

**Lifeline Australia**



**National Stress Poll  
—Topline Report—**

**May 2013**

## I. Introduction

In 2013, 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 thoughts about the future. This follows on from similar research conducted annually since 2008.

The research was undertaken using the Newspoll Telephone Omnibus, surveying 1201 respondents aged 18 and over from across Australia.

This report, prepared by ORIMA Research, summarises the top line findings of the Newspoll survey results, compared to results from previous years. For full details of the Newspoll methodology, please refer to the Newspoll results provided to Lifeline in May 2013.

### 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 1,201 respondents answered a question, the confidence interval is no greater than 3 percentage points (pp) at the 95% confidence level. Significant differences are reported at this level, unless otherwise indicated.

Where survey estimates are based on a smaller proportion of the population (such as demographic groups), confidence intervals are wider.<sup>1</sup>

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 of results

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. Therefore, any 'not applicable', 'don't know' or 'refused' type responses have been excluded from the base for percentage calculations (please note that these types of responses *are* included in the Newspoll percentages).

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<sup>1</sup> Also note that possible interactions between different demographic categories should be considered when interpreting these results.

## II. Topline Results

As in previous surveys, respondents were asked how much stress (a lot, a little, or no stress at all) was caused by each of five different life factors:

- ◆ work;
- ◆ finances;
- ◆ thoughts about the future;
- ◆ health; and
- ◆ personal relationships.

As shown in Figure 1, more than half the respondents indicated that they experienced at least *some* stress about:

- ◆ work<sup>2</sup> (52% indicated a little stress, while 26% indicated a lot of stress);
- ◆ finances (47% a little stress, 25% a lot of stress);
- ◆ thoughts about the future (54% a little stress, 17% a lot of stress); and
- ◆ health (48% a little stress, 13% a lot of stress).

As in previous years, personal relationships were the *least* likely of the life factors to be nominated as being a source of stress, with 37% indicating that they experienced a little stress, and 7% indicating they experienced a lot of stress.

When considering the five life factors as potential causes of stress combined:

- ◆ The majority of respondents (92%) agreed that at least one of the five life factors caused them *some* amount of stress; and
- ◆ Less than half the respondents (45%) agreed that at least one of the five life factors caused them 'a lot' of stress.

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<sup>2</sup> This question was only asked of respondents currently employed. As a proportion of all respondents, 47% experienced some stress from work, and 15% experienced a lot of stress.

**Figure 1: Causes of stress**

Base: All respondents (employed respondents only for 'work' factor)

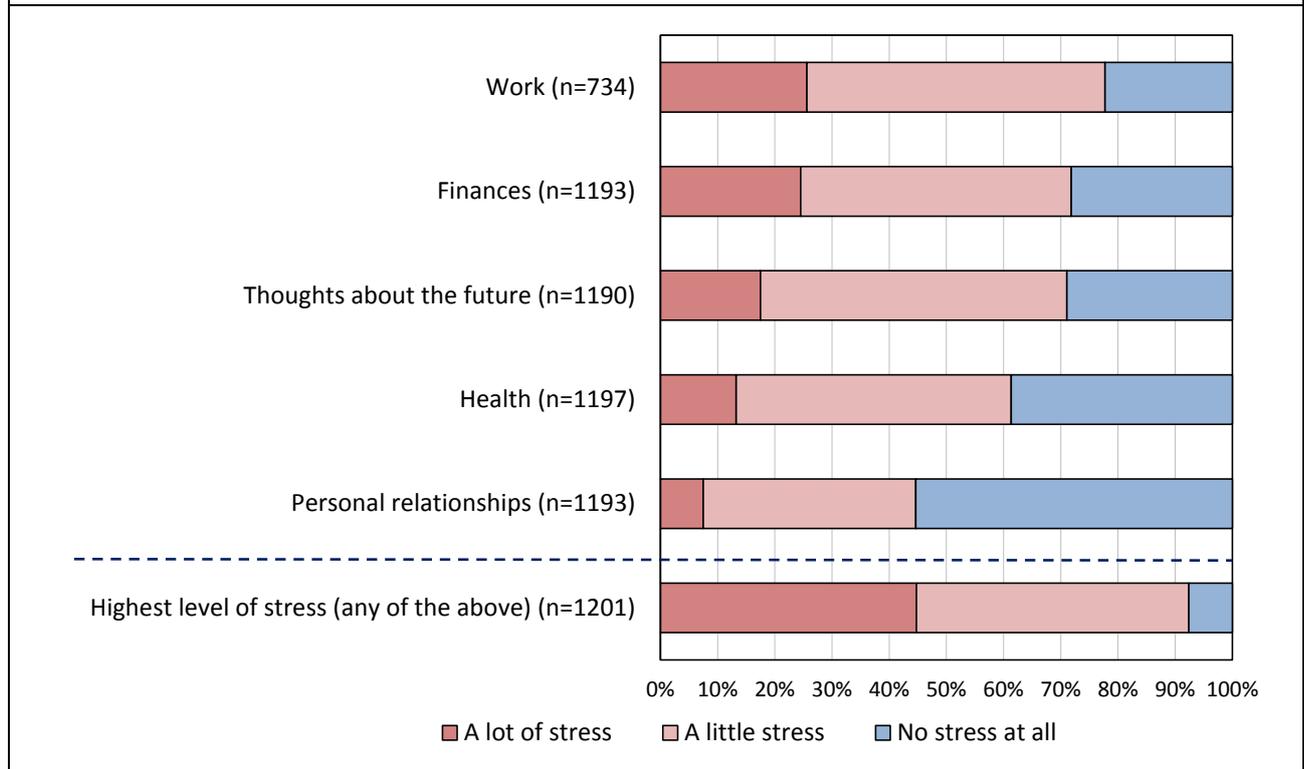
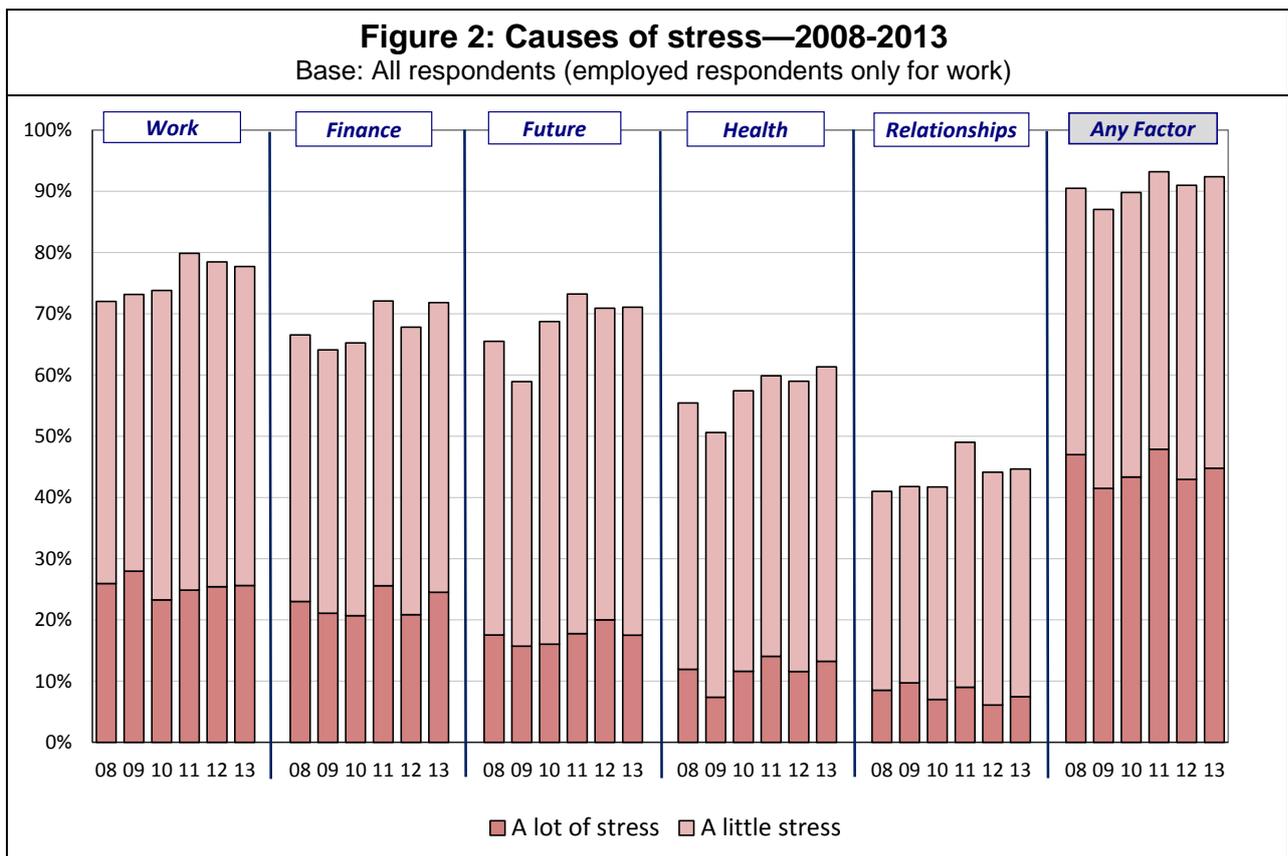


Figure 2 shows overall stress for respondents tracked for all factors since 2008. As in 2012 and the previous years, work remains the factor causing the highest amount of overall stress for respondents, relative to other factors.

