

Emotional health

Fielded November/December 2021

Every month, IBM Watson Health® conducts a health poll that surveys approximately 3,000 Americans to gauge attitudes and opinions on a wide range of healthcare issues.

This health poll is powered by the IBM Watson Health PULSE® Healthcare Survey, an independently funded, multi-modal (cell phone, internet) survey that collects information from approximately 60,000 U.S. households annually.

The results depicted in this report represent responses from two identical surveys: 3,020 participants interviewed from November 1 – 14, 2021, and 3,006 participants interviewed from December 1 – 14, 2021, both with a margin of error of +/- 1.8%.

Executive summary

This health poll asked Americans about their opinions about their emotional health and social connections.

Of all respondents:

Increasing age was associated with lower levels of feeling empty and lonely, as well as stronger feelings of social support, across all the questions in both surveys.

55%

(Nov. and Dec.) said they “Agree” with the statement “When I have problems, there are people I can rely on.” 60% (Nov.) and 62% (Dec.) said they “Agree” with the statement “There are people in my life I can completely trust.”

32%

(Nov.) and 30% (Dec.) indicated they have “Never” felt a general sense of emptiness in the last 30 days. The highest percentage of those who answered “Never” (51% in Nov. and 49% in Dec.) were age 65 or older.

46%

(Nov.) and 45% (Dec.) said they “Agree” when asked about the statement “I feel useful to others.” Among those who agree, the lowest rate (32% in Nov. and 29% in Dec.) was among those with an income less than \$25,000, and the highest rate (62% in Nov. and 63% in Dec.) was among those with an income higher than \$100,000.

11%

(Nov. and Dec.) of those younger than 35 said they “Always” felt lonely in the last 30 days, while 2% (Nov) and 1% (Dec) of respondents 65 or older said the same.

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Note: Bolded figures are statistically significant.

Note: Care should be taken when interpreting all questions due to small sample sizes.

Question 1: In the last 30 days, how often have you felt a general sense of emptiness?

Age group (in years)	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
<35	19.60%	23.20%	30.70%	16.60%	8.40%
35 - 64	29.60%	20.00%	28.20%	13.00%	7.30%
65+	51.40%	28.40%	14.80%	4.00%	0.30%
Total	31.80%	22.80%	25.80%	11.90%	6.00%

Education level

HS or Less	26.10%	20.10%	27.70%	14.10%	9.60%
Some College/Associate	31.10%	21.50%	26.80%	13.30%	6.10%
College+	35.20%	24.90%	24.30%	10.00%	4.00%
Total	31.80%	22.80%	25.80%	11.90%	6.00%

Generation

Silent Generation	50.40%	41.50%	6.90%	0.00%	1.20%
Baby Boomers	50.30%	25.90%	16.70%	4.70%	1.10%
Generation X	28.60%	19.50%	29.10%	13.10%	7.60%
Millennials	20.50%	22.50%	30.40%	16.70%	8.20%
Total	31.80%	22.80%	25.80%	11.90%	6.00%

Annual income

<\$25k	22.30%	18.30%	29.80%	16.60%	9.70%
\$25k - \$49.9k	27.10%	23.30%	30.50%	12.80%	5.30%
\$50k - \$99.9k	37.60%	25.90%	21.00%	10.20%	3.80%
\$100k+	41.10%	21.80%	22.40%	7.90%	6.00%
Total	31.80%	22.80%	25.80%	11.90%	6.00%

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Question 2: In the last 30 days, how often have you felt lonely?

Age group (in years)	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
<35	17.70%	21.50%	28.80%	19.90%	11.00%
35 - 64	28.60%	20.70%	27.30%	14.10%	7.60%
65+	49.20%	27.70%	16.80%	4.60%	1.10%
Total	30.30%	22.50%	25.30%	13.50%	7.10%

Education level

HS or Less	23.20%	19.00%	28.50%	16.70%	10.80%
Some College/Associate	28.30%	23.30%	24.40%	15.70%	7.50%
College+	35.20%	23.80%	24.30%	10.60%	4.80%
Total	30.30%	22.50%	25.30%	13.50%	7.10%

