



Lifeline Australia



National Stress Poll

- Topline Report -

July 2009

Introduction

In June 2009 Lifeline Australia purchased a number of questions on a Newspoll national omnibus survey to measure the extent to which people experience stress due to work, finance, health, personal relationships and the future. This follows on from similar research conducted in May 2008.

The research was undertaken using the Newspoll Telephone Omnibus, surveying 1200 respondents aged 18 and over from across Australia.

This report, prepared by ORIMA Research, summarises the top line findings of the Newspoll survey results.

For full details of the Newspoll methodology, please see the Newspoll ‘Stress’ report provided to Lifeline in late June 2009.

Statistical precision

Sample surveys are subject to both sampling and non-sampling measurement error.

Sampling error is a mathematically measurable error that arises from the selection of only a part of the target population for participation in a survey. The larger the sample size, the lower the degree of sampling error.

For this survey, the level of sampling error is low. Where all 1200 respondents answered a question, the confidence interval is no greater than 3 percentage points (pp) at the 95% confidence level.

Where survey estimates are based on a smaller proportion of the population (such as demographic groups), confidence intervals are wider.

Unlike sampling error, *non-sampling error* is generally not mathematically measurable. The main non-sampling error is non-response bias, which arises if the people who respond to the survey differ systematically to non-respondents in characteristics of relevance to the survey.

A high response rate lowers the risk of non-response bias. Telephone surveys, such as this one, tend to have acceptably high response rates.

Presentation

All results presented in this report have been weighted using Australian Bureau of Statistics data (on age, schooling level, sex and location) to more closely reflect population proportions. (Demographic profiles, provided in the Appendix, are unweighted.)

In most cases, results reflect those respondents who expressed a view and for whom the questions were applicable. ‘Not applicable’, ‘don’t know’ and ‘refused’ responses have only been presented where this significantly aids in the interpretation of the results.

Top line results

Respondents were presented with five different life factors and asked how much stress each of these factors caused them – a lot, a little, or none at all.

- ◆ As shown in Figure 1, the majority of respondents indicated they experienced at least *some* stress due to:
 - finances (64% indicate some stress, 21% a lot of stress);
 - thoughts about the future (59% indicate some stress, 16% a lot of stress); and
 - health (51% indicate some stress, 7% a lot of stress).
- ◆ Respondents were *least* likely to nominate personal relationships as a source of stress (42% indicated some stress, 10% a lot of stress).
- ◆ Respondents were *most* likely to indicate stress caused by work (73% indicating some stress, and 28% indicating a lot of stress).
 - However, this question was only asked of respondents currently in full-time or part-time employment. Adjusting for this, 45% of *all* respondents indicated being caused some stress by work, and 17% indicated being caused a lot of stress.
 - This means that work is still more likely to be a source of *some* stress than personal relationships, and is also more likely to be the source of *a lot* of stress than either thoughts about the future or health.

Considering the five potential causes of stress together:

- ◆ The vast majority of respondents (87%) indicated that they were caused some level of stress by at least one of the five factors; and
- ◆ A substantial minority (41%) indicated they were caused ‘a lot’ of stress by at least one of the five factors.

Figure 1: Causes of stress

Base: All respondents (employed respondents only for work)

