

Presentation Data Analysis

Absence and Workload: Describing, Comparing and Explaining the Figures

Name: _____ Date: _____

Lesson aims

- Choose the right verb, adverb and preposition for different shapes of data (peak, fluctuate, fall slightly)
- Compare figures with a benchmark and between departments
- Explain possible causes carefully, without claiming more than the data shows
- Answer audience questions, including ones you cannot fully answer

Warm-up: talk about it

- What can absence figures tell a company about its staff and its workplace?
- Why might a manager want to see absence figures broken down by department?
- How can you explain a number without sounding too certain about the cause?

1. Key vocabulary

Talking about data

Word / phrase	Meaning	Example
turnover rate	the percentage of employees who leave a company in a period	Our annual turnover rate is 16%.
retention rate	the percentage of employees who stay with a company	Our retention rate improved to 84% this year.
headcount	the total number of employees	Our headcount is currently 420.
figures	numbers, especially official ones	The latest figures show a clear improvement.
trend	a general pattern of change over time	There is a downward trend in resignations.
benchmark	a standard used for comparison	The industry benchmark is 15%.
breakdown	a division of a total into smaller parts	Here is a breakdown by department.
proportion	a part of a whole	A large proportion of leavers were under 30.
year-on-year	comparing one year with the year before	Year-on-year, turnover has fallen by 3 percentage points.
exit interview	a final interview with an employee who is leaving	We carry out an exit interview with every leaver.

Describing change

Word / phrase	Meaning	Example
rise / increase / climb	go up	Turnover climbed from 14% to 22%.
fall / drop / decline	go down	The rate declined after 2023.
remain stable / level off	stay at the same level	Turnover levelled off at 16%.
fluctuate	go up and down without a clear pattern	Absence fluctuated throughout the year.
peak at	reach the highest point	Resignations peaked at 31 in March.
reach a low of	reach the lowest point	Quarterly turnover reached a low of 3.3%.

How big is the change?

Word / phrase	Meaning	Example
sharply / dramatically	a very big change, happening quickly	Resignations rose sharply in Q1.
significantly	a large and important change	Turnover fell significantly after the pay review.
steadily	at a regular, continuous rate	Retention has improved steadily.
gradually	slowly, in small steps	The gap is gradually closing.
slightly	by a small amount	We are slightly above the benchmark.

Prepositions with data

Pattern	Use
rise BY 8 points	the size of the change
rise FROM 14% TO 22%	the starting point and the end point
an increase OF 8 points	the size of the change (noun)
an increase IN turnover	the thing that changes
stand AT 16% / peak AT 31	the level or the highest point

2. Presentation phrases

Function	Useful phrases
Opening	Today I'd like to take you through our turnover figures. The aim of this presentation is to explain why people are leaving. I'll start with the overall trend, then look at the reasons, and finally suggest some next steps.
Signposting	Let's move on to the exit interview results. That brings me to my next point. Turning to the reasons for leaving, ...
Referring to a visual	As you can see from this chart, ... If you look at the line on the right, ... This graph shows / illustrates the trend since 2021.
Highlighting a key point	What's interesting here is that ... I'd like to draw your attention to ... The key point is that ...
Interpreting the data	This suggests that ... One possible explanation is ... This may be due to ...
Recommending	Based on these findings, I recommend that we ... Our next step should be to ...
Concluding	To sum up, ... The main takeaway is that ...
Inviting questions	I'd be happy to take any questions. Does anyone have any questions?

3. Model presentation

Look at the charts, then read the presentation by an analyst at Corran Contact Centre. Underline the phrases from Section 2.