Generation

Silent Generation	56.70%	27.90%	9.50%	3.70%	2.20%
Baby Boomers	47.30%	27.00%	17.40%	6.10%	1.60%
Generation X	27.10%	20.90%	28.10%	14.40%	7.80%
Millennials	19.60%	20.40%	29.30%	18.70%	10.50%
Total	30.30%	22.50%	25.30%	13.50%	7.10%

Annual income

<\$25k	19.00%	17.90%	29.50%	20.00%	11.20%
\$25k - \$49.9k	25.50%	23.00%	27.40%	16.30%	7.00%
\$50k - \$99.9k	37.20%	25.20%	22.20%	9.40%	5.10%
\$100k+	39.60%	22.60%	23.70%	8.00%	5.00%
Total	30.30%	22.50%	25.30%	13.50%	7.10%

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Question 3: In the last 30 days, how often have you felt left out or isolated?

Age group (in years)	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
<35	22.30%	18.20%	27.70%	17.90%	12.40%
35 - 64	34.50%	19.40%	23.60%	12.50%	8.00%
65+	58.20%	21.90%	14.80%	3.90%	0.70%
Total	36.60%	19.70%	22.70%	12.00%	7.50%

Education level

HS or Less	30.00%	17.70%	25.10%	14.10%	10.40%
Some College/Associate	35.90%	18.70%	22.00%	13.80%	8.20%
College+	40.40%	21.20%	21.90%	9.80%	5.60%
Total	36.60%	19.70%	22.70%	12.00%	7.50%

Generation

Silent Generation	66.70%	18.00%	12.50%	1.90%	0.90%
Baby Boomers	56.00%	21.80%	15.70%	4.60%	1.40%
Generation X	33.50%	19.50%	24.10%	12.50%	8.30%
Millennials	23.90%	18.30%	27.10%	17.40%	11.60%
Total	36.60%	19.70%	22.70%	12.00%	7.50%

Annual income

<\$25k	25.10%	17.90%	25.50%	15.20%	14.10%
\$25k - \$49.9k	31.20%	19.80%	26.20%	14.50%	7.10%
\$50k - \$99.9k	43.00%	21.10%	20.30%	9.90%	4.40%
\$100k+	47.50%	19.20%	18.70%	8.10%	5.50%
Total	36.60%	19.70%	22.70%	12.00%	7.50%

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Question 4: How much do you agree with the following statement:
When I have problems, there are people I can rely on.

Age group (in years)	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree
<35	7.00%	8.20%	11.10%	26.70%	45.00%
35 - 64	6.30%	6.40%	8.80%	25.10%	52.10%
65+	2.00%	2.10%	3.40%	17.70%	73.90%
Total	5.50%	5.90%	8.20%	23.80%	55.10%

Education level

HS or Less	9.40%	6.80%	11.60%	27.20%	43.10%
Some College/Associate	6.90%	6.30%	7.70%	22.60%	55.00%
College+	2.60%	5.20%	6.70%	22.80%	61.40%
Total	5.50%	5.90%	8.20%	23.80%	55.10%

Generation

Silent Generation	0.00%	0.00%	2.40%	22.50%	75.20%
Baby Boomers	3.40%	3.40%	4.00%	17.60%	70.60%
Generation X	5.80%	6.90%	7.50%	26.20%	52.40%
Millennials	7.10%	7.10%	12.20%	26.10%	45.40%
Total	5.50%	5.90%	8.20%	23.80%	55.10%

Annual income

<\$25k	10.80%	7.80%	13.00%	26.60%	38.80%
\$25k - \$49.9k	5.20%	8.20%	7.60%	25.10%	52.80%
\$50k - \$99.9k	3.90%	5.10%	6.50%	21.10%	62.90%
\$100k+	0.80%	1.00%	6.20%	23.40%	67.70%
Total	5.50%	5.90%	8.20%	23.80%	55.10%

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Emotional health

Question 5: How much do you agree with the following statement:
There are people in my life I can completely trust.

