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Employee research Phase 2:

Sickness absence and return to work

Quantitative and qualitative research

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March 2023

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

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Statement of compliance

This research complies with the three pillars of the [Code of Practice for Statistics](#): trustworthiness, value and quality.

Trustworthiness

This research was conducted, delivered and analysed impartially by Ipsos MORI, working to the Government Social Research code of practice.

Quality

The survey was carried out using established statistical methods. The research has been quality assured using Ipsos MORI's internal quality checking processes, which have been shared with the Department for Work and Pensions. The report has been checked thoroughly and quality assured by analysts at the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure it meets the highest standards of analysis and drafting.

Value

This research provides insight into workers' health, wellbeing, sickness absence and sick pay and contributes to the growing evidence base. Findings from this report have informed the ongoing development of policy decisions relating to workers and ill-health related job loss.

Executive Summary

This report presents findings from research into the perceptions, understanding and experiences of sickness absences among workers (including employees and self-employed), conducted by Ipsos MORI.

Methodology

The research involved an online survey with 4,435 working adults aged 16 to 74 years old in GB. The survey took place in April 2021. The survey was conducted on Ipsos MORI's random probability panel (KnowledgePanel, the largest online random probability panel in the UK) and findings were weighted to be representative of the employed population by employment status, gender, age, educational level and region.

Additionally, 20 in-depth qualitative telephone interviews were conducted with employees, selected from those who had completed the quantitative survey, to explore experiences in more depth.

Key Findings

General health and the impact of health conditions on work: when asked about their health in general, three quarters (75%) of respondents felt that their overall health was good/very good (49%/26%).

Three in ten respondents (30%) reported having a physical or mental health condition that they expected to last 12 months or more (LTHC). Of these, half felt their overall health was 'good' (51%) (39% felt it was 'fair' and 10% that it was 'bad').

Of those with a long-term health condition, employees were more likely than the self-employed to be affected by a mental health condition(s) (28% versus 18% respectively). Whereas the self-employed were more likely than employees to have physical health conditions related to bones or joints (31% versus 20% respectively).

Younger workers (age 16-34) were the most likely to be affected by mental health conditions while older age groups (age 50+) were the most likely to be affected by diabetes and long-term conditions affecting major organs.

Six in ten (60%) of those who had a condition lasting, or expected to last, 12 months or more said it reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities, and more than a third (36%) said it impacted the amount or type of work they can do in their current job.

Sick pay: of those employees who reported in the survey that they knew what they were eligible for, 26% said that they would receive Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) during a sickness absence (of at least a week) while 57% said that they would receive Occupational Sick Pay (OSP). A further 9% said they would receive SSP some of

the time and Occupational/ Company Sick Pay some of the time. Few reported (qualitatively) that they considered an employer's sick pay policy when deciding where to work.

Sickness absence and medical evidence: Overall, around one-third (35%) of workers had taken time off work due to self-isolation, illness, a health condition, an injury or disability, in the past 12 months.

Workers in the voluntary (46%) and public (40%) sectors were more likely to have taken time off work sick or for self-isolation in the past 12 months than those working in the private sector (32%).

The majority of employees who had a sickness absence or a COVID-19 related absence in the past 12 months received some form of sick pay, with around two thirds receiving Occupational sick pay.

However, more than one in ten employees had not received any sick pay during their absence from work.¹ The most frequently cited reasons for not receiving pay were either that they were not off work for long enough or they had been told they were not entitled to sick pay.

Participants in the qualitative research² considered the current rate of SSP to be low, which could cause financial difficulties. Financial considerations were felt to be one of the main factors prompting consideration of returning to work before full recovery, due to the financial impact of only receiving SSP.

Overall, nearly two thirds (65%) of employees who had a sickness absence, in the past 12 months, had been required to provide some form of medical evidence. Half (50%) of those who had had a sickness absence in the last 12 months said their employer required a Fit Note after Day 7 of their sickness absence.

Return to work: Around two-thirds (64%) of employees who had a long-term sickness absence in the past 12 months had a meeting, or were going to have a meeting, with their employer to discuss their return to work. While some valued this process and considered it to be beneficial in terms of facilitating their return to work, others perceived this to be more a 'tick-box' exercise.

The survey results demonstrated that where phased returns to work were offered, participants valued them and 70% of participants felt they facilitated a quicker return to work. However, in the qualitative interviews those receiving SSP voiced concerns around the potential for loss of income as result of working fewer hours.

¹ To qualify for Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) you must: be classed as an employee and have done some work for your employer; earn an average of at least £120 per week; have been ill or self-isolating for at least 4 days in a row (including non-working days).

² Around half of the qualitative sample were eligible for SSP

Contents

Statement of compliance	3
Trustworthiness	3
Quality.....	3
Value.....	3
Executive Summary	4
Acknowledgements	8
The Authors.....	9
Glossary and abbreviations.....	10
General terms	10
Size definitions.....	11
1 Introduction	12
Research aims.....	12
2 Methodology	14
A breakdown of participants.....	14
Quantitative fieldwork.....	14
Qualitative fieldwork.....	16
Survey data.....	18
Report structure	18
3 Context: general health and the impact of health conditions on daily activities and type of work.....	20
Overall health rating.....	20
4 Sickness absence	24
Taken time off work	24
Sick Pay.....	27
Self-employed.....	31
Financial support	31
Employer policies.....	32
Medical Evidence.....	33
5 Statutory Sick Pay Provision.....	35

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

	Attitudes towards Statutory Sick Pay in the qualitative research	35
	Awareness and knowledge of the SSP waiting period	36
	The impact of SSP on decisions regarding sickness absence.....	38
6	Returning to work.....	40
	Adjustments that support employees' return to work after a long-term sickness absence.....	40
	Factors that employees consider when deciding to return to work after a sickness absence	41
	Presenteeism	43
	Appendix	45
	Appendix A: Additional data tables	45
	Appendix B: Questionnaire used for quantitative survey	72
	Appendix C: Topic guide.....	91

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Glossary and abbreviations

General terms

Coronavirus (COVID-19)	Coronavirus is the type of virus that causes the illness COVID-19. There are several coronaviruses; the recent pandemic is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus which in some people causes the illness COVID-19.
Employee	Someone in paid employment, who works for an employer and who does not classify themselves as self-employed.
Fit note	Fit notes are issued by GPs or hospital doctors when an individual's health condition has impacted on their fitness for work. The provision of a fit note involves an assessment of an individual's fitness for work by either a GP or hospital doctor. Assessments determine whether an individual is either 'not fit for any work' or 'may be fit for work' if certain workplace adjustments are in place. If an individual is found 'not fit for work' a fit note details how long the medical professional recommends they take off work. Employers may ask to see Fit Notes as evidence for a sickness absence for the payment of sick pay.
Flexible working	Flexible working is a way of working that suits an employee's needs, for example having flexible start and finish times, job sharing, working part time or compressed hours, or working from home. All employees have the legal right to request flexible working.
Furlough	Temporary leave of absence from work. During the coronavirus pandemic the government introduced the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, known as furlough. This scheme enabled employers to furlough employees and apply for a grant to cover a portion of their usual monthly wage costs.
Human Resources (HR)	HR is a department within an organisation with responsibility for managing and developing employees. Key roles may include recruitment, payroll and providing employment and legal advice.
Long-term health condition (LTHC)	A physical or mental health condition or illnesses (including any intermittent conditions or illnesses) lasting, or expected to last, for 12 months or more.
Long-term sickness absence (LTSA)	An instance of sickness absence from work lasting four or more weeks. There is no official definition of what constitutes a long-term sickness absence, but a period of four weeks has been commonly used. ³

³ E.g. DWP (2021) Sickness absence and health in the workplace: Understanding employer behaviour and practice.

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Occupational health (OH)	OH are advisory and support services that help to maintain and promote employee health and wellbeing through the provision of direct support and advice to employees and managers.
Occupational Sick Pay (OSP)	OSP is a form of sick pay provided by employers that is above the statutory minimum (i.e. Statutory Sick Pay).
Presenteeism	Where employees work while they are sick.
Reasonable (or workplace) adjustments	Steps taken by employers to ensure disabled workers or workers with health conditions are not substantially disadvantaged when doing their jobs. For more information, please see: https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers
Self-employed	Self-employed were defined as a freelancer or the owner of a business rather than working for an employer.
Self-isolation	Self-isolation is when you do not leave your home because you have or might have coronavirus. At the time of the research, people had to self-isolate if any of the following applied: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• they had symptoms of COVID-19• they had a positive COVID-19 test• they had been in contact with someone who had tested positive
Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)	SSP is the minimum amount that employers must pay their employees who are too ill to work. At the time of the research the amount was set at £96.35 per week. SSP is payable for up to 28 weeks (2021). ⁴ SSP was also available if an employee could not work because they were self-isolating, for example because they or someone they live with had coronavirus symptoms, or because they were shielding (where shielding advice is in place).
Worker	An employee or someone who is self-employed.

Size definitions

Employers are referred to by size (number of employees) throughout the report.

Micro employers	Employers with less than 10 permanent employees.
Small employers	Employers with 10 – 49 permanent employees.
Medium employers	Employers with 50 – 249 permanent employees.
Large employers	Employers with 250 or more permanent employees.

⁴ For more information, see: <https://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay>

1 Introduction

The employee survey and follow-up qualitative research was commissioned by the Work and Health Unit (WHU) (which is jointly sponsored by DWP and DHSC). WHU leads the government's strategy to support working-age disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to enter, and stay in, employment. The survey updates information last collected in [2014](#); the qualitative research explores issues from the survey in greater depth.

In 2019 DWP/DHSC launched the 'Health is Everyone's Business' consultation, seeking views on the different ways in which government and employers could take action to reduce ill-health related job loss. The consultation response was published in 2021⁵ and proposed a range of measures designed to minimise the risk of ill-health-related job loss through providing employers with access to good quality information and advice, supporting employers and employees during sickness absence, enabling Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to reap the benefits of Occupational Health (OH), and proposals to enable better use of the fit note. The current research with employees (and the self-employed) will provide a baseline from which we can monitor change.

Research aims

Ipsos MORI were commissioned to conduct a quantitative survey and follow-up qualitative research with employees and self-employed individuals to understand workers' experiences of sickness absence, sick pay and managing health in the workplace.

Research was conducted in two phases: the initial phase was undertaken in 2020 and involved an online quota survey of workers (to explore health in the workplace and access to Occupational Health) using Ipsos MORI's Access Panel, and in-depth interviews to understand participants experiences of sickness absence. Findings from the initial phase are published separately alongside this report. The second survey (reported here) was conducted in 2021 using Ipsos MORI's Knowledge Panel - an online omnibus which uses random probability sampling. Follow up in-depth interviews with 20 participants were also conducted, to explore the survey topics in greater depth.

Specific aims of the research were to explore the following topics:

- Experiences of sickness absence
- Medical evidence of availability to work

⁵ [Government response: Health is everyone's business - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/health-is-everyones-business)

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

- Employees' sick pay arrangements, in terms of timing, rate, type (SSP, OSP, none), length of provision and whether these have changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic
- Employees' understanding of SSP rules and eligibility
- How workers are supported in work, or to return to work following a long-term sickness absence, including the effectiveness of support received from employers such as workplace adjustments.

2 Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology used in this stage of the research and details the participant characteristics. Further detail can be found in the technical report.

A breakdown of participants

Quantitative fieldwork

Prior to undertaking the quantitative fieldwork, a draft version of the questionnaire was cognitively tested with 10 individuals between 26th February and 5th March 2021. The purpose of the interviews was to test comprehension, recall, and suitability of the draft survey questions.

Table 2.1: A breakdown of cognitive interview participants

Description	Characteristics	Total
Employment status	Employed	8
	Self-employed	2
Sickness absence	Had a sickness absence in the past 12 months	6
	Had a LTSA in the past 12 months	3
Pay received when off sick	SSP	4
	SSP and OSP	1
	None	5
Sick pay eligibility	Eligible for SSP	3
	Eligible for no sick pay	1

The quantitative fieldwork took place between 1–7 April 2021. The research involved an online survey with 4,435 working adults (both employees and the self-employed), aged 16 to 74 years old in Great Britain (England, Scotland and Wales).

The survey was conducted on Ipsos MORI's random probability panel – known as the KnowledgePanel. The KnowledgePanel is the largest online random probability panel in the UK. In order to maximise the number of respondents who were either eligible for SSP or had received SSP, email invitations were sent to all KnowledgePanel members. Respondents were then screened, to identify sufficient numbers who were eligible for or who had received SSP.

The survey findings were weighted to be representative of the employed population by working status, gender, age, educational level, and region. Full details can be found in the technical report.

Table 2.2: Sample characteristics

	Total
Unweighted Total	4435
Weighted Total	4435
	%
Gender	
Male	50
Female	49
In another way / prefer not to say	*
Age	
16-24	10
25-34	23
35-49	34
50-64	30
65-74	4
Ethnicity	
White (including White minorities)	89
Ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities)	9
Prefer not to say	1
Health condition	
Long-term health condition	30
No long-term health condition	69

Table 2.3: Employment characteristics

	Total
Unweighted Total	4435
Weighted Total	4435
	%
Employment status	
Full-time	66
Part-time	21
Self-employed	13
Size of organisation (employees only)	
Micro: 1-9 employees	12
Small: 10-49 employees	11
Medium: 50-249 employees	15
Large: 250 or more employees	62
Sector (employees only)	
Private sector	53
Public sector	38
Voluntary/not for profit sector	5
Something else	4
Type of contract (employees only)	
None or casual	11
Temporary	5
Permanent	82

Qualitative fieldwork

The qualitative research took place after the survey. Between 2nd June – 6th July 2021, Ipsos MORI conducted 20 in-depth qualitative telephone interviews with employees. Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes. As a thank you for participating in these interviews, participants received £30 as a BACS payment. Ipsos MORI selected participants who had completed the quantitative survey and contacted them via the KnowledgePanel, to gauge their interest in participating in the qualitative research and to gain their consent.

Quotas were used to ensure a range of views would be included, as shown in Table 2.4. Researchers were particularly interested to hear from those with multiple sickness absences and those with long-term health conditions as the qualitative topic guide was focused towards understanding these participants. The monitoring quotas were used to ensure the qualitative sample was diverse.

Table 2.4: A breakdown of qualitative participants

Description	Characteristics	Total
Primary quotas		
Employees	All participants = employees, exclude self-employed	20
Sickness absence	All participants to have had a sickness absence	20
Long term health condition	A high proportion to have long-term health condition to find people with more complex sickness absences	8
More than one sickness absence	A high proportion to have had multiple sickness absences	8
Sick pay	Statutory sick pay	11
	Occupational sick pay	5
	None	4
Employer size	Small	6
	Medium	6
	Large	8
Secondary quotas		
Type of contract	Permanent	14
	Non-permanent (e.g. zero hours, temporary, casual)	6
Occupation	Manager/professionals	3
	Skilled trades/Associate professionals/Technical occupations	9
	Lower skilled occupations (admin/secretarial; personal service; sales/customer service and elementary occupations)	8
Monitoring quotas		
Age	16-34	4
	35-49	7
	50+	9
Gender	Male	8
	Female	12
Ethnicity	White (including White minorities)	11
	Ethnic minorities (excluding White minorities)	9
Location	North	5
	Midlands	2
	London and South East	10
	Other (Scotland, South West)	3

Analysis and interpretation of the data

Survey data

All tables and figures report weighted data but include the unweighted base. Where findings have only been reported descriptively, fully referenced supporting tables have been included in the Appendix.

Unless otherwise stated, differences between groups noted in the report are statistically significant at the 95 per cent level. This is the standard level for probability sample designs in social research and provides a level of confidence about the estimates provided. Any sampling approach risks sampling error, but where differences are significant at the 95 per cent level this means that in 19 out of 20 samples, the difference in the estimates will reflect a real difference in the population rather than sampling error.

The survey results are subject to margins of error, which vary depending on the number of respondents answering each question and pattern of responses. Where figures do not add to 100 per cent, this is due to rounding or because the question allows for more than one response (multicode).

Qualitative interviews

Qualitative approaches explore the nuances and diversity of views and experiences, the factors which shape or underlie them, and the ideas and situations that can lead views to change. In doing so, it provides insight into a range of views that, although not statistically representative, nonetheless offer important insight into overarching themes.

Verbatim quotes have been included in this report to illustrate and highlight key points and common themes. Where verbatim quotes are used, they have been anonymised and attributed according to key characteristics of the participants, i.e. type of sickness absence.

Report structure

The remainder of this report is divided into four chapters, combining the relevant evidence from the survey and qualitative interviews:

- Chapter 3: **General health and the impact of health conditions on daily activities and type of work** – looking at the general health of workers, including any long-term health conditions and their impact on work and day-to-day activities.
- Chapter 4: **Sickness absence overview** – looking at time taken off work in the past year, sick pay received, medical evidence and financial support available for short- and long-term absences.
- Chapter 5: **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) provision** – exploring overall attitudes towards SSP, awareness of the SSP waiting period and how SSP rate and length effects decisions on returning to work after sickness absence.

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

- Chapter 6: **Returning to work** – looking at adjustments that support workers to return to work after a sickness absence and factors that workers consider when deciding to return to work.

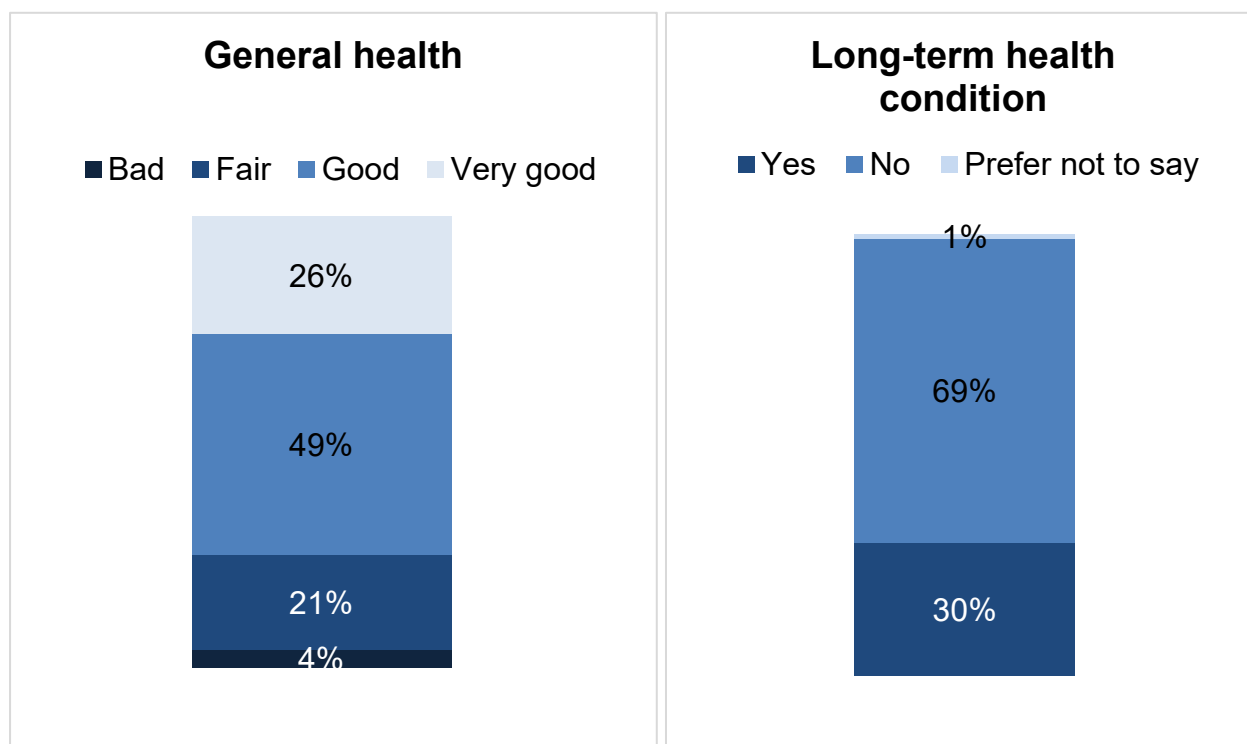
3 Context: general health and the impact of health conditions on daily activities and type of work

In this chapter we look at the general health of workers, the proportion with a long-term health condition (relating to physical or mental health) and the extent to which this impacts an individual’s ability to carry out day-to-day activities and/or affects the amount or type of work chosen.

