

Study: Understanding public-private sector differences in work absences, 2012

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In 2012, full-time employees in the public sector took 12.4 days off for sickness and personal or family responsibilities, compared with 8.3 days in the private sector—a difference of 4.1 days.

The difference can be attributed to several factors, as the public sector workforce tends to be older, more female and more unionized. Accounting for these factors reduces the gap in work absences between public and private sector employees by approximately 80%, or from 4.1 days to 0.8 days.

Overall, unionized full-time employees missed an average of 12.9 days for personal reasons in 2012, compared with 7.5 days for their non-unionized counterparts. Unionized employees in both the public and private sector took more days off than their non-unionized counterparts.

Full-time employees aged 55 to 64 missed 12.4 days on average, compared with 6.1 days for those aged 20 to 24. Women missed 11.4 days, compared with 7.6 days for men.

Work absences also varied across occupational categories. However, these differences did not explain public-private differences in work absences.

Note to readers

This article uses 2012 data on work absences released today, which are derived from the Labour Force Survey. Work absences refer to the estimated number of days taken by full-time employees holding only one job (excluding the military) for illness or disability, or personal and family responsibilities, and exclude all other forms of absences (including parental and maternity leave).

The public sector includes employees in public administration at the federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, First Nations and other Aboriginal levels as well as in Crown corporations, liquor control boards and other government institutions such as schools (including universities), hospitals and public libraries.

Available in CANSIM: tables 279-0029 to 279-0039.

Definitions, data sources and methods: survey number 3701.

The article "Understanding public-private sector differences in work absences" in *Insights on Canadian Society* (75-006-X) is now available. From the *Browse by key resource* module of our website, choose *Publications*.

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