2018 AARP Brain Health and Mental Well-Being Survey

October 2018
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</table>
KEY FINDINGS
Key Findings

Most stressors faced by adults age 18 or older are acute in that the level of stress decays significantly over time. The opposite of acute stressors – chronic stressors – include the death of a child, caregiving, hard feelings from something that happened long ago, and being the victim of fraud, a scam, or identity theft.

The most common stressor for all generations is the death of a close family member, experienced by six in 10 (62%) adults within the last five years.

For each generation, stress levels decrease. Millennials (age 22-37) have the highest average stress levels and members of the Silent/Greatest generation (age 73+) have the lowest.

Adults employ many different coping strategies when faced with a challenging or stressful situation and most (59%) are confident they can handle it. Those who cope by putting their faith in God have among the highest average mental well-being scores.

When faced with a stressful situation, the most common activities, by far, that adults engage in more often than usual are praying (51%) and private meditation (42%).

Adults who self-report they have a more positive view of aging have higher average mental well-being scores and lower depression and anxiety scores compared to those who do not. More adults age 18-49 have a positive view of aging compared to adults 50 or older.
Key Findings (Cont.)

Adults who say they manage stress effectively “most or all of the time” are more likely to rate their cognitive function as “excellent” or “very good.”

Routine engagement in mentally-stimulating activities buffers high-stress conditions. This means that adults in high stress conditions who engage in certain cognitive activities have higher average mental well-being scores than those who do not engage in them.

Adults age 18 or older see loneliness as a modifiable stressor.

Caregivers age 18 to 49 have higher average depression scores compared to caregivers age 50 or older and adults overall.

Adults age 18 or older who report physical ailments, but who do not have any mental health concerns, have higher-than-average mental well-being scores that are virtually identical to those who report no physical ailments at all.

The effect of multiple predictors (stressors, behaviors, beliefs) on three specific outcome measures are presented throughout this report. Mental well-being, as measured on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) is the chief outcome measure. The remaining two outcome measures are Anxiety, as measured on the GAD-7 and Depression, as measured on the CES-D. Details on these scales and their construction are in the methodology section.
Stress Levels Tend to Decline by Generation

Members of Gen-Z and members of the Silent/Greatest Generation tend to have the lowest self-reported levels of stress. Stress tends to peak for Millennials and Gen-Xers and then decline. Moderate stress is the rule for youth and middle age.

On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is extremely low and 10 is extremely high, please rate the level of stress in your life today

Level of stress

- 1: 5%
- 2: 9%
- 3: 12%
- 4: 12%
- 5: 15%
- 6: 16%
- 7: 17%
- 8: 8%
- 9: 2%
- 10: 53%

Average stress level by generation

- Gen-Z* (up to 21 years): 4.67
- Millennials (22-37 years): 5.53
- Gen-X (38-53 years): 5.41
- Baby Boomers (54-72): 4.86
- Silent & Greatest (73+ years): 4.38

*Includes the leading edge of Gen-Z (18 to 21 years)
Death of a Close Family Member is the Most Common Stressor

Among the top 10 stressors experienced by adults age 18 and older in the last five years, more than six in 10 (62%) experienced the death of a close family member. In a distant second place is job stress. Stress related to finances/money hold three spots in the top 10 list.

Q5 Have you experienced any of the following in the last five years? Yes, No
*Q6 Have you ever experienced any of the following? Yes, No

Three-quarters (75%) of adults age 50 and older have experienced the death of a close family member compared to half (50%) of adults age 18 to 49.

