



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Australians report increased levels of anxiety**

Australians have experienced higher levels of anxiety and irritability as well as increases in relationship conflict over the past 12 months, an Australian Psychological Society (APS) survey has found.

The study of more than 1600 Australians - released today for National Psychology Week - investigated the psychological impact of the global economic downturn on Australians.

Two thirds of those surveyed stated they had concerns about the future.

"We were particularly concerned with the results from the unemployed respondents: of the 278 unemployed participants, 45 per cent reported higher levels of anxiety, feelings of uselessness (41 per cent) and irritability (35 per cent) in the past 12 months," said APS president, Professor Bob Montgomery.

Thirty-five per cent of those unemployed reported they spent less time socialising, 28 per cent spent less time with friends and 26 per cent experienced more conflict with others.

"Having a job gives people a sense of purpose, a structured week and social contact, which helps to build self-esteem and psychological wellbeing. These findings are concerning because we know long-term unemployment can create a range of psychological problems, putting people at risk of depression," he said.

"Those who have lost their jobs are not suddenly going to find employment as employers take time to recover and invest in the future. We want those people who are unemployed to know there is support in the form of practical and professional services available to them."

The study also found that of those currently employed, 37 per cent reported being under financial stress, 20 per cent reported an increased workload, and 27 per cent indicated moderate to extreme concern about job security. Those concerned about job security reported higher levels of conflict generally, increased tension in the workplace, as well as spending less time socialising, having fun and sleeping over the past 12 months.

"The psychological impact of the financial downturn should not be underestimated. The survey shows that even people with jobs are feeling concerned and that concern is affecting their relationships and wellbeing. Financial strain and other stress factors such as concerns about job security can impact on a person's desire to be social, which can impact on relationships with work colleagues, friends and families." Professor Montgomery said.

“Although Australia has fared well in the economic downturn – a real tribute to our nation’s resilience – it’s important to recognise that a smaller but still significant percentage of our community may feel its impact for years to come,” said Professor Montgomery.

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The APS has produced two postcards ***Coping with financial stress*** and ***Coping with unemployment*** to assist people struggling through difficult financial times. To find the postcards and information on coping in difficult financial times, go to [www.psychology.org.au](http://www.psychology.org.au) and click on the ***Coping with difficult financial times*** link on the homepage.

The APS provides a free referral service for the general public, GPs and other health professionals who are seeking the advice and assistance of a qualified psychologist, online at [www.psychology.org.au](http://www.psychology.org.au) or call 1800 333 497.

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**Notes to editors:**

- APS president and psychologist, Professor Bob Montgomery, is available for interview during National Psychology Week.
- The full National Psychology Week 2009 report and tip sheets are available on request.