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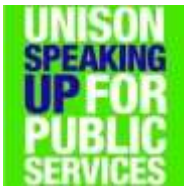
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[Universal basic income can directly reduce work-related stress](#)

20th August, 2018 4:02 pm

Dr Matthew Johnson

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**Tags:**[John McDonnell](#) [Labour](#) [lancaster university](#) [UBI](#) [universal basic income](#)

John McDonnell has [announced](#) that Labour may include a trial of [Universal Basic Income](#) (UBI) in the next Labour Party Manifesto. UBI – state provision of unconditional monthly stipends to all adult citizens – has been justified on myriad grounds: citizenship, welfare reform, growth. However, its biggest and, as yet, unexplored contribution may be to physical health and it is essential that any trial is able to measure that effect in very specific ways.

Some of our research on UBI took place through an international, interdisciplinary, participatory study entitled '[A Cross-cultural Working Group on "Good Culture" and Precariousness](#)', which involved a research network of more than 30 academics and led to research exchanges between Ian Lavery MP's Wansbeck constituency and Aboriginal groups around Brisbane.

[Our research](#) indicates that UBI may have a revolutionary effect on stress among those in and out of work, raising health and, potentially, productivity in the process.

The need for such policy is pressing as we are facing a crisis of stress. Psychologically, in 2016/17 stress [was found](#) to be responsible for 40% of all work-related cases of, and 49% of all working days lost due to, ill-health. Physiologically, [in 2012](#), stress-related long-term health conditions affected a quarter of all people in England – some 15 million – through such conditions as heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes, arthritis and depression. Caring for patients with long-term conditions accounted for 70% of NHS England's spend, representing 50% of all GP appointments, 64% of outpatient appointments and 70% of all inpatient bed days.

To deal with this crisis, we must first understand the link between stress and ill-health. The [stress response](#) ensures that your mind and body are primed to be able to deal with bacterial, viral, physically traumatic and even social threats to your existence. Through a cascade of hormone release and biological effects, stress bolsters your immune system, sharpens your reactions and helps you fight or flee these threats. The same system then ensures that your body, and especially your immune system, returns to balance.

However, when stress is chronic – ongoing, intense and without space for restoration of balance – the system designed to protect you can instead cause significant damage. While the mechanism is [debated](#), it is almost universally accepted that stress contributes to such breadth of conditions as colds and heart disease.

Traditionally, the stimuli for stress would be primal and containable, like sprinting away from a wolf mistaken for a deer when hunting. Today, in most industrialised countries, the threat comes not from other animals or direct warfare, but from phenomena more pervasive, consistent and complex to resolve – perceived threats to employment and, through destitution, life.

Received opinion suggests that the more senior in an organisational hierarchy, the higher the level of stress due to increased ‘responsibility’. The reality is different. The [Whitehall Study](#) of civil servants found that, as position within the hierarchy decreased, physiological measures of stress increased. This correlated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease. This [social health gradient](#) occurs even when individuals are removed from objective poverty – the subjective nature of individuals’ evaluation of their position in a hierarchy still has an effect.

The cause of stress in these circumstances is what the republican political philosopher, [Philip Pettit](#), has termed ‘domination’: being subject to arbitrary decisions of others made without reference to the interests of those affected by the decisions.

Neoliberal reforms aimed at promoting labour flexibility and productivity have exacerbated this condition. As [Guy Standing](#) has argued, employees often ‘lack the capacity to claim or enforce rights, or fear that the act of asserting a right would have a high probability of retributive consequences or disastrous costs’. In the UK, appeals to [Employment Tribunals](#) are lengthy, costly and uncertain; while employees dismissed on the grounds of ‘misconduct’ are subject to benefits sanctions, precluding access to [Jobseekers Allowance](#) for a minimum of 13 weeks. This is quite aside from the social death experienced through exclusion from work.

It is no coincidence that, at a time of increasing and stark inequality, such as that highlighted by the recent [BBC Panorama](#) investigation, that we face a crisis of stress-related ill-health. Individuals who are dominated cannot ever relax their guard; they must always adopt tactics to uphold their interests, no matter how demeaning or unnatural those tactics may appear. The #MeToo movement speaks precisely to this.