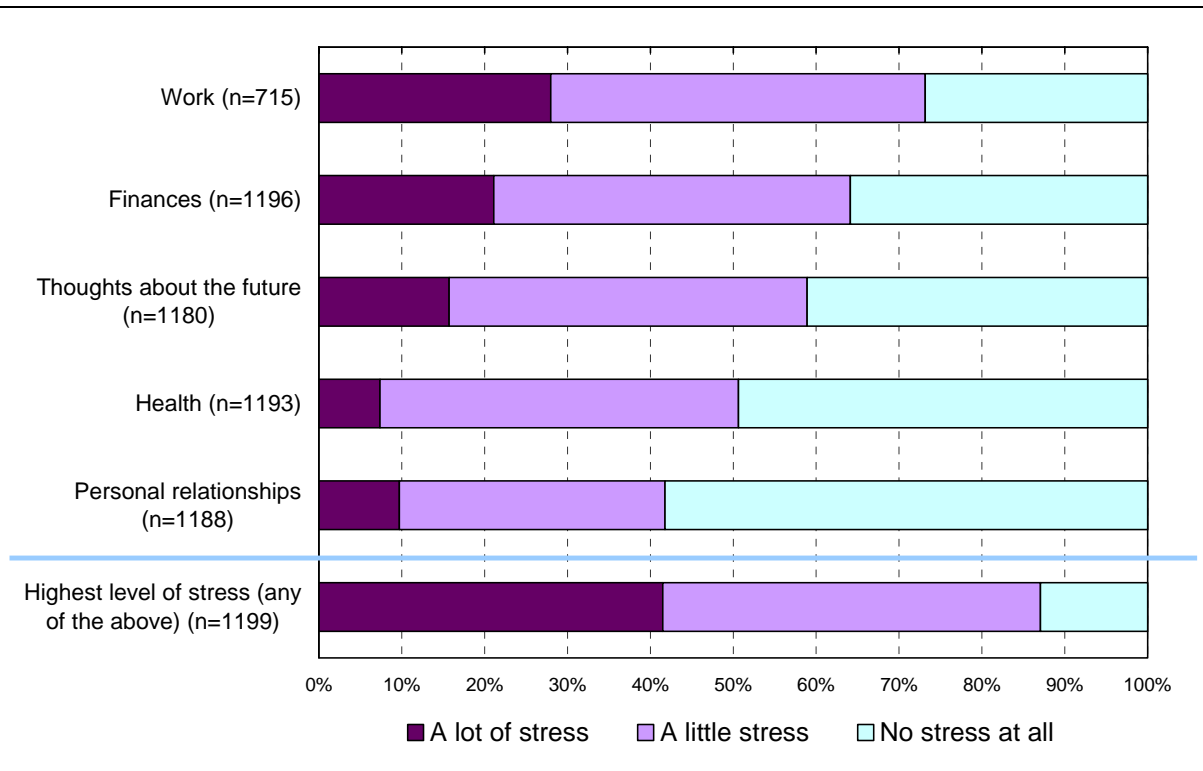


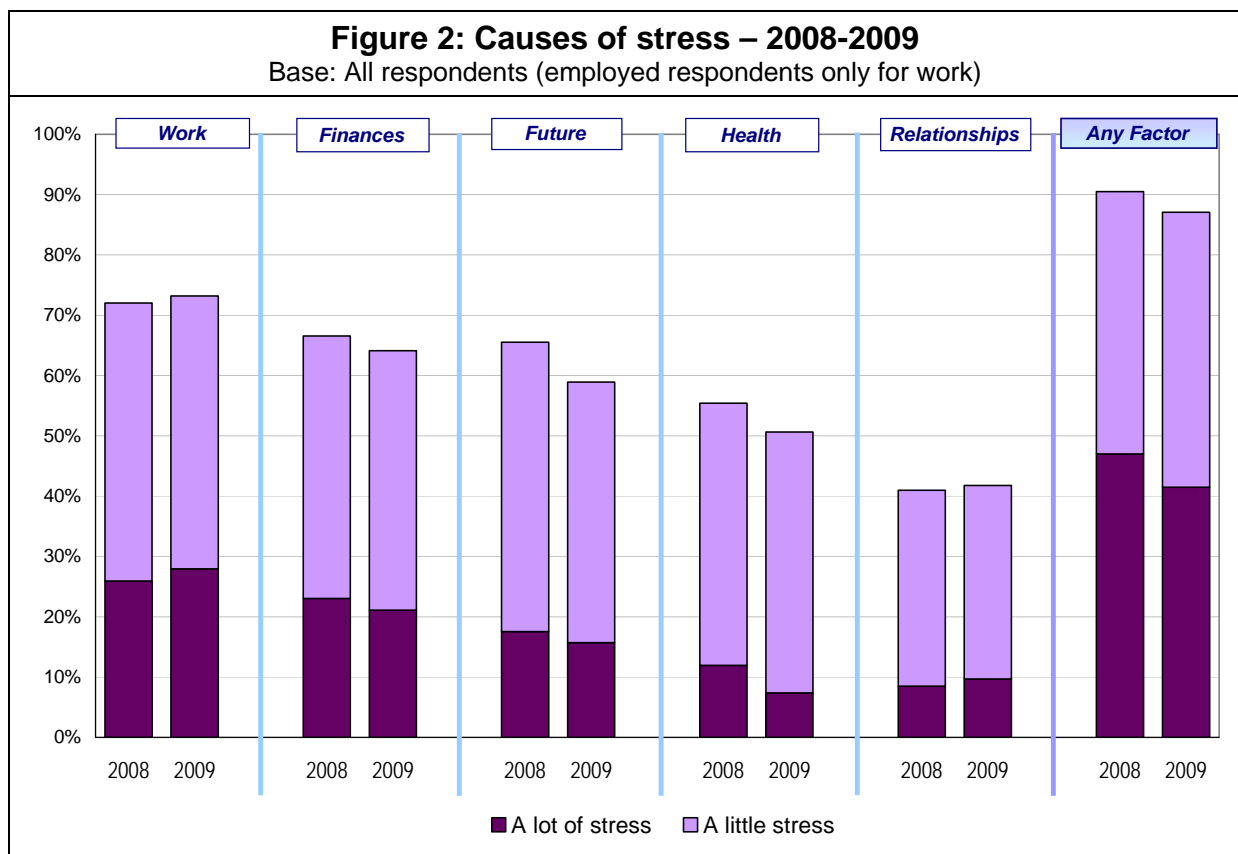
Figure 2 shows that respondents were in general slightly less likely to indicate experiencing stress in 2009 than in 2008.¹

Considering all five life factors together:

- ◆ the share of respondents who indicated they were caused *some* stress by at least one of the five factors fell from 91% to 87%; and
- ◆ the share of respondents who indicated they were caused a *lot* of stress by at least one of the five factors fell from 47% to 41%.

While none of the five factors were significantly *more* likely to be nominated as a cause of stress in 2009 than in 2008, two factors in particular were *less* likely:

- ◆ thoughts about the future (65% indicated *some* stress in 2008, compared to 59% in 2009); and
- ◆ health (just over half indicated *some* stress in both 2008 and 2009; and 12% indicated a *lot* of stress in 2008, compared to 7% in 2009).



¹ The two Newspoll surveys were conducted in May 2008 and June 2009. In this period (starting in September 2008) there were six successive interest rate drops.

Demographic breakdowns

Further analysis reveals several notable demographic differences in perceived stress levels. A selection of the most notable differences are described below.

Comparison by **relationship status** (Figure 3 and Figure 4) shows that:

- ◆ ‘Single’ respondents (i.e., those who have never been partnered) are more likely than both partnered and separated/widowed respondents to feel some level of stress due to:
 - work (78%, compared to 66%-73%);
 - finances (70%, compared to 52%-66%); and
 - personal relationships (50%, compared to 36%-41%).
- ◆ Taking all life factors together, single respondents were more likely to indicate experiencing *a lot* of stress due to at least one factor (52%) than respondents who were either partnered (40%) or separated/widowed (34%).
- ◆ Partnered respondents (married or de facto) generally indicated higher stress levels than separated/widowed respondents.
 - This difference is likely to be at least in part an age-related effect (see comparisons by age, below). Separated/widowed respondents were more likely than partnered respondents to be in older age groups.

