

Uncovering absence trends in the UK

An industry benchmarking report

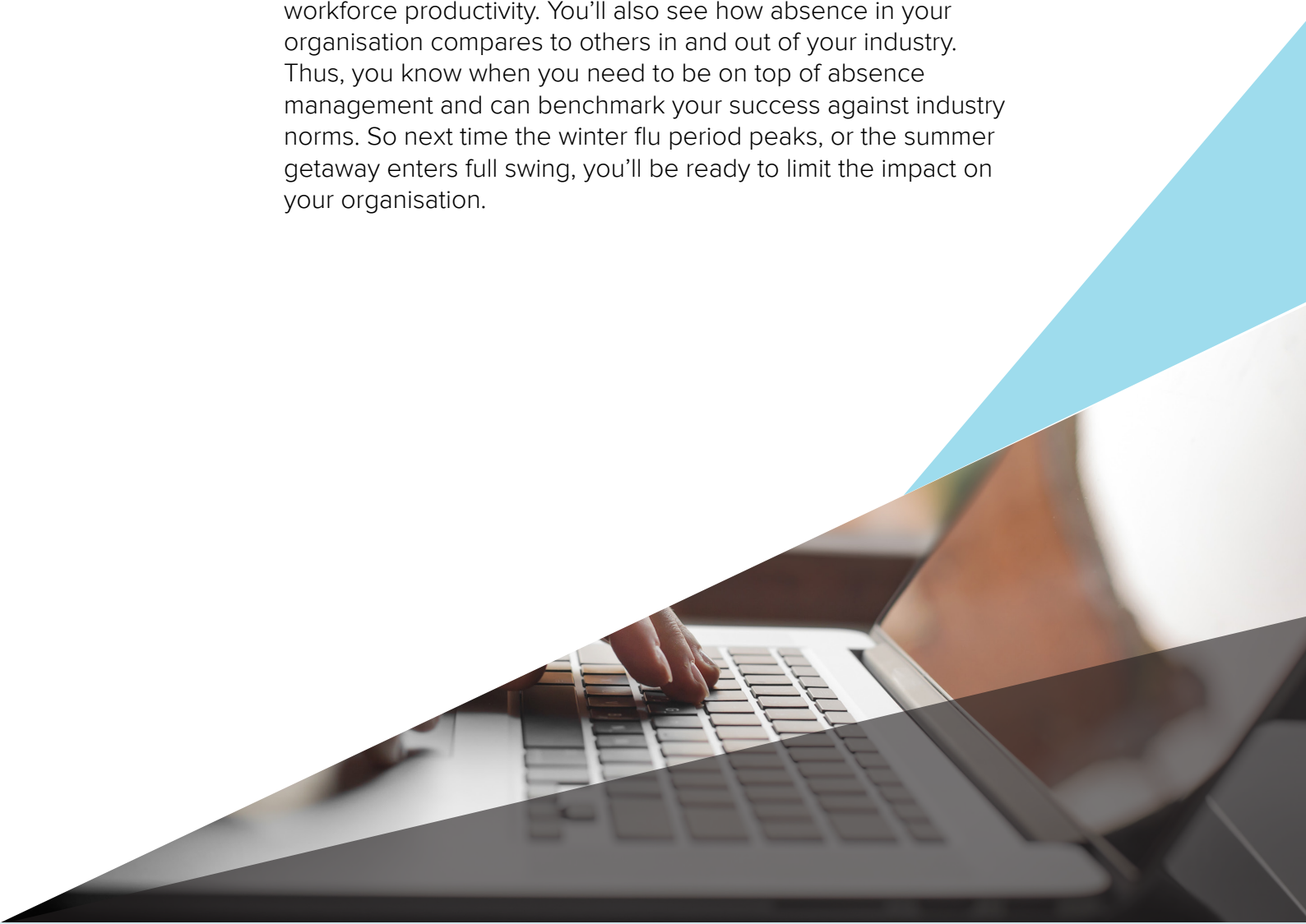


aCloud TeamSeer is the UK's leading holiday and absence management tool. Our software helps our customers process their holiday requests and log sick leave.

