

Sick leave in UK hits 15-year high: Study

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Employees in the UK took an average 7.8 sick days over the past year, according to a study.

Sick leave in the UK has hit its highest rate in 15 years and is well above pre-pandemic levels, a study showed Tuesday.

Employees took an average 7.8 [sick days](#) over the past year, according to

the study published by human resources association CIPD and medical services company Simplyhealth.

That was two days more than before the pandemic and marked the highest level since 2008, a CIPD spokesperson told AFP.

"Despite our research showing that most organizations are focusing on employee well-being, the considerable rise in absences across all sectors is a worry," said Rachel Suff, senior employee well-being adviser at the CIPD.

The jump in [sick leave](#) is contributing to a tight labor market, with employers struggling to recruit or retain existing employees due to worker shortages accentuated by the pandemic and Brexit.

The study also finds that stress is one of the prevalent factors for both short- and long-term sick leave, with over 76 percent of managers reporting absences for this reason over the last year.

Short-term absences are dominated by minor illnesses (94 percent) and injuries (45 percent), with 39 percent due to [mental health disorders](#), according to the survey of 6.5 million [employees](#) in 918 organizations.

Mental health issues topped the list for long-term absences (63 percent), followed by acute health conditions such as strokes and cancer.

Over a third of organizations reported that Covid-19 remained a major cause of short-term absence.

At the beginning of 2023, 2.6 million Britons of working age (6.1 percent of the total) were out of the workforce for health reasons, becoming the largest cohort among the economically inactive for the first time, state budget body OBR reported this summer.

Claudia Nicholls, chief customer officer at Simplyhealth, urged employers to take action to improve the health of their staff.

"Employers have a vital role to play in supporting them through workplace health and well-being services," she said.

"Companies need to implement preventative health and well-being strategies that are supported by the most senior levels of leadership," she added.

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