



Safety Bulletin 96

Working when sick – January absence statistics 2009

One in four of the workforce went to work despite thinking they were too ill to do so in January, according to a YouGov poll commissioned by the TUC and published today. The vast majority said they struggled in because they did not want to let others down.

Workplace absence statistics collected by the CBI support these findings and show that sickness absence has been steadily falling over the past decade. Ten years ago the average worker took an average of 8.5 days off sick a year. Last year it was 6.7 days. This is a fall of over 20%, and the second lowest figure since records began in 1987.

According to the YouGov poll more than half the workforce (57%) say they have gone to work when too ill during the last year. Only one in eight (12%) say they have never gone to work when too ill.

Results indicated that people went into work when ill because they didn't want to let people down, rather than because of pressure from bosses to do so. In total, two in three (67%) went to work when ill because they didn't want to let clients, workmates or their bosses down.

But, while still a minority of the workforce, there are substantial numbers of people who say they are pressured into going into work. More than three million (13%) say they cannot afford to lose pay and nearly 1.5 million (6%) say they are worried that their boss would take action against them.

More than one in four (29%) say that the recession will make them more likely to go to work when ill.

TUC General Secretary, Brendan Barber, said:

“Too often we are told that British workers are always taking bogus sickies or taking time off at the first sign of a sniffle.

“But the truth is that we are a nation of mucus-troopers who struggle into work even when we are too ill because we do not want to let colleagues, clients or our employer down.

“While this is admirable, it is not always the best thing to do. Coughs and sneezes still spread diseases, and the worst thing you can do to your workmates is pass on your illness.”

If you require any further information, clarification or assistance with the above, then please do not hesitate to contact us;

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Source – Workplace Law Network
www.workplacelaw.net