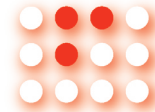
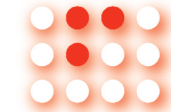


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## Shift workers are more susceptible to disease

Shift workers may be more prone to infections and chronic diseases due to disruptions to their body clocks, researchers from the University of Cambridge suggest.

Workers are more susceptible to catching infections at certain times of the day, according to research that found that the body clock affects the ability of viruses to replicate and spread between cells.

Those with disrupted body clocks – also known as "circadian rhythms" which control functions such as sleep patterns, body temperature, and immune systems and the release of hormones – were more likely to be susceptible to illness.

Research conducted at the Wellcome Trust–Medical Research Council Institute of Metabolic Science at the University of Cambridge, found that virus replication in mice that were infected with herpes at the start of day, at the animals resting phase (equivalent to sunrise) was 10 times greater than in mice that were infected 10 hours into their day, when transitioning to their active phase.

When disruptions to the body clock gene in both mice and individual cells were made, the timing of

infection no longer mattered, but viral replication was consistently high.

Professor Akhilesh Reddy, the study's lead author, said: "The time of day of infection can have a major influence on how susceptible we are to the disease, or at least on the viral replication, meaning that infection at the wrong time of day could cause a much more severe acute infection.

The finding is consistent with recent studies, which have shown that the time of day that the flu vaccine is administered can influence how effectively it works.

[www.hrgrapevine.com/markets/hr/article/2016-08-17-shift-workers-more-prone-to-infections](http://www.hrgrapevine.com/markets/hr/article/2016-08-17-shift-workers-more-prone-to-infections)

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## Motherhood's penalty

Women suffer a "motherhood wage penalty" that sees their pay fall, relative to men, for more than a decade after having children, new research finds.

Women earn 18% less an hour than men, and the gap has closed from 28% in 1993 and 23% in 2003.

But it is only among the lowest-educated (those with less than A levels) that the gender wage gap has been steadily declining. For the mid- and high-educated, the gender wage gap is essentially the same as it was 20 years ago.

**LABOUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT**

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And the gender pay gap widens for 12 years after childbirth for mothers to the point they are earning a third (33%) less than men an hour, according to the respected think tank, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS).

The widening of the hourly wage gap after childbirth is associated with reduced hours of paid work, but not because women see an immediate cut in hourly pay when they reduce their hours, the IFS said. Rather, women who work half-time lose out on subsequent wage progression, meaning that the hourly wages of men (and of women in full-time work) pull further and further ahead. In addition, women who take time out of paid work altogether and then return to the labour market miss out on wage growth.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said: "It is scandalous that millions of women still suffer a motherhood pay penalty. Many are forced to leave better-paid jobs due to the pressure of caring responsibilities and the lack of flexible working.

"Without more well-paid, part-time jobs and affordable childcare, the gender pay gap will take decades to close. We need to see a step change in government policy and employer attitudes if we are to fix this problem."

The TUC has set out a number of policies that could help to close the gender pay gap, such as free childcare from the end of maternity leave, to help younger mothers with less seniority and lower pay to stay in work after having children.

There should, for example, be support for more equal parenting roles to stop women being held back at work – shared parental leave is a start but take up is likely to be low due to lack of incentives for fathers to take the leave.

Better-paid jobs need to be made more flexible – with for example, job shares, part-time working, and compressed hours – to prevent women getting stuck in low-paid, part-time work after having children.

Stronger enforcement of legislation against discrimination linked to pregnancy and childbirth would help as would better paid leave targeted at fathers.

**Public sector** The government has launched a consultation on gender pay gap reporting in the public sector.

The consultation, which closes on 30 September 2016, sets out how the government intends to bring in the reporting requirements for public sector

organisations; how the reporting requirements will work in the public sector; and poses a number of questions on the proposed approach.

The government is seeking to amend the 2011 regulations on specific duties that are followed by public bodies, to include mandatory gender pay gap reporting for public bodies with more than 250 employees.