Comparison by **work status** (Figure 5 and Figure 6) shows that:

- ◆ Taking all life factors together, non-employed respondents¹ were less likely than part-time or full-time workers to indicate experiencing some stress due to at least one factor (77%, compared to 92%-93%), and also less likely to indicate experiencing *a lot* of stress (34%, compared to 41% of part-time workers and 49% of full-time workers).
 - While this is partly due to non-employed respondents not being in a position to experience work-related stress, these respondents were also significantly less likely to indicate some stress due to:
 - finances (57%, compared to 68%-71% of workers);
 - personal relationships (35%, compared to 43%-52% of workers); and
 - thoughts about the future (49%, compared to 63%-68% of workers).

¹ This includes *all* respondents not in full-time or part-time work (unemployed, retired, etc.).

- ◆ Full-time workers, compared to part-time workers, were more likely to indicate experiencing *some* work stress (78%, compared to 64%) and were almost twice as likely to indicate experiencing *a lot* of work stress (33%, compared to 17%).

Comparison by **type of location** (Figure 7 and Figure 8) shows that:

- ◆ Taking all life factors together, respondents living in a major capital city, compared to respondents in ‘other’ locations¹, were only slightly more likely to indicate experiencing some stress (88%, compared to 85%) or a lot of stress (43%, compared to 39%) in response to at least one factor.
- ◆ Respondents in a major capital city were more likely than other respondents to indicate some stress due to thoughts about the future (62%, compared to 54%).
- ◆ Major capital city respondents were only marginally more likely to indicate some stress due to finances (66%, compared to 62%), but significantly *less* likely to indicate *a lot* of stress due to finances (19%, compared to 25%).

Comparison by **gender** (Figure 9 and Figure 10) shows that:

- ◆ Males and females are broadly similar in their stress profiles, and about equally likely to indicate some level of stress due to at least one of the five life factors (86% of males, 88% of females).
 - However, females were a little more likely to indicate some level of stress caused by health (54%, compared to 47%).

Comparison by **age** (Figure 11 to Figure 16) shows that:

- ◆ For each of the five life factors, stress levels were lower among respondents in the 60-64 age bracket than in all younger age groups, and lower still among respondents aged 65 and over.
 - Considering the five factors of stress together (see Figure 16), stress levels:
 - were highest among respondents aged 25-29 (97% indicated some stress, 63% indicated a lot of stress); and
 - show a tendency to decline among older respondents, (65% of respondents aged 65 and over indicated some stress, while only 17% indicated a lot of stress).

¹ For classification purposes ‘major capital city’ includes all of the ACT and all other capital cities except Hobart (all Tasmanian respondents are classed as ‘other’), and Darwin (no Northern Territory respondents were interviewed).

- ◆ Respondents aged 25-29 were most likely to indicate some level of stress due to work (87%).
 - Stress levels due to work declined sharply among older respondents (down to 29% among *employed* respondents aged 65 or over – which equates to 2% of *all* respondents aged 65 or over).
- ◆ Of the five life factors, the amount of stress caused by health concerns varies least across age groups remaining in the 50% to 60% range among all age groups up to 55-59 (see Figure 14)
 - However, like other factors, health was less likely to be a source of stress among older respondents (stress levels declining to 40% among respondents aged 65 and over).

Comparison by **household income** (Figure 17 to Figure 21) shows that:

- ◆ Respondents living in households earning under \$40,000 per year were less likely than respondents in higher-income households to indicate experiencing some stress due to *any* particular life factor (this applies to each factor considered individually, and also to all five factors combined).
 - However, respondents in lower-income households were more likely to indicate experiencing *a lot* of stress due to:
 - personal relationships (12%, declining to 7% among respondents in \$80,000+ households); and
 - health (12%, declining to 5% among \$80,000+ households).
- ◆ Stress due to work factors showed the sharpest increase among higher-income households (see Figure 17). The proportion of respondents who indicated *some* stress caused by work increased:
 - from 58% among *employed* respondents in under-\$40,000 households, to 79% among *employed* respondents in \$80,000+ households; and
 - from 17% among *all* respondents in under-\$40,000 households, to 70% among *all* respondents in \$80,000+ households.

