

ABSENCE BENCHMARK 2025



MAKEuk **INSIGHT:**

The rate of sickness absence in manufacturing fell significantly in 2024.

For the first time in a decade, the overall rate of sickness absence stood at below 1%, though this was marginally higher for manual workers than non-manual, for the former it was 0.9% and the latter 0.46%.

2023 had seen an alarming rise in the number of working days lost to sickness, but these numbers have also declined drastically. Compared to an average 4.7 days lost to sickness in the previous year, in 2024 this fell to 2.06. This appears to be largely accounted for by a drop in both short-term and long-term absences caused by physical ill health; the proportion of absences related to mental ill health have stayed almost the same, with a small rise in work-related stress.

It is notable that the number of manufacturers reporting that they increased their investment in workforce health and wellbeing rose substantially in 2024. Compared with less than half of employers in the sector who said they had increased health and wellbeing spending in 2023, more than three quarters invested more in 2024 and note improved productivity and retention as a result.

Improving health and wellbeing support is high on the Government's agenda for 2025, with plans to 'Get Britain Working' and reforms to Statutory Sick Pay on the horizon. Views on the latter are mixed among manufacturers, with some concerns over the proposed removal of three-day waiting period and lower earnings limit potentially leading to higher absence rates, while others believe there may reduced long-term absence and presenteeism.

For SMEs in particular, the high financial cost of this policy - expected to be over £1 billion across the economy - is a concern and Make UK has called for additional support from the Government for these businesses to mitigate the impact.



What Happened in 2024?