Chart 1: Annual absence rate, Corran Contact Centre

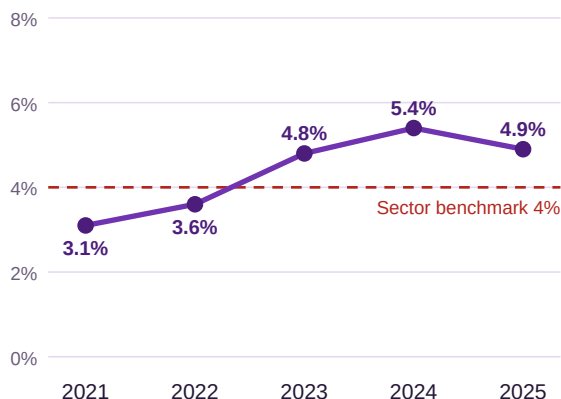


Chart 2: Main causes of absence

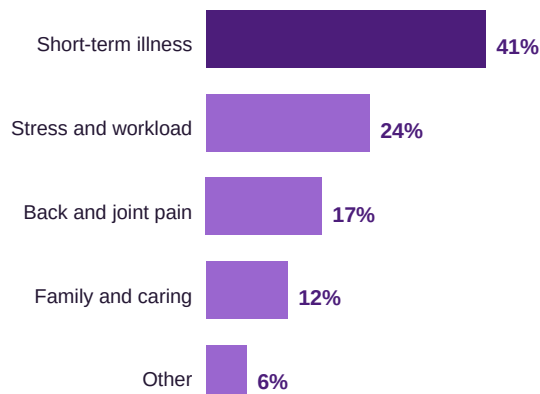


Table 1: Quarterly absence rate, 2025

Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
5.6%	4.8%	4.3%	4.9%

Table 2: Absence rate by department, 2025

Customer service	Sales	Operations	Finance
6.2%	4.4%	3.9%	2.6%

OPENING

Good afternoon, everyone. Today I'd like to take you through our absence figures for the last five years. I'll start with the overall trend, then look at the causes, and finally I'll suggest what we should do next.

THE TREND

Let's start with this line chart. As you can see, absence rose significantly between 2021 and 2024, climbing from 3.1% to a peak of 5.4%. Last year it fell slightly, to 4.9%, but that is still almost a full percentage point above the sector benchmark of 4%. The first table shows that the rate fluctuated during 2025, reaching a low of 4.3% in Q3 before rising again in Q4.

THE CAUSES

Turning to the causes, this bar chart shows why people were absent. What's interesting here is that short-term illness accounts for 41% of absence, but stress and workload come second, at 24%. The second table gives a breakdown by department: customer service has the highest rate, at 6.2%, which is more than double the figure for Finance. This may be due to the pressure on our call-handling teams.

RECOMMENDATION AND CLOSE

Based on these findings, I recommend that we review workloads in customer service and introduce a return-to-work conversation after every period of sick leave. To sum up, absence is starting to fall, but it is still above the benchmark. I'd be happy to take any questions.

Exercise 1: Vocabulary in context

Type the missing word or phrase. The first letter is given to help you.

1. The sector **b**_____ for absence is 4%, so we can compare our results with similar companies.
2. Quarterly absence reached a **l**_____ of 4.3% in Q3, the lowest figure of the year.
3. Our current **h**_____ is 310 employees, so even a small change in absence affects many people.
4. Absence **p**_____ at 5.4% in 2024, the highest level in five years. (reached the highest point)
5. A **y**_____ comparison looks at this year's figure against the figure for last year.
6. Absence **f**_____ during 2025: it went up and down from one quarter to the next.
7. A large **p**_____ of absence, 41%, was caused by short-term illness.
8. High absence can be an early warning sign of a higher staff **t**_____ rate.

Exercise 2: Prepositions with data

Choose the correct preposition for each sentence.

in from on to at of by

1. Between 2021 and 2024, absence climbed _____ 3.1% to 5.4%.
2. Quarterly absence dropped _____ 1.3 percentage points between Q1 and Q3.
3. Absence currently stands _____ 4.9%.
4. In 2025 the rate fell to 4.9%, a decrease _____ 0.5 percentage points.
5. By Q3, quarterly absence had fallen _____ 4.3%.
6. Absence rose _____ 2.3 percentage points between 2021 and 2024.
7. There was a sharp increase _____ sick leave in customer service.
8. Quarterly absence reached a low _____ 4.3% in Q3.