To deal with the medical crisis, we must address its social basis by promoting what [Pettit](#) terms ‘freedom as nondomination’, in which no individual has ‘the capacity to interfere in another’s affairs on an arbitrary basis’. We need to enable individuals to say ‘no’ to acts that run contrary to their interests.

Historically, trade unions and other institutions performed this function. Today, Labour is right to explore the potential of UBI. The approach seeks to ensure that no citizen falls below the poverty line, enhancing the ability of employees to refuse arbitrary, intolerable managerial demands and resign positions if those demands persist.

While debate on UBI often returns to [cost](#), the prospective benefits and savings fostered by promoting health have not fully been explored. However it is funded, such as through a [flat tax](#), its benefit in addressing the wellbeing issues of 6.5% of the UK population at risk of persistent poverty and, vitally, the 15m people affected by long-term stress-related illness, offers potential for reducing NHS burdens (albeit with attendant increases in lifespan) *and* increasing workplace productivity by reducing sick-leave. This is in addition to the savings created by removing other benefits and streamlining bureaucracies.

For this reason, we call on Labour’s UBI trial to measure, for the first time, physiological indications of stress, particularly among those in work.

Dr Matthew Johnson is a Labour member and senior lecturer in Politics at Lancaster University. Elliott Johnson is a disability researcher.

As authors and Labour members, we are keen to receive comments on the public health justification for UBI. Guy Standing has asked that the following note preface this request for comment:

“I have been asked by John McDonnell to prepare the report on piloting basic income, drawing on my recent book ‘Basic Income: And how we can make it happen’. I am trying to ensure that all points of view are taken

into account, but obviously start from the premise that a progressive movement should wish to ensure everybody has a life of basic economic security and can pursue a dignifying work-based life. Those who contribute comments or send emails are asked to avoid sarcasm or insults. We surely begin with the knowledge that across Britain today huge numbers of people are suffering degrading insecurity and impoverishment as a result of almost nine years of austerity.”

If you would like to contribute to this report please send emails to Dr Matthew Johnson at m.johnson@lancaster.ac.uk

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Name



Richard Dean • 2 days ago

I would like to be a test case.

To make things more scientific, i would like my UBI to be increased each week, starting say at a modest £100 and increasing at a rate of £100 more each week compared to the previous one. For instance, I would be paid £200 the second week, £300 for the third week, and so on.

I will consent to my happiness being measured in a non-intrusive, non-destructive way, so that a graph can be plotted of my happiness against my weekly income, and the value of income found which optimizes my happiness. Hopefully the measurements will be designed such that they do not affect the results.

I am a very ordinary, average person, so the results should be representative and reliable. For added realism, I suggest the trial be continued for the entire rest of my working life. Actuarial

estimates suggest this would be around 39 years on average.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Socialist Venezuela → Richard Dean • a day ago

Top trolling, Richard.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Eric the bee → Richard Dean • 2 days ago

A work free income rather like retiring very early and simply avoiding the working years.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



S Simons. → Richard Dean • 2 days ago

In my case 15 years so I would be the cheapest test case!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



MrSauce → S Simons. • a day ago

Me first: I'll do it for 10.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Surrey Teenager • 2 days ago

Id love to give up work and live off the state, my work ethic is weak and i only work because there are things i want and cant afford. Beveridge's five evils were Want, disease, ignorance, squalor and idleness. The key to the welfare state was that you worked if you were able. We already have whole communities where idleness is a lifestyle choice for generations. If the welfare state is to survive when social capital is being destroyed by immigration and poor ethics the only answer is to make it time limited.

6 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



disqus_nG2LUgfwv → Surrey Teenager • a day ago

You try living on ten pound a day for a few years then tell me how generous the benefits system is.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Danny → Surrey Teenager • a day ago

"We already have whole communities where idleness is a lifestyle choice for generations."

Bollocks. Absolute bollocks. To be honest, I don't know why I bother rising to your dogwhistle, Sun-style claptrap but the idea that we have "whole "communities [sic] where idleness is a lifestyle choice for generations" is naive horseshit.

