Absenteeism and Presenteeism Among American Workers

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Absenteeism and Presenteeism

- Chronic absence from work due to illness could be an early indicator of eventual labor market exit and SSDI claiming

- Presenteeism—working while sick—could be a substitute for, or precursor to, absenteeism

- A better understanding of current trends in absenteeism and presenteeism is needed for at least two reasons:
  - Inform the extent absenteeism predicts future long-term disabilities
  - Highlight potentially effective targeting strategies for intervention and rehabilitation

Absenteeism and Presenteeism: Definitions

- <u>Absence rate</u>: the number of days of missed work over a period of time

- <u>Absenteeism</u>: a series of prolonged, chronic absences
  - measured by high absence rates

- <u>Presenteeism</u>: working while sick
  - could either be short-term or chronic

- <u>Productivity loss</u>: degree to which presenteeism impairs work performance

Absenteeism and Presenteeism: Research Questions

- What is the distribution of worker absences and presenteeism rates in the general population?

- How does this distribution vary for workers with different health conditions?

- What characteristics are strongly associated with high rates of absence or presenteeism?

- How persistent are absence rates and presenteeism over time?

- To what extent do absence rates and presenteeism predict eventual labor market exit and participation in SSDI?

Absenteeism and Presenteeism: This Project

- Use the American Working Conditions Survey (AWCS)
- Analyze descriptive patterns in absence rates, absenteeism and presenteeism
    - Worker characteristics
    - Job characteristics
    - Health characteristics
- Examine persistence and progression in absenteeism over time
- Relate prior absenteeism and presenteeism to future employment outcomes

The American Working Conditions Survey

- Nationally representative survey of American workers 25-71
- Fielded in the RAND American Life Panel in July 2015
  - 3,075 respondents at baseline
  - 2,066 working for pay at baseline
- Follow-up surveys: January 2016, July 2016 (ages 50+), July 2018
  - >85% response rate in follow-up surveys
- Contains questions on health, absenteeism/presenteeism, job characteristics, employment patterns
- Can be linked to other ALP modules (demographic, employment, health)

Baseline Characteristics of AWCS Sample

	Overall	Sick leave	No sick leave
Age	45.2	44.6	46.4**
Female (%)	46	46	46
Blue Collar (%)	60	53	73**
More than HS Diploma (%)	66	69	60**
Works Part Time (%)	27	19	44**
Family Income > $75k (%)	40	44	32**
Health problem >=6 months (%)	30	29	32
Muscle/back problems (%)	60	61	58
Depression (%)	36	35	38
Has paid sick leave (%)	66	100	0
Observations	*1965*	*1294*	*671*

Source: AWCS 2015. Stars indicate test of equality of means between sick leave and no sick leave columns. ** p<0.01, * p<0.05, + p<0.1

AWCS Absenteeism and Presenteeism

	Overall	Sick leave	No sick leave
At least one absence in last 12 months (%)	49	55	38**
Mean absence days (unconditional)	3.5	4.2	2.2*
Mean absence days (conditional)	7.2	7.6	5.9
Median absence days (conditional)	3	3	3
Worked while sick at least once (%)	68	70	66
Productivity Loss when working while sick (%)	22.8	21.8	25.0**
Observations	*1,965*	*1,294*	*671*

- "Over the past 12 months how many days in total were you absent from work for health-related reasons?"

- "Over the past 12 months did you work when you were sick?"

