



MENTAL HEALTH AND WORK

Policy challenges and policy developments
in OECD countries

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Outline of the presentation

- Background:OECD reviews
- What is mental ill-health?
- Why do we care?
- Links between work, working conditions and mental health
- Policy responses and examples
- Conclusions



OECD policy reviews on (i) Disability and Work and (ii) Mental Health and Work



- ***Sickness, Disability and Work: 2006-2010***
 - Review of policies in 13 Member countries
 - High-Level Forum in Stockholm in May 2009
 - Conclusion: Mental health biggest unresolved challenge



- ***Mental Health and Work: 2011-2015***
 - Analytical report to build evidence base
 - Identified 4 key policy areas: Education; Workplace; Benefit systems; Health system
 - Review of policies in 9 countries



- ***Fit mind, Fit Job: 2015***
 - High-level Forum in the Netherlands in March 2015
 - Ministers of Employment and Health from 30 OECD countries



How do we define mental ill-health and who is affected by it?

- People with mental illness reaching clinical threshold (mostly depression and anxiety)
- Identified by validated mental health instruments used in population health surveys as a proxy for in-depth clinical interviews
- Prevalence of mental ill-health is very high

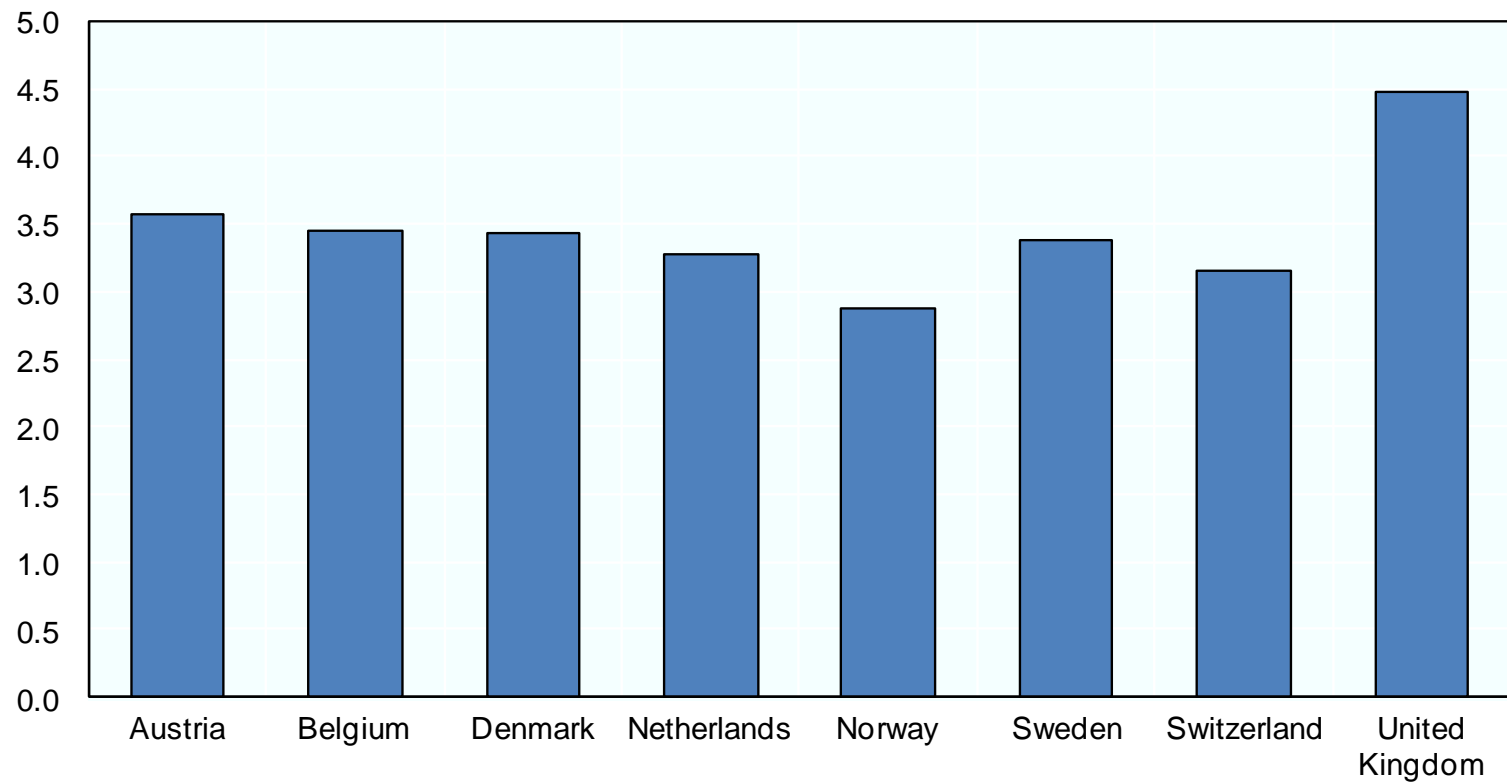


THE CASE FOR POLICY ACTION



Economic costs of mental ill-health are enormous

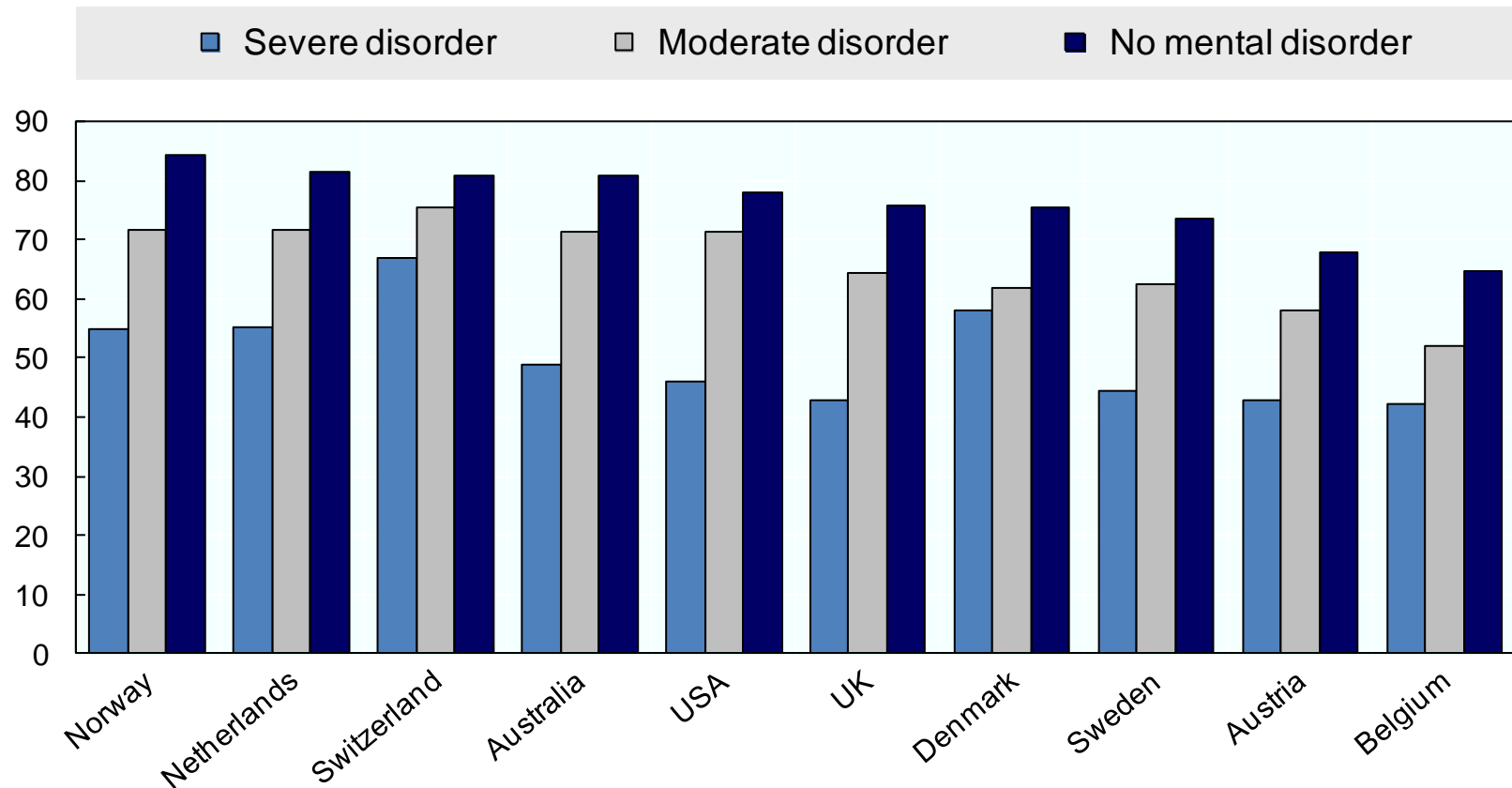
Costs of mental disorders as a percentage of the country's GDP, 2010





Most people with a mental disorder are in work but the employment gap is significant...