The existing specific duties regulations, a section of the 2010 *Equality Act*, already requires public bodies with 150 or more employees to publish information relating to staff.

[www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/publications/bns/bn186.pdf](http://www.ifs.org.uk/uploads/publications/bns/bn186.pdf)

[www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/motherhood-pay-penalty-%E2%80%9Cscandal%E2%80%9D-says-tuc](http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/motherhood-pay-penalty-%E2%80%9Cscandal%E2%80%9D-says-tuc)

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/equality-framework-team/gender-pay-gap-reporting-public-sector>

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## MPs call for ban on plastic microbeads

The use of plastic microbeads in bathroom products – such as exfoliating scrubs, shaving gel and toothpaste – should be banned because of the marine pollution they cause, say MPs.

The House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee found that microplastic pollution is potentially more environmentally damaging than larger pieces of plastic because it is more likely to be eaten by wildlife and microplastics have a greater surface area with which to transfer chemicals to and from the marine environment. Relatively little research has been done so far either on potential impacts to marine life, human health or the marine economy, the committee says.

Mary Creagh MP, chair of the committee, said: "Trillions of tiny pieces of plastic are accumulating in the world's oceans, lakes and estuaries, harming marine life and entering the food chain. The microbeads in scrubs, shower gels and toothpastes are an avoidable part of this plastic pollution problem. A single shower can result in 100,000 plastic particles entering the ocean."

Most of the large cosmetics companies have made voluntary commitments to phase out microbeads by 2020. Nevertheless, the committee found that a legal ban would have advantages for consumers and the industry in terms of consistency, universality and confidence. The committee would like to see a national ban on microbeads by the end of 2017.

“Cosmetic companies’ voluntary approach to phasing out plastic microbeads simply won’t wash. We need a full legal ban, preferably at an international level as pollution does not respect borders,” Creagh said.

The committee’s report points out that the industry is failing to label products containing microbeads clearly. If the government fails to introduce a ban, the committee is calling on it to introduce a clear labelling scheme for microbeads during the transitional period of a voluntary phase out to provide transparency for customers.

Campaign group Beat the Microbead has an app which will scan the barcode of products and tell the shopper whether or not the product contains plastic microbeads. Products are divided into the categories Red, Orange and Green. Red: the product contains microbeads; Orange: the product contains microbeads but the manufacturer has pledged to stop using microbeads in the near future; Green, the product does not contain microbeads.

<https://spark.adobe.com/page/qW03f/>  
[www.beatthemicrobead.org/en/](http://www.beatthemicrobead.org/en/)

## Underemployment of BAME workers

Black, Asian and minority ethnic workers are a third more likely to be underemployed than white workers, a new TUC report finds.

The research shows that black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) workers faced the same rate as white workers, over 110,000 would be lifted out of underemployment.

According to the latest Office for National Statistics figures for the first quarter of 2016, BME workers face an underemployment rate of 15.3%, compared to a rate of 11.5% for white workers.

The TUC analysis comes a week after the Equality and Human Rights Commission found that BAME workers also face higher unemployment rates, lower pay, and are underrepresented in senior roles.

The findings have been released as part of a TUC submission to the McGregor-Smith Review, a government consultation on “developing black and minority ethnic talent”.

TUC general secretary Frances O’Grady said: “Underemployment is a major problem in the UK,

and it only gets worse if you’re black, Asian, or part of any ethnic minority. This is not only wrong, but a massive waste of talent too.

“BAME workers are more likely to be unemployed, paid less, and aren’t getting enough of the top jobs.

“Employers and the government cannot afford to ignore these problems. They must now take real action to tackle underemployment and pay discrimination.”

To combat racism in the labour market, the TUC is calling for employers to take measures including:

- publishing ethnic monitoring reports on underemployment, hiring, firing, promotion, and training;
- using standardised, anonymous job application forms for new hires;
- establishing clear, written procedures for dealing with discrimination at work; and
- advertising opportunities for training, extra hours and development, such as deputising and secondments, to all staff.

