

OECD Health Statistics 2016

Definitions, Sources and Methods

Self-reported absence from work due to illness

The number of self-reported work days lost per year due to illness per employed person. It excludes maternity leave.

There are two main sources of data on absence from work due to illness:

- 1) **data from household surveys** (labour force, social or health surveys) providing estimates of self-reported absence from work due to illness, covering most if not all of the working population, regardless of whether the absence from work has been financially compensated or not; and
- 2) **data from administrative sources** (often social security and other insurance agencies) providing estimates of compensated absence from work due to illness, typically covering only certain segments of the working population.

Estimates from these two data sources are not directly comparable, and are therefore presented separately.

Sources and Methods

Labour force, general social or health surveys.

Australia

Source:

2011: Microdata: Australian Health Survey, National Health Survey, 2011-12 (TableBuilder). ABS Cat. No. 4324.0.55.001. Canberra: ABS.

2004 and earlier: **Australian Bureau of Statistics**. National Health Survey 2004-05: Summary of results. ABS Cat. No. 4364.0. Canberra: ABS (and previous issues).

Coverage: Employed persons aged from 15 to 74 years old from all states and territories.

Methodology:

- Sample size (last survey): Around 15800 dwellings and 20800 people.
- Sample design: Dwellings selected at random using a multistage area frame.
- Type of interview: Face-to-face interview.
- Reference period: Data refer to the number of work days lost due to illness in the 2 weeks prior the interview.
- Calculation method: Total lost days have been multiplied by 23 (to allow for annual leave and public holidays) and divided by an estimate of the size of the labour force to derive days lost/person/year.

Further information: <http://www.abs.gov.au/>.

Austria

Source: **Statistics Austria**, Austrian Health Interview Survey 2014.

Coverage: Population aged 15 years old and over in private households.

Methodology: "In the past 12 months, have you been absent from work for reasons of health problems? Take into account all kind of diseases, injuries and other health problems that you had and which resulted in your absence from work." Response categories include: 1. Yes or 2. No.

Further information: http://www.statistik.at/web_en/.

Belgium

Source: Scientific Institute of Public Health, Operational Direction of Public Health and Surveillance, Health Interview Survey.

Coverage: Population aged 15 years old and over.

Further information: <https://www.wiv-isp.be/epidmio/hisia/index.htm>.

Canada

Source: Statistics Canada.

From 1987: Labour Force Survey (LFS), monthly. CANSIM Table 279-0029.

1975-1986: Analytic Reports - Labour and Household Surveys Analysis Division (Cat. No. 71-535-MPB).

Coverage:

- **Geographical:** Areas excluded are Yukon, Northwest territories, Nunavut and Indian reserves.

- **Population groups:** Civilian non-institutional full-time employees aged 15 years old and above, excluding the full-time members of the Canadian Armed Forces and inmates of institutions (around 2% of the total population aged 15 years old and over).

Methodology:

- **Sample size:** Approximately 54,000 households resulting in approximately 100,000 individuals.

- **Sample design:** Dwellings selected using a stratified multistage area frame.

- **Type of interview:** Computer assisted interviewing, telephone and face-to-face.

- **Reference period:** Data refer to the number of days away from main job because of illness or disability in the last week prior the interview (only for full-time employees).

❗ **Deviation from the OECD definition:** Data beginning in 1997 exclude maternity leave. However, men on paid paternity (in Quebec only) or parental leave are included in the calculation until 2006.

Further information: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/>.

Chile

Data not available.

Czech Republic

Source: European Health Interview Survey 2008.

Coverage: Population aged 15 years old and over.

Methodology:

- Number of respondents: 1955.

- Average number of days with self-reported reduction in working activities per employed person. Questions HS10 and HS11 were used for this computation:

- HS.10: During the last 12 months have you had to interrupt your work activities because of health problems (sick leave or other absence from work)? Take into account all diseases, injuries and other health problems you have suffered and which have resulted in interruption of your work activities.

- HS.11 How many days in total you have been absent from work (had to interrupt your work activities) because of health problems during the last 12 months?

Denmark

Source: National Research Centre for the Working Environment - Danish Work Environment Cohort Study (DWECS).

Coverage: Total national labour market, regardless of respondents' labour market status. Prior to 2014, the age range is 18-59. In 2014, the age range is 18-64.

