

**Unemployment and mental health in the current economic climate in Ireland.**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of the study was to research if unemployment has a negative effect on mental health of individuals in the current economic climate in Ireland. The sample consisted of 200 adults in Ireland, 100 of whom were unemployed and 100 were employed. Quantitative analysis was used to compare the findings between the two samples based on employment status. Psychological distress and depression levels were compared between the unemployed and employed sample. The findings indicated that significantly higher depression levels and psychological distress were found among those who are unemployed, with unemployed males having the highest levels of negative mental well being. Lower levels of past education were found among the unemployed sample; however a large proportion of this sample indicated that they intend to return to further education in the near future. Unemployment was also found to have a negative effect on relationships and marriage. In addition levels of physiological distress and depression within the unemployed sample were found to be the highest level at 2-6 months of unemployment duration. The findings indicated that unemployment had a severe negative impact on the mental well being of those that were currently unemployed in Ireland. Limitations of this research are discussed and suggestions for future research are proposed.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Much research has been carried out that found those who are unemployed suffer greater mental health problems than those who are employed, such as anxiety, depression and low self esteem, and also that mental health problems increase as a result of unemployment. (Artazcoz, Benach, Borrell & Cortes, 2002; Hammer, 2000; Karsten & Klaus, 2009; Smith, 1985). The relationship between unemployment and mental well-being across various studies, have shown that unemployment has a severe negative impact on an individual's mental health.

Unemployment is not just about financial loss, also lack of structure and identity and has been found to harm an individual's mental health in a number of ways. There is a loss of structure to a day, a loss of status and purpose and a loss of social contacts (Smith, 1985). The world of work is also an area where an individual is judged and perceived socially. Everett Hughes (1951) believed that, '*a man's work is one of the things by which he is judged, and certainly one of the more significant things by which he judges himself*' (Korczynski, Hodson, & Edwards, 2006, p. 424). The world of work is one by which our own identity is played out in a social setting and how our social identity is perceived. Hughes believed that work '*is one of the most important parts of his social identity, of his self; indeed of his fate in the one life he has to live*' (Korczynski et al., 2006, p. 424). The working individual seeks to perform his or her roles in society through the work they perform and without the structure of work; an individual's identity faces many challenges.

### Importance of employment

The importance of employment is one which cannot be overlooked on many levels. Karl Marx described how the activity of work itself is unique to humans and is what separates us from animals; *the human species is different from all other animal species, not because of its consciousness but because it alone produces its own means of subsistence. This uniquely human attribute also provides the medium through which individuals can realize their true potential as humans: in short, the arena of productive activity, the world of work, incorporates the secret of human nature.* (Grint, 2005, p. 86).

It is easy to see from Marx comments how the world of unemployment can affect a human being. As it is an essential part to human existence, the effects of unemployment are far more than lack of income through employment, although economic deprivation has been found to have the strongest association to mental health problems (Hammer, 2000). Those who experience unemployment face many levels of problems, as largely the working environment ‘*can be an area for self-development, a source of social ties, a determinant of status and a shaper of consciousness*’ (Korczynski et al., 2006, p. 424), and unemployment will have a negative effect in all these areas on the individual. Jahoda suggested a latent deprivation model which recognises five aspects of unemployment which individuals experience apart from income which is the primary function of employment. The five aspects include, time structure, a sense of collective purpose and experience, social contact, social identity, and regular activity. Loss of employment therefore leads to loss of human experience in these five areas, which in turn has a negative effect on mental well being of those unemployed individuals (Jahoda, 1981).

### Unemployment in Ireland

A recent study in Ireland, The 2009 Pfizer Health Index, indicated that unemployment rates in Ireland have risen to over 450,000 in the past year and that individuals who have recently become unemployed are four times more likely to suffer from depression when compared with the rest of the general population of Ireland. The situation numerous of these individuals face has been unprecedented in Ireland. Many individuals in this position believe that the supports they are receiving are somewhat inadequate and short term focussed. Policy responses to the rapid rise in unemployment have been few and largely criticised. With further declines in employment and rise in unemployment predicted until at least 2011, a sustainable long term successful and innovative support system needs to be put in place as early as possible in Ireland. Unemployment and mental health is an issue which much research has been carried out and many findings have been discussed, however further research in this area needs to be addressed in Ireland with findings providing a basis for debate for policy reform and support networks for the growing number who find themselves in a situation of unemployment.

The Celtic Tiger in Ireland was one of unprecedented growth, which had a number of effects on Irish society and the Irish economy and in particular the labour market in Ireland. Unemployment in Ireland which had been a huge burden in Irish society during the 1980's fell dramatically: '*the unemployment rate fell from a peak of 17% in the 1980's to under 4% in 2001*' (Clinch, Convery, & Walsh, 2002, p. 27). However in late 2008, the Irish economy entered a period of recession after twelve years of annual growth, and as the unemployment rates continue to rise on daily basis, '*the employment level in 2015 is expected to be lower than in 2008 by 77,000 or 3.8%*' (FÁS/ESRI, 2010, p. 43). Unemployment in Ireland will continue to be a real problem for those individuals who find themselves in this situation and for society. Some areas of society may perceive that unemployment is the fault of

those that are unemployed, and this stigmatises the unemployed as being lazy and not actively seeking work, which is simply not true in the rapid economic decline that is occurring globally.

There must however in Ireland, be a move and strategy to remove the stigmatism attached to being unemployed, as this is widely viewed as being the responsibility of these individuals. Pressure from family, friends, neighbours and society also add to the stress of being unemployed and job seeking can often become a demoralising and humiliating experience which is added to by those who view unemployed individuals as ‘ ‘*social welfare scroungers*’ or ‘*defrauders*’ ‘ (Breen, 1988, p. 9), placing further stress, tension and pressure on those who are unemployed. Considerable improvements and innovative measures need to be implemented to improve the structure of unemployment supports nationally, as this group of unemployment continues to grow in numbers daily. What is also critical is early intervention and support for those who are recently unemployed, as previous research has shown that the longer an individual remains unemployed the greater the negative effects on their mental well-being. In addition to this is the current state of the job market, with those who have become recently unemployed and have sparse employment opportunities available.

The high cost of unemployment benefit coupled with the mental health costs provides a real burden to the state financially and better understanding and research in the area can provide a platform for which a programme for training and support with a view to employment can be achieved. The real dilemma for many unemployed individuals receiving unemployment social welfare is the threat of loss of many of their social welfare payment should they receive any paid employment. Early intervention is crucial when an individual becomes unemployed and faces an uncertain future. Policy reform and partnership approach is needed to face the unemployment situation in Ireland, and sooner rather than



later. The National Economic and Social Council (NESC), recognises the importance of immediate action and dialogue between government departments and agencies and argues that it is crucial for Ireland to become a country that recognises the needs of the unemployed sector on a national basis:

*‘‘the high degree of uncertainty - particularly about the impact of conventional policy measures - provides further reasons for constructive, collective discussion of the problems and their solution. Countries which are capable of conducting such a dialogue and implementing a coherent and agreed response quickly are likely to come through current difficulties better than those which do not’’* (National Economic & Social Development Office [NESC], 2009, p. ix).

National dialogue with a view to new measures and efficient policy initiatives particularly in the area of education and retraining are needed immediately to ensure that those who are recently unemployed and those who are unsuccessfully seeking employment for the first time, do not become long term unemployed statistic into the future. However, while a large amount of research in this area of unemployment and its effects on mental health have been carried out internationally, the equivalent cannot be said for research in Ireland which is seen to be comparatively limited (Carlson, Fellows & Maslach, 1989).