Relationship status*

Figure 3: Causes of stress – by relationship status

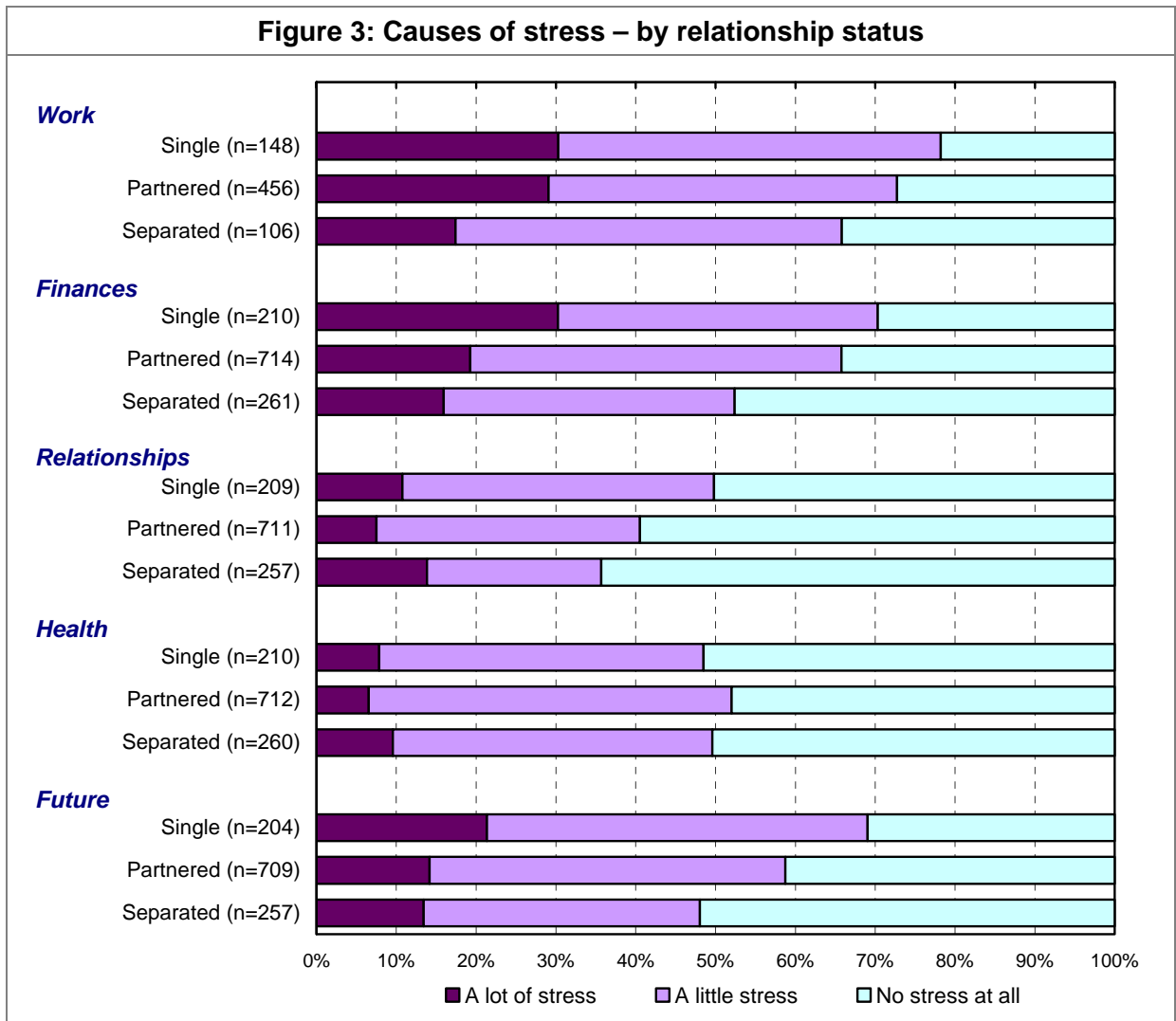
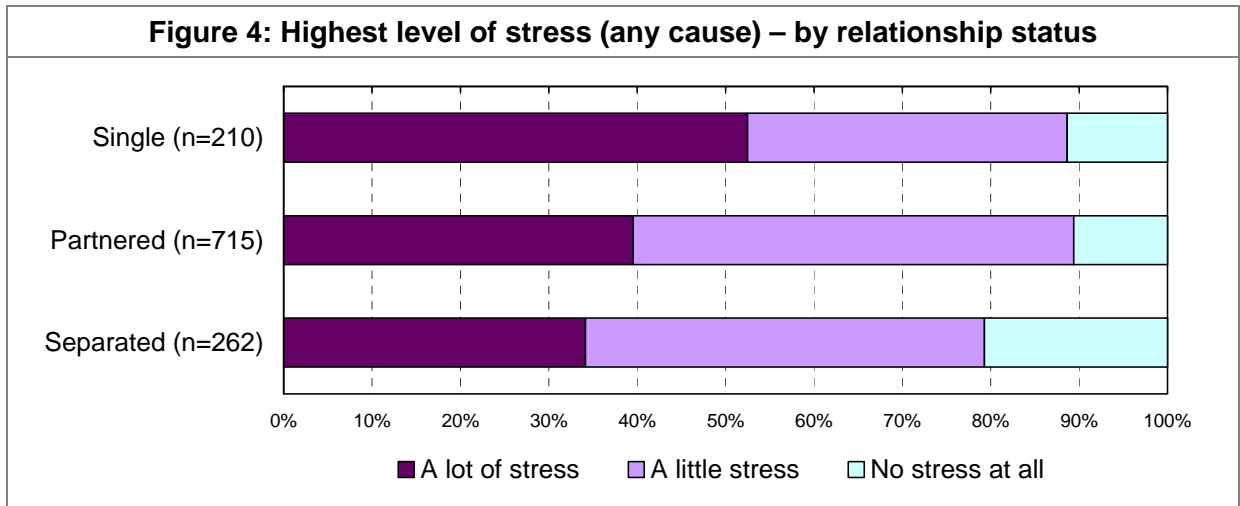


Figure 4: Highest level of stress (any cause) – by relationship status



* Note: 'single' indicates 'never married'; 'partnered' includes married and de facto; 'separated' includes separated, widowed and divorced.