Exercise 3: Check the chart: find and fix the mistake

Look at the charts and tables in the model presentation. Each sentence has one mistake in the highlighted part. Type the correct word or figure.

1. In 2025, absence was **5.4%**. Correction: _____
2. Absence is now **below** the sector benchmark. Correction: _____
3. Absence has **risen** since 2024. Correction: _____
4. Absence reached its peak in **2023**. Correction: _____
5. Absence **fell** significantly between 2021 and 2024. Correction: _____
6. **Family and caring** is the most common cause of absence. Correction: _____

Exercise 4: Match the data to the description

Read the figures (one number for each period). Choose the best description.

1. Sick days per month: 40 - 41 - 40 - 41
 - a) Sick days remained stable.
 - b) Sick days fell dramatically.
 - c) Sick days fluctuated widely.
 - d) Sick days rose sharply.
2. Sick days per month: 25 - 24
 - a) Sick days dropped sharply.
 - b) Sick days fell slightly.
 - c) Sick days rose significantly.
 - d) Sick days peaked.
3. Absence rate (%): 4.0 - 4.1 - 4.2 - 4.3
 - a) Absence fluctuated.
 - b) Absence fell gradually.
 - c) Absence rose sharply.
 - d) Absence rose gradually.
4. Sick days per month: 120 - 90 - 60 - 30
 - a) Sick days fell dramatically.
 - b) Sick days fell slightly.
 - c) Sick days levelled off.
 - d) Sick days rose steadily.
5. Sick days per month: 15 - 22 - 30 - 36 - 36 - 36
 - a) Sick days fluctuated.
 - b) Sick days rose and then fell sharply.
 - c) Sick days rose steadily and then levelled off.
 - d) Sick days fell and then levelled off.
6. Absence rate (%): 4.1 - 5.2 - 3.8 - 5.0 - 4.2
 - a) Absence remained stable.
 - b) Absence fluctuated.
 - c) Absence fell steadily.
 - d) Absence rose sharply.

Exercise 5: What is the speaker doing?

Choose the function of each phrase.

A Highlighting a key point	B Interpreting the data	C Recommending
D Inviting questions	E Giving background	F Concluding
G Referring to a visual	H Signposting	I Opening

1. "As this chart shows, short-term illness is the biggest cause." **Function:** ____
2. "Our next step should be to review workloads in that department." **Function:** ____
3. "The main takeaway is that absence is falling, but too slowly." **Function:** ____

4. "Moving on to the second section, let's look at the causes." **Function:** _____
5. "Does anyone have any questions?" **Function:** _____
6. "I'd like to draw your attention to the figure for customer service." **Function:** _____
7. "The aim of today's talk is to explain what is driving absence." **Function:** _____
8. "This may be due to the pressure on our call-handling teams." **Function:** _____

Exercise 6: Build the sentence

Put the words in the correct order to make a sentence from a presentation.

1. **turn / breakdown / department. / the / Let's / to / by**

2. **point / rate / The / last / half / percentage / year. / by / a / dropped**

3. **look / the / customer / see / at / If / will / table, / that / absence. / you / service / the / highest / you / has**

4. **may / suggests / workload / affecting / This / that / attendance. / be**

5. **5.4% / then / 2024 / fell / at / and / in / slightly. / peaked / Absence**

6. **I / on / in / customer / recommend / review / Based / that / these / service. / we / workloads / figures,**

Exercise 7: Best phrase for the situation

Choose the most suitable phrase for a presentation to senior managers.

1. You are ending your presentation.
 - a) OK, that's everything, thanks.
 - b) To sum up, absence is falling, but we remain above the benchmark. Thank you, and I'd be happy to take any questions.
 - c) So, yes, the end.
 - d) I'm finished, I think. Questions?
2. You think stress may be a factor, but you do not have proof.
 - a) One possible explanation is that high workloads are putting pressure on staff.
 - b) It's obviously stress, nothing else.
 - c) This proves that managers are not doing their job.
 - d) Everyone is stressed, that's all.
3. Customer service has the highest absence and you want the board to notice.
 - a) Customer service is terrible, as you can see.
 - b) Look at this, it's huge!
 - c) I'd like to draw your attention to customer service, where absence is more than double the Finance figure.
 - d) Customer service, yes.