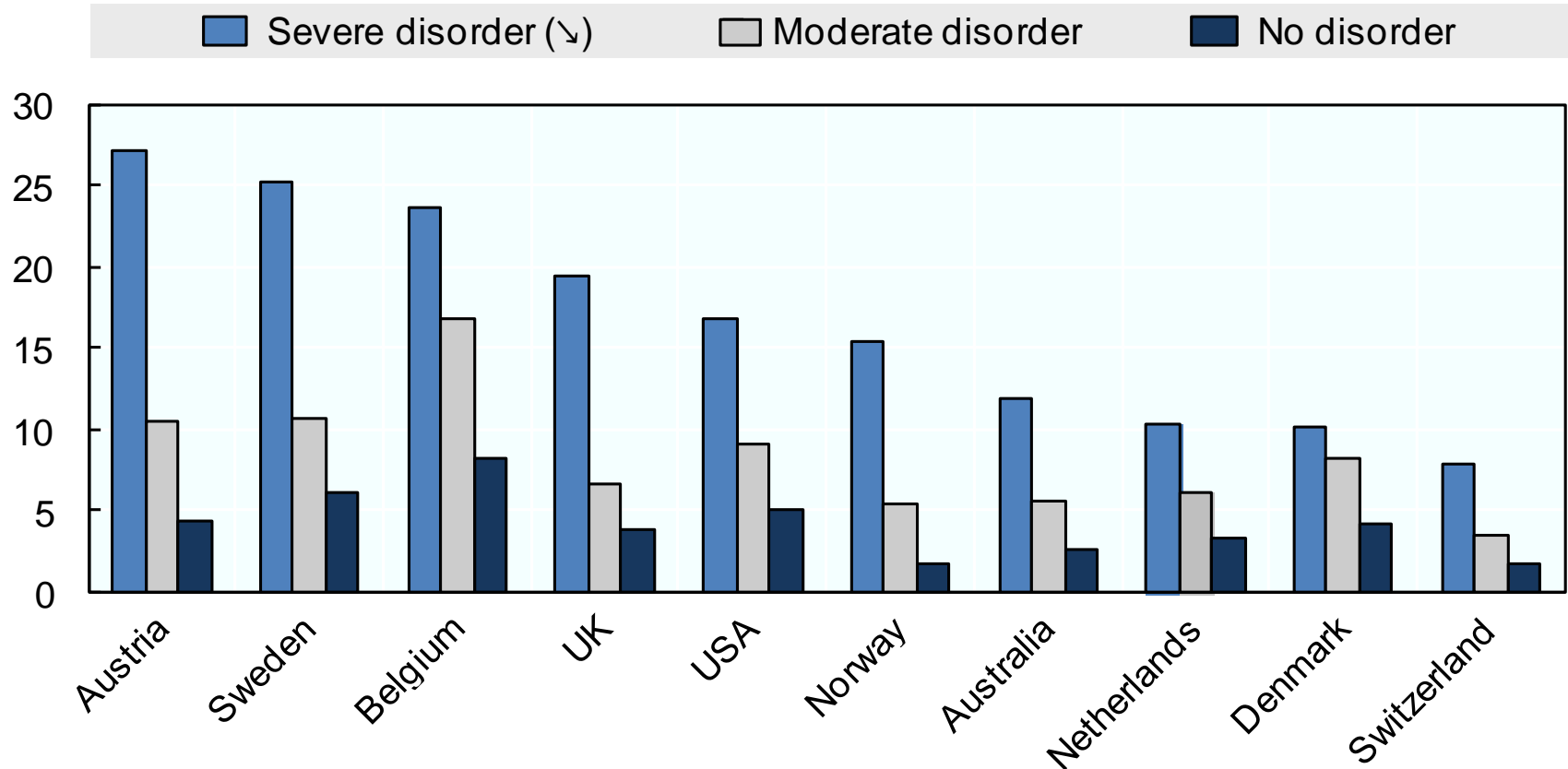
Employment rate (in %), latest available year