Considering all five life factors together:

- ◆ The percentage of respondents who indicated that they experienced at least *some* stress caused by one or more of the factors was broadly in line to last year (92% this year compared to 91% last year).
- ◆ The proportion of respondents who indicated that they experienced a *lot* of stress caused by one or more of the factors remained consistent with 2012 (45% this year compared to 43% last year).

Total levels of stress caused by work (78%), thoughts about the future (71%), health (61%) and personal relationships (45%) are broadly consistent with levels recorded in 2012. However, reported total levels of stress *increased* this year for finances, up from 68% in 2012 to 72% this year.

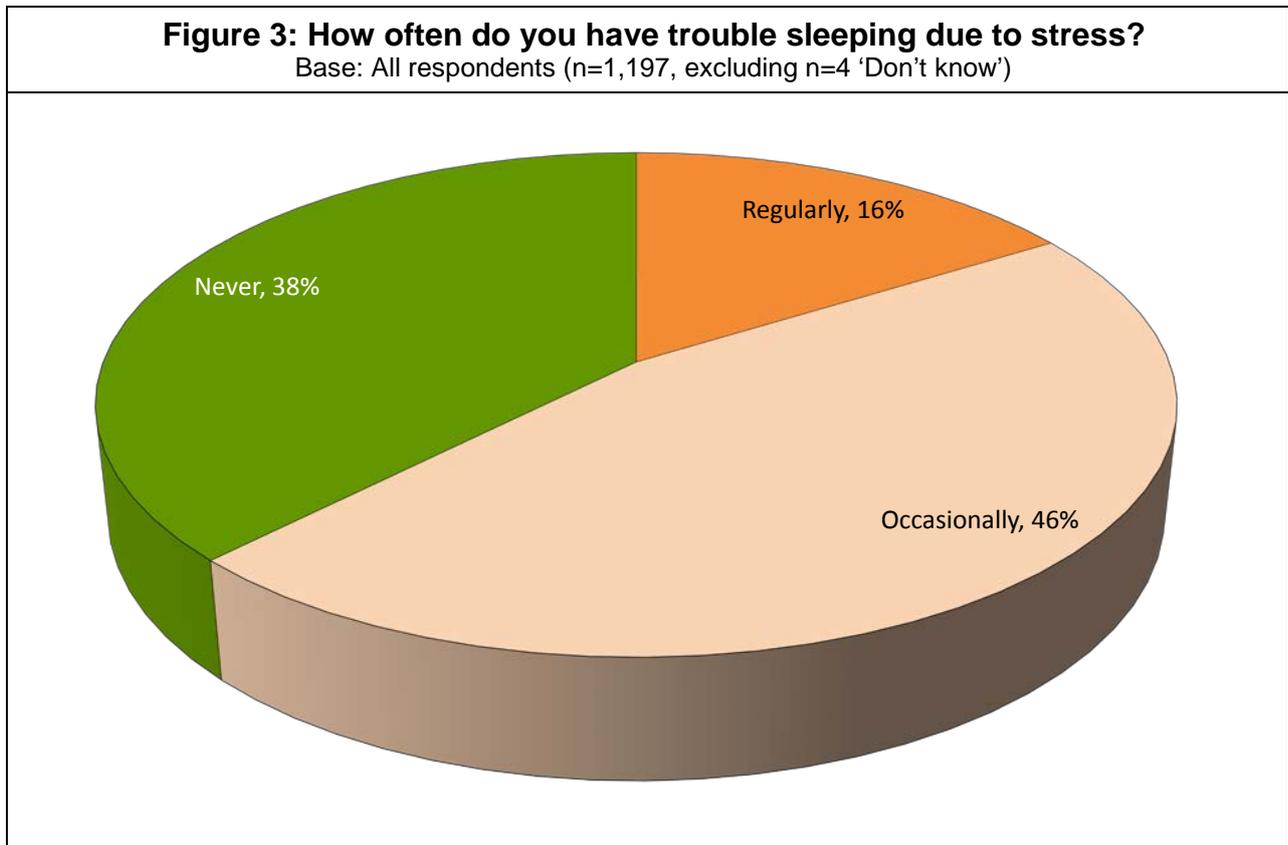


For the first time in 2013, respondents were asked how often they had trouble sleeping due to stress. As shown in Figure 3, the majority indicated having trouble sleeping at least ‘occasionally’ (62%, including 16% who ‘regularly’ have trouble sleeping).

Further analysis found only a small amount of variation in levels of sleeplessness according to the *kinds* of stress experienced.

- ◆ Respondents who experienced some stress due to relationships were most likely to experience sleeplessness due to stress (76% had trouble sleeping at least occasionally, including 23% who had trouble sleeping regularly).
- ◆ However, levels of sleeplessness among people experiencing other kinds of stress were only slightly lower (69%-72% had trouble sleeping at least occasionally, including 20%-21% who had trouble sleeping regularly).

Among respondents who indicated they did not experience *any* stress due to the five life factors measured by the survey (n=95), a minority still reported some sleeplessness due to stress (18% at least occasionally, including 1% regularly).



### III. Demographic Breakdowns

Further analysis revealed several significant differences in stress levels across various demographic groups. A selection of the most notable differences are described below.

Comparison by **relationship status** (Figure 4 to Figure 6) shows that:

- ◆ Considering all life factors together, overall stress levels reported by single and partnered respondents were slightly higher than levels reported by separated/widowed respondents (93% for both singles and partnered respondents and 89% for separated respondents). In terms of relationships status:
  - stress levels specifically due to relationships were noticeably *higher* for single respondents (53%, compared to 38-44% for others);
  - stress levels due to work were significantly *lower* for single respondents compared to partnered or separated respondents (71%, vs. 79-84%); and
  - separated respondents were less likely to experience stress due to finances (61%, vs. 74-76% for others).

Comparison by **work status** (Figure 7 to Figure 9) shows that:

- ◆ Respondents who are employed either full-time or part-time were more likely than non-employed respondents to indicate experiencing some stress due to at least one or more life factor (96% of full-time respondents and 93% of part-time respondents, compared to 88% of non-employed respondents).
  - Workers were significantly more likely to experience more stress due to:
    - finances (75%-79%, compared to 64% of non-workers);
    - personal relationships (48% for both full-time and part-time workers, vs. 39%); and
    - thoughts about the future (71%-74%, vs. 67%).
- ◆ Full time workers reported higher levels of work-related stress (84%) compared to part time workers (67%).

Comparison by **location** (Figure 10 to Figure 12) shows that:

- ◆ Considering all life factors together, overall stress levels for those respondents living in a major capital city<sup>3</sup> compared to those living elsewhere were broadly similar (92% compared to 93%, respectively), however those in capital cities were:
  - slightly *less* likely to experience overall levels stress due to finances (70% vs. 75%). Comparison by **gender** (Figure 13 to Figure 15) shows that:
- ◆ Females were significantly more likely to indicate ‘a lot’ of stress caused by any one factor compared to males (52% vs. 37%).
  - This pattern held for most of the individual factors, and was most noticeable in relation to:
    - work (80% of females reported overall stress, vs. 76% for males);
    - finances (31% of females reported ‘a lot’ of stress, vs. 18% for males);
    - health (65% overall vs. 57%); and
    - the future (76% vs. 66%).
- ◆ Females were much more likely than males to at least occasionally experience trouble sleeping due to stress (71% vs. 53%)—and, to a lesser extent, more likely to *regularly* experience this (20% vs. 13%).

Comparison by **age**<sup>4</sup> (Figure 16 to Figure 22) shows that:

- ◆ Overall levels of stress caused by any factor ranged from 81% for those aged 65+, to 96% or more for most groups aged 30-54 years.
  - Indications of ‘a lot’ of stress peaked for those aged 35-39 (61%).
- ◆ Overall levels of stress for the 18-19 year age bracket were noticeably higher in some cases than their immediately older counterparts, particularly in relation to stress caused by relationships (58%, compared to 51-53% for those aged 20-24 and 25-29); health (62%, compared to 47%-54% for those aged 20-24 and 25-29) and thoughts about the future (71% vs. 65-67% for those aged 20-24 and 25-29).
- ◆ Reported levels of *sleeplessness* due to stress peaked for those aged 50-54 (35% indicated they *regularly* had trouble sleeping, compared to 6% of 18-19-year-olds, 16%-22% of other adults under 50, and 10%-14% in age groups of 55 or over).