### *Economy and mental health*

Emile Durkheim put forward the idea that during a period of rapid economic and social change, people feel detached from society and social morality disintegrates. He believed that an anomic division of labour would occur during a period when there is ‘*widespread economic failure*’ (Morrison, 1995, p. 149). He believed that social solidarity diminishes when this occurs. The current economic climate in Ireland is one which has contributed to unemployment on a large scale. However during times of

recession, many of those who are currently employed also face mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. Research has shown that during times of recession adults are more likely to suffer from stress related illnesses (Collier, 2009).

Research carried out in Canada found that *‘more than 40% of working adults in Canada are worried they will lose their jobs, and 1 in 3 are having trouble sleeping and experiencing overall anxiety’* (Collier, 2009, p. 3), indicating that in times of recession both those who are employed and unemployed suffer mental stress. This can be due to the threat of loss of work for those who are employed during times of economic downturn which Ireland is currently experiencing. The 2009 Pfizer Health Index, discussed how reduced pay and reduced working hours also affects individuals self esteem, not just solely job loss, and the economic recession in Ireland had impacted negatively on 34% of Irish households, through job loss, reduced pay and reduced hours of work. The attitudes of those recently unemployed in Ireland feel that *‘the recession is having a significant self esteem impact and causing domestic tension and ill health’* (The Pfizer Health Index, 2009, p. 26).

#### Previous research & literature review

Previous research to this however has largely focused on the health effects of unemployment on males solely, as males were traditionally prevalent in the labour market. As the labour market is rapidly changing, with this movement, gender roles have also shifted. Traditionally masculinity was labour based through manual labour particularly during the Fordism era of 1916. However, the basis of the labour market has changed and less manual labour is prevalent with a more knowledge based labour market being sought. Through this change, gender roles have also changed and many males employed and unemployed find that the traditional labour that defined their roles in society have fragmented and

this can cause a serious threat to their mental health; *'The World Health Organisation identified the problems experienced by adolescent boys as a result of changes of the roles of boys and men in society, accompanied by changes in developmental and economic possibilities and opportunities'* (Burke & McKeon, 2007, p. 68). Coupled with this change in the roles of males in society is the lack of employment and therefore economic possibilities.

In a traditional nuclear family in Ireland in past generations, the male was the main source of income through employment. However, the face of employment has changed with females now participating heavily in the work force, *'between 1993 and 2004, the proportion of women aged 15 to 64 in paid employment has increased from 38 per cent to 56 per cent'* (Fahey, Russell, Whelan, 2007, p. 200). With this change in the labour force comes a struggle for many males who once realised their roles in society and in the labour force through traditional manual labour;

*'As capitalism shifts from production to consumption and the nuclear family of an earlier capitalist era begins to fragment...new configurations of power relations are creating a space in which the old model of two distinct genders is beginning to fray at the edges'* (Burkitt, 1998, p.502).

This proposes many difficulties for traditional ideas of masculinity for many males, and may be directly linked to growing rates of suicide; particularly in Ireland among young males, as unemployment itself is known to increase the risk of suicide (Philippe, 1998).

Unemployment can be extremely limiting for adults to achieve feelings of achievement, self fulfilment, satisfaction and personal accomplishment. Males in particular who are unemployed may have increased feelings of *'guilt about failure to provide for one's family'* (Linn et al., 1985, p. 504),

which can have a severe effect on mental health, particularly if the male is the primary or sole earner in a household as has been traditionally. Furthermore this can also add to problems within families, marriages and relationships. Previous research has also shown that ‘*unemployment has its greatest impact on the mental health of married men*’ (Whelan, Hannan & Creighton, 1991, p. 3).

### Literature review

A study comparing three hundred unemployed males, and three hundred employed males with matching age and race found major differences in the mental health between the two groups. Those males that were unemployed suffered significantly greater levels of depression, anxiety and concerned with bodily symptoms. However some unemployed males coped with the loss of employment better than other unemployed males due to support from friends and family. (Linn et al., 1985).

Research carried out in 1991 by the Economic and Social Research Institute in Dublin, covered a wide variety of issues surrounding unemployment. In relation to marital status, employment status and gender, it was found that unemployed married men suffer the greatest negative effect on their mental health, whereas with females the effect is greatest on those that are single. The research also found that the length of unemployment is positively associated with psychological distress (Whelan, Hannan & Creighton, 1991). Similarly previous research carried out in Spain in 1994, examined gender differences in the effects of unemployment on mental health. This research found that ‘*unemployment had more of an effect on the mental health of men, than on that of women*’ (Artazcoz, et al., 2002, p. 1).

Similarly Warr, suggests that physiological well being is severely negatively affected by being unemployed. Furthermore an unemployed individual faces many additional challenges, such as taking

on the identity and characteristics of being unemployed, which itself can cause damage to individuals self esteem and mental well being. This new role can include seeking and being rejected by job applications, seeking financial allowances, and registering as being unemployed (Warr, 1984, p. 425).

In relation to the affect of unemployment and families research carried out by Fagin in 1981, assessed the effect unemployment had on twenty two families when unemployment became a factor in a household. The research showed that the health of the whole family deteriorated after the main earner in the family became unemployed. Moderate to severe depression was found in the families when unemployment became an issue. Unemployment also was found to have a severe effect on marital relationships with some of the couples becoming separated after one spouse became unemployed (Fagin, 1981).

#### *Gender differences in employment/unemployment*

This research considered gender difference in relation to unemployment and mental health in the current economic climate in Ireland. Through the process and structure of socialisation, gender, gender identity and gender roles of masculinity and femininity are formed. Much of this process and structure of socialisation is linked to the labour force, and these roles are realised through employment. However with unemployment or indeed the threat of unemployment the acting of these social roles is threatened and the task of fulfilling gender roles in society becomes intensely difficult;

*“Clearly, gender socialization is very powerful, and challenges to it can be upsetting. Once a gender is ‘assigned’, society expects individuals to act like ‘females’ and ‘males’. It is in the practices of everyday life that’s these expectations are fulfilled and reproduced”*

(Giddens, 2006, p. 172).

Through the process of employment gender roles are largely fulfilled particularly for males, and without the structure of employment individuals have one less means of fulfilling their gender roles socially.

Previous research carried out in Sweden has found that men value the psychosocial value of employment more than women do, (Nordenmark, 1999), perhaps reinforcing the traditional notion of a male dominated work force, with males traditionally being the main earner and economic provider in a traditional nuclear family. Unemployment has also been found to have a negative effect on family relationships and increases marriage difficulties. Families can find themselves in situation of economic hardship or poverty, and parental roles of providing economically for their offspring can be significantly reduced often leading to depression (Ross & Huber, 1985).

#### Length of unemployment

Previous evidence also suggests that the long term unemployed, generally twelve months or more, suffer greater mental health issues than those recently unemployed (Hammer, 1993).

Furthermore there is a certain agreement of the psychological effects of length of unemployment, and that stages of unemployment are a basic concept in the account of the relationship between length of unemployment and the negative effect this has on mental well being;

*“first there is shock, which is followed by an active hunt for a job, during which the individual is still optimistic and unresigned; he still maintains an unbroken attitude. Second when all efforts fail, the individual becomes pessimistic, anxious and suffers active distress: this is the most crucial state of all. And third the individual becomes fatalistic and adapts himself to his new state but with a narrower scope. He now has a broken attitude”* (Eisenberg & Larsfield, 1938, p. 378).