Overall health rating

Overall, three quarters (75%) of workers felt that their overall health was good. Three in ten said they had a long-term health condition (physical or mental health condition or illness that they expected to last 12 months or more). Long-term health conditions were more prevalent among the older age groups, with nearly half (46%) of those aged 65-74 years reporting they had a condition they expected to last 12 months or more, compared to a third of 50-64 year olds (34%), and around a quarter of both 25-34 year olds (24%) and 16-24 year olds (26%).⁶

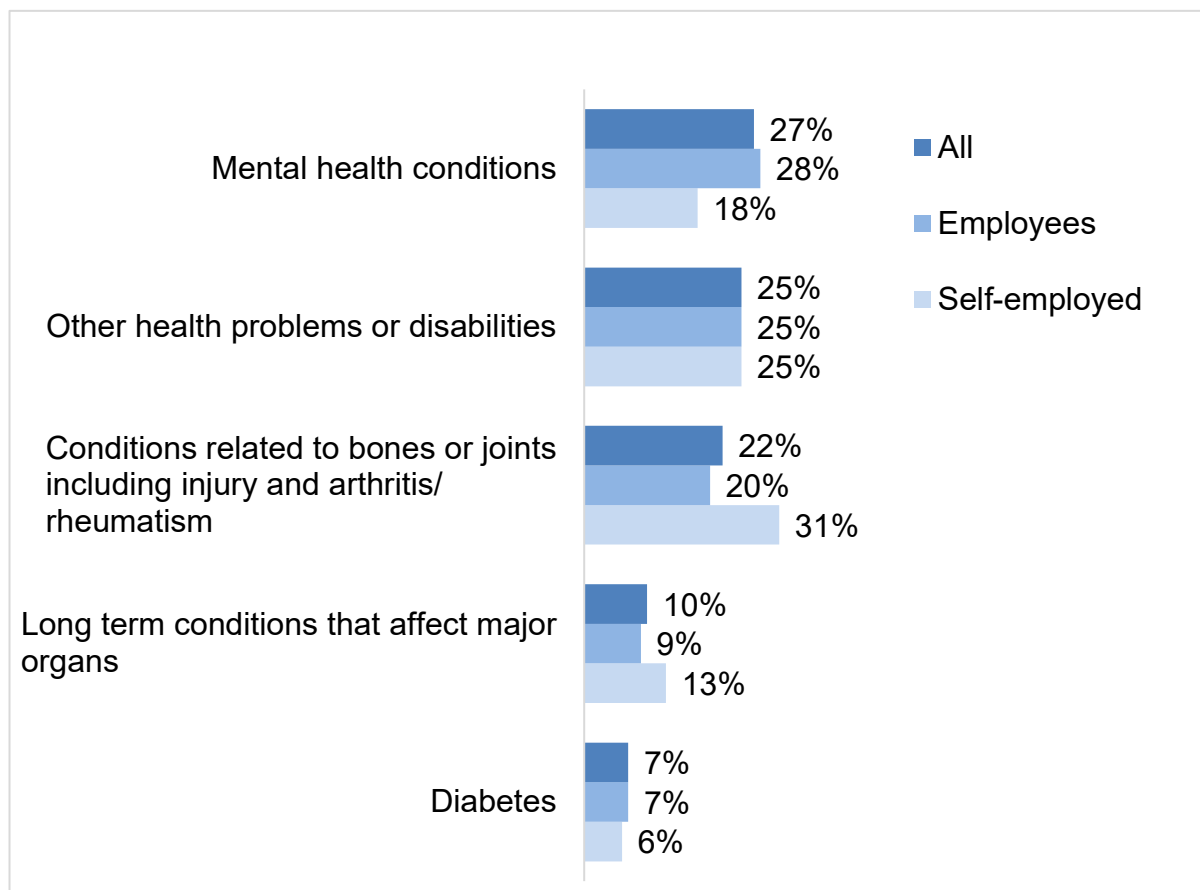
Figure 3.1: State of general health and presence of physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting, or expected to last, for 12 months or more



⁶ A full data table can be found in Table A1 in the Appendix.

Among those reporting a long-term health condition, there was a range of health conditions that affected day-to-day activities. Some differences between employees and the self-employed were observed: employees were more likely than the self-employed to report mental health conditions, with more than a quarter (28% versus 18%) stating this to be the case; the self-employed were more likely than employees to have physical health conditions related to bones or joints (31% versus 20%).⁷

Figure 3.2: Main health condition that most affects day-to-day activities



Base (unweighted): All who have a mental or physical health condition lasting or expected to last 12 months or more (All: 1,395; Employees: 1,183; Self-employed: 212)

There were also age differences: younger workers (both employees and self-employed) with long term health conditions were the most likely to report mental health conditions – over a third (41%) of 25-34 year olds (compared to 30% of 35-49 year olds, 14% of 50-64 year olds and 7% of 65-74 year olds).⁸ Conversely, older age groups with long term health conditions were the most likely to be affected by diabetes (16% of 65-74 year olds and 10% of 50-64 year olds, compared to 3% of 16-24 year olds and 2% of 25-34 year olds); and long-term health conditions affecting major organs (27% of 65-74 year olds, compared to 1% of 16-24 year olds and 10% of 25-34 year olds).

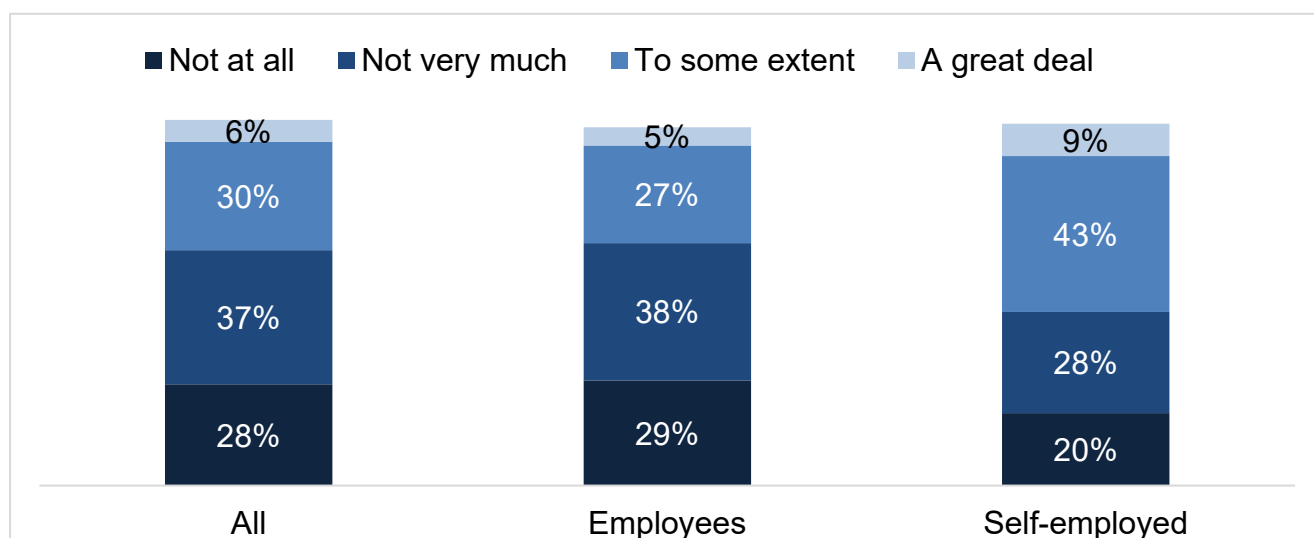
⁷ A full data table can be found in Table A2 in the Appendix.

⁸ A full data table can be found in Table A3 in the Appendix.

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Six in ten (60%) of those who had a health condition said it reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities, including 6% who said the condition reduced their ability a lot.⁹ More than a third (35%) said their condition impacted the amount or type of work they could do in their current job to some extent or a great deal, this increased to over half (52%) among the self-employed. No statistically significant differences were identified by sector type (private vs. public vs. voluntary).

Figure 3.3: Extent to which condition or illness affects amount or type of work able to do



Base (unweighted): All who have a mental or physical health condition lasting or expected to last 12 months or more (All: 1,395; Employees: 1,183; Self-employed: 212)

Job considerations for individuals with long term health conditions

The qualitative research revealed that participants with long term health conditions had additional factors to consider when applying for or accepting a job. Recurring factors were sick pay, flexible working hours and when to disclose their condition.

Few respondents were found to have actively considered an employer's sick pay policy when deciding where to work. The minority that had considered sick pay policy tended to be those with long-term health conditions with an expectation of needing to take periodic absences as an ongoing result of their condition.

"I looked at my employer's sick pay policy and considered it when accepting my job. If I'm sick, I want to be able to get paid. If I don't get paid, I am going to have financial problems".

**Permanent contract, small employer,
short-term sickness absence, long term health condition**

⁹ A full data table can be found in Table A4 in the Appendix.

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Most respondents in the qualitative research perceived an employer's sick pay policy to be low down the list of consideration factors, if factored in at all, when accepting a new role – a 'luxury item', secondary to simply being offered a suitable role.

"If I had two jobs and one was going to give me full sick pay and the other was just going to give me SSP I would 100% go for the employer that paid me proper sick pay...unfortunately the situation is, you're not usually in a position to choose, you get a job with an employer and you get what you're given basically."

**Permanent contract, large employer,
short-term sickness absence, no long-term health condition**

Some did, however, add that it may be a more prominent consideration going forward, typically prompted by only getting SSP or no sick pay currently and experiencing a financial strain because of this.

Some respondents also spoke of consciously choosing roles that allowed for flexible working (e.g. autonomy over working hours) in order to accommodate preferred patterns of working and offer a degree of discretion to make changes to these if experiencing an impact of a long-term health condition. One respondent, for example, spoke of being able to complete admin related tasks as and when they preferred; another spoke of often taking a break in the middle of the day, before making up the time outside of usual working hours.

Most of the qualitative respondents considered the responsibility of employee wellbeing to be a joint responsibility of employers, employees and third party governing/policy forming organisations (e.g. Government, work unions). However, many also reported not having informed their employer about their condition, particularly those with mental health concerns who perceived a stigma to be associated with such conditions.

"I think there are employers that consider mental health and depression a downfall and they probably wouldn't hire me because of it."

**Non-permanent contract, large employer,
short-term sickness absence, long-term health condition**

Equally, some also reported only disclosing their condition to their employer once securely in their role, driven by a worry that disclosure at interview stage could hinder chances of being hired and/or the condition not being perceived to be of enough significance to mention at that stage.

"I didn't raise it at the interview because I wanted the job. I got the job and, as it's progressed, I've told her [my boss] about it."

**Permanent contract, small employer,
short-term sickness absence, long-term health condition**

4 Sickness absence

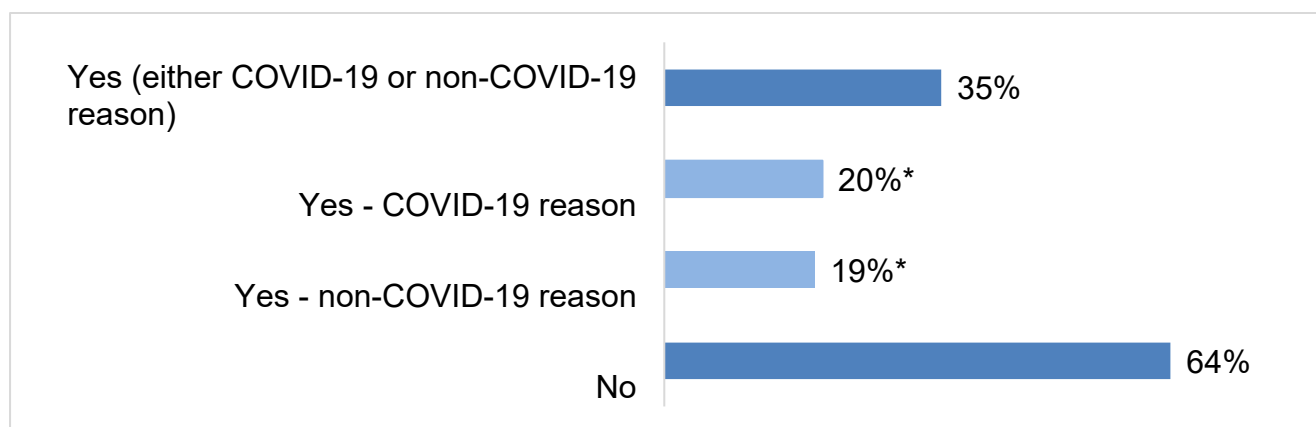
In this chapter we look at the proportion of workers who have had a sickness absence, the types of financial support they received during their sickness absence and the extent to which organisations require medical evidence.

Taken time off work

Overall, around one-third (35%) of workers had taken time off work due to self-isolation, illness, a health condition, or an injury or disability, in the past 12 months (either for a COVID-19, non-COVID-19 related reason or both). Around two thirds of workers experienced no sickness absence (64%).

Similar numbers had taken time off due to COVID-19 (20%) vs. non-COVID-19 reasons (19%), whilst a very small proportion (4%) had taken time off for both reasons.

Figure 4.1: Proportion of workers taken time off due to self-isolation, illness, a health condition, an injury or disability, in the past 12 months (multicode)



Base (unweighted): All participants (4,435)

* these bars sum to more than the total Yes responses (35%), as 4% of respondents reported both a COVID **and** non-COVID reason for absence (the question was multicode)

The survey also explored sickness absence patterns in the past 12 months. The majority of sickness absences were for up to a week for 1 or 2 periods (15%) followed by between 1 to 2 weeks for 1 or 2 periods (5%). For each category of absence (from up to a week to more than 3 weeks), being absent for 1 or 2 periods was more common than having 3 or more periods of absence. These figures demonstrate that when workers took sickness absence, it was usually for a short period of time.

Table 4.1: Sickness absence patterns – incidence and length of absences in the past 12 months (sum of up to first three separate periods of absences)

Sickness absence length	%
No sickness absence	64
Up to a week: 1 or 2 periods	15
Up to a week: 3+ periods	2
Between 1-2 weeks: 1 or 2 periods	5
Between 1-2 weeks: 3+ periods	1
Between 2-3 weeks: 1 or 2 periods	2
Between 2-3 weeks: 3+ periods	1
More than 3 weeks: 1 or 2 periods	3
More than 3 weeks: 3+ periods	1

Unweighted base

Base: All participants (4,435)

i – figures in this table which show more than three separate periods of sickness absence taken in the past 12 months include individuals who have had 3 or more separate periods of sickness absence in the past 12 months but only sums the first three absences. Around 3% of respondents had more than 3 separate periods of absence.

ii - this table excludes those that didn't know/couldn't remember how many absence periods they had, and those who said they did not know how long any of their absences lasted. The table also excludes those with inconsistent absence incidence and duration data (e.g. if an employee stated they had 3+ absences that lasted 0 days in length). Due to this, the table will not sum to 100%

Perhaps not surprisingly, general health was linked to likelihood of having taken time off work either for sickness, illness, injury, disability or self-isolation. Overall, 69% of those who had rated their health as bad and 43% who had rated their health as fair had taken time off work in the last 12 months compared with 31% of those who had rated their overall health as good or very good.¹⁰

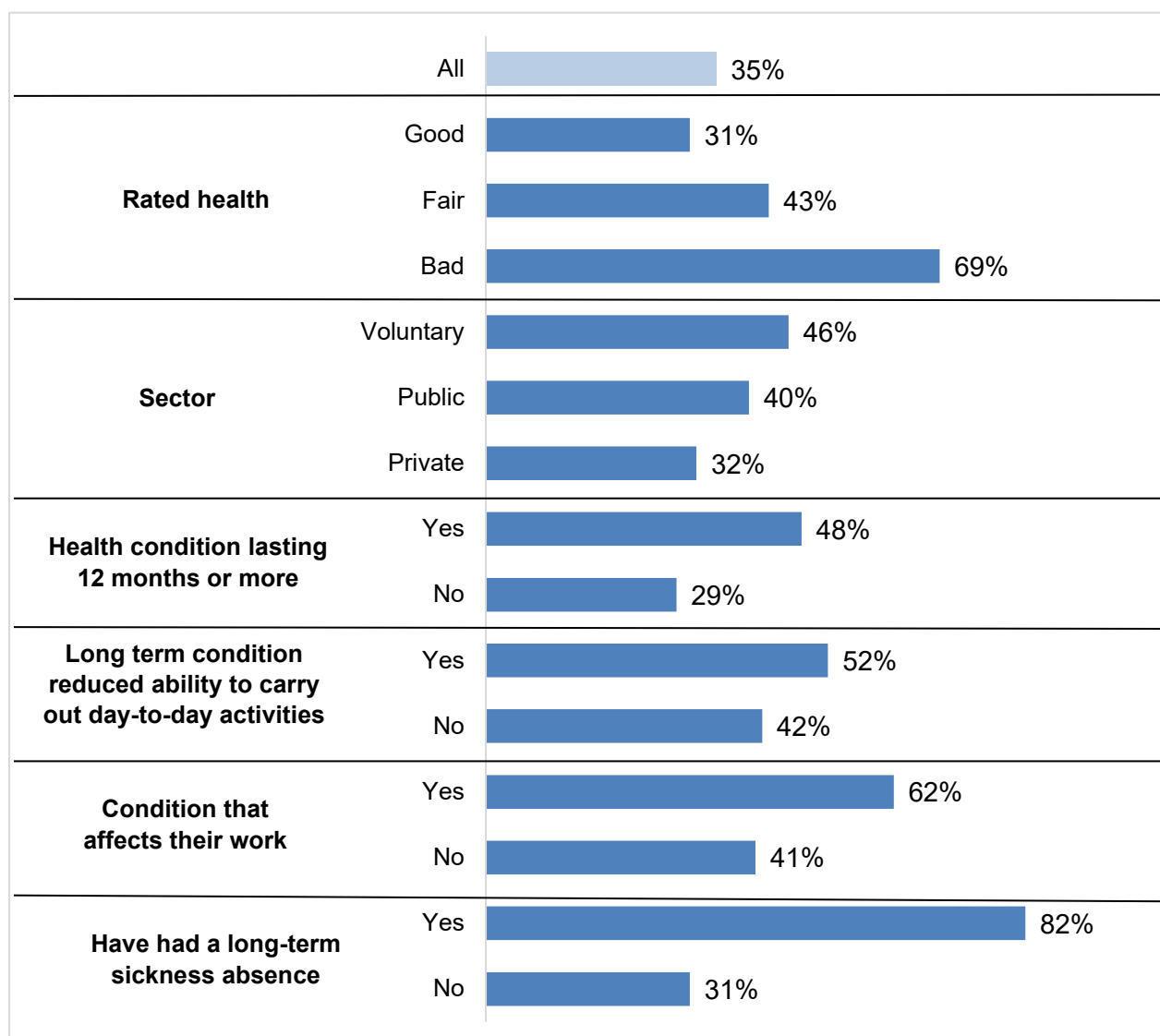
The presence of a long-term health condition, health conditions that reduced ability to carry out day-to-day activities and conditions that affected work were correlated with levels of sickness absence (Figure 4.2). Of those that had a long-term health condition, almost half (48%) had a sickness absence in the past 12 months. However, this does not imply causation – the sickness absence may not be related to the health condition.

¹⁰ A full data table can be found in Table A5 in the Appendix.

