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NOTE: Find [tips](#) for coping with stress of the economy.
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**Women's Mental Health Hit Hard by Recession,
Yet Many Show Resilience and Resourcefulness in Coping with Stress**

-- New survey shows women focus on others, at expense of their own mental health --

Arlington, Va. – More than two-thirds of American women interviewed for a survey released today by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) say that the nation's sagging economy has negatively affected their lives or the lives of their loved ones. The findings also indicate women may be neglecting their own needs while focusing on other concerns.

This two-pronged telephone survey examines the impact of the economic crisis on the mental well-being of women both nationally and in Clinton County, Ohio, where survey respondents report significantly higher levels of hardship amid deep job cuts by air freight giant DHL, which has devastated the local economy.

Women in the survey report sharp increases in stress, anxiety, frustration and other negative mental health indicators since the recession took hold last fall, with job loss pushing these increases even higher. And while more than three-quarters of these women report engaging in one or more positive coping strategies, most tend to prioritize family and other financial responsibilities ahead of their own needs – a tendency that can backfire despite the best of intentions.

“Women will take care of their families before making sure they have what they need to stay healthy. If at all possible, they should avoid spending cuts on activities and resources that can help maintain their own health,” said APA President Nada L. Stotland, M.D., M.P.H. “For instance, keep up the gym membership, even if it means you can't give your kids the latest electronics. Take time to exercise and eat right. The bottom line is that taking care of your mental health is necessary to your ability to care for your family.”

In this national telephone survey, women rank the ability to provide food, clothing and education for their families, relationships with family and friends, and personal finances such as mortgages and retirement savings, as more important than their own mental and physical health.

“Losing a job or taking a wage cut creates an ongoing source of anxiety for families. Women are particularly affected because they are often juggling the stress of their workplace demands with those of running a household and keeping their families healthy,” Dr. Stotland said. “While this survey focused on women, the answers we found can be indicative of the health and well-being of the entire family. The challenge for each of us is to find effective ways to cope with the stress caused by the economic crisis. Reaching out to a support network can help.”

The APA conducted the survey as part of its “*Healthy Minds. Healthy Lives.*” campaign, which is designed to improve understanding of mental illnesses, psychiatry and successful treatment options, as well as to reduce the stigma sometimes associated with seeking mental health care.

Coping in One Devastated Community

While women across the country are greatly affected by these difficult times, the APA wanted to look at how the economic crisis was impacting communities more acutely affected by the stress and anxiety from job loss and wage cuts. Results from a telephone survey conducted in Clinton County, Ohio – where DHL’s cutbacks have eliminated more than 5,000 jobs in recent months, and the unemployment rate among the county’s roughly 43,000 residents to an estimated 10.5 percent in February – show that women in this hard-hit community encounter greater levels of stress that seen in women nationally.

More than half of women in Clinton County say they are worried that they or a family member will lose a job in the near future compared with 40 percent nationally. And nearly two-thirds of women in Clinton County say the economy has had “a negative impact” on their mental health, versus just over half of women polled nationwide. Moreover, when compared with women nationally, the women of Clinton County are much more likely to be experiencing greater levels of stress (45% vs. 33%), frustration (38% vs. 27%), anxiety (34% vs. 24%), irritability (35% vs. 23%) and insomnia or oversleeping (29% vs. 20%).

These feelings are natural, considering the reality of life in Clinton County: 30 percent of women in this hard-hit region say that wage cuts have affected their family, compared to 21 percent nationally. In addition, the incidence of job loss in the family is 9 percentage points higher in Clinton County than the national average.

“Even if people are working, it’s emotionally draining to live with a constant fear of losing a job,” said Ohio Psychiatric Physicians Association President, Joseph Locala, M.D. “To help get through these uncertain times, it’s important to find positive ways to cope – whether it’s spending time with friends and family, engaging in hobbies, exercising, or talking with a clergy member or mental health professional.”

A Silver Lining

While women in communities across the country are facing the stresses brought on by the economic crisis, this survey demonstrates that women tend to be resilient and resourceful. More importantly, 76 percent of women polled nationally say they are participating in more positive activities than they were six months ago – including spending time with family or friends, praying or attending religious services, exercising, watching television, reading, or listening to music.

This survey also found that the majority of women view getting mental health care as a positive action. Eighty-five percent see the benefit in receiving support from a mental health professional for emotional or mental health concerns, and view it as a sign of strength. In addition, 80 percent of women are confident they could find mental health resources should they or family members require the services.

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 38,000 physician members specialize in diagnosis, treatment, prevention and research of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.HealthyMinds.org.

The national telephone survey of 1,000 women ages 30 to 54 was conducted by StrategyOne for the APA. The survey was conducted between March 13 and 23 and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3.1 percentage points. The Clinton County, Ohio, oversample of 617 interviews has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.