... and the risk of becoming unemployed is high

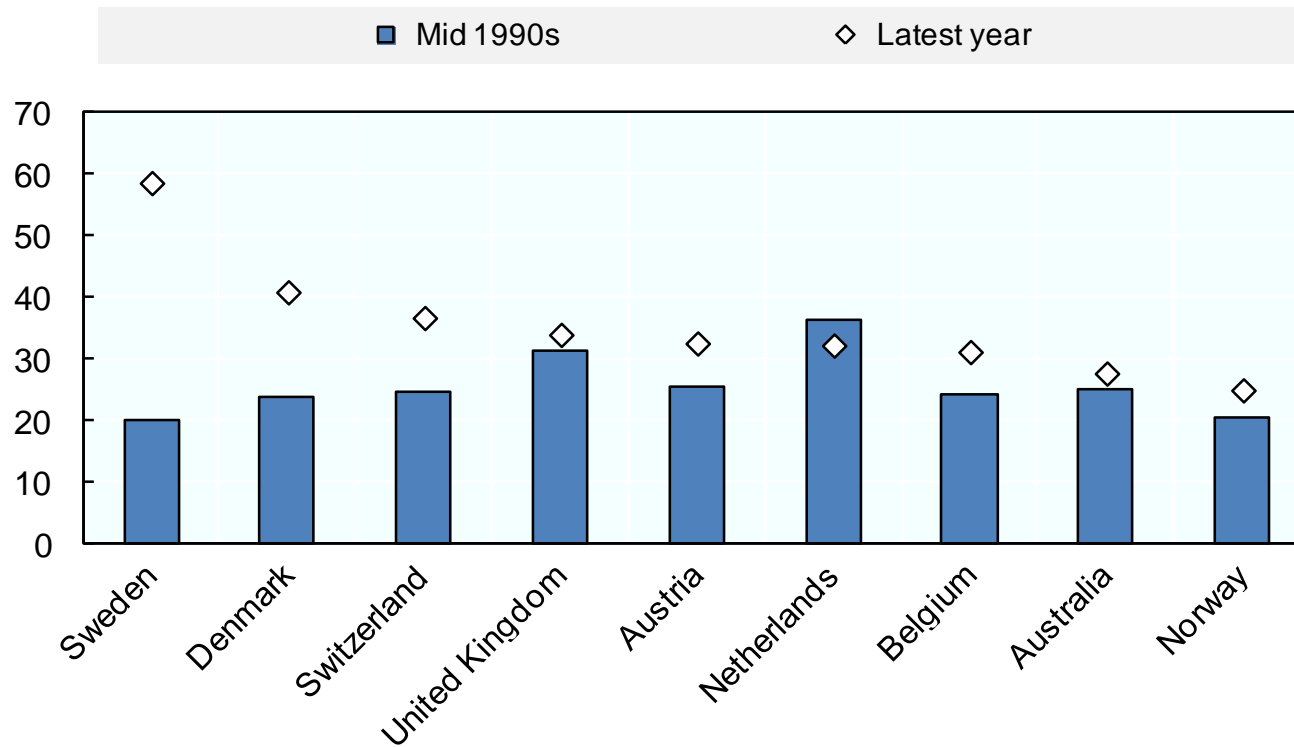
Unemployment (in %), latest year available