- "Thinking about the time when you worked while sick or ill, how much did your illness affect your work productivity (e.g., the amount or kind of work you were able to do, or whether you worked as carefully as usual)?" (0-100%)
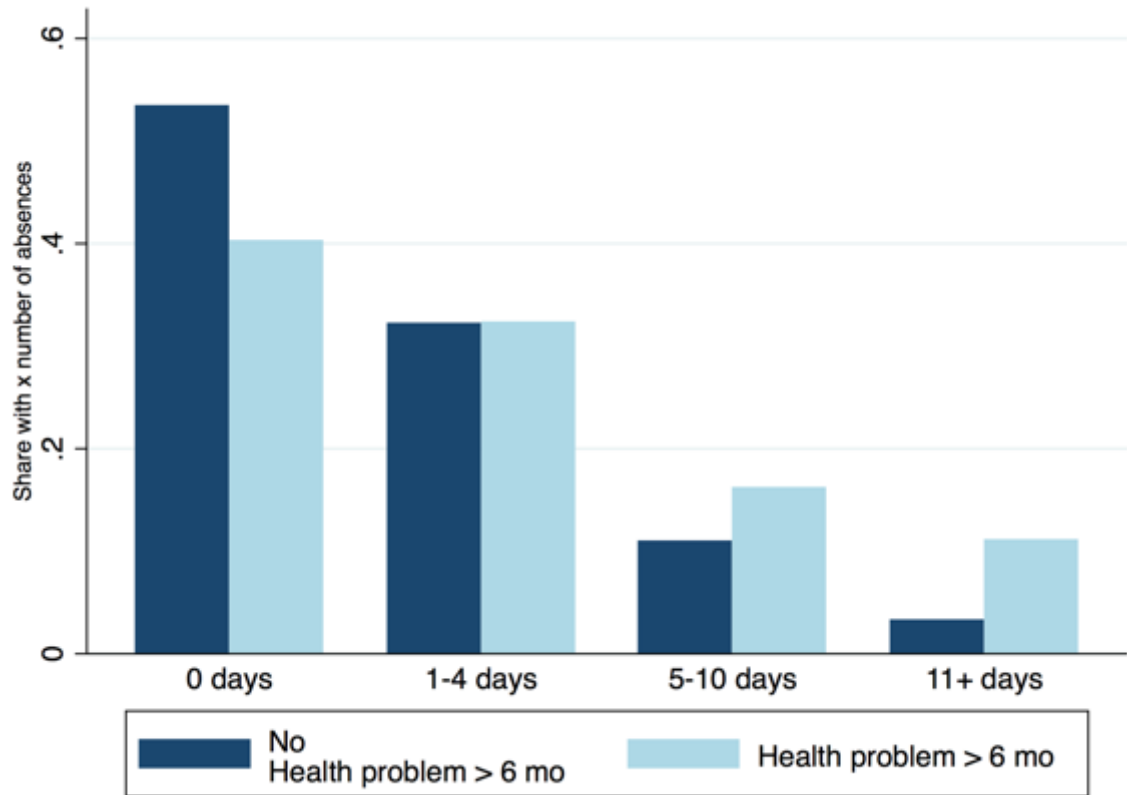
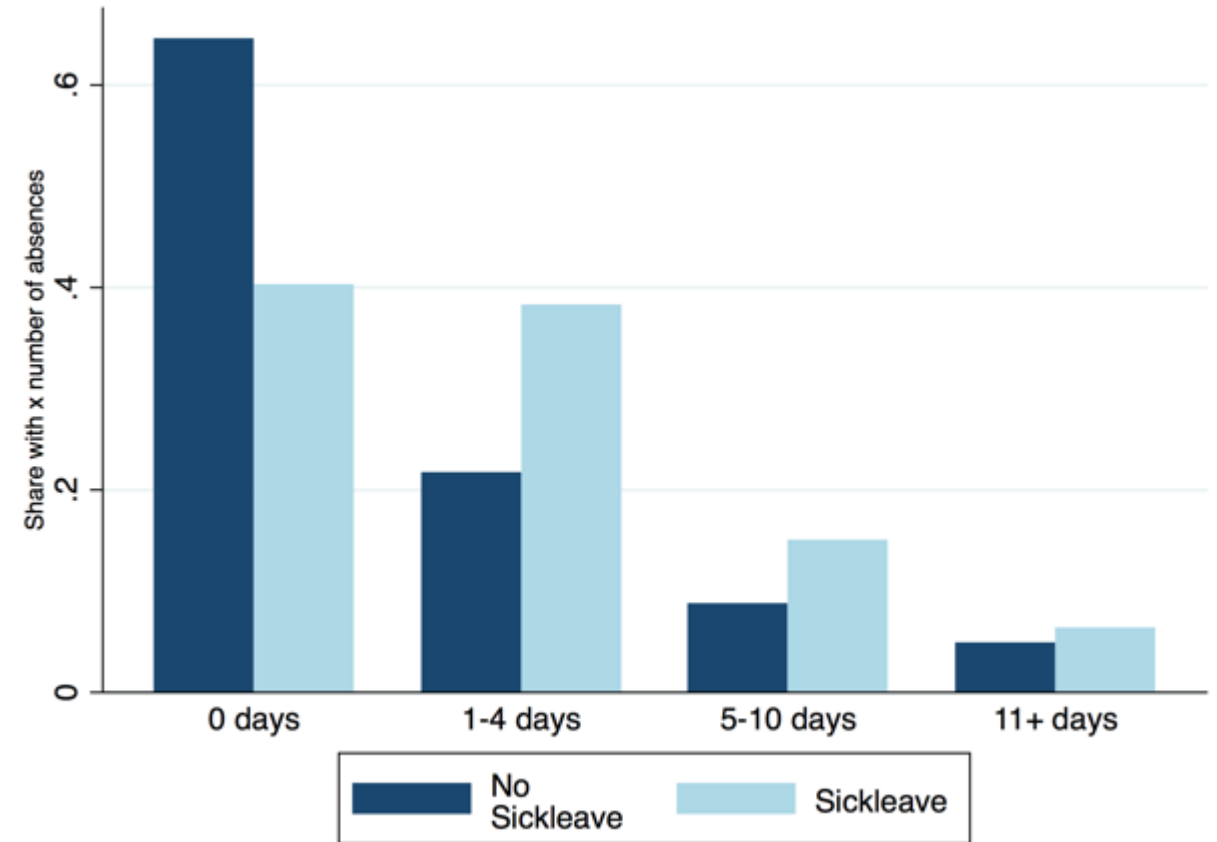# Average