



EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 WEDNESDAY 30 APRIL

RESEARCH NOTE 30 **PUBLIC SECTOR STRIKES**

Strikes are back in the news, with industrial action in the past week by oil refinery workers and school teachers. As a result, there is growing public concern at the cost of these strikes and the interruption to vital services.

New TaxPayers' Alliance research reveals that workers in the public sector go on strike far more than their private sector counterparts:

- Over the **last five years** public sector workers have gone on strike for over **20 times** as many days on average as workers in the private sector (see Table 2).
- Over the **last twelve months** public sector workers have gone on strike for **895,000 working days**, more than **100 times** as many days on average as workers in the private sector (see Table 1).
- This is despite public sector workers being paid more¹ and being far more likely to enjoy benefits such as a final salary pension scheme.²

Mike Denham, former Treasury economist and TaxPayers' Alliance expert, said:

"Public sector workers have learned from past cave-ins that this government is willing to compromise taxpayers' interests in the face of strikes. They know that politicians are far too ready to spend our money to avoid political embarrassment. And with the public sector four times more unionised than the private, strikes have increased sharply, leaving ordinary taxpayers facing untold inconvenience and expense, as well as the prospect of even higher taxes to buy off the strikes."

To discuss the research, please contact:

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¹ Office for National Statistics 'Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings', 2007, Table 13

² Barrow, B. 'Final-salary schemes 'extinct in 10 years', Daily Mail, April 2008

Table 1: Public and private sector strikes twelve-month comparison

Month	Working days lost in the private sector, 000s	Working days lost in the public sector, 000s
2007 03	9	5
2007 04	3	0
2007 05	3	108
2007 06	2	88
2007 07	3	184
2007 08	4	83
2007 09	3	5
2007 10	1	326
2007 11	3	14
2007 12	0	68
2008 01	2	2
2008 02	1	12
12 month total, 000s	34	895
Number of workers, 000s	23679	5778
Strike days/No. of workers	0.001435871	0.154897889
Public/private	107.8772677	

Table 2: Public and private sector strikes 60-month comparison

Month	Working days lost in the private sector, 000s	Working days lost in the public sector, 000s
2003 03	6	8
2003 04	5	5
2003 05	3	22
2003 06	13	21
2003 07	20	28
2003 08	2	9
2003 09	2	5
2003 10	7	123
2003 11	41	21
2003 12	4	31
2004 01	10	22
2004 02	98	122
2004 03	7	126
2004 04	3	197
2004 05	6	56
2004 06	2	17
2004 07	15	79
2004 08	10	6
2004 09	2	5
2004 10	5	2
2004 11	7	108
2004 12	0	3
2005 01	0	1
2005 02	1	6
2005 03	1	3
2005 04	3	3
2005 05	5	27
2005 06	5	1
2005 07	13	2
2005 08	5	13
2005 09	16	13
2005 10	3	4
2005 11	1	19
2005 12	8	7
2006 01	4	73
2006 02	3	10
2006 03	20	462
2006 04	1	2
2006 05	12	71
2006 06	4	2
2006 07	6	7
2006 08	4	2

Month	Working days lost in the private sector, 000s	Working days lost in the public sector, 000s
2006 09	3	20
2006 10	11	2
2006 11	22	1
2006 12	6	4
2007 01	5	117
2007 02	0	4
2007 03	9	5
2007 04	3	0
2007 05	3	108
2007 06	2	88
2007 07	3	184
2007 08	4	83
2007 09	3	5
2007 10	1	326
2007 11	3	14
2007 12	0	68
2008 01	2	2
2008 02	1	12
60 month total, 000s	464	2,787
Average No. of workers, 000s	22,949	5,770
Strike days/No. of workers	0.0202	0.4830
Public/private	23.9	

Sources and methodology

1. Data showing the number of days lost to strikes is taken from the Office for National Statistics report Labour Disputes Public and Private Breakdown:
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/StatBase/tsdataset.asp?vlnk=9350>
2. Data showing the number of people working in the public and private sectors is taken from the Office for National Statistics report Public Sector Employment:
<http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/pse0308.pdf>
3. The public/private ratio compares the number of strike days per person in the public and private sectors.