

# Study Finds Presenteeism Costs Employers More than Absenteeism



The term '[presenteeism](#)' can be defined as when workers come to work despite the fact that they're sick, injured or otherwise under the weather. That is, workers may be there in body but aren't working at full capacity. Presenteeism may occur when workers feel pressured to come to work when they're sick, stressed or having mental health issues.

You might assume that it's better to have workers working at half-speed than not at all. But a recent study from GCC found that presenteeism costs employers a lot more than absenteeism.

The white paper, 'Clocking on and Checking out: Why Your Employees May Not Be Working at Optimal Levels and What You Can Do About It,' explains that it's based on the study of nearly 2,000 participants in 17 countries who completed both the GCC 100 Day Journey and the World Health Organization Workplace Health and Productivity Questionnaire in 2015.

On average, employees in the sample group took about four sick days off each year. But when they reported how many days they lost due to presenteeism, that number shot up to a *57.5 days* per year per employee.

That's almost 12 full working weeks' or one quarter of the entire year' that employees admit they really aren't performing at their best.

In addition, a typical employee admits to losing 25% of their day being unproductive.

The researchers note that employers can't address presenteeism if they're unaware that it's occurring in their workplace. Some of the red flags to look for include:

- People may have difficulty falling and/or staying asleep. As a result, they may be fatigued, which affects their concentration.
- They may lack attention and become easily distracted.
- Their engagement with their job may decrease and they may seem uninterested in what they're doing and unconcerned about outcomes. For example, they may become less competitive.
- Their performance may deteriorate. They may begin coming in late and leaving early; have more safety incidents and altercations with colleagues; begin falling asleep at work; or become unproductive.

The good news is that although studies show there's no quick fix for absenteeism, presenteeism responds well to short term action that tackles the underlying issues of [sleep](#), stress and unhappiness in creative ways.

The researchers concluded that the focus needs to shift from how many sick days employees are taking to what they're doing when they're actually at work. Ultimately, having happier, healthier, less stressed employees is not only a great human outcome, but also provides direct benefits to companies.