Absences over the Last 12 months, by Industry
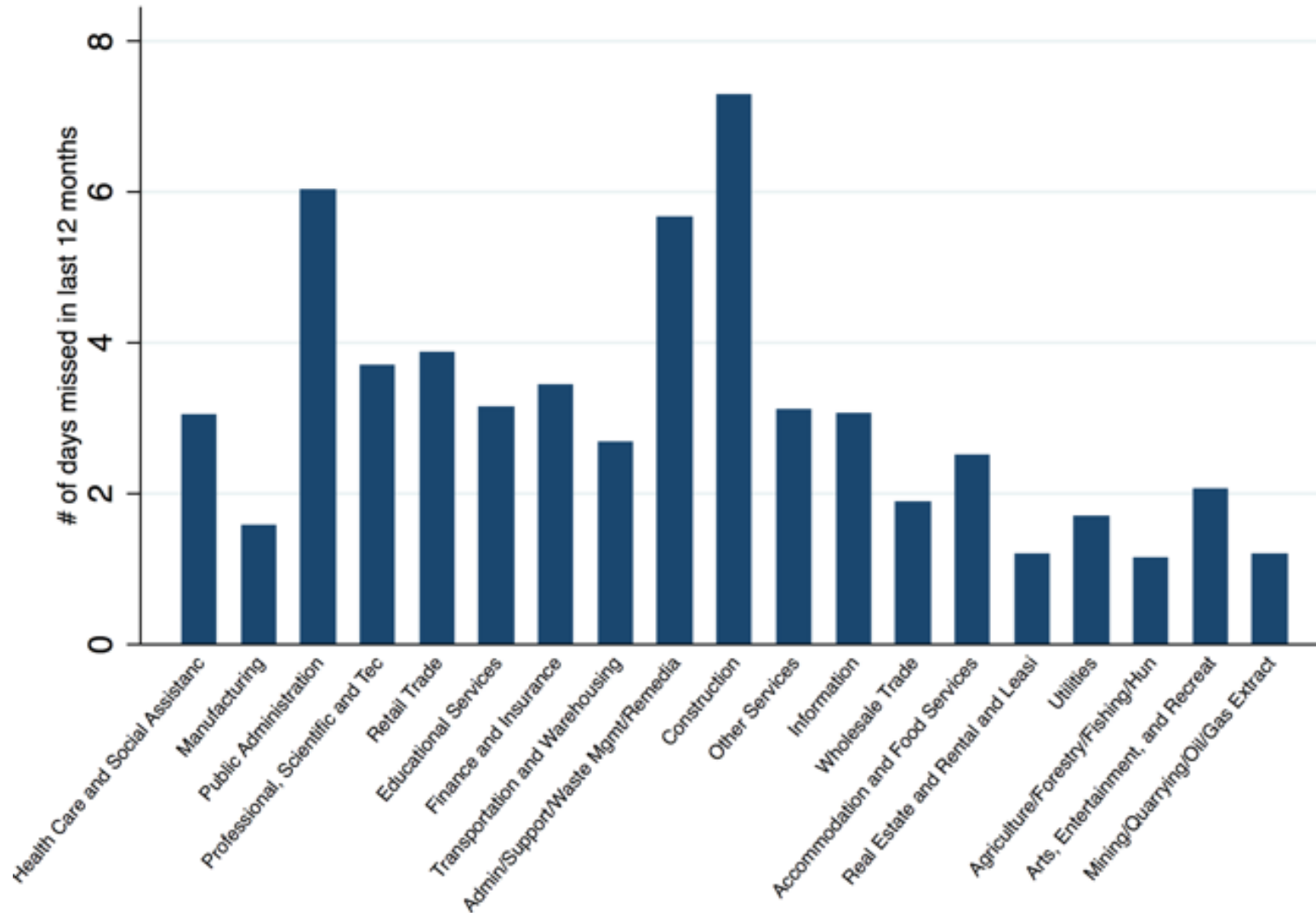
Note: Industries ranked by employment share