Methodology:

- **Sample design:** Stratified simple random sampling design with proportional allocation. The sample was extracted from the cpr-register prior to 2014. In 2014 the sample was extracted from the e-salary register (e-indkomst registret).
 - **Type of interview:** 1990 and 2000 data collected via telephone interviews; in 2005, surveys conducted primarily by mail; in 2010, surveys conducted only by mail. In 2014, surveys conducted primarily by web-questionnaire (non-responders got a paper-questionnaire).
 - **Reference period:** The same question about absence due to sickness is used in all studies: "How many work days have you been absent due to sickness within the last 12 months?"
- Further information:** <http://www.arbejdsmiljoforskning.dk/en>.

Estonia

Source: "Health Behavior among Estonian Adult Population", a study conducted by the **National Institute for Health Development** (or preceding legitimate institutions) starting from 1990. (The study was until 2010 part of the *Finbalt Health Monitor* (Finbalt) co-operative study co-coordinated by the National Institute for Health and Welfare (Finland).)

Coverage: Survey represents population aged 16-64 years.

Methodology:

- Postal survey that is carried out in every second year.
- The question used in the study: "How many days in the past 12 months have you been absent from work/school due to being ill (please don't take into account maternity leave, taking care of a sick child, etc; if you haven't been absent, note down 0)."
- The question was slightly modified twice (2004 and 2006), but no statistically significant changes in data were observed. Therefore no "breaks in time series" or "deviations from the definition" can be reported.

Further information: <http://www.tai.ee/en/health-data/research-reports> and <http://www.tai.ee/en/health-data/research-reports/download/222>.

Finland

Source: Statistics Finland, the **Finnish Labour Force Survey (LFS)**.

Coverage: Employed persons aged 15 to 74 years old in the country, including persons residing temporarily (for under one year) abroad as well as foreign nationals registered in the Finnish Population Information System, whose stay in Finland will last for at least one year.

Methodology:

- LFS is a continuous panel survey, in which one person is interviewed five times, for the purpose of determining the population's participation in work, employment, unemployment and activity of persons outside the labour force.
- **Sample size:** The sample of each month consists of approximately 12,000 persons, which is, on the average, every 300th person in the population. A total of 103,000 persons selected from the population register were interviewed in 2014.
- **Sample frame:** The sample of the Labour Force Survey is drawn twice a year as a stratified random sample from Statistics Finland's population database, which is based on the Central Population Register. The results from the sample are weighted to correspond to the entire population aged between 15 and 74. The effects of non-response on the results are corrected by using so-called weight calibration, in which weighting is used to produce the correct population distributions by area, gender and age.
- **Type of interview:** Approximately 99% by Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) and 1% by Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI).

🔪 **Break in time series in 2008:** See http://tilastokeskus.fi/til/tyti/tyti_2008-02-19_men_001_en.html.

Further information: http://www.tilastokeskus.fi/til/tyti/index_en.html.

France

Source:

1991-1992: **Institut de recherche et documentation en économie de la santé** (Irdes). Health, Care, and Social Protection survey (ESPS), Health and Medical Care Survey (ESSM) 1991-1992.

Coverage: Full-time persons over 18 years old employed in metropolitan France.

Methodology:

- **Sample size:** 8219 full-time employed persons participated in the survey.
- **Sample frame:** Sample based on the Population Census.
- **Type of interview:** Face-to-face interview (CAPI).
- **Reference period:** Data refer to the length of interruption of professional activity (in days) declared by the respondent during the time collection (e.g., 3 months).
- **Calculation method:** Amongst the 8219 full-time employed persons who participated in the survey, 861 individuals declared to have interrupted their activity due to illness. As the activity interruption summary covers only the time of collection, i.e. about three months, the length of sick leave of each individual has been divided by the exact number of days of collection, and multiplied by 365. The sum of annual length of sick leave obtained has then been divided by the total number of employed active persons who have been investigated. The interruption of activity due to pregnancy, abortion or accident at work has not been taken into account in this calculation.

Further information: <http://www.irdes.fr/EspaceRecherche/Enquetes/EnqueteSanteSoinsMed.htm> (in French).
 2014: European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), see http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/203647/203710/EHIS_wave_1_guidelines.pdf/ffbeb62c-8f64-4151-938c-9ef171d148e0, Questions AW01-AW02.

Germany

Data not available.

Greece

Source: Hellenic Statistical Authority, European Health Interview Survey - EHIS.