THE HEADLINES

THE AVERAGE
NUMBER OF DAYS
**LOST TO
SICKNESS
ABSENCE**
(INCLUDING COVID)
IN 2024 WAS

1.6 

EXCLUDING COVID
THE AVERAGE
NUMBER OF DAYS
**LOST TO
SICKNESS**
FALLS TO



1.3

THE SICKNESS
ABSENCE RATE FOR
MANUFACTURING
INCLUDING COVID
RELATED SICKNESS
WAS

0.7%

EXCLUDING COVID
RELATED ABSENCE
**THE SICKNESS
ABSENCE RATE**
WAS

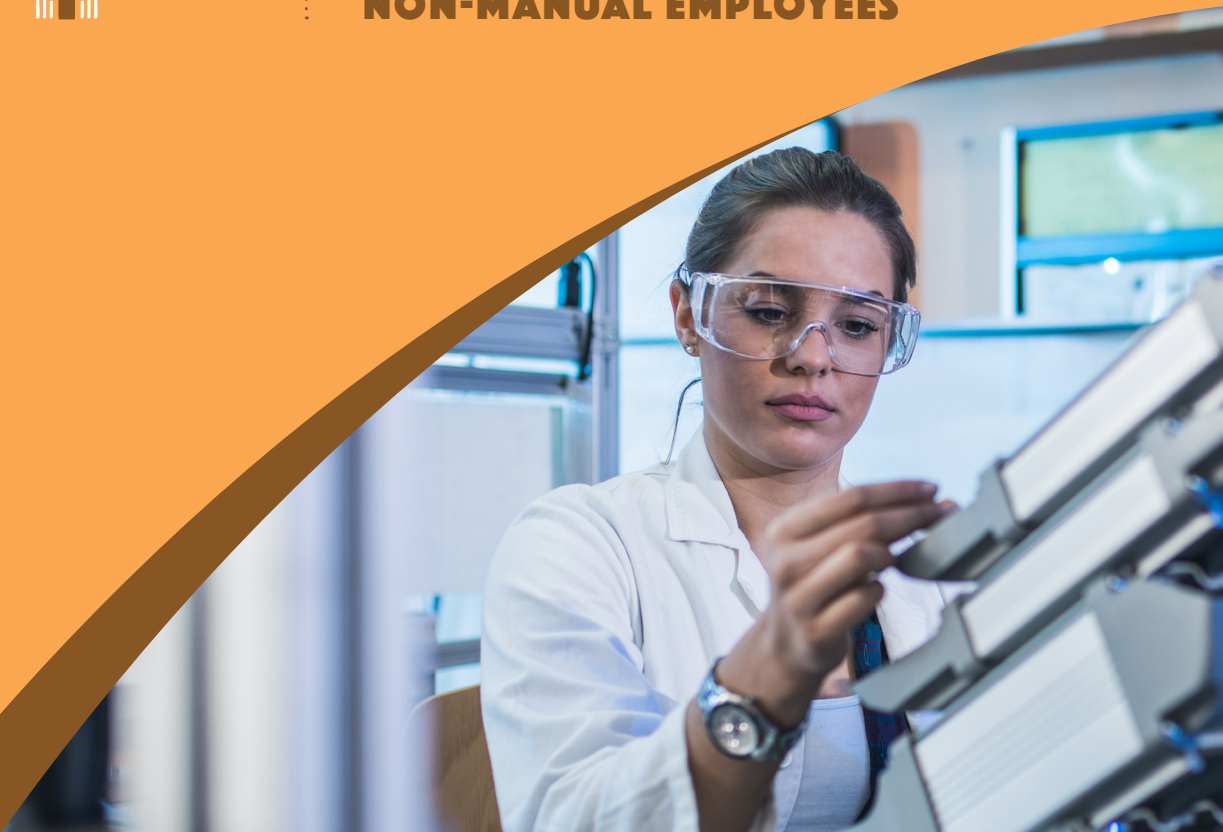
0.58%

DAYS LOST TO
SICKNESS ABSENCE
(INCLUDING COVID RELATED)
FOR MANUAL EMPLOYEES
WAS

2.1

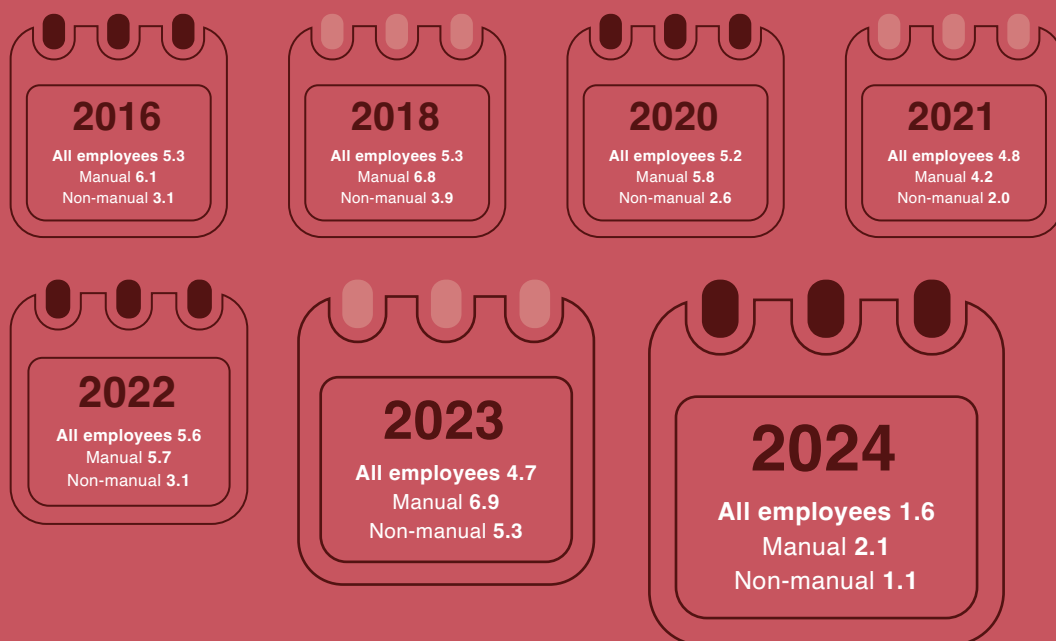


THIS **DROPS TO**
1.1 DAYS FOR
NON-MANUAL EMPLOYEES



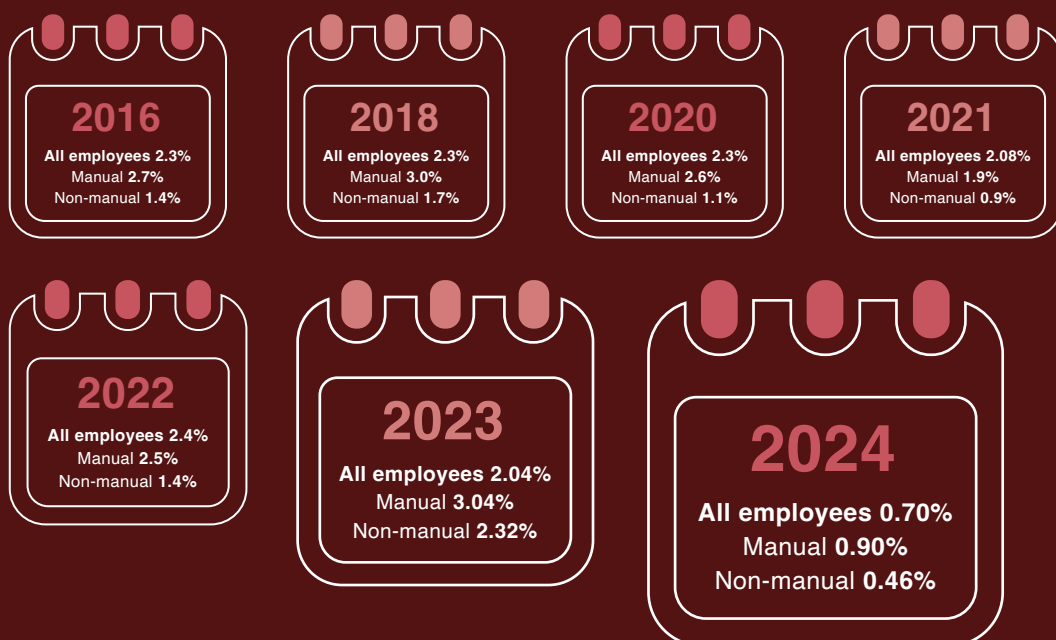
Days lost to sickness absence **BY EMPLOYEE TYPE:**

(including Covid-related absences)



Sickness absence rate **BY EMPLOYEE TYPE:**

(including Covid-related absences)



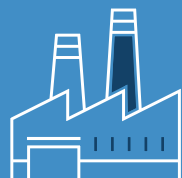
Average days lost due to sickness absence

BY SIZE OF COMPANY:

(by employee number)

1-9 

Manual	Non-Manual	All
3.43	3.11	3.25



10-249 

Manual	Non-Manual	All
4.72	2.04	3.51

250-499 

Manual	Non-Manual	All
0.60	0.60	0.56

500-999 

Manual	Non-Manual	All
0.14	0.24	0.15

1000+ 

Manual	Non-Manual	All
0.11	0.34	0.15

Average sickness absence rate

BY SIZE OF COMPANY:

(by employee number)

1-9 

Manual	Non-Manual	All
1.50%	1.36%	1.43%



10-249 

Manual	Non-Manual	All
2.07%	0.90%	1.54%

250-499 

Manual	Non-Manual	All
