# Britain’s mental health crisis costs £45 billion and threatens workforce resilience



Britain is grappling with an unprecedented mental health crisis, as evidenced by alarming workplace absence statistics attributed to stress, anxiety, and depression. Recent data reveals that nearly one in four citizens have taken mental health days off work in the past year, with over a third reporting diminished productivity due to poor mental health. This escalating trend underscores a pressing concern regarding the factors contributing to decreased workplace performance across the nation.

According to research conducted by Chrysalis, the UK’s largest provider of counsellor training, poor mental health exacts a staggering toll on the economy, costing employers approximately £45 billion annually. The study also highlights that work-related mental health issues are responsible for the loss of 12.8 million working days, exacerbating the strain on an already overburdened healthcare system. The economic implications of this crisis are further underscored by reports indicating that the combined social and economic costs of mental ill health in England amount to £300 billion, which includes a substantial £110 billion in direct economic losses.

The current landscape suggests a worrying “national crisis of resilience,” wherein ordinary emotional challenges—such as fatigue, low mood, and frustration—are increasingly pathologised, leading to a higher incidence of sick leave. Experts caution against the tendency to classify various grievances, from overwhelming workloads to the pressures of rising living costs, under the broad umbrella of “mental health” issues. A recent report from the mental health charity Mind linked increasing stress levels with factors such as household debt and insecure housing, indicating that economic conditions may play a significant role in deteriorating workplace wellbeing.

The situation is exacerbated by a growing prevalence of burnout. A YouGov poll indicates that 35% of adults experience high or extreme levels of pressure at work, with 20% needing time off due to stress-related mental health challenges. Brian Dow, chief executive of Mental Health UK, points to global pressures, including climate change and the rise of artificial intelligence, as part of the contributing factors to this state of burnout. He has called for government intervention to bolster support for the workforce amidst these challenges.

Compounding these issues, recent findings from the Commission for Healthier Working Lives reveal that more than eight million adults are currently out of the workforce due to ill health, highlighting the significant impact of physical and mental health conditions on employment. The rise in those unable to work has increased by 37% since 2013, and those with long-term health conditions are now three times more likely to be jobless than their healthier counterparts. Experts attribute this trend not only to mental health crises but also to the broader implications of Britain’s obesity epidemic, which interferes with workforce participation.

The urgency for intervention is clear, as mental health issues not only threaten individual wellbeing but also pose a significant risk to the economy. With millions becoming economically inactive due to health problems, it is imperative that both public and private sectors undertake thorough reviews of their working practices. This is particularly pressing in public sector employment, where sickness absence rates associated with mental health issues are notably higher than in other sectors.

To remedy this deteriorating situation, increased investment in early mental health interventions is crucial. The call for open, supportive, and safe workplace environments has never been more relevant, as poor mental health accounts for over half of all work-related illnesses in the UK. As the nation grapples with this crisis, the need for a coordinated response remains paramount in addressing both the economic and personal repercussions of mental ill health.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060370/Sick-Note-Culture-Mental-Health-Days-Surge-Amid-Burnout-Britain-Fears), [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/jan/22/mental-health-uk-burnt-out-nation)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060370/Sick-Note-Culture-Mental-Health-Days-Surge-Amid-Burnout-Britain-Fears), [[4]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/03/27/mental-health-workers-costs-uk-economy-nhs/), [[5]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/02/19/economic-cost-of-crumbling-mental-health-finally-clear/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[2]](https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/jan/22/mental-health-uk-burnt-out-nation), [[3]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/10/03/britain-ill-health-crisis-eight-million-out-workforce/), [[6]](https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/blog/ten-workplace-mental-health-statistics-for-2023/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[5]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/02/19/economic-cost-of-crumbling-mental-health-finally-clear/), [[7]](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/health-fitness/wellbeing/mental-health-sick-leave/)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060370/Sick-Note-Culture-Mental-Health-Days-Surge-Amid-Burnout-Britain-Fears> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2024/jan/22/mental-health-uk-burnt-out-nation> - A charity has warned that the UK is at risk of becoming a 'burnt-out nation' due to a significant number of people taking time off work because of poor mental health caused by stress. A YouGov poll revealed that 35% of adults experienced high or extreme levels of pressure at work, with 20% requiring time off due to stress-related mental health issues in the past year. The chief executive of Mental Health UK, Brian Dow, highlighted global challenges such as climate change and artificial intelligence as contributing factors to this burnout. He called for government intervention to better support the workforce.
3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/10/03/britain-ill-health-crisis-eight-million-out-workforce/> - A report indicates that more than eight million adults in Britain are out of the workforce due to ill health. The study shows that one in five working-age individuals have health conditions that have left them unemployed or limited their work capacity. Those with such conditions are three times more likely to be jobless. The findings, from the Commission for Healthier Working Lives, highlight that the combined figure of 8.2 million has risen by 37% since 2013. Experts attribute the trend to Britain's obesity crisis and worsening mental health, which have added billions to annual borrowing.
4. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2024/03/27/mental-health-workers-costs-uk-economy-nhs/> - A report backed by NHS chiefs reveals that workers with poor mental health cost the UK economy £110 billion annually. The Centre for Mental Health commissioned the NHS Confederation’s mental health network to conduct research for 2022, finding that the total economic and social costs of mental ill health in England amounted to £300 billion. This includes £110 billion in economic losses, £130 billion in human costs, and £60 billion in health and care costs. The report emphasizes the need for increased investment in early mental health interventions to reduce these costs and build a mentally healthier nation.
5. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2024/02/19/economic-cost-of-crumbling-mental-health-finally-clear/> - The article discusses how Britain's mental health crisis is now an economic issue, with millions becoming economically inactive due to health problems. There are now 9.25 million people aged between 16 and 64 who are neither working nor looking for work, with a record 2.8 million having dropped out of the jobs market because of their health. The article attributes this trend to an increase in the number of older workers, who are more likely to be unwell, and calls for a review of working practices across the public sector, which has some of the highest rates of workplace sickness.
6. <https://mhfaengland.org/mhfa-centre/blog/ten-workplace-mental-health-statistics-for-2023/> - A recent report highlights the impact of poor mental health on UK employees, noting that nearly half of UK workers are 'running on empty,' with burnout, mental ill health, and work-related stress now costing the economy £28 billion annually. The report provides ten vital workplace mental health and wellbeing statistics, emphasizing the need for open, safe, and supportive workplaces. It also highlights that poor mental health accounts for more than half of all work-related illnesses, with around 51% of long-term sick leave due to stress, depression, or anxiety.
7. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/health-fitness/wellbeing/mental-health-sick-leave/> - The article discusses how mental health sick leave is impacting Britain's economy, noting that the country's mental health crisis has been steadily rising over the past two decades, with a rapid escalation in the past three years. Latest figures from the Office for National Statistics show an estimated 185.6 million working days were lost due to sickness or injury in 2022. The number of people off work due to long-term sickness has risen to a record 2.5 million, with the sickness absence rate for those with long-term health conditions at its highest point since 2008. The article highlights that the public sector is most acutely affected by mental health problems, with sickness absences 50% higher among public sector workers and twice as likely to be linked to mental health issues.