Over 80,000 people and over 700 businesses rely on aCloud TeamSeer to manage their leave. Collecting and storing absence records on this scale grants us a unique insight into holiday and sickness trends across multiple industries and organisations.

Keen to quantify these trends, we conducted an anonymous but detailed analysis of our dataset. This report details the findings of the study, giving a full picture of UK absence across the full calendar year of 2015.

From this report, you'll learn when high levels of absence impact workforce productivity. You'll also see how absence in your organisation compares to others in and out of your industry. Thus, you know when you need to be on top of absence management and can benchmark your success against industry norms. So next time the winter flu period peaks, or the summer getaway enters full swing, you'll be ready to limit the impact on your organisation.



How time of year affects absence

Knowing how seasonality affects absence tells HR and line managers when to prepare for people taking time off en masse. This way they can take measures to minimise its impact on your business.

The findings show that businesses need to:

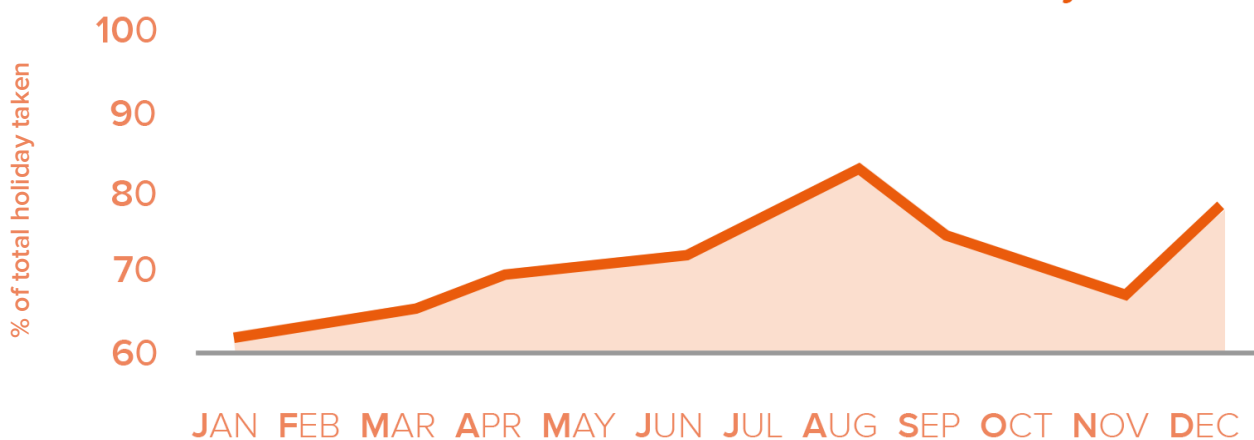
1. Prepare for high levels of unplanned absence at the start of the year
2. Expect productivity to drop in August and December, when people take most holiday

Summary

August, a month that lines up with UK school holidays, is the most popular for planning time off. Holiday peaks at 81.2% of time off in August, which is around 5% more than in any other month.