I live in a Lower Layer Super Output Area that is ranked among the most deprived 10% in England and Wales. Even on this part of the estate, most people have jobs. One of the exceptions lives next door to me, he hasn't worked a day for god knows how many years, at least the 9 I've lived next door to him, presumably many more. However, his life sucks. It might suit him that the highlight of his week is bumping into an old friend he hasn't see for years when he pops into Aldi for the 5th time that day, or that the highlight of his year is a week in a caravan in Hemsby that his mother-in-law pays for but for the majority of people, aspiration makes that lifestyle something so unpalatable as to make it worth getting a job.

And as for the implication that it is passed down from generation to generation, his three children (from his current wife) are all adults and all working.

People who are determined to sit on their backsides and depend on welfare will do so regardless, UBI won't change that. The rate would not be set to such a level that the recipient can enjoy a comfortable standard of living but at a level just sufficient to provide shelter and sustenance.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Mick → Danny • a day ago

Who says UBI won't be much? We've been often told that a main feature is its equivalent to a lowest wage. Now, as Labour are usually reticent to offer cost figures, let's do it ourselves.

Now, minimum wage is £7.83 per hour. That's a low wage. A 40 hr week for 52 weeks comes to £16,286.40.

Now, multiplied by 535,000 adults (according to the 2011 census) and we get a cost of £8,713,224,000 a year just for UBI.

We'd be taxed way more than that to pay for everything McDonnell wants to splurge on. UBI defeats itself, at least for everybody and with everything else on the socialist menu.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



disqus_nG2LUgfwv → Mick • a day ago

That's only for over-25.

The average working week is now less than 35 hours/week.

You have to pay poll tax contributions out of that.

And income tax.

And NI.

And rent contributions if you live in more than one room.

And they are means tested and capped as well.

Otherwise a knowledgeable and truthful description of the facts I'm sure.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Mick → disqus_nG2LUgfwv • a day ago

You mean tax and NI charges are exempt from UBI recipients??

Oh Labour Labour!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



disqus_nG2LUgfwv → Mick • a day ago

"You mean tax and NI charges are exempt from UBI recipients??

Oh Labour Labour! "

Is that available in coherent?

If you mean 'are UBi recipients exempt from it and ni' then the answer is 'no because nobody actually gets ubi, it doesn't exist yet'

And if you meant 'are uc recipients exempt from it and ni' then the answer is still no, just like I said in the previous post, you have to pay them'

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Mick → disqus_nG2LUgfwvv • a day ago

And yes, I mis-spelled semantics!

You can have that nitpick for free!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Mick → disqus_nG2LUgfwvv • a day ago

Indeed. Symantics aside, it doesn't matter what you have to pay after you get your free wage, the fact still stands that the odds are on that it will be the amount suggested.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



disqus_nG2LUgfwvv → Mick • a day ago

There is absolutely no chance this will ever be enacted.

But anyway.

It's supposed to replace all other benefits, that's the point of it. So people on or below this so-called 'minimum wage' would lose the child and tax credits and housing benefit and poll tax reduction they get now to help top up the pathetically inadequate hourly rate they get. So why would it be anywhere near your made up numbers?

Besides.

The only way to make it remotely feasible would be means testing.

But the entitled ones think only poor peoples benefits should be means tested, not the benefits they claim.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Mick → disqus_nG2LUgfwvv • 20 hours ago

Well this is the thing - there's no proposal to means test for it. It's a flat rate for everyone, rich or poor. And to think there's been fuss about more wealthy pensioners being able to claim all the heating allowances and things. Labour will do no favours for itself.

And where Labour now churns out the kind of 'good ideas' you may have down the pub, with nothing at all to tell us, we'll just have to chew it over ourselves.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Dannv → Mick • a day ago



"We've been often told that a main feature is its equivalent to a lowest wage."

By whom?

The two-year trial carried out by Finland saw recipients receive an equivalent of around £500 a month.

Still, don't let me stop you with your hyperbolic, fag-packet calculations, the busier you are with that, the less sludge will appear on here.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Mick → Danny • a day ago

Well hang on a minute, it's appearing anyway, in that event. So cool your jets cowboy, there's the rest of the costing system, for example the usual supplementary benefits we could look at - unless you have Labour figures to hand. Shall we do that, Left? All that plus UBI can come to basic wages. And for free. To everyone.