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Workers in the voluntary (46%) and public (40%) sectors were more likely to have taken time off work sick or for self-isolation in the past 12 months than those working in the private sector (32%). A number of factors may be relevant here, e.g. workers in certain sectors are less likely to be able to work from home, to be paid different types of sick pay and undertake different types of role.¹¹

Figure 4.2: Taken time off work due to self-isolation, illness, a health condition, an injury or disability, in the past 12 months and how this varied by worker characteristics



Base (unweighted): All participants (4,435); Rated health: Good (3,397), Fair (876), Bad (155); Sector: Private (1,920), Public (1,551), Voluntary (235), Long-term health condition: Yes (1,395), No (3,013); Long-term health condition reduced ability to carry out day-to-day activities: Yes (806), No (585); Long-term health condition that affects their work: Yes (452), No (940); Long-term sickness absence: Yes (309), No (4,116)

¹¹ A full data table can be found in Table A5 and A6 in the Appendix.

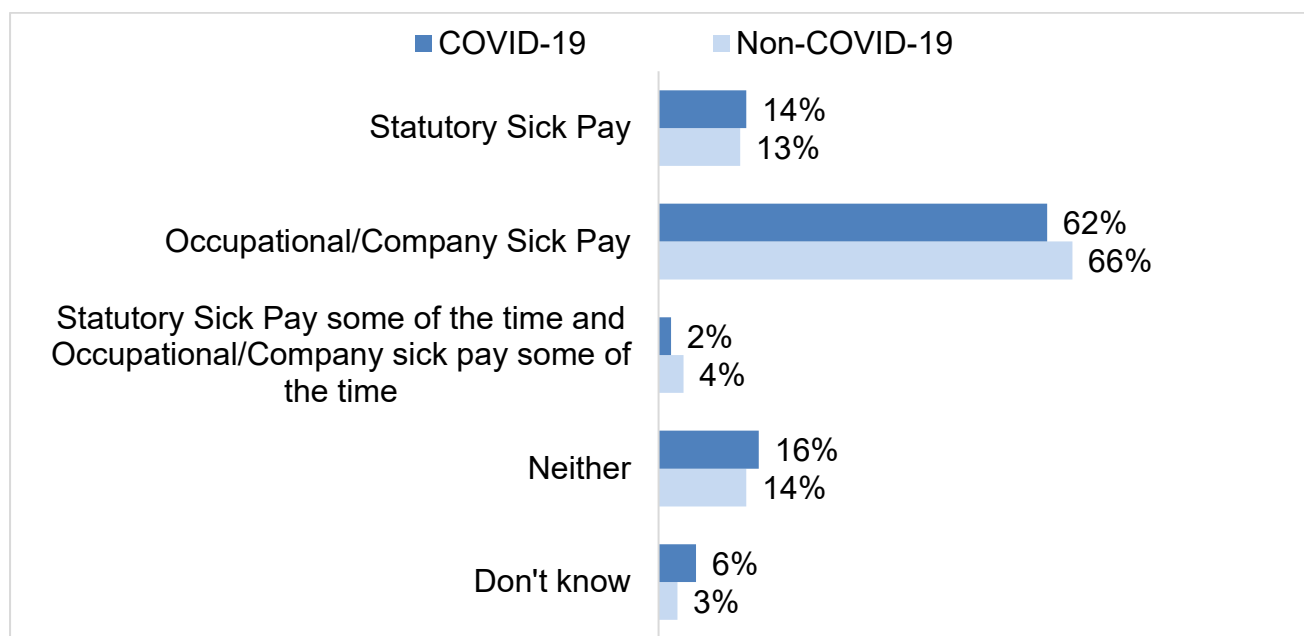
Sick Pay

The majority of employees who had a sickness absence (including COVID-19 related absences) in the past 12 months received some form of sick pay, with around two thirds receiving Occupational/Company Sick Pay (OSP) (Figure 4.3).

However, a sizeable minority reported that they had not received any sick pay during their sickness absence from work. The most commonly cited reasons for not receiving sick pay were because they were not off work for long enough to receive sick pay; they had been told they were not entitled to sick pay; or they took annual leave instead of sickness absence. This pattern was reflected in both non- COVID-19 related sickness absences and COVID-19 related (including self-isolation) sickness absences.

As the majority of sickness absences reported in the survey are for short periods, respondents may not have received SSP as it only payable from the fourth day of work missed¹². To qualify for SSP, employees must earn above the Lower Earnings Limit (LEL)¹³, so those on lower incomes may not have reached the earnings threshold.

Figure 4.3: Types of sick pay received by absence type (COVID-19 or non- COVID-19)



Base (unweighted): All employees who had a sickness absence (COVID-19: 637; Non-COVID-19: 738)

¹² SSP is paid from the 4th day of work missed and is not paid for the first three 'qualifying days' (e.g. days an employee usually works) in a period of sickness absence

¹³ Employees must have average weekly earnings at or above the lower earnings limit (LEL) - £120 a week at the time of the research (£123 currently) – to qualify for SSP

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

The profile of employees who received OSP vs. SSP¹⁴ was slightly different. Employees who received OSP for a non-COVID-19 sickness absence (66%) were more likely than average to be male (73%), work full time (73%), have worked for their employer for 10 or more years (78%), or work for the public sector (74%). This pattern was similar for COVID-19 related sickness absences.¹⁵

In contrast, those receiving SSP (13%) were more likely than average to have worked for their employer for less than a year (32%) or have a health condition that would last or was expected to last 12 months or more (17%).

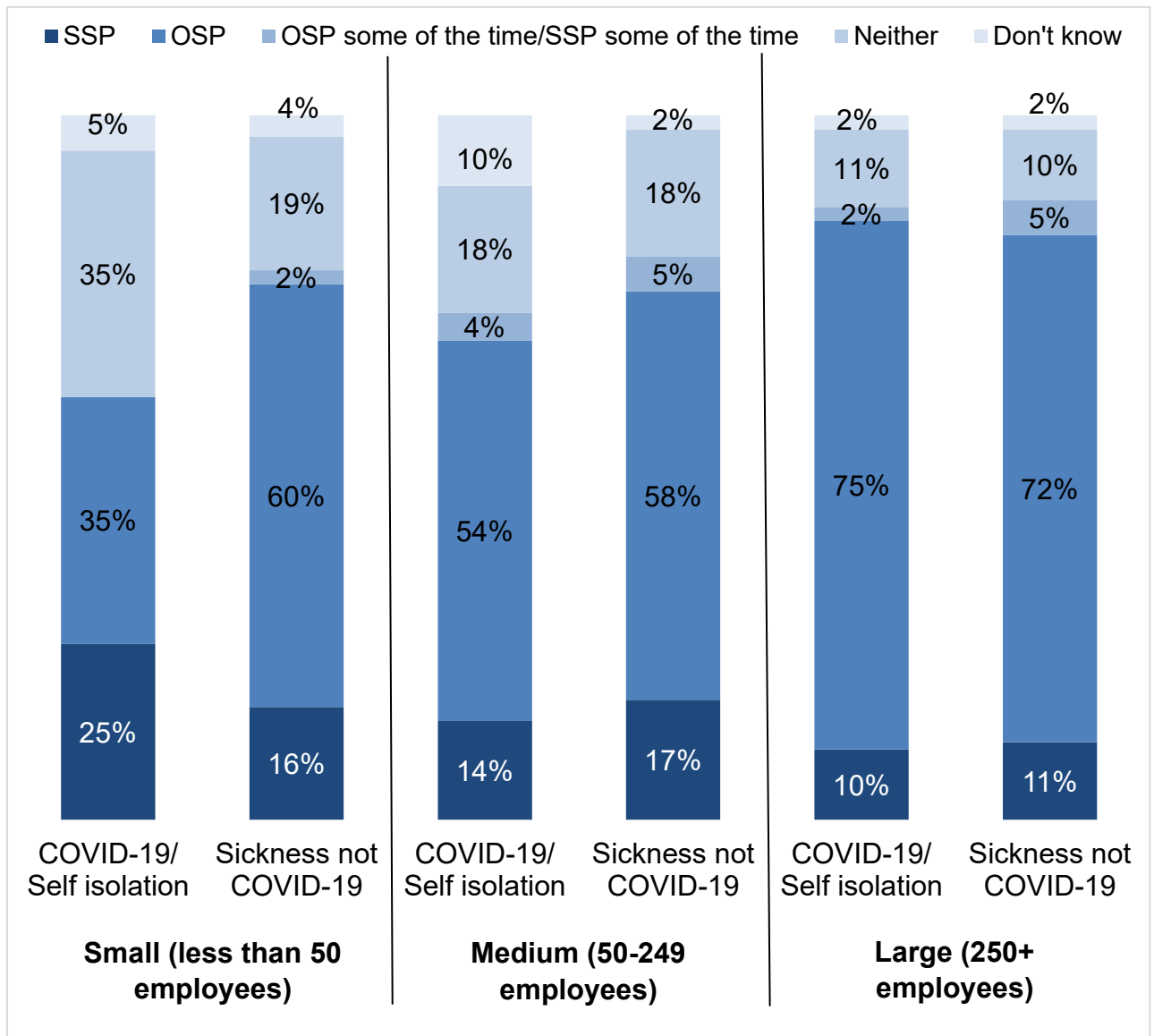
The majority of large companies offered employees OSP to cover sickness or COVID-19 related absences (75% COVID-19 related absence; 72% non-COVID-19 sickness absence). However, the pattern of sick pay receipt was very different between COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 related sickness absences in organisations with less than 50 employees. In these organisations, fewer employees received OSP and there was an increase in those receiving SSP or no sick pay for a COVID-19 related absence compared with a non-COVID-19 related sickness absence (Figure 4.4).¹⁶

¹⁴ There are differences between the proportion of employees who report being eligible for SSP and those who have received SSP. Much of the difference in eligibility and receipt may be explained by waiting days. As a large percentage of absences do not exceed 3 days, respondents could be eligible for SSP but would not receive it due to the length of absence (due to SSP eligibility rules around waiting days)

¹⁵ A full data table can be found in tables A7 and A8 in the Appendix

¹⁶ A full data table can be found in tables A9 and A10 in the Appendix

Figure 4.4: Types of sick pay received by type of sickness and size of organisation



Base (unweighted): all employees who had Covid-19 or had to self-isolate (less than 50: 110; 50-249: 83*; 250+: 420); all employees had a sickness not Covid-19 related (less than 50:108; 50-249: 106; 250+: 504)

As previously mentioned, whilst the majority of workers received sick pay for a sickness absence in the last 12 months, there was still a sizeable minority who did not receive SSP or OSP (16% covid, 14% non-covid) for the time they were absent from work. The most commonly cited reasons for not receiving sick pay were because they were not off work for long enough to receive sick pay; they had been told they were not entitled to sick pay; or they took annual leave instead of sickness absence.

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

In the qualitative research, one participant reported that they tended to avoid telling their employer about periods of sickness absence wherever possible, especially as one of their key issues was mental health, instead they opted to take annual leave:

"I feel it's just too personal for me to discuss at work."

**Permanent contract, small organisation,
short-term sickness absence, long-term health condition**

Another participant was on a non-permanent contract and was below the lower earnings limit of £120 per week. They were not therefore entitled to any sick pay. When they became sick they used annual leave to allow them to be off work:

"Yes [I took annual leave as part of my sickness absence], when I was off for 3 months. I took my annual leave that I had, so that [I] got some money coming in. It only covered a few days of the period, I didn't get anything for the rest of it."

**Non-permanent contract, medium sized organisation,
long-term sickness absence, long-term health condition**

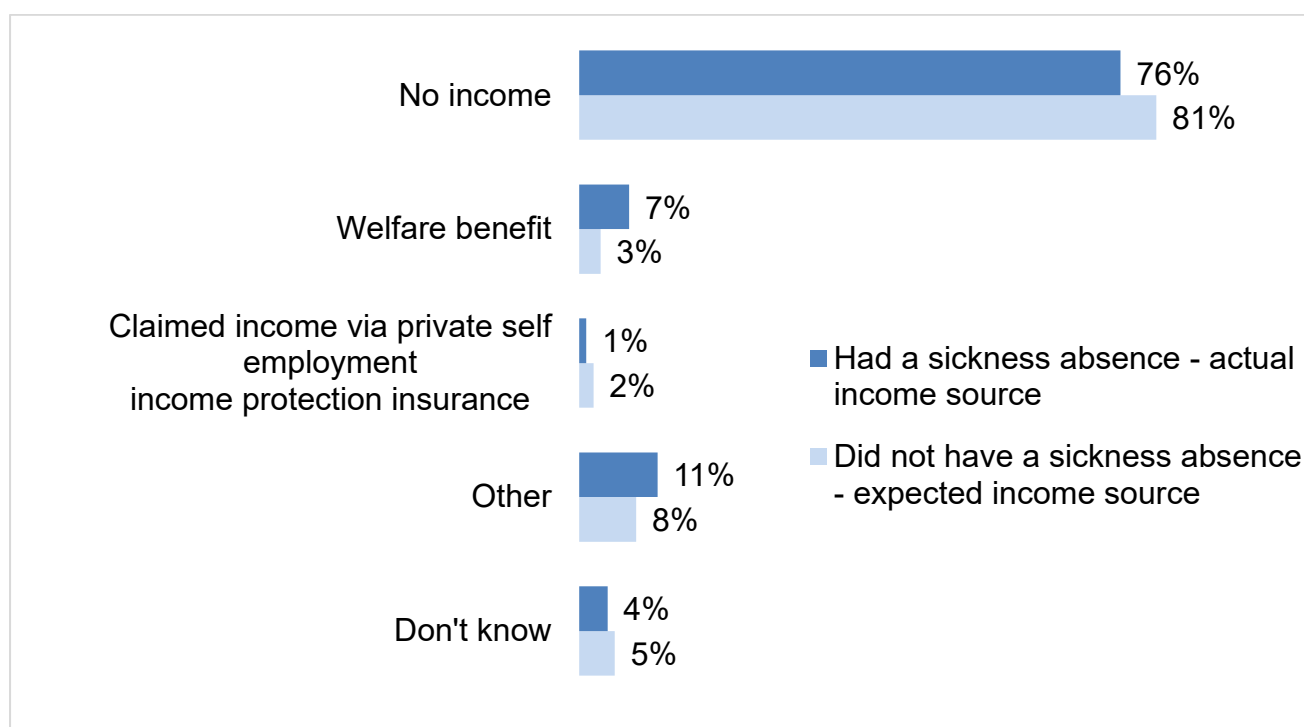
Self-employed

Whilst the majority of employees received some form of sick pay, by contrast the vast majority of the self-employed (81%) reported that they would not receive any income if they were unable to work due to sickness, illness, disability, injury or self-isolation (Figure 4.5).

Among the self-employed who had a sickness absence just one per cent said that they claimed on income protection (e.g. insurance), whilst seven per cent had claimed welfare benefits.

The pattern was similar across those who had a sickness absence and those who had not been sick but reported that this would be their expected income source were they were to be off work sick.

Figure 4.5: Sickness absence income for the self-employed (multicode)



Base (unweighted): All self-employed (had a sickness absence – actual income source: 153; did not have a sickness absence – expected income: 456)

Financial support

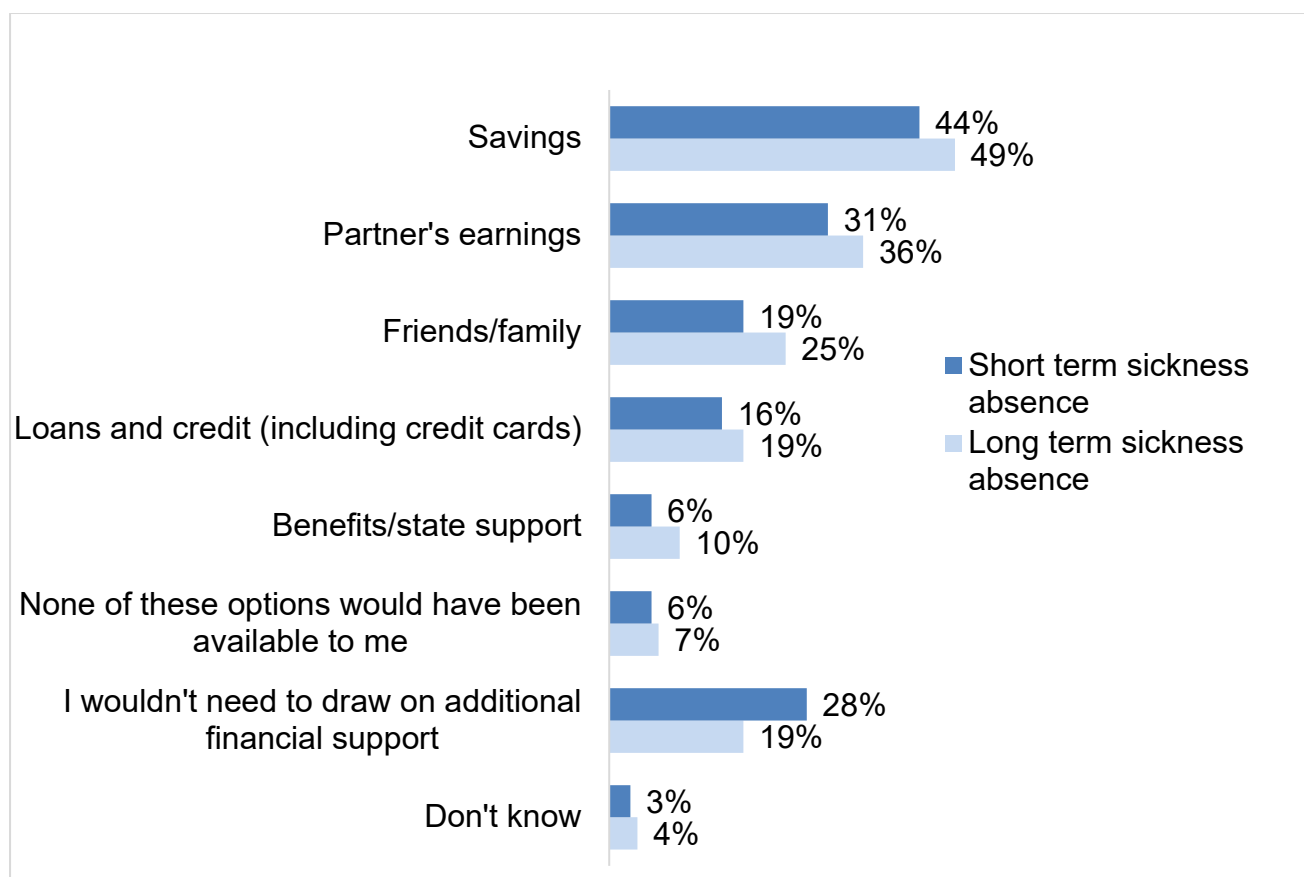
The pattern of financial support that participants would draw upon during a short term (less than 4 weeks) or long term (4 weeks or more) sickness absence was very similar. As might be expected, fewer participants reported that they would need to draw on additional financial support for a short-term sickness absence than with a long-term sickness absence (69% and 77% respectively).

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

As the majority of the self-employed reported that they do not have an income when off sick, they were much more likely to say they would need to draw on additional financial support if they had a sickness absence, compared to employees (short term sickness absence: 84% versus 66% respectively; and long-term sickness absence: 87% versus 76% respectively).¹⁷

Overall savings and partner's earnings were the most commonly mentioned support that people could draw upon in the event of sickness absence.

Figure 4.6: Potential sources of financial support that could be drawn upon for short and long term sickness absences (multicode)



Base (unweighted): All participants (4,435)

Employer policies

The survey asked employees whether their employer had written guidelines or policies on sickness absence management. Overall, 83% of employees said their employer had written guidelines on sickness absence management. This was more

¹⁷ A full data table can be found in tables A14 and A15 in the Appendix.

