

Research says modern work-related stress damages national output more than 1970s strikes

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(PhysOrg.com) -- Research presented by Bernard Casey of the University of Warwick's Institute for Employment Research shows that work-related stress today damages national output even more than the loss to national output due to strikes at the peak of industrial unrest in the 1970s.

At a presentation forming part of the University of Warwick's [Social Science](#) Festival Bernard Casey pointed out that at the peak of industrial unrest in the 1970s the UK lost around 12.9 million person days of output. But he also showed that loss of output due to work-related [stress](#) today costs the economy around 13.5 million person days.

On top of 13.5m days lost by temporary absence, yet more days are lost by people leaving the labour force completely. The costs of such absence might be more than twice those associated with temporary absences. And the economic cost of presenteeism - people going to work when ill when they should be at home - might also be twice the costs of short-term absenteeism,

Indeed, if short-term absence, total withdrawals and presenteeism are added together, work-related stress might cost as much as 1.25 per cent of national output.

That surprising large figure is still a conservative one. The estimates

exclude the costs associated with the suffering endured by people who experience work as particularly stressful; these costs are far more difficult to quantify. They also exclude the costs of benefit payments to people temporarily or permanently off work.

Bernard Casey says:

“The current recession is likely to intensify stress at work. Uncertainty, itself, breeds stress. Many organisations trying to survive by raising productivity will be putting their employees under increasing pressure. Moreover, fearing for their jobs, people who ought to be absent might choose, instead, to be “present”.”

Bernard Casey also said

“Recognition of the costs of work-related stress is useful in determining the efficiency of treatments - something in which NICE (the National Institute of Clinical Health and Excellence) has become much more interested in of late. Recognition should also help structure initiatives that follow up the Black review *Working for a Healthier Tomorrow*; these are supposed to pay special attention to mental health and work.

The current recession might be seen as making work-related stress an issue of limited concern. As has been feared with respect to family-friendly practices and policies to promote disadvantaged groups, in the current recession, policies to improve working conditions might be deemed luxuries that cannot be afforded.

Whatever one’s perspective on the current recession may be, one thing is clear: any short-term gains will have long-term costs - not only for employers and for individual employees but also for society at large.”

Provided by University of Warwick ([news](#) : [web](#))

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