

Special Feature: Health and Work

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Each Winter since 1994/95, the LFS questionnaire has contained a number of questions concerning the incidence of work-related accidents. Due to the transition of the LFS from seasonal quarters to calendar quarters such questions are now asked in Quarter 1 (January – March) where they were previously asked in the Winter quarter (December – February) of each year.

Work-related Accidents

- **An estimated 9,000 persons had a work-related accident in the year prior to January – March 2008.**

For January – March 2008, an estimated 9,000 persons had a work-related accident in the previous year. (This is similar to the estimate for the year previous to January-March 2007; 10,000). The estimates of work-related accidents broken down by gender were below the minimum quotation level of 8,000 cases.

The number of persons who had a major accident, where the injured person returned to work on the fourth day or later after the accident or never worked again, was below the minimum quotation level.

The accident rate is the number of persons in employment who had an accident divided by the total number of persons in employment. In January – March 2008 the accident rate was 1.2% which is similar to the previous year (1.3%).

- **NI had the lowest accident rate of any UK region in January – March 2008.**

In January – March 2008 NI had the lowest overall accident rate of any UK region (1.2% compared with 3.0% for the UK as a whole).

Sickness Absence From Work

The Labour Force Survey collects information on total sickness absence from the workplace. New questions introduced in Spring 2000 enable us to calculate “days lost through sickness absence as a proportion of the number of days on which an employee was scheduled to work”, known as “sickness absence rate” and to identify on which day(s) of the week the respondent was absent.

At January - March 2008 there were 655,000 employees for whom data was available. Out of these, 49,000 were not scheduled to work at all during the week in question (eg persons on annual or maternity leave) and 17,000 whose scheduled working days were not relevant (those who had no regular schedule of work or could not answer the question).

- **An estimated 29,000 scheduled working days were lost per week due to absence in January - March 2008, representing 1.1% of the total scheduled to work.**

Table 17 shows that for the remaining 589,000 employees scheduled to work, 29,000 scheduled working days out of 2,692,000 scheduled working days were lost to sickness or injury per week during January - March 2008. This estimate represented 1.1% of the total scheduled working days (compared to 1.3% in the UK). Estimates of absence percentages for Saturday and Sunday were too small to be reliably quoted.

Daily Sickness Absence rates of employees, January - March 2008

Table 17

	Number Scheduled to Work	Number Absent from Work	% Absent on Day
Monday - Friday	2,526,000	28,000	1.1%
Saturday - Sunday	166,000	*	*
All Work Days	2,692,000	29,000	1.1%

* Cell size too small for a reliable estimate.

Of the total scheduled working days lost, 19,000 were due to absenteeism among females, representing 1.5% of their scheduled working days and 10,000 were due to males being absent, representing 0.7% of their scheduled working days.

The “occurrence of sickness absence” looks at the total number of employees who were absent for at least one day during the week as a proportion of the total number of employees who were scheduled to work.

In January - March 2008, an estimated 10,000 employees (1.5% of all employees) were absent at least one day during the week. In order to look at these absentees in more detail, data from the January – March 2008 quarter has been amalgamated with the previous three quarters. For this combined data the minimum quotation level reduces from 8,000 to 6,000 cases. An advantage of averaging data over a year is that it smoothes out variation between individual quarters. The estimated average number who had at least one day off sick during the survey reference week for these four quarters was 8,000 (1.2% of all employees).

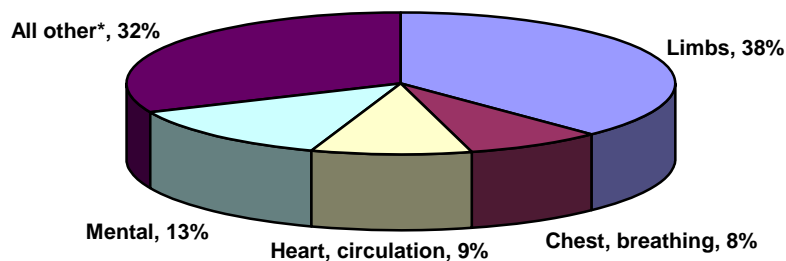
Given the relatively small estimate provided for the total average sick absence it is not feasible to provide further breakdowns by gender, or industry sector.

HEALTH PROBLEMS AFFECTING WORK

- **One in six persons of working age (188,000) had a long-term health problem which affected the amount or kind of work they could do.**

For January - March 2008 there were an estimated 1,087,000 persons of working age in Northern Ireland. Looking at health problems that were expected to last more than twelve months, for 170,000 persons the health problem affected the amount of paid work they could do, and for 184,000 persons they affected the kind of paid work they could do. Combining these there were 188,000 persons (101,000 males and 86,000 females) who had a long-term health problem which affected either the amount or kind of paid work they could do. This represented 17% of all persons of working age. Figure 19 shows the main health problem that affected these people, for 71,000 (38%) persons the health problem was that associated with mobility of the limbs (including arthritis or rheumatism) affecting arms, hands, legs, feet, back or neck. The other main health problems were mental illnesses including depression (13%), heart and circulation problems (9%) and chest and breathing problems (8%).

Main Health Problem affecting Amount or Kind of Work, January - March 2008
Figure 23



* All other illnesses include sensory illnesses, skin conditions, diabetes, epilepsy, learning difficulties and progressive illnesses not elsewhere included.