

**UNDERSTANDING AND REDUCING ABSENTEISM
IN THE INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KARNATAKA**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report summarizes the findings based on the analysis of the attendance data provided by the Karnataka Evaluation Authority (KEA).
 - The data covers the clock-in and clock-out times of 7,757 individuals between January 2014 and June 2019.
 - *Note:* we analyze variation in clock-in and clock-out patterns recorded at the main premises of the Government Secretariat in Bangalore. To the extent that employees pursue legitimate work-related activities outside of these premises, the recorded hours do not reflect unexcused absence.

- We find substantial variation in attendance, both in the extensive margin (clocking in at work) and the intensive margin (the hours spent at work for those who clock in).
 - Around a third of civil servants are not clocking in on a given day.
 - The mean hours of attendance is 7.5 hours; 5% of the labor days however are shorter than 6.2 hours, and 5% longer than 9.4 hours.

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- Variation in attendance *across* individuals explain up to 42% of the overall variation in attendance. While there exists differences in attendance across time and departments, they explain much less of the overall variation.
 - Excluding common holidays, at most 4.3% of the variation in attendance can be explained by time-variation. Absence from the main premises is highest in April and lowest in January; absence is highest on Friday and lowest on Wednesday.
 - Differences in absenteeism and hours present across departments explain at most 6.3% of the overall variation in attendance.

- Senior officers are more likely to be present, and work longer hours per day on average.
 - Compared to junior employees, senior employees are 21% points more likely to be present on any given day, staying on average 43 minutes longer each day.
 - While a third of all employees clock-out between 5-5.30pm, senior officers leave office substantially later.
 - We document a positive relationship between the attendance patterns of the senior officer and the attendance of his/her subordinates.

- Further research can help to better understand how to shape attendance dynamics
 - Data on contractual hours of work is needed to understand if absenteeism or short work hours reflect deviations from the contractual hours. This would allow us to provide a precise assessment on the number of days “lost” due to absenteeism.
 - Longer hours of work need not translate into productivity and work satisfaction. Data on productivity and well-being could help understand the link between hours of work and performance.
 - To benchmark the results, we require similar attendance data for organizations beyond the Government Secretariat (e.g. district administrations).
 - Researchers at the Haas School of Business, UC Berkeley are keen to provide research capacity to foster an international co-generation of knowledge between academia and public sector.