

# **STATES OF JERSEY**



## **SICKNESS ABSENCE LEVELS IN JERSEY'S PUBLIC SECTOR**

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**Presented to the States on 14th February 2006  
by the Chief Minister**

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**STATES GREFFE**

## **REPORT**

### **SICKNESS ABSENCE LEVELS IN JERSEY'S PUBLIC SECTOR**

#### **Introduction**

This report provides an analysis of the levels of sickness absence that relate to the Public Sector in Jersey up to 30th June 2005.

The management of absence continues to be a prime responsibility for all managers within the public service. Its importance has also been underlined by the Public Accounts Committee and the interest that it has shown in this particular issue.

Absence can impose a heavy burden upon organisations and so it is vital to chart the levels of absence that are experienced within the States of Jersey in order to ensure that appropriate remedial action can be taken wherever it is considered appropriate.

#### **Departmental Absence Levels**

Following the implementation of a new computer system in 2002, which captured appropriate data relating to all States' employees, it has been possible to track rates of absence at a corporate level since that time.

The average percentage of working time lost and the average days lost per employee are identified in Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

It is important to note that, as a consequence of the re-organisation of the States of Jersey, it is no longer possible to chart the changes in the levels of absence relating to certain States' departments. In addition, certain of the employees that had previously been employed in those departments have been transferred to other departments and their absence records have been imported into the records of their new department. Thus, some of the data relating to newly re-organised departments must be treated with caution, although comparative data will emerge with the passage of time.

**Table 1 – Average percentage of working time lost per full-time employee (FTE)**

	<b>Jan02 to June02*</b>	<b>Jan02 to Dec02</b>	<b>Jul02 to Jun03</b>	<b>Jan03 to Dec03</b>	<b>Jul03 to Jun04</b>	<b>Jan04 to Dec04</b>	<b>Jul04 to Jun05</b>	<i>Average No. employees (FTE) Jul04 to Jun05</i>
	3.09	2.94	3.83	4.98	5.28	4.22	4.36	191.80
bers	0.48	0.44	2.57	7.10	5.54	0.68	0.76	10.50
nmigration	6.32	6.55	6.19	4.46	2.74	2.74	3.65	76.00
icle Standards	4.30	4.72	3.59	4.32	4.20	2.96	6.87	17.00
Commercial Dev.	3.87	2.78	1.67	1.38	1.55	1.40	2.29	59.64
	x	x	x	x	3.46	3.06	3.35	1,471.82
nning	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.75
nd Social Security	3.77	3.25	3.48	4.05	4.53	3.93	3.81	107.41
	4.67	4.21	4.62	4.04	4.80	5.14	4.48	87.40
	4.78	5.12	3.40	3.22	3.36	4.11	4.23	102.30
ial Services	4.78	4.03	4.53	4.09	3.64	3.17	2.74	2,124.50
	10.03	3.54	2.45	3.03	6.85	19.14	15.52	7.50
	3.52	3.54	4.26	9.91	8.73	5.73	4.74	85.76
	3.66	2.76	2.48	2.94	2.56	2.57	3.13	71.00
and Viscounts	1.50	1.60	1.65	1.62	2.57	3.50	2.91	65.33
	2.94	2.85	2.73	3.52	2.41	0.86	1.66	35.25
ernor	3.76	3.70	2.16	1.31	3.96	4.74	5.20	13.00
st	2.75	2.09	2.34	5.55	7.05	4.58	0.80	8.84
	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.81
nvironment	4.02	2.75	2.48	2.43	3.88	3.97	4.33	124.55
	5.67	4.89	4.77	4.63	5.24	5.45	4.82	332.07
ources	2.27	2.30	1.82	4.05	3.84	4.02	3.79	82.11
	9.83	9.29	11.00	11.44	11.65	9.30	9.28	101.18
Procedures	1.13	2.55	2.27	2.70	3.13	2.96	4.24	35.23
	12.05	7.33	1.52	6.00	5.23	2.16	4.94	25.12
s	6.20	6.15	5.48	5.25	5.55	5.85	5.92	493.77
7	5.09	5.04	4.74	5.03	4.71	3.80	3.97	103.89
Registrar	0.00	0.00	8.60	9.19	0.59	0.29	1.91	3.00
	1.94	4.23	3.61	11.19	11.19	2.29	4.10	5.00
	<b>4.87</b>	<b>4.48</b>	<b>4.58</b>	<b>4.56</b>	<b>4.37</b>	<b>3.75</b>	<b>3.68</b>	<b>5,843.53</b>