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

common for employees in large organisations (92%), those in the public sector (91%) and those who had been with their employer for 10 years or more (89%).¹⁸

The survey also asked employees about the type of sick pay, if any, they would receive during a sickness absence (of at least a week). Of those who reported the type of pay that they would receive, 57% would receive OSP, 26% would receive SSP only and a further 9% would receive SSP some of the time and OSP/Company Sick Pay some of the time.

Medical Evidence

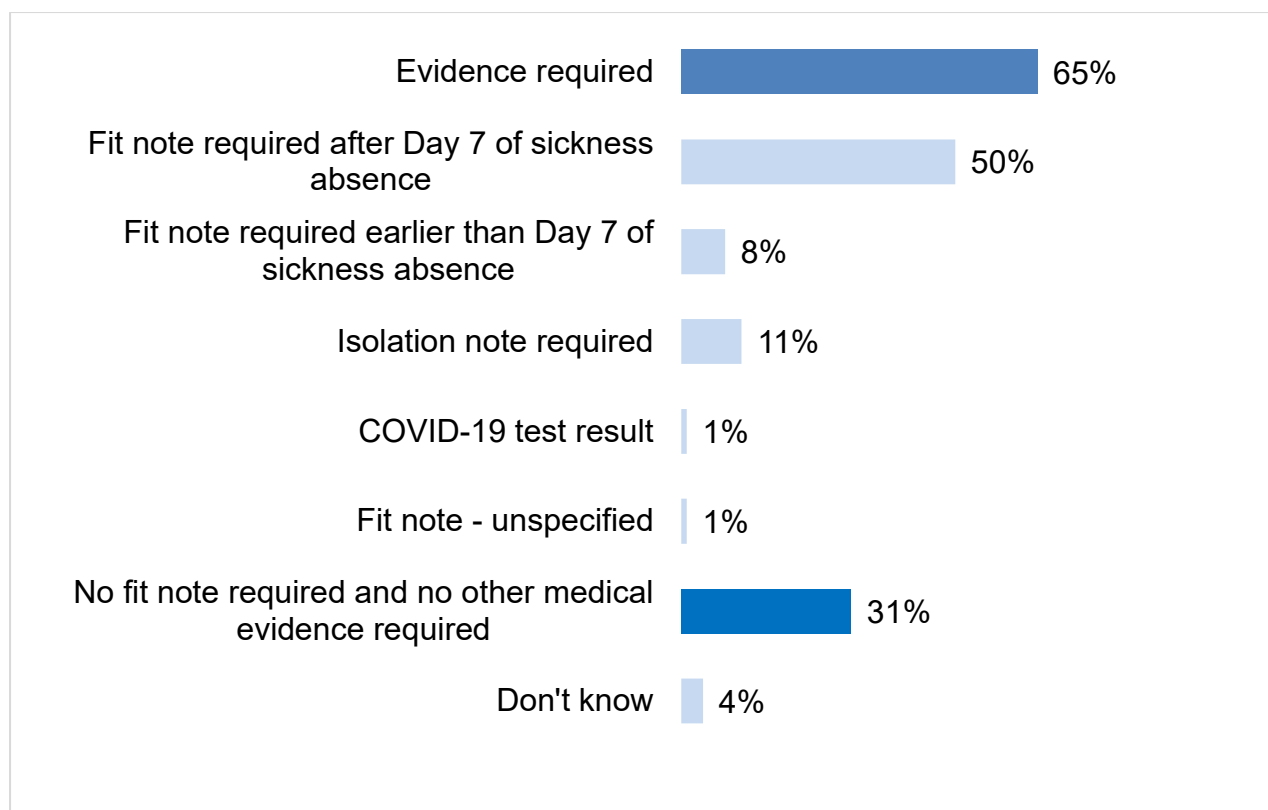
Overall, nearly two thirds (65%) of employees who had a sickness absence in the past 12 months had been required to provide some form of medical evidence to their employer. Half (50%) were required to provide a fit note after Day 7 of their sickness absence; this requirement was most prominent amongst those who had been employed by their company for 10 years or more (60%), those working in large companies with 250 or more employees (59%) or on a permanent contract (56%).

Around three in ten (31%) employees said that they were not required to provide a fit note or any other medical evidence when they had a sickness absence, and this increased to more than two thirds (69%) of employees who worked for micro companies (i.e. those with less than 10 employees).¹⁹

¹⁸ A full data table can be found in Table A19 in the Appendix.

¹⁹ Full data tables can be found in tables A20 and A21 in the Appendix

Figure 4.7: Requirement to provide medical evidence for a sickness absence (multicode)



Base (unweighted): All employees who had a sickness absence in the past 12 months (1,234)

Employers' approaches to sickness absence and the need for medical evidence varied considerably. In the qualitative research, many employees reported that their employers were supportive of their employees' sickness absence and concerned for their wellbeing, some kept in touch with the employee during their absence. One participant reported that their company had a sickness absence policy to keep the levels of sickness absence low:

"HR normally rate you on a Bradford score²⁰. It's a combination of periods of absence and length of each period and they give you a score. So long as it doesn't go over 125 then it's not considered problematic"

**Permanent contract, large size employer,
short term sickness absence, no long-term health condition**

²⁰ For more information see: <https://www.bradfordfactorcalculator.com/>

5 Statutory Sick Pay Provision

In this chapter we look at the overall attitudes of participants towards sick pay, and the levels of awareness and knowledge of the waiting period for SSP. We also discuss the impact of SSP on decisions around returning to work after a sickness absence. This section is based on participants from the qualitative research who received SSP, and participants from the quantitative research who had either received or would be eligible for SSP.

Attitudes towards Statutory Sick Pay in the qualitative research

Participants in the qualitative research²¹ reported that the current SSP rate is low, and difficult for them to manage on, especially for those living in single-person households. Participants reported falling behind on their monthly outgoings or needing to use some of their savings to cover living costs:

“It's [SSP] devastating. I'm below the poverty line as it is. I don't smoke, I don't drink, I don't take drugs, I don't socialise, but my income doesn't meet my outgoings as it is. Even losing £10 is going to affect me.”

**Full time employment, permanent contract, small employer,
short term sickness absence, long-term health condition, received SSP**

One participant, who worked in care full-time, described how - despite SSP being low – it was in line with what they would expect (although a substantial drop from their usual income). They felt that if the SSP rate was too high it may encourage people to take longer sickness absences when they were in fact well enough to return to work:

“With it being SSP it is what I would expect from the government, but it is still too little. But that's the way it is unfortunately. Luckily, I get child and working tax credits and I took a mortgage break so could catch up with it later on. That helped a lot.”

**Permanent contract, medium size employer,
short term sickness absence, long-term health condition**

Another participant, whose employer limits the amount of paid (OSP) sick leave to 5 days per year, felt this was difficult, as many people returned to work early (whilst still ill) as they could not afford to live on SSP:

“If you're sick any more than those 5 days, you just get SSP after the usual first 3 days. It does discourage you from taking time off if you're ill because you simply

²¹ 20 employees who had experienced a sickness absence were included in the qualitative interviews

can't afford to. You get a lot of people going into work ill which is no good for them and not good for everyone else either because everyone ends up getting it."

**Permanent contract, small size employer,
short term sickness absence, long-term health condition**

There was limited feedback in relation to the 28-week length of SSP, as the majority of participants had only experienced a short-term sickness absence of less than 4 weeks. One participant had received SSP and experienced a long-term sickness absence of 4 weeks or more, but the absence was not near the SSP cut off point of 28 weeks.

Awareness and knowledge of the SSP waiting period

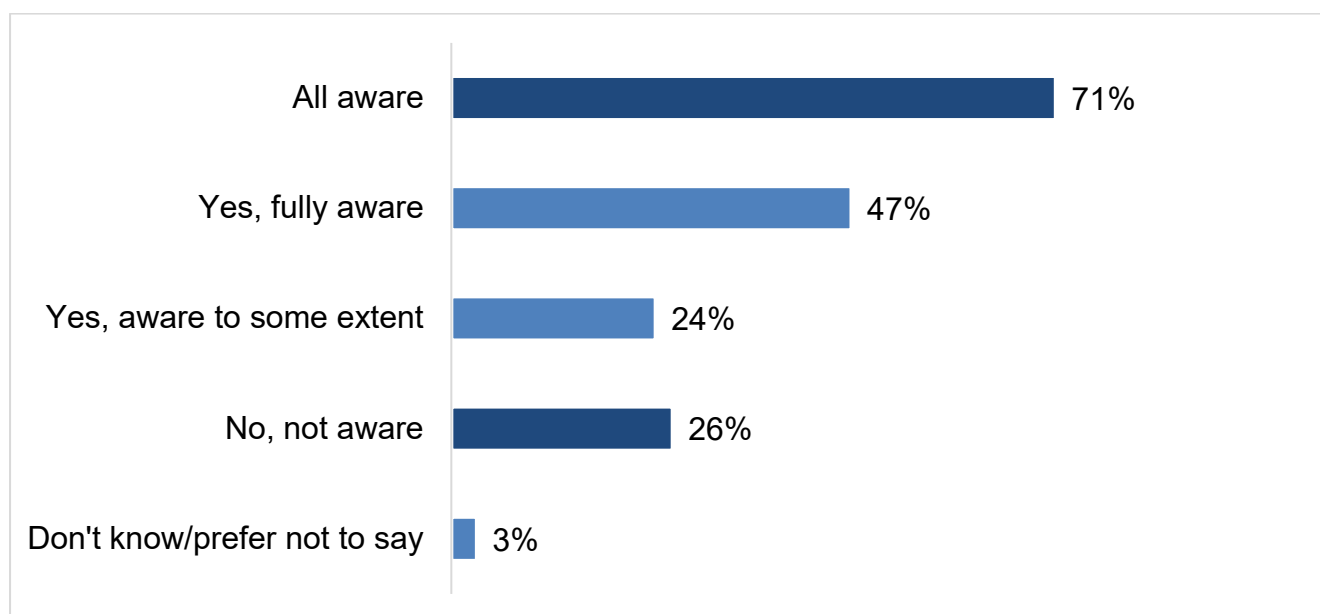
In the quantitative research, employees who had received or would receive SSP were asked to what extent they were aware that their employer is not required to pay SSP until the fourth working day of the first sickness absence taken within an 8-week period. Among these employees levels of awareness of the waiting period were fairly high. Just over seven in ten (71%) said they were aware at least to some extent of the waiting period, with nearly half (47%) fully aware. Levels of awareness of the waiting period were highest among those with a health condition or illness that affected their work (83%), those who had a long-term health condition which reduced their ability to carry out day-to-day activities (79%), or who were senior managers or administrators (82%).²²

Base sizes were small, but nearly two fifths (38%) of modern professionals were not aware of the waiting period and this was significantly higher than the overall average (26%)²³. There was no correlation between being a modern professional and having taken a sickness absence, having a LTHC or having worked when ill.

²² A full data table can be found in table A22 in the Appendix

²³ A full data table can be found in table A23 in the Appendix

Figure 5.1: Awareness of waiting period



Base (unweighted): All employees who receive/would receive SSP (1,131)

In the qualitative research, employees who had received SSP were asked their opinions on the waiting period. There were mixed responses in terms of understanding the waiting period, with some having a solid understanding and others not having heard of it. There were neutral responses towards the waiting period and a general acceptance of it.

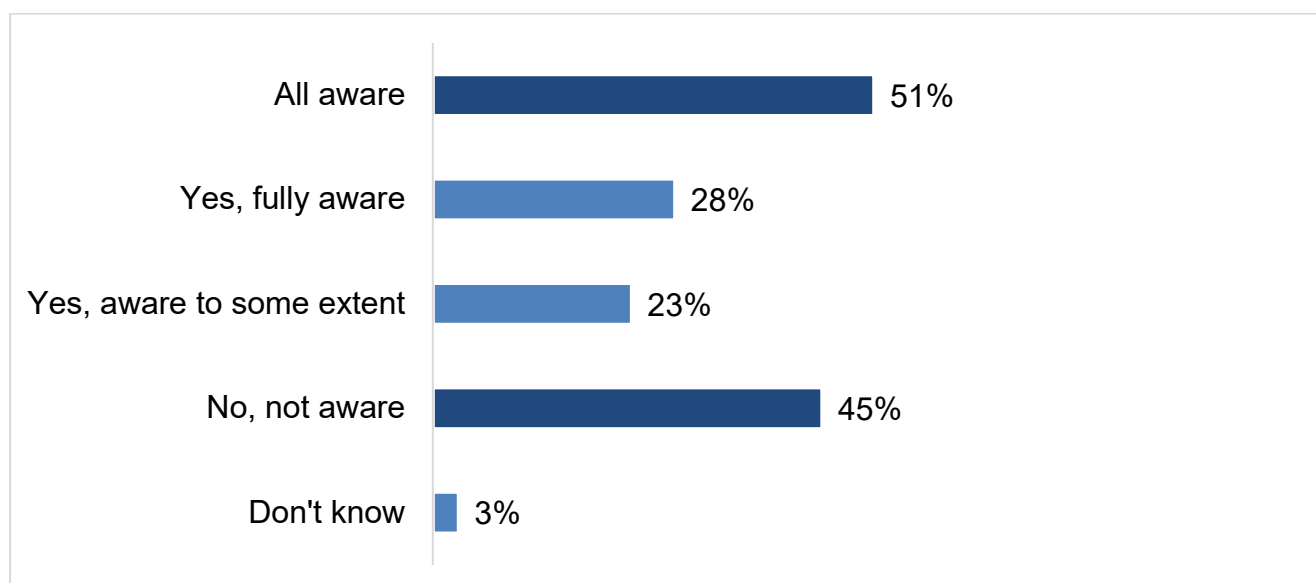
“It is what it is you know. You can’t expect to be paid the same amount as your normal salary.”

**Permanent contract, medium size employer,
short term sickness absence, no long-term health condition**

In some circumstances the waiting period is not applied i.e. if the first sickness absence is 4 or more days, for any subsequent sickness absences taken within an 8-week period of the original sickness absence they would receive SSP from the first day of their sickness absence. In the quantitative research, around half (51%) of those who received/would receive SSP reported being aware at least to some extent of the 8-week period, with just over a quarter (28%) being fully aware. Senior managers or administrators were more likely than average to be aware of this 8-week period (69% versus 51% respectively).²⁴

²⁴ A full data table can be found in Table A25 in the Appendix

Figure 5.2: Awareness of the 8-week period



Base (unweighted): All employees who receive/would receive SSP (1,131)

The impact of SSP on decisions regarding sickness absence

For survey participants who received SSP, the financial impact of being off work was stated to be of greater influence in decisions around sickness absence than for those who received OSP (a concern for 31% of those receiving SSP, compared to 14% of those receiving OSP). In the qualitative research, finances were reported to be a large factor in deciding whether to return to work or not. Most participants receiving SSP only reported that they try to avoid taking time off sick unless they have to – either because of financial concerns, or because they are concerned about their workload.

“I was making such a financial loss, there was no way I was going to stay off work for another week.”

**Permanent contract, large employer,
short-term sickness absence, long-term health condition**

One participant working in a care home stated that they avoided taking time off unless necessary for financial reasons, but also because they had a duty of care to the residents:

“I had to go back to work, firstly for my family as I couldn’t carry on losing that much wages. I was a bit slower when I went back, but I wanted to go back for the residents.”

**Permanent contract, medium size employer,
short-term sickness absence, long-term health condition**

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

However, some participants were strict in prioritising their health above other matters. Whilst their financial situation was very important to them, their health was considered the only aspect they'd judge when considering whether to return to work or not.

“My financial situation does make you think about going back earlier, but I'm not going to do it. Feeling well again is more important.”

**Permanent contract, large employer,
short-term sickness absence, long-term health condition**

6 Returning to work

This chapter looks at workers who returned to work, or are returning to work, after a sickness absence. The focus of the chapter is on the factors that workers consider when returning to work and what helps them when they do. Workers experience different adjustments depending on their needs, however a phased return to work seems to be one of the most common and desired. The chapter also discusses themes such as financial issues, guilt from employers or from workers themselves regarding their workloads and returning to work on the basis that they feel ready to do so.

Adjustments that support employees' return to work after a long-term sickness absence

In the quantitative survey, employees who had a long-term sickness absence in the past 12 months were asked about any adjustments that were made for them to help them return to work from long-term sickness absence.

Around two-thirds (64%) of employees who had a long-term sickness absence in the past 12 months, had a meeting, or were going to have a meeting, with their employer to discuss their return to work. Just under half (46%) of employees had used a phased return to work as a way to ease their way back into their job after a long-term sickness absence. When asked, of those who had a phased return to work, almost three-quarters (70%) felt this helped them return to work quicker than otherwise.

A quarter (25%) of employees who had a long-term sickness absence but did not have a phased return to work, felt that a phased return work would have helped them to return to work more quickly.²⁵

This mirrors findings from the qualitative research which also showed that there was an appetite for a phased return to work, and it was mostly well received by people coming back to their job. One participant who worked in hospitality was given a lighter workload upon her return, but she felt that adjusted or phased return hours would have been more useful for her:

"When you come in you don't want to be overwhelmed straight away.... For me, I wouldn't get the busiest event of the day, you definitely get the lighter workload to begin with until maybe 3 or 4 days later then I would pick up everything I had from before."

**Permanent contract, large employer,
short-term sickness absence, long-term health condition**

²⁵ A full data table can be found in Table A17 and Table 1A18 in the Appendix

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Another employee who was not offered a phased return to work, felt it would have helped her productivity on her return if she had been:

"I think a phased return to work would have been interesting because it took me a while after I came back to work to actually recover from [my sickness]. And I think I probably would have recovered faster if I hadn't returned straight away to my full work hours. That definitely had an impact on my productivity because I wasn't feeling well."

**Temporary contract, large employer,
short-term sickness absence, long-term health condition**

The survey showed that phased returns to work were utilised by employees with several different characteristics:²⁶

- They were used more when the employee had a long-term health condition (56%) compared to those without a long-term health condition (32%).
- Phased returns to work were more common amongst employees in the public sector (55%) than in the private sector (32%).

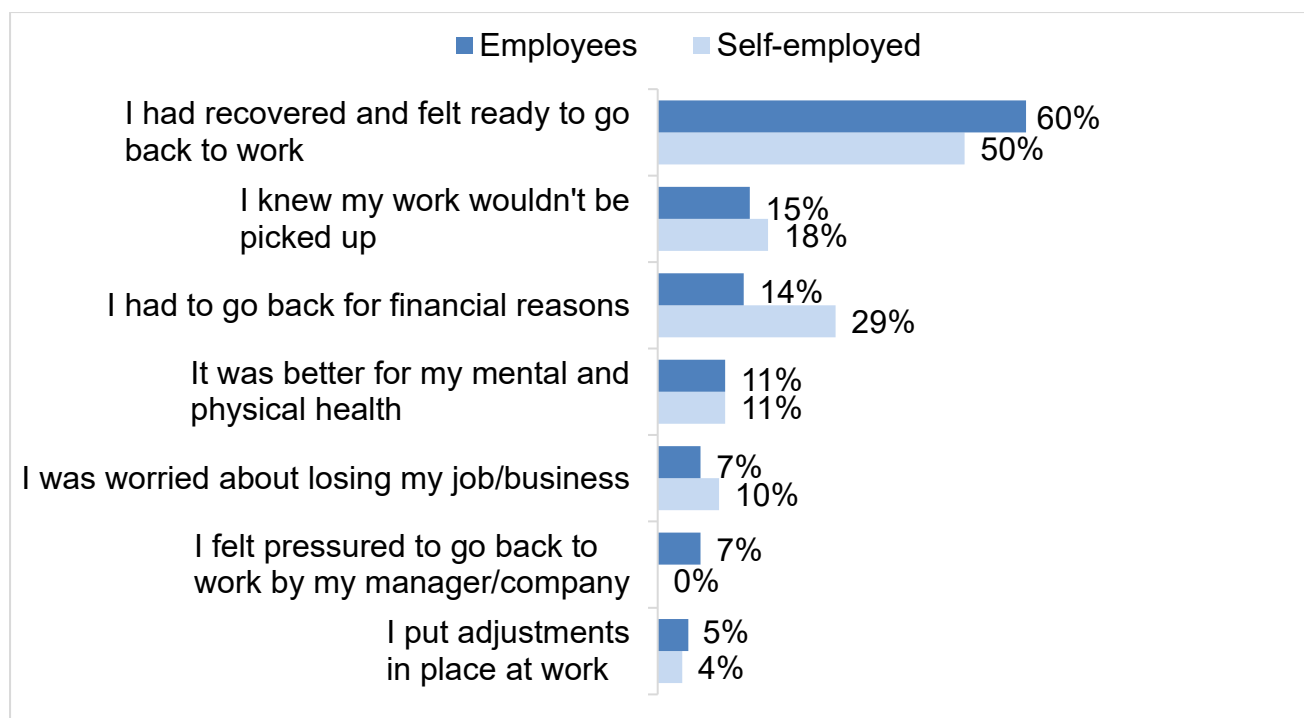
Factors that employees consider when deciding to return to work after a sickness absence

Both the quantitative and qualitative research aimed to understand what factors employees consider when deciding to return to work. In the quantitative research, participants were asked to think about their longest spell of sickness absence in the past 12 months and what factors they considered when deciding to return to work (see Figure 6.1).