Age group (in years)	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree
<35	6.90%	7.40%	12.10%	24.90%	46.30%
35 - 64	6.20%	5.60%	8.00%	21.90%	57.10%
65+	1.30%	0.60%	2.90%	13.30%	81.30%
Total	5.30%	5.00%	8.00%	20.80%	59.70%

Education level

HS or Less	8.80%	7.10%	12.90%	24.10%	45.50%
Some College/Associate	6.50%	6.00%	7.00%	19.20%	60.30%
College+	2.80%	3.30%	6.00%	20.10%	66.60%
Total	5.30%	5.00%	8.00%	20.80%	59.70%

Generation

Silent Generation	0.00%	0.00%	0.90%	12.20%	86.90%
Baby Boomers	2.30%	1.20%	3.70%	14.50%	77.60%
Generation X	5.70%	5.90%	7.30%	21.90%	57.90%
Millennials	7.30%	7.10%	12.00%	24.70%	46.90%
Total	5.30%	5.00%	8.00%	20.80%	59.70%

Annual income

<\$25k	10.90%	7.70%	13.30%	22.50%	42.90%
\$25k - \$49.9k	4.30%	6.90%	6.80%	22.70%	58.00%
\$50k - \$99.9k	3.80%	2.80%	7.50%	19.00%	66.50%
\$100k+	1.10%	1.90%	3.90%	19.10%	72.80%
Total	5.30%	5.00%	8.00%	20.80%	59.70%

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Question 6: How much do you agree with the following statement:
I feel useful to others.

Age group (in years)	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree
<35	7.60%	9.90%	15.30%	27.60%	36.90%
35 - 64	6.70%	8.20%	11.70%	28.40%	44.10%
65+	1.60%	1.90%	10.60%	25.10%	59.60%
Total	5.80%	7.20%	12.40%	27.40%	45.70%

Education level

HS or Less	8.70%	10.70%	18.00%	26.10%	34.80%
Some College/Associate	7.80%	7.70%	12.60%	28.40%	42.10%
College+	3.00%	5.00%	9.40%	27.50%	53.40%
Total	5.80%	7.20%	12.40%	27.40%	45.70%

Generation

Silent Generation	1.90%	3.60%	11.80%	20.30%	59.10%
Baby Boomers	2.60%	2.50%	10.80%	24.20%	59.00%
Generation X	6.70%	8.10%	11.60%	29.30%	43.30%
Millennials	7.40%	9.90%	14.40%	28.40%	37.50%
Total	5.80%	7.20%	12.40%	27.40%	45.70%

Annual income

<\$25k	9.10%	9.80%	19.30%	27.50%	32.20%
\$25k - \$49.9k	6.70%	8.60%	11.80%	30.10%	40.20%
\$50k - \$99.9k	4.40%	6.30%	10.70%	26.10%	51.50%
\$100k+	1.80%	3.00%	7.00%	26.30%	61.50%
Total	5.80%	7.20%	12.40%	27.40%	45.70%

PULSE 2021: December

Emotional health

Note: Bolded figures are statistically significant.

Note: Care should be taken when interpreting all questions due to small sample sizes.

Question 1: In the last 30 days, how often have you felt a general sense of emptiness?

Age group (in years)	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
<35	17.70%	18.50%	36.00%	15.80%	8.80%
35 - 64	27.30%	22.10%	28.50%	12.60%	7.60%
65+	49.40%	27.70%	15.30%	5.10%	1.20%
Total	29.50%	22.30%	27.70%	11.90%	6.50%

Education level

HS or Less	27.00%	16.90%	29.30%	14.80%	9.00%
Some College/Associate	25.90%	22.60%	30.30%	13.70%	5.30%
College+	32.90%	24.90%	25.30%	9.20%	6.00%
Total	29.50%	22.30%	27.70%	11.90%	6.50%

Generation

Silent Generation	58.00%	19.00%	17.20%	3.80%	0.00%
Baby Boomers	45.40%	28.50%	17.90%	4.90%	1.60%
Generation X	27.70%	21.80%	28.00%	12.40%	8.70%
Millennials	18.20%	19.00%	34.90%	16.60%	8.30%
Total	29.50%	22.30%	27.70%	11.90%	6.50%

Annual income

<\$25k	22.60%	18.00%	30.30%	16.90%	9.80%
\$25k - \$49.9k	24.20%	22.70%	33.40%	12.60%	4.30%
\$50k - \$99.9k	33.20%	25.00%	26.00%	9.80%	4.50%
\$100k+	40.40%	23.00%	18.10%	6.70%	10.80%
Total	29.50%	22.30%	27.70%	11.90%	6.50%

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Question 2: In the last 30 days, how often have you felt lonely?