Mental ill-health is a key driver of inactivity

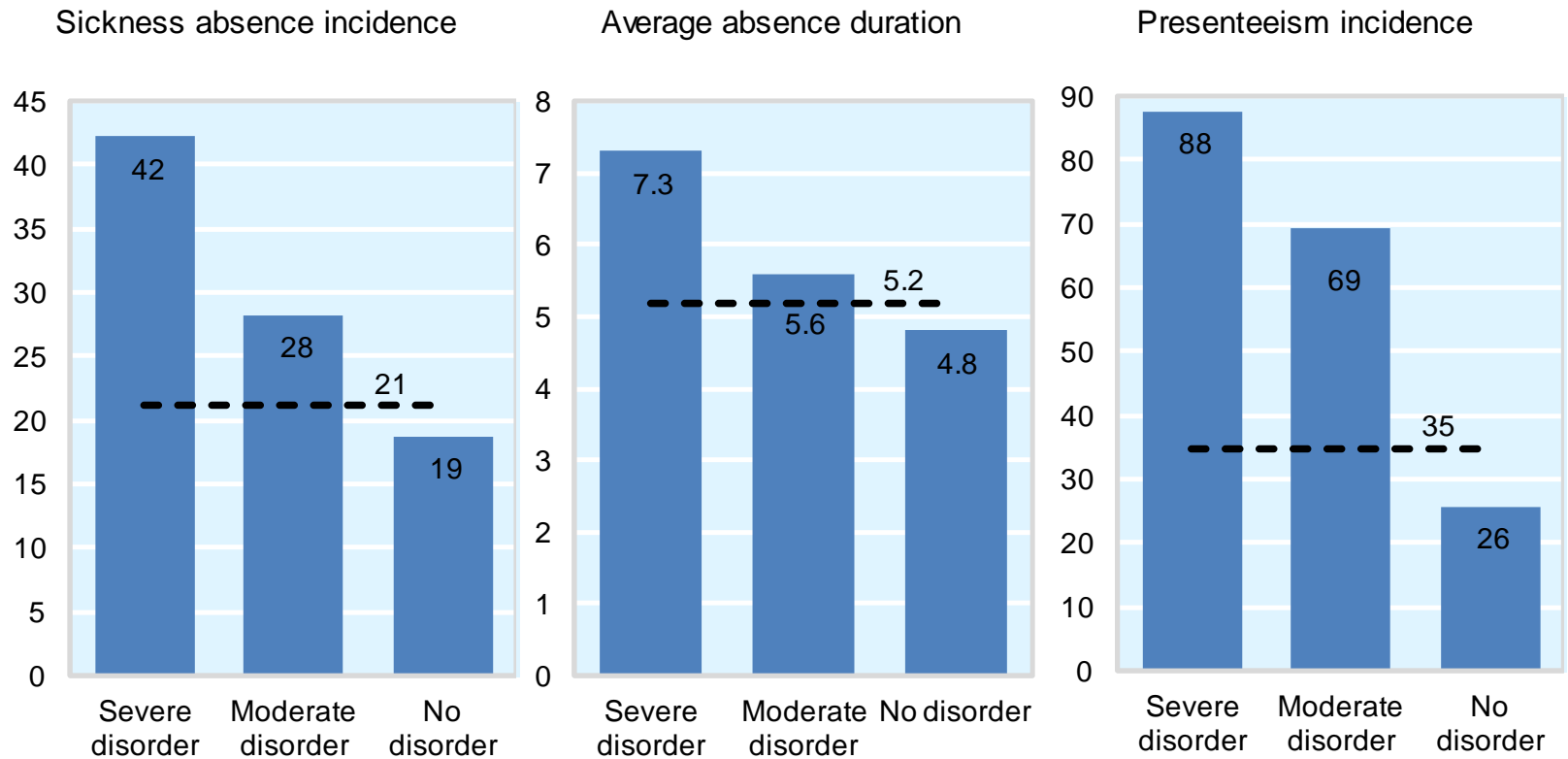
New disability benefit claims due to mental disorders (in % of total claims)





Productivity losses at work are large

Measures of productivity loss: Sickness absence incidence and duration and proportion of workers accomplishing less than they would like because of a health problem, 2010