0.26%	0.26%	0.24%

500-999 

Manual	Non-Manual	All
0.06%	0.11%	0.07%

1000+ 

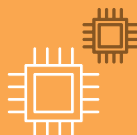
Manual	Non-Manual	All
0.05%	0.15%	0.07%

Average days lost due to sickness absence BY SECTOR:



BASIC METALS

All employees 0.1
Manual 0.08
Non-manual 0.15



ELECTRONICS

All employees 0.18
Manual 0.16
Non-manual 0.32



TEXTILES

All employees 1.61
Manual 3.00
Non-manual 0.23



CHEMICALS

All employees 1.70
Manual 2.76
Non-manual 1.72



RUBBER & PLASTICS

All employees 2.29
Manual 2.82
Non-manual 1.28



ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

All employees 0.97
Manual 1.45
Non-manual 0.72



OTHER MANUFACTURING

All employees 3.89
Manual 5.67
Non-manual 1.78



NON-MANUFACTURING

All employees –
Manual –
Non-manual –



PAPER & PRINTING

All employees 4.83
Manual 6.35
Non-manual 2.49



OTHER TRANSPORT

All employees –
Manual –
Non-manual –



MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT

All employees 1.23
Manual 1.48
Non-manual 0.79



NON-METALLIC MINERALS

All employees –
Manual –
Non-manual –



METAL PRODUCTS

All employees 2.72
Manual 2.94
Non-manual 2.15



FOOD AND DRINK

All employees 0.30
Manual 0.26
Non-manual 0.47



MOTOR VEHICLES

All employees 3.83
Manual 4.87
Non-manual 1.96



PHARMA-CEUTICALS

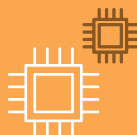
All employees 0.09
Manual 0.10
Non-manual 0.09

