

Increase in death rate among managers due to 'economic collapse': study

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Death rates of Japanese men in managerial or professional positions have risen dramatically in 30 years compared to other professions, claims a study published today in the *British Medical Journal*.

The cause of this increase is thought to be due to Japan's economic stagnation and the authors warn that the health of developed nations may suffer due to risks associated with economic changes. They warn that due to the economic collapse, many economies may experience the same thing as Japan.

The authors, from the Kitasato University School of Medicine in Japan, assessed trends in death rates among working-age men aged between the ages of 30 and 59 from 1980 to 2005. The four leading causes of death were: cancer, heart disease, [brain disease](#) and accidental death. All occupations were placed into ten different categories including management, professional, production / labour and unemployed. Data on death rates and occupations were collected from the Japanese Ministry of Health.

Decreases in death rates have been seen in all roles since 1980, except those in managerial and professional jobs which have seen a 70% increase. Production / labour, clerical and sales workers all had the lowest rates of death. Suicide also rapidly increased amongst all occupations with the largest increase in managerial and professional workers.

Public health specialists argue that economic stagnation in Japan is responsible for changes in [work environments](#) and there is now a strong link between stressful lives and health outcomes including mental disorders and [death rates](#). Furthermore, health risks associated with high job demands have become more prevalent in Japan including being overweight, drinking high volumes of alcohol and not doing enough exercise, all of which are risk factors for cancer. This changing work environment may also be primarily responsible for increasing [suicide rates](#) in recent years.

The authors conclude that the major economic crash of the 1990s followed by years of economic stagnation is associated with a rapid increase in death rate patterns in Japan. They suggest the importance of reacting quickly to the health consequences of an [economic collapse](#), especially since the 2008 global economic crisis. The authors remind us that the changes in Japan serve as a reminder that the "health gains in modern societies may not be guaranteed and could be vulnerable to sudden socioeconomic changes".

Provided by British Medical Journal

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