<sup>3</sup> For classification purposes ‘major capital city’ includes Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth.

<sup>4</sup> These results should be treated with caution due to the low numbers of respondents in each bracket.

Comparison by **household income** (Figure 23 to Figure 29) shows that:

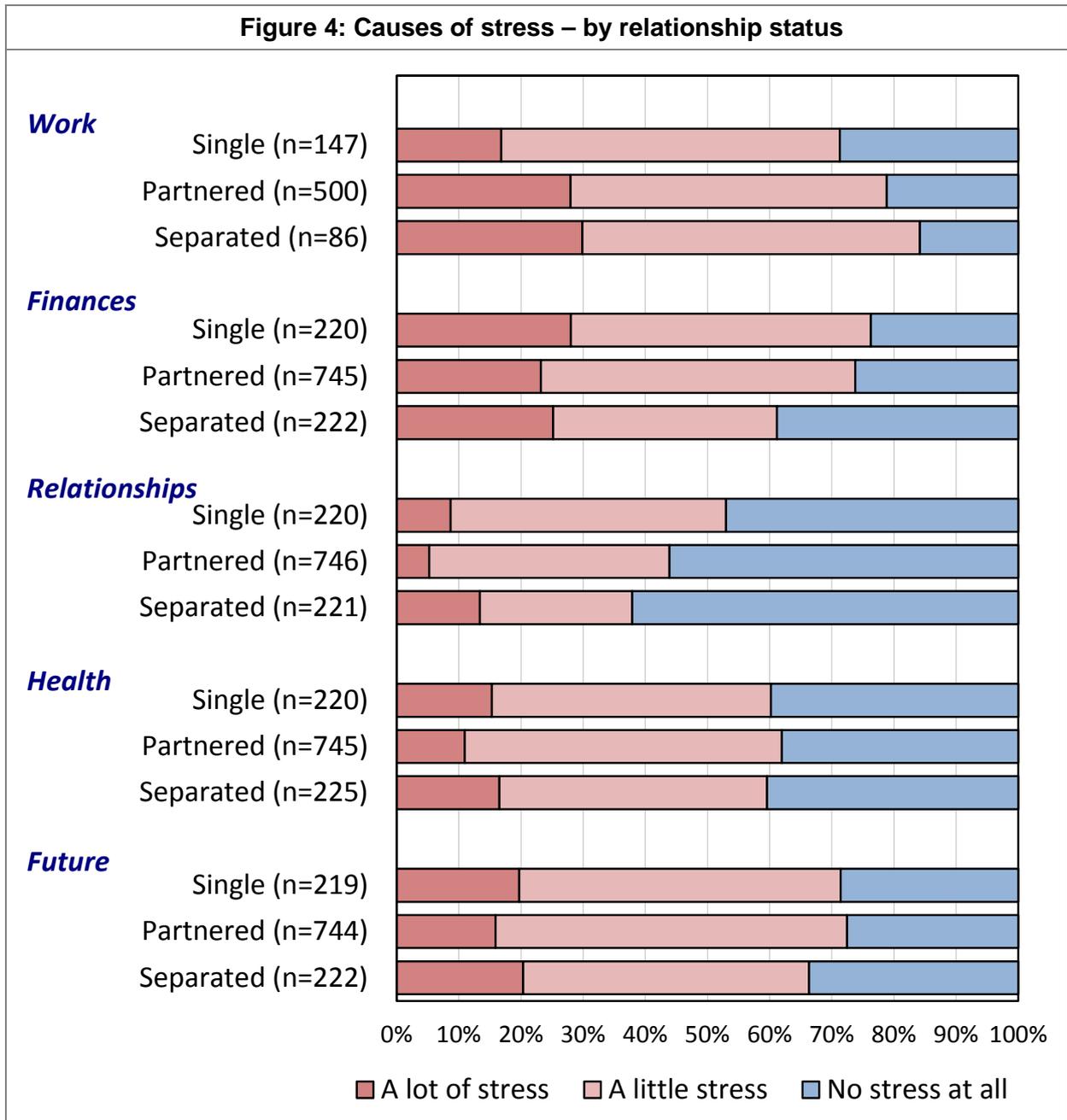
- ◆ Overall levels of stress caused by any one factor ranged from 90% for those respondents in households earning less than \$50,000, to 95% for those earning \$90,000 or more and 96% for those earning between \$50,000-\$89,000.
- ◆ Households earning less than \$50,000 per year were *slightly less* likely than respondents in higher-income households to indicate experiencing at least some stress due to:
  - work (70%, compared to 78-81% for higher income households); or
  - relationships (40% vs. 45-48%).
    - However, while the *overall* level of stress caused by finances was also lower for this group (70% vs. 74-77%<sup>5</sup>), the proportion experiencing ‘a lot’ of stress due to finances was highest amongst this cohort (34% vs. 18%-23%).

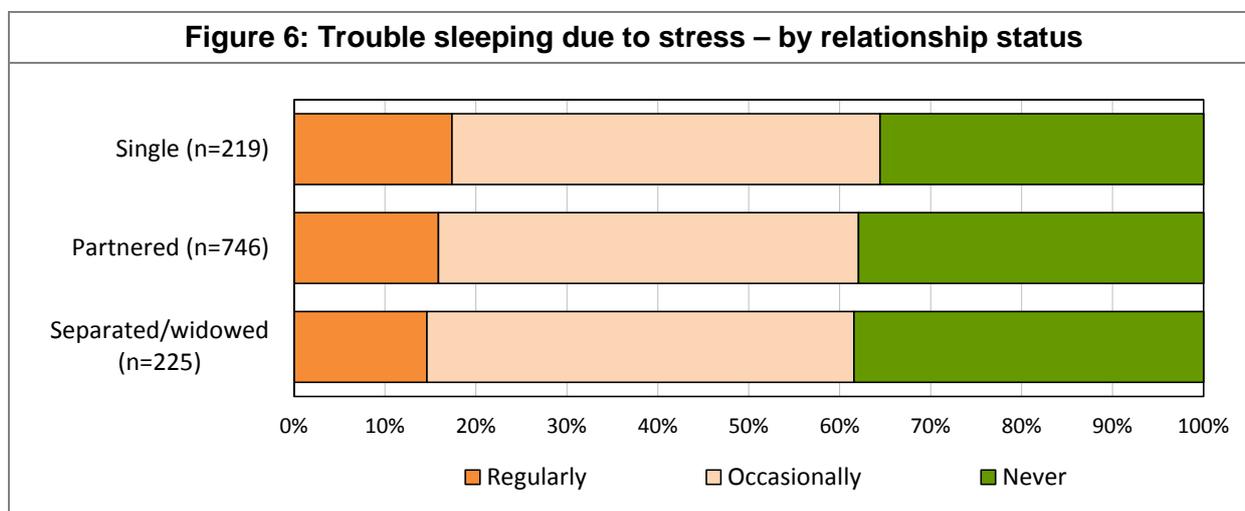
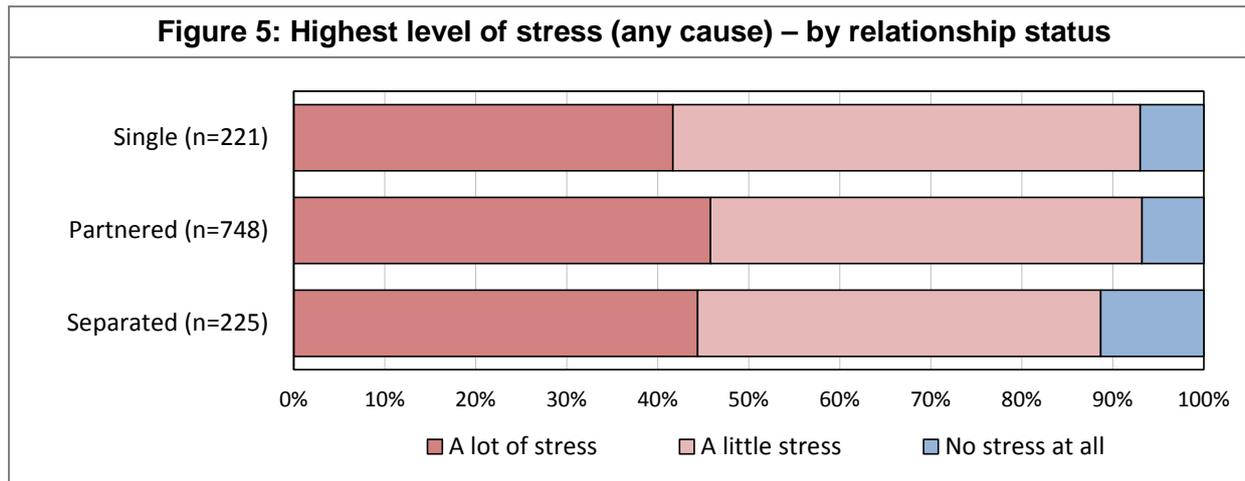
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<sup>5</sup> Significant at the 90% confidence level.

