

BBC Learning English

6 Minute English

Stress in the workplace



NB: This is not a word for word transcript

Rob: Hello, I'm Rob...

Neil: And I'm Neil.

Rob: And this is 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. Today we're talking about **stress**.

Neil: Yes, stress. It's becoming a common problem in our modern society. Most of us have felt it at some point in our life... perhaps at home with the kids and family or maybe when you are watching your favourite football team lose. Or when you're stuck in a traffic jam.

Rob: Well Britain is facing increasing stress-related issues at work and this is what we are going to talk about today. But first Neil, I've got a question for you to answer. According to a survey carried out this year, what is considered to be the most stressful job? Is it:

- a) A commercial airline pilot
- b) A schoolteacher
- c) A surgeon

Neil: It's got to be a teacher, a schoolteacher. You can't escape for the hour length of that lesson.

Rob: That's true! OK, well, we'll see if you're right at the end of the programme. Now let's talk more about stress and a report by the Chartered Institute of Personnel

and Development. It's found that the number of people who are suffering from stress in the UK is increasing.

Neil: So why is that?

Rob: It seems that the economic problems we are all facing are mainly to blame.

Neil: To blame – in other words, the economic problems are the cause of the stress. So Rob, I guess it's the high prices of things like food and petrol that's worrying people?

Rob: Well not just that. It's stress in the workplace that is the biggest issue. This report discovered that it's become the number one cause of long-term workplace **absence**.

Neil: So people are off sick – or absent – from work. And what's causing this stress?

Rob: Again, it's the financial situation as we can hear from the BBC's John Moylan. Listen out for the word he uses to describe how bad the economic situation is...

John Moylan, BBC

The world of work is rarely stress-free. But now there is fresh evidence of the impact that the tough economic climate is having on employees. According to this annual report of workplaces across Britain, the downturn is taking its toll. There's a particular problem in the public sector. 50% of public sector firms say that stress-related absence has increased in the past year.

Rob: John Moylan describes the workplace as being rarely stress-free. It's often a stressful place but now he's saying the current economic climate is **tough** – it's hard – and this is having an impact on **employees** – or staff - and businesses.

Neil: John uses another phrase, **taking its toll** – it's taking its toll on the workplace.

Rob: So the picture is not good and half of the UK's **public sector** companies have reported a rise in employee absence caused by stress.

Neil: That's interesting because jobs in the public sector are traditionally seen as more stable and secure than those in the private sector.

Rob: Yes it's surprising. Public sector jobs, such as civil servants and teachers, were seen as jobs-for-life but perhaps that's not the case anymore. It's a worrying time.

Neil: So how exactly is the poor economic situation affecting the workplace?

Rob: Well let's hear more from John Moylan on what the report says are the reasons for this increase. Listen out for the phrase he uses to describe the main cause for concern by employees...

John Moylan, BBC

The main causes they cite are organisational change. With staff numbers being cut, workloads are also a problem, as are concerns over job security. The survey found that employers planning to make redundancies are more likely to report an increase in mental health problems among their staff.

Neil: So it's **organisational change** – or changes in the structure of the workplace – that is the main problem.

Rob: This includes cutting the number of staff and that leads to increased workloads for others. And everyone is worried about how secure their job is – or what we call **job security**.

Neil: The other worrying factor is employers who are planning to make **redundancies** have reported an increase in mental health problems in their staff.

Rob: That's not good. And staff are also concerned that if they lose their job they won't find another one.

Neil: Yes, it might mean they are unemployed for longer than they had expected. So what can be done to reduce this stressful situation?

Rob: Well the report has made some recommendations for managers on how to help their staff. It says companies should have a plan – or **a strategy** – in place to help staff. Offering **counselling** is one option.

Neil: Well the economy doesn't look like improving very soon so the problem of stress in the workplace looks set to stay.

Rob: OK Neil. I think it's time we revealed the answer to today's question.

Neil: Am I right or am I wrong?!

Rob: Let's see. Earlier I asked you: According to a survey carried out this year, what is considered to be the most stressful job? Is it:

a) A commercial airline pilot

b) A schoolteacher

c) A surgeon

Neil: And I said a schoolteacher.

Rob: Well, it's a stressful job but it's actually wrong. According to a survey by employment website Careercast, commercial airline pilots are the most stressed. They are not only expected to guarantee the safety of passengers, but also to keep their flights on-time, even when flying in bad weather.

Neil: It's not a job for me then!

Rob: Nor me! Anyway Neil, could you please remind us of some of the vocabulary we've used today:

Neil: Sure. We had:
stress
absence
tough
employees
taking its toll
public sector
organisational change
job security
redundancies
a strategy
counselling

Rob: Thanks Neil. We hope you've enjoyed today's programme. Please join us again for another 6 Minute English very soon.

Both: Bye!

Vocabulary and definitions

stress	a feeling of tension and worry
absence	being unavailable
tough	difficult, hard
employees	people who are paid to work for somebody
taking its toll	causing suffering, harm or damage
public sector	part of the economy that is controlled or supported financially by the government
organisational change	replacing the structure of a workplace with a different one
job security	the probability of someone keeping their job for a long time
redundancies	jobs which will stop existing
a strategy	a plan to achieve something
counselling	professional advice about a problem, often relating to mental health

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