

SICKNESS ABSENCE IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Sickness absence, or as it can be defined more precisely, incapacity to work due to disease or injury, is one of the major topics in all European countries. High level of absence can be costly for the absent person, the employer and also the social system. It adversely affects efficiency, productivity and profitability.

This issue becomes more urgent in the context of population ageing. This demographic process will lead to decline in proportion of economically active people and consequently to deterioration of the performance of the whole economy.

That is why these facts, causes and trends of sickness absence should be examined better and actions to manage and reduce sickness absence should be taken. Moreover, sickness absence in the Czech Republic is much higher than the average of European countries.

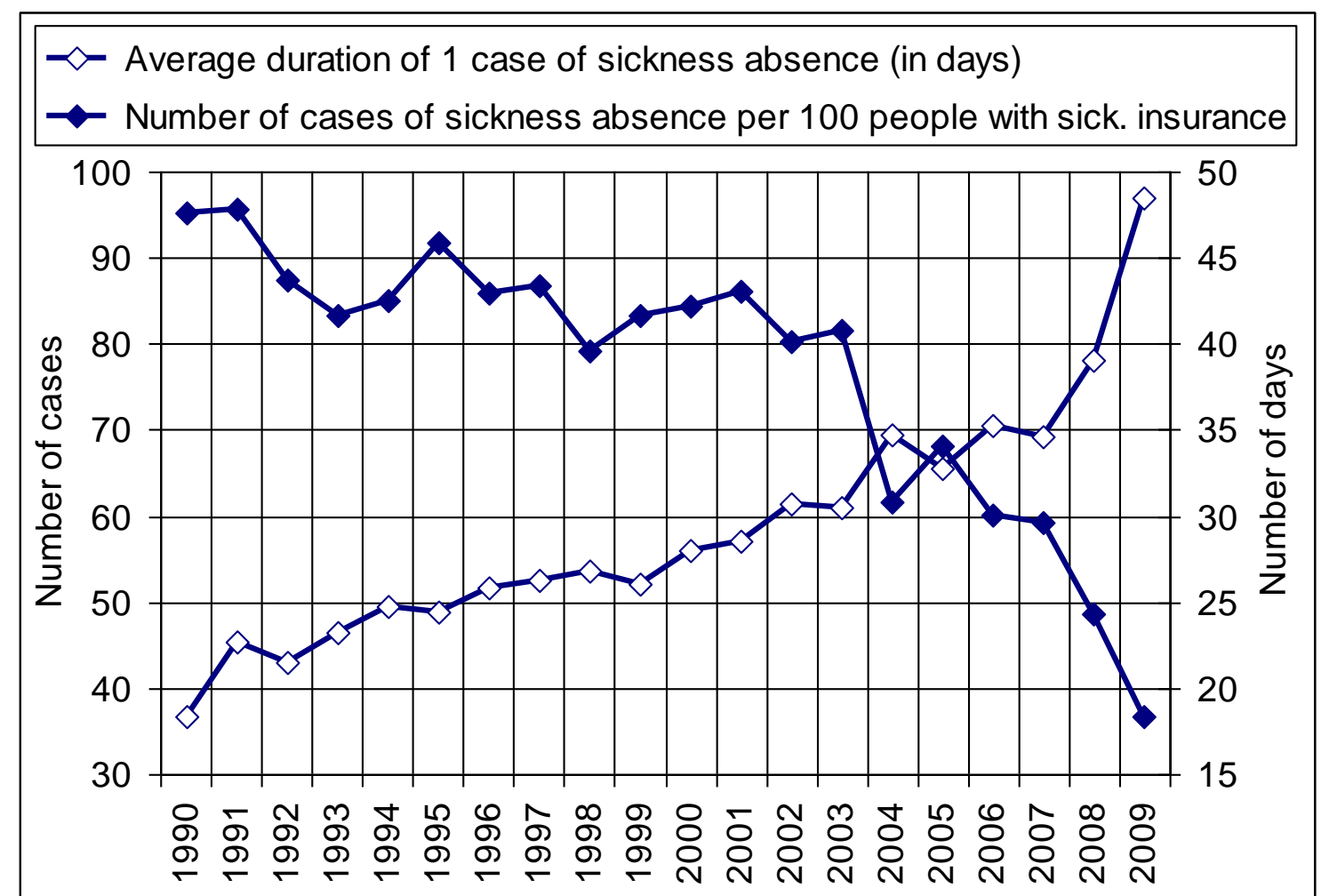
DEVELOPMENT AND TRENDS

Since the beginning of 1990:

- the number of sickness absence cases per 100 people with sickness insurance has dropped. In 1990, it was 95 sickness absence cases per 100 people with sickness insurance. By 2009 the number declined to 37 cases per 100 people.
- the average duration of 1 sickness absence case has increased. The average duration of 1 sickness absence case raised from 18 days in 1990 to 48 days in 2009.
- the average percentage of sickness absence (the complex indicator of sickness absence, which represents the percentage of workers who are absent from work due to disease or injury per day) grew up until 2003 and then started to decline. The average percentage of sickness absence was 4.8 in 1990. This number grew to 6.8 in 2003 and then declined to 4.9 in 2009.