Further information: <http://www.statistics.gr/portal/page/portal/ESYE>.

Hungary

Sources:

2014: National Institute of Pharmacy and Nutrition (OGYÉI in Hungarian), National Diet and Nutritional Status Survey 2014 (OTÁP2014 in Hungarian).

2009: Johan Béla National Center of Epidemiology (OEK), EHIS (ELEF2009 in Hungarian).

2000 and 2003: Johan Béla National Center of Epidemiology (OEK), National Population Health Survey (OLEF2000, OLEF2003).

Coverage: Population aged 15 years old and over for 2009 and 2014 data. Population aged 18 years and over for 2000 and 2003 data.

Methodology: Question asked in the survey: In the last 12 months altogether how many days have you been out of work due to health problems?

2009 and 2014: 0-365 days.

2000 and 2003: 0-240 days (only weekdays counted in the calculation).

Further information: <http://www.ksh.hu/elef/index.html> (in Hungarian).

Iceland

Data not available.

Ireland

Data not available.

Israel

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Survey.

Until 2011, data were calculated by the **Ministry of Health**. From 2012 data are calculated by the Central Bureau of Statistics.

Coverage: Data cover the employed population aged 15 years old and over living permanently in Israel, including the Jewish residents living in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza area, potential immigrants and permanent residents.

living abroad for a period of less than one year, the residents of East Jerusalem (since 1968) and the non-Jewish population of the Golan subdistrict (since 1982). The survey excludes tourists and temporary residents unless they have been living in Israel continuously for more than a year, as well as and members of the armed forces.

Methodology:

- Sample size (2013 survey): Approximately 9,000 households are interviewed each month.
- Sample frame: Most of the sample is taken from the main frames used for localities (obtained from the Arnona tax registers of local councils, but there are special frames for sampling specific population groups (obtained mainly from the 1983 Census of Population and Housing).
- Type of interview: Face-to-face and telephone interviews.
- Reference period: The surveys count hours or days of absence from main job due to illness or injury in the week prior to interview among employed persons.
- Calculation method: This reference week figure was calculated for the whole year, taking into account weekly working hours by industry.

 **Break in time series in 2012:**

- From January 2012, the **Central Bureau of Statistics** has made a transition from a quarterly system of measuring labour force characteristics to a new and improved system that better suits the latest international recommendations on employment and unemployment: the Monthly Labour Force Survey. Therefore the 2012 data refer to the entire labour force (including those who are in compulsory or permanent military service), and not to the civilian labour force as it was before.
- In addition to the transition to a monthly survey, in 2012 a new Standard Industrial Classification of Economic Activities based on ISIC was implemented as well as a new Standard Classification of Occupations based on ISCO-08.

Further information: <http://www1.cbs.gov.il> (in Hebrew), http://www.cbs.gov.il/publications/labour_survey04/labour_force_survey/answer_question_e_2012.pdf, and http://www.cbs.gov.il/publications12/economic_activities11/pdf/e_print.pdf.

Note: The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

Italy

Source: ISTAT, Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (National Institute of Statistics).

2005: Survey “Health conditions and recourse to health services, 2005.” The survey runs every 5 years.

1999: Survey “Health conditions and recourse to health services, 1999-2000.”

Coverage: All employed persons aged 14 to 64 years old living in Italy (excluding Armed Forces and people living in hospitals, religious institutes, etc).

Methodology:

- Sample size (last survey): Around 60,000 households.
- Type of interview: CAPI and PAPI.
- Reference period: The number of self-reported work-days lost per year is estimated from the self-reported number of work-days lost in the 4 weeks before the interview.
- Calculation method: Data are weighted.

Further information: <http://en.istat.it/>.

Japan

Data not available.

Korea

Sources:

From 2007: **Ministry of Health and Welfare, Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**, Korea National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, unpublished data.

2005: **Ministry of Health and Welfare** and **Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs**, Report on the National Health and Nutrition Survey.

Coverage: Population aged 19 years old and over.

Methodology:

- The sample size of the National Health and Examination Nutrition Survey in 2013 was 3,182 families (8,018 people). It excludes the institutional dwelling units (e.g. dormitories, social welfare institutions, prisons, military camps, etc.) and foreigners.
 - Type of interview: Face-to-face interview.
 - Reference period: Data refer to the number of days of absence from the main job (for paid workers) due to illness or injuries in the month prior to the interview.
 - Calculation method: The total number of days lost due to illness in the month prior to the interview was multiplied by 12 and divided by the total number of people answering the question.
- Further information:** <http://knhanes.cdc.go.kr/>.