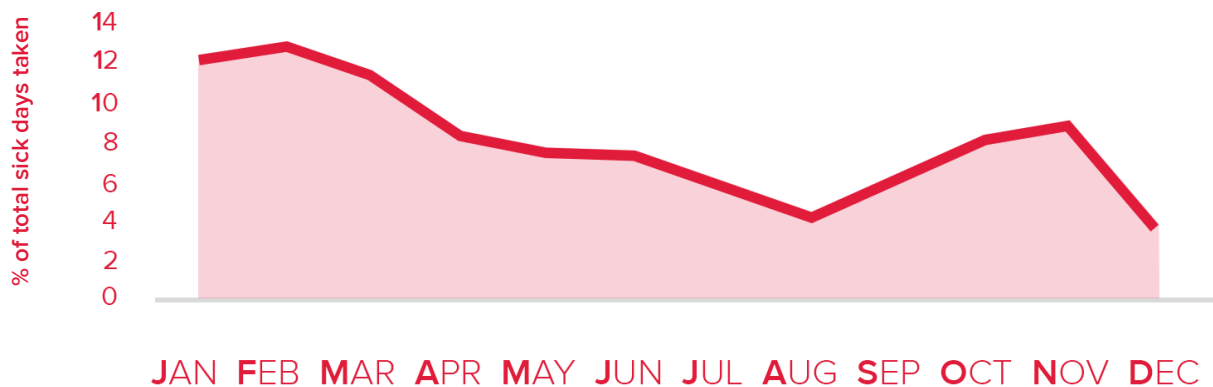
The second most popular month for taking holiday is December. This is a likely combination of extended Christmas breaks and the last-minute rush to use up remaining leave before the new year.

Holiday Trends



Interestingly, people take the least amount of sick leave in December (3.9%). Besides people taking lots of holiday at this time, pressure to finish projects before the new year is a likely reason for this. In contrast, a high amount of sick leave is taken in the following months of January and February. In January and February sick leave is at its highest, with 12.5 – 13% of time off due to sickness.

Sickness Trends



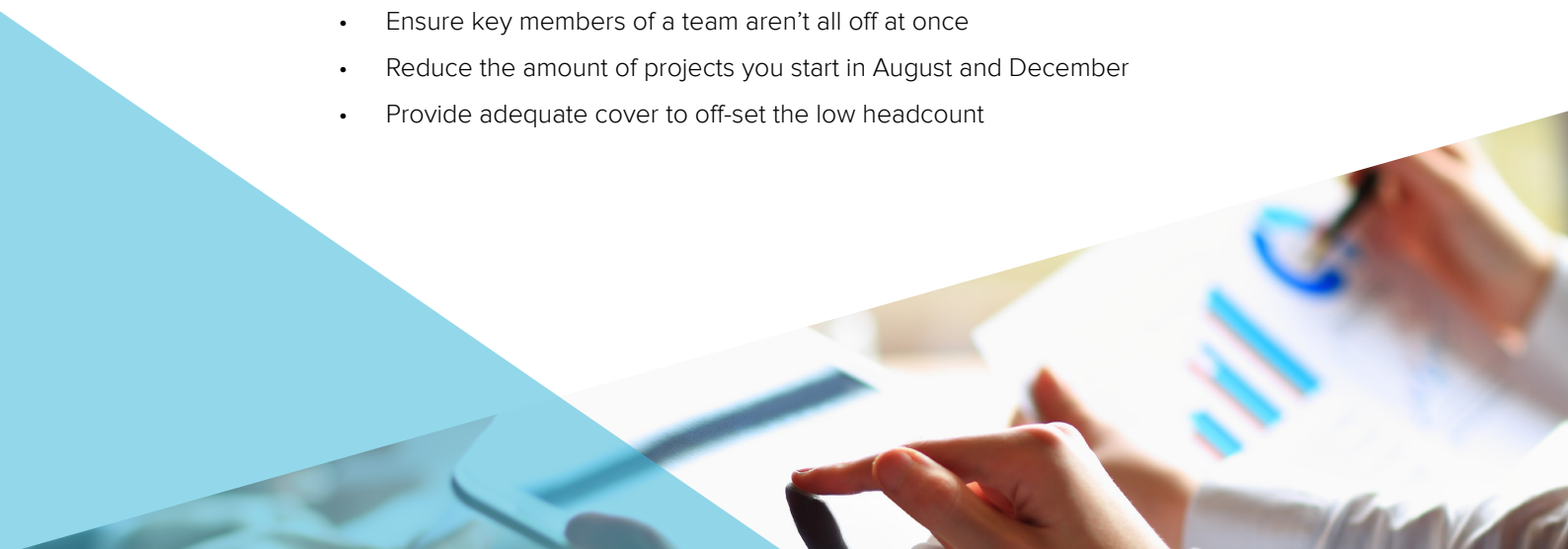
How to prepare for spikes in absence

To minimise the impact of sick leave you can:

