



# ***Social Connectedness and Health Survey***

**May 2008**

Mental Health America  
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## **About Mental Health America**

Mental Health America (formerly known as the National Mental Health Association) is the country's leading nonprofit dedicated to helping ALL people live mentally healthier lives. With our more than 320 affiliates nationwide, we represent a growing movement of Americans who promote mental wellness for the health and well-being of the nation – everyday and in times of crisis.

## **About the Survey**

“Social Connectedness and Health” was conducted by International Communications Research, an independent research company. Interviews were conducted via telephone from April 2 – April 7, 2008 among a nationally representative sample of 1,016 respondents 18 years of age or older. The poll has a margin of error of +/- 3.07%.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary provides details on the stress levels of survey respondents, their social relationships with others and their awareness of the benefits these relationships may have on mental and overall health.

## Current Stress

About one-third (34%) of respondents describe themselves as “routinely overwhelmed by stress.” African Americans (45%) and women (39%) report the most stress. Age also plays a role – younger respondents are significantly more likely than older respondents to report being overwhelmed by stress.

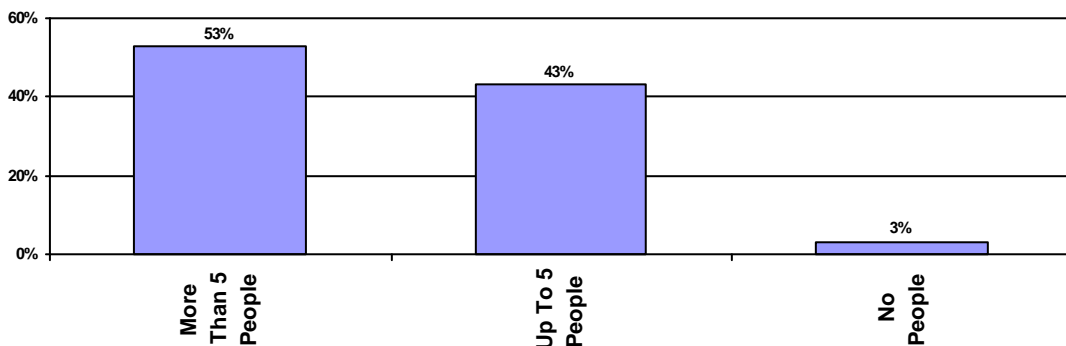
In addition, over one-third of survey respondents (40%) say they are concerned about their current stress levels. Nearly twice as many African American respondents (64%) say they are concerned about their stress levels as Whites (36%).

## Social Relationships

### Number of Relationships

Despite experiencing high stress levels, the vast majority (97%) of respondents have people in their lives who they trust and can turn to when in need of support.

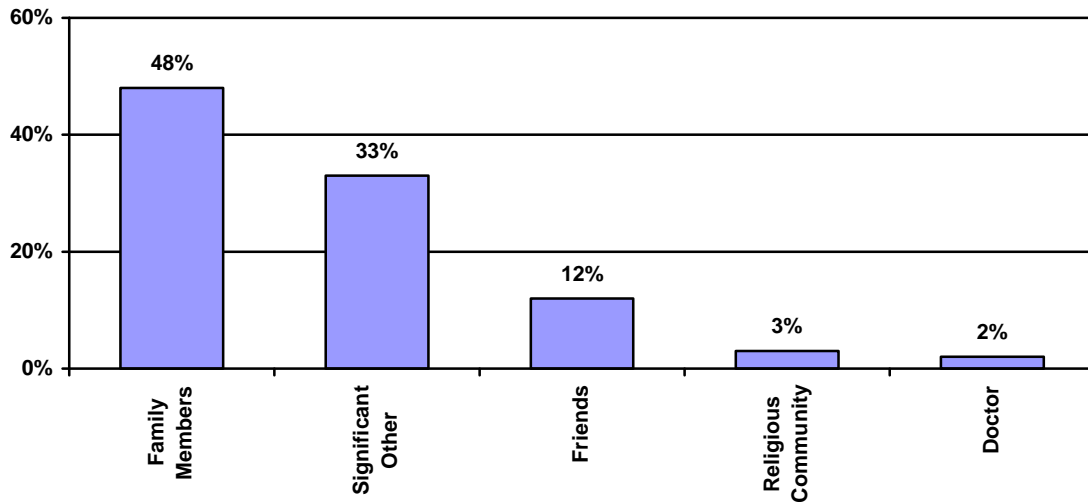
- Over one-third (43%) have as many as five people;
- Over half (53%) have more than five; and
- Only three percent of respondents report having none.



Women (58%) are significantly more likely than men (48%) to have more than five people in their lives who they trust and can turn to when in need of support. The same is true for people with higher incomes and more education.

## Types of Relationships

Those with relationships turn most often to family members (48%) and significant others (33%) for emotional support during stressful times.



Men (40%) are more likely than women (26%) to turn to their significant other for emotional support, while women (55%) are more likely than men (41%) to turn to family members.

Income level may also determine who respondents turn to. Respondents with higher incomes are more likely to rely on significant others and less likely to rely on family members than those with lower incomes.

## Relationship Characteristics

The survey asked participants to respond to specific statements about their relationships and found that most participants do support relationships in their lives.

	<b>TOTAL Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	<b>TOTAL Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
<b>I often meet or talk with family or friends</b>	91%	76%	15%	9%	6%	3%
<b>I have someone to talk to about decisions in my life</b>	95%	83%	11%	5%	3%	2%
<b>When I feel lonely, there are several people I can talk to</b>	92%	79%	14%	6%	3%	4%
<b>I have close relationships that make me feel good</b>	94%	82%	12%	6%	2%	4%
<b>There are people I know will help me if I really need it</b>	96%	86%	9%	4%	2%	2%
<b>I have close relationships that help me cope with stress</b>	91%	75%	16%	8%	4%	4%
<b>There are people who appreciate me for who I am</b>	96%	81%	15%	3%	1%	1%
<b>I feel a strong emotional tie with at least one other person</b>	93%	83%	10%	7%	4%	3%

## **Health Benefits of Relationships**

The survey also asked participants to respond to statements about the benefits of their relationships and found that most are aware of the positive effects social relationships may have on mental and overall health. Nearly all respondents believe that:

- having close relationships helps people relieve stress (94%)
- having close relationships helps protect them from developing depression and other mental health conditions (93%).

Slightly less (86%) believe that not having close relationships can put them at risk for illness. African-American respondents (22%) were twice as likely as White respondents (11%) to disagree with this statement.