It's speculated in places they could get £15,000 but we can trust Labour to be more generous: <https://www.independent.co....>

UBI would also undermine the Left's golden-haired trade unions, who would already be supercharged under Corbyn to indulge in wildcat striking and secondary picketing, to chase their own endless wage claims, same as they did in the 70s.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Danny → Mick • a day ago

"unless you have Labour figures to hand"

Labour don't yet have the figures to hand. You overestimate my abilities. I know I'm talented old boy, but my talents do have limits and plucking figures that don't exist out of thin air exceeds those limits. Not for you though, it would seem.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Mick → Danny • a day ago

Well well well, so once again the Corbynites pretend they are 'fully costed' when in fact it is they who can't even be bothered to do what you call a fag-packet calculation!

It's OK, I'm not blaming you. It's the sheer poverty of common sense and practical application in the modern Labour Party which holds up progress.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Danny → Mick • a day ago

Fully costed? My my, quite the expert at reading things that are not there.

The only clarity I provided was that the level of UBI would not be set at a rate so high as to provide a comfortable standard of living. I'm not sure

what world you live in, but even if it was at the equivalent of a minimum wage for a full time job (the calculation would be 37.5, by the way, not 40), which is not something I would advocate, then you'd be hard-pressed to purchase yourself a comfortable standard of living anyway. So if you want some fag packet calculations, the annual amount would be £15,268.50. You couldn't be "comfortable" on that for any great stretch of time.

So, pray tell Mickey Boy where I pretended that the UBI proposal is fully-costed? In fact, don't, I'll tell you. I've more chance of getting the clap by f*cking a virgin than I have of getting a cogent response out of you. I never pretended that. So, with that fact ringing in your lugholes, ask yourself why you are having to make stuff up to sustain this debate?

UBI as a concept has been floated as an idea with a pledge to trial it. I support the concept and support an implementation of a structured trial

[see more](#)

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Mick → Danny • a day ago

No no, I only said the Corbynites pretend they are fully costed. As in 'Look at our fully costed 2017 manifesto, which won't have a £250 billion overspend shortfall - oh no no - and can never go wrong in a month of secondary pickets.'

You, as I, are as kept in the dark as anyone else!

LABOUR: They only love their secrets because they have nothing concrete to say anyway!!!!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Surrey Teenager → Danny • a day ago

you say it doesn't happen yet immediately give an example of it happening. It rankles you doesn't it? Everyone who goes to work knows someone who is hiding behind their kids or culture to do what is convenient and this is destroying the social contract on welfare. Under Beveridge they would not be entitled to a house as these were only for workers with good reference and if you were not incapacitated but didnt work you would get nothing. Socialism isnt supposed to be a soft touch where did it go wrong?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Mick → Surrey Teenager • a day ago

Welfare WAS time-limited.... back in the Corbynites' golden era of the 1970s!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Oddity → Surrey Teenager • a day ago

What communities can do that?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Quiet_Sceptic • 2 days ago

“Gloth like most consumers faster than laborers, while the used level is always bright”

Stress, like rust, consumes faster than labor wears, while the used key is always bright.

While many people do suffer from work related stress, in measuring the benefits or dis-benefits, you also have to consider the stress and physical health problems created from not-working.

We've got plenty of example of communities which suffered from the blight of loss of jobs and high rates of unemployment, condemning large numbers of people to a purposeless life existing on long-term benefits. The evidence from those is downright damning, condemned to a life without work, nothing to do all day and living on a meagre income from benefits, people and whole communities fall to pieces.

Work at its best provides purpose, dignity, self-respect and opportunities to use ones skills, even at its worst it provides something to do.

I expect like most things, the best outcome is a balance between the two extremes - work for those that can, with a decent safety net for those that can't. But with a bias to keeping people active and busy during their working years.

4 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›

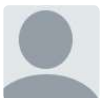


Mick → Quiet_Sceptic • a day ago

There's also the issue of the additional stress put on people by working harder to pay more tax for all the black hole projects this kooky Labour party wants to spend on.

Doling out a Universal Basic Income of \$12,000 a year to every American citizen would cost taxpayers \$3.8 trillion, according to a new study by investment management firm Bridgewater Associates, says the New York Post. We can directly translate that to Pounds, meaning UBI has more disadvantages than advantages. It seems a less stressful route would be perhaps to fortify Universal Credit for around the bottom 30% of the lowest earners on a trial period. Or better yet, spend some of that cash to fix the housing crisis, which triggers so much hardship for people.