Distribution of Absence Rates

Health problems
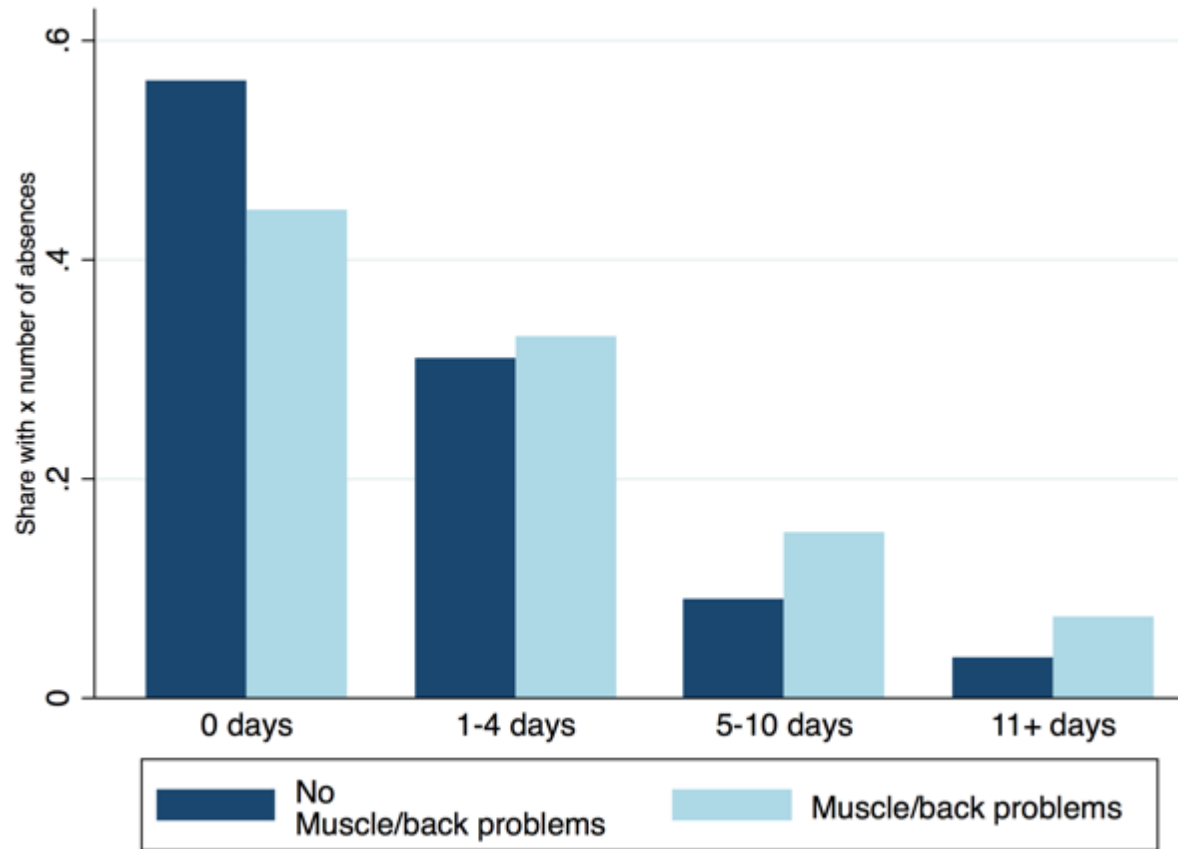