

Working long hours kills hundreds of thousands

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The World Health Organization (WHO) and International Labour Organization have issued a stark warning about the danger of overworking. They said working long hours is causing the premature death of hundreds of thousands of people worldwide.

The two organizations analysed the link between loss of life and working long hours. Their findings were sobering. Around three-quarters of a million workers die early after suffering strokes and heart attacks as a result of working over 55 hours a week. Most of these deaths were in people aged 60 to 70 who had worked at least 55 hours between the ages of 45 and 74. The researchers discovered that men accounted for 72 per cent of the deaths.

The WHO study revealed that people who work at least 55 hours a week have a 42 per cent increased risk of stroke, and a 19 per cent increased chance of heart disease. Researchers analysed data from workforces in 154 countries. They looked at data collected from 1970 to 2018. The WHO Director-General said: "No job is worth the risk of stroke or heart disease. Governments, employers and workers need to work together to agree on limits to protect the health of workers." The WHO said over nine per cent of workers overwork. It warned that the situation is worsening, saying: "The pandemic is accelerating developments that could feed the trend towards increased working time."

Sources: cnn.com / cnet.com / sky.com

Writing

There should be a limit of 35 hours on everyone's working week. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

WHO / labour / overworking / premature / link / loss of life / million / workers / men / risk / stroke / heart disease / governments / limits / pandemic / developments / time

True / False

- 1) The International Health Organization issued a stark warning. T / F
- 2) The WHO said working long hours caused the early death of millions. T / F
- 3) The WHO looked at the link between the loss of hours and a long life. T / F
- 4) Over 70% of the deaths caused by working long hours were men. T / F
- 5) Working over 55 hours a week carries a 19% increased risk of a stroke. T / F
- 6) Researchers looked at data from workforces in 154 countries. T / F
- 7) The WHO said the working week should be limited to 35 hours. T / F
- 8) COVID-19 is making the situation worse. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------|
| 1. issued | a. grim |
| 2. stark | b. possibility |
| 3. premature | c. made up |
| 4. findings | d. shift |
| 5. accounted for | e. early |
| 6. revealed | f. safeguard |
| 7. risk | g. released |
| 8. agree | h. disclosed |
| 9. protect | i. concur |
| 10. trend | j. conclusions |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) How would you feel if you worked 55 hours a week?
- c) What happens to someone's health when they work too hard?
- d) Do you think there should be a 4-day week?
- e) How has the pandemic affected working conditions?
- f) Would it be better for people to work from home?
- g) What advice do you have for people who overwork?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the researchers?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. a stark warning about | a. chance of heart disease |
| 2. causing the premature | b. result of working over 55 hours |
| 3. the link between loss of | c. accelerating developments |
| 4. heart attacks as a | d. the danger of overworking |
| 5. men accounted | e. together to agree on limits |
| 6. a 19 per cent increased | f. life and working long hours |
| 7. No job is | g. increased working time |
| 8. workers need to work | h. for 72 per cent of the deaths |
| 9. The pandemic is | i. worth the risk of stroke |
| 10. feed the trend towards | j. death of hundreds of thousands |

Discussion – Student B

- How many hours a week do you work?
- Should there be a limit on the number of hours people work?
- How dangerous is overworking?
- Have you ever overworked?
- Why do some people work such long hours?
- What do you think of working 55 hours a week?
- Who do you know that works long hours?
- Should companies be fined if their workers overwork?

Spelling

- issued a trask warning
- causing the meturearp death of hundreds
- The two organizations aelynsda the link
- Their findings were groenbsi
- after suffering osrtkes and heart attacks
- men anucoectd for 72 per cent
- The WHO study evdalere that
- eowscokrfr in 154 countries
- No job is trohw the risk
- work together to agree on istlmi
- the situation is nrnwgioes
- itagacelcren developments

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. a	3. e	4. j	5. c
6. h	7. b	8. i	9. f	10. d

Role Play

Role A – Teacher

You think a teacher is the most stressful job. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their jobs aren't as stressful. Also, tell the others which is the least stressful of these (and why): a CEO, a soccer coach or a miner.

Role B – CEO

You think a CEO is the most stressful job. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their jobs aren't as stressful. Also, tell the others which is the least stressful of these (and why): a teacher, a soccer coach or a miner.

Role C – Soccer Coach

You think a soccer coach is the most stressful job. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their jobs aren't as stressful. Also, tell the others which is the least stressful of these (and why): a CEO, a teacher or a miner.

Role D – Miner

You think a miner is the most stressful job. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their jobs aren't as stressful. Also, tell the others which is the least stressful of these (and why): a CEO, a soccer coach or a teacher.

Speaking – Stressful Jobs

Rank these with your partner. Put the most stressful jobs at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-----------|------------------|
| • Teacher | • Cashier |
| • Soldier | • Soccer coach |
| • CEO | • Police officer |
| • Actor | • Miner |

Answers – True False

1 F	2 F	3 F	4 T	5 F	6 T	7 F	8 T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.