



Press release

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Sickness absence down to 4.7 percent

Absence among Dutch employees caused by sickness was on average 4.7 percent in 2003. In 2002 it was still over 5.3 percent. On average employees reported in sick 1.3 times a year. Women, older people and people in lower wage brackets claimed more sick leave than average. Divorced and foreign workers were also absent more often.

These data are from the first report of the national sickness absence statistics, a joint project of Statistics Netherlands and the organisation of occupational health and safety institutions in the Netherlands (BOA). These new statistics mean that for the first in the ten years since the health law was abolished detailed information is available on absence from work due to illness.

Women and older employees more often sick

Women report in sick more often than men. In 2003 the sickness absence rate for women was 5.3 percent, compared with 4.3 percent for men. Although older employees are ill less often, they stay off work for longer periods than their younger colleagues. In 2003 employees aged 15-25 were off sick 2.6 percent of the time, while workers aged 55-65 were off for 5.5 percent of the time.

Absence decreases as wage increases

The more people earn, the less likely they are to report in sick. Workers with an average gross annual wage of 50 thousand euro or more have an absence rate of 3.1 percent, while employees with a wage below 30 thousand euro a year have a rate of 5.0 percent.

Higher absence among divorced workers

Workers who are divorced have a higher rate of sickness absence than unmarried, married or widowed employees: 7.4 percent and 3.9 percent respectively. If the difference in age is taken into account, divorced employees are sick 1.7 times as often as unmarried employees.

Non-western foreigners off more often

Sickness among non-western foreigners (6.0 percent in 2003) is higher than among native Dutch employees (4.5 percent) and western foreigners (5.0 percent). Within the group of non-western foreigners, Turks and Moroccans had the highest rates of sick leave.