**Relationship status**

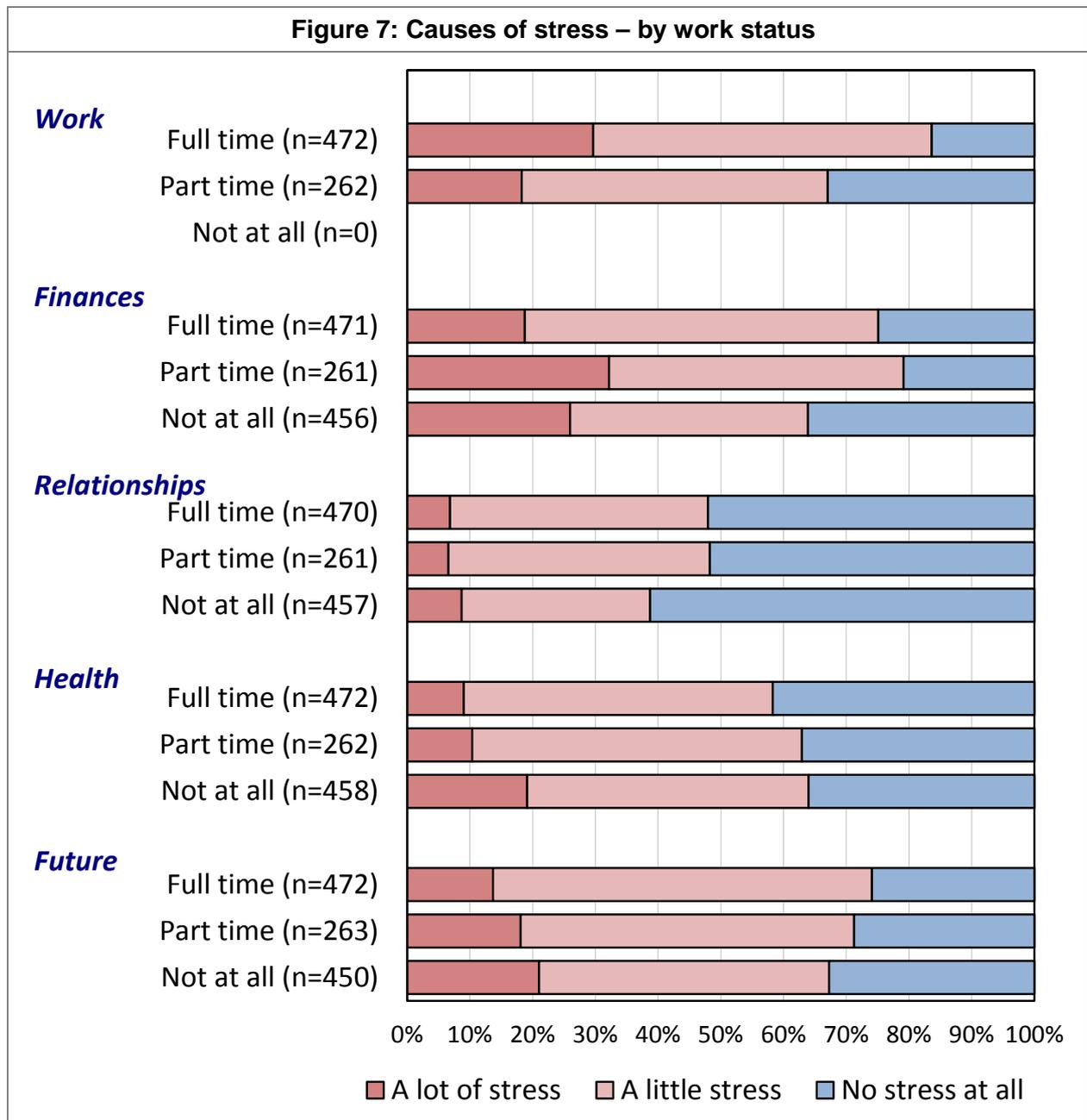
**Figure 4: Causes of stress – by relationship status**



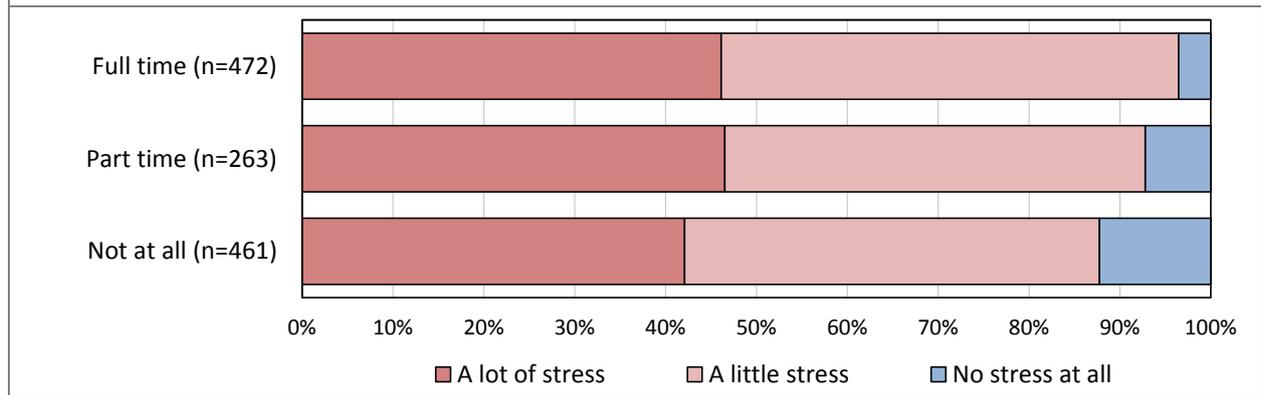


**Work status**

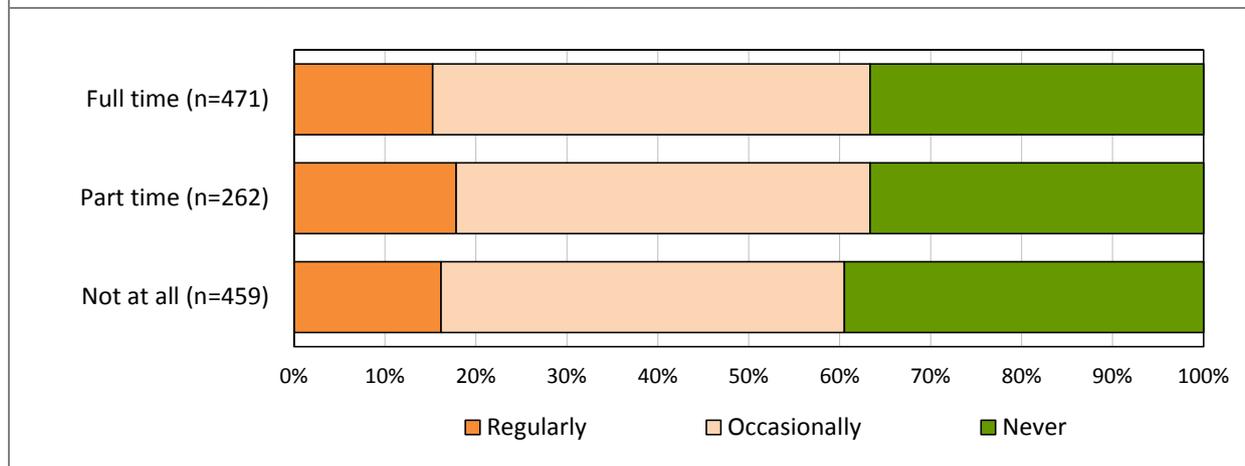
**Figure 7: Causes of stress – by work status**