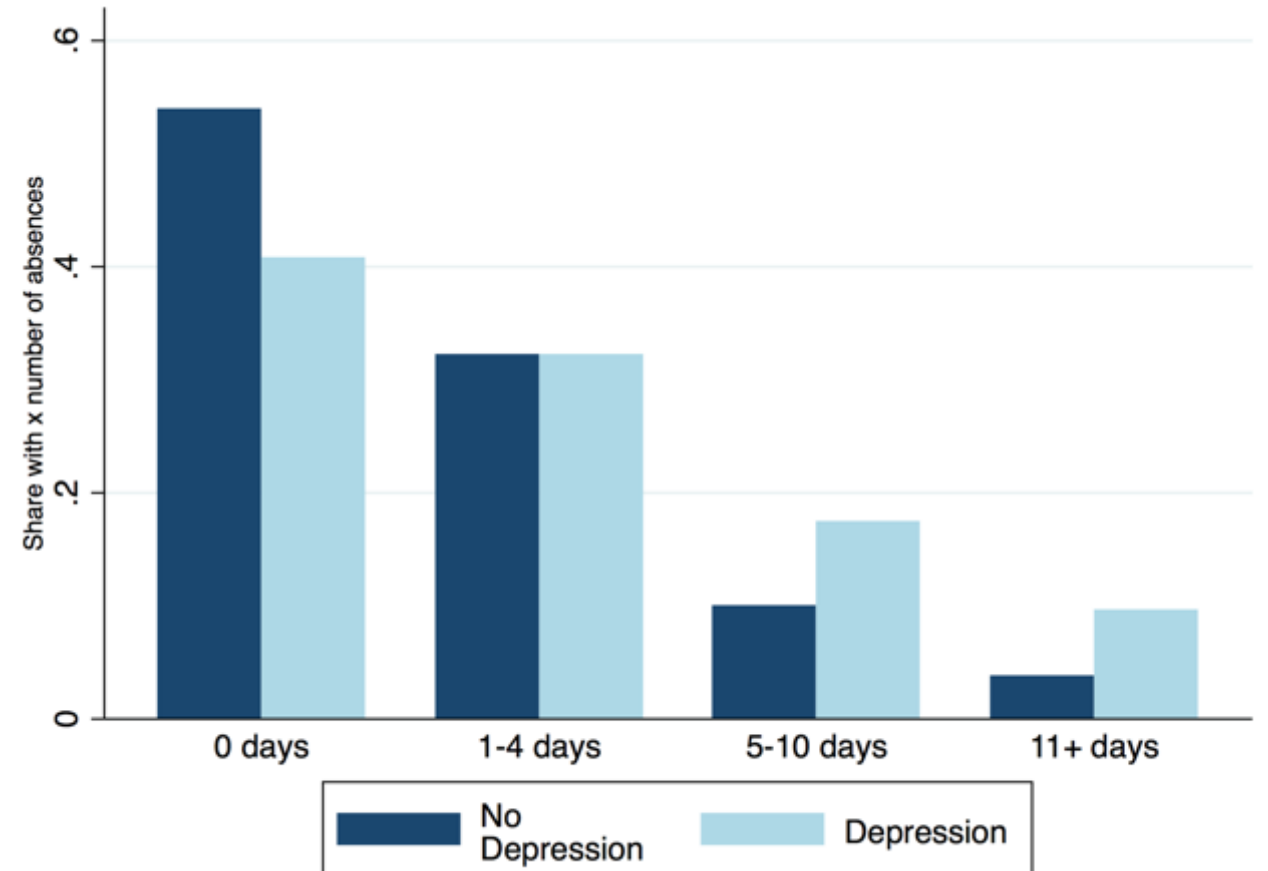
Sick leave

