The Economic Recession Increases Depression Among Workers Too

May 17, 2010

The economic downturn has directly affected the mental health of working people in the United Kingdom and has driven many to seek mental health services, according to a survey from the U.K. charity Mind. The finding adds to the accumulating evidence on the recession's negative psychological impact.

Mind commissioned a poll by Populus of 2,050 workers in the United Kingdom. The poll, conducted by phone in March 2010, found that 1 in 10 of those surveyed had visited a general practitioner for depression and distress over workplace issues in the previous year and that 7 percent started taking an antidepressant.

"Considering how much time we spend at work, it is hardly surprising that it can have a huge impact on our mental wellbeing," said Paul Farmer, the chief executive officer of Mind. "A bad work environment can be damaging and can trigger a wide range of problems from exhaustion to depression."

The report of Mind's survey coincided with the release of data from the British government showing the largest spike in antidepressant use ever, increasing from 35.9 million prescriptions in 2008 to 39.1 million in 2009.

Populus did not survey the unemployed, nor did it speak with U.S. residents. In the United States, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) has reported that long-term unemployment has a profoundly negative impact on mental health. What's more, SAMHSA reported that calls to its crisis lines dramatically surged in the months following the onset of the economic recession, even among those who remained employed.

Mind also announced the launch of its Taking Care of Business campaign to "improve working environments and working lives and transform attitudes about mental wellbeing at work. "

Mind's campaign will address issues of mental distress in the workplace. The Mind poll found that 22 percent of employed respondents had developed depression related to work issues in the past, 20 percent (or 1 in 5) said that work stress had made them ill, and 1 in 4 reported crying at work due to unmanageable workplace expectations.

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