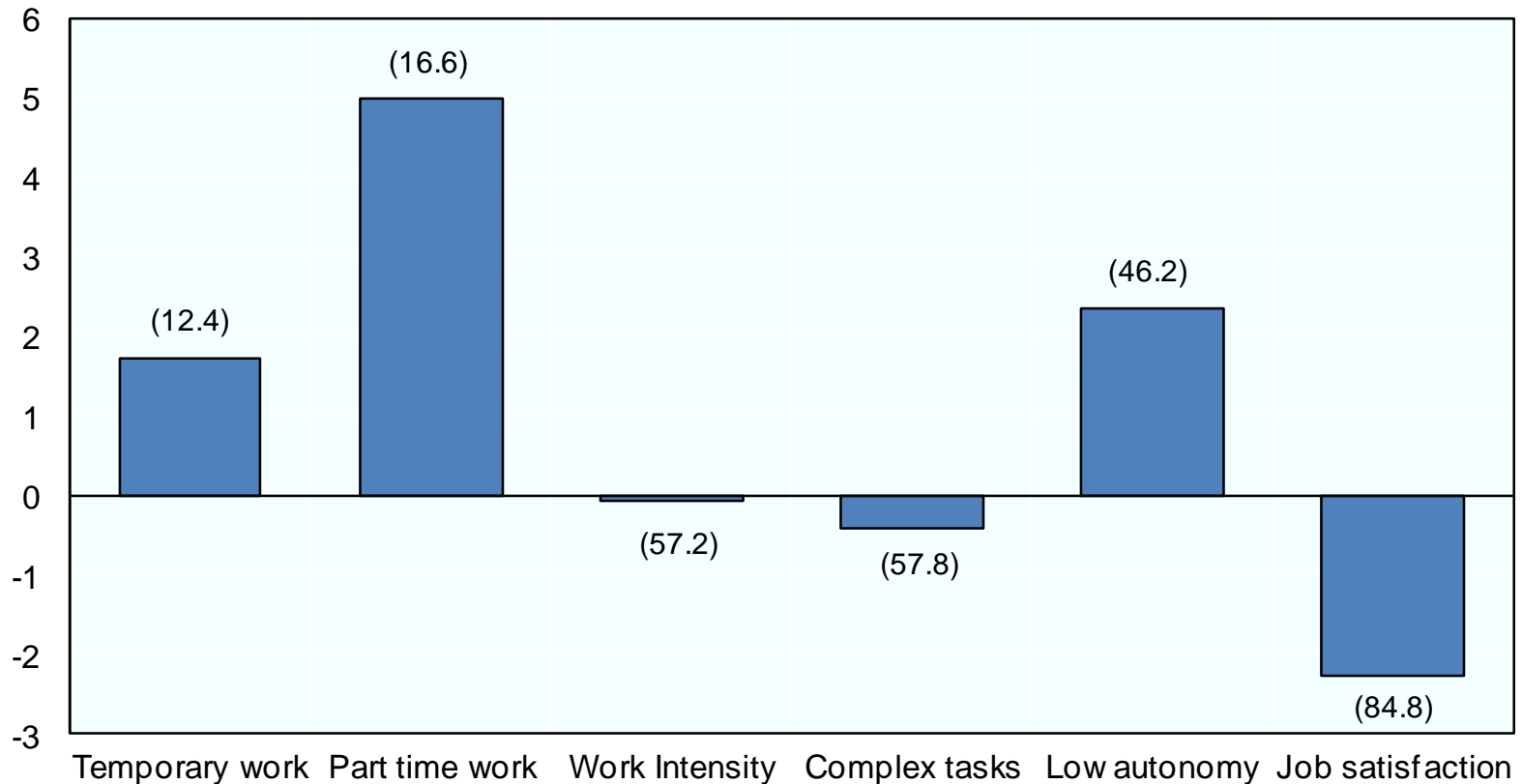
WORKING CONDITIONS AND WORK-RELATED STRESS: WHY DO THEY MATTER?





Have working conditions changed over time?

Percentage-point change in selected labour market outcomes and working condition indicators in the period 1990-2010



Note: Values within parenthesis are the OECD average in the last year

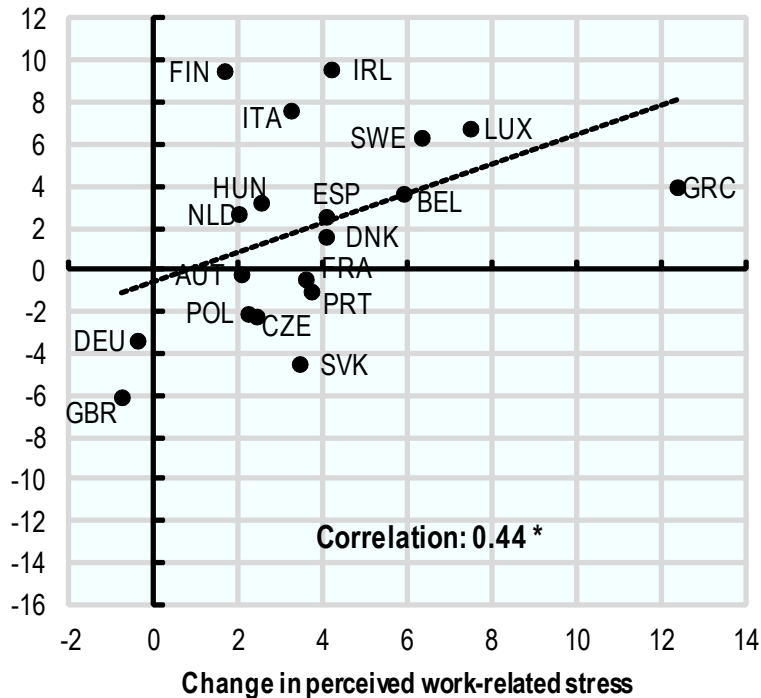
Source: OECD database on Labour Force Statistics and the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS).