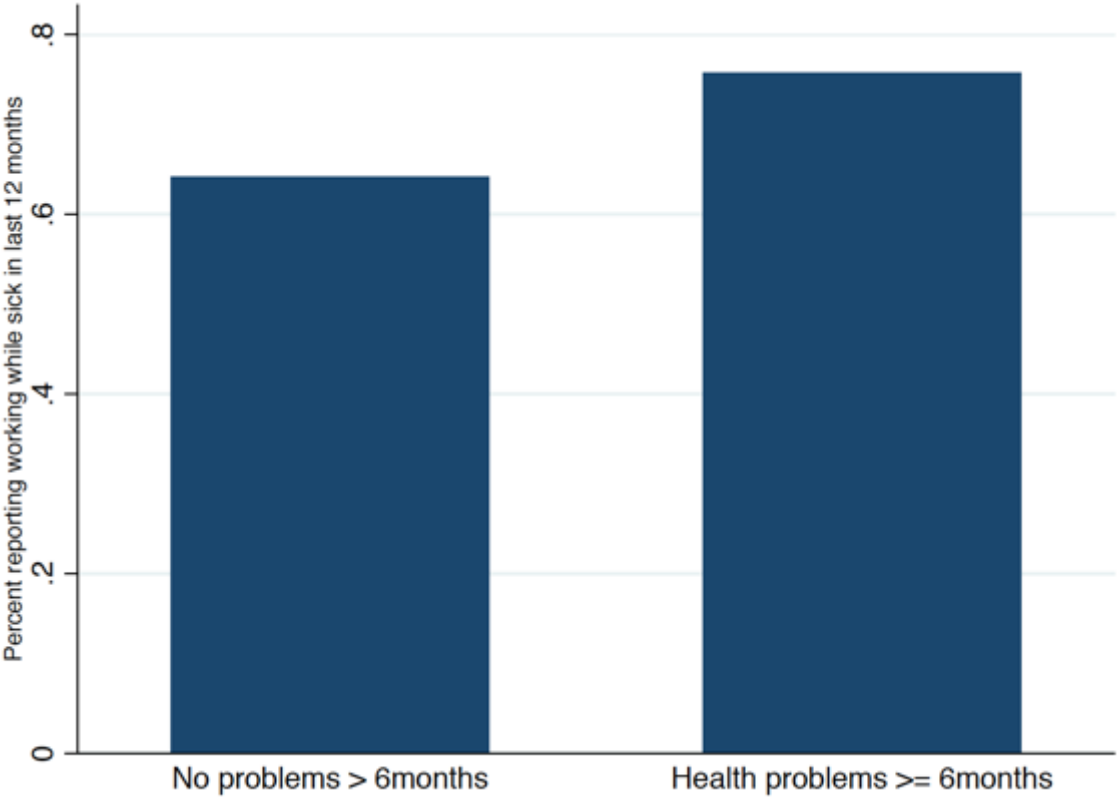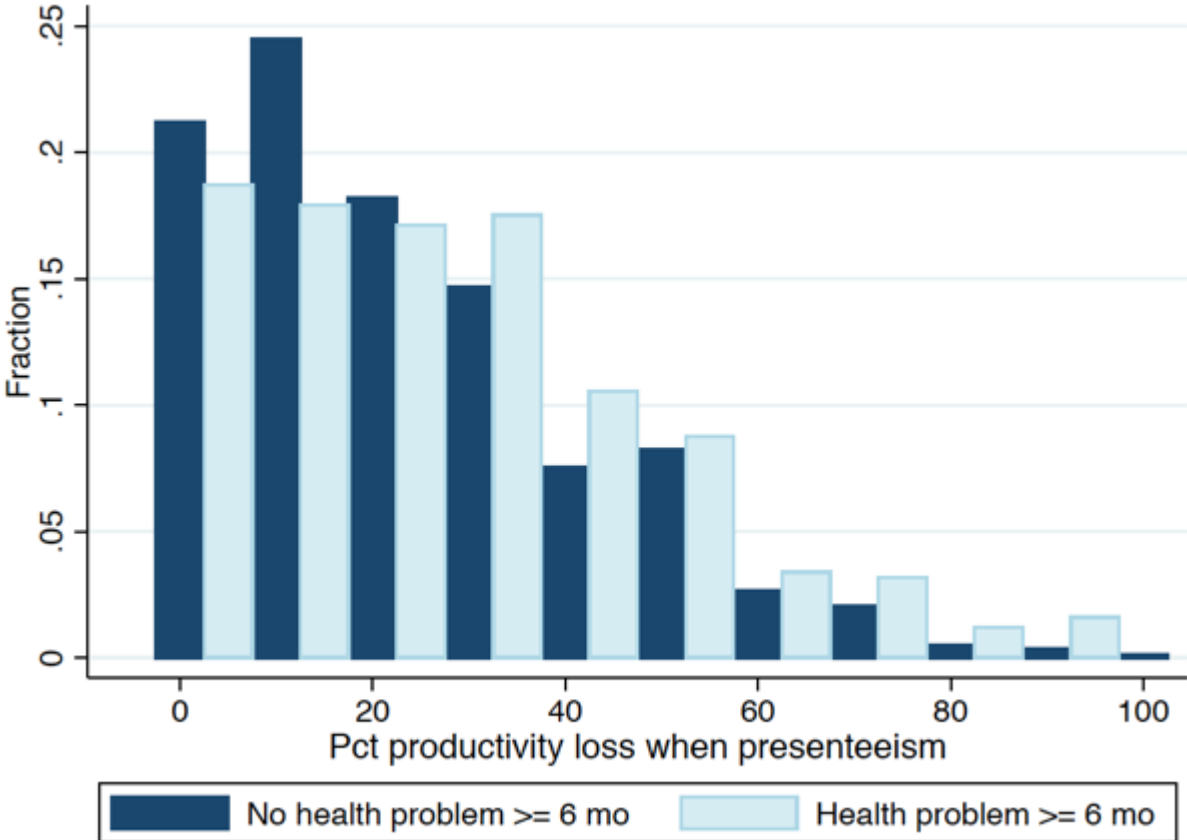# Distribution of Absence Rates