4. You are moving from the annual trend to the quarterly figures.
 - a) Next one.
 - b) Let's now look at how the figures changed from quarter to quarter.
 - c) Okay, quarters now.
 - d) So the quarters are the next thing after this thing.
5. You are starting a presentation to the board about last year's absence figures.
 - a) OK, can everyone hear me? Right, this is about sick days.
 - b) I made some slides about absence, so here they are.
 - c) Hello, hello. So, absence. Let's just start.
 - d) Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to begin by giving you an overview of last year's absence figures.
6. You want to explain a line on the chart.
 - a) The purple line shows the average absence rate for the whole company.
 - b) Please just look at the colours.
 - c) The line is the line for absence, I think.
 - d) That's the line.

Exercise 8: Handling audience questions

An audience member asks you a question. Choose the best response.

1. "Why did you choose the sector benchmark and not our own target?"
 - a) It's in the report.
 - b) Because it is better.
 - c) Good question. The sector benchmark lets us compare ourselves with similar companies, but we could also set an internal target.
 - d) I don't know.
2. "I think the real problem is management style, not workload."
 - a) That's wrong.
 - b) That's an interesting point. The data doesn't cover management style, so it would be worth looking at in a follow-up study.
 - c) Maybe. Next question.
 - d) No, it is workload.
3. "Does the 4.9% include long-term sickness?" (You are not sure.)
 - a) Yes, of course.
 - b) Why does that matter?
 - c) No.
 - d) I'm afraid I'm not sure. I'll check the definition and email you the answer after the presentation.
4. "Could you remind us what you mean by 'headcount'?"
 - a) Of course. Headcount is the total number of people employed by the company.
 - b) Please check the glossary.
 - c) Headcount. It's the count of heads.
 - d) I explained it earlier.

Exercise 9: Say it yourself

Write one sentence for each situation, as if you were speaking in a presentation. Use the language from this lesson.

1. Overtime hours per employee were: 2023 - 12 hours, 2024 - 15 hours, 2025 - 21 hours. Describe the trend in one sentence.

2. Employees who work night shifts have the highest absence. Suggest a possible reason (you do not have proof).

3. You have finished the annual trend. Now you want to move on to the quarterly figures. What do you say?

4. Absence in Finance is 2.6% and in customer service it is 6.2%. Highlight the difference to the audience.

Your turn: plan a mini presentation

Use the new data below. Write one or two sentences for each step, then present for about two minutes. Record yourself if you can.

Average time to hire (days), company target: 35 days

2022	2023	2024	2025
52 days	47 days	47 days	38 days

1. Opening - Say what you will talk about and how you will organise it.

2. Describe the trend - Use a verb, an adverb and the correct prepositions (from ... to ..., by ..., at ...).

3. Compare with the target - Say how close the company is to 35 days.

4. Highlight a key point - Use 'What's interesting here is that...' or similar.

5. Interpret - Suggest one possible reason, using cautious language.

6. Recommend and close - Give a recommendation, sum up and invite questions.

Self-check

- [] I used at least three trend verbs or nouns.
- [] I used the correct prepositions with the data.
- [] I signposted each part of my presentation.
- [] I used cautious language when I interpreted the data.
- [] I finished with a summary and invited questions.

TEACHER ANSWER KEY - DO NOT DISTRIBUTE

Presentation Data Analysis: Absence and Workload: Describing, Comparing and Explaining the Figures (Level B1+)

The worksheet order is fixed; answers below follow the printed numbering. The interactive HTML version shuffles item order and answer positions each time it is opened.