Some of the key factors that influenced decisions about returning to work included workers feeling ready to go back to work, financial implications on their lives, and their workloads. Overall, employees and the self-employed had similar considerations, and whilst the sizeable majority prioritised their health and went back to work when they had recovered, the self-employed were more likely to say they had to go back to work for financial reasons compared to employees (29% and 14% respectively).

²⁶ A full data table can be found in Table A25 in the Appendix

Figure 6.1: The factors considered by employees and the self-employed when considering returning to work (multicode)



Base (unweighted): All participants with a sickness absence in the past 12 months and are currently working (Employees: 1,157; Self-employed: 141).

Of the participants who had been sick in the past 12 months and returned to work, 6 in 10 employees (60%) and half (50%) of the self-employed participants said that they only returned to work once they felt fully recovered and ready to go back. The qualitative research supported this.

"I've learnt not to go back until I am 100% fit in physical and mental ways because as far as I'm concerned, you're just a number and I don't think you should put yourself at risk."

**Permanent contract, large employer,
long-term sickness absence, long-term health condition**

Another participant mentioned they would return to work when their health was better, and this was a very important factor to them:

"When I came out hospital after having [...], it was a case of when I was well enough to return to work, I didn't even consider anything else. For anything not so serious, I would do my best to get back as quick as I possibly could because of the financial implications."

**Permanent contract, small employer,
long-term sickness absence, long-term health condition**

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

The quantitative survey showed that the fear of losing their job was a consideration for some employees when returning to work and furthermore, employees whose health conditions affect their work are even more worried about losing their job (22%) than employees whose illness does not affect their work (9%).

The financial impact of being on sick leave also influenced the decision to return to work. Almost one third (29%) of self-employed respondents who had a sickness absence over the past 12 months felt that their financial situation was a factor in their decision to return to work. This impacted employees to a lesser extent (14%) than the self-employed (29%).

The qualitative research also highlighted financial reasons for return. One participant working as a customer service advisor had to isolate twice due to COVID-19, and reported that they suffered financial loss as a result:

"Definitely there's been times where I've felt I haven't wanted to be in work because I felt ill. I've gone in because I can't afford not to, but I shouldn't have been in work. People [across the workforce] are frequently saying they shouldn't be in work when they are, and you can see they're ill. There's definitely a lot of that."

**Permanent contract, large employer,
short-term sickness absence, no long-term health condition**

In contrast, another participant noted that as he was receiving his full salary when he was off sick, he could focus on his health purely and that became the most important consideration:

"My health is paramount in making the decision!"

**Permanent contract, medium employer,
short-term sickness absence, no long-term health condition**

Workers also considered the fact that their work would not be picked up in their absence (15% of employees and 18% of the self-employed). There was a sense of employees not wanting to let their fellow employees pick up their work or overload their teams with an increased workload.

"You do feel a little bit guilty, not being there and you do feel a bit more conscious about getting back so that the team's not being let down"

**Permanent contract, small employer,
short-term sickness absence, no long-term health condition**

Presenteeism

Presenteeism is defined as going to work whilst ill. The survey asked participants if there were any occasions when they went to work or worked from home when they didn't feel well enough to work. A third (33%) of workers reported that in the past 12 months they had either gone to work or worked (including working from home) when they didn't feel well enough to.

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Presenteeism was most prevalent for those with a long-term health condition lasting 12 months or more (45%) and those with a health condition/illness that affects their work (64%); but women (36%), those working full-time (35%) and employees on a permanent contract (34%) were also more likely than average to have worked despite not feeling well enough.²⁷

Of those who had gone to work or worked whilst they were not well enough to do so, nearly a half (46%) had done so on 2 to 3 occasions and more than a fifth (22%) reported doing so on more than 5 occasions. Those who worked on more than 5 occasions whilst ill in the past 12 months were more likely to be self-employed (29%), those on a temporary contract (37%) and those with LTHCs (35%), conditions that reduces ability to carry out day-to-day activities (41%) or had a condition that affects their work (42%).²⁸

²⁷ A full data table can be found in Table A26 in the Appendix

²⁸ A full data table can be found in Table A27 in the Appendix

Appendix

Appendix A: Additional data tables

An asterisk within the data table means that the response is less than 1%, a dash means no one answered.

Table A1: Health condition by age

Q114. Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?

	Total	Age				
		16-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65-74
Unweighted Total	4435	172	678	1585	1747	253
Weighted Total	4435	442	999	1511	1322	161
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	30	26	24	30	34	46
No	69	73	75	69	66	53
Prefer not to say	1	*	1	1	*	1

Base: All participants

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A2: Health conditions by employment status

Q116. What type of health condition, illness, injury or disability do you have? If you have more than one health condition, please let us know about the main one that affects your day-to-day activities the most.

	Total	Employment status			
		Full time	Part time	Employed (full time or part time)	Self-employed
Unweighted Total	1395	841	342	1183	212
Weighted Total	1331	822	311	1133	199
	%	%	%	%	%
Mental health conditions	27	27	30	28	18
Learning or socialisation difficulties	1	1	2	1	*
Conditions related to bones or joints including injury and arthritis/ rheumatism	22	21	16	20	31
Long-term conditions that affect major organs	10	8	11	9	13
Diabetes	7	8	4	7	6
Epilepsy	2	2	2	2	1
Migraine	2	3	2	3	2
Difficulty in seeing	1	1	1	1	-
Difficulty in hearing	1	1	2	1	*
Other dizziness or balance problems	1	*	4	1	2
Problems due to alcohol dependency	*	*	-	*	-
Problems due to drug dependency	*	*	-	*	-
Other health problem or disability	25	25	23	25	25
Prefer not to say	2	2	3	2	1

Base: All participants who have a mental/physical health condition lasting/expected to last 12 or more months

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A3: Health conditions by age

Q116. What type of health condition, illness, injury or disability do you have? If you have more than one health condition, please let us know about the main one that affects your day-to-day activities the most.

	Total	Age				
		16-24	25-34	35-49	50-64	65-74
Unweighted Total	1395	42*	173	465	599	116
Weighted Total	1331	116	237	458	446	73
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Mental health conditions	27	43	41	30	14	7
Learning or socialisation difficulties	1	5	2	1	1	-
Conditions related to bones or joints including injury and arthritis/ rheumatism	22	11	10	20	32	21
Long-term conditions that affect major organs	10	1	10	9	9	27
Diabetes	7	3	2	6	10	16
Epilepsy	2	1	2	2	1	-
Migraine	2	4	1	2	1	-
Difficulty in seeing	1	5	1	1	*	*
Difficulty in hearing	1	4	1	*	2	3
Other dizziness or balance problems	1	3	-	1	2	*
Problems due to alcohol dependency	*	-	-	*	-	-
Problems due to drug dependency	*	-	1	-	-	-
Other health problem or disability	25	20	27	25	24	21

*Caution low base size

Base: All participants who have a mental/physical health condition lasting/expected to last 12 or more months

Table A4: Health conditions

Q115. Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry-out day-to-day activities?

	Total
Unweighted Total	1395
Weighted Total	1331
	%
Yes, a lot	6
Yes, a little	53
Not at all	40
Prefer not to say	*

Base: All participants who have a mental/physical health condition lasting/expected to last 12 or more months

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A5: Table showing whether any time has been taken off work due to self-isolation, illness, a health condition, an injury or a disability

Q121. In the past 12 months, have you taken any time off work due to self-isolation, illness, a health condition, an injury or a disability?

	Total	Quality of health in general		
		Good	Fair	Bad
Unweighted Total	4435	3397	876	155
Weighted Total	4435	3318	928	178
	%	%	%	%
Yes – for COVID-19 unconfirmed case (COVID-19 test not taken)	5	5	4	8
Yes - for COVID-19 confirmed case (had a positive COVID-19 test)	6	6	6	15
Yes - self isolation (being asked/ required to stay at home)	11	12	11	10
Yes - an illness other than COVID-19 e.g. cold, flu, migraines	13	11	18	28
Yes - a long-term health condition e.g. cancer, diabetes	3	1	6	24
Yes - an injury	4	3	5	8
Yes – a disability	1	*	2	6
No - I have not taken time off work for any of these reasons	64	69	56	31
Can't remember	1	1	1	-
NETS				
Net: Yes either	35	31	43	69
Net: Yes – for COVID-19	20	20	20	29
Net: Yes – not COVID-19	19	15	29	48
Net: No	64	69	56	31

Base: All participants

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A6: Table showing working arrangements over the past 12 months

Q110. Over the course of the past 12 months, which of the following predominantly applies to your working arrangements?

	Total
Unweighted Total	4435
Weighted Total	4435
	%
I have worked from home for the entire period	26
I have mainly worked from home but occasionally worked from my employer's or customer's premises	16
I have divided my time between working from home and working from my employer's or customer's premises	12
I have worked solely from either my employer's or my customer's premises	36
I have been furloughed part of the time	*
I have worked in the same way I did prior to Covid / no change	*
I have mainly worked from my employer's or customer's premises but occasionally worked from home	*
I have not worked / unemployed	*
I am / was retired	*
Other	*
None of these - I have been on furlough/ off sick etc.	8
I would prefer not to say	1

Base: All employees

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A7: Table showing whether any time has been taken off work by sector

Q121. In the past 12 months, have you taken any time off work due to self-isolation, illness, a health condition, an injury or a disability?

	Total	Sector		
		Private	Public	Voluntary
Unweighted Total	4435	1920	1551	235
Weighted Total	4435	2041	1467	188
	%	%	%	%
Yes – for COVID-19 unconfirmed case (COVID-19 test not taken)	5	5	5	7
Yes - for COVID-19 confirmed case (had a positive COVID-19 test)	6	6	9	2
Yes - self isolation (being asked/ required to stay at home)	11	10	14	13
Yes - an illness other than COVID-19 e.g. cold, flu, migraines	13	13	14	23
Yes - a long-term health condition e.g. cancer, diabetes	3	2	4	5
Yes - an injury	4	3	5	3
Yes – a disability	1	*	1	2
No - I have not taken time off work for any of these reasons	64	67	60	54
Can't remember	1	*	1	-
NETS				
Net: Yes either	35	32	40	46
Net: Yes – for COVID-19	20	19	24	18
Net: Yes – not COVID-19	19	17	22	31
Net: No	64	67	30	54

Base: All participants

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A8: Tables showing those who have received SSP and OSP and working status for COVID-19 absences (including self-isolation)

Q123. Were you paid any of these types of sick pay during the period that you were self-isolating/had COVID-19?

	Total	Gender		Employment status		Sector	
		Male	Female	Full time	Part time	Private	Public
Unweighted Total	637	297	337	474	163	280	312
Weighted Total	785	389	393	578	207	380	350
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Statutory Sick Pay [Statutory Sick Pay paid at a rate of £95.85 per week since the 6th April 2020]	14	14	14	13	17	19	10
Occupational/ Company Sick Pay including being paid your regular salary when sick [Occupational/ Company Sick Pay is more than Statutory Sick Pay].	62	65	58	68	43	53	73
Statutory Sick Pay some of the time and Occupational/ Company Sick Pay some of the time	2	2	2	2	2	3	1
Neither Statutory or Occupational/ Company Sick Pay	16	16	17	12	27	22	9
Don't know	6	2	10	4	12	4	7

Base: All employees who had COVID-19 or had to self-isolate

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A9: Tables showing those who have received SSP and OSP and working status for COVID-19 absences (including self-isolation)

	Total	Length of time with employer			
		Less than 1 year	1 year to less than 5 years	5 years to less than 10 years	10 years or more
Unweighted Total	637	70*	209	126	229
Weighted Total	785	109	279	149	242
	%				
Statutory Sick Pay [Statutory Sick Pay paid at a rate of £95.85 per week since the 6th April 2020]	14	32	14	12	8
Occupational/ Company Sick Pay including being paid your regular salary when sick [Occupational/ Company Sick Pay is more than Statutory Sick Pay].	62	36	56	68	78
Statutory Sick Pay some of the time and Occupational/ Company Sick Pay some of the time	2	1	2	3	3
Neither Statutory or Occupational/ Company Sick Pay	16	21	24	11	8
Don't know	6	9	4	7	3

Base: All employees who had COVID-19 or had to self-isolate

* Caution low base size

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A10: Tables showing those who have received SSP and OSP and working status for non-COVID-19 absences

Q129. Thinking about your longest continuous spell of sickness absence over the past 12 months, which of these types of sick pay did you receive, if any?

	Total	Gender		Employment status		Sector		
		Male	Female	Full time	Part time	Private	Public	Voluntary
Unweighted Total	738	330	404	565	173	349	322	57*
Weighted Total	740	321	417	568	173	339	327	59
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Statutory Sick Pay [Statutory Sick Pay paid at a rate of £95.85 per week since the 6th April 2020]	13	9	15	12	15	11	11	17
Occupational/ Company Sick Pay including being paid your regular salary when sick [Occupational/ Company Sick Pay is more than Statutory Sick Pay].	66	73	61	73	44	60	74	71
Statutory Sick Pay some of the time and Occupational/ Company Sick Pay some of the time	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	2
Neither Statutory or Occupational/ Company Sick Pay	14	13	14	10	27	21	8	5
Don't know	3	2	5	1	10	5	2	5

*Caution low base size

Base: All employees who had a non-COVID-19 related sickness absence

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A11: Tables showing those who have received SSP and OSP and working status for non-COVID-19 absences

Q129. Thinking about your longest continuous spell of sickness absence over the past 12 months, which of these types of sick pay did you receive, if any?

	Total	Length of time with employer				Health condition/illness lasting 12 months or more	
		Less than 1 year	1 year to less than 5 years	5 years to less than 10 years	10 years or more	Yes	No
Unweighted Total	738	85*	249	148	256	333	401
Weighted Total	740	113	247	155	226	361	370
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Statutory Sick Pay [Statutory Sick Pay paid at a rate of £95.85 per week since the 6th April 2020]	13	32	14	12	8	17	8
Occupational/ Company Sick Pay including being paid your regular salary when sick [Occupational/ Company Sick Pay is more than Statutory Sick Pay].	66	36	56	68	78	60	73
Statutory Sick Pay some of the time and Occupational/ Company Sick Pay some of the time	4	1	2	3	3	3	5
Neither Statutory or Occupational/ Company Sick Pay	14	21	24	11	8	17	10
Don't know	3	9	4	7	3	4	3

*Caution low base size

Base: All employees who had a non-COVID-19 related sickness absence

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A12: Tables showing sick pay eligibility

QS2. Which of these types of sick pay, if any, would you receive during a sickness absence at your current main place of work?

	Total	Gender		Employment status		Sector		
		Male	Female	Full time	Part time	Private	Public	Voluntary
Unweighted Total	3826	1800	2003	2876	950	1920	1551	235
Weighted Total	3837	1857	1959	2924	913	2041	1467	188
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Statutory Sick Pay [Statutory Sick Pay paid at a rate of £95.85 per week since the 6th April 2020]	24	22	26	23	28	28	19	24
Occupational/ Company Sick Pay including being paid your regular salary when sick [Occupational/ Company Sick Pay is more than Statutory Sick Pay].	53	57	49	59	35	47	64	40
Statutory Sick Pay some of the time and Occupational/ Company Sick Pay some of the time	9	8	9	9	8	11	6	17
Neither Statutory or Occupational/ Company Sick Pay	8	7	8	4	21	9	6	8
Don't know	6	5	8	6	9	6	6	11

Base: All employees

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A13: Tables showing sick pay eligibility

QS2. Which of these types of sick pay, if any, would you receive during a sickness absence at your current main place of work?

	Total	Length of time with employer				Health condition/illness lasting 12 months or more	
		Less than 1 year	1 year to less than 5 years	5 years to less than 10 years	10 years or more	Yes	No
Unweighted Total	3826	455	1195	765	1403	1183	2621
Weighted Total	3837	558	1281	769	1218	1133	2675
	%						
Statutory Sick Pay [Statutory Sick Pay paid at a rate of £95.85 per week since the 6th April 2020]	24	36	27	26	15	27	23
Occupational/ Company Sick Pay including being paid your regular salary when sick [Occupational/ Company Sick Pay is more than Statutory Sick Pay].	53	29	46	53	71	52	54
Statutory Sick Pay some of the time and Occupational/ Company Sick Pay some of the time	9	10	10	9	7	9	9
Neither Statutory or Occupational/ Company Sick Pay	8	12	10	7	3	7	8
Don't know	6	14	7	6	3	5	7

Base: All employees

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A14: Sources of financial support that could be drawn upon

Q144a. Which, if any, of these financial support, have you (or could you) draw on to support yourself during a short term sickness absence? (an absence of less than 4 weeks)

	Total	Health condition/illness lasting 12 months or more	
		Employed	Self-employed
Unweighted Total	4435	3826	609
Weighted Total	4435	3837	598
	%	%	%
Savings	44	41	59
Partner's earnings	31	30	36
Friends/family	19	20	14
Loans and credit (including credit cards)	16	16	17
Benefits/state support e.g. universal credit	6	6	7
None of these options have been or would be available to me	6	6	6
I wouldn't need to draw on additional financial support	28	31	13
Don't know	3	3	3

Base: All participants

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A15 Sources of financial support that could be drawn upon

Q144b. Which, if any, of these financial support, have you (or could you) draw on to support yourself during a long term sickness absence? (an absence of 4 or more weeks)

	Total	Health condition/illness lasting 12 months or more	
		Employed	Self-employed
Unweighted Total	4435	3826	609
Weighted Total	4435	3837	598
	%	%	%
Savings	49	48	60
Partner's earnings	36	35	40
Friends/family	25	27	17
Loans and credit (including credit cards)	19	19	22
Benefits/state support e.g. universal credit	10	10	11
None of these options have been or would be available to me	7	7	5
I wouldn't need to draw on additional financial support	19	20	9
Don't know	4	4	4

Base: All participants

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A16: Discussing the return to work

Q147. Did/will you have a meeting with your employer to discuss your return to work whilst you were/are off work?

	Total
Unweighted Total	276
Weighted Total	303
	%
Yes	64
No	34
Prefer not to say	1

Base: Employees who had a long-term sickness absence who are currently working or off sick

Table A17: Phased returns to work

Q149. Would a phased return to work, if currently working, have helped OR If currently sick would a phased return to work help you to return to work more quickly from your long-term sickness absence?