**Figure 8: Highest level of stress (any cause) – by work status**

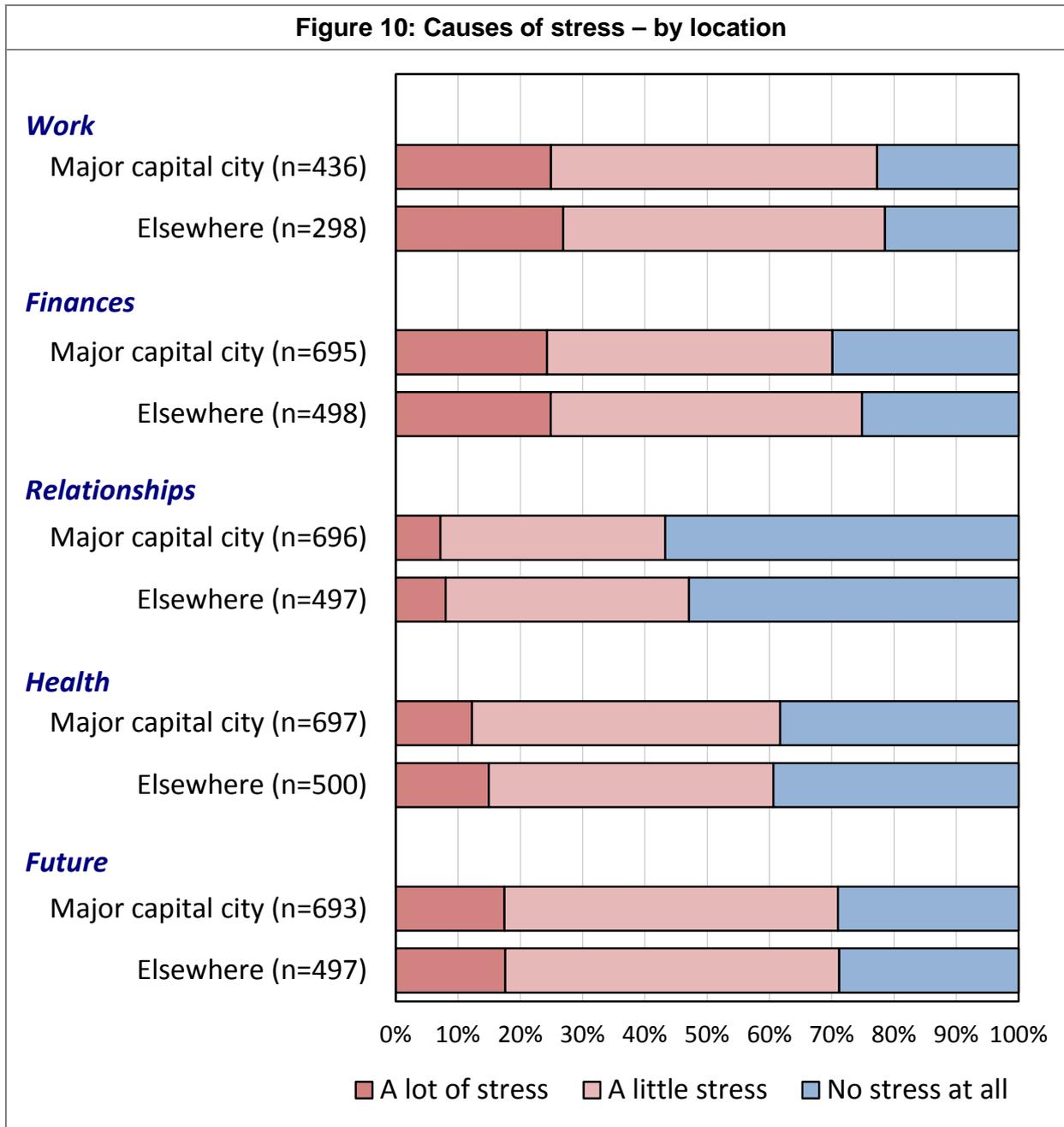


**Figure 9: Trouble sleeping due to stress – by work status**

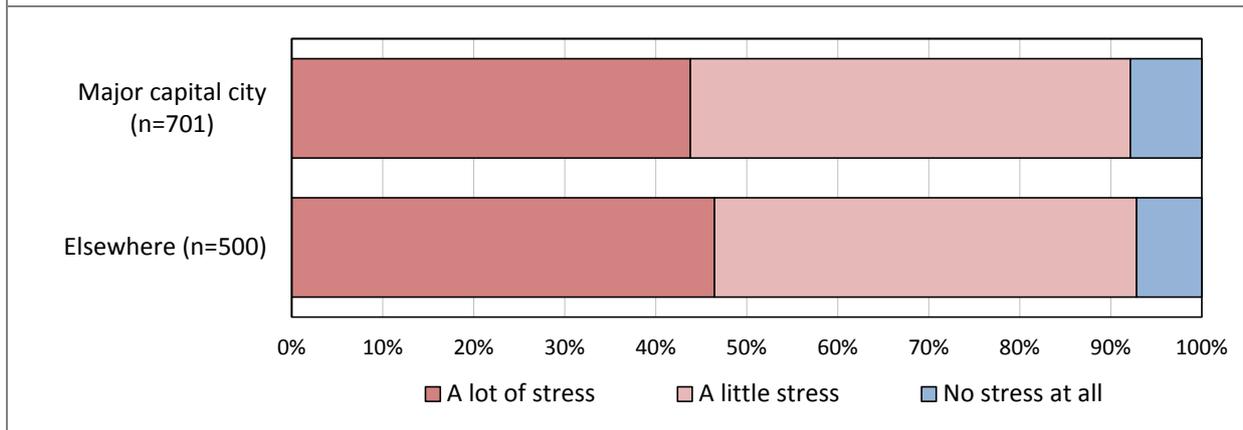


**Location**

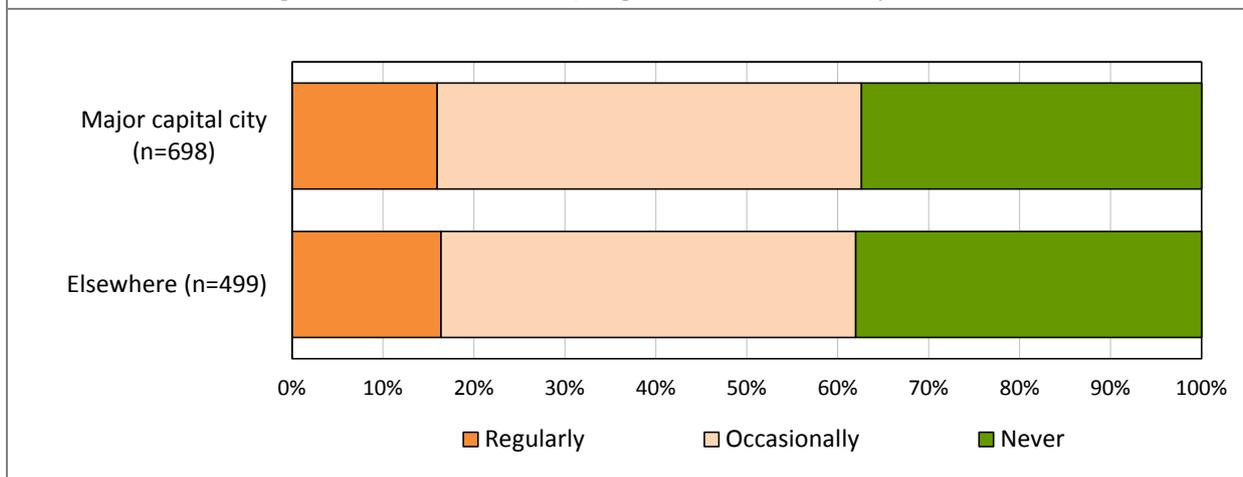
**Figure 10: Causes of stress – by location**