Nearly three in 10 (29%) adults age 18-49 have experienced loneliness compared to fewer than one in five (17%) age 50 and older.
Death of a Close Family Member is the Most Common Stressor for Everyone

For the Silent/Greatest generation, all of the top five stressors are related to death and sickness. Interestingly, “loneliness” is a top five stressor only for Gen-Z and “moving to another location” is a top five stressor only for Millennials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Five Stressors by Generation</th>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gen-Z (Note: limited to 18 to 21 years)</td>
<td>Death of close family member* (35%)</td>
<td>Death of a pet Loneliness (32%)</td>
<td>Increase in expenses (28%)</td>
<td>Job stress (26%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Millennial (22 to 37 years)</td>
<td>Death of close family member* (47%)</td>
<td>Job stress (46%)</td>
<td>Increase in expenses (43%)</td>
<td>Moving to another location (41%)</td>
<td>Money problems (36%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gen-X (38 to 53 years)</td>
<td>Death of close family member* (62%)</td>
<td>Job stress (42%)</td>
<td>Increase in expenses (40%)</td>
<td>Money problems (39%)</td>
<td>Major illness-close friend/relative (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Baby Boomer (54 to 72 years)</td>
<td>Death of close family member* (78%)</td>
<td>Death of close friend* (41%)</td>
<td>Major illness-close friend/relative (33%)</td>
<td>Job stress (32%)</td>
<td>Death of a pet (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Silent &amp; Greatest Generation (73 years and older)</td>
<td>Death of close family member* (68%)</td>
<td>Death of close friend* (52%)</td>
<td>Major illness-close friend/relative (38%)</td>
<td>Major illness-self (23%)</td>
<td>Death of spouse* (23%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q5 Have you experienced any of the following in the last five years? Yes, No
Q6 Have you ever experienced any of the following? Yes, No

*Q6 Have you ever experienced any of the following? Yes, No
Finances and Conflict are Among Most Stressful Experiences

Among the top 10 most stressful experiences, money being tight and conflict in a spousal or significant other relationship are said to be “extremely” or “very” stressful by more than half of adults age 18 and older. Substance abuse issues in one’s family and legal problems are uncommon but, when experienced, are “extremely” or “very” stressful.

Percentage who say experience is “extremely” or “very” stressful

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money is tight</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict in significant other relationship</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs/substance abuse in family</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal problems</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Decrease in income, Major family conflict, Death of a spouse or partner</em>*</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Major illness of someone else, Major personal illness or injury, Separation or divorce</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All three stressors have equal percentages of adults age 18 or older who answered “extremely” or “very” stressful.

Q5b **Q6b At this point in time, how stressful does the event feel to you? Extremely stressful, Very stressful, Somewhat stressful, Not very stressful, Not at all stressful

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AARP RESEARCH 10
The Impact of Most Stressors Diminishes with Time

**Acute stressors**

- Break-up of non-spousal "significant other" relationship
- Conflict in significant other relationship
- Conflicts outside of work and family (neighbor)
- Death of a pet
- Death of close family member*
- Death of close friend*
- Death of spouse/partner/significant other*
- Decrease in income
- Drugs/substance abuse issues in family
- Going from living with someone to living on my own
- Having someone move in with you
- Increase in expenses
- Job stress
- Legal problems
- Loneliness
- Lost touch with relatives I’d like to see
- Major family conflict (excluding significant other relationship)
- Major injury or illness of someone else
- Major personal injury or illness
- Members of my household are not getting along
- Money is tight
- Moving from one location to another
- Relationship issue affecting me
- Retirement
- Separation or divorce
- Victim of robbery, burglary, assault or other major crime*

**Chronic stressors**

- Caregiving
- Death of a child*
- Hard feelings about something that happened years ago
- Victim of fraud, a scam, or identity theft

Acute and chronic stressors were defined by the level of stress experienced over time. When the level of stress diminished significantly over time, a stressor was labeled as acute. When the level of stress did not diminish over time, it was labeled as chronic.