- Educate employees about what to do when sick – many managers will ask their team to stay at home to avoid infecting other team members and to encourage a speedy recovery
- Remind employees of company sickness policy. This should include how many sick days they can take before they need a doctor's note
- Remind managers when and how to conduct return to work meetings

To minimise the impact of the holiday season you can:

- Ensure key members of a team aren't all off at once
- Reduce the amount of projects you start in August and December
- Provide adequate cover to off-set the low headcount



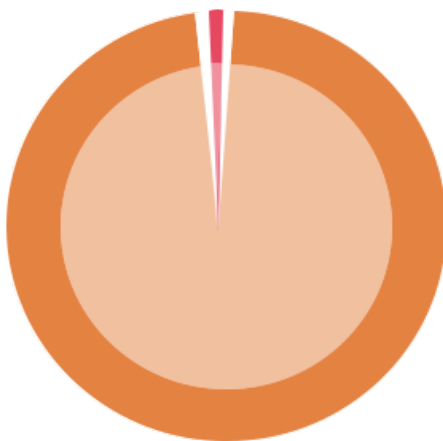
Absence breakdown by sector

The study also revealed how absence trends vary from one sector to another. Therefore we can see which industries suffer the highest levels of unplanned absence. Here, we focus on two absence types: holidays (planned time off) and sick leave (unplanned time off).

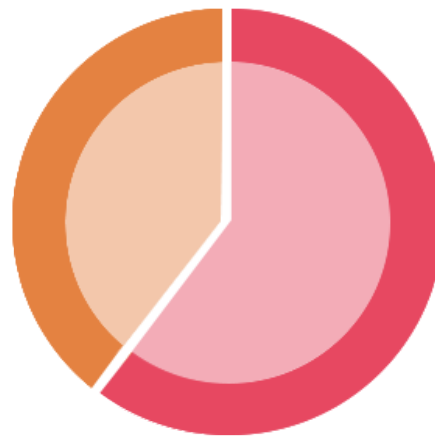
Holiday absence

People working for water and energy suppliers take the most holiday as a proportion of their total time off. 92.4% of absence in the utilities sector is holiday - far higher than the cross-industry average of 70.9%. It suggests the value these employees place on holiday, as it's the only time they take off work.

