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The Long-Term Effects of the Chernobyl Catastrophe on Subjective Well-Being and Mental Health

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Abstract:

This paper assesses the long-term subjective well-being and mental health toll of the Chernobyl disaster of 1986 in the general Ukrainian population and estimates the monetary differential necessary to compensate victims of the catastrophe. The analysis is based on two nationally representative Ukrainian data sets and reveals that even 20 years after the accident subjective well-being is negatively associated with self-reported assessments of having been affected by the catastrophe. The causal long-term effect of the disaster on life satisfaction is established by exploiting variation in official radiation data which are linked to survey respondents through information on their place of living in 1986. We find higher depression and trauma rates as well as poorer subjective life expectancy among those stronger affected by Chernobyl. Expressed in monetary terms, the estimated amount of income required to compensate for the experienced utility loss amounts to an annual cost of seven percent of Ukraine's GDP.

Text: See [Discussion Paper No. 5906](#)



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