Q5a Q6b At this point in time, how stressful does this event feel to you? Extremely stressful, Very stressful, Somewhat stressful, Not very stressful, Not at all stressful
Q5aa When, during the last five years, did this event begin or take place? Within the last year, Between 1 and 3 years, About 4 or 5 years ago, Longer than five years ago

*Q6a How long ago did you experience this event? Within the last year, 1 year ago but not more than 5 years ago, 5 years ago but not more than 10 years ago, 10 or more years ago
Adults Believe They Can *Change* Loneliness and the Way They Think About it

Loneliness was seen as a modifiable stressor as were job stress and issues related to moving.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stressor</th>
<th>Percent who say they can change the situation to make it less stressful</th>
<th>Percent who say they can change the way they think about a situation to make it less stressful</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Loneliness</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conflict in significant other relationship</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Having someone move in with you</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lost touch with relatives I like to see</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Conflicts outside of work and family</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Job stress</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Hard feelings about something that happened years ago</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Money is tight</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Separation or divorce</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Going from living with someone to living on my own</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q5c To what degree can you change the situation to make it less stressful? Q5d To what degree can you change the way you think about the situation to make it less stressful? To a great degree, To some degree, To a little degree, To no degree at all
Adults are Confident they can Handle Problems or Challenges

Nearly six in 10 (59%) adults age 18 and older are confident they can handle problems or challenges in their lives. More adults believe they will determine a solution for themselves (40%) rather than have God provide a solution (33%) and they tend to rely on themselves (45%) more than others (25%).

Q9 In general, when I’m facing a challenge or problem in my life…

Members of the Silent/Greatest Generation are less likely to think they can change the situation (27%) compared to Millennials (41%).
Adults who Say that God Will Find a Solution to their Problems have Higher Mental Well-Being* Scores than those who Rely Primarily on Themselves

Adults age 18 or older who leave solutions to God and those who are confident they can handle the situation have higher average mental well-being scores. Additionally, taking a definite coping approach (i.e., “almost entirely” changing the situation or view of a situation or “almost entirely” dealing with it all at once or breaking it into smaller pieces) is associated with higher average mental well-being scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coping Style</th>
<th>Almost entirely</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Both equally</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Almost entirely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I rely on other people who can help me out if I need it**</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>51.7</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My God will find a solution for me</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>51.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am confident I can handle it</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>51.6</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to change the situation</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>51.5</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to deal with it all at once</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>50.3</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>54.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q9 In general, when I’m facing a challenge or problem in my life…

*Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2006, all rights reserved. Scale consists of 14-items and ranges from 14-70.

**Not statistically significant.
Few Adults Drink, Smoke, or Use Drugs “more than usual” when Stressed

The most common activities at least one-quarter of adults age 18 and older engage in “more than usual” when facing a challenge or stressful event are: eating, losing their cool, sleeping, and listening to music.

Q13 Again when facing challenges or problems in your life that may be stressful, anxiety-producing, or cause you to be sad/depressed, how do these challenges impact your engagement in the following activities? More than usual, Less than usual, The same as usual, I do not engage in this activity.
Older Generations Tend to Minimally Change Behaviors When Stressed

Younger generations are significantly more likely to engage in reactive coping “more than usual” when they are facing stressful challenges or problems compared to older generations. Members of the Silent/Greatest Generation are the least likely to engage in each coping behavior “more than usual” when faced with a challenge or problem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Gen-Z* (up to 21 years)</th>
<th>Millennials (22 to 37 years)</th>
<th>Gen-X (38 to 53 years)</th>
<th>Baby Boomers (54 to 72 years)</th>
<th>Silent &amp; Greatest (73+ years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sleep in or nap</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lose your cool</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat comfort food</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit with sympathetic people</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit and wait it out</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drink alcohol</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate use of drugs</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoke</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q13 Again when facing challenges or problems in your life that may be stressful, anxiety-producing, or cause you to be sad/depressed, how do these challenges impact your engagement in the following activities? More than usual, Less than usual, The same as usual, I do not engage in this activity

*Includes the leading edge of Gen-Z (18 to 21 years)
Among Routine Activities*, Prayer and Meditation Offer Comfort During Stressful Events

Among the top 10 activities that adults age 18 and older engage in more often when facing challenges or problems, prayer and private meditation are the most common by far with more than half saying they pray in private more often.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pray in private</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private meditation</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play online games 2 hrs+</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk for exercise</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surf the internet</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch TV 2 hrs+</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercise/play sports</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend religious services</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational shopping</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music or singing</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q12 Do you engage in this activity more, less, or the same as always when facing challenges or problems in your life that you may consider to be stressful, anxiety-producing, or cause you to be sad/depressed? (among those who engage at least once per year)