**Figure 11: Highest level of stress (any cause) – by location**

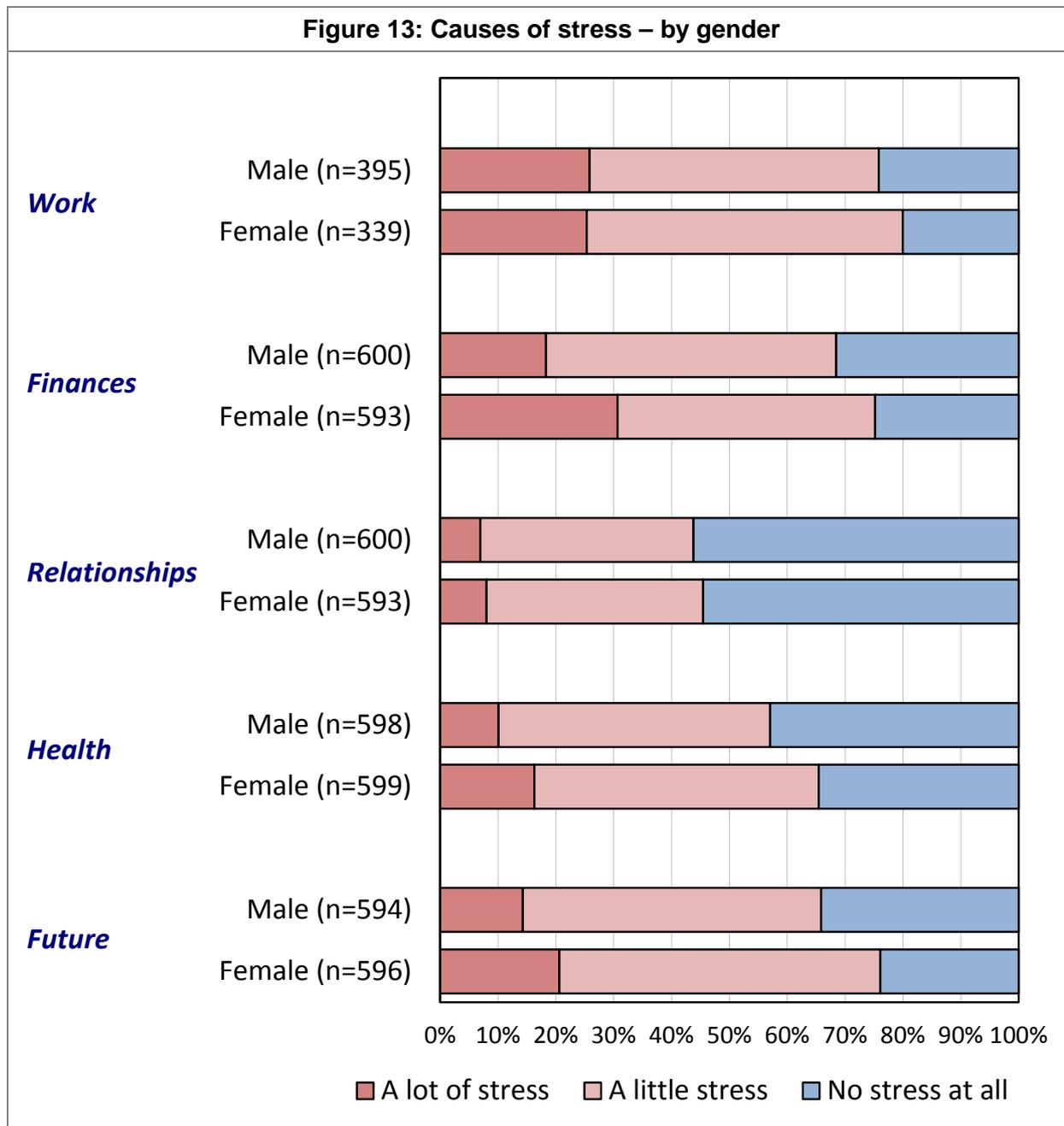


**Figure 12: Trouble sleeping due to stress – by location**

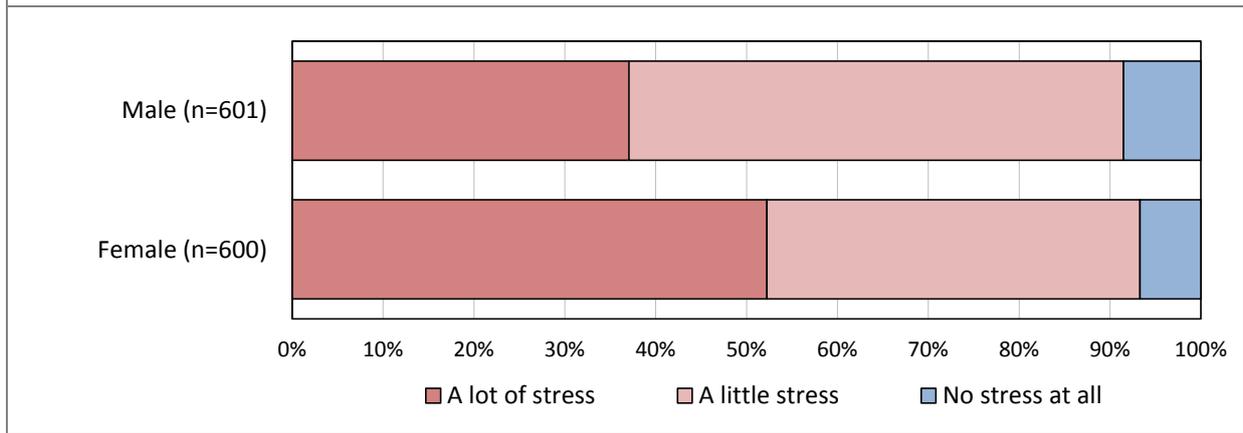


**Gender**

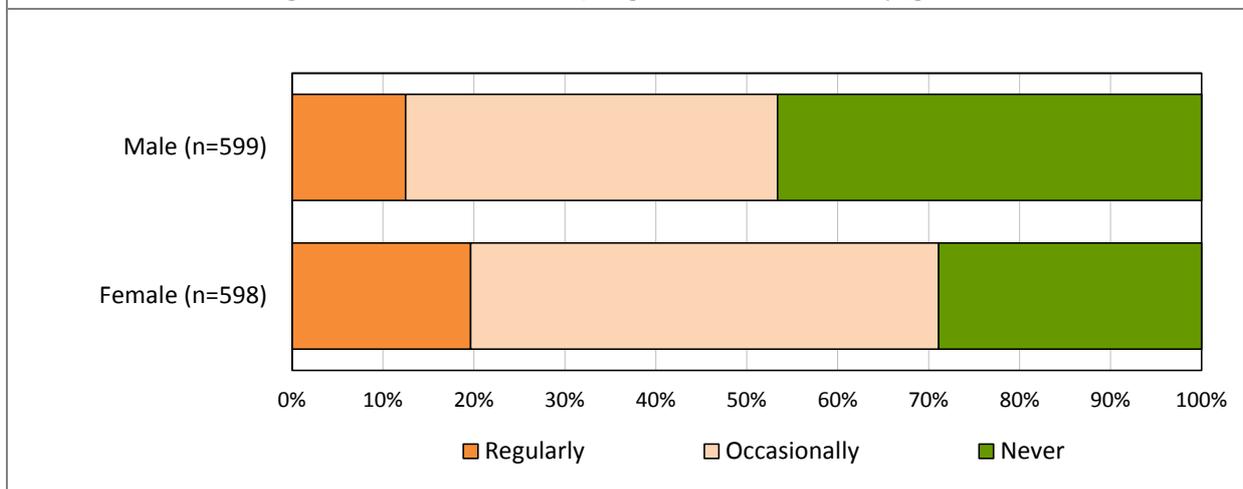
**Figure 13: Causes of stress – by gender**



