

## SICKNESS ABSENCE

# Many employers lack good data on employee absence

AT A TIME when organisations are looking to cut costs, many are not managing their employee absence rates effectively because of a lack of good data.

While most (76%) employers can access simple data about the number of days employees are absent, only 42% can identify the cause of employee absence and only one-third have access to data on the direct cost to the organisation, according to Mercer's 2008 *Pan-European Health & Benefit Report*.

Overall, one-fifth (21%) of respondents said their company could not access good data relating to the level, cause or cost of absence.

Mercer surveyed 800 companies across 24 European countries this summer, revealing that, on average, employees are absent 7.4 days a year.

Respondents in Bulgaria reported the highest absence rate of 22 days a year, while those in Turkey had the lowest, at 4.6 days. Respondents in the UK and Spain also reported low average rates, of 5.5 and 5.7

## ■ How do employers measure sickness absence?

Number of days absent	76%
Cause of absence	42%
Cost	33%

Source: Mercer's 2008 Pan-European Health & Benefit Report

days, respectively. The top three causes of absence were musculo-skeletal problems, stress and mental health issues, and cancer.

For respondents that do have a specific absence management programme, the most commonly used components were formal absence policies and procedure (56%), sick pay arrangements (38%), case management and occupational health (37%), and return-to-work interviews (36%).

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