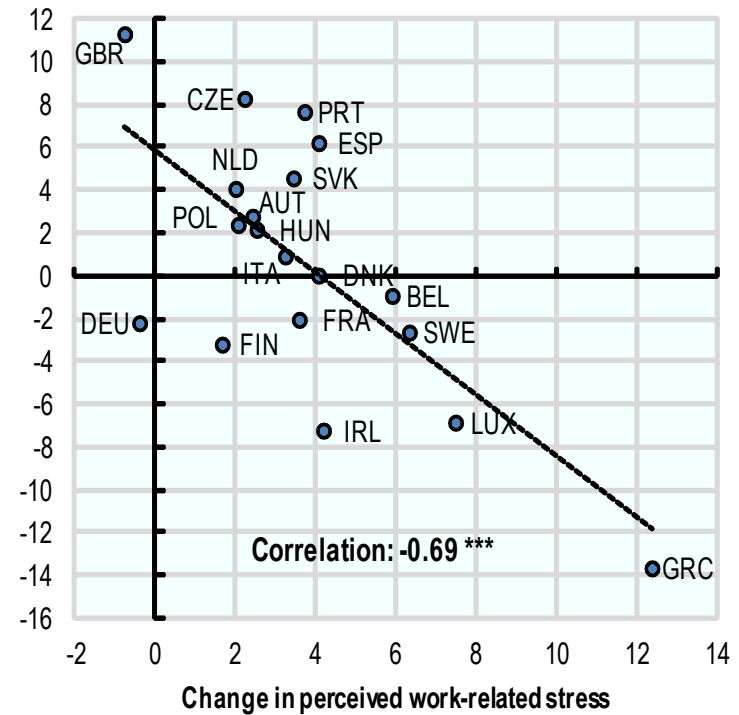
Links between working conditions and work-related stress

Association between percentage-point change in exposure to selected working conditions and change in perceived work-related stress, 1995-2005

Low job satisfaction



Low autonomy at work



* significant at 10%; *** significant at 1%.