Work status*

Figure 5: Causes of stress – by work status

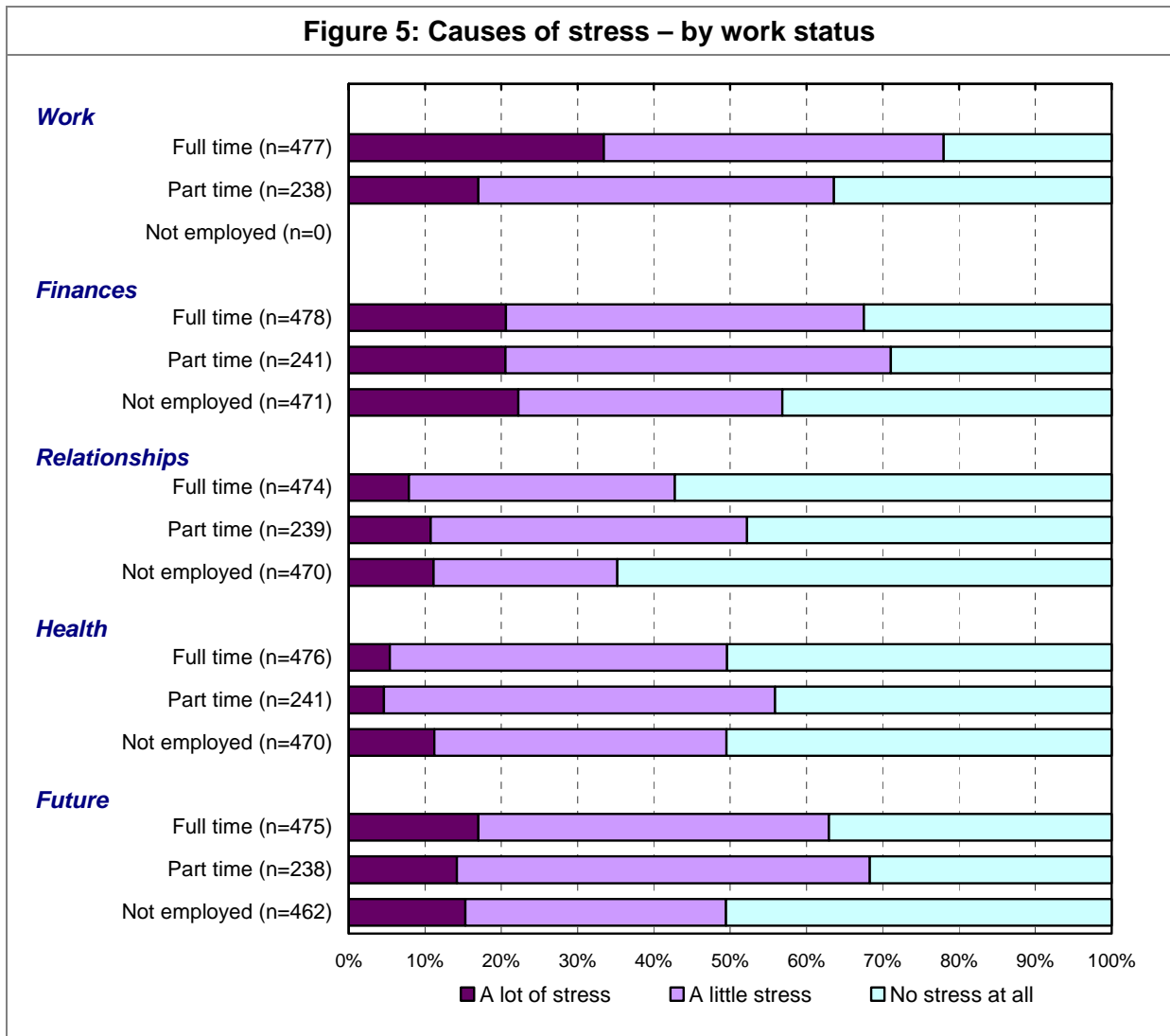
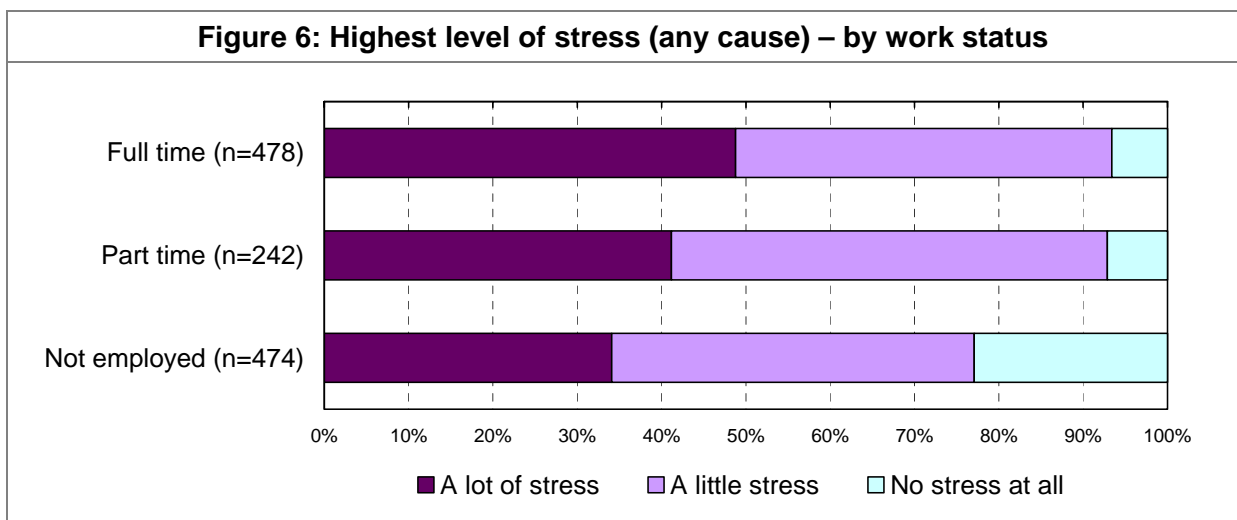


Figure 6: Highest level of stress (any cause) – by work status



* Note: 'not employed' includes all respondents who are neither in full-time nor part-time work.