	Total
Unweighted Total	141
Weighted Total	159*
	%
Yes	25
No	49
Not sure	26
Can't remember	-

*caution low base size

Base: Employees who had a long term sickness absence and did not have a phased return to work

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A18: Phased return to work

Q150. Did your phased return to work help you to return to work quicker than otherwise?

	Total
Unweighted Total	134
Weighted Total	139
	%
Yes	70
No	21
Don't know	10

Base: Employees who had a long term sickness absence and had a phased return to work

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A19: Written guidelines or policies on sickness absence

Q154. Does your employer have written guidelines or policies on sickness absence management?

	Total	Sector			Company size		Length of time with employer	
		Private	Public	Voluntary	Less than 250	250+	Less than 10 years	10 years or more
Unweighted Total	3826	1920	1551	235	1273	2448	2415	1403
Weighted Total	3837	2041	1467	188	1319	2379	2608	1218
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	83	79	91	77	69	92	80	89
No	8	11	3	14	19	3	9	7
Prefer not to say	9	10	6	9	12	5	11	4

Base: All employees

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A20: Sickness absence evidence by length of employment and size of company

Q125. What evidence of sickness, if any, are you currently required to provide to your employer during periods of sickness absence (including periods of self-isolation)?

	Total	Length of employment				Size of company			
		Less than 1 year	1 year less than 5 years	5 years to less than 10 years	10 years or more	Less than 10	10-49	50-249	250+
Unweighted Total	1234	140	415	243	433	74*	128	173	820
Weighted Total	1365	203	477	265	414	105	156	173	862
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Fit note required after day 7 of sickness absence	50	34	49	51	60	12	40	48	59
Fit not required earlier than day 7 of sickness absence	8	12	7	9	8	8	15	9	7
Isolation note required	11	8	12	8	13	7	7	15	12
COVID test result	1	1	1	*	1	-	1	*	1
Fit note - unspecified	1	-	*	2	1	-	*	-	1
Fit note not required but other medical evidence required	*	-	-	*	*	-	-	-	-
No fit note required and no other medical evidence required	31	40	35	30	23	69	38	27	25
Don't know	4	9	2	6	2	5	1	7	3

*Caution low base size

Base: All employees who had a sickness absence in the past 12 months

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A21: Sickness absence evidence by type of contract

Q125. What evidence of sickness, if any, are you currently required to provide to your employer during periods of sickness absence (including periods of self-isolation)?

	Total	Type of contract		
		None or casual	Temporary	Permanent
Unweighted Total	1234	90*	71*	1064
Weighted Total	1365	150	77	1115
	%	%	%	%
Fit note required after day 7 of sickness absence	50	21	40	56
Fit not required earlier than day 7 of sickness absence	8	12	11	8
Isolation note required	11	6	8	12
COVID test result	1	-	-	1
Fit note - unspecified	1	-	*	1
Fit note not required but other medical evidence required	*	-	-	*
No fit note required and no other medical evidence required	31	59	28	27
Don't know	4	5	13	3

*Caution low base size

Base: All employees who had a sickness absence in the past 12 months

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A22: Awareness of waiting period

Q133. To what extent are you aware or not that your employer is not required to pay statutory sick pay (SSP) until the fourth working day of the first sickness absence taken within an eight week period?

	Total	LTHC that reduces ability to carry out day-to-day activities		Health condition/illness that affects their work	
		Yes	No	Yes	No
Unweighted Total	1131	242	134	147	230
Weighted Total	1296	276	155	168	265
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes – fully aware	47	54	44	60	45
Yes – aware to some extent	24	24	25	24	25
No – not aware	26	24	27	16	28
Don't know/prefer not to say	3	*	2	1	3
All aware	71	79	69	83	70

Base: All employees who receive/would receive SSP

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A23: Awareness of waiting period

Q133. To what extent are you aware or not that your employer is not required to pay statutory sick pay (SSP) until the fourth working day of the first sickness absence taken within an eight week period?

	Total	Occupation							
		Modern professionals	Clerical and intermediate	Senior manager or administrators	Technical and craft	Semi routine and manual	Routine manual and service	Middle or junior managers	Traditional professional
Unweighted Total	1131	271	184	142	67*	138	84*	126	106
Weighted Total	1296	240	216	134	81	177	136	191	91
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes – fully aware	47	37	49	67	44	44	63	53	25
Yes – aware to some extent	24	24	22	16	19	30	15	23	38
No – not aware	26	38	29	17	30	21	20	18	34
Don't know/prefer not to say	3	1	1	-	6	5	2	6	3
All aware	71	61	71	82	64	74	78	76	63

*Caution low base size

Base: All employees who receive/would receive SSP

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A24: Awareness of the 8 week period after the waiting time

Q134. To what extent are you aware or not that if your first sickness absence is four or more days, for any subsequent sickness absences you take within an 8 week period of the original sickness absence you will receive statutory sick pay (SSP) from the first day you are off work?

	Total	Occupation							
		Modern professionals	Clerical and intermediate	Senior manager or administrators	Technical and craft	Semi routine and manual	Routine manual and service	Middle or junior managers	Traditional professional
Unweighted Total	1131	271	184	142	67*	138	84*	126	106
Weighted Total	1296	240	216	134	81	177	136	191	91
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes – fully aware	47	20	27	53	22	27	25	35	16
Yes – aware to some extent	24	26	26	16	20	24	22	21	25
No – not aware	26	16	16	12	19	22	31	20	21
Don't know/prefer not to say	3	*	*	*	*	*	-	-	1
All aware	71	45	54	69	42	51	47	56	42

*Caution low base size

Base: All employees who receive/would receive SSP

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A25: Tables showing whether employees had a phased return to work/a meeting to discuss a phased return to work and employment status

Q148. Following your long-term sickness absence did you have a phased return to work (returning to full duties and hours at work gradually, over a defined time period) OR If currently off sick, has your employer discussed a phased return to work (returning to full duties and hours at work gradually, over a defined time period) to help you return to work?

	Total	LTHC lasting 12 months or more		Sector	
		Yes	No	Private	Public
Unweighted Total	276	155	120	108	154
Weighted Total	303	172	128	125	160
	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	46	56	32	32	55
No	53	44	64	65	45
Can't remember	1	-	4	4	-

Base: Employees who had a long-term sickness absence who are currently working or off sick

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A26: Presenteeism at work when employees worked whilst feeling unwell

Q120. In the past 12 months were there any occasions when you went to work or worked (including working from home) when you didn't feel well enough to work?

	Total	Gender		Employment status		Type of contract			LTHC lasting 12 months or more		Health condition/illness that affects their work	
		Male	Female	Full time	Part time	None or casual	Temporary	Permanent	Yes	No	Yes	No
Unweighted Total	4435	2130	2278	2876	950	323	217	3251	1395	3013	452	940
Weighted Total	4435	2226	2184	2924	913	404	209	3158	1331	3070	471	859
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes	33	31	36	35	26	25	28	34	45	29	64	34
No	66	69	64	64	74	74	71	65	55	71	36	66
Can't remember	1	1	*	*	*	*	1	*	*	*		*

Base: All participants

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Table A27: Number of occasions worked when feeling too ill to work

Q120a. On how many occasions did you go to work or worked (including working from home) when you did not feel well enough to work?

	Total	Employment status		Type of contract			LTHC lasting 12 months or more		LTHC that reduces ability to carry out day-to-day activities		Health condition/ illness that affects their work	
		Employed	Self-employed	None or casual	Temporary	Permanent	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Unweighted Total	1393	1217	176	68*	63*	1076	567	822	408	157	272	294
Weighted Total	1478	1268	210	103	59	1089	593	883	416	175	300	291
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1 occasion	14	14	17	16	17	13	9	18	7	15	6	13
2-3 occasions	46	48	33	45	23	49	37	52	35	42	31	44
4-5 occasions	14	14	19	12	20	14	16	13	14	20	17	15
More than 5 occasions	22	21	29	13	37	20	35	13	41	21	42	27
Don't know/prefer to say	4	4	2	14	3	3	3	5	3	1	4	1

*Caution low base size

Base: All who, in the past 12 months, have gone to work/worked (including work from home) when not well enough to do so

Appendix B: Questionnaire used for quantitative survey

Survey of employees (Spring 2021)

INVITATION CONTENT

We would like your help with an important survey on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC). The purpose of the survey is to understand people's experiences of health and wellbeing at work, to help DWP plan future services.

It should take between 10-20 minutes to complete depending on your answers. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and your participation in the survey is voluntary.

Please click to start the survey

Thank you in advance for your help. If you have questions about the research, please contact the research team at Ipsos MORI at dwp-lms@ipsos-mori.com

NOTE FOR DP:

USE -99 FOR MISSING (IE. NOT INCLUDED IN THE BASE)

USE -98 FOR DON'T KNOW / CAN'T REMEMBER / PREFER NOT TO SAY

Screening question

QS1. What is your current employment status? If you are doing more than one job please select your main job, that is the one where you earn the most money.

Please select one answer only

1. In paid employment – working full time (30+ hours per week)
2. In paid employment – working part time (8-29 hours per week)
3. In paid employment – working part time (under 8 hours per week)
4. Self-employed
5. None of the above (CLOSE INTERVIEW)

ASK OF THOSE IN PAID EMPLOYMENT AT QS1 (CODES 1 TO 3)

QS2 Which of these types of sick pay, if any, would you receive during a sickness absence (of at least a week) at your current main place of work?

Please select one answer only

1. Statutory Sick Pay [Statutory Sick Pay paid at a rate of £95.85 per week since the 6th April 2020]
2. Occupational/ Company Sick Pay including being paid your regular salary when sick [Occupational/ Company Sick Pay is more than Statutory Sick Pay].
3. Statutory Sick Pay some of the time and Occupational/ Company Sick Pay some of the time
4. Neither Statutory or Occupational/ Company Sick Pay
5. Don't know

LOGIC CHECK. IF CODE DON'T KNOW. If you would be paid your regular salary when sick – please select Occupational/Company Sick Pay

ASK ALL

QS3 (QS2). In the past 12 months, have you had a sickness absence from work, for a continuous period of 4 weeks or more (including weekends)?

Please select one answer only

1. Yes

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

- 2. No
- 3. Can't remember

ASK ALL

QS4 (QS3). What is your age?

WRITE IN & DP TO AUTO-POPULATE TO THESE CODES:

Less than 16 years (CLOSE)
16-17
18-20
21-24
25-34
35-49
50-64
65-74
75 and over (CLOSE)

QS5 (QS4). Which of the following best describes how you think of yourself?

- 1. Male
- 2. Female
- 3. Other

QS6 (QS5). Where do you live?

PLEASE ENTER YOUR POSTCODES (dp: AUTO-POPULATE TO REGION BELOW).

=98. Don't know /prefer not to say

Can you tell us which of these areas you live in?

Please select one answer only

East of England
East Midlands
London
North East England
North West England
Northern Ireland
Scotland
South East England
South West England
Wales
West Midlands

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Yorkshire and The Humber

ASK ALL

QS7 (QS6). What is your highest level of qualification?

Please select one answer only

1. Degree level or above (including postgraduate qualifications)
 2. 2 or more A-Levels, NVQ Level 3, BTEC Level 3 Diploma or equivalent
 3. 1 A-Level or equivalent, 5 or more GCSEs of grade A*-C or equivalent, NVQ Level 2, BTEC level 2 diploma or equivalent
 4. GCSEs of less than A*-C or equivalent, NVQ Level 1
 5. Something else (Specify)
 6. No qualifications
- 98. Don't know

Employment characteristics

Please answer the following questions about your current main job, if you are doing more than one job please select your main job, that is the one where you earn the most money.

ASK ALL

Q1 (Q1a). Are you currently working or are you absent from work due to a physical or mental health condition(s) or illness?

Please select one answer only

1. Currently working
 2. Absent from work due to a physical or mental health condition(s) or illness
- 98. I prefer not to say

ASK ALL

Q2 (Q1b). What is the main activity of the company/organisation you work for?

Please select one answer only

1. Administration/Office including Public sector and Human resources
2. Agriculture and Land Based Services
3. Arts and Media
4. Automotive Industry, passenger Transport and logistics
5. Beauty and Therapy
6. Care/Childcare/Social Care
7. Chemical, Oil and Nuclear Industry
8. Customer Service and Retail
9. Education / Teaching
10. Energy & Utilities Industry
11. Electricians and Building Services
12. Facilities Management
13. Food and Drink
14. Financial Services
15. Health Industry
16. Hospitality Leisure and Tourism
17. Information Technology and Telecoms
18. Manufacturing & Engineering
19. Security and Safety
20. Sports & Recreation
21. Voluntary, Charity & Social Enterprise
22. Other public sector
23. Other private sector

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

24. Other voluntary sector

-98. Don't know

ASK ALL

Q3 (Q2). How long have you been [IF EMPLOYEE (QS1=1,2 OR 3): with your current employer] [IF SELF-EMPLOYED (QS1=4): self-employed]?

Please select one answer only

1. less than 12 weeks
2. 12 weeks to less than 1 year
3. 1 to less than 2 years
4. 2 to less than 5 years
5. 5 to less than 10 years
6. 10 years or more

-98. Can't remember

ASK IF EMPLOYEE (QS1 CODES 1 or 2 or 3)

Q4 (Q3). Which of the following best describes the contract for your main job?

Please select one answer only

1. A zero hours contract
2. A casual / flexible contract
3. A temporary/fixed term or seasonal contract with more than three months remaining
4. A temporary/fixed term or seasonal contract with less than three months remaining
5. A permanent or open-ended job/contract
6. Apprenticeship or other training scheme
7. I do not have a contract

-98. Not sure

ASK IF EMPLOYEE (QS1 CODES 1 or 2 or 3)

Q5 (Q4). Which of the following best describes the type of organisation you work for?

Please select one answer only

1. A private sector business
2. A public sector organisation
3. A voluntary, not for profit sector organisation
4. Something else

ASK ALL

Q6 (Q5). IF EMPLOYEE (QS1 CODES 1 OR 2 OR 3): Approximately how many people work for the organisation that pays your wages across all of its sites or offices in the UK?

IF SELF-EMPLOYED (QS1 CODE 4): How many people do you employ in the UK?

Please select one answer only

1. Less than 10 employees
2. 10-49
3. 50-99
4. 100-249
5. 250 – 499
6. 500 and higher

-98. Don't know

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

ASK ALL

Q7a (Q5a). **Thinking about your work pattern prior to the coronavirus pandemic, how many hours, including overtime or extra hours, did you usually work in your job each week?** Please exclude meal breaks and time taken to travel to work. Please enter hours per week to nearest hour.

ENTER HOURS. PERMISSABLE RANGE: MIN 1HOURS. MAX 99 HOURS.

-98. Don't know

ASK IF "Don't know"

Q7b (Q5b). **Can you provide an estimate for the number of hours, including overtime or extra hours, you usually worked in your job each week prior to the coronavirus pandemic?**

1. 1-7 hours
2. 8-14 hours
3. 15- 21 hours
4. 22 - 28 hours
5. 29-35 hours
6. 36-40 hours
7. 41-50 hours
8. 51 hours or more

-98. Don't know

ASK ALL

Q8 (Q5c). **You have just said that you usually work {insert hours from Q7a} hours each week/ between {insert hours from Q7b} hours each week, over how many days did you usually work these hours (before coronavirus)?**

If the number of days you work varies week by week, please tell us about the number of days you work in an 'average' week.

1. 1 day
2. 2 days
3. 3 days
4. 4 days
5. 5 days
6. 6 days
7. 7 days
8. I would prefer not to say

ASK IF EMPLOYEE (QS1 CODE 1 or 2 or 3)

Q9 (Q6). **In the past 12 months, have any of the following happened to you as a result of the coronavirus pandemic?**

Please select all that apply

1. I have been placed on furlough by my employer, on one or more occasion, within the last 12 months [ADD INFORMATION ICON: This is where your employer tells you to temporarily stop working and you receive some pay but you are not made redundant. If you have been furloughed and are now working please select that you have been on furlough and the appropriate working code]
2. I was made redundant by my employer
3. I am still working for the same employer, but my hours have been increased
4. I am still working for the same employer, but my hours have been reduced
5. I am still working for the same employer but my pay has been reduced
6. I am still working for the same employer, but in a different role
7. My company benefits have been reduced (e.g. pensions, medical insurance)
8. I have been asked / told to take unpaid holiday / annual leave (not furloughed)
9. I am shielding*
10. Off work (includes sickness absence, self-isolation, unpaid leave)
11. Other (specify)
12. None of the these

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

13. Prefer not to say

- *ADD INFORMATION ICON: This is someone who was at high risk (clinically extremely vulnerable) from coronavirus, and were advised to take extra steps to protect themselves against coronavirus. These people were advised to stay at home.

ASK ALL EMPLOYEES QS1 CODE 1 or 2 or 3)

Q10 (Q6b). **Over the course of the past 12 months, which of the following predominantly applies to your working arrangements?**

Please select one answer only

REVERSE LIST

1. I have worked from home for the entire period
2. I have mainly worked from home but occasionally worked from my employer's or customer's premises
3. I have divided my time between working from home and working from my employers' or customer's premises
4. I have worked solely from either my employers' or my customer's premises
5. Other (specify)
6. None of these – I have been on furlough/off sick etc
7. -98. I would prefer not to say

ASK IF EMPLOYEE (QS1 CODE 1 or 2 or 3)

Q11a (Q6a). Thinking about prior to the coronavirus pandemic, what **was your usual gross salary for your main job (i.e. your total pay before deductions for tax, National Insurance and pension contributions)? Please include overtime, bonuses, commission, and tips.**

Please write in a weekly or monthly amount to the nearest pound (e.g if £100.50 then write in £111).

INSTRUCTION FOR SCRIPTER: CAN ANSWER WEEKLY, MONTHLY OR YEARLY NOT ALL THREE.

MY USUAL GROSS WEEKLY PAY IS: £ INSERT

PERMISSABLE RANGE: MIN £50. MAX £5000.

OR

MY USUAL GROSS MONTHLY PAY IS: £ INSERT

PERMISSABLE RANGE: MIN £50. MAX £20,000

OR

MY USUAL GROSS YEARLY PAY IS: £ INSERT

PERMISSABLE RANGE: MIN £50. MAX £200,000

-98. I prefer not to say

IF PREFER NOT TO SAY AT Q11A

Q11b. **Which broad band does your gross salary for your current main job (i.e. your total pay before deductions for tax, National Insurance and pension contributions) fall into? Please include overtime, bonuses, commission, and tips.**

BANDS

	Per week	Per month	Per year
1	Less than £120	Up to £518	Up to £6,200
2	£120 - £149	£519 - £651	£6,201 - £7,820
3	£150 - £182	£652 - £791	£7,821- £9,499
4	£183 - £221	£792 - £958	£9,500 - £11,499

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

5	£222 - £259	£959 - £1,124	£11,500 - £13,499
6	£260 - £298	£1,125 - £1,291	£13,500 - £15,499
7	£299 - £336	£1,292 - £1,458	£15,500 - £17,499
8	£337 - £480	£1,459 - £2,083	£17,500 - £24,999
9	£481 - £576	£2,084 - £2,499	£25,000 - £29,999
10	£577 - £769	£2,500 - £3,333	£30,000 - £39,999
11	£770 - £961	£3,334 - £4,166	£40,000 - £49,999
12	£962 - £1,442	£4,167 - £6,249	£50,000 - £74,999
13	£1,443 - £1,923	£6,250 - £8,333	£75,000 - £99,999
14	£1,924 or more	£8,334 or more	£100,000 or more

1. Don't know
2. Prefer not to say

Worker health

ASK ALL

We would now like to ask you some questions about your health.

Q13 (Q9A). How is your health in general, would you say your health is...?

Please think about both your physical and mental health.

Please select one answer only

1. Very good
2. Good
3. Fair
4. Bad
5. Very bad

-98. I prefer not to say

Q14 (Q9). Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more? Please include any intermittent conditions or illnesses, lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more.

