

Thyroid disease isn't the end for your career prospects, report finds

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How employers behave toward workers experiencing thyroid dysfunction could play a critical part in addressing the UK's labor market challenges.

With long-term [sickness](#) on the rise in the UK, researchers at the University of Aberdeen Business School have marked World Thyroid Day (May 25) by releasing [new findings](#) which, for the first time, explore the relationship between [employer](#) sympathy and the labor market prospects of people with thyroid conditions.

One in 20 people in the UK have a thyroid problem, with a significant majority of sufferers being [women](#). Posing serious implications for the physical, mental and [emotional life](#) of those affected, thyroid patients are at greater risk of experiencing long-term sick leave and impaired working ability.

"Long-term sickness has emerged as the predominant reason for withdrawal from the workforce in the UK, accounting for 28% of total economic inactivity. This trend has been further highlighted by a rise in long-term health issues driving more women than men out of work," said Professor Catia Montagna of the Business School's Centre for Labor Market Research.

"A recent TUC report indicates that long-term sickness is the primary cause for women's absence from the labor force, which has resulted in over half a million more women leaving the workforce due to sickness in the past five years.

"This reflects a wider challenge in health-related economic inactivity that disproportionately affects women compared to men. In this context it is clear that renewed efforts are desperately needed to address these disparities and facilitate a more inclusive and supportive work environment."

The study found that patients who were dissatisfied with their thyroid treatment they were receiving were more likely to have a discussion with their employer about their condition.

The detrimental effects of their condition on their engagement levels at work were mitigated, however, when employers were sympathetic towards the challenges they faced.

Where an employer lacked sympathy, the likelihood of the thyroid condition having a minimal impact on employees' work engagement decreased by around 13%.

In contrast, for those whose thyroid conditions have little impact on their ability to work, the likelihood of them receiving a pay rise is around 18% higher, a promotion 17% higher and the probability of moving to a better job also increases by around 8%.

Workers are also found to have a higher probability of working more hours, with the probability increasing by around 12%.

"Thyroid dysfunctions represent a significant challenge to women's overall well-being and can exert adverse effects on their labor market outcomes and labor productivity, from pay rises, promotion and working hours to job mobility" added Centre director, Professor Alexandros Zangelidis

"Understanding the influence of employer sympathy on women's productivity and labor market prospects is crucial for promoting inclusive and supportive work environments.

"Our results highlight the importance of enabling employees to openly discuss their thyroid condition and its impact on their work with employers. This is crucial, as a key result of this research is that when employers are made aware of their workers' thyroid condition and respond with sympathy, the condition's adverse impact on employee engagement is diminished, leading to improved labor market prospects for affected individuals."

The team, along with the Thyroid Trust and other stakeholders, are developing a thyroid workplace toolkit, the first of its kind in the UK.

Designed to raise awareness of how the condition affects individuals, provide a framework that empowers staff to have an open discussion with their employer and provide guidance to businesses on the support that could be offered, it will shortly be piloted.

More information: Discussion Papers in Economics and Finance: [The Impact of Employer Sympathy on Women's Labour Market Prospects: A Focus on Thyroid Conditions.](#)

Provided by University of Aberdeen

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