Average sickness absence rate BY SECTOR:



BASIC METALS

All employees 0.04%
Manual 0.04%
Non-manual 0.07%



ELECTRONICS

All employees 0.08%
Manual 0.07%
Non-manual 0.14%



TEXTILES

All employees 0.04%
Manual 0.04%
Non-manual 0.07%



CHEMICALS

All employees 0.04%
Manual 0.05%
Non-manual 0.04%



RUBBER & PLASTICS

All employees 2.12%
Manual 2.78%
Non-manual 1.09%



ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

All employees 0.42%
Manual 0.64%
Non-manual 0.32%



OTHER MANUFACTURING

All employees 1.29%
Manual 0.94%
Non-manual 1.19%



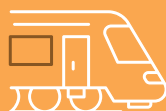
NON- MANUFACTURING

All employees 0.65%
Manual 0.35%
Non-manual 0.54%



PAPER & PRINTING

All employees 1.71%
Manual 2.49%
Non-manual 0.78%



OTHER TRANSPORT

All employees 0.13%
Manual 0.11%
Non-manual 0.21%



MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT

All employees 0.54%
Manual 0.65%
Non-manual 0.35%



NON-METALLIC MINERALS

All employees 0.71%
Manual 1.32%
Non-manual 0.10%



METAL PRODUCTS

All employees 1.19%
Manual 1.29%
Non-manual 0.94%



FOOD AND DRINK

All employees 0.75%
Manual 1.21%
Non-manual 0.75%



MOTOR VEHICLES

All employees 1.68%
Manual 2.13%
Non-manual 0.86%

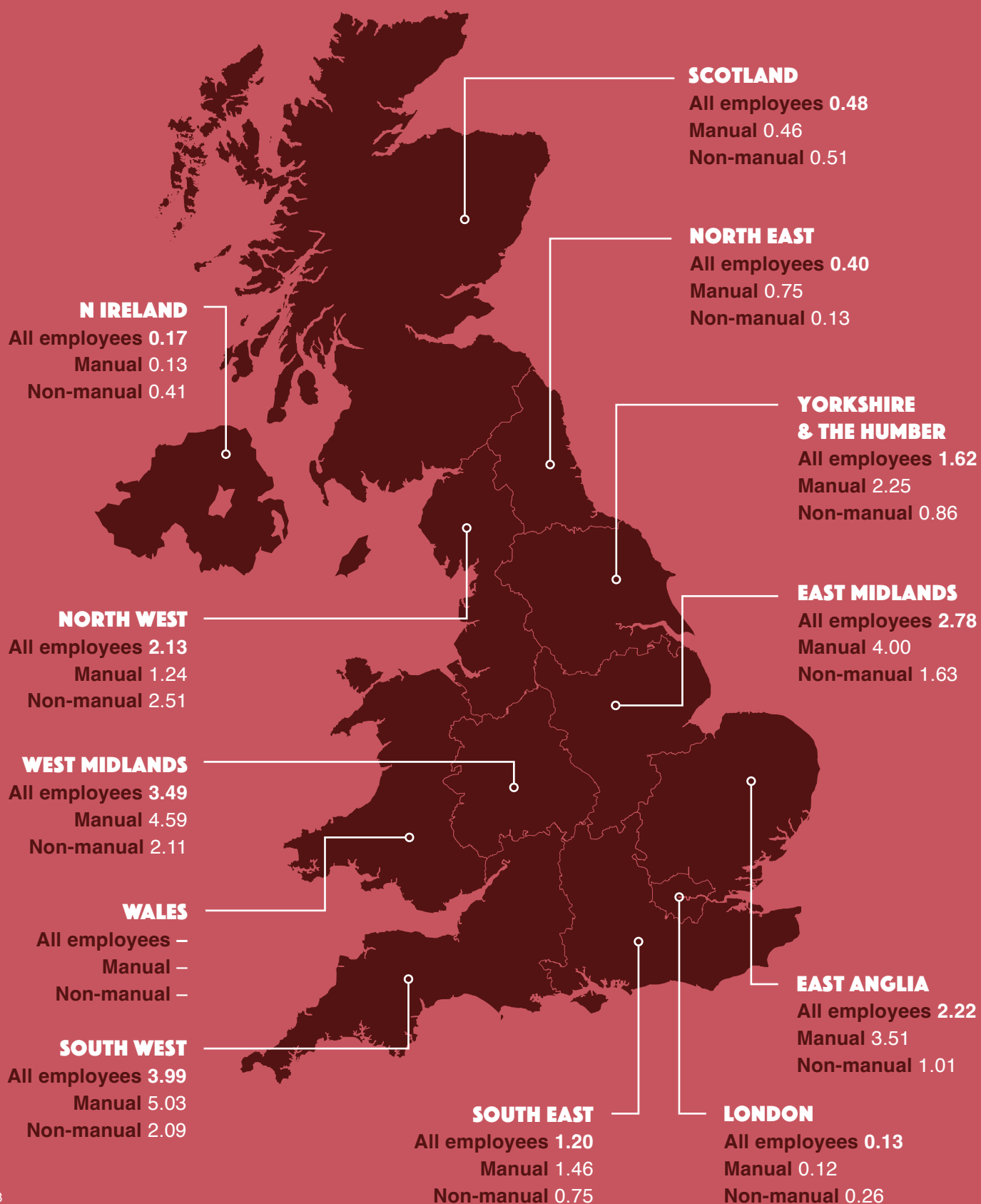


PHARMA- CEUTICALS

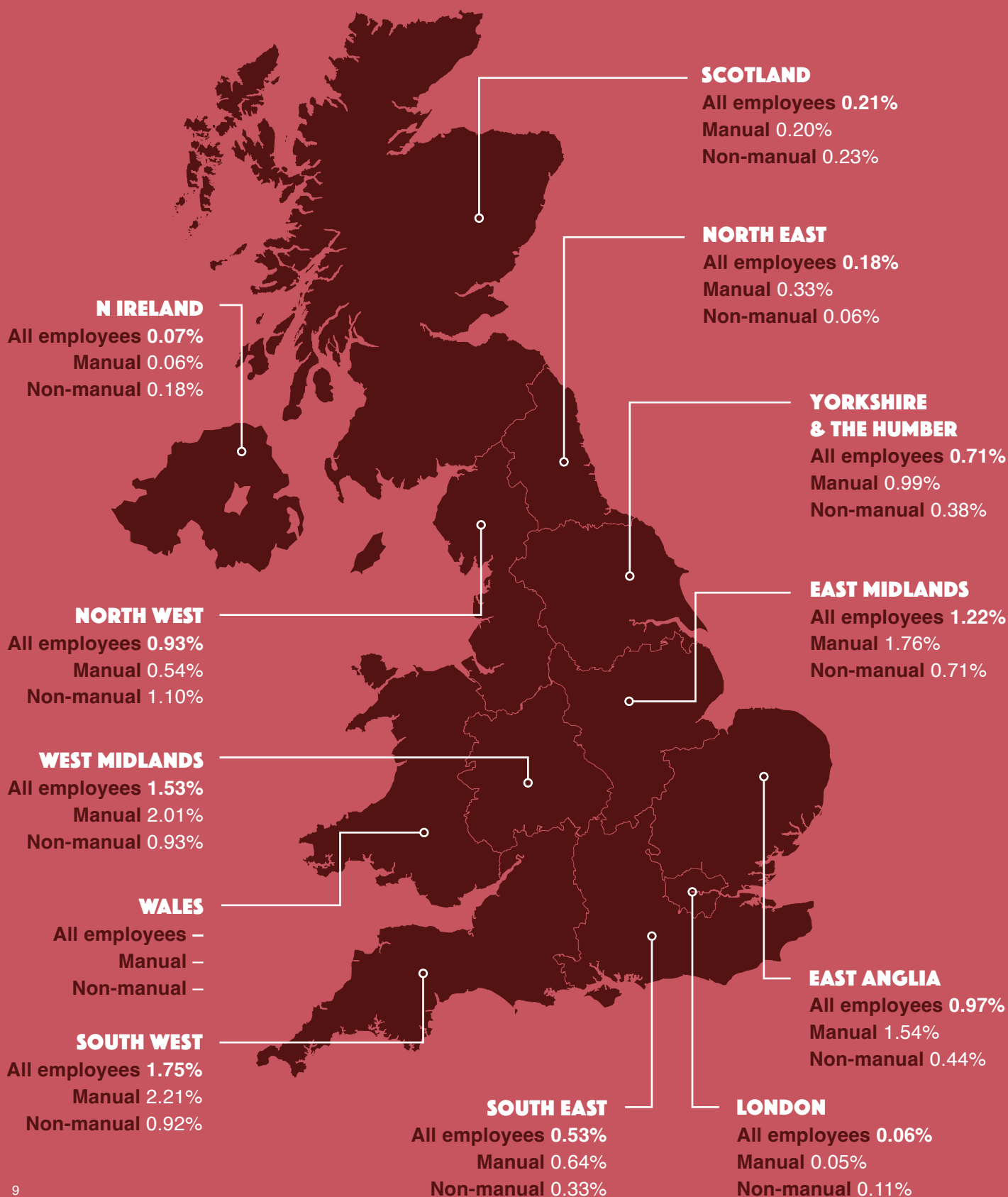
All employees 0.97%
Manual 1.24%
Non-manual 0.56%