Utilities Sector



Not For Profit Sector



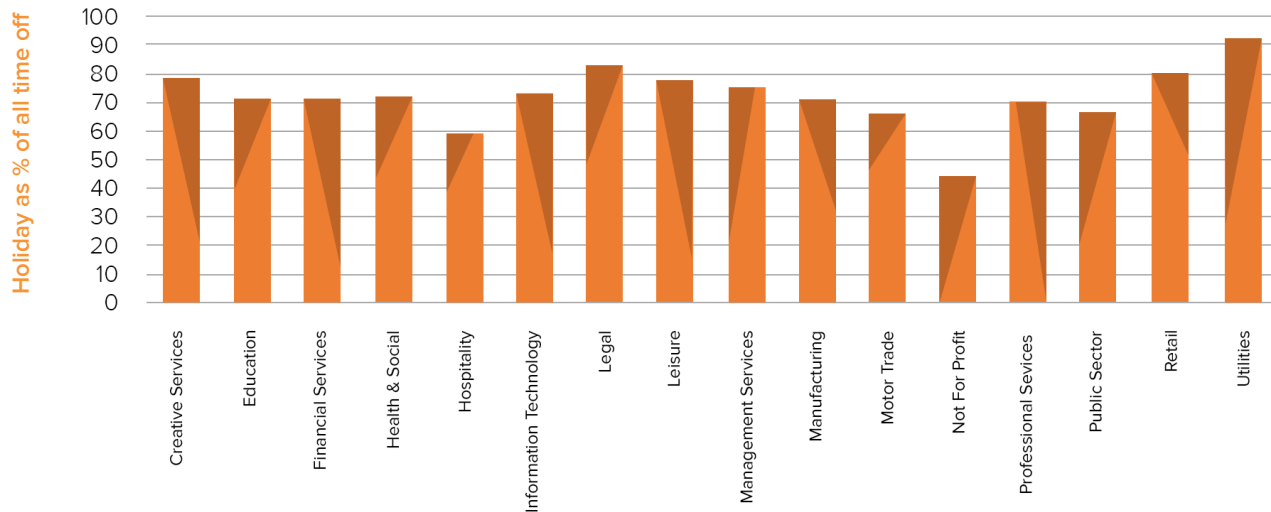
- Holiday
- Sickness

Whereas employees in the not for profit sector take much less holiday as a percentage of their time off. Less than half of absence (44%) is holiday, suggesting ad hoc leave is rampant.

This is likely due to the amount of part-time, temporary and voluntary workers in this sector. 38% of people in the sector work part-time, as opposed to just 25% in the private sector.[1] As a result, employees will be entitled to less holiday, which may compel them to take time off spontaneously.

Holiday as a percentage of total time off

The graph below shows the amount of leave requested and approved in TeamSeer before being taken. This is shown as a percentage of all that industry's absence records for 2015.

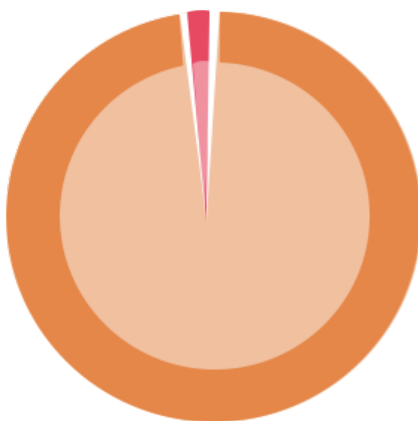


Sickness absence

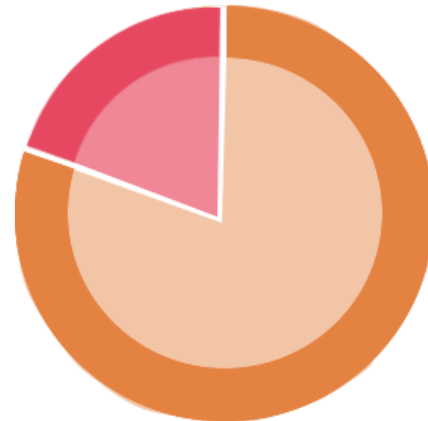
Public sector employees take a disproportionate amount of sick leave. In this sector, 16.7% of time taken off work is recorded as sick leave – considerably more than in the private sector industries. Reports by the Office of National Statistics consistently show that public sector workers take more sick leave. But when viewing it as a proportion of their total time off, the contrast is stark.[2]

At the opposite end of the sickness spectrum are those who work in hospitality. Just 0.8% of leave taken in the hospitality sector is sickness absence – 15.9% less than in the public sector. A likely reason for this: employees in this sector are unlikely to get paid when they take sick days.[3]