\*Average % of time lost based upon 6 months

**Table 2 – Average days lost per full-time employee (FTE)**

Department	Jan02 to June02*	Jan02 to Dec02	Jul02 to Jun03	Jan03 to Dec03	Jul03 to Jun04	Jan04 to Dec04	Jul04 to Jun05	Average No. employees (FTE) Jul04 to Jun05
	7.00	6.68	8.69	11.31	11.97	9.59	9.90	191.80
Chambers	1.10	1.00	5.82	16.09	12.55	1.55	1.71	10.50
and Immigration	14.34	14.86	14.04	10.13	6.22	6.23	8.29	76.00
and Vehicle Standards	9.76	10.71	8.16	9.80	9.54	6.71	15.59	17.00
and Commercial Dev.	8.78	6.30	3.80	3.12	3.51	3.18	5.20	59.64
	x	x	x	x	3.60	6.40	6.99	1,471.82
and Planning	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1.75
and Social Security	8.56	7.38	7.89	9.19	10.28	8.92	8.64	107.41
and	7.82	7.04	7.83	6.78	8.09	8.66	7.49	87.40
	10.86	11.63	7.71	7.31	7.62	9.34	9.60	102.30
and Social Services	10.82	9.12	10.24	9.24	8.23	7.18	6.20	2,124.50
and	22.76	8.03	5.57	6.88	15.55	43.45	35.20	7.50
	8.00	8.03	9.68	22.49	19.83	13.01	10.75	85.76
and	8.30	6.26	5.64	6.68	5.81	5.84	7.11	71.00
and	3.40	3.62	3.73	3.67	5.83	7.94	6.60	65.33
and	6.64	6.43	6.18	7.96	5.45	1.93	3.74	35.25
and Governor	8.52	8.40	4.91	2.98	8.99	10.75	11.80	13.00
and Analyst	6.24	4.75	5.31	12.60	16.00	10.39	1.81	8.84
and Aid	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.81
and Environment	9.12	6.24	5.63	5.51	8.81	9.00	9.83	124.55
	12.86	11.10	10.83	10.52	11.90	12.38	10.94	332.07
and Resources	5.14	5.21	4.12	9.20	8.72	9.12	8.61	82.11
	22.48	21.27	25.17	26.18	26.66	21.27	21.23	101.18
and Procedures	5.12	5.77	5.15	6.11	7.10	6.70	9.59	35.23
	27.34	16.62	3.44	13.62	11.87	4.90	11.20	25.12
and Services	14.08	13.96	12.45	11.91	12.59	13.29	13.43	493.77
and Assurance	11.54	11.45	10.76	11.42	10.69	8.62	9.01	103.89
and Ident Registrar	0.00	0.00	19.53	20.86	1.33	0.67	4.33	3.00
	4.40	9.60	8.20	25.40	25.40	5.20	9.30	5.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.98</b>	<b>9.91</b>	<b>10.33</b>	<b>10.28</b>	<b>9.84</b>	<b>8.31</b>	<b>8.13</b>	<b>5,843.53</b>

**\*Average days lost for 6-month period has been doubled for annual comparison**

It is apparent that the overall levels of absence within the States of Jersey have fallen fairly consistently over the period for which data has been captured. The most recent percentage annual figure is nearly 1.2% less than the figure in June 2002 which, on a States wage bill in the region of £250 million, represents an increase in productivity of the order of £3 million.

The final column of these 2 tables identifies the average number of employees present in the departments during the period of review as, in making comparisons at a departmental level, it is important to recognise that certain States' departments have small numbers of employees. Thus, an employee suffering serious long-term incapacity in one of these departments can have a disproportionate effect upon its overall absence level. Similarly, certain employee groups are subject to greater levels of absence because of the nature of the work that they undertake.

Thus, absence figures for individual departments will be subject to all of these factors and should be considered in this light.

### **Comparative data**

It is appropriate, on occasion, to make comparisons with other organisations in order to identify any areas of mismatch with those organisations and thereby highlight potential issues that might need to be pursued. Such comparisons can, however, prove “odious”. Direct comparisons between survey findings are not necessarily appropriate as the sample, the basis of the measurement and the ways in which absence levels are expressed can vary significantly. This data should, therefore, be treated with caution.

The Confederation of British Industries (CBI) and the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) have both published regular survey data relating to sickness absence levels that have been experienced by employers in the United Kingdom, both in the private as well as the public sector.

**Table 3 – Comparisons with CBI/CIPD Surveys**

	CBI	CIPD	States of Jersey
Public Sector	9.1 days	10.3 days	8.13 days
Large workforce	8.3 days	10.0 days	8.13 days

The 2005 survey by the CBI shows that during 2004, the average number of days lost in the U.K. Public Sector was 9.1. The survey also shows that the recorded absence rates for organisations which have more than 5,000 employees is 8.3 days. The latter figure is comparable with the States of Jersey, which has in excess of 7,000 employees.