* Activities engaged in by fewer than 200 respondents are excluded from this list.
# Engagement in Prayer and Meditation Increases in Stressful Circumstances

For all generations, praying in private is the top activity impacted by stress but with increasing age, significantly fewer adults increase their prayer when stressed. Adults in the oldest generation are the least likely to increase their frequency of engagement in routine activities compared to younger generations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Five Routine Activities* Engaged in More Often When Faced with a Stressful Situation by Generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen-Z** (up to 21 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millennial (22 to 37 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen-X (38 to 53 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomer (54 to 72 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silent &amp; Greatest Generation (73 years and older)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q12 Do you engage in this activity more, less, or the same as always when facing challenges or problems in your life that you may consider to be stressful, anxiety-producing, or cause you to be sad/depressed? (among those who engage at least once per year)

* Activities engaged in by fewer than 200 respondents are excluded from this list.

**Includes the leading edge of Gen-Z (age 18 to 21)
MENTAL WELL-BEING AND COGNITIVE FUNCTION
With Age Comes an Increase in Mental Well-Being

Adults in their 50s and beyond have higher average mental well-being scores compared to younger adults.

Average Mental Well-Being* Scores by Age

Age 18-29: 49.9  
Age 30-39: 49.9  
Age 40-49: 50.7  
Age 50-59: 53.3  
Age 60-69: 54.1  
Age 70+: 54.6

Overall average=52.0

*Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2006, all rights reserved. Scale consists of 14-items and ranges from 14-70.
Higher Cognitive Function is Related to Greater Mental Well-Being

Adults age 18 or older who rate selected aspects of their cognitive function as “excellent” or “very good” have higher average mental well-being scores compared to adults who rate their cognitive function as “good,” “fair,” or “poor.” The largest difference was in the rating of brain health/mental sharpness showing a 16.7-point difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Function</th>
<th>Excellent/Very Good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair/Poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory*</td>
<td>55.3</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>45.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory**</td>
<td>54.6</td>
<td>48.6</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision making</td>
<td>54.8</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>41.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>48.2</td>
<td>41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn new things</td>
<td>54.7</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brain health, mental sharpness</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>47.9</td>
<td>38.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall average=52.0

Q1 & Q2 How would you describe each of the following at this point in time? Would you say it is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

*Your ability to remember things such as names, dates, grocery lists, etc.
**Your ability to remember things such as recipes, to take medication, and to pay your bills.
Higher Fulfillment Ratings are Related to Greater Mental Well-Being

Adults age 18 or older who rate selected aspects of life, such as wisdom and overall health status, as “excellent” or “very good” have higher average mental well-being scores compared to adults who rate these aspects as “good,” “fair,” or “poor.”

Q1 & Q2 How would you describe each of the following at this point in time? Would you say it is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

Overall average=52.0
Engagement in Brain-Healthy Behaviors is Related to Mental Well-Being

The more frequently adults age 18 or older engage in brain-healthy behaviors, such as eating nutritious meals or exercising, the higher their average mental well-being scores. The greatest difference is seen in managing stress effectively with a 14.3 point difference between those who manage stress effectively “most or all of the time” (58.0) compared to those who do “rarely or none of the time” (43.7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>5-7 days</th>
<th>3-4 days</th>
<th>1-2 days</th>
<th>Less than 1 day</th>
<th>Overall average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Managed stress effectively</td>
<td>51.0</td>
<td>46.4</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felt well rested</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>53.2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercised</td>
<td>56.8</td>
<td>48.7</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ate nutritiously</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialized</td>
<td>56.7</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q14 Below is a list of the ways you might have felt or behaved. Please tell me how often you have felt this way during the past week. I ate nutritious and well-balanced meals, I exercised, I socialized with family, friends, or others, I managed stress effectively, I was well-rested. Rarely or none of the time (less than 1 day), Some or a little of the time (1-2 days), Occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3-4 days), Most or all of the time (5-7 days).
More Adults Who Manage Stress Effectively Rate Cognitive Function Highly

One brain-healthy behavior, managing stress effectively, is reliably related to self-reported cognitive function. Adults age 18 or older who frequently managed stress effectively were more likely to rate selected cognitive functions as “excellent” or “very good.”