Hospitality Sector



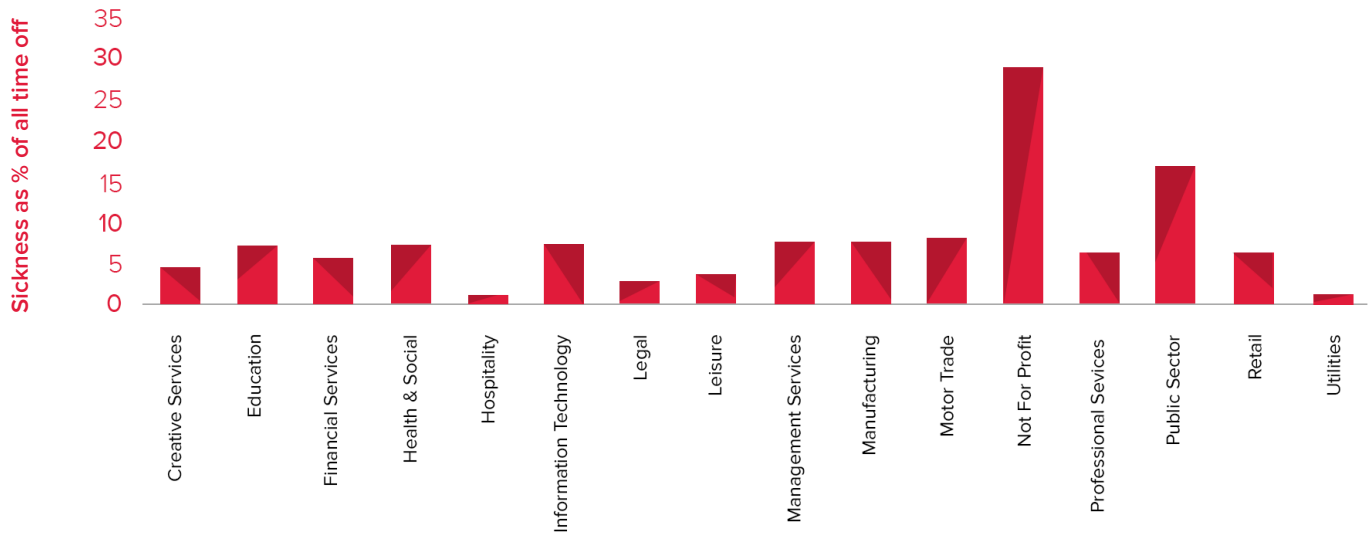
Public Sector



■ Holiday
■ Sickness

Sickness as a percentage of total time off

This graph shows sick leave by industry. The percentage shown is the amount of sickness logged as a percentage of all absence recorded in 2015.