It is easy to see from the above stages of unemployment that the longer an individual remains unemployed the worse the negative effect that this has on their mental well being. Furthermore the second stage is crucial for intervention as when all efforts to find employment fails, this is when the individual begins to suffer distress that may worsen the longer they are unemployed. At this second stage psychological support is needed along with a long term strategy to reduce the negative effects of unemployment on all aspects of an individual's life. Previous research carried out in Sweden has found that unemployed men and women who are actively seeking work have higher risks of poor mental health, than of those who are weakly motivated to source employment (Nordenmark, 1999). In addition those that are long term unemployed are also at a greater risk of being unemployed in the future than those who are recently unemployed (Vuorela, 1993).

### *Mental well being*

Unemployment is also long associated with social exclusion, however previous research carried out in Scandinavian countries indicated that unemployed youth suffer less social isolation than older adults, and a high level of social integration leads to moderate mental health, whereas social exclusion and isolation leads to greater mental health symptoms (Hammer, 2000). This could be due to the fact that many younger unemployed adults will have family supports both financially and socially, that older unemployed adults are less likely to have. Older unemployed adults are also perhaps more likely to have far greater financial commitments and responsibilities such as mortgages and dependant children and spouses which can further increase anxiety and fears over their economic situation adding further pressure to their mental well being.

### Education

Education as a factor in employment and indeed unemployment is one which previous research has rarely included and indeed further research around this area need to be carried out in Ireland. A study in Lithuania found that those who have a higher level of education reduced the risk of depression when these individuals are unemployed (Stankunas, Kalediene, Starkuviene, & Kapustinskiene, 2006). The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) previously carried out research to help identify those that are at risk of long term unemployment and recognised that one of the most important risk factors in becoming unemployed is having a relatively low education (ESRI, 2009).

The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed (INOUE) recognised that many issues are prevalent in the area of education and training for the unemployed sector. Large sectors of the unemployed in Ireland are former construction workers, who were largely early school leavers with no third level education. Future employment opportunities for this sector in particular look bleak, particularly without further education, re-training and up-skilling. The INOUE also recognised that a need for an integrated approach between government departments and agencies to support the unemployed sector is needed immediately (The Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed, 2009).

The FÁS/ESRI Forecasting Study, predicts that by the year 2015, over 45% of those in employment will hold a third level qualification (FÁS/ESRI, 2010, p. 61). Therefore those with lower levels of education will be at a complete disadvantage in the labour market in Ireland. The need to provide an integrated return to education system for those that are unemployed is more than ever paramount if they are to be included in this group of employment in the future. Interestingly past



research has found that those who are unemployed and return to education or employment have not experienced better mental health than those continuously unemployed (Hammer, 2000).

### *Aims and objectives*

This research examined the relationship between mental health and unemployment in the current economic climate in Ireland and focused on the following areas: a comparison of the mental health of adults sampled based on whether they are unemployed or employed; examined gender differences in relation to unemployment and mental health; examined if past education has an effect on mental health, and provided an indication whether those who are unemployed intend to return to education and training in Ireland. Furthermore this research considered if employment status had an effect on relationships and marriages, and analysed if this effect has a negative or positive outcome. Research was also carried out to determine if age plays a factor in an unemployed adult's mental health in the current climate in Ireland. This research was concerned to find out what it really means from a psychological perspective to be unemployed in the current economic climate in Ireland. Further analysis was carried out to consider if the unemployed sample and indeed the employed sample are hopeful about their futures given the current economic situation in Ireland. Furthermore the current economic situation in Ireland at the present time is unprecedented, as the nature of the current recession seems to be unlike any other experienced. This research highlighted the difficulties with unemployment in the current difficult economic situation.

Hypotheses;

Hypothesis 1: Unemployed adults suffer greater mental health issues than those who are employed.

Hypothesis 2: Unemployed males suffer greater mental health issues than unemployed females.

Hypothesis 3: Unemployment will have a negative effect on marital status.

Hypothesis 4: The longer unemployed will suffer greater mental health problems.

Hypothesis 5: Unemployed adults will have a lower level of past education compared to employed adults.

Hypothesis 6: A higher level of education reduces the negative effect on unemployed individuals' mental health.

Hypothesis 7: Unemployed older adults suffer greater negative mental health issues.

## **METHODOLOGY:**

### Materials

A questionnaire booklet was distributed (Appendix 1), which included General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) and Becks Depression Inventory II which was used to measure mental well being. With the GHQ sixty questions were used to measure the mental health of participants. The validity of the questionnaire and subsequent measure and thresholds has been recognised and accepted internationally. It is a self-administered questionnaire designed to measure the level of psychological distress in individuals. The GHQ is designed to test participants in the present, and designed to test symptoms of psychological disorder rather than personality traits (Goldberg, 1972.) The higher the score on the general health measure, the greater the probability of clinical disorder. Becks depression inventory is a self-administered questionnaire designed to assess the degree of depression in adults. The questionnaire consists of twenty one questions designed to measure the symptoms of depression. The following cutoffs are suggested for levels of depression: 0-13 – minimal, 14-19 – mild, 20-28 – moderate, 29-63 – severe.

### Participants

The total sample consisted of 200 participants, 100 employed and 100 unemployed adults. The participants were selected from a sample of unemployed adults in Ireland and from a sample of employed adults in Ireland. The employed sample consisted of 44 males aged between the ages of 19 – 65 years and 56 females between the ages of 19 – 65 years. The unemployed sample consisted of 50 males between the ages of 19-65 years and 50 females between the ages of 19-65 years. From the employed sample 18 adults were in the age category 19-25 years, 43 adults in the category 26-35 years, 18 in the category 36-45 years and 21 in the category 46-65 years. In the unemployed sample 15 adults

were in the age category 19-25 years, 24 in the category 26-35 years, 32 in the category 36-45 years and 29 in the category 46-65 years. The breakdown of the sectors worked in by the 100 employed participants is as follows: 1 of the sample was self employed, 44 worked in the public sector, 54 worked in the private sector and 1 in worked in another sector.

### Design

The design used was a non experimental quantitative design using correlation. Descriptive statistics were used to analyse differences and similarities between various groups. Independent t-test analysis were used to test gender differences in relation to mental health and to test psychological distress differences between those who are employed and those who are unemployed. The dependant variables were psychological distress and depression. The independent variables were gender and employment. Descriptive statistics were used to run frequencies and describe the data and independent t-tests were used to analyse differences between various groups.

### Procedure

Questionnaires for the unemployed sample were distributed through unemployment offices nationwide by Fás, and also by the Blanchardstown Centre for the Unemployed in Dublin 15. Questionnaires for the employed sample were distributed to work colleagues and employed family members and friends. The participants were made aware of ethical concerns, and were assured of confidentiality at all times. Also they were assured that all their answers would remain strictly anonymous and also that they had the right to withdraw from participation at any time. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, (SPSS) 15 software, was used to analyse the data and test the null hypotheses.

## **RESULTS**

### *Descriptive statistics*

#### *Hypothesis 1:*

One of the main research questions was to find if unemployed adults suffer greater levels of mental health issues than those who are employed. Based on the results of all participants from the general health questionnaire measure and the depression measure significant differences were found. On both measures those who are unemployed scored higher on both the General health questionnaire; with employed scoring (M=43.4, SD=16.7) and the depression measure (M=4.73, SD=4.811), compared to unemployed participants general health (M=59.5, SD=25.89) and depression measure (M=11.58, SD=9.80).

