

Women, Work and Health

Jennifer Skues and Robert J. Kirkby

School of Behavioural Health Sciences, La Trobe University

Work stress is costly, not only to the well-being of the individual but also to the efficiency of the employing agency and ultimately to the community at large. Although the last half century has seen a substantial increase in women in the paid workforce, investigations into work stress has focused predominantly on the effectiveness and health of males. Although it appears that, in general, women benefit from paid employment, working women can suffer from the increased responsibilities of maintaining both employment and the expected role in the home. Epidemiological data have indicated that not only do women in the larger community have lower mortality and higher morbidity than do men, but also that this pattern holds for those in paid employment. It has been reported that, in particular, health workers are vulnerable to occupational stressors. Given the high proportions of females working in health care, these findings have important implications for these professions. It is hoped that future research workers will pay increased attention to the particular needs of women in the workforce to manage stress.