Decline was mainly caused by changes in legislation, especially by reduction the financial compensation in the first 14 days of sickness absence since 2004.

Figure 1: The number of sickness absence cases per 100 people with sickness insurance and average duration of 1 case, 1990–2009

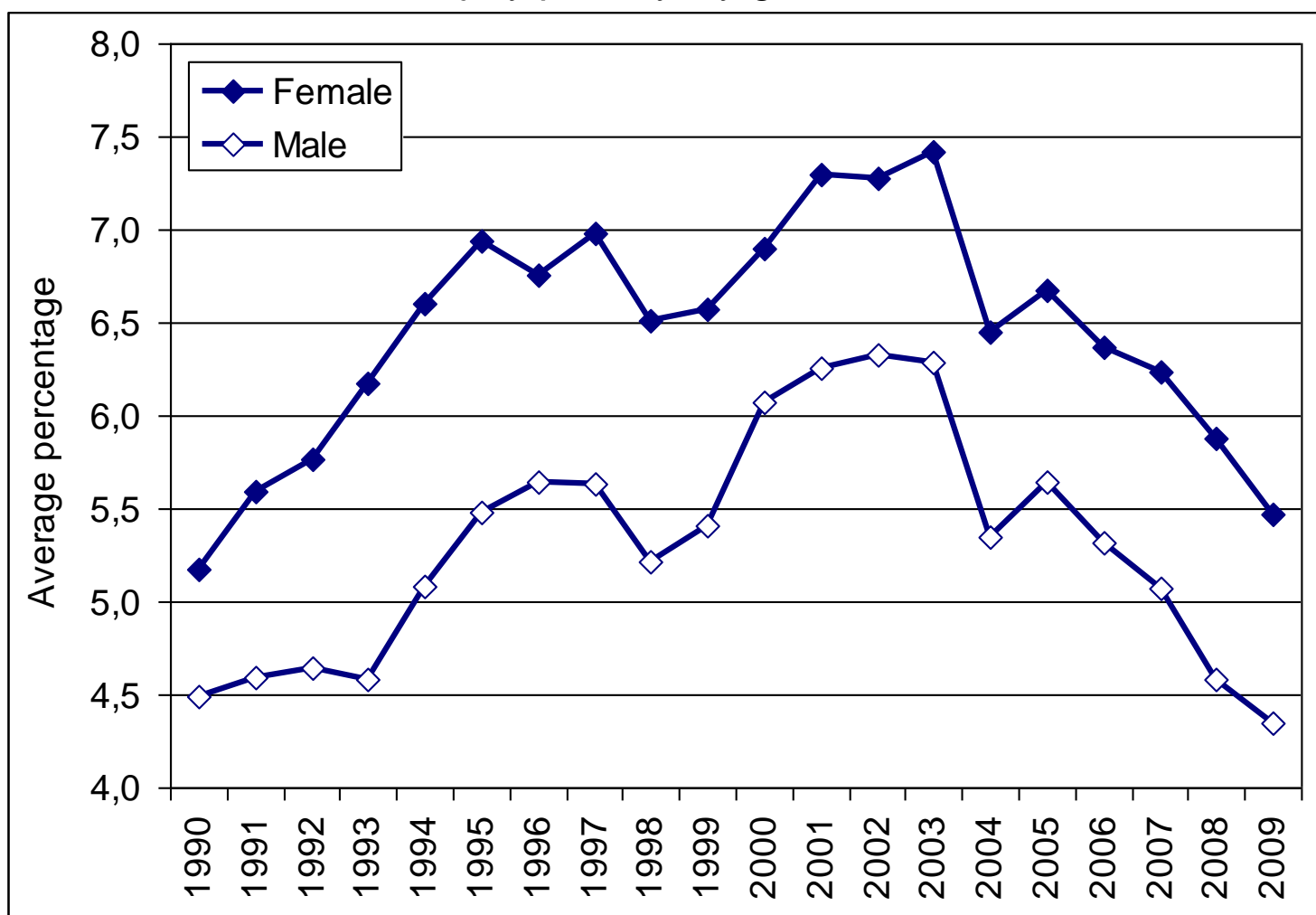


Source: www.czso.cz

FACTORS INFLUENCING LEVEL OF SICKNESS ABSENCE

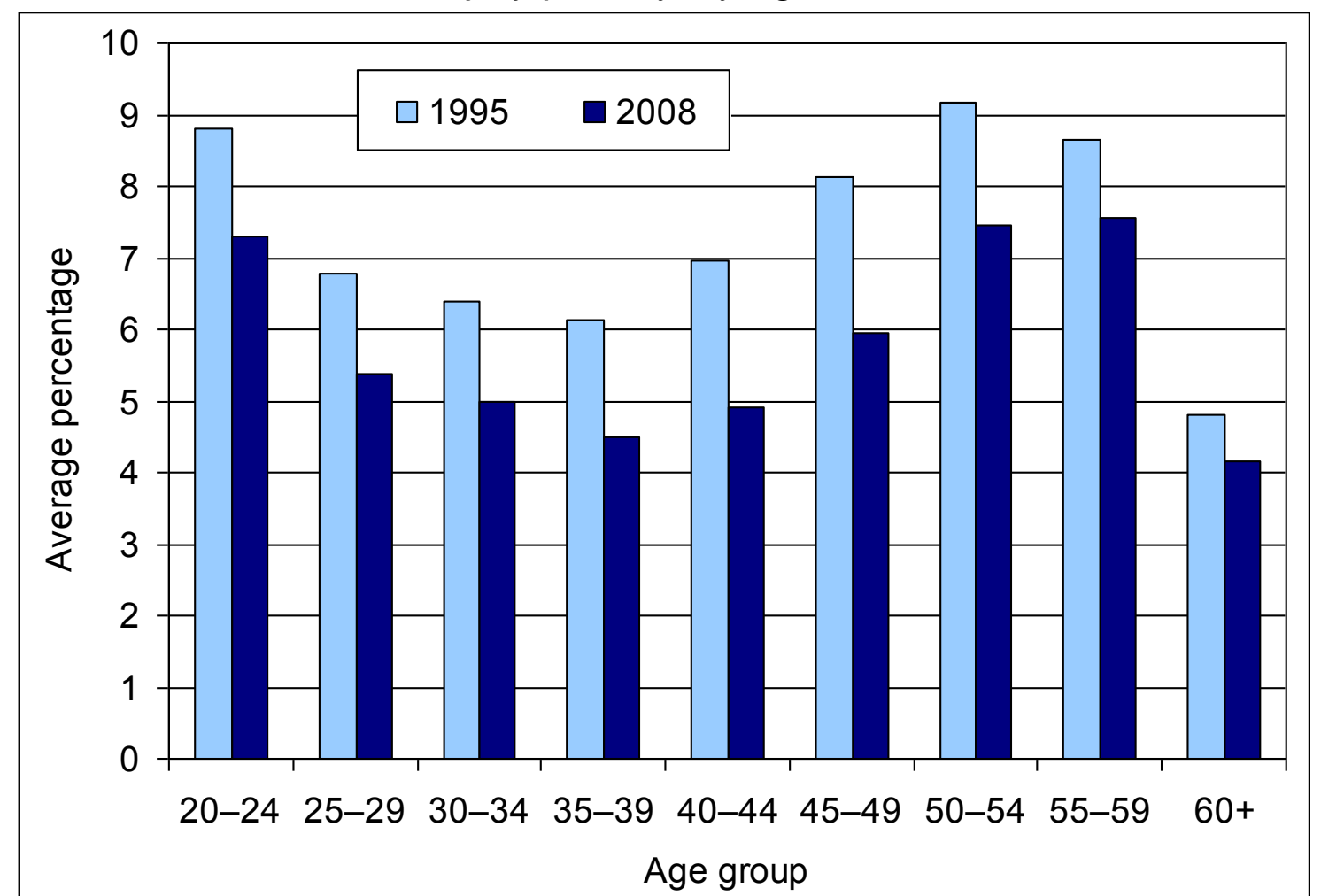
Sickness absence differs according to workers' gender and age, as well. Women have higher level of sickness absence than men. They have not only longer average duration of 1 sickness absence case, but also more frequent absent spells. The elderly have higher level of sickness absence than the young. Younger people have more frequent absent spells but markedly shorter than are those of the elderly.

Figure 2: The average percentage of workers who are absent from work due to disease or injury per day, by gender, 1990–2009



Source: www.czso.cz

Figure 3: The average percentage of workers who are absent from work due to disease or injury per day, by age, 1995 and 2008



Source: www.uzis.cz

Sickness absence is influenced not only by workers' health. Other incentives, such as financial compensation of lost income, generosity of social system, arrangement of working hours, stability of the labour market or level of unemployment have effect on its level. Modifying of these incentives may result lower level of sickness absence.

Through the method of decomposition, it was found out that the change of sickness absence level between 1995 and 2008 was largely determined by intensity of the reference phenomenon. E.g. the average percentage of sickness absence dropped by 1.62 percent points, which is 21.9 %. The decline was caused by intensity of this indicator, which dropped by 22.02 %. The effect of age structure was very weak and moreover, it counteracted the decline of this indicator.

Figure 4: Decomposition of average percentage of sickness absence, between 1995 and 2008

| Change | absolute | relative |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|
| Effect of intensity | -1,63 | -22,02% |
| Effect of age structure | 0,01 | 0,10% |
| Total | -1,62 | -21,92% |