### *Inferential statistics*

Correlation was used between the unemployed and employed sample based on the depression measure and the general health measure to indicate the relationship between depression and general health. The relationship between the employed participants on both the depression and the general health measure shows that there is a strong positive highly significant correlation,  $r = .678$ ,  $n = 100$ ,  $p < .01$ . Similarly the unemployed sample had a strong positive highly significant correlation,  $r = .624$ ,  $n = 100$ ,  $p < .01$ .

Correlation between genders was used to indicate their relationship with the depression and general health measure. Both genders when taken as a whole sample showed similar results on both the depression and general health measure. The sample of males showed a strong positive highly significant correlation,  $r = .674$ ,  $n = 94$ ,  $p < .01$ . The sample of females showed a strong positive highly significant correlation,  $r = .685$ ,  $n = 106$ ,  $p < .01$ .

**Table 1:**

*Showing levels of depression and general health for employed and unemployed participants*

	Employed	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
General health	Yes	100	43.44	16.70
	No	100	59.50	25.89
depression	Yes	100	4.73	4.81
	No	100	11.58	9.80

The above table shows means scores were higher among those who are unemployed for both the depression ( $m=11.58$ ,  $sd=9.80$ ), and general health measure ( $m=59.50$ ,  $sd=25.89$ ) with a higher score on this measure indicating higher levels of poor general health. Significant differences in the descriptive statistics show that depression levels and level of poor general health are higher among the unemployed sample. Further t-test analysis indicated that this difference was significant,  $t(198)=-6.270$ ,  $p<.01$

#### Descriptive statistics

##### **Been feeling unhappy or depressed:**

A measure of the general health questionnaire which measures psychological distress, asked if participants have been feeling unhappy or depressed. When comparisons were made between employed and unemployed participants, again those that are unemployed scored higher with 7% feeling unhappy or depressed much more than usual, compared with only 1% of the employed sample. Also 21% of the unemployed sample felt unhappy or depressed rather more than usual compared with only 8% of the employed sample.

##### **Felt constantly under strain:**

Another measure of the general health questionnaire asked participants if they felt constantly under strain. The unemployed sample scored higher on this measure also with 7% of the unemployed sample feeling constantly under strain much more than usual, compared with 1% of the employed

sample. 35% of the unemployed sample felt constantly under strain rather more than usual compared with 14% of the employed sample.

**Feel like a failure:**

A measure of the depression inventory asked participants if they feel like a failure. When comparing unemployed and employed participants responses, 82% of the employed sample did not feel like a failure compared with 60% of the unemployed sample. 31% of unemployed participants felt they failed more than they should have compared with only 15% of the employed participants.

**Found yourself wishing you were dead and away from it all:**

On the general health questionnaire the participants were asked if they find themselves wishing you were dead and away from it all. The results indicated that 97% of the employed sample responded not at all, compared with 69% of the unemployed sample. None of the employed sample responded at the higher measure of this question; however 3% of the unemployed sample answered rather more than usual, and 2% answered much more than usual.

**Discouraged about my future:**

The depression inventory asked participants if they feel discouraged about their future: 75 % of the employed sample responded that they are not discouraged about their future, compared with 59% of the unemployed sample. 25% of the employed sample and 35% of the unemployed sample feel more discouraged about their future than they used to be. None of the employed sample scored on the higher range of this question, however 4% of the unemployed sample responded that they do not expect things to work out for them and 2% felt their future is hopeless and will only get worse.

**Been finding life a struggle at times:**

On the GHQ questionnaire participants were asked if they have been finding life a struggle at times. Results indicated that 30% of the employed sample responded not at all, compared with 12% of the unemployed sample. 13 % of the employed sample responded rather more than usual compared with 34% of the unemployed sample. No employed participants responded much more than usual however 7% of the unemployed sample answered that they have been finding life a struggle much more than usual.

**Felt that you are playing a useful part in things:**

On the general health measure questionnaire participants were asked if they felt that you are playing a useful part in things: 89% of the employed sample felt the same as usual, compared to 52% of the unemployed sample. 6% of the employed sample felt less useful than usual compared with 28% of the unemployed sample. None of the employed participants felt much less useful when asked if felt that they are playing a useful part in things, whereas 8% of the unemployed sample felt this way. However 12% of the unemployed sample and just 5% of the employed sample responded more so than usual when asked if they felt they were playing a useful part in things. Overall the results show that 36% of unemployed participants felt that they were not playing a useful part in things, compared to just 6% of the employed sample, indicating that the unemployed sample felt much less valuable in terms of their participation in society.

**Been feeling hopeful about your own future:**

The general health questionnaire asked participants if they have been feeling hopeful about your own future: the unemployed participants felt less hopeful about their future, with 26% of the



unemployed sample feeling less hopeful than usual compared with 19% of the employed sample. Also 14% of the unemployed sample felt much less hopeful about their own future whereas none of the employed participants did.

**Found the idea of taking your own life kept coming into your mind:**

A measure in the general health questionnaire asked participants if they found the idea of taking your own life kept coming into your mind; 96% of the employed sample responded definitely not compared with 64% of the unemployed sample. 2% of the employed sample responded that it has crossed my mind, compared with 9% of the unemployed sample. None of the employed sample responded that they found the idea of taking your own life kept coming into your mind, whereas 3% of the unemployed sample responded that it definitely has.

*Hypothesis 2: Unemployed males suffer greater mental health issues than unemployed females.*

**Table 2:**

*Showing levels of depression and general health for employed and unemployed participants based on gender*

Employed		Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Yes	depression	Male	44	5.00	4.96
		Female	56	4.51	4.72
	General health	Male	44	44.84	18.16
		Female	56	42.33	15.53
No	depression	Male	50	13.22	10.38
		Female	50	9.94	9.00
	General health	Male	50	62.40	26.32
		Female	50	56.60	25.39

On the depression measure the employed sample males scored higher on the depression measure (M=5.00, SD=4.96), with females scoring (M=4.51, SD=4.7). However both unemployed males and females scored higher than employed participants with unemployed males again scoring higher, (M=13.22, SD=10.38) and unemployed females scoring (M=9.94, SD=9.00). Unemployed males scored the highest measure of depression, more than double that of employed males and indeed employed females. On the general health measure employed females scored the lowest with (M=42.33, SD=15.53), compared with employed males scoring (M=44.84, SD=18.16). Both unemployed males and females scored higher on the general health totals when compared with the employed sample. Again on this measure unemployed males scored higher than unemployed females with males scoring (M=62.40, SD=26.32), unemployed females scoring (M=56.60, SD=25.39). Further t-test analysis indicated that this difference was significant,  $t(98)=.496$ ,  $p<.01$

*Hypothesis 3: Unemployment will have a negative effect on marital status*

Variation on marital status was evident between the employed and the unemployed sample. The unemployed sample had the highest levels of separated and divorced participants with 6% of the unemployed sample being divorced compared with 1% of the employed sample. 10% of the unemployed sample is separated compared with 2% of the employed sample. 75% of the employed participants are either in a relationship or married compared to just 55% of the unemployed participants.

*Hypothesis 4: The longer unemployed will suffer greater mental health problems.*

In the unemployed sample 7 participants had been unemployed for less than 1 month, 13 participants for 2-6 months, 22 participants for 7-12 months, and 59 participants for 12 + months.

When the means for the unemployed sample were calculated unemployment duration depression levels were highest at 2-6 months of unemployment, (M=13.61, SD=8.99), and the highest level in the general health also (M=63.23, SD=20.24). Depression levels were at the lowest at less than one month of unemployment duration, (M=8.42, SD=7.97) and general health measure was at its lowest at 12+ months of unemployment duration, (M=58.72, SD=29.68).