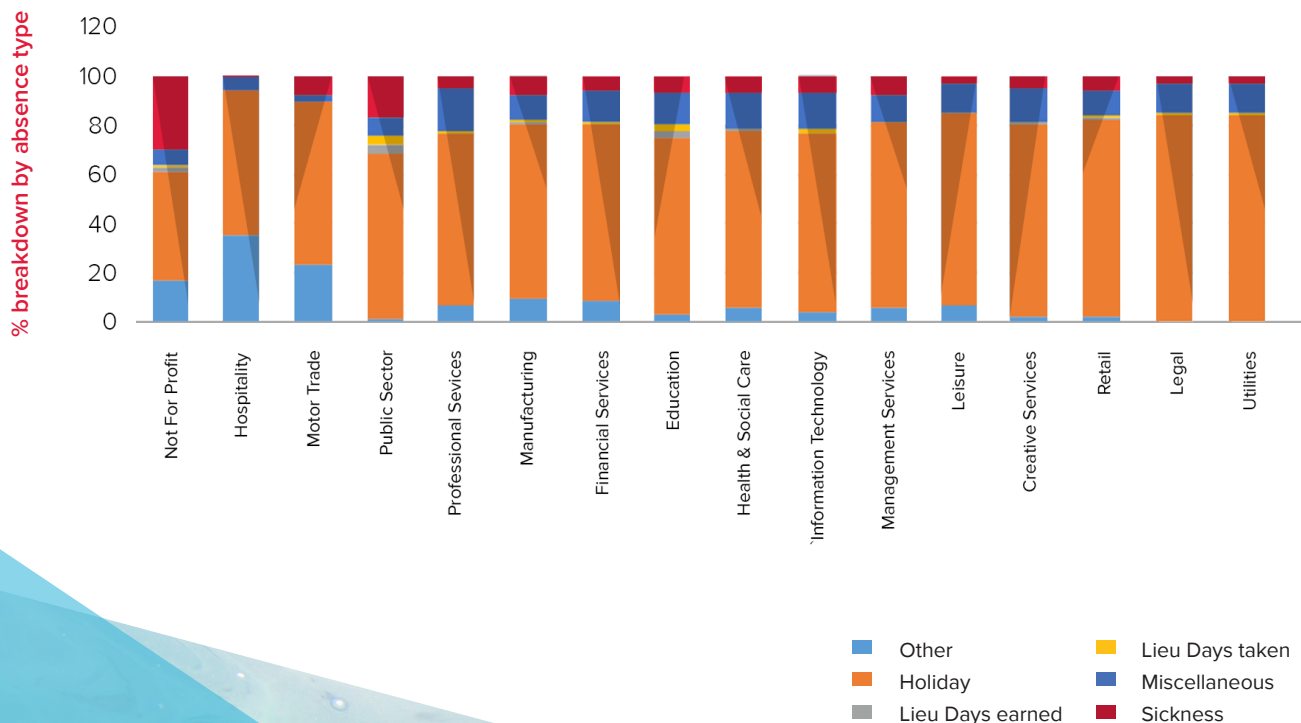
Conclusion

Businesses experience peaks in absence at different points in the calendar year. Holiday is primarily taken in August, but the festive month of December is popular too. Meanwhile the majority of sick days occur in January and February.

With this oversight, your businesses can plan ahead for potential dips in productivity. For instance, you might take pre-emptive measures such as moving deadlines or hiring temporary staff. This way, your business will experience sustained growth unaffected by absence.

It's also clear that absence trends vary across sectors. This is borne out in how holiday and sick days in one sector differ those of another. Even after accounting for variants like whether employees can take paid sick leave, these differences suggest a disparity in UK work culture. Employee morale, a factor known to impact absenteeism, will contribute to the difference. [4] While other factors, such as employees believing their sick leave goes unnoticed/unchallenged, will also have influenced the outcome. Therefore, absence management presents a greater challenge in certain sectors. Where employee morale is low and no absence management process is in place, businesses will see the cost of absence mount.

Absence type by sector



Discover an easier way to manage absence

Are you worried about the levels of sickness absence in your organisation?
Are you finding it tricky to enforce your absence policy?

aCloud TeamSeer is a tool proven to reduce unplanned absence by up to 25% and significantly cut the cost of sick leave. It provides insights into absence trends across your company letting you view absence data for an individual, department or office. Use this information as the basis for an effective absence management strategy.

Key benefits



Make informed decisions with real-time absence reports



Tackle sickness absence with Bradford Factor scoring



Reduce administration by automating holiday entitlement, accrual and carryover calculations



Eliminate scheduling conflicts with a team calendar that shows who's off when

Notes

[1] <https://data.ncvo.org.uk/a/almanac12/what-are-working-patterns-like-in-the-voluntary-sector/> (worry they specify voluntary as oppose to NFP...)

[2] http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_353899.pdf

[3] http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160105160709/http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_353899.pdf . P.9.

[4] https://www.cipd.co.uk/binaries/absence-management_2015.pdf



What is Access aCloud?

Access aCloud is a suite of integrated cloud-based applications developed and provided by the Access Group. We have over 10,000 UK business customers spanning various sectors, including well-known brands Publicis, Legal & General and KPMG to name but a few.

Founded in 1991, Access has over 20 years' experience in providing vertically focused industry specific software solutions. Proud recipients of 'The Sunday Times Best Companies to Work For 2016' award, our team of over 900 employees provide an outstanding service with a personal touch.