**Figure 14: Highest level of stress (any cause) – by gender**



**Figure 15: Trouble sleeping due to stress – by gender**



Age

Figure 16: Stress caused by work – by age

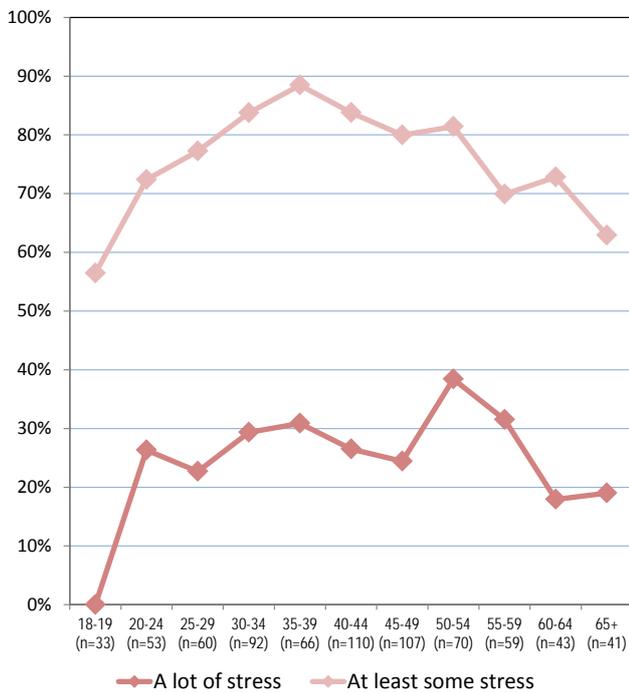


Figure 17: Stress caused by finances – by age

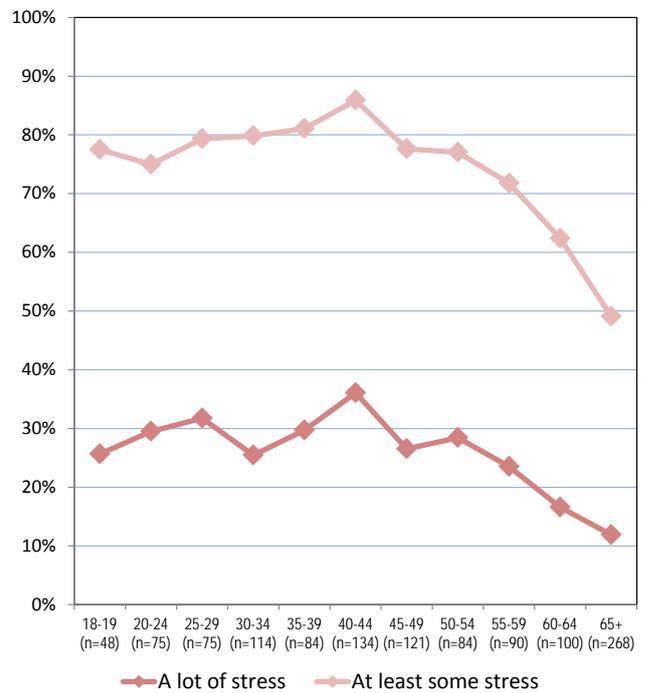


Figure 18: Stress caused by relationships – by age

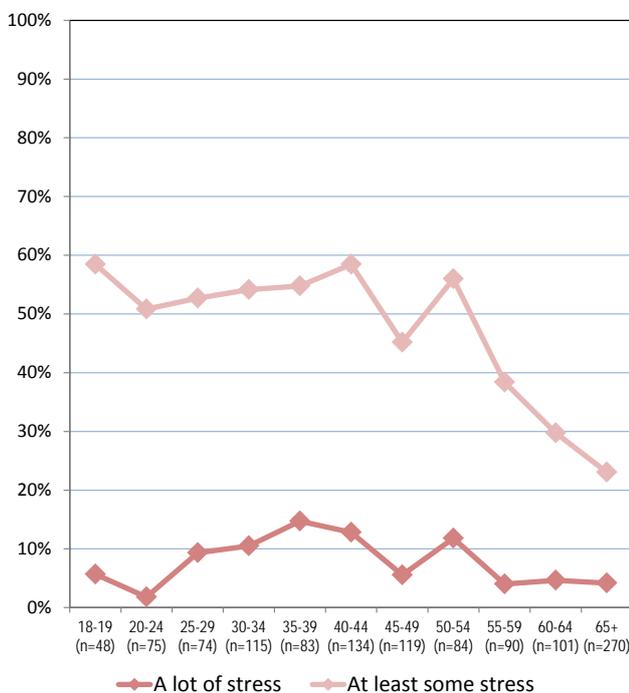
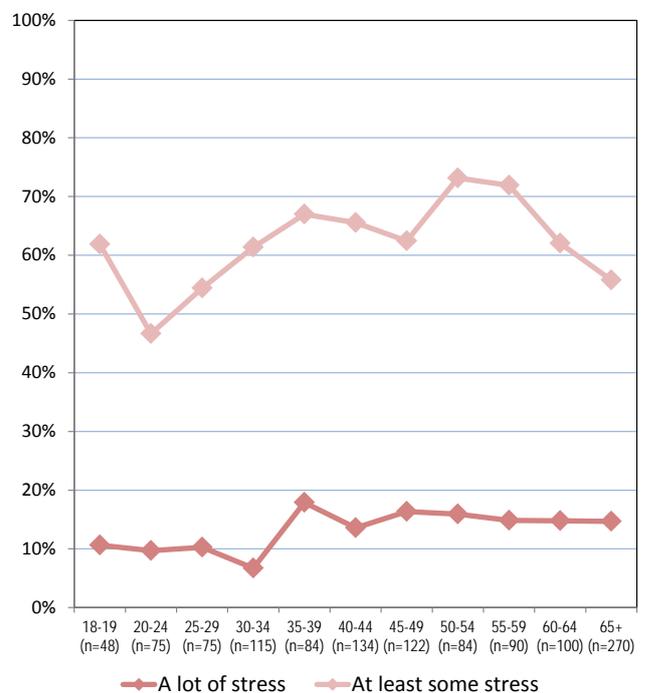
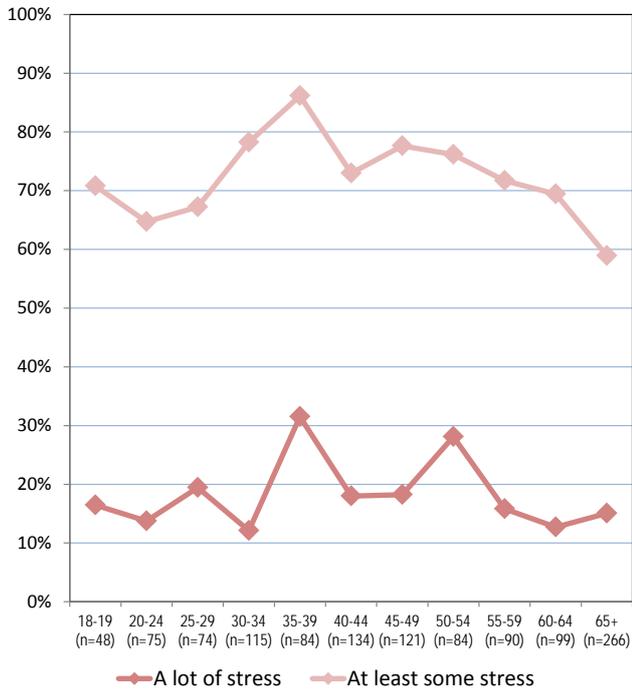


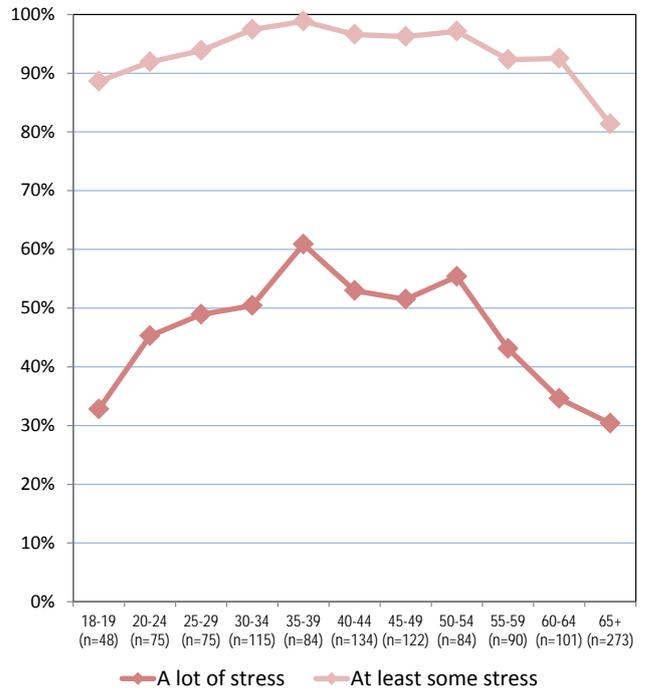
Figure 19: Stress caused by health – by age



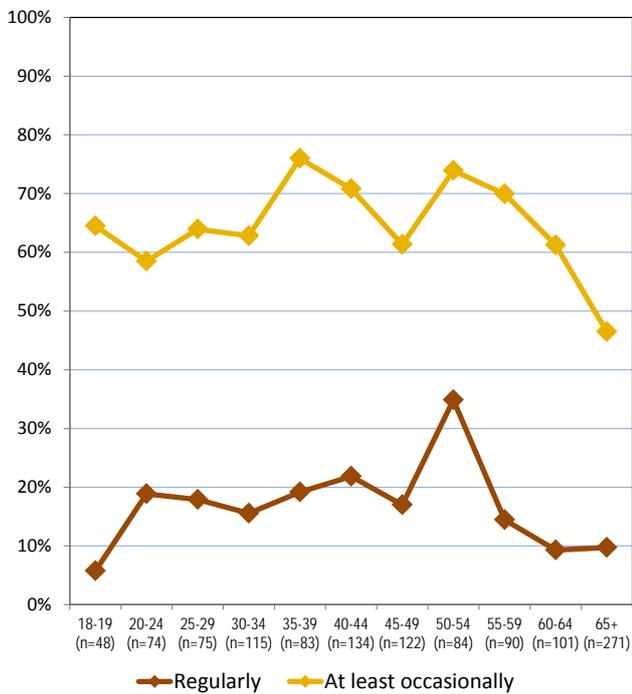
**Figure 20: Stress caused by thoughts about the future – by age**