*Hypothesis 5: Unemployed adults will have a lower level of past education compared to employed adults.*

When comparing the past education of participants based on their current employment status, noticeable differences occur. 71% of the unemployed sample were educated to just a secondary school level, compared with just 35% of the employed sample. 60% of the employed sample were educated to a third level standard and hold a diploma or a degree compared to just 25% of the unemployed sample. However, 65% of those who were employed already have an education to a third or fourth level compared with just 29% of those that are unemployed. Significant difference is apparent in the percentage of those who were unemployed intending to return to further education. 70% of those that were unemployed intend to return to further education or already have, compared to just 49% of the employed sample. 29% of the unemployed sample indicated that they don't intend to return to further education, compared to 51% of the employed sample

*Hypothesis 6: A higher level of education reduces the negative effect on unemployed individuals' mental health.*

Using the depression measure the highest levels of depression were found among those who are unemployed and have the highest level of education either to a masters, or doctorate level, (M=16.50,

SD=6.45). The second highest level of depression was found in the group that were unemployed and educated to a level of Diploma or degree, (M=12.44, SD=11.54).

Using the general health measure the highest total was again found among those who are currently unemployed and have been educated to a masters, or doctorate level (M=73.25, SD=16.31). Similar to the depression measure the second highest score on the general health measure was those who are unemployed and educated to either diploma or degree level, (M=63.40, SD=24.78). In contrast to these findings, among the employed sector those who were educated to a masters, or doctorate level had the lowest score on both the depression measure, (M=4.40, SD=4.56), and the general health measure, (M=39.80, SD=17.89).

*Hypothesis 7: Unemployed older adults suffer greater negative mental health issues*

Using the age groups 16-18 years, 19-25 years and 26-35 years as the younger age group, and the age groups 36-45 years, 46-65 years and 65 years plus as the older age groups, these two groups were compared by using the depression measure and the general health measure. For the unemployed younger adults the depression total (M=11.00, SD=7.65) and general health total (M=62.51, SD=18.75). For the unemployed older adults the depression total was slightly higher (M=11.95, SD=11.01), but was lower on the general health score than the younger adults age group, (M=57.57, SD=29.56).

## **DISCUSSION**

One of the main areas of this study was to research the effect that unemployment has on mental health. The main means by which this was tested was comparing those adults that are unemployed with adults that were employed. This research was also concerned with the concept that unemployed men suffer greater mental health issues than unemployed women and also researched if there was a negative effect from unemployment on relationships and marriages. Customarily males are the main income in a traditional nuclear family and unemployment can threaten this masculine position of providing and caring for their family. Unemployment can also have a negative effect on marriages and relationship and this research was keen to ascertain if this is the case in Ireland at present when comparing relationship status to the employed sample. Furthermore this research was concerned with those that are long term unemployed (twelve months or more), to assess if those in this situation suffer greater negative mental well being than those that are short term unemployed (one month to eleven months).

A large concern of this research was the role that education plays in the labour market, both in the lives of those that employed and unemployed, and the role that the level of past education had on the participant's employment status. Typically unemployed adults have a lower level of past education when compared to those that are employed.

Additionally this research was keen to ascertain if the level that the unemployed participants were educated to has a bearing on their current mental well being, and if a higher level of past education had a positive effect on an unemployed adults well being. Education is a key factor to retraining and re-skilling for a radically changing labour force, and also provides a platform for self achievement,

improving self esteem and improving employment possibilities. This research was also keen to learn if both those who are employed and unemployed intend to return to further education in both the short term and the long term as this would give an indication of what support systems need to be put in place nationally for those who wish to achieve to return to further education at all levels.

Another area this research was concerned with was to ascertain if age had an effect on the mental well being of those that are unemployed. Previous research has show that older unemployed adults generally suffer greater negative mental health issues when compared to those that are in a younger age category and unemployed. This research was keen to determine if this is the case in Ireland particularly in the current economic climate with many younger now unemployed adults and find themselves in an unprecedented situation with minimal intervention and support from any national network or system.

### *Summary of results*

One of the main research questions was to find if unemployed adults suffered greater levels of mental health issues than those who are employed. Results from this research indicated that unemployed adults suffered greater depression and scored a higher level on the general health measure, which indicates psychological distress, which strongly suggests that unemployment has a severe negative impact on the mental health of adults. This is concurrent with past research in this area which established that those who are unemployed suffer greater mental health problems than those who are employed. Correlations between the depression measure and the general health measure show that there was a highly significant relationship between these two measures, indicating that depression correlates with high levels of psychological distress regardless of employment status. Correlations between genders and the depression and general health measure, similarly showed that depression correlates

positively and significantly with psychological distress for both males and females across the whole sample. The results of the depression measure for those that are unemployed were more than double that of the employed sample and gave an indication that a minimal level of depression was evident (however the measure of  $M=11.58$  is at the higher end of the scale of cut-offs for depression levels measure with 0-13 measuring minimal, and 14-19 measuring mild). However when comparing the employed and unemployed sample, a large disparity was evident with unemployed adults suffering over double the rate of depression of those that employed. Similarly on the general health measure unemployed adults suffered a greater degree of negative well being and psychological distress when compared to the employed sample, indicating that unemployment causes a negative effect on general well being and mental well being.

Comparisons of feeling unhappy or depressed between the employed and unemployed sample again indicated that those that were unemployed suffered greater unhappiness and depression than those who were employed. The unemployed sample were nearly three times more unhappy or depressed rather more than usual, when compared with the employed sample indicating that unemployed adults are three times more likely to suffer from feeling of unhappiness and feeling of depression than those adults who are employed. The unemployed adults also felt they were constantly under strain rather more than the employed sample, with more than a third, 35% of the unemployed sample feeling under strain rather more than usual compared with just 14% of the employed sample, indicating that unemployment causes a greater degree of constant strain on individuals. When participants were asked if they felt they were playing a useful part in things 12% of unemployed felt that they were playing a useful part in things compared to just 5% of the employed participants. This could be due to the fact that the unemployed

sample had more time to volunteer, more time for recreation and perhaps more time to spend with their families and children.

Feelings of failure were also evident more so in the unemployed sample, with double the number of unemployed adults feeling that they have failed more than they should have compared with the employed sample. Feelings of suicide may be evident when respondents were asked if they found themselves wishing they were dead and away from it all. At the highest measure of this question 5% of the unemployed sample responded negatively compared to zero of the employed sample indicating perhaps that 5% of the unemployed sample had feelings of suicide and overwhelming psychological distress. Furthermore an additional measure in this area asked participants if they found the idea of taking your own life kept coming into your mind. The number of unemployed participants that felt that it has crossed their mind, or definitely has crossed their mind, was six times greater than the employed sample, indicating a major difference in the mental well being between both groups. Therefore hypothesis 1 which proposed that unemployed adults suffer greater mental health issues than those who are employed, based on previous research in the area, was supported. The disturbing statistic that shows a relationship between unemployment, mental health and suicide in Ireland is that ‘*unemployment is still associated with about a 70 per cent greater suicide risk*’, with individuals who are unemployed being ‘*three times more likely to consider suicidal behaviour*’ (Culliton, 2009, para.1). Although recognition for suicide prevention programmes has been prevalent in Ireland in recent times, it remains largely a focus of health services, where a particular stigma remaining somewhat attached to it. The necessity in Ireland remains to create a constructive and practical approach, to remove the stigma, and to create an open and effective dialogue in the area.