More adults age 50 or older (46%) manage stress effectively “most or all of the time” compared to adults age 18 to 49 (25%).

Q1 & Q2 How would you describe each of the following at this point in time? Would you say it is excellent, very good, good, fair, or poor?

Q14 Below is a list of the ways you might have felt or behaved. Please tell me how often you have felt this way during the past week. I managed stress effectively. Rarely or none of the time (less than 1 day), Some or a little of the time (1-2 days), Occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3-4 days), Most or all of the time (5-7 days).

*Your ability to remember things such as names, dates, grocery lists, etc.
**Your ability to remember things such as recipes, to take medication, and to pay your bills.
Stressed Adults Have Lower Mental Well-Being Scores and Higher Levels of Depression and Anxiety

Mental well-being, depression, and anxiety are related to the level of stress experienced by adults age 18 or older at a snapshot in time. The average mental well-being score is about 10 points higher for those experiencing very low stress compared to those experiencing very high stress.

Q16 On a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is extremely low and 10 is extremely high, please rate the overall level of stress in your life today. (1,2,3=Very low stress; 4-5=Somewhat low stress; 6-7=Somewhat high stress; 8,9,10=Very high stress)

*Mental Well-Being measured using the validated Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale, Depression measured using the CES-D, Anxiety measured using the GAD-7.
More than half (55%) of all adults age 18 or older agree that quality of life decreases with age.

Those who are more likely to agree that quality of life decreases with aging:
- Adults age 50+ (61%) compared to adults age 18 to 49 (50%).
- Hispanic/Latino adults compared to all adults age 18+ (65% vs. 55%).

African American/Black adults were less likely to agree that quality of life decreases with age compared to adults overall (43% vs. 55%).

Q29 Do you agree or disagree with the statement: With aging, quality of life decreases. Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree
Positive Views of Aging Related to Better Well-Being Outcomes

Adults age 18 or older who hold a more positive view of aging by DISAGREEING that quality of life decreases with aging have higher average mental well-being scores and lower depression and anxiety scores.

Q29 Do you agree or disagree with the statement: With aging, quality of life decreases. Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree

*Mental Well-Being measured using the validated Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale, Depression measured using the CES-D, Anxiety measured using the GAD-7.
A large majority (85%) of adults age 18 or older are satisfied with the quality of their social relationships but those who are not have lower average mental well-being scores and higher levels of depression and anxiety.

Q11 How satisfied are you, if at all, with the quality of your social relationships? Very satisfied, Somewhat Satisfied, Not very satisfied, Not at all Satisfied

*Mental Well-Being measured using the validated Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale, Depression measured using the CES-D, Anxiety measured using the GAD-7.
Caregivers Under Age 50 Have Higher Depression Scores

Caregivers under age 50, whether or not they care for someone with a cognitive or mental health issue, have higher depression scores compared to all other same-aged adults. Caregivers age 50 or older are more likely to care for someone with a cognitive or mental health issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recipient status</th>
<th>Caregiving incidence</th>
<th>Average mental well-being score</th>
<th>Average depression score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total, all adults</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All adults age 18 to 49</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>50.1</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care recipient <strong>with</strong> a cognitive impairment or mental health concern</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care recipients <strong>without</strong> a cognitive impairment or mental health concern</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All adults age 50 or older</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>11.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care recipient <strong>with</strong> a cognitive impairment or mental health concern</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care recipient <strong>without</strong> a cognitive impairment or mental health concern</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Due to the small number of cases, these data show trends only.*
Engagement in Devotion and Volunteering is Related to Higher Mental Well-Being

Adults age 18 or older who attend church and pray in private have higher mental well-being scores than those who do not. This is also true for adults who volunteer and/or help others.