Average days lost due to sickness absence

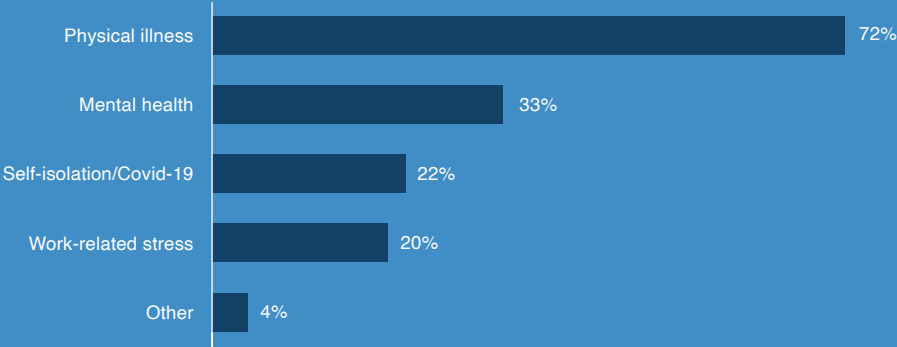
BY REGION:



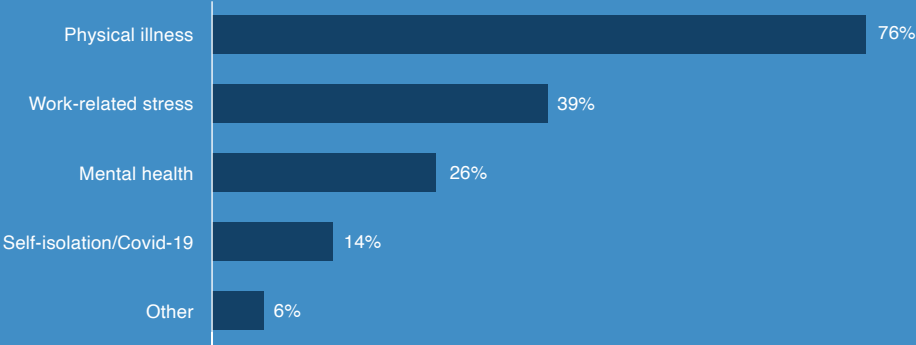
Average sickness absence rate **BY REGION:**



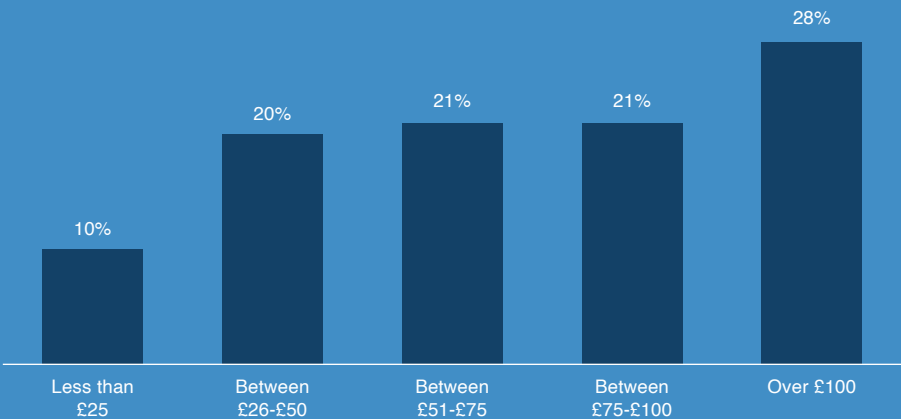
WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MAIN REASONS FOR LONG-TERM ABSENCE WITHIN YOUR WORKFORCE IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?