Location*

Figure 7: Causes of stress – by location

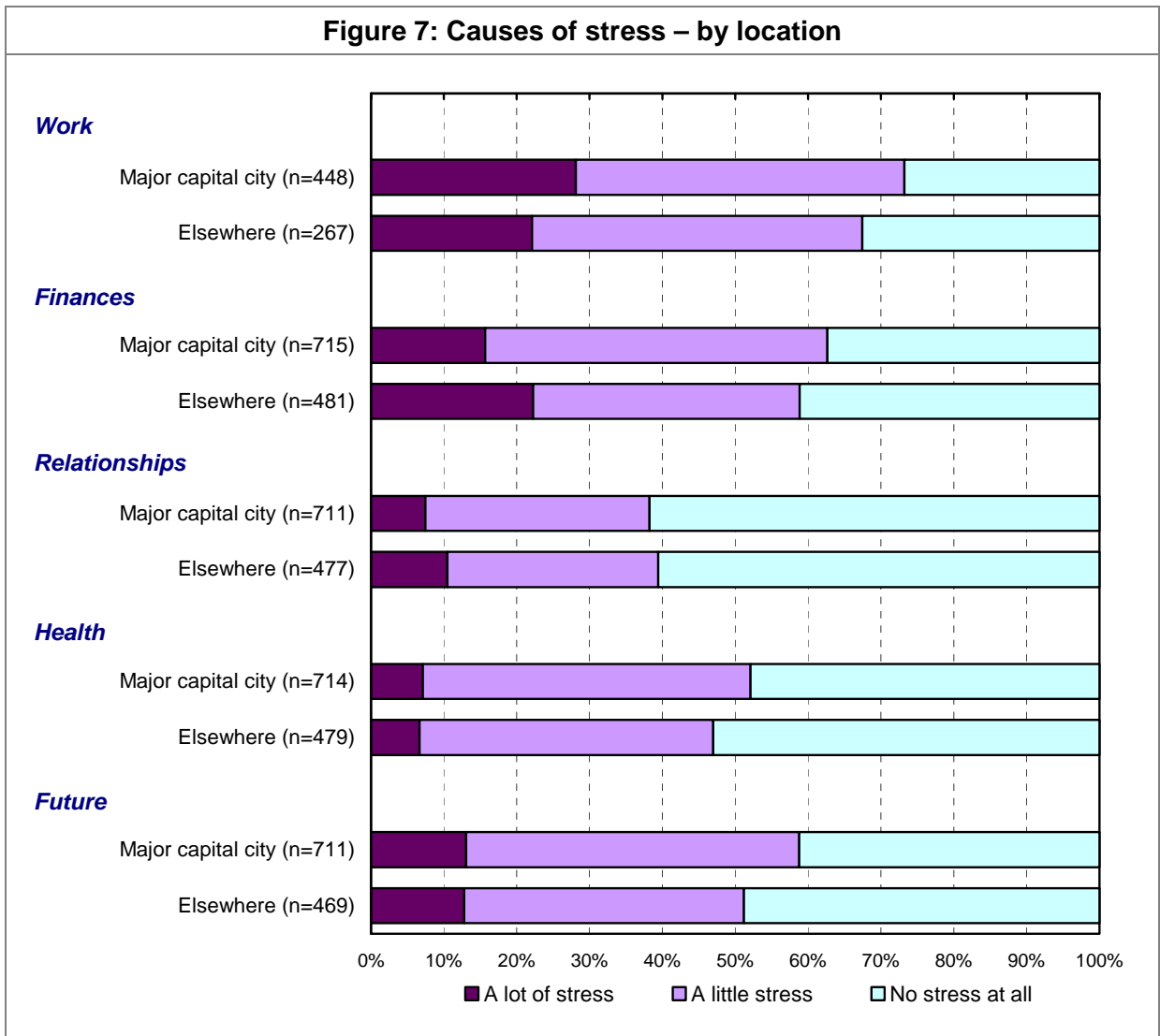
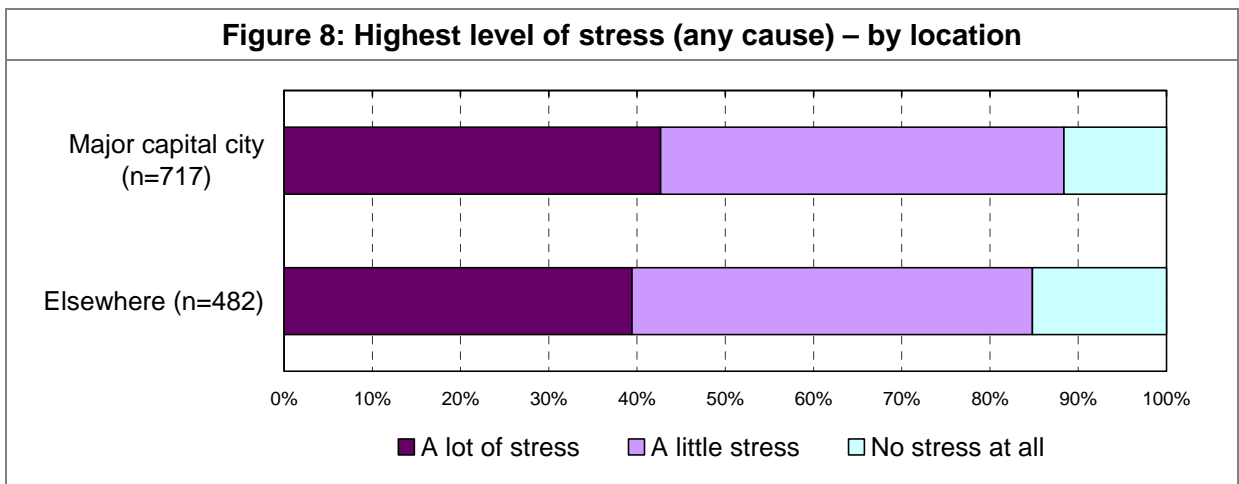


Figure 8: Highest level of stress (any cause) – by location



* 'Major capital city' includes residents of all capital cities except Hobart (all Tasmanian respondents are classed as 'elsewhere') and Darwin (no NT respondents were interviewed).