The 2005 CIPD survey indicates that the working time lost across the public sector was an average of 4.5% of working time and an average of 10.3 days per fulltime employee. The CIPD survey shows that the rate of absence is 10.0 days in organisations that have a workforce in excess of 2,000.

It will be noted that the figures relating to the States of Jersey compare favourably with comparable organisations in the United Kingdom. However, the outcomes of the surveys carried out by the CBI and CIPD will have been affected by the type of organisations that participated in the surveys. (For example, the number of respondents to the CBI survey is 522 organisations, whereas there were 874 organisations that responded to the CIPD survey. The public service in Jersey consists of a wide range of different employee groups, each affected in different ways by the nature of the work that employees undertake.

In order to address this issue, attempts have been made to seek to identify comparative data in respect of specific pay groups that are considered to be broadly similar to their Jersey equivalents. In the case of the 2 most significant pay groups in Jersey, civil servants and manual workers, the relevant United Kingdom data is set out below.

**Table 4 – Comparisons with UK Civil Service**

	2003	2004	2005
U.K. Civil Service	4.4% (10.0 days)	4.0% (9.1 days)	Not available
Jersey Civil Service	3.64% (8.27 days)	3.76% (8.54 days)	3.45% (7.84 days)

The absence figures reported in the United Kingdom include officers employed in H.M. Prison Service. The Jersey figure for civil servants has, therefore, been adjusted to include officers employed in the local Prison Service in order to provide equivalent data. It will be noted that Jersey’s figures consistently fall below those of the United Kingdom.

**Table 5 – Comparisons with Manual Workers employed by U.K. Local Authorities**

	2003	2004	2005
Local Government Manual Workers	5.7% (13.1 days)	7.1% (15.5 days)	Not available
Jersey Manual Workers	6.97% (15.82 days)	5.56% (12.63 days)	5.47% (12.42 days)

It will be noted that Jersey's figures compare favourably with those in the United Kingdom. In addition, importantly, the trend on absence levels in Jersey is downwards, whereas in the United Kingdom, there was a significant increase recorded from 2003 to 2004.

## Spells of absence

An analysis has also been carried out for the first time of the number of employees with no spells of absence during the period under review. The results are shown in Table 6.

**Table 6 – Percentage of Employees with no spells of sickness absence**

<b>Department</b>	<b>% of staff with no spells of Sickness Absence</b>
Airport	36.65%
Bailiff's Chambers	60.00%
Customs and Immigration	34.62%
Driver and Vehicle Standards	27.78%
Economic and Commercial Dev.	45.00%
Education	39.69%
Emergency Planning	100.00%
Employment and Social Security	28.45%
Fire Service	28.74%
Harbours	41.12%
Health and Social Services	46.55%
Home Affairs	25.00%
Housing	29.41%
Income Tax	29.33%
Judicial Greffe and Viscounts	31.08%
Law Officers	44.44%
Lieutenant Governor	46.15%
Official Analyst	33.33%
Overseas Aid	100.00%
Planning and Environment	37.50%
Police	29.48%
Policy and Resources	40.23%
Prison	28.04%
Privileges and Procedures	37.50%
Probation	32.35%
Public Services	34.12%
States Treasury	31.37%
Superintendent Registrar	33.33%
T.A.	None
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>40.11%</b>

It will be noted that just over 40% of all employees took no spells of sickness absence in the 12 months ended 30th June 2005. This is similar to the United Kingdom Civil Service rate in 2004 of 40.2%. However, it should be borne in mind that Jersey's figure includes many employee groups where the requirements of the job are more physically demanding and therefore the likelihood of being absent from work is higher. Thus, the overall figure of 40% for all employee groups within the Jersey Public Service compares favourably with the United Kingdom, which relates predominantly to white collar workers.

## Reasons for absence

The data that is captured also identifies the reasons for the incapacity of employees. These are analysed into 12 categories and the percentages attributed to particular reasons for absence compared to the totals absence

levels in each Department are set out in the attached table.