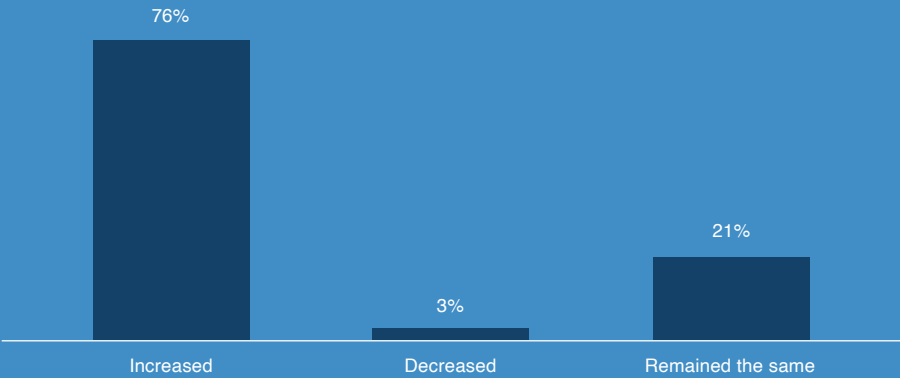
WHAT HAVE BEEN THE MAIN REASONS FOR SHORT-TERM ABSENCE WITHIN YOUR WORKFORCE IN THE PAST 12 MONTHS?



APPROXIMATELY, HOW MUCH DOES YOUR BUSINESS INVEST IN HEALTH AND WELLBEING SUPPORT PER EMPLOYEE EACH YEAR?



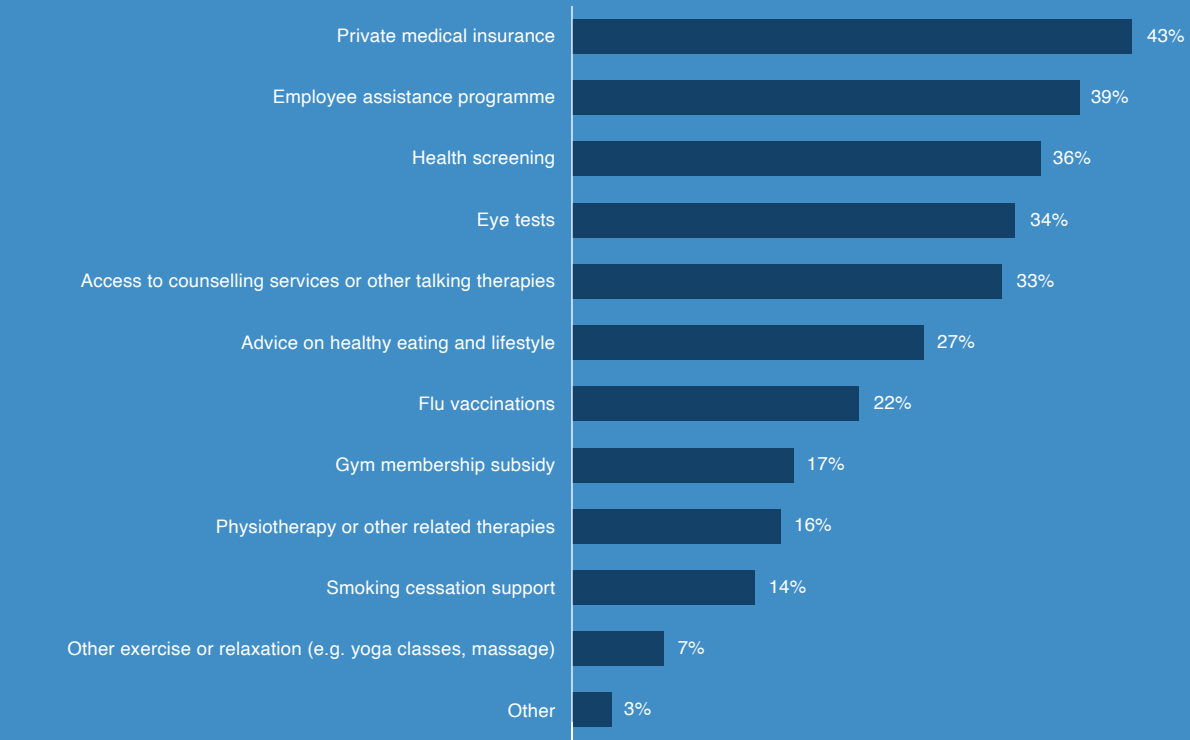
IN THE LAST 12 MONTHS HOW HAS YOUR COMPANY'S OVERALL SPEND ON HEALTH AND WELL-BEING CHANGED?