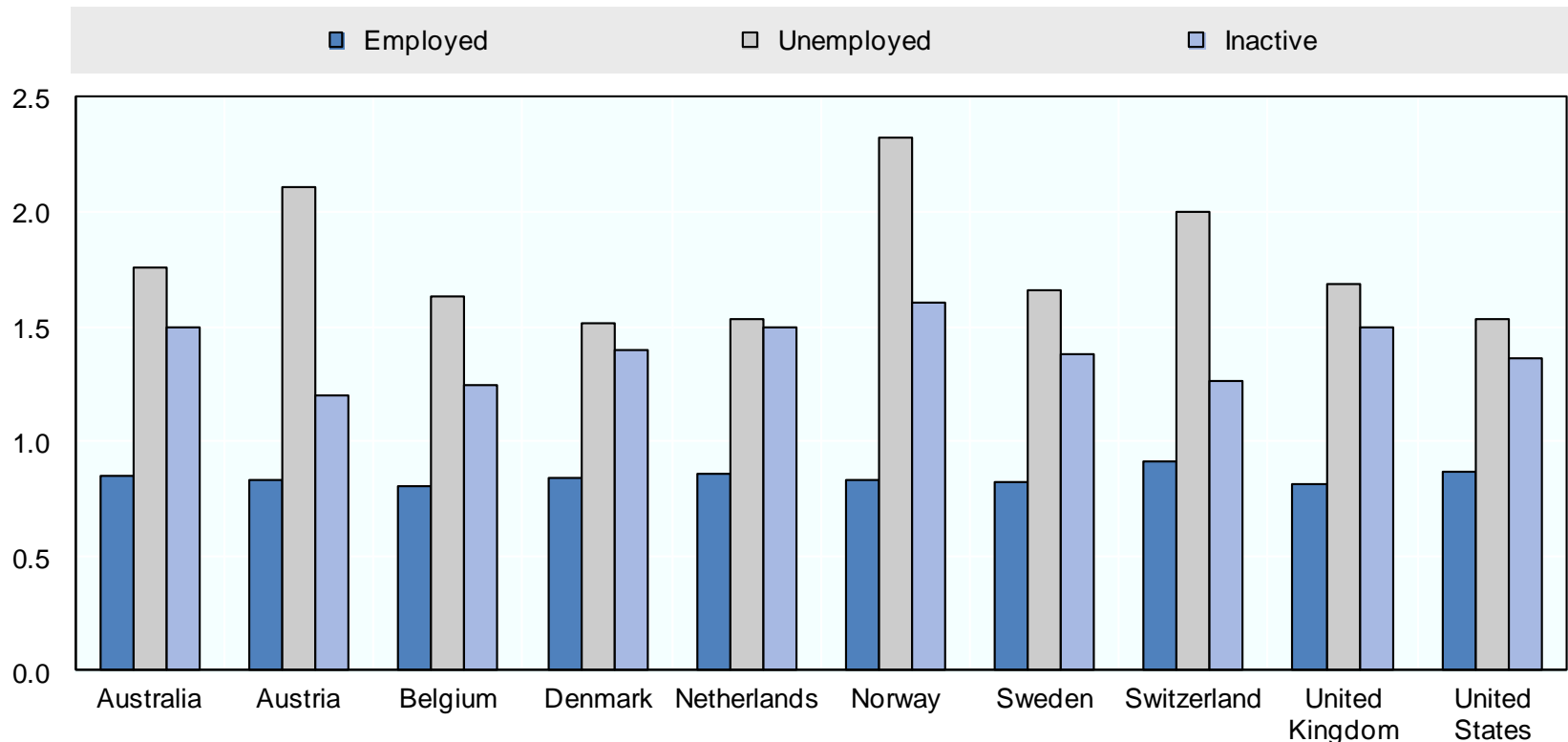
Work-related stress can worsen mental health

- Some stress can translate into job strain, i.e. a situation of high demands and low control
- Job strain can translate into mental ill-health
- Mental ill-health results almost always from a combination of personal characteristics, non-work factors and workplace factors



Having a job is important for mental well-being ...

Persons with a mental disorder by labour market status, relative to the overall prevalence in the working-age population, latest year available



Source: OECD (Mental Health and Work review)



... but the quality of work is also critical

- Mental health suffers when individuals move from employment to unemployment or inactivity
- But the type of employment has a substantial impact on the person's mental health
- A change from standard to “non-standard” employment tends to reduce mental well-being
*e.g. temporary contract,
long working hours,
shift work,
low job security.*



WHAT CAN EMPLOYERS DO? POLICY RESPONSES AND EXAMPLES





Elements for good workplace policies

- Attention to psychosocial workplace risks, e.g. work pressure, working hours etc.
- Multidisciplinary support at the workplace
 - e.g. occupational health + psychological services
- Addressing stigma and discrimination
- Raising awareness and competence among management and employees
- Systematic monitoring of sick-leave behaviour with return-to-work support



Interesting workplace policies: Belgium, Denmark, Netherlands and the UK

- **Belgian labour law on dealing with mental health risks**
 - Psychosocial risk assessments; occupational doctors and psychosocial prevention advisors
- **In Denmark, Sector and job-specific guidance tools**
 - Describe (i) risk factors; (ii) ways to prevent problems; (iii) consequences of unawareness
- **Employer responsibility for sick workers in Netherlands**
 - Two-year sick-pay by the employer; mandatory reintegration plans; significant sanctions; OHS
- **Supporting line-managers**
 - Mental health first aid kit in the UK
 - Training for line managers



Conclusion

- Topic neglected for too long due to widespread stigma, fears and taboos
- Countries increasingly recognising this as an issue for public policy
- Policy action calls for an integrated response to improve outcomes.



THANK YOU

For further details and OECD
publications:

www.oecd.org/els/disability
https://twitter.com/OECD_Social