As is concurrent with past research carried out to ascertain gender differences in depression and mental health of those that are unemployed, and with this current research, both males and females who were unemployed had significantly higher levels of both depression and psychological distress measures than employed males and females. Both genders in the unemployed sample scored almost double of those in the employed category in the depression measure, indicating that with unemployment both genders suffered almost double the levels of depression when compared to employed males and females. Unemployed males however, as was found in previous research, suffered greatest psychological distress. Therefore hypothesis 2 which suggested that unemployed men suffer greater mental health issues than women was supported. This can be due to many factors such as the traditional masculine role of males being the main income and provider for their families even in Ireland today. Many males experience feeling of guilt and distress at the failure to provide economically for their family. Traditional male dominated areas of employment such as the construction industry, has experienced a huge decline in number of employment in the current economic climate in Ireland, with many of these males having no third level education or training in any other skill or sector. Unemployment proposes many difficulties for traditional ideas of masculinity for many males, and may be directly linked to growing rates of suicide, particularly among young males. Gender constraints of masculinity also upholds men's reluctance to '*disclose emotional matters to anyone*' (Cleary, 2005, p. 159). To disclose emotional matters would be too un-masculine, and this masculine trait has been formed by society, '*disclosing is un-masculine behaviour*' (Cleary, 2005, p. 160).

Masculine traits are traditionally about strength and being the main breadwinner and provider and breadwinner for their families, and to disclose any feeling of psychological distress would be seen as a weakness, and contradict the traditional masculine gender trait. Gender socialisation has enforced

what is considered masculine, even psychological distress and depression related illnesses are seen as a weakness by males themselves even in the arena of unemployment, where: *'men view depression as a threat to their masculinity'* (Burke & McKeon, 2007, p. 68). It is evident that unemployment needs to be tackled as an issue independent of any other stigma which it may be attached to.

Results for the effect of unemployment on relationship and marital status indicated that unemployment has a negative effect on marital status. A large variation on marital status was evident between the employed and the unemployed sample. The unemployed sample had the highest levels of separated and divorced participants indicating as is concurrent with previous research, that unemployment has a negative effect not just on the individual themselves, but on their families, relationships and marriages (Ross & Huber, 1985). However these findings were not conclusive, as participants' marriage or relationship status before unemployment were not indicated. Nevertheless, without controlling for marriage status before unemployment, the findings gave an indication that those who are employed were in more relationship and marriages than the unemployed sample, where higher levels of divorce and separation and single participants were evident. Therefore hypothesis 3 which proposed that unemployment will have a negative effect on marital status was supported.

In the area of the relationship between unemployment duration and mental health, both depression levels and the general health measure were found to be highest at two to six months of unemployment duration. This stage of two to six months could concur with the stages of unemployment (Eisenberg et al, 1938), which indicates that at stage two after seeking employment and not having success, individuals become anxious and despondent and suffer distress and that this is the most important stage in the duration of unemployment. Furthermore concurring with the stages of

unemployment, is where depression levels were found to be at the lowest level at the unemployment duration of less than one month. This period is when the individual is still optimistic and has a somewhat positive attitude, actively seeks employment and is somewhat hopeful about their future. Previous research indicated that the longer an individual is unemployed, over twelve months or more, the greater the negative effect on their mental health (Hammer, 1993). This was not found in this research where the highest levels of depression and poor general health occurred at two to six months of unemployment, therefore hypothesis 4 which proposed that the longer unemployed will suffer greater mental health problems was not supported.

Hypothesis 5 proposed that unemployed adults will have a lower level of past education compared to employed adults, and this hypothesis was supported based on this research. Significant differences occurred between the unemployed and employed sample based on their past education levels. As is concurrent with previous research educational levels for the unemployed participants were largely lower than the employed sample. Over double, 71% of the employed sample were educated to just a secondary school level, compared to just 35% of the unemployed sample. Significant variation was also evident when comparing the group's attainment of third level education. Overall 65% of those within the employed sample had attained an education to a third or fourth level compared with just 29% of those that were in the unemployed sample.

This significant difference indicates that the need to return to further education for those that unemployed may well be a contributing factor for their future employment prospects. However a willingness to achieve this is evident within the unemployed sample with 70% of those that are unemployed intending to return to further education or already have, compared to just 49% of the

employed sample. This difference could be due to the fact that a high proportion of the employed sample were already educated to a diploma/degree/masters/doctorate level. However this indication also suggested that there was recognition by the unemployed sample of the need to retrain and reskill. This recognises the importance that third level institutions must give to life long learning and to an adult and mature students return to education. Returning to education at various stages throughout a period of unemployment, or indeed employment to retrain or gain various skills and qualifications, is becoming more prevalent and is an essential requirement in the future of the labour market in Ireland.

In previous research a higher level of education was found to reduce the negative effect of unemployment on the individual (Stankunas et al., 2006). However in this research for both the depression measure and the general health measure the highest levels of depression and poor general health were found in the sample that is unemployed and have the highest level of education either masters, or Doctorate, followed by those who were unemployed and hold a diploma or a degree. The findings showed that the higher the education level attained by those who were unemployed, the higher the depression and psychological distress they experienced. However the opposite findings were found for the employed sample, with a higher level of education correlating with a lower level of depression and psychological distress, indicating that unemployment was the deciding factor in deeming if the level of education attained affected psychological well being. These findings could be due to the fact those who are currently unemployed and are educated to a degree level or higher are largely frustrated at the lack of employment opportunities in the current economic climate in Ireland, particularly with their level of education attainment. Therefore hypothesis 6 which proposed that a higher level of education reduces the negative effect, on unemployed individuals' mental health based on past research, was not supported by this research.

In relation to age and unemployment hypothesis 7 proposed that unemployed older adults (36-65+ years) suffer greater negative mental health. However the findings of this research indicated that older adults scored slightly higher on the depression measure but lower on the general health measure, indicating lower levels of psychological distress. This could be due to the fact that many unemployed younger adults face an uncertain future particularly in relation to their future employment opportunities. Therefore this hypothesis based on previous research which indicated that older unemployed adults suffered greater negative mental health issues (Hammer, 2000), was not supported. Many in the age category of 18-35 years in Ireland have many financial commitments such as high mortgage payments and young families and feel somewhat helpless and frustrated. Many may also be a victim of the property bubble during Ireland's Celtic tiger era, and many now face high mortgages and negative property equity. Supports for young adults in this category are largely non-existent, with many facing large financial commitments, debt, and lack of employment opportunities. In addition an unsure future in all of these areas can lead to psychological distress.

### Limitations

This research is somewhat limited by the small sample of 200 participants. With a larger sample further categories of unemployed participants could be differentiated such as reasons for unemployment to establish if this has an effect on negative mental health. Also the research could have an additional category to research previous employment of those that are unemployed and if those that have worked previously have a greater degree of negative mental well-being. Furthermore if this research was combined with qualitative research further in-depth analysis could be carried out as to the history of the participants and their current lifestyle, and how it compares with their previous lifestyle before

unemployment. Another limitation of the research was that the origin of the psychological distress that was found amongst the unemployed sector was limited in its assignment as it did not ascertain if the negative mental well being were due wholly to economic loss, or loss of other benefits of employment such as Jahoda's latent deprivation model where loss of time structure, loss of a sense of collective purpose and experience, loss social contact, loss of social identity, and loss regular activity are factors of loss of employment (Jahoda, 1982), or a combination of some or all of these factors. Furthermore, this research could not control for the mental health of individuals before unemployment.

