

## UCU SURVEY OF WORK-RELATED STRESS 2014

Summary of findings by sector (HSE job-related hazards and psychological distress scores and a general picture of working hours only)

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### HIGHER EDUCATION (n = 6,439)

#### Work-related stress

More than three-quarters of UCU members from HE (79%) agreed (46%) or strongly agreed (33%) with the statement 'I find my job stressful'. Less than one respondent in every ten (9%) disagreed (6%) or strongly disagreed (3%). **The proportion of respondents from HE who agreed or strongly agreed that they find their job stressful has increased from 72% in the 2012 survey to 79% in 2014.**

More than half of members from HE (53%) indicated that their general or average level of stress was high (36%) or very high (17%) whereas 37% indicated it was moderate. Only one respondent in every ten from this sector indicated that it was low (9%) or very low (1%). **The proportion of respondents from HE who consider their average level of stress to be very high has risen slightly from 16% in 2012 to 17% in 2014.**

In response to the question 'How often do you experience levels of stress that you find unacceptable?' almost half (48%) responded that they felt this way either 'often' (39%) or 'always' (9%), with a further 37% feeling this way 'sometimes'. Only 1% (i.e. 84 respondents) indicated that they 'never' experience unacceptable levels of stress and 14% 'seldom' felt this way. **There was a considerable increase in the proportion of members from HE that reported experiencing unacceptable levels of stress 'always' or 'often': 39% in 2012 and 48% in 2014.**

#### HSE work-stressor categories

UCU members in higher education reported lower levels of wellbeing than average on all but one of the Health and Safety Executive's stressor categories. The biggest 'wellbeing gaps' related to work demands, change management, management support, relationships and role clarity. The wellbeing gaps for all stressor categories have widened since the previous survey was conducted in 2012 which, in turn, had worsened since the first survey in 2008. Most notably, satisfaction with the quality of workplace relationships has reduced dramatically since 2012. The proportion of respondents who indicated that they are never subjected to personal harassment and

bullying at work has reduced, and perceptions that relationships at work are strained have increased considerably. As in previous surveys commissioned by the UCU, the overall level of control meets the benchmark set by the HSE, but has been gradually diminishing over time.

### Psychological distress

The 2014 survey utilised a widely used measure to assess levels of psychological distress amongst UCU members. This measure was used in a previous study commissioned by the AUT in 2004 (only comparative data from HE members are therefore available). Fifty-three percent of respondents to the earlier survey showed evidence of 'caseness' levels of psychological distress, where some intervention is recommended, but this increased to 60% in the current survey.

### Working hours

On average, working hours have risen further in the two years since the previous survey was conducted. Only 15% of respondents from this sector reported that they typically work no more than their contracted hours. Forty-one percent who are employed on a full time contract indicated that they generally worked over 50 hours a week (an increase from 34% in 2012) and more than one respondent in ten (15%) in excess of 60 hours per week (which is an increase from the 10% found in 2012).

### Work-life balance

The extent to which the demands of work interfere with the personal life of UCU members in HE has increased in the two years since the previous survey was conducted.

## FURTHER EDUCATION (n = 2,251)

### Work-related stress

87% of UCU members from FE agreed (42%) or strongly agreed (45%) with the statement 'I find my job stressful'. Only 5% (disagreed (2%) or strongly disagreed (3%)). **The proportion of members from FE who agreed or strongly agreed that they find their job stressful has increased from 78% in the 2012 survey to 87% in 2014.**

64% of members from FE reported that their general or average level of stress was high (43%) or very high (21%), whereas 31% indicated it was moderate. Only 5% of respondents considered it to be low (4%) or very low (1%). **The proportion of respondents from FE who consider their average level of stress as very high has risen from 16% in 2012 to 21% in 2014.**

In response to the question 'How often do you experience levels of stress that you find unacceptable?', more than one respondent in every six from FE (62%) indicated that they felt this way either 'often' (48%) or 'always' (14%), with a further 31%

responding 'sometimes'. Only 6% 'seldom' and less than 1% (i.e. 14 respondents) indicated that they 'never' experienced unacceptable levels of stress this. **There was a considerable increase in the proportion of members from FE that reported experiencing unacceptable levels of stress 'always' or 'often': i.e. 45% in 2012 and 62% in 2014.**

### **HSE work-stressor categories**

UCU members in FE reported lower wellbeing than average on all of the Health and Safety Executive's stressor categories. The biggest 'wellbeing gaps' related to change management work demands, role clarity, management support and relationships. The wellbeing gaps for all stressor categories have widened since the previous survey was conducted in 2012 – which, in turn, had worsened since the first survey in 2008. Most notably, satisfaction with the quality of workplace relationships has reduced dramatically since 2012. The proportion of respondents who indicated that they are never subjected to and bullying at work has reduced, and perceptions that relationships at work are strained have increased considerably.