Q12 Please indicate which of the following activities you engage in at least once per year.

- Attend church
- Pray in private
- Volunteer
- Help others

Average=52.0
Range=14 to 70
Engagement in Novel or Mentally-Stimulating Activities is Related to Higher Mental Well-Being

Adults age 18 or older who engage in mentally-stimulating activities, or novel activities, have higher average mental well-being scores.

Average=52.0
Range=14 to 70

Q12 Please indicate which of the following activities you engage in at least once per year.
Engagement in Physical Activities is Related to Higher Mental Well-Being

Adults age 18 or older who engage in exercise or other physical activities have higher average mental well-being scores.

Average=52.0  
Range=14 to 70

- Exercise, sports: 53.4  
- Exercise, walk: 53.1  
- Gardening: 53.9  
- Visit a park: 53.1

Q12 Please indicate which of the following activities you engage in at least once per year.
Engagement in Mentally-Stimulating Activities Buffers the Impact of Multiple Stressors

The negative impact on mental well-being of having a large number of stressors is significantly lower for those adults with relatively high levels of engagement in cognitive activities. This finding is noted after controlling for demographic, attitudinal, and behavioral factors.

The impact of stressors on Mental Well-Being, by level of engagement in Cognitive Activities*

![Graph showing the impact of stressors on Mental Well-Being by level of engagement in cognitive activities.](image)

Q12 Please indicate which of the following activities you engage in at least once per year.

- Reading
- Hobbies
- Board games/puzzles
- Learning new things
- Etc.

*MEASURED BY A FACTOR SCORE REFLECTING ENGAGEMENT IN READING, HOBBIES, BOARD GAMES/PUZZLES, LEARNING NEW THINGS, ETC.
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS
Adults Who Report Anxiety, Depression, Obesity, and Aches and Pains Have Lower Average Mental Well-Being Scores

Adults age 18 or older who report high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, diabetes, or arthritis have virtually the same average mental well-being scores as those who do not report those conditions. However, adults who report mental health concerns, obesity, and general aches and pains do have lower average mental well-being scores.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition, disease, or illness</th>
<th>No, do not have condition</th>
<th>Yes, have condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aches and pains</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>49.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High blood pressure**</td>
<td>51.8</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High cholesterol**</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>46.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arthritis**</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>51.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obesity</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>44.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes**</td>
<td>52.1</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart disease**</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>51.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Average=52.0, Range=14 to 70

Adults whose activities are limited “to no extent at all” (49%) by diseases, conditions, or illnesses have higher average mental well-being scores:

- To no extent at all: 54.7
- To a little extent: 50.7
- To some extent: 48.8
- To a great extent: 47.2

Fewer adults age 50 and older (43%) say they are limited by conditions “to no extent at all” compared to those under age 50 (55%).

Q20 To what extent do diseases, conditions, or illnesses limit your ability to engage in activities you would like to do? (i.e., physical activity, socializing, doing yard work, etc.) To a great extent, To some extent, To a little extent, To no extent at all.

Q21 Do you currently have any of the following conditions or illnesses?

**Not statistically significant.
Adults Reporting a Mental Health Condition Report Lower-Than-Average Mental Well-Being

Adults age 18 or older who report a mental health condition either with or without a physical condition have significantly lower average mental well-being scores. Adults who report selected physical conditions have virtually the same average mental well-being score as adults who report no physical or mental health conditions.

Type of Condition Reported

- Physical condition only: 40%
- Mental health condition only: 6%
- Physical and Mental Health condition: 15%
- Neither type of condition: 39%

Average mental well-being by type of condition

- Physical condition only: 53.6
- Mental health condition only: 46.3
- Physical and mental health condition: 46.2
- Neither type of condition: 53.3

Physical conditions: High blood pressure, high cholesterol, diabetes, heart disease, gout, arthritis, obesity, aches and pains.

Mental Health Conditions: Anxiety, depression
Implications

Over half (55%) of adults age 18 or older have a negative view of aging, and even more adults age 50 or older share this view compared to adults under age 50 (61% vs. 50%). This finding highlights the importance of AARP’s campaign to “disrupt aging” especially because adults with a more positive view of aging also have higher average mental well-being scores.