The TUC has called on the government to take a number of measures including developing a comprehensive race equality strategy; and using public sector contracts to drive best practices among private employers.

[www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/black-workers/bame-workers-third-more-likely-be-underemployed-finds-tuc-report](http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/black-workers/bame-workers-third-more-likely-be-underemployed-finds-tuc-report)

## Scottish public sector deficit unchanged

Scotland’s public spending deficit remained at about £15 billion in the past financial year ending March 2016 despite plummeting oil revenues, official figures show.

The Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland (GERS) figures estimated that Scotland’s illustrative share of North Sea revenue fell by about 97% from £1.8 billion in 2014-15 to £60 million last year, reflecting a decline in total UK North Sea revenue. However, this fall was offset by Scotland’s onshore revenues growing by £1.9 billion.

Overall, Scottish public sector revenue was estimated as £53.7 billion while total expenditure by the public sector was £68.6 billion.

First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said: “The foundations of our economy remain strong. Scotland, in terms of economic output per head – and even excluding offshore revenues – remains the most

prosperous part of the UK outside of London and South-east England.

"The lower oil price has, of course, reduced offshore revenues, with a corresponding impact on our fiscal position – this underlines the fact that Scotland's challenge is to continue to grow our onshore economy. However, Scotland's long-term economic success is now being directly threatened by the likely impact of Brexit."

The GERS data were released a day after analysis from Scottish government which showed that taking Scotland out of the European Union would make the task of growing and diversifying the Scottish economy even harder.

"If we were to allow Scotland to be forced out of the EU against our democratic will, then we will see Scotland's economy as a whole take a hit worth up to £11.2 billion pounds per year by 2030," said Sturgeon.

<http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Government-Expenditure-Revenue-Scotland-2015-16-294c.aspx>

<http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/GERS-figures-published-294e.aspx>

## Acas guidance for young workers

On the day that many young people will receive their GCSE results and consider moving into work, employment relations service Acas has published guidance for them.

*New to work* aims to help young people get to know their right and responsibilities at work.

The first of four key points is to make sure that the employer supplies a written statement with details of the job within the first two months of starting.

If the employer wants to vary the terms of your contract, for example, the hours you do or your pay, they should discuss this with you so you can agree to any changes.

Regardless of whether you have a written contract, you have certain basic rights, for example, the right to holidays, the right to be paid at least the National Minimum Wage for your age band, and the right to rest breaks.

As most young people are social media users the guidance reminds new employees of their responsibilities.

"Even if your contract doesn't say anything about a particular issue, you should still think carefully about your behaviour outside of work. Many employers will expect you to behave in a way that doesn't reflect badly on the company in your free time. For example, company policy may not say you can't discuss your work on social media, but complaining about your colleagues on Facebook could still amount to misconduct," the guidance says.

The guidance rightly suggests that young workers may want to join a trade union. "Trade Unions are able to offer people who join advice and support on a range of things that might happen at work, for example if you're not getting paid properly or if you just want to check a detail about your contract."

Other issues covered in the guidance include the National Minimum Wage, zero-hours contracts, sickness and absence, and training as well as leaving a job.

Acas spokesperson Stewart Gee said: "Most school leavers may not be aware of their rights at work or their responsibilities, as they get ready to start apprenticeships or part time jobs.

"This new guidance is an invaluable tool to help young employees navigate the first few months in the world of work."

[www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=5818](http://www.acas.org.uk/index.aspx?articleid=5818)

## Blacklisting hit for Carillion

The cost of blacklisting compensation is revealed in the half-year results of contractor Carillion.

The accounts for the six months ending June 2016 show a £10.5 million charge, "which represents the compensation and associated costs that we expect to pay under The Construction Workers Compensation Scheme set up by eight UK companies for workers who have been impacted by use of the database vetting system operated by The Consulting Association".

Philip Green, chair of Carillion, passed no comment on the compensation payout in his statement accompanying the half-year figures.

<https://carillionplc-uploads-shared.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/1110AR-interim-stock-exchange-announcement-2016-v2-original.pdf>