Gender

Figure 9: Causes of stress – by gender

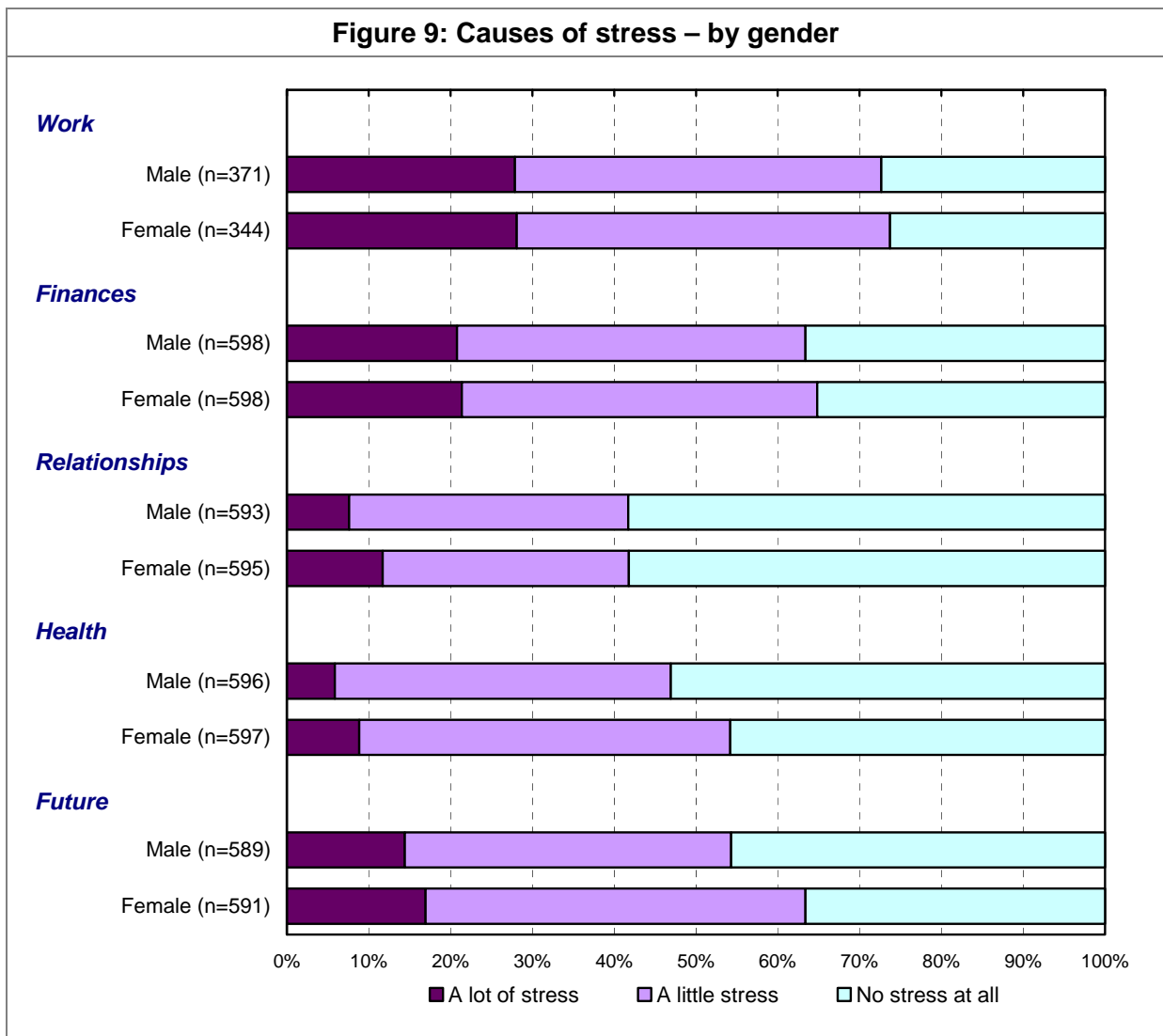
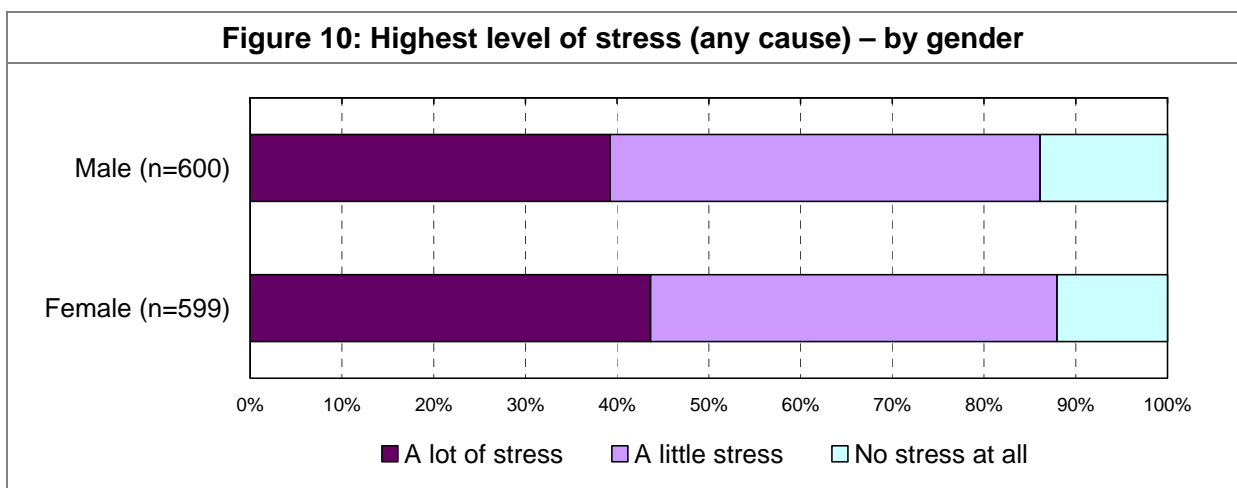