Adults who said they had experienced loneliness in the last five years also felt they could change the situation or change the way they think about it “to a great degree” or “to some degree.” Adults’ awareness that this is a modifiable situation gives the AARP Foundation an opportunity to prevent social isolation at an early stage.

Although relatively few adults who participated in this survey identified themselves as caregivers, younger caregivers (age 18 to 49) experience higher levels of depression and lower mental well-being compared to older caregivers.
Methodology

- **Objectives:** To explore the relationship between stress, coping styles, mental health measures, and routine activities
- **Methodology:** Online, nationally representative survey via GfK KnowledgePanel®, with sample targeting panelists age 18 or older.
- **Sample:** GfK KnowledgePanel®, N=2,287.
- **Oversample:** Additional interviews were conducted to achieve the following samples:
  - 352 Hispanic/Latinos age 18+ (conducted in both English and Spanish)
  - 356 African Americans age 18+
  - 203 Asian Americans age 18+
- **Interviewing Dates:** May 15-June 1, 2018
- **Weighting:** The data were weighted by age, gender, race, ethnicity, employment status, and income
- **Questionnaire length:** 20-minutes
- **Margin of error:** Total sample: ± 2.2 percentage points. The margin of error among subgroups (e.g., age cohorts, race/ethnicity oversamples) is higher
- **Generational analysis:** Gen-Z includes only the leading edge of the generation (age 18-21). The Silent (age 73 to 90)/Greatest (age 91+) generation includes only a few members of the older generation.
- Percentages may not equal 100% due to rounding
Methodology: Key Outcome Measures

- **Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale**: The WEMWBS consists of 14 positively-worded statements (e.g., “I’ve been able to make up my mind about things,” “I’ve been feeling good about myself,” “I’ve been feeling close to other people,” etc.) with five response options related to the amount of time during the previous two weeks that the statement would accurately reflect the respondents’ actual situation or state of mind (i.e., 1= None of the time, 2= Rarely, 3=Some of the time, 4=Often, 5= All of the time). The WEMWBS net score is a simple sum of the 14 item’s scores with a resulting minimum score of 14 (lowest mental well-being) to 70 (highest mental well-being).

- **Depression Scale (CES-D)**: The CES-D consists of 20 statements (e.g., “I felt I was just as good as other people,” “I was happy,” “I talked less than usual,” etc.) with four response options related to the amount of time during the past week that each statement applies [i.e., Rarely or none of the time (less that 1 day), Some of a little of the time (1-2 days), Occasionally or a moderate amount of time (3-4 days), Most or all of the time (5-7 days)]. The CES-D is the sum of the 20 questions where each item is code 0 to 3. The resulting score ranges from 0 to 60.

- **Anxiety Scale (GAD-7)**: The GAD-7 consists of seven statements (e.g., “Not being able to stop or control worrying,” “Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen,” “Trouble relaxing,” etc.) with four response options related to the amount of time during the last two weeks that each statement applies (i.e., Not at all, Several days, More than half the days, Nearly every day). The GAD-7 is the sum of the seven items coded 0 to 3. The resulting score ranges from 0 to 21.
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About AARP

AARP is the nation’s largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering Americans 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With nearly 38 million members and offices in every state, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, AARP works to strengthen communities and advocate for what matters most to families with a focus on health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. AARP also works for individuals in the marketplace by sparking new solutions and allowing carefully chosen, high-quality products and services to carry the AARP name. As a trusted source for news and information, AARP produces the nation’s largest circulation publications, AARP The Magazine and AARP Bulletin. To learn more, visit www.aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media.

Acknowledgements

GfK conducted this survey for AARP using its nationally representative online panel, Knowledge Panel. This report was prepared by Laura Mehegan and Chuck Rainville in AARP Research. For additional information about the survey, contact Laura Mehegan at lmehegan@aarp.org. Media inquiries should be directed to media@aarp.org.