**Table 7 – Reasons for absence**

Department	01 Cancer	02 Cardiovascular	03 Dermatological	04 Endocrine	05 Gastrointestinal	06 Gynaecological	07 Miscellaneous
	12.42	2.60	0.35	4.91	5.60	0.05	13.44
Chambers	16.67				11.11		16.67
and Immigration		0.63	0.47		7.98	23.15	14.29
and Vehicle Standards		4.53			10.94	0.75	9.43
and Commercial Dev.		2.26		0.97	6.45	15.15	2.10
	4.97	1.71	1.35	0.15	8.77	6.02	21.21
City Planning							
Environment and Social		0.11	0.86	2.02	9.84	0.97	25.33
Finance		0.11	1.70		15.93	3.79	7.83
		19.95			8.20	0.81	20.08
General Affairs				0.38	2.65		86.36
					11.97		17.90
Health Services			1.58	1.19	8.91	6.93	30.10
Hereditary and Viscounts			0.23		10.59		28.07
Human Resources					8.33	0.76	15.91
Independent Governor						6.37	29.94
Information Analyst					18.75		68.75
International Aid							
Land and Environment	16.07	0.08			2.64	2.10	32.03
		1.68	0.22		8.13	1.32	32.90
Local Resources		2.83			7.27	0.99	8.83
		0.38	0.05	0.14	8.43	0.57	4.27
Legal and Procedures				3.85	8.34	0.89	
	57.56	1.07	2.49		15.11	5.73	3.83
Public Services	2.71	4.09	0.37		7.41	0.95	15.38
Public Safety		27.97		0.64	7.90	5.66	5.02
Public Health Registrar					46.15		46.15
	<b>3.63</b>	<b>3.14</b>	<b>0.61</b>	<b>0.47</b>	<b>8.22</b>	<b>3.15</b>	<b>19.07</b>

Note: % rates show a slight margin of error due to rounding

It is apparent that “musculoskeletal” is the single most significant cause for absence within the Public Service. Bearing in mind the nature of the duties of a significant number of States employees, such as manual workers, firemen, police officers, etc., and the requirement to be physically fit to perform the duties associated with their roles, this is not surprising.

#### **Certificated and non-certificated absence**

A department can require employees to produce a medical certificate from the first day of incapacity. However, the current practice in the States of Jersey is to require an employee to produce a certificate after 3 days of absence. In this way, a measure of the levels of short-term absences can be gauged from the level of uncertificated absences.



The proportion of absences that are certificated and non-certificated are set out in the following table. The final column identifies the average percentage of working time lost associated with each department.

**Table 8 – Percentage of Certificated and non-certificated absences**

<b>Department</b>	<b>Uncertified</b>	<b>Certified</b>	<b>Overall Rate</b>
Airport	19.59	80.41	4.36
Bailiff's Chambers	77.78	22.22	0.76
Customs and Immigration	21.46	78.54	3.65
Driver and Vehicle Standards	3.40	96.60	6.87
Economic and Commercial Dev.	26.16	73.84	2.29
Education, Sport and Culture	26.68	73.32	3.35
Emergency Planning	0.00	0.00	0.00
Employment and Social Security	30.21	69.79	3.81
Fire Service	16.32	83.68	4.48
Harbours	10.12	89.88	4.23
Health and Social Services	40.01	59.99	2.74
Home Affairs	8.71	91.29	15.52
Housing	16.54	83.46	4.74
Income Tax	28.12	71.88	3.13
Judicial Greffe and Viscounts	28.38	71.62	2.91
Law Officers	60.61	39.39	1.66
Lieutenant Governor	2.54	97.46	5.20
Official Analyst	62.50	37.50	0.80
Overseas Aid	0.00	0.00	0.00
Planning and Environment	20.30	79.70	4.33
Police	18.49	81.51	4.82
Policy and Resources	17.83	82.17	3.79
Prison	8.98	91.02	9.28
Privileges and Procedures	24.85	75.15	4.24
Probation	11.60	88.40	4.94
Public Services	16.42	83.58	5.92
States Treasury	12.58	87.42	3.97
Superintendent Registrar	15.38	84.62	1.91
T.A.	17.13	82.87	4.10
<b>Overall Total</b>	<b>25.71</b>	<b>74.29</b>	<b>3.68</b>

It will be noted that nearly three-quarters of all absences are covered by medical certificates.

### **Conclusion**

The most recent data in respect of absence within the States of Jersey shows a clear and sustained reduction in the levels of sickness absence since corporate data was first captured in 2002. This indicates a significant productivity improvement during that period.

Nevertheless, this cannot be cause for complacency. The policy and procedures that are applied within the Public Service are considered to be in line with good practice elsewhere. However, this approach relies upon managers within the Service to constantly manage absence and ensure that the policies and procedures are continuously applied. To this end, the management training programme that is offered to all managers continues to provide training in respect of this important issue.

A new initiative that has recently been introduced within the States of Jersey is the provision of a counselling

scheme. It is intended to trial this in 4 representative States departments in order to gauge the impact that this service has on employees in those departments. Under this scheme employees can refer themselves to trained counsellors for advice and support on home and work issues. It is anticipated that this service will have a further beneficial effect upon levels of sickness absence.

In due course, future data will provide an indication of how the States of Jersey fares in its continuing efforts to manage sickness absence effectively.