Muscle/back problems

Depression

Source: AWCS 2015.

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Presenteeism by Health Problems >= 6 months

Any presenteeism?

Productivity loss (%)

Source: AWCS 2015.

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Health Factors that Predict Absenteeism/ Presenteeism

Dependent variable:	High absenteeism	Any presenteeism	High productivity loss
Any presenteeism	0.0685***		
	(0.0257)		
Days absent		-0.00100	0.000198
		(0.000810)	(0.000802)
Health problem >= 6mo	0.133***	0.0990***	0.0611
	(0.0329)	(0.0292)	(0.0393)
Muscle back problem	0.0104	0.131***	0.0194
	(0.0270)	(0.0350)	(0.0409)
Depression	0.0835***	0.137***	0.120***
	(0.0309)	(0.0326)	(0.0396)
Demographics			
Sick Leave	0.0815**	0.0457	-0.0823*
	(0.0352)	(0.0304)	(0.0435)
Age	-0.000946	-0.00916***	-0.00295**
	(0.00126)	(0.00118)	(0.00143)
Female	0.0703**	-0.0159	0.0753**
	(0.0294)	(0.0282)	(0.0349)
Blue Collar	0.0340	0.0809***	-0.0348
	(0.0308)	(0.0312)	(0.0369)

Source: AWCS 2015. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Sample restricted to those who responded to AWCS absenteeism questions. Additional covariates in the regression include income and education

2018 Labor Force Status on 2015 Absenteeism & Presenteeism

	(1) Working	(2) Unemployed	(3) Temp Layoff	(4) Disabled	(5) Retired
1-4 Absences	0.00848	-0.00345	0.000782	-0.00246	-0.0193
	(0.0185)	(0.00920)	(0.00463)	(0.00673)	(0.0139)
5-10 Absences	0.0108	-0.00509	0.00971	0.0231	-0.0162
	(0.0257)	(0.0139)	(0.00920)	(0.0141)	(0.0178)
11+ Absences	-0.0607	0.0289	0.0220	0.0259	0.0265
	(0.0419)	(0.0257)	(0.0160)	(0.0229)	(0.0311)
Any presenteeism	-0.0122	0.0110	0.00247	0.00564	-0.00784
	(0.0178)	(0.00812)	(0.00443)	(0.00620)	(0.0148)
Health problem >= 6 months	-0.0353*	0.00497	-0.00712	0.0359***	0.0316**
	(0.0188)	(0.00993)	(0.00434)	(0.00869)	(0.0150)
Observations	1,795	1,795	1,795	1,795	1,795
Y mean	0.861	0.0332	0.0111	0.0196	0.0880

Source: AWCS 2015 and ALP 2018. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Respondents were working at baseline and responded to the 2018 ALP. Additional covariates include muscle/back problem, depression, sick leave, age, female, ed, income and occupation.

2018 Labor Force Status on 2015 Absenteeism & Presenteeism

	(1) Working	(2) Unemployed	(3) Temp Layoff	(4) Disabled	(5) Retired
1-4 Absences	0.0330	0.00467	-0.00953	0.00540	-0.0325
	(0.0316)	(0.0140)	(0.00613)	(0.0110)	(0.0277)
5-10 Absences	-0.00172	0.00761	-0.00976	0.0182	-0.0240
	(0.0561)	(0.0241)	(0.00635)	(0.0229)	(0.0459)
11+ Absences	0.0536	-0.0225**	-0.00602	0.0284	-0.0284
	(0.0622)	(0.00921)	(0.00660)	(0.0426)	(0.0616)
Any Presenteeism	0.00457	0.0129	-0.00640	0.00867	-0.0183
	(0.0240)	(0.0115)	(0.00695)	(0.00799)	(0.0198)
Presenteeism * 1-4 Absences	-0.0363	-0.0112	0.0158*	-0.0111	0.0200
	(0.0381)	(0.0178)	(0.00828)	(0.0134)	(0.0316)
Presenteeism * 5-10 Absences	0.0103	-0.0160	0.0267**	0.00527	0.0128
	(0.0620)	(0.0289)	(0.0126)	(0.0276)	(0.0493)
Presenteeism * 11+ Absences	-0.149*	0.0647**	0.0380*	-0.00375	0.0724
	(0.0785)	(0.0325)	(0.0208)	(0.0502)	(0.0704)
Health problem >= 6 months	-0.0361*	0.00483	-0.00713	0.0356***	0.0318**
	(0.0188)	(0.00995)	(0.00437)	(0.00870)	(0.0149)
Observations	1,795	1,795	1,795	1,795	1,795
Y mean	0.861	0.0332	0.0111	0.0196	0.0880

Source: AWCS 2015 and ALP 2018. Robust standard errors in parentheses. *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1. Respondents were working at baseline and responded to the 2018 ALP. Additional covariates include muscle/back problem, depression, sick leave, age, female, ed, income and occupation.

Summary of Preliminary Findings

- 50% of population is absent at least once per year

- 68% of population goes to work sick at least once per year

- Higher absenteeism/presenteeism among:
  - Workers with health problems (esp. depression and muscle/back problems)
  - Workers with sick leave
  - Younger workers (selection effect)
  - White collar workers and higher educated workers

- High absenteeism rates (above 90th percentile) associated with lower employment rates and higher unemployment/layoff rates 3 years later