Please select one answer only

1. Yes
2. No (GO TO Q20)

-98. I prefer not to say (GO TO Q20)

ASK IF YES AT Q14 (Q14 CODE 1)

Q15 (Q9a). Do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry-out day-to-day activities?

Please select one answer only

1. Yes, a lot
2. Yes, a little
3. Not at all

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

-98. I prefer not to say

ASK IF HAVE A HEALTH CONDITION OR DISABILITY (Q14 CODE 1), ELSE SKIP TO Q20

Q16 (Q10). What type of health condition, illness, injury or disability do you have? If you have more than one health condition, please let us know about the main one that affects your day-to-day activities the most.

Please select one answer only

1. Mental health conditions (e.g. stress, anxiety, depression, concentration or memory problems, schizophrenia or psychosis)
2. Learning or socialisation difficulties (e.g. learning difficulties including dyslexia, Asperger's syndrome or autism)
3. Conditions related to bones or joints including injury and arthritis/rheumatism (e.g. problems with back, necks, shoulders, arms, hands, etc or other physical difficulties including recovering from surgery)
4. Long-term conditions that affect major organs (e.g. cancer, heart or circulatory problems – high blood pressure, heart attacks, strokes, chest or breathing problems – asthma, emphysema, problems with stomach. Liver, bowel, digestive system, kidneys bladder etc, skin conditions or allergies, nervous system conditions – MS, Parkinsons)
5. Diabetes
6. Epilepsy
7. Migraine
8. Difficulty in seeing
9. Difficulty in hearing
10. Other dizziness or balance problems
11. Problems due to alcohol dependency
12. Problems due to drug dependency
13. Other health problem or disability

-98. Prefer not to say

ASK IF YES AT Q14 (Q14 CODE 1)

Q17 (Q11).Thinking about your health conditions, illnesses or disabilities that have lasted or are expected to last for 12 months or more. To what extent do they affect the amount or type of work you can do in your current job?

Please select one answer only

1. A great deal
2. To some extent
3. Not very much
4. Not at all

-98. Don't know

ASK IF HAVE A HEALTH CONDITION OR DISABILITY (Q14 CODE 1)

Q18. Do you feel that any of your health conditions, illnesses or disabilities would put you at high risk of severe consequences if you caught COVID-19?

Please select one answer only

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

-98. Prefer not to say

ASK IF HAVE A HEALTH CONDITION OR DISABILITY (Q14 CODE 1)

Q19. In the past 12 months, have you been advised/told to shield? *ADD INFORMATION ICON: People who were at high risk (clinically extremely vulnerable) from coronavirus, were advised by the Government, NHS or their GP to take extra steps to protect themselves against coronavirus. These people were advised to stay at home and shield.

1. Yes
2. No

-98. Prefer not to say

ASK ALL

Q20. In the past 12 months were there any occasions when you went to work or worked (including working from home) when you didn't feel well enough to work?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

-98. Prefer not to say

IF YES AT Q20 (Q20 CODE 1)

Q20a. On how many occasions did you go to work or worked (including working from home) when you did not feel well enough to work?

If you are unsure of the exact number of days please provide your best estimate

1. 1 occasion
2. 2-3 occasions
3. 4-5 occasions
4. More than 5 occasions
5. Don't know

-98. Prefer not to say

Sickness absence and sick pay

We would now like to ask you some questions about any periods of sickness absence you've experienced over the past 12 months, that is between April 2020 and now.

ASK ALL

Q21 (Q12). In the past 12 months, have you taken any time off work due to self-isolation, illness, a health condition, an injury or a disability?

Please select all that apply

ROTATE CODES 1 TO 7 (KEEP CODES 1 TO 4 TOGETHER)

1. Yes – for COVID-19 – unconfirmed case (COVID test not taken)
2. Yes - for COVID-19 – confirmed case (had a positive COVID test)
3. Yes – self isolation (e.g you were asked/required to stay at home)
4. Yes – an illness other than COVID-19 e.g. cold, flu, migraines
5. Yes - a long-term health condition e.g. cancer, diabetes
6. Yes - an injury
7. Yes - a disability
8. No - I have not taken time off work for any of these reasons- GO TO Q39 if employee/ Q42 if self employed

-98. Can't remember – GO TO Q39 if employee/ Q42 if self employed

IF HAD CORONAVIRUS CODES 1 OR 2 AT Q21

Q22 Do you currently have post-COVID-19 syndrome or 'long COVID'?

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

By post-COVID-19 syndrome or 'long COVID' we mean signs and symptoms that develop during or following an infection consistent with COVID-19 which continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis.

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

-98. Prefer not to say

ASK IF EMPLOYEE HAD COVID-19 OR HAD TO SELF ISOLATE (QS1 CODES 1 TO 3 AND Q21 CODE1, 2 or 3)

Q23 (Q21). Were you paid any of these types of sick pay during the period that you were self-isolating/had COVID-19? [ADD INFO ICON: If you had more than one sickness absence period due to self-isolation, please think about your longest continuous period or your most recent if you've had periods of the same duration].

Please select one answer only

1. Statutory Sick Pay [Statutory Sick Pay paid at a rate of £95.85 per week since the 6th April 2020]
2. Occupational/ Company Sick Pay including being paid your regular salary when sick [Occupational/ Company Sick Pay is more than Statutory Sick Pay].
3. Statutory Sick Pay some of the time and Occupational/ Company Sick Pay some of the time
4. Neither Statutory or Occupational/ Company Sick Pay

-98. Don't know

LOGIC CHECK. IF CODE DON'T KNOW. If you would be paid your regular salary when sick – please select Occupational/Company Sick Pay

ASK IF DIDN'T RECEIVE SSP OR OSP (CODE 4 AT Q23)

Q24 (Q21A) What was the main reason(s) you did not receive either Statutory or Occupational/Company Sick Pay during the period you were self-isolating? [ADD INFO ICON: If you had more than one sickness absence period due to self-isolation, please think about your longest continuous period or your most recent if you've had periods of the same duration].

Please select all that apply.

ROTATE LIST

1. I did not tell my employer I had to self-isolate
2. I took annual leave and got paid for that instead
3. I did not want to put my employer out
4. I did not want to put my job at risk
5. My self-isolation period was not long enough for me to receive sick pay
6. I was told I was not entitled to sick pay
7. Other (please write in)

-98 Don't know/prefer not to say

Fit note

ASK IF EMPLOYEE AND HAD SICKNESS ABSENCE (QS1 CODE 1 OR 2 OR 3 AND Q21 CODES 1 TO 7)

Q25 (Q22). What evidence of sickness, if any, are you currently required to provide to your employer during periods of sickness absence (including periods of self-isolation)?

Please select all that apply.

1. Fit Note required after Day 7 of sickness absence
2. Fit Note required earlier than Day 7 of sickness absence
3. Isolation note required
4. Fit note not required but other medical evidence required (SPECIFY)

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

5. No fit note required and no other medical evidence required (exclusive)

-98. Don't know

ASK IF SAID YES AT Q21 (CODES 1 TO 7 AT Q21)

Q26 (Q14). In the past 12 months, approximately on how many occasions did you have a sickness absence (of 1 day or more). . .

ENTER NUMBER OF OCCASIONS (MIN=1, MAX = 24)

CAN'T REMEMBER – GO TO Q16

IF Q26=1 OCCASION

Q27 (Q15a) SICK ON ONE OCCASION IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS

ASK IF Q26=1 OCCASION: **You said you had one sickness absence in the past 12 months.**

Approximately how many working days did the sickness absence last?

- ENTER NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS (MIN = 1. MAX 240 DAYS) – THEN GO TO Q29
- Can't remember: ASK – **Can you provide an estimate in weeks?** OPEN BOX TO ENTER – THEN GO TO Q29.

ASK IF SICK ON MORE THAN THREE OCCASION IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS (Q26 > 3)

Q27A

IF Q26>3 OCCASION: **You said you had [INSERT RESPONSE AT Q26] sickness absence in the past 12 months. Approximately, how many working days did they last in total? PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR BEST ESTIMATE.**

ENTER NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS (MIN = 1. MAX 240 DAYS) – THEN GO TO Q28A

999. Don't know

If don't know – **Can you provide an estimate in weeks?**

OPEN BOX TO ENTER – THEN GO TO Q28A.

Q28A (Q15d) SICK ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION IN PAST 12 MONTHS

IF Q26>1 OCCASION: **You said you had [INSERT RESPONSE AT Q26] sickness absence in the past 12 months. Thinking about these absences in order of when they happened, how many working days did each of them last? ADD IF Q26>3 OCCASSIONS: Please tell us about the three longest periods of sickness absence.**

If you have an irregular work pattern, please give us a best estimate of the number of days you would have worked during your period of sickness absence

LOGIC CHECK IF Q26> 3 OCCASION: total for 1st, 2nd and 3rd MUST BE LESS THAN TOTAL AT Qnew28A

(i): Please check the number of days you have entered below. You said you have had [insert Qnew28A (i) days] sickness absence in total on the past 12 months.

FIRST SICKNESS ABSENCE:

ENTER NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS (MIN = 1. MAX 240 DAYS)

- Can't remember: ASK – **Can you provide an estimate in weeks?** OPEN BOX TO ENTER.

SECOND SICKNESS ABSENCE

ENTER NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS (MIN = 1. MAX 240 DAYS)

- Can't remember: ASK – **Can you provide an estimate in weeks?** OPEN BOX TO ENTER.

IF Q26>2 OCCASIONS

THIRD SICKNESS ABSENCE

ENTER NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS (MIN = 1. MAX 240 DAYS)

- Can't remember: ASK – **Can you provide an estimate in weeks?** OPEN BOX TO ENTER.

Q28b (Q15b) SICK ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION IN PAST 12 MONTHS AND UNABLE TO GIVE BREAKDOWN

IF UNABLE TO ANSWER ANYTHING AT Q28a (i) – IE. CAN'T REMEMBER FOR **ALL AND** DON'T PROVIDE A NUMBER IN WEEKS FOR **ALL**, ASK:

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Are you able to provide an estimate of the number of working days or weeks your **longest** period of sickness absence last, during the past 12 months?

ENTER NUMBER OF WORKING DAYS (MIN = 1. MAX 240 DAYS)

ENTER NUMBER OF WORKING WEEKS (MIN 1. MAX 52)

Can't remember

End of Q28

ASK IF EMPLOYEE AND HAVE BEEN SICK IN PAST 12 MONTHS (QS1 CODE 1, 2 OR 3) AND (Q21 CODE 4 to 7 – ALLOW CODES 1 TO 3 IF MULTICODED WITH CODES 4 TO 7)

Q29 (Q16). Thinking about your **longest** continuous spell of sickness absence over the past 12 months, {if code 1 to 3 at Q21: **excluding** any sickness absences taken due to self-isolating/COVID-19}, which of these types of sick pay did you receive, if any? [ADD INFO ICON: If you've had spells of the same length then please consider your most recent]

Please select one answer only

1. Statutory Sick Pay [Statutory Sick Pay paid at a rate of £95.85 per week since the 6th April 2020]
2. Occupational/ Company Sick Pay including being paid your regular salary when sick [Occupational/ Company Sick Pay is more than Statutory Sick Pay].
3. Statutory Sick Pay some of the time and Occupational/ Company Sick Pay some of the time
4. Neither Statutory or Occupational/ Company Sick Pay

-98. Don't know

LOGIC CHECK. IF CODE DON'T KNOW. If you were paid your regular salary when sick – please select Occupational/Company Sick Pay

IF HAD MORE THAN ONE SICKNESS ABSENCE (Q26 >1) AND RECEIVED STATUTORY SICK PAY CODES (Q29 CODES 1 OR 3 OR Q21 CODES 1 TO 3 ONLY AND Q23 CODES 1 OR 3)

Q30 (Q15f) You said you had {insert number from Q26} sickness absences in the past 12 months. Did any of your absences occur within 8 weeks of each other?"

Please select one answer only

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't know

-98. Prefer not to say

ASK IF DIDN'T RECEIVE SSP OR OSP (CODE 4 AT Q29)

Q31 (Q16a) What was the **main** reason(s) you did not receive either Statutory or Occupational/Company Sick Pay during your sickness absence, { if code 1 to 3 at Q21: **that was not related to COVID-19/self-isolation**}?

[ADD INFO ICON: If you had more than one sickness absence, {if code 1 to 3 at Q21: **that was not related to COVID-19/self-isolation**}, please think about your **longest** continuous period over the past 12 months or your most recent if you've had periods of the same duration].

Please select all that apply

1. I did not tell my employer I was sick
2. I took annual leave and got paid for that instead
3. I did not want to put my employer out
4. I did not want to put my job at risk
5. I was not off work sick for long enough to qualify for sick pay
6. I was told I was not entitled to sick pay
7. Other (please write in)
8. Don't know

-98. Prefer not to say

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

ASK IF NOT ENTITLED TO SICK PAY (CODE 6/YES AT Q31)

Q32. Why were you told you were not entitled to sick pay?

Please select all that apply

1. I did not provide a sick note in time
2. I had used up all the paid sick days I was entitled to
3. I work variable or part time hours
4. My earnings were too low
5. I was involved in a trade dispute
6. I was working outside of the country?
7. I was not entitled for another reason
8. Don't know

-98. Prefer not to say

ASK ALL WHO RECEIVE SSP (QS2 CODE 1 OR 3 OR Q23 1 OR 3 OR Q29 1 OR 3)

Q33. To what extent are you aware that your employer is not required to pay statutory sick pay (SSP) until the fourth working day of the first sickness absence taken within an eight week period.

Please select one answer only

1. Yes – fully aware
2. Yes – aware to some extent
3. No – not aware
4. Don't know
5. Prefer not to say

ASK ALL WHO RECEIVE SSP AND ARE AWARE OF THE WAITING PERIOD (QS2 CODE 1 OR 3, OR Q23 1 OR 3 OR Q29 1 OR 3 AND Q33 CODES 1 OR 2)

Q34. To what extent are you aware that if your first sickness absence is four or more days, for any subsequent sickness absences you take within an 8 week period of the original sickness absence you will receive statutory sick pay (SSP) from the first day you are off work.

Please select one answer only

1. Yes – fully aware
2. Yes – aware to some extent
3. No – not aware
4. Don't know
5. Prefer not to say

ASK IF RECEIVED OSP (Q29 CODE 2 OR 3) AND ABLE TO ANSWER Q28

Q35. (Q17). Thinking about your longest continuous spell of sickness absence over the past 12 months, { if code 1 to 3 at Q21: that was not related to COVID-19/self-isolation. Did you receive Occupational/ Company Sick Pay for the full number of days that you were off work? [ADD INFO ICON: If you've had spells of the same length then please consider your most recent]

Please select one answer only

1. Yes for the full period
2. No – How many days were you paid?

-98. Don't know

ASK IF RECEIVED OSP (Q29 CODE 2 OR 3) AND ABLE TO ANSWER Q28

Q36 (Q18). How much Occupational/ Company Sick Pay did you receive? [ADD INFO ICON: If you had more than one sickness absence, { if code 1 to 3 at Q21: that was not related to COVID-19/self-isolation, please think about your longest continuous period or your most recent if you've had periods of the same duration].

Please select one answer only

1. A percentage of my salary – a fixed percentage over the course of the absence
2. A percentage of my salary – but the percentage changed over the course of the absence

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

3. I was paid a fixed sum (per day) – ENTER AMOUNT £ per day to the nearest pound (PERMISSABLE RANGE MIN=£10. MAX £999)

-98. Can't remember

IF CODE 1 OR 2 AT Q36

Q37 (Q18b) **Please enter the {IF CODE 2 AT Q18: initial} percentage of your salary you received**

IF CODE 2 ADD TEXT:

Enter % (PERMISSABLE RANGE 1-100. PLEASE MAKE THE BOX BIGGER SO A MAX OF 3 DIGITS MAY BE SEEN).

-98. Can't remember

ASK IF EMPLOYEE AND HAVE BEEN SICK IN PAST 12 MONTHS AND IS CURRENTLY WORKING (QS1 CODE 1, 2 OR 3) AND (Q21 CODES 1 TO 7) AND (Q1a = 1)

Employees who have not had any sickness absence in past 12 months

ASK IF EMPLOYEE AND HAVE NOT HAD ANY SICKNESS ABSENCE IN PAST 12 MONTHS BUT WOULD RECEIVE OSP (QS1 CODE 1, 2 OR 3) AND (Q21 CODE 8 OR CAN'T REMEMBER) AND (QS2 CODE 2 OR 3)

Q39 (Q25). **You previously said that you would receive Occupational/ Company Sick Pay, if you had a sickness absence from your main place of work. How much Occupational/ Company Sick Pay would you receive if you were sick?**

Please select one answer only

1. A percentage of my salary – a fixed percentage over the course of the absence
2. A percentage of my salary – but the percentage changed over the course of the absence
3. A fixed sum (per day)– ENTER AMOUNT £ (per day)
4. Don't know
5. Prefer not to say

IF CODE 1 OR 2 AT Q39

Q39a (Q26A) **Please enter the {IF CODE 2 AT Q39: initial} percentage of your salary you would receive**

Enter %

-98. Don't know

Sickness absences for self employed

ASK IF SELF-EMPLOYED AND HAD SICKNESS ABSENCE IN PAST 12 MONTHS (QS1 CODE 4 AND Q21 CODES 1 TO 7)

Q40. (Q27). **Thinking about your longest continuous spell of sickness absence over the past 12 months, what income did you receive during your absence? [ADD INFO ICON: If you've had spells of the same length then please consider your most recent]**

Please select all that apply (CODES 4 AND -98. SINGLE CODE)

1. Claimed income via private self-employment income protection insurance
2. Claimed welfare benefit
3. Other (please specify)
4. Didn't receive an income

-98. Can't remember

ASK IF SELF-EMPLOYED AND HAD SICKNESS ABSENCE IN PAST 12 MONTHS AND IS CURRENTLY WORKING (QS1 CODE 4 AND Q21 CODES 1 TO 7 AND Q1a = 1)

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Q41 Thinking about your longest spell of sickness absence over the past 12 months, which if any, of the following reasons were factors in your decision to return to work?

Please select all that apply

ROTATE LIST

1. I had recovered and felt ready to go back to work
2. I was worried about losing my job/business
3. I had to go back for financial reasons
4. I knew my work would not have been picked up by anyone else
5. It was better for my mental/physical health
6. My Fit Note from the GP came to end and I didn't discuss renewing it with the GP
7. My Fit Note from GP said I was fit to return to work
8. I put adjustments in place at work
9. Other (specify)
10. Don't know

ASK IF SELF-EMPLOYED AND HAVE NOT HAD SICKNESS ABSENCE IN PAST 12 MONTHS (QS1 CODE 4 AND Q21 CODE 8 OR CAN'T REMEMBER)

Q42 (Q28). What type of income, if any, would you receive during a period of sickness absence from your self-employed work?

Please select all that apply (CODES 4 -5 SINGLE CODE)

1. Would claim income via private self-employment income protection insurance
 2. Would claim welfare benefits
 3. Other (please specify)
 4. Wouldn't receive an income
- 98. Don't know

Sickness absences – ask all

ASK ALL

Q43 (Q29). Thinking about the time you have been in your current main job, have you claimed an out of work benefit because you had taken a sickness absence from work of 4 weeks or more?

Please select one answer only

1. Yes – Please specify the name of the benefit
 2. No
- 98. Don't know

ASK ALL

Q44 (Q30). Which, if any, of these financial support, have you (or could you) draw on to support yourself during a sickness absence?

