

Unemployment and mental disorder

<http://www.bps.org.uk/news/unemployment-key-mental-disorder-trigger>

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Unemployment and living in situations of social adversity are among the main mental disorder contributory factors. This is according to new **research** led by Jorge Cervilla of the University of Granada Department of Psychiatry, which found being a woman is the other strongest trigger influence on subjects with a genetic predisposition to mental disorder.

A pilot study has been completed by the researchers - which include representatives of the University Hospital, the Andalusian School of Public Health and the **Mental Health** Program of the Andalusian Health Service - with the full study to look at 4,500 households in Andalusia.

It was found that 20 per cent of the population present a mental disorder at one time or another in their lives, with the most common of these including **depression** and anxiety disorders.

Mr Cervilla said the findings "will be of great use in helping identify people at greater risk of suffering the onset of a mental disorder or of having a relapse".

Chartered Psychologist Micheal Gallagher adds:

"This research takes place in the context of an official unemployment rate of 27 per cent in Spain, compared to just under 8 per cent for the UK. The nature and direction of the relationships between unemployment, social adversity and mental health have been matters of intense debate whenever unemployment increases substantially.

"Two studies by Butterworth and colleagues have helped to clarify such relationships. **Analysis** of two waves of data from a large community survey (in Australia) showed that current financial hardship was strongly and independently associated with depression, above the effects of other measures of socio-economic position and demographic characteristics. In contrast, the effect of prior financial difficulty was explained by baseline depression symptoms. There was some evidence that current hardship was more strongly associated with depression for those who were not classified as depressed at baseline than for those identified with depression at baseline. The contemporaneous association between hardship and depression suggests that addressing deprivation could moderate socio-economic inequalities in mental health.

"More recently, **Butterworth et al.** found that baseline mental health status was a significant predictor of overall time spent unemployed for both men and women. However, this overall effect masked gender differences. For women but not men, baseline mental health was associated with risk of experiencing any subsequent unemployment, whereas for men - but not women - who experienced unemployment, mental health was associated with the duration of unemployment.

"The Spanish finding that being a woman increases the risk of mental health problems (in those with a genetic predisposition) may need to be analysed carefully: in my experience of various community mental services in Ireland and the North of England, women make up 60 per cent or more of referrals, but the **Mental Health Foundation** website provides an excellent summary of the factors - positive and negative - influencing women's mental

health. Because they are more likely to be carers, to deal with the family budget on a daily basis, and more likely to work in part-time and/or low paid jobs, economic recession may have a greater psychological impact on some women.

"The findings of the main study in Andalusia will be awaited with great interest by social psychologists, sociologists and mental health professionals who subscribe to a biopsychosocial model, but I hope that clinical psychologists will also consider the relevance of the findings for greater understanding of the experiences of many of their clients."