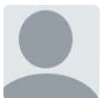
^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Forlornehope • a day ago

This is a great idea whose time has come and according to Richard Murphy, of Tax Research, the government can just print the money to pay for it so there is no need to raise anyone's taxes or increase borrowing.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Socialist Venezuela • 2 days ago

Giving people money, whether they need it or not will reduce stress. Who knew?

In other news, creating a new tax and forcing on to households, even if they cannot afford it will create stress and anxiety. Strangely enough, the authors forgot to mention that in their "how to fund it" section. Neither did they mention that it would cost £850 billion to pay everyone aged 16 or over an income that brings them to the poverty line.

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



JimmyBSands → Socialist Venezuela • 2 days ago

I'm not sure it necessarily follows. If giving people money for nothing reduced stress then Corbyn would be far less ratty in interviews.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Socialist Venezuela → JimmyBSands • 2 days ago

Funnily enough, he was never ratty when appearing on Press TV or RT.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



JimmyBSands → Socialist Venezuela • 2 days ago

Not true. When he was guest hosting the Gorgeous George Comedy Hour he mistakenly thought that a caller had said something nice about the US. He got quite shirty as I recall.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Mick → JimmyBSands • a day ago

Ah and what about that golden triggering on Channel 4 News, when someone dared ask him about calling Hamas his friends?

<https://www.youtube.com/wat...>

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Socialist Venezuela → Mick • a day ago

The wagging finger of death lol.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Jeremy Corbyn (Not) • 2 days ago

Why not test it? We need to find a way out of the mess created by Thatcher/Blair and their attacks on our benefits system, and disabled people in particular. The system was rotten long before UC. UC just makes matters worse.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Oddity → Jeremy Corbyn (Not) • a day ago

It's been tested in several places, and each time the "conservative" party gets rid of it because they're scared shitless that people won't be completely beholden to corporations.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



andnowforthefacts • 2 days ago

<https://twitter.com/MrHarry...>

Was Seamus in Tunisia as well?

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Eric the bee • 2 days ago

It doesn't work in a capitalist society so it's a pointless suggestion. Still it a start Labour needs to show it doesn't just sit on a fence with no ideas. They just need workable solutions not basic handouts for not contributing to society.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Chas • 2 days ago

The trouble with a trial is that it won't show up the macroeconomic problems like inflation. It might seem to have benefits at the small scale, but it is unlikely to benefit the economy overall due to fallacy of composition.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Socialist Venezuela → Chas • 2 days ago

Something that we can agree on.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Chas → Socialist Venezuela • 2 days ago

Your reverse psychology wont work on me. I still think UBI is bad.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Socialist Venezuela → Chas • 2 days ago

UBI is a terrible idea.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



S Simons • 2 days ago

It's been tested and it failed!

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Robin1946 • a day ago

‘ unconditional monthly stipends to ALL adult citizens ‘ !

So , how old should you be to qualify , as an adult ?
How much should this free handout be per month ?

Imagine , a family comprising two parents and a few kids , say over 18.

Work for a living under Labour ?
Why bother ?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Socialist Venezuela • a day ago

Voting intention polls – the fools’ gold of predicting elections. Leader ratings do it better - <http://www2.politicalbetting.com/>

Time to follow the Tories lead, and start looking for a new leader.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Socialist Venezuela • a day ago

Ah, so Corbyn had an active anti-semitic working as his personal secretary. <https://twitter.com/MrHarry...>

Isn't it extraordinary that Corbyn repeatedly and persistently surrounds himself with anti-semites? It's almost as if birds of a feather flock together...

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Hampsteadpinko → Socialist Venezuela • a day ago

'As if'?

LOL

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Godfrey • a day ago

This is a sciver's charter !!!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



andnowforthefacts • 2 days ago

Len and the Jewish. Shots fired

https://twitter.com/Jasmin_...

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



andnowforthefacts • 2 days ago

https://twitter.com/EU_Comm...

EU and Greece. Actual lol

^ | v • Reply • Share ›

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