Future research in the area of unemployment and its effects on mental health is paramount to achieving a reduction in the psychological distress suffered by individuals who find themselves in a situation of unemployment. Unemployment not only affects the individual but also has a negative effect on their families and their relationships and marriages, and with unemployment on the rise in Ireland, this detrimentally is having a destructive impact on a large proportion of families throughout Ireland. In addition further research on the stigma attached to unemployed must be carried out with a view to reversing this label and therefore perhaps relieving some stress and psychological distress being suffered by a large proportion of those who are unemployed. The large proportion of those that were unemployed which intended to return to further education cannot be ignored and support systems and a national scheme should be implemented in order for those who wish to return to education to be able to do so without barriers and obstacles, financial or otherwise.

Unemployed males were found to be at the highest risk of psychological distress and depression and further research in this area is important to determine ways to alleviate and prevent the adverse affects of unemployment. Furthermore this research was a first indicator of depression and

psychological distress among those who are unemployed, it purely denotes a primary step to assign how further research can be carried out in this area, particularly in the early stages of unemployment where it is crucial that support systems are designed and implemented to avoid long term mental health issues. Further research in the area of the stages of length of unemployment is imperative, to ascertain at what point is intervention critical to relieve the psychological distress particularly if the individual will remain unemployed on a long term basis. In addition, little research during times of economic recession has been carried out in Ireland to ascertain what bearing this can have on the mental health of those that are both employed and unemployed.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, results from this research strongly suggest that unemployment has a harmful effect on mental well being, with the unemployed group showing notably higher levels of depression and psychological disorder than the employed group. More of the unemployed group also felt that they found themselves wishing they were dead and away from it all, more discouraged about their future, been finding life a struggle, and found the idea of taking their own life kept coming to mind. Although both males and females who were unemployed experienced significantly greater degrees of these symptoms, unemployed males experienced the greatest levels of distress and are at the highest risk of suffering from depression and psychological distress. Greatest psychological distress and depression levels were found at two to six months of unemployment duration indicating that intervention before this stage is crucial for mental well being. Age was found not to have a major impact on the levels of psychological distress and depression among those who were unemployed. Unemployment was found to have harmful affects on the individual themselves but also on their relationships, marriages and families. Furthermore, education was found to play a key role to play in employment prospects with

those who were unemployed having lower levels of past education than those who were employed.

Those with the highest level of education among the unemployed sample were found to have the highest levels of negative well being, perhaps indicating the lack of future prospects in the labour market even for those with a high level of education in the current economic climate in Ireland.



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**APPENDIX 1: *Showing questionnaire booklet used in the present study***



## UNEMPLOYMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH

This study is concerned about unemployment and mental health in the current economic climate in Ireland. Please answer each section as honestly as you can, do not spend too long thinking about each question as there are no right or wrong answers. Any information that you give will remain strictly confidential, you are not required to write your name anywhere on this survey.

I hope you find this interesting, and I would like to thank you in advance for your time and co-operation.

If you require any further information concerning this research, please contact my project supervisor at the address below.

Dr Bernadette Quinn  
Lecturer  
Department of Social Science  
DBS School of Arts  
34/35 South William Street  
Dublin 2  
Ireland  
Tel: 014178737

Please attempt all questions. Be as honest as possible. Your confidentiality is of utmost importance. Please do not sign your name.

Please indicate your Age:

16-18 \_\_\_\_\_

19-25 \_\_\_\_\_

26-35 \_\_\_\_\_

36-45 \_\_\_\_\_

46-65 \_\_\_\_\_

66+ \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your Marital Status:

Single \_\_\_\_\_

In a relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Married \_\_\_\_\_

Divorced \_\_\_\_\_

Separated \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your Sex:

Male \_\_\_\_\_

Female \_\_\_\_\_

If you are employed please indicate your current employment sector:

Self employed \_\_\_\_\_

Public sector \_\_\_\_\_

Private sector \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

If you are unemployed please indicate your Length of unemployment:

Less than 1 month \_\_\_\_\_

2-6 months \_\_\_\_\_

7-12 months \_\_\_\_\_

12+ months \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE TURN OVER**



Please indicate your Past Education to level of:

Primary school\_\_\_\_\_

Secondary school\_\_\_\_\_

Third level college (diploma/degree) \_\_\_\_\_

Fourth level college (Masters/Phd/Doctorate) \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your Further education:

I intend to return to further educational study: \_\_\_\_\_

I already have\_\_\_\_\_

I hope to in the next 6 months\_\_\_\_\_

I hope to within the next 1-3 years \_\_\_\_\_

I don't intend to return to further educational study\_\_\_\_\_

**This section consists of 21 groups of statements. Please read each group of statements carefully then pick one statement in each group that best describes the way you have been feeling during the past 2 weeks, including today. Circle the number beside the statement you have picked. Be sure that you do not choose more than one statement for any question.**

a.

0 I do not feel sad.

1 I feel sad much of the time.

2 I am sad all the time.

3 I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it.

b.

0 I am not discouraged about my future

1 I feel more discouraged about my future than I used to be

2 I do not expect things to work out for me

3 I feel my future is hopeless and will only get worse

c.

0 I do not feel like a failure

1 I have failed more than I should have

2 As I look back, I see a lot of failures

3 I feel that I am a total failure as a person

d.

0 I get as much pleasure as I ever did from the things I enjoy

1 I don't enjoy things as much as I used to

2 I get very little pleasure from the things I used to enjoy

3 I cant get any pleasure from the things I used to enjoy

e.

0 I don't feel particularly guilty

1 I feel guilty over many things I have done or should have done

2 I feel guilty most of the time

3 I feel guilty all of the time

f.

- 0 I don't feel I am being punished
- 1 I feel I may be punished
- 2 I expect to be punished
- 3 I feel I am being punished

g.

- 0 I feel the same about myself as ever
- 1 I have lost confidence in myself
- 2 I am disappointed in myself
- 3 I dislike myself

h.

- 0 I don't criticise or blame myself more than usual
- 1 I am more critical of myself than I used to be
- 2 I criticise myself for all of my faults
- 3 I blame myself for everything bad that happens

i.

- 0 I don't have thoughts of killing myself
- 1 I have thoughts of killing myself, but I would not carry them out
- 2 I would like to kill myself
- 3 I would kill myself if I had the chance

j.

- 0 I don't cry anymore than I used to
- 1 I cry more than I used to
- 2 I cry over every little thing
- 3 I feel like crying but I can't

k.

- 0 I am no more restless or wound up than usual
- 1 I feel more restless or wound up than usual
- 2 I am so restless or agitated that it's hard to stay still
- 3 I am so restless or agitated that I have to keep moving or doing something

l.

- 0 I have not lost interest in other people or activities
- 1 I am less interested in other people or things than before
- 2 I have lost most of my interest in other people or things
- 3 its hard to get interested in anything

m.