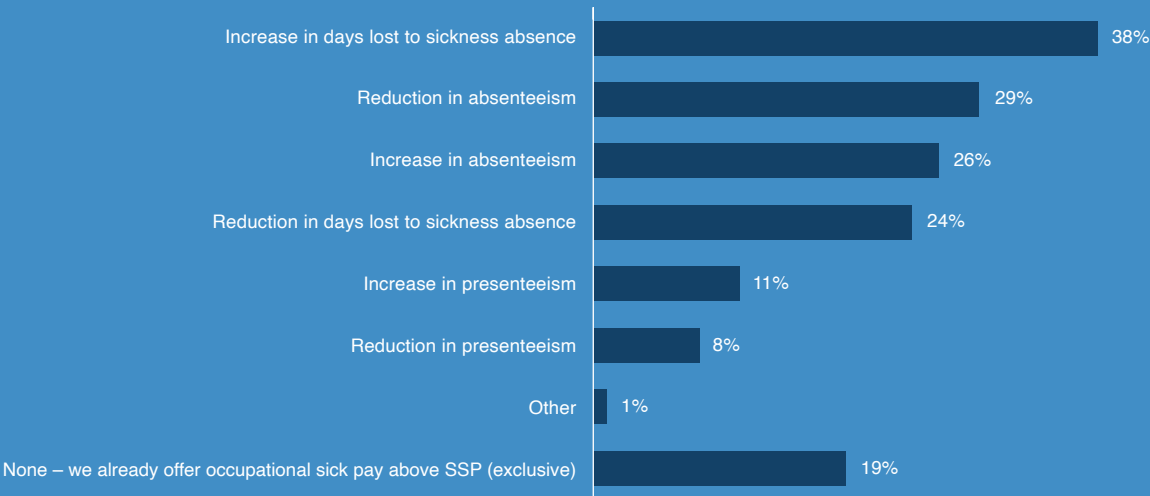
IF SPEND HAS INCREASED, WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT, IF ANY, ON YOUR BUSINESS?



WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING HAVE PROVIDED THE BEST RETURN ON INVESTMENT CONSIDERING THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF YOUR WORKFORCE?



WHAT DO YOU EXPECT TO BE THE IMPACT OF INCREASED ELIGIBILITY FOR SSP?



Methodology

Sample: 140 manufacturers responded to the survey between 22nd January and 6th February 2025.

Measuring absence: the survey covers all lengths of sickness absence, but excludes training leave, holidays, maternity, paternity, parental and adoption leave and time off for dependents. This survey asked companies to split Covid-related absences (including self-isolation) with these figures reflected in this report.

The calculations:

Average number of days absent per employee =
$$\frac{\text{Total number of working days lost to absence}}{\text{Average number of employees across the year}} \times 100$$

Absence rate =
$$\frac{\text{Total number of working days lost to absence}}{228 \text{ days} \times \text{Average number of employees across the year}} \times 100$$

Dash (–) indicates insufficient sample size

Please note that in the survey, respondents were asked to provide data for both manual and non-manual employees; if they were unable to provide data for each, they provided data for all employees. Therefore, in this report, the 'all employees' category in each chart does not only represent the total of the 'manual employees' and 'non-manual employees' categories, but also includes the data given by respondents who only provided one set of information for their whole workforce.



Make UK is a powerful voice at local, national and international level for all companies from small to large in the manufacturing and engineering sector.

We create the most supportive environment for UK manufacturing growth and success, and we represent the issues that are most important to our members, working hard to ensure UK manufacturing remains in the government and media spotlight.

Our services help manufacturers increase efficiency, productivity, and capability across areas such as HR & legal support; health, safety & sustainability; compliance; and training & skills.

Our HR experts are on hand to support you through the entire employment cycle, from challenges around recruitment, retention and employee engagement to broader strategic issues involving your workforce.

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