Please tick all that apply

- a) For a short term sickness absence (an absence of less than 4 weeks)
 - b) For a long-term sickness absence (an absence of 4 or more weeks)
1. Savings
 2. Partner's earnings
 3. Friends/ family
 4. Loans and credit (including credit cards)
 5. Benefits/state support e.g. universal credit
 6. None of these options have been or would be available to me (exclusive)
 7. I wouldn't need to draw on additional financial support (exclusive)
- 98. Don't know

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Adjustments for self-employed people with a long-term health condition who are currently working

ASK IF SELF-EMPLOYED AND CURRENTLY WORKING AND HAVE A HEALTH CONDITION (QS1 CODE 4) AND (Q1A CODE 1) AND (Q14 CODE 1)

Q45. (Q36). **Have you done any of the following to help manage your health condition(s) whilst working?**

Please tick all that apply (CODES 9 & 10 ARE SINGLECODE)

1. Reduced your working hours
 2. Changed your working hours
 3. Adjusted the nature of your work
 4. Started working from home
 5. Brought in additional resources i.e. staff, sub-contracted work
 6. Bought equipment to help (such as different chairs or desks, building modifications, or other specialised equipment)
 7. Sought specialist advice
 8. Other (please specify)
 9. I haven't put any adjustments in place though it would help
 10. I haven't put any adjustments in place because I don't need to
- 98 Prefer not to say

ASK IF MADE ADJUSTMENTS (Q45 CODE 1 TO 8)

Q46. (Q37). **When did you decide to put [this/these] adjustments in place?**

Please select one answer only

1. As soon as you became self-employed
 2. After your condition started to affect your work
 3. After you took time off work because of your health condition
 4. When a change was recommended by your GP, doctor or consultant
 5. When a change was recommended by Occupational Health services
- 98. Can't remember

Return to work for employed people with a long-term sickness absence in the past 12 months

ASK IF EMPLOYEE AND HAD A LTSA (QS1 CODE 1, 2 OR 3) AND (QS3=1) AND WERE EITHER CURRENTLY WORKING OR OFF SICK AT Q1 (Q1 CODE 1 OR 2).

You mentioned that you had been off work for a period of more than four weeks in the past 12 months. Please answer the following questions about the longest continuous period of sick leave in the past 12 months, or the most recent if you've had absences of the same duration.

ASK IF EMPLOYEE AND HAD A LTSA (QS1 CODE 1, 2 or 3) AND (QS3=1) AND WERE EITHER CURRENTLY WORKING OR OFF SICK AT Q1 (Q1 CODE 1 OR 2).

Q47. {If working: Q1 code1: **Did**} **[IF sick Q1 code 2: Will} you have a meeting with your employer to discuss your return to work whilst you {were/are} off work?**

Please select one answer only

1. Yes
 2. No
- 98. Can't remember

ASK IF EMPLOYEE AND HAD A LTSA (QS1 CODE 1, 2 or 3) AND (QS3=1) AND WERE EITHER CURRENTLY WORKING OR OFF SICK AT Q1 (Q1 CODE 1 OR 2).

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Q48 (Q38c). {If working (Q1A CODE 1): **Following your long-term sickness absence did you have a phased return to work (returning to full duties and hours at work gradually, over a defined time period)** [If currently off sick (Q1A CODE 2): **Has your employer discussed a phased return to work (returning to full duties and hours at work gradually, over a defined time period) to help you return to work?**}

Please select one answer only

1. Yes
2. No
- 98. Can't remember

ASK IF NO AT Q48 (CODE 2)

Q49 (Q.38d). Would a phased return to work {if currently working (Q1 CODE 1): **have helped/if currently sick (Q1 CODE 2): help**} you to return to work more quickly from your long-term sickness absence?

Please select one answer only

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure
- 98. Can't remember

ASK IF HAD A PHASED RETURN TO WORK (Q49 CODE 1)

Q50 (Q39). **Did your phased return to work help you to return to work quicker than otherwise?**

Please select one answer only

1. Yes
2. No
- 98. Don't know

Return to work for self-employed people with a long-term sickness absence in the past 12 months

ASK IF SELF EMPLOYED AND HAD A LTSA (QS1 CODE 4 AND QS3=1) AND WERE EITHER CURRENTLY WORKING OR OFF SICK AT Q1 (Q1 CODE 1 OR 2).

You mentioned that you had been off work for a period of more than four weeks in the past 12 months. Please answer the following questions about the longest continuous period of sick leave in the past 12 months, or the most recent if you've had absences of the same duration.

ASK IF SELF EMPLOYED AND HAD A LTSA (QS1 CODE 4 AND QS3=1) AND WERE EITHER CURRENTLY WORKING OR OFF SICK AT Q1 (Q1 CODE 1 OR 2).

Q51 (Q40a). (If working Q1 CODE 1: **Did/** off sick Q1 CODE 2: **Will**) you put any of the following workplace adjustments in place to help with your return to work?

Please tick all that apply

ROTATE CODES 1-8

1. Phased return to work (returning to full duties and hours at work gradually, over a defined time period)
2. Reduced your working hours
3. Changed your working hours
4. Adjusted the nature of your work
5. Started working from home
6. Brought in additional resources
7. Bought equipment to help (such as different chairs or desks, building modifications, or other specialised equipment)
8. Sought specialist advice
9. Other (specify)
10. None

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

-998 Don't know

ASK IF NO ADJUSTMENT (Q51 CODE 10)

Q52 (Q40b). **Which, if any, of the following things would help you to return to work following your long-term sickness absence?**

Please tick all that apply

ROTATE CODES 1-8

1. Phased return to work (returning to full duties and hours at work gradually, over a defined time period)
2. Reduced your working hours
3. Changed your working hours
4. Adjusted the nature of your work
5. Started working from home
6. Brought in additional resources
7. Bought equipment to help (such as different chairs or desks, building modifications, or other specialised equipment)
8. Sought specialist advice
9. Other (specify)
10. None

-998 Don't know

ASK IF MADE ADJUSTMENT (Q52 CODES 1 TO 9)

Q53 (Q41). **Did the adjustments you put in place help you to return to work quicker than otherwise?**

Please select one answer only

1. Yes
2. No

-98. Don't know

ASK ALL EMPLOYEES (QS1 CODES 1, 2 OR 3)

Q54 (Q42). **Does your employer have written guidelines or policies on sickness absence management?**

Please select one answer only

1. Yes
2. No

-98. Don't know

IF YES,

Please write in your name.

First Name (OPEN ENDED BOX, MAX 20 CHARACTERS)

Surname (OPEN ENDED BOX, MAX 20 CHARACTERS)

Please write in your email (SCRIPTER – PLEASE VALIDATE IT CONTAIN @ ETC]

Please write in your telephone number (MIN 11 MAX 11 DIGITS)

CLOSE SURVEY

Demographics available from panel data

Social Grade

Household income

Presence of children

Ethnicity

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

Appendix C: Topic guide

Table C.1 shows the topic guide used for all in-depth qualitative interviews.

Table C.1: Topic guide

1. Introduction	2-3 mins
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank participant for taking part. Introduce self, and explain nature of interview: informal conversation; gather all opinions; all opinions valid. Interviews should take around 45 minutes. • Introduce research and topic –DWP has commissioned Ipsos MORI to conduct research with employees who have had a sickness absence to understand their experiences. • Role of Ipsos MORI – Independent research organisation (i.e. independent of government), we adhere to the MRS Code of Conduct. • Confidentiality – reassure all responses anonymous and that identifiable information about them will not be passed on to anyone, including back to DWP or any other government department. • Consent – check that they are happy to take part in the interview and understand their participation is voluntary (they can withdraw at any time). • Ask for permission to digitally record – transcribe for quotes, not detailed attribution. Only non-identifiable information will be passed back to DWP. • Any questions before we begin? 	<p><i>Orientates interviewee, prepares them to take part in the interview.</i></p> <p><i>Outlines the ‘rules’ of the interview (including those we are required to tell them about under MRS and GDPR guidelines).</i></p>
2. Context	5 mins
<p>To start with, can you tell me a bit about yourself?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is your current job? How long have you been doing it for, have you always been employed in same line of work? • PROBE: job role (e.g. manual, office based, mixed), type of contract (permanent/casual/temporary) and sector and size of the employer • PROBE: any change to their job role as a result of COVID-19 (e.g. have they been furloughed/had their hours or benefits reduced; have they been working from home or not)? 	<p><i>Warms up participant and provides contextual background information about the participant and their employer.</i></p>
3. General Health	5 mins
<p>Now I’d like to find out a bit about your general health.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe your general health? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If answered yes at survey q14/q15 and not spontaneously mentioned: You mentioned in the survey you had a condition or illness that you expect to last 12 months or more [if 	<p><i>Exploring the relationship between work and health</i></p>

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

appropriate: which affects your ability to carry out day to day activities], can you tell me about this?

- Do you consider yourself to be disabled?
- Does working have any impact on your physical [if appropriate: including your disability] and/or mental health? In what ways?
 - Probe positive impact: sense of routine, accomplishment, purpose
 - Probe negative impact: stress, burnout, pain from office work/discomfort from manual work
- In your opinion, whose responsibility is it to ensure workers are healthy (e.g. self, employer, government, all three parties)?
- Have you been personally affected by COVID-19 (by this we mean tested positive for and/or personally taken illness absence/self-isolated from work because of COVID-19)?
 - What has been the impact of this? Were the effects/impact of COVID-19 short term or longer/still on-going?
 - **For those affected by longer/on-going COVID related illness:** How does your health condition affect your day-to-day activities including your current job? Does your employer understand what long COVID is and how it affects you? Have they have been flexible around absences and adjustments etc.? In what ways?
- **If have long-term health condition (q14):** In the survey you mentioned that you have a long-term health condition (follow below probes/questions)
- **Everyone else:** Do you have any long-term health condition that affects your day-to-day activities including your current job? If yes, ask below:
 - Probe: when did your health condition first develop?
 - How does your health condition affect your day-to-day activities including your current job?
 - Is your employer aware of your health condition? How and when did they become aware – when interviewed for job, when you raised it with them?
 - If employer not aware – why have you not raised it with them? How has your employer not knowing affected your work and health?

Ask all:

- Did you consider/have you ever considered an employer's sick pay policy when deciding where to work? If so, what impact did this have?

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

- Has your health ever influenced your choice of job, role or employer?
If so, in what ways?
 - Probe for preferences for flexible working options if not raised spontaneously

4. Sickness absence and medical evidence

5-10 mins

Moderator note – Probe as appropriate throughout discussion to explore any experiences of encountering stress and/or anxiety as a result of being off sick and the impact, if any, of sick pay arrangements on this

This section explores employees experiences of sickness absence and use of medical evidence

I would now like to ask you some questions about sickness absence from work

Firstly, just thinking generally...

- Based on your experiences of both your current and previous employers, do you feel that mental health and physical health are treated equally when it comes to sick leave?
- Have there ever been any instances where you have taken annual leave for all, or part, of a period of sickness absence? If so, why?
- What factors do you tend to consider when deciding to return to work after a sickness absence?
 - Probe to explore how, if at all, this differs for **short** vs. **longer** sickness absences
 - Probe around the sickness absence being a **one-off** vs. a **series of absences**, and how, if at all, these different circumstances might lead to different decisions
- Have there ever been any instances where you have still worked whilst ill? If so, why?
 - Probe to explore the role, if any, of:
 - Physical vs. mental health conditions
 - Length of time already taken off / recurrent absences
 - Sick pay
- In your experience, what happens to your workload when you are off sick, does someone else tend to cover this? How does your employer manage this? Do you have to do anything?

Now thinking more specifically about any sickness absence you have had from work in the past 12 months...

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

In the survey you mentioned that you have been sick on [INSERT] number of occasions in the past year [ADD IF RELEVANT: including at least one time when you were off for more than four weeks].

- On these occasions, how did you inform your employer about your sickness absence? What evidence did you have to provide to your employer?
- What happened as the result of informing your employer? What support/measures did your employer put in place ahead of your return to work, if any?

Interviewer examples of changes that may have been made:

- A phased return to work
 - Altered hours
 - Amended duties
 - Workplace adaptations
- Probe to explore any ways in which the above measures helped/could have helped were they offered in these instances
 - Probe specifically around phased returns to work and the impact the respondent perceives these have on the likelihood to return to work?
 - Probe to explore what they would be paid during a phased return and if they would need to use annual leave to cover days/hours not worked
 - What other measures, if any, do you think would help employees like yourself come back to work after sickness absence?

5. Sick pay

5-10 minutes

Moderator note – Probe as appropriate throughout discussion to explore any experiences of encountering stress and/or anxiety as a result of being off sick and the impact, if any, of sick pay arrangements on this

You mentioned in the survey that you:

- Received {employee: statutory sick pay/occupational sick pay/mixture of the both (q16)}

This section explores employees' understanding of sick pay and the extent to which the amount and duration of sick pay affect their behaviours

- **Did not receive any statutory sick pay/occupational sick pay during your longest spell of sickness absence in the past 12 months. Can I check this is correct?**

For those that received SSP/OSP, use survey responses to prompt recall in terms of what they received, how much they received and how long they received it for.

- Explore the extent to which they understood how much they received **and from what sources**. How different was this to your usual income?
 - Probe to explore whether the respondent sought information on SSP & if they did, where from? Did it help them to understand their entitlement/rights?
- What do you think about the amount you received? What was the impact of this? Was it in line with your expectations?
- Were you aware of the waiting period for SSP? What impact did this have?
- For how long did you receive sick pay? (probe to explore the impact for anyone who anyone 'ran out' of eligibility)
- Did you draw on any other financial support during your sickness absence (e.g. using up annual leave, savings, loans, Universal Credit etc)?
- To what extent, if at all, did the **amount and duration** of sick pay you received influence your decision:
 - (i) to continue working even though you may not have felt fully recovered
 - (ii) on when to return to work?
- How would you describe how effective at you felt on your return to work (i.e. fully effective or not)?
 - If not fully, probe to explore the extent to which this was the case and the length of time this lasted for

For those that did not receive any sick pay (particularly those off for more than 4 days):

- Do you know why you did not receive any sick pay? How did you find out?
 - Probe to explore if it is because they are off for fewer than 4 days. Have they found they regularly take very short absences? (As a result of health condition?)

If don't know: have you tried to find out – who from? And with what result?

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

- What sources of income did you draw on instead (e.g. savings, loans, using up annual leave, claimed other benefits etc)?
- How, if at all, did not having any sick pay influence your decision
 - (i) to continue working even though you may not have felt fully recovered
 - (ii) on when to return to work?
- How would you describe how effective at you felt on your return to work (i.e. fully effective or not)?
 - If not fully, probe to explore the extent to which this was the case and the length of time this lasted for
- If not already covered, probe to explore the impact of **repeated absences** (on logistics, finances, etc.)

6. Managing health conditions in work (ask those who have a long-term health condition only)

10 mins

Moderator note – Probe as appropriate throughout discussion to explore any experiences of encountering stress and/or anxiety as a result of being off sick and the impact, if any, of sick pay arrangements on this

This section will focus on employees who have a long-term health condition that affects their current job **and** their employer is aware of their condition.

What, if any, support or adjustments has your employer provided to help you manage your health condition at work?

- PROBE: Have you had an assessment with Occupational Health and/or been referred to other specialists/health professionals? If no, why not?
- If yes: What advice did the health professional/specialist give to you and your employer? What advice were followed by you and your employer? For example:
 - **Phased return to work**
 - Reduce/change your hours
 - Adjust the nature of your work
 - Work more from home
 - Provide equipment – chairs, desks, modifications to buildings etc
 - Seek specialist advice
- And was this support effective/helpful?

This section explores how employees manage existing long-term health conditions at work and the support provided to them by their employer to enable them to remain in work

Use of OH is explored in this section.

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

- What would the impact be if you didn't have this support?
- Are there any things you asked for and didn't get?
- Are there any things you would like but don't know how to ask for or do you struggle to know what you might need?
-
- If not all of the advice given was followed:
 - Which was not followed by whom and why not? What if anything made it difficult/undesirable to follow the advice?

What was the impact of not following the advice / not getting support / not having all of the recommended adjustments on (i) your health and wellbeing; (ii) your sickness absence and (iii) your ability to do your job?

7. Return to work (ask those who have experienced a LTSA only)

10 mins

I'd now like to talk about your most recent long-term absence of 4+ weeks from work.

- Have you returned to work? How long were you off work?

If have returned to work:

- How was the decision made on your return to work (e.g. if you had a fit note, did your fit note expire? Or did a GP issue a new fit note which said you 'might be fit for work' with recommended adjustments? Or did you/your employer contribute to this decision?)
- How did you feel about coming back to work?
 - Probe: nervous, anxious, excited?
 - Was there any pressure to come back to work? Who from – employer, family, themselves?
 - Probe: financial pressure, concern for career prospects, encouraged by family
- Explore whether they returned earlier than the doctor/fit note advised?
- What conversations, if any, did you have with your employer about returning to work?
- Did you and your employer draw up a return-to-work plan? What was in the plan?
- Did you have a phased return to work?
 - Did your employer arrange for you to see a health or rehabilitation professional (e.g. OH) to assess and provide support for your return to work? If yes, what did they recommend?
 - What were you paid during the phased return, (i.e. normal full time salary, or no pay for the hours/days not worked, or were they expected to use annual leave for hours/days not worked?).

This section explores the effectiveness of the support received to enable employees to return to work

Use of OH is explored in this section

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

- If they were not paid or expected to use annual leave, it could be a reason why they didn't follow advice to take a phased return
- Did you/ your employer follow their advice completely? If yes, how useful was the advice given? If no, why did you/your employer not follow their advice to the full/at all? What advice was followed by you and your employer? For example:
 - Reduce/change your hours
 - Adjust the nature of your work
 - Work more from home
 - Provide equipment – chairs, desks, modifications to buildings etc
 - Seek specialist advice
- Are you happy with what was put in place?
- Did you and your employer have any follow-up conversations/ongoing support once you had returned to work?

- If not all of the advice given was followed: which were not followed by whom and why? What were the impact of not following the advice / not getting support / not having all of the recommended adjustments on (i) your health and wellbeing; (ii) your sickness absence and (iii) your ability to do your job?

- Did you take sick leave again, fairly soon after returning to work? If so, what was the reason behind this?

- **If not already covered** - what other measures, if any, do you think would help employees like yourself come back to work after sickness absence?
 - Probe specifically around phased returns to work and the impact the respondent perceives these have on the likelihood to return to work?
 - Probe to explore what they would be paid during a phased return and if they would need to use annual leave to cover days/hours not worked

If have not returned to work

- Do you know when you will be returning to work?
 - What are the most influential factors in deciding when you return to work e.g. financial pressure, concern for career prospects, encouraged by family

Employee research Phase 2: sickness absence and return to work

- What conversations, if any, are you having with your employer about returning to work?
- Have you and your employer drawn up a return-to-work plan? If not so far, will they? What is in the plan?
- Will/has your employer arrange(d) for you to see a health or rehabilitation professional (e.g. OH) to assess and provide support for your return to work? If yes, have you had this appointment? If yes: what did they recommend? What advice was given? For example:
 - Reduce/change your hours
 - Adjust the nature of your work
 - Work more from home
 - Provide equipment – chairs, desks, modifications to buildings etc
 - Seek specialist advice
- What did your employer think about the recommendations given?
- **If not already covered** - what other measures, if any, do you think would help employees like yourself come back to work after sickness absence?
 - Probe specifically around phased returns to work and the impact the respondent perceives these have on the likelihood to return to work?
 - Probe to explore what they would be paid during a phased return and if they would need to use annual leave to cover days/hours not worked

8. Summing up	2-3 mins
<p>We are coming to the end of the interview, but I would just like to ask if there anything else you would like to mention that we haven't had the opportunity to discuss?</p> <p><i>Thank participant for their time and reiterate confidentiality. As discussed on the phone with our recruiter, we will be sending them a £30 BACS payment from Ipsos MORI, as a thank you for their time and contribution to the research.</i></p> <p><i>Explain next steps for the research and close.</i></p>	<p><i>Brings the conversation to a close, and allows participants time to mention anything that has not already been covered.</i></p>