- 0 I make decisions about as well as ever
- 1 I find it more difficult to make decision than usual
- 2 I have much greater difficulty in making decisions than I used to
- 3 I have trouble making any decisions

- n.
- 0 I do not feel I am worthless
  - 1 I don't consider myself as worthwhile and useful as I used to
  - 2 I feel more worthless as compared to other people
  - 3 I feel utterly worthless
- o.
- 0 I have as much energy as ever
  - 1 I have less energy than I used to have
  - 2 I don't have enough energy to do very much
  - 3 I don't have enough energy to do anything
- p.
- 0 I have not experienced any change in my sleeping pattern
  - 1 (a) I sleep somewhat more than usual
  - 1 (b) I sleep somewhat less than usual
  - 2 (a) I sleep a lot more than usual
  - 2 (b) I sleep a lot less than usual
  - 3 (a) I sleep most of the day
  - 3 (b) I wake 1-2 hours early and can't get back to sleep
- q.
- 0 I am no more irritable than usual
  - 1 I am more irritable than usual
  - 2 I am much more irritable than usual
  - 3 I am irritable all the time
- r.
- 0 I have not experienced any change in my appetite
  - 1 (a) My appetite is somewhat less than usual
  - 1 (b) My appetite is somewhat greater than usual
  - 2 (a) My appetite is much less than before
  - 2 (b) My appetite is much greater than usual
  - 3 (a) I have no appetite at all
  - 3 (b) I crave food all the time

**PLEASE TURN OVER**

s.

- 0 I can concentrate as well as ever  
 1 I can't concentrate as well as usual  
 2 Its hard to keep my mind on anything for very long  
 3 I find I can't concentrate on anything

t.

- 0 I am no more tired or fatigued than usual  
 1 I get more tired or fatigued more easily than usual  
 2 I am too tired or fatigued to do a lot of the things I used to  
 3 I am too tired or fatigued to do most of the things I used to do

u.

- 0 I have not noticed any recent change in my interest in sex  
 1 I am less interested in sex than I used to be  
 2 I am much less interested in sex now  
 3 I have lost interest in sex completely

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**In this section please underline the answer which you think most applies to you. It is important that you answer ALL the questions. Please include present and recent complaints, not those you had in the past. Simply underline or circle the answer that you think most applies to you.**

**HAVE YOU RECENTLY:**

1 – been feeling perfectly well and in good health?

Better than usual      Same as usual      Worse than usual      Much worse than usual

2- been feeling in need of a good tonic?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

3- been feeling run down and out of sorts?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

4- felt than you are ill?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

5- been getting any pains in your head?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

6- been getting a feeling of tightness of pressure in your head?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**PLEASE TURN OVER**

**HAVE YOU RECENTLY:**

7 – been able to concentrate on whatever you're doing?

Better than usual      Same as usual      Less than usual      Much less than usual

8 – been afraid that you were going to collapse in a public place?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

9 – been having hot or cold spells?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

10 – been perspiring (sweating) a lot?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

11 – found yourself waking early and unable to get back to sleep?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

12 – been getting up feeling your sleep hasn't refreshed you?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

13- been feeling too tired and exhausted even to eat?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

14 – lost much sleep over worry?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**PLEASE TURN OVER**

**HAVE YOU RECENTLY:**

15 – been feeling mentally alert and wide awake?

Better than usual      Same as usual      Less than usual      Much less than usual

16- been feeling full of energy?

Better than usual      Same as usual      Less than usual      Much less than usual

17 – had difficulty in getting off to sleep?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

18 – had difficulty in staying asleep once you are off?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

19 – been having frightening or unpleasant dreams?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

20 – been having restless, disturbed nights?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

21 – been managing to keep yourself busy and occupied?

More so than usual      Same as usual      Rather less than usual      Much less than usual

22 – been taking longer over the things you do?

Quicker than usual      Same as usual      Longer than usual      Much longer than usual

23 – tended to lose interest in your ordinary activities?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**PLEASE TURN OVER**

**HAVE YOU RECENTLY:**

24 – been losing interest in your personal appearance?

Not at all          No more than usual          Rather more than usual          Much more than usual

25 – been taking less trouble with your clothes?

More trouble than usual          About same as usual          Less trouble than usual          Much less trouble

26 – been getting out of the house as much as usual?

More than usual          Same as usual          Less than usual          Much less than usual

27 – been managing as well as most people would in your shoes?

Better than most          About the same          Rather less well          Much less well

28 – felt on the whole you were doing things well?

Better than most          About the same          Less well than usual          Much less well

29 – been late getting to work or starting on your housework?

Not at all          No later than usual          Rather later than usual          Much later than usual

30 – been satisfied with the way you've carried out your task?

More satisfied          About same as usual          Less satisfied than usual          Much less satisfied

31 – been able to feel warmth and affection for those near to you?

Better than usual          About same as usual          Less well than usual          Much less well

**PLEASE TURN OVER**

**HAVE YOU RECENTLY:**

32 – been finding it easy to get on with other people?

Better than usual      About same as usual      Less well than usual      Much less well

33 – spent much time chatting with people?

More time than usual      About same as usual      Less than usual      Much less than usual

34 – kept feeling afraid to say anything to people in case you made a fool of yourself?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

35 – felt that you are playing a useful part in things?

More so than usual      Same as usual      Less useful than usual      Much less useful

36 – felt capable of making decision about things?

More so than usual      Same as usual      Less useful than usual      Much less useful

37 – felt you're just not able to make a start on anything?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

38 – felt yourself dreading everything that you have to do?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

39 – felt constantly under strain?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

40 – felt you couldn't overcome your difficulties?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**PLEASE TURN OVER**



**HAVE YOU RECENTLY:**

41 – been finding life a struggle at times?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

42- been able to enjoy your normal day-to-day activities?

More so than usual      Same as usual      Less so than usual      Much less than usual

43 – been taking things hard?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

44 – been getting edgy and bad-tempered?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

45 – been getting scared or panicky for no good reason?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

46 – been able to face up to your problems?

More so than usual      Same as usual      Less useful than usual      Much less useful

47 – found everything getting on top of you?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

48 – had the feeling that people were looking at you?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**PLEASE TURN OVER**

**HAVE YOU RECENTLY:**

49 – been feeling unhappy or depressed?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

50 – been losing confidence in yourself?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

51 – been thinking of yourself as a worthless person?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

52 – felt that life is entirely hopeless?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

53 – been feeling hopeful about your own future?

More so than usual      Same as usual      Less useful than usual      Much less hopeful

54 – been feeling reasonably happy, all things considered?

More so than usual      Same as usual      Less so than usual      Much less than usual

55 – been feeling nervous and strung-up all the time?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

56 – felt that life isn't worth living?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

57 – thought of the possibility that you might make away with yourself?

Definitely not      I don't think so      Has crossed my mind      Definitely have

58 – found at times you couldn't do anything because your nerves were too bad?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

**HAVE YOU RECENTLY:**

59 –found yourself wishing you were dead and away from it all?

Not at all      No more than usual      Rather more than usual      Much more than usual

60 – found that the idea of taking your own life kept coming into your mind?

Definitely not      I don't think so      Has crossed my mind      Definitely has

End of questionnaire. Many thanks for your participation. Please find contact details below for organisations that may be useful.

Contact details for organisations; Unemployment entitlement and rights

Citizens Information Board: Ph 01 6059000 [www.citizensinformation.ie](http://www.citizensinformation.ie) [www.losingyourjob.ie](http://www.losingyourjob.ie)

Aware –Helping to defeat Depression. Ph: 1890303302 [www.aware.ie](http://www.aware.ie)

FÁS, for job seeking, training, career advice, and employment rights: [www.fas.ie](http://www.fas.ie) Ph: 01 6070500

For information on money and debt management: The Money and Budgeting Service (MABS) is a free and confidential service for people in debt or in danger of getting into debt. Helpline: 1890 283 438 (Monday-Friday 9:00am-8:00pm) Email: [helpline@mabs.ie](mailto:helpline@mabs.ie)

For more information on mental health and wellbeing:

Go to [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie)