



**Burnout and Resilience:**

# **The Enduring Impact of COVID-19 on Mental Health**

**Insights and Recommendations  
2022**

# The country continues to be stressed due to COVID-19. And it is now exhausted.

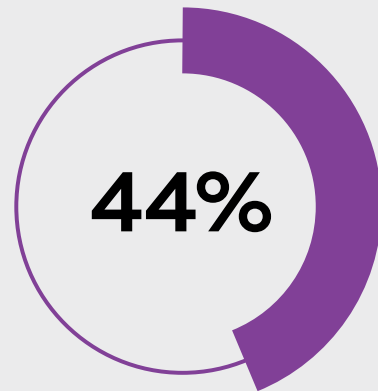
Over the course of the pandemic, Aetna®, a CVS Health® company, has examined the impact COVID-19 has had on the mental and emotional health of the nation. After 20 months of shifting policies, a rebound in cases largely due to new variants and several other factors, it's clear the pandemic is having an enduring effect on mental well-being, one that may last for years to come, with stress now leading to burnout.

According to our latest survey with Morning Consult, 55% of Americans report a negative impact on their overall stress levels due to the pandemic. Moreover, 44% of Americans feel that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on their overall mental health, a significant rise from April 2020, when just 34% of adults reported similar feelings.

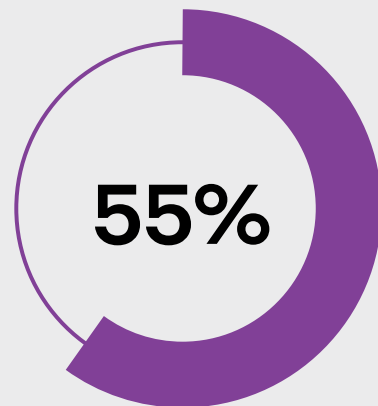
Also on the rise are Americans' fears about the potential impact of the virus on the overall health of their loved ones. In our latest survey, 69% now report these concerns, rebounding to levels seen in January 2021 (71%) after dipping in April (65%).

Fortunately, while COVID-19 has taken its toll, there is an opportunity to forge a new path forward. As a result of the pandemic, 52% of adults have a personal resolve to be more resilient. Now is the time to truly make mental health stigma a thing of the past, and for employers, providers and other stakeholders to permanently instill a culture around mental well-being to ensure individuals have easy access to care and resources to improve their mental well-being and their ability to thrive.

44% of Americans feel that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on their overall mental health



55% of Americans report a negative impact on their overall stress levels due to the pandemic



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## Methodology & Demographics

The survey was conducted by Morning Consult between October 8–11, 2021 among a national sample of 2,200 adults, including 551 parents, 865 employed adults and 331 working parents. The interviews were conducted online, and the data were weighted to approximate a target sample of adults based on gender, educational attainment, age, race and region. Results from the full survey have a margin of error of plus or minus two percentage points, with a plus or minus of three percentage points for employed adults, plus or minus of four percentage points for parents and plus or minus of five percentage points for working parents.



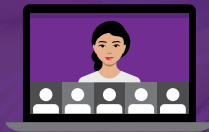
## Recent Aetna® mental health studies

**Understanding the mental health impact of COVID-19**

**As the pandemic's toll on mental health mounts, moms and caregivers experience increased stress.**

**Mental well-being, returning to the workplace and COVID-19**

# Understanding burnout



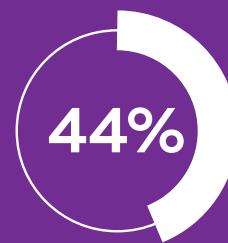
Since March 2020, COVID-19 rates have risen, fallen and risen again in communities. Individuals have lost loved ones or just time with family and friends. Layer on social unrest, major weather events in some parts of the country and other recent issues and it adds up to stress and increasingly more worries. Individuals lose patience with one another or neglect their own self-care. It means Americans are burnt out — which is a state of emotional, mental and often physical exhaustion — and they're admitting as much.

When asked how often they were experiencing a variety of emotions over the last three months, more than 4 in 10 Americans (44%) report experiencing burnout or mental exhaustion “at least somewhat often.” In addition, 53% of adults have “worried about what will happen next,” while exactly half have felt as though they are just trying to get through the week “at least somewhat often.”

Compared to adults overall, parents are 13 points more likely (57%) and employed adults are seven points more likely (51%) to be experiencing burnout or mental exhaustion “at least somewhat often” since the summer. Both groups also report a lack of motivation (49% for parents, 46% for employed), feeling no boundaries between work and home (41% for parents, 38% for employed) and less patience (55% parents, 49% employed) at significantly higher rates than adults overall.

Among parents in particular, about 7 in 10 also report missing a family or social event such as a vacation or graduation due to COVID-19, and just over half said the amount of time they have spent providing care has increased. Sixty percent have also been overwhelmed trying to understand the news and policies on the pandemic.

Americans who report burnout or mental exhaustion



Americans who have worried about what will happen next



## Are you burnt out?

It's not always easy to tell the difference between just-plain-busy, normal stress and actual burnout. Answering these questions may help:

- Are you tired all the time?
- Do you have trouble sleeping?
- Do you ever have quiet time with your friends, your family or by yourself?
- Do you ever have fun?
- Do little things set you off?

Answering yes to one or more of these questions may mean that you are feeling more than just stressed or busy, and that it's time to make changes to improve your mental well-being.





# Improving resilience



Burnout is a normal stress response, but incorporating self-care strategies and resources to improve mental well-being can reduce the feelings associated with burnout and help build resilience against future events. Just as important though is adaptability, which entails not simply bouncing back from adversity, but thriving beyond it. Focusing on coping skills, self-care and self-growth are helpful strategies to get there.

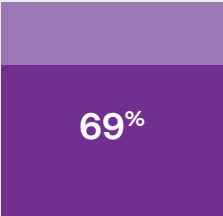
Fortunately, 6 in 10 adults (69% of parents, 65% of employed adults) agree they could benefit from learning how to improve resilience. A majority of adults (54%) also felt routine mental health checkups, similar to an annual physical, would be beneficial. Two-thirds of parents and 60% of employed adults would also find more conversation around mental health with family, friends and colleagues helpful.

Within the workplace specifically, employed adults (76%) and working parents (77%) unsurprisingly identified “additional days off” as the top resource to improve mental health at work. However, given those may be difficult for some employers to provide, or for colleagues to take, both groups selected several other options that would improve their mental well-being. These include “having a clear start and end to the day” (76% for both), “more flexibility regarding work arrangements” (72% for both) and updated policies to improve work/life balance (70% employed, 74% working parents).

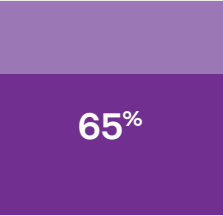
Among working parents, 72% pointed to employee assistance programs (EAP) and talking to other colleagues through employee resource groups (64%) as helpful resources

## Those who agree they could benefit from learning how to improve resilience

Parents

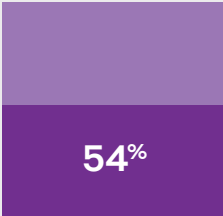


Employed Adults



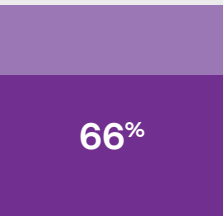
## Those who feel they could benefit from routine mental health checkups

All adults

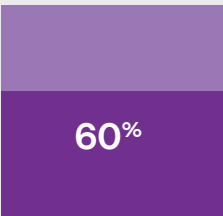


## Those who feel they could benefit from mental health conversations

Parents



Employed Adults



# Conclusion

COVID-19 has put a spotlight on the fact that, as a population, we all need to build skills for resiliency and prepare for the unexpected. And yet, nearly half of adults agree they could benefit from help navigating the complex mental health system. How do we begin to reduce burnout and enable communities to thrive?

Understanding burnout and updated workplace policies will help, but we also need to commit in 2022 to further building a culture that empowers us to improve and maintain our mental well-being, just as we do our physical health. Only then can we continue to make mental well-being services more accessible, less complicated, more convenient and more inviting.



## Leaders can help their teams thrive

- **Know your own assumptions.**  
Be mindful of your opinions on topics such as stress and burnout and recognize they will not hold for everyone. You may feel OK, but your colleagues may feel differently.
- **Talk openly.**  
Highlight the short-term and long-term difficulties COVID-19 has had on personal and professional lives. This may make a significant difference for someone who feels they must hide their true feelings and struggles, which can lead to a sense of isolation.
- **Keep an open dialogue with your teams.**  
Let everyone know that you are available to support them during hard times.
- **Encourage support services.**  
Highlight Resources for Living® or other employee assistance programs (EAP) along with the importance of using paid time off (PTO) for mental health breaks. View the Resources for Living [Leaders' Guide to mental wellbeing resources](#) for additional tips and resources to help reduce stress in the workplace and help teams thrive.

## Individuals can reduce burnout and improve resilience

- **Be transparent about your needs.**  
This can be hard if you are the leader or the decision maker at home. Strive though to be clear with your family, or your team at work, about what you can and cannot do. Share when you are on overload. Be clear you can't work tonight or need to order takeout. It's OK to be vulnerable.
- **Set and hold boundaries.**  
Work and family are blending together at home. It may feel like there is no start or stop to the workday. Find ways to keep them separate.
- **Take regular breaks from work.**  
It can be difficult to stop the flow of work or find time between meetings, but even stepping away for a minute can relax you and reduce stress. Simple breaks can include stretching, taking a short walk, listening to a song or starting a crossword puzzle.
- **Take breaks from social media and the news.**  
It can be too much. Stepping away and focusing on a hobby can be more fulfilling.
- **Adopt healthy habits.**  
A good night's sleep and a healthy diet set a positive tone for the day. Finding time outside improves one's ability to process stress and make better choices.

# Aetna® mental health resources

## Aetna MindCheck® tool

To help individuals build both resilience to future challenges and the ability to thrive beyond them, the Aetna MindCheck tool offers a simple way for individuals to get a quick read on their emotional health and how they can improve it.

## Mental health counseling

CVS Health offers patients access to licensed clinical social workers (LCSW) at select MinuteClinic® and [CVS HealthHUB®](#) locations. These professional mental health care providers can conduct an assessment and offer personalized treatment plans and counseling that address feelings of stress, anxiety, grief, depression and more.

## Mental health awareness guides

The CVS Health® mental health awareness guides provide tools to support mental health.

### Young adults

### Parents and caregivers

## Aetna mental well-being services

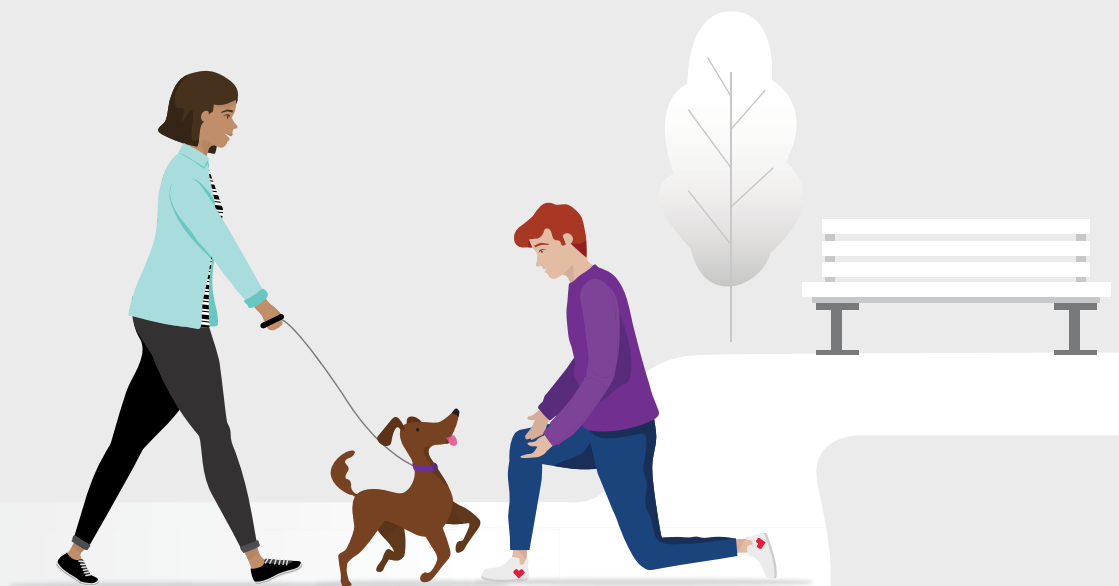
Learn more about how Aetna, a CVS Health company, is making mental well-being services more accessible, less complicated, more convenient and more inviting.

## Aetna suicide prevention services

Learn more about Aetna's strategy, resources and programs to reduce suicide attempts 20 percent among members by the year 2025.

## Resources for Living

Resources for Living members have access to 24/7 free emotional support, daily life assistance and tools to build resilience.





#### ABOUT CVS HEALTH®

CVS Health is a different kind of health care company. We are a diversified health services company with nearly 300,000 employees united around a common purpose of helping people on their path to better health. In an increasingly connected and digital world, we are meeting people wherever they are and changing health care to meet their needs. Built on a foundation of unmatched community presence, our diversified model engages one in three Americans each year. From our innovative new services at HealthHUB® locations, to transformative programs that help manage chronic conditions, we are making health care more accessible, more affordable and simply better. Learn more about how we're transforming health at [www.cvshealth.com](http://www.cvshealth.com).