**Figure 21: Causes of stress combined – by age**

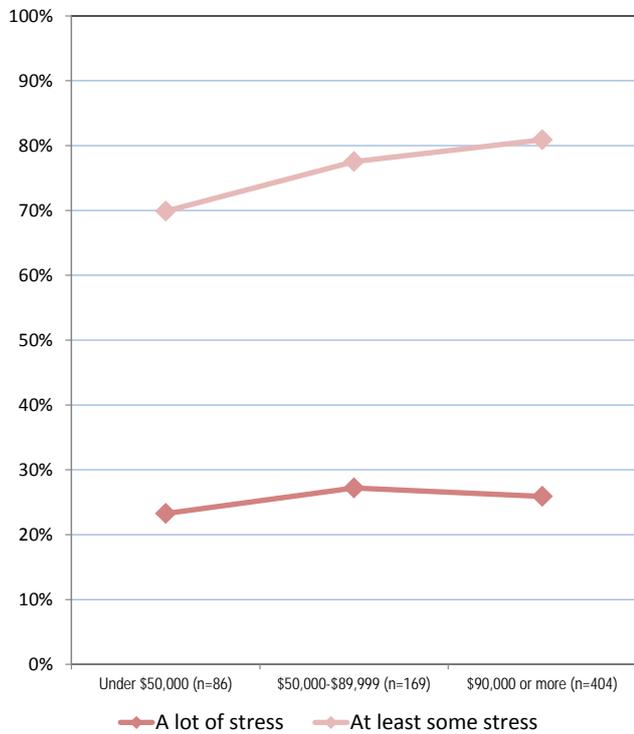


**Figure 22: Trouble sleeping due to stress – by age**

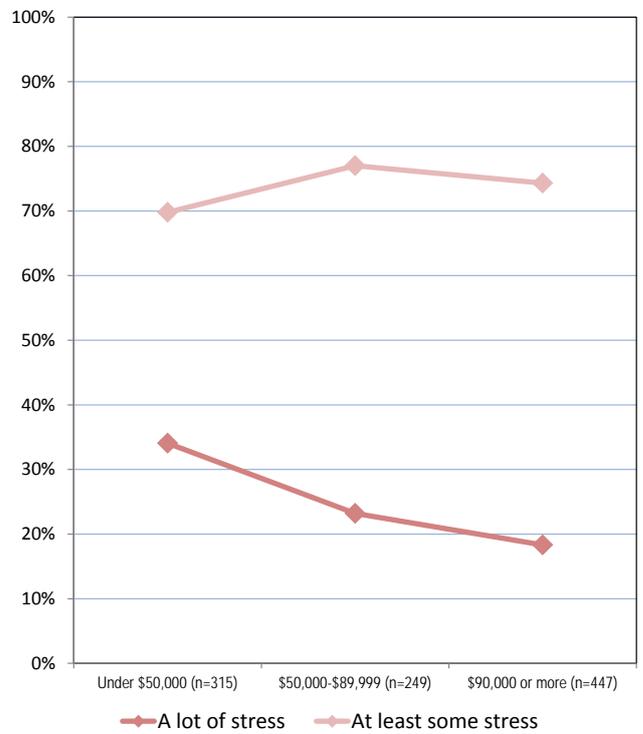


### Household income

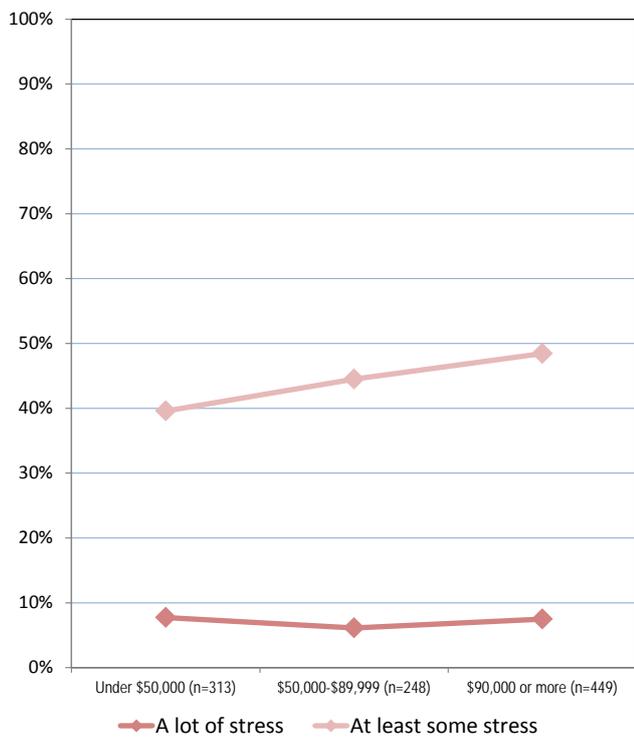
**Figure 23: Stress caused by work – by household income**



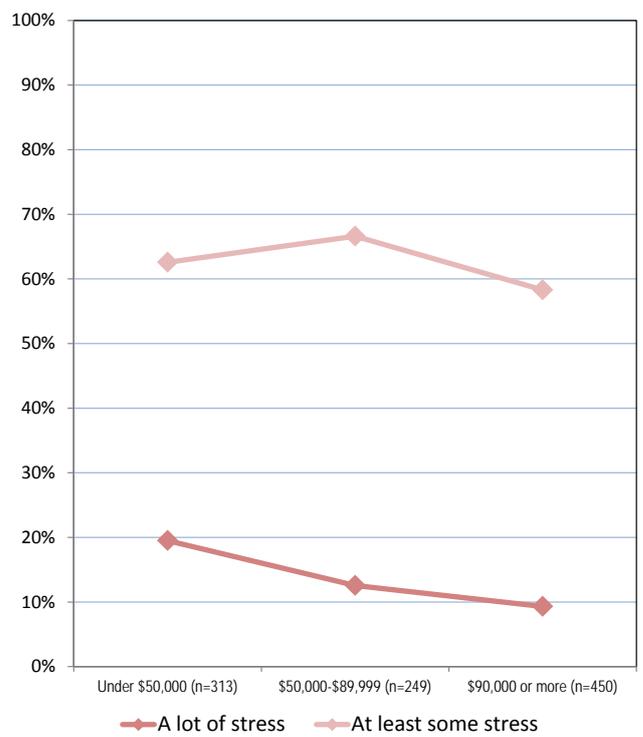
**Figure 24: Stress caused by finances – by household income**



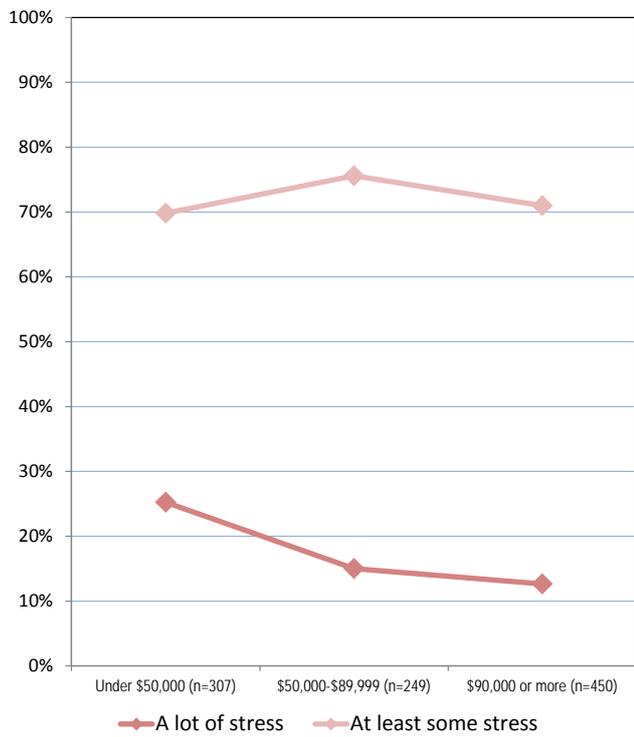
**Figure 25: Stress caused by relationships – by household income**



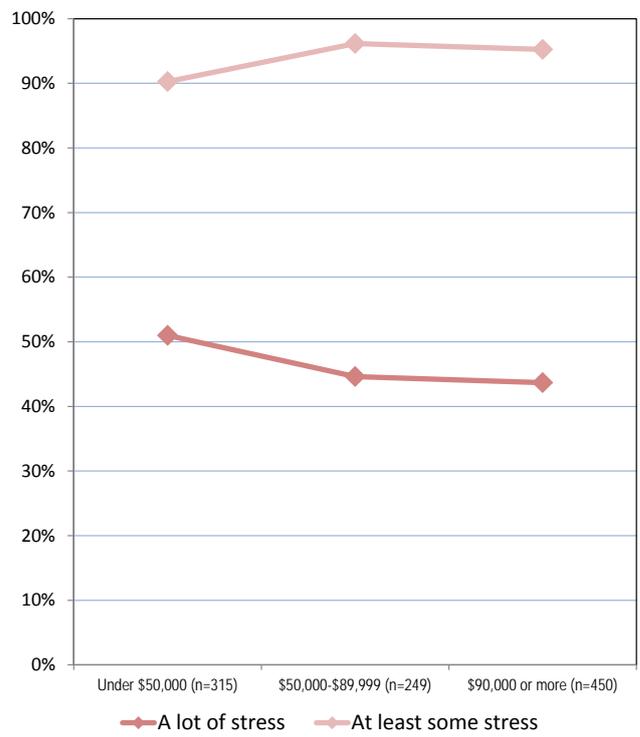
**Figure 26: Stress caused by health – by household income**



**Figure 27: Stress caused by thoughts about the future – by household income**



**Figure 28: Causes of stress combined – by household income**



**Figure 29: Trouble sleeping due to stress – by household income**