Figure 10: Highest level of stress (any cause) – by gender



Age

Figure 11: Stress caused by work – by age

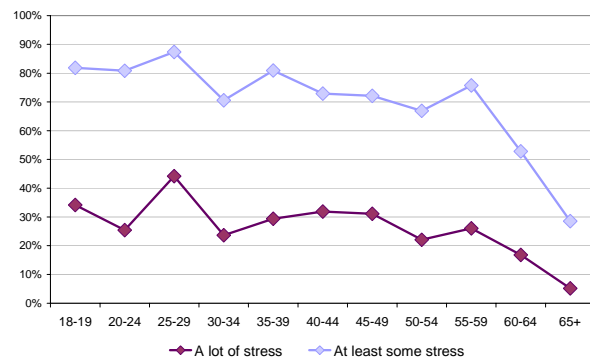


Figure 12: Stress caused by finances – by age

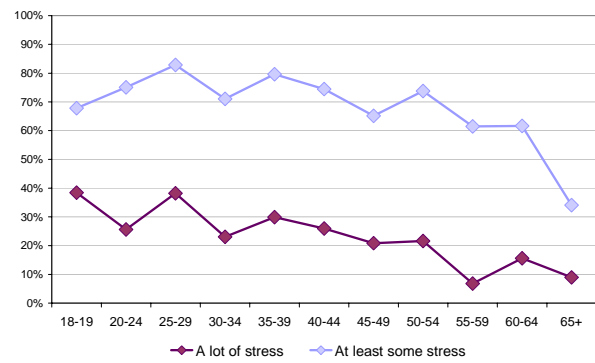


Figure 13: Stress caused by relationships – by age

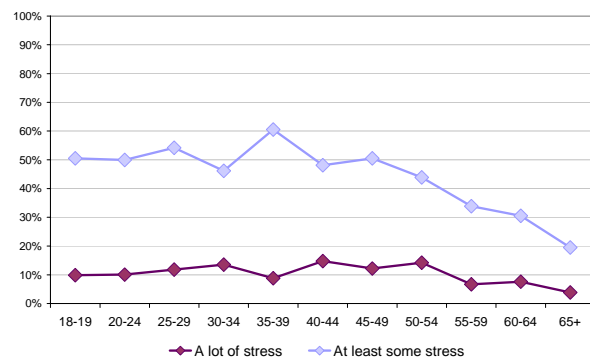


Figure 14: Stress caused by health – by age

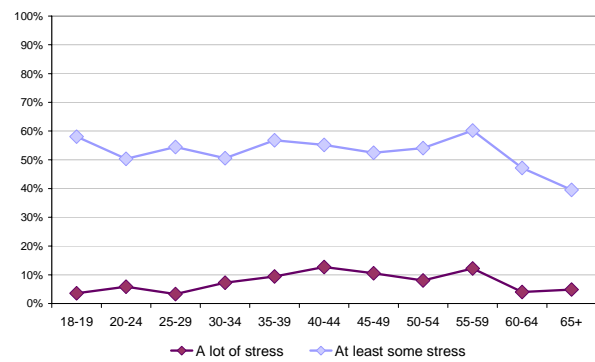


Figure 15: Stress caused by thoughts about the future – by age

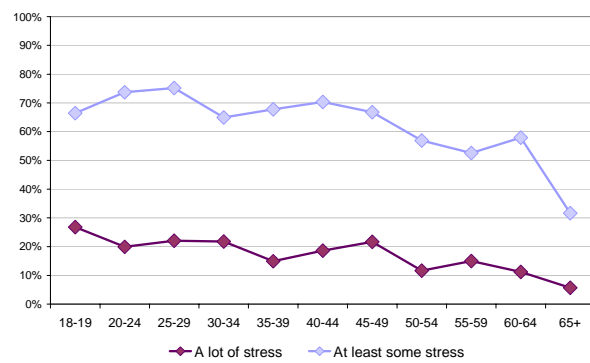
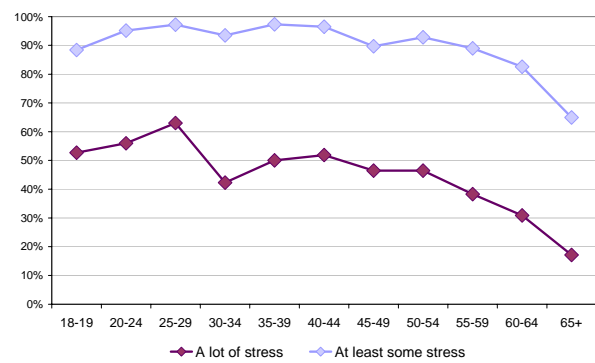


Figure 16: Causes of stress combined – by age



Household income