### **Working hours**

On average, working hours have risen further in the two years since the previous survey was conducted. Only 14% of UCU members from FE reported that they typically work no more than their contracted hours. Thirty-seven percent of all members from this sector who are employed on a full time contract indicated that they generally worked over 50 hours a week (an increase from 26% in 2012) and more than one respondent in ten (12%) in excess of 55 hours per week.

### **Work-life balance**

The extent to which the demands of work interfere with the personal life of UCU members in FE has increased considerably in the two years since the previous survey was conducted.

## ADULT EDUCATION (n = 220)

### Work-related stress

80% of UCU members from AE agreed (47%) or strongly agreed (33%) with the statement 'I find my job stressful'. Only 8% (disagreed (4%) or strongly disagreed (4%). **The proportion of respondents from AE who agreed or strongly agreed that they find their job stressful has increased from 70% in the 2012 survey to 80% in 2014.**

More than half of members working in AE (51%) reported that their general or average level of stress was high (37%) or very high (14%), whereas 40% indicated it was moderate. Less than one respondents in every ten (8%) indicated that they experienced a low level of stress and no-one reported it being very low. **The proportion of respondents from AE who characterised their average level of stress as very high has risen slightly from 13% in 2012 to 14% in 2014.**

In response to the question 'How often do you experience levels of stress that you find unacceptable?', more than half of the respondents from AE (55%) responded either 'often' (49%) or 'always' (6%), with a further 34% responding 'sometimes'. Only 10% 'seldom' and less than 1% (i.e. 1 respondent) 'never' experience unacceptable levels of stress. **There was a considerable increase in the proportion of respondents from AE that reported experiencing unacceptable levels of stress 'always' or 'often': i.e. 36% in 2012 and 55% in 2014.**

### HSE work-stressor categories

UCU members from AE reported lower wellbeing than average on all of the Health and Safety Executive's stressor categories. The biggest 'wellbeing gaps' related to change management work demands, management support, role clarity and relationships. The wellbeing gaps for all stressor categories have widened since the previous survey was conducted in 2012. Most notably, satisfaction with manager support and the quality of workplace relationships has reduced since 2012. The proportion of respondents who indicated that they are never subjected to bullying at work has reduced markedly.

### Working hours

On average, working hours in AE have risen in the two years since the previous survey was conducted. Only 15% of members from this sector reported that they typically work no more than their contracted hours. More than a quarter of respondents from AE who are employed on a full time contract indicated that they generally worked over 50 hours a week (26%) an increase from 24% in 2012).

### Work-life balance

The extent to which the demands of work interfere with the personal life of UCU members in AE has increased considerably in the two years since the previous survey was conducted.

## PRISON EDUCATION (n = 83)

These findings should be interpreted with caution owing to small numbers in the 2012 and 2014 surveys

### Work-related stress

85% of UCU members from PE agreed (40%) or strongly agreed (45%) with the statement 'I find my job stressful'. Only 5% (disagreed (4%) or strongly disagreed (1%). **The proportion of respondents from PE who agreed or strongly agreed that they find their job stressful has increased from 72% in the 2012 survey to 85% in 2014.**

More than half of members working in PE (53%) reported that their general or average level of stress was high (34%) or very high (23%), whereas 33% indicated it was moderate. Only 9% indicated that it was low (7%) or very low (2%). **The proportion of respondents from PE who characterised their average level of stress as very high has risen considerably from 14% in 2012 to 23% in 2014.**

In response to the question 'How often do you experience levels of stress that you find unacceptable?', more than six respondents from every ten from PE (62%) responded either 'often' (48%) or 'always' (14%), with a further 31% responding 'sometimes'. Only 8% 'seldom' and no-one indicated that they 'never' experienced unacceptable levels of stress. **There was a considerable increase in the proportion of respondents from PE that reported experiencing unacceptable levels of stress 'always' or 'often': i.e. 37% in 2012 and 62% in 2014.**

### Working hours

Working hours have risen further in the two years since the previous survey was conducted. Only just over one-third of members from PE reported that they typically work no more than their contracted hours. Twenty-one percent of all respondents who are employed on a full time contract indicated that they generally worked over 50 hours a week (an increase from 9% in 2012).

### HSE work-stressor categories

UCU members in prison education reported lower wellbeing than average on all of the Health and Safety Executive's stressor categories. The biggest 'wellbeing gaps' related to change management work demands, management support, role clarity and relationships. The well-being gaps for all stressor categories have widened since the previous survey was conducted in 2012. Most notably, wellbeing in relation to change management is particularly low and levels of control and satisfaction with manager support have reduced considerably since 2012.

## **Work-life balance**

The extent to which the demands of work interfere with the personal life of UCU members in AE has increased considerably in the two years since the previous survey was conducted.