

PruHealth reveals stressed lifestyles increasing during recession

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PruHealth's bi-annual Vitality Index* - which tracks the nation's health trends - has revealed that the health of the nation has declined by two points since July 2008 to a health rating of just 59%. Nearly one in five (18%) Brits now admit they live unhealthy lifestyles, an increase of four per cent in just six months.**

In the last six months the percentage of Brits saying they are under a significant amount of stress has increased from 38% to 40%. As confidence in the economy has decreased it is perhaps of little surprise that almost half (44%) of Brits report their stress levels have increased.

Half (50%) of these adults disclose that stress is affecting their personal life, with many of those surveyed now considering stress the greatest health risk to the nation (10%). Two in five (41%) people suffering from the condition put their increased stress levels down to money worries while 22% say an increased workload is the main reason for their stress. The same number also cited redundancy worries as a large contributing factor to their levels of stress.

The Vitality Index (http://www.pruhealth.co.uk/insurance/vitality/reduce_premiums) showed that those in poor health have seen the most significant rise in their stress levels, up from 56% to 64%. Those in good health cited only a slight rise from 32% to 34%.

The problems of increased stress are exacerbated by a lack of exercise. According to PruHealth, the number of people reporting that they never exercise has increased from 11% to 14%, with more than a quarter (28%) of adults blaming work commitments.

Commenting on the findings, Dr David Grainger, a senior fellow of the University of Cambridge, said: "In just six months there has been a marked widening of the 'health gap' as lifestyle improvements evaporate. Replicated across the entire adult population of the UK, these findings suggest a staggering two million more people have an unhealthy lifestyle than six months ago. The most likely cause? Economic recession."

Almost half of Brits (47%) say they struggle to eat the recommended "five-a-day" servings of fresh fruit and vegetables; only 24% manage to eat their five portions on a daily basis and alarmingly a fifth (21%) only get their daily intake of fresh fruit and veg once a week or less.

Primarily, it's the perceived cost of exercising and eating healthily that is driving more people to cut exercise and healthy eating out of their daily routines. More than half (56%) of Britons feel they cannot currently afford the added expenses associated with being healthy, such as gym memberships and super-foods, and over one in three (37%) say they find it hard to take care of themselves due to their busy schedule. Sixty one per cent of people simply feel healthy foods are more expensive than the unhealthy alternatives.

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Notes to Editors:

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*The research was carried out on behalf of PruHealth by Ipsos MORI. A nationally representative sample of 3034 GB adults was questioned online in January 2009. Results are weighted to be representative of the GB adult population. Seasonal variations may affect some responses.

**4% of 48million UK adults is 1.9million people

About PruHealth

PruHealth was launched in October 2004 as a joint venture between Prudential and Discovery Holdings from South Africa. Since launch, PruHealth has grown quickly. It now provides health insurance cover (http://www.pruhealth.co.uk/insurance/plans/at_a_glance) for more than 190,000 lives and in a sample of its individual customers, one third said they had changed their behaviour for the better because of its Vitality reward scheme which encourages health insurance (<http://www.pruhealth.co.uk>) policyholders to look after their health.

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