Age group (in years)	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
<35	16.40%	19.10%	32.70%	19.50%	10.70%
35 - 64	27.10%	22.30%	27.20%	13.70%	8.40%
65+	44.90%	32.20%	16.00%	4.20%	1.80%
Total	28.00%	23.60%	26.30%	13.30%	7.60%

Education level

HS or Less	22.90%	19.90%	28.90%	15.20%	11.60%
Some College/Associate	24.20%	25.30%	28.30%	14.50%	6.60%
College+	33.00%	24.40%	23.70%	11.50%	6.10%
Total	28.00%	23.60%	26.30%	13.30%	7.60%

Generation

Silent Generation	49.30%	30.10%	12.70%	3.00%	2.70%
Baby Boomers	41.70%	31.10%	19.20%	5.10%	1.80%
Generation X	28.00%	21.60%	26.80%	13.50%	9.10%
Millennials	17.20%	20.00%	31.70%	19.20%	10.40%
Total	28.00%	23.60%	26.30%	13.30%	7.60%

Annual income

<\$25k	20.00%	20.00%	27.30%	18.90%	12.60%
\$25k - \$49.9k	22.60%	26.10%	30.60%	12.00%	7.10%
\$50k - \$99.9k	33.00%	24.70%	24.90%	12.40%	4.30%
\$100k+	39.10%	21.80%	19.60%	9.70%	8.80%
Total	28.00%	23.60%	26.30%	13.30%	7.60%

PULSE 2021: December

Emotional health

Question 3: In the last 30 days, how often have you felt left out or isolated?

Age group (in years)	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
<35	21.30%	17.50%	30.00%	18.50%	10.90%
35 - 64	34.00%	21.10%	22.30%	13.40%	8.30%
65+	58.10%	22.90%	11.90%	4.60%	1.60%
Total	35.70%	20.50%	22.20%	12.90%	7.60%

Education level

HS or Less	31.50%	16.20%	22.90%	17.30%	10.90%
Some College/Associate	33.20%	19.80%	23.60%	13.80%	8.00%
College+	39.40%	23.00%	20.90%	10.10%	5.60%
Total	35.70%	20.50%	22.20%	12.90%	7.60%

Generation

Silent Generation	67.80%	17.20%	11.20%	2.70%	1.10%
Baby Boomers	53.70%	24.30%	14.20%	5.10%	1.90%
Generation X	35.10%	20.60%	20.50%	14.20%	8.70%
Millennials	21.80%	18.00%	29.90%	17.70%	10.80%
Total	35.70%	20.50%	22.20%	12.90%	7.60%

Annual income

<\$25k	26.20%	16.60%	23.70%	20.90%	11.70%
\$25k - \$49.9k	31.00%	23.30%	25.20%	12.00%	6.60%
\$50k - \$99.9k	41.70%	21.30%	20.50%	10.90%	5.40%
\$100k+	45.70%	18.60%	18.60%	7.20%	9.00%
Total	35.70%	20.50%	22.20%	12.90%	7.60%

PULSE 2021: December

Emotional health

Question 4: How much do you agree with the following statement:
When I have problems, there are people I can rely on.

