**Perceived Stress Scale**

**by Sheldon Cohen**

The *Perceived Stress Scale* (PSS) is the most widely used psychological instrument for measuring the perception of stress. It is a measure of the degree to which situations in one’s life are appraised as stressful. Items were designed to tap how unpredictable, uncontrollable, and overloaded respondents find their lives. The scale also includes a number of direct queries about current levels of experienced stress. The PSS was designed for use in community samples with at least a junior high school education. The items are easy to understand, and the response alternatives are simple to grasp. Moreover, the questions are of a general nature and hence are relatively free of content specific to any subpopulation group. The questions in the PSS ask about feelings and thoughts during the last month. In each case, respondents are asked how often they felt a certain way.

**Scoring:** Begin byreversing your responses for items 4, 5, 7, & 8. Specifically, if you gave yourself a score of 0 on these four items, cross it out and give yourself a new score of 4. If you gave yourself a score of 1 on these four items, cross it out and give yourself a new score of 3. If you gave yourself a score of 2 on these four items, it remains a 2. If you gave yourself a score of 3 on these four items, cross it out and give yourself a new score of 1. If you gave yourself a score of 4 on these four items, cross it out and give yourself a new score of 0. Next, add your responses across all 10 scale items. This will provide you with a total perceived stress score. Scores can range from 0 to 40, with higher scores indicateing a greater amount of perceived stress over the past month.

**Norm Groups:** L. Harris Poll gathered information on 2,387 respondents in the U.S. Take your total perceived stress score and compare it to the demographic categories below to which you identify.

### Norm Table for the PSS 10 item inventory

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Category | N | Mean | S.D. |
| Gender |  |  |  |
| **Male** | **926** | **12.1** | **5.9** |
| **Female** | **1406** | **13.7** | **6.6** |
| Age |  |  |  |
| **18-29** | **645** | **14.2** | **6.2** |
| **30-44** | **750** | **13.0** | **6.2** |
| **45-54** | **285** | **12.6** | **6.1** |
| **55-64** | **282** | **11.9** | **6.9** |
| **65 & older** | **296** | **12.0** | **6.3** |
| Race |  |  |  |
| **white** | **1924** | **12.8** | **6.2** |
| **Hispanic** | **98** | **14.0** | **6.9** |
| **black** | **176** | **14.7** | **7.2** |
| **other minority** | **50** | **14.1** | **5.0** |