Exercise 1: Vocabulary in context

1. benchmark
2. low
3. headcount
4. peaked
5. year-on-year (also accept: year on year)
6. fluctuated
7. proportion (also accept: percentage, share)
8. turnover

Exercise 2: Prepositions with data

1. from; 2. by; 3. at; 4. of; 5. to; 6. by; 7. in; 8. of

Exercise 3: Check the chart: find and fix the mistake

1. In 2025, absence was **4.9%**. (accept: 4.9%)
2. Absence is now **above** the sector benchmark. (accept: above / higher than)
3. Absence has **fallen** since 2024. (accept: fallen / declined / dropped)
4. Absence reached its peak in **2024**. (accept: 2024)
5. Absence **rose** significantly between 2021 and 2024. (accept: rose / increased / climbed)
6. **Short-term illness** is the most common cause of absence. (accept: Short-term illness)

Exercise 4: Match the data to the description

1. a; 2. b; 3. d; 4. a; 5. c; 6. b
1. The numbers hardly change, so the best description is 'remained stable'.
2. A fall of 1 day is very small: 'slightly'.
3. Small, regular increases: 'gradually'.
4. The figure is four times smaller at the end, so 'dramatically' fits.
5. It goes up regularly, then stays at 36.
6. The rate goes up and down with no clear direction: 'fluctuated'.

Exercise 5: What is the speaker doing?

1. G (Referring to a visual); 2. C (Recommending); 3. F (Concluding); 4. H (Signposting); 5. D (Inviting questions); 6. A (Highlighting a key point); 7. I (Opening); 8. B (Interpreting the data)
- Letter I (Giving background) is a distractor and is not used.

Exercise 6: Build the sentence

1. Let's turn to the breakdown by department.
2. The rate dropped by half a percentage point last year.
3. If you look at the table, you will see that customer service has the highest absence.
4. This suggests that workload may be affecting attendance.
5. Absence peaked at 5.4% in 2024 and then fell slightly.
6. Based on these figures, I recommend that we review workloads in customer service.

Exercise 7: Best phrase for the situation

1. b; 2. a; 3. c; 4. b; 5. d; 6. a

1. A summary, a main message and an invitation for questions.
2. Use cautious language (possible, may, might) when you have no proof.
3. A highlighting phrase plus a specific comparison.
4. A clear signpost tells the audience what is coming next.
5. Formal, clear, and it tells the audience what the talk is about.
6. Say which line and what it shows.

Exercise 8: Handling audience questions

1. c; 2. b; 3. d; 4. a

1. Give a reason and show you are open to the suggestion.
2. Acknowledge the idea, say what the data does not cover, and suggest a next step.
3. Be honest when you do not know, and offer a follow-up.
4. Polite, clear and helpful.

Exercise 9: Say it yourself

1. Model: Overtime rose from 12 hours in 2023 to 21 hours in 2025. (Use a trend verb with from and to, and include the end figure.)
2. Model: This may be because night shifts are tiring and affect employees' health. (Use cautious language (may, might, could) because you have no proof.)
3. Model: Let's move on to the quarterly figures. (Use a signposting phrase and name the next topic.)
4. Model: What's striking here is that absence in customer service is more than double the Finance figure. (Use a highlighting phrase, then make the comparison.)

Accept any accurate, natural sentence that uses suitable language from the lesson.

Teacher notes

- Suggested timing (60 minutes): warm-up 5 min; revise the vocabulary and phrases from lesson 1 10 min; model presentation (listen, then read) 10 min; exercises 1 to 5 in class 20 min; exercises 6 to 9 for homework or the next lesson; 'Your turn' task 15 min (speaking, with feedback).
- Compare the data shapes with lesson 1: absence rises to a peak and then eases, and the 2025 quarters fluctuate. Check that the student chooses 'peaked at', 'fluctuated' and 'reached a low of' accurately.
- Percentage points vs percent: absence 'fell by 0.5 percentage points' (4.9% compared with 5.4%), not 'by 0.5%'. Practise saying both versions aloud.
- Common B1 errors: 'the absence' (use 'absence' without an article for the general idea); 'increase of' vs 'increase in'; 'rise to' vs 'rise by'; 'the figures is'; 'sick days' (countable) vs 'sickness absence'.
- Extension: ask the student to choose one chart from her own work (anonymised) and present it using the phrases from lessons 1 and 2.