Luxembourg

Data not available.

Mexico

Data not available.

Netherlands

Data not available.

New Zealand

Data not available.

Norway

Data not available.

Poland

Source: Central Statistical Office (CSO). 2009 European Health Interview Survey.

Coverage: Employed persons 15 years old or older.

Methodology: Two questions are asked:

- Within the past 12 months, have you been absent from work due to health problems? (*Consider all your diseases, injuries and health conditions that resulted in an absence from work.*)
- *If yes:* How many days in total have you been absent from work for health problems during the past 12 months?

Portugal

Source: Ministry of Health, National Health Survey, 1995/1996.

Coverage: Employed persons aged 15 years old and over living in Portugal.

Methodology:

- Sample size (last survey): 15,239 households, 41,193 people.
- Sample design: Probabilistic sample from 2003.
- Type of interview: Face-to-face interview.
- Calculation method: The data were calculated by adding the total of days lost per employed person and dividing the result by the number of respondents in the relevant population group. The NHS is a continuous process during a year, so it includes 26 periods of two weeks.

Further information: <http://www.portaldasaude.pt/portal> (in Portuguese).

Slovak Republic

Data not available.

Slovenia

Source: National Institute of Public Health, Slovenia.

2014: National Institute of Public Health, Anketa o zdravju in zdravstvenem varstvu 2014 (Questionnaire of the European Health Interview Survey, EHIS, 2nd round).

2007: Anketa o zdravju in zdravstvenem varstvu 2007 (Questionnaire of the European Health Interview Survey, EHIS, 1st round).

Coverage: Population living in private households (persons living in institutions are excluded), age 15+.

Further information: <http://www.ivz.si/> (in Slovenian).

Spain

Sources: Ministerio de Sanidad, Política Social e Igualdad (Ministry of Health, Social Policy and Equality) and National Statistics Institute.

2009: Encuesta Europea de Salud en España European Health Survey (EHIS) in Spain.

<http://www.msssi.gob.es/estadEstudios/estadisticas/sisInfSanSNS/nivelSalud.htm>.

Coverage: Employed persons aged 16 years old and over living in Spain.

Methodology:

- 2009 question: "In the past 12 months, how many days in total were you absent from work for health-related problems?" Denominator: Total number of respondents currently working.

- Data are weighted and calculated excluding missing values.

Further information: <http://www.msssi.gob.es/>.

Sweden

Data not available.

Switzerland

Source: Federal Statistical Office, Neuchâtel, Swiss Health Survey 1992, 1997, 2002, 2007 and 2012.

Coverage: Employed persons aged 15 years old and over living in Switzerland (including foreigners living in Switzerland for more than 3 months).

Methodology:

- Sample size: Around 20000 individuals.

- Sample frame and design: Probabilistic sample based on the OFS telephone register.

- Type of interview: Telephone interview followed by a written (paper or web) survey.

Further information:

http://www.bfs.admin.ch/bfs/portal/fr/index/infothek/erhebungen_quellen/blank/blank/ess/04.html (in French).

Turkey

Source: Turkish Statistical Institute (TURKSTAT), Turkey Health Interview Survey.

Further information: <http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/>.

United Kingdom

Data not available.

United States

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/National Center for Health Statistics/National Health Interview Survey (NHIS). Vital Health Statistics Series 10. Summary Health Statistics for US Adults.

Coverage: National representative sample of the US non-institutionalised adults (aged 18 years old and over).

Methodology:

- The National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) is an ongoing nationwide sample survey in which data are collected through personal household interviews. Information is obtained on personal and demographic characteristics including race and ethnicity by self-report. Information is also obtained on illness, injuries, impairments, chronic conditions, utilisation of health resources and other health topics.
- Estimates were weighted to represent the U.S. civilian non-institutionalised population for each time period.
- Reference period: Respondents who worked at any time in the past year were asked how many days they missed work at a job or business because of illness or injury (not including maternity leave) in the past year.
- Estimates are the number of work loss days per year per currently employed persons. A work loss day is defined as a day in which a currently employed person missed more than one-half day from a job or business.

Further information: NHIS website, <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>.

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<http://www.oecd.org/health/health-data.htm>