Age group (in years)	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree
<35	7.00%	8.60%	13.00%	28.10%	41.40%
35 - 64	4.30%	6.40%	8.70%	24.90%	54.30%
65+	2.70%	2.70%	3.00%	16.70%	74.60%
Total	4.70%	6.20%	8.70%	24.00%	55.10%

Education level

HS or Less	7.70%	8.20%	15.00%	24.10%	43.90%
Some College/Associate	5.70%	6.60%	7.60%	28.60%	50.20%
College+	2.60%	5.00%	6.10%	21.10%	63.90%
Total	4.70%	6.20%	8.70%	24.00%	55.10%

Generation

Silent Generation	3.50%	0.00%	0.00%	12.60%	83.90%
Baby Boomers	2.40%	3.30%	5.00%	17.40%	71.10%
Generation X	4.40%	6.10%	7.10%	26.40%	55.10%
Millennials	6.70%	8.80%	13.30%	27.00%	42.10%
Total	4.70%	6.20%	8.70%	24.00%	55.10%

Annual income

<\$25k	11.20%	8.00%	15.80%	25.70%	37.90%
\$25k - \$49.9k	4.20%	8.40%	9.60%	25.20%	50.80%
\$50k - \$99.9k	2.40%	4.40%	5.40%	25.40%	62.00%
\$100k+	1.00%	3.80%	3.70%	17.60%	73.20%
Total	4.70%	6.20%	8.70%	24.00%	55.10%

PULSE 2021: December

Emotional health

Question 5: How much do you agree with the following statement:
There are people in my life I can completely trust.

Age group (in years)	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree
<35	6.50%	6.60%	13.40%	23.90%	47.10%
35 - 64	4.30%	4.60%	8.60%	20.10%	60.90%
65+	1.20%	1.10%	1.90%	11.80%	83.40%
Total	4.30%	4.40%	8.50%	19.30%	62.00%

Education level

HS or Less	7.90%	6.50%	14.30%	22.30%	47.00%
Some College/Associate	5.00%	5.40%	6.90%	22.90%	58.30%
College+	1.90%	2.70%	6.40%	15.60%	72.00%
Total	4.30%	4.40%	8.50%	19.30%	62.00%

Generation

Silent Generation	2.00%	0.70%	0.00%	7.60%	89.10%
Baby Boomers	1.20%	1.60%	3.00%	14.10%	79.40%
Generation X	4.30%	4.40%	8.20%	19.80%	62.10%
Millennials	6.40%	6.60%	13.00%	23.30%	48.10%
Total	4.30%	4.40%	8.50%	19.30%	62.00%

Annual income

<\$25k	9.70%	6.30%	17.30%	21.30%	43.30%
\$25k - \$49.9k	4.20%	5.30%	7.70%	21.60%	58.50%
\$50k - \$99.9k	2.00%	3.20%	5.20%	19.30%	69.90%
\$100k+	0.90%	2.20%	4.10%	14.10%	78.20%
Total	4.30%	4.40%	8.50%	19.30%	62.00%

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Emotional health

Question 6: How much do you agree with the following statement:
I feel useful to others.

Age group (in years)	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree
<35	7.00%	11.90%	17.50%	27.20%	34.00%
35 - 64	6.70%	9.80%	10.20%	27.60%	44.50%
65+	2.30%	3.60%	8.10%	25.40%	60.50%
Total	5.80%	9.00%	11.80%	27.00%	45.00%

Education level

HS or Less	9.60%	12.40%	16.90%	25.70%	33.70%
Some College/Associate	6.20%	11.20%	12.20%	28.70%	39.90%
College+	3.50%	6.00%	8.90%	26.70%	54.10%
Total	5.80%	9.00%	11.80%	27.00%	45.00%

Generation

Silent Generation	4.50%	1.30%	9.00%	22.30%	63.00%
Baby Boomers	2.20%	4.90%	8.90%	26.20%	57.60%
Generation X	6.90%	9.50%	8.80%	28.10%	45.50%
Millennials	7.20%	12.00%	16.80%	26.90%	34.80%
Total	5.80%	9.00%	11.80%	27.00%	45.00%

Annual income

<\$25k	11.80%	13.80%	17.00%	26.30%	28.60%
\$25k - \$49.9k	5.00%	10.60%	13.20%	30.00%	39.70%
\$50k - \$99.9k	3.80%	7.50%	9.80%	25.70%	52.60%
\$100k+	2.80%	2.80%	5.70%	25.20%	63.10%
Total	5.80%	9.00%	11.80%	27.00%	45.00%

Learn More

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