
Harder Work, Longer Hours Lead to 'Risky' Drinking Habits, Study Finds

21/01/2015



The study, published in the British Medical Journal (BMJ), examined data on over 330,000 people living in 14 different countries. It found that employees who worked longer than the average work week (defined in the study as 48 hours or more) were 11 percent more likely to engage in heavy drinking than their colleagues.

The parameters used by the BMJ researchers to conduct this study defined heavy, or "risky" drinking as over 14 drinks a week for women and over 21 drinks per week for men. The results showed that approximately two million hard-working men and women in countries all around the globe have innate tendencies to drink heavily due to their long hours in the office.

The authors of the study made it clear that no difference in the results were seen between men and women or by age, socioeconomic status or region. The results are seemingly all-encompassing.

"Although the risks were not very high, these findings suggest that some people might be prone to coping with excess working hours by habits that are unhealthy, in this case using alcohol above the recommended levels," said Marianna Virtanen, a researcher at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and a co-author of the study. "Although with this type of study, you can never fully prove the cause and effect relationship."

One conclusion that was definitively reached was that the level of heavy drinking being looked at is deemed risky. Risky alcohol use is an issue in the workplace because it can have adverse

and serious side effects on employees, including absenteeism, inefficiency, poor performance, impaired decision making, damaged customer relations and injuries at work, according to the researchers.

World Tech Today pointed out in a [report](#) that prior studies have shown that increased working hours can also be linked to diabetes risks, stress among other things. Also, alcohol use has been linked in other studies to diabetes, blood pressure problems, sperm quality issues, memory impairment, loss of self-control and more.

Another conclusion drawn from this study is that the results that were found support a long held theory that many workers may be using alcohol as a mental and physical painkiller and also to ease the transition between work and home, according to Cassandra Okechukwu, assistant professor at Harvard School of Public Health and co-author of the report.

The researchers involved with this study point out that the workplace is an important setting for the prevention of alcohol misuse because more than half of the adult population are employed.

On a related note, the study suggests that brief interventions by healthcare personnel in which they would assess an individual's drinking habits in combination with feedback about health risks might be useful in efforts to reduce problems with alcohol use in the working population.

However, authors of the study also note that further research is definitely needed to assess whether preventive interventions against risky alcohol use could benefit from information on working hours.
