

New workers rights unveiled against backdrop of 'strike Britain'



Our unmissable weekly email of all the gossip, rumours and covert goings-on inside the Square Mile

Sign up

I would like to be emailed about offers, event and updates from Evening Standard. Read our [privacy notice](#).

The government said its Employment Rights Bill is being unveiled against a backdrop of it inheriting a “battered” economy from the [Conservatives](#), who ministers accused of presiding over “strike Britain”.

More than twice as many days were lost to industrial action than [France](#) under Rishi Sunak’s premiership, said [Labour](#), following more than two years of strikes by hundreds of thousands of workers including nurses, teachers, junior doctors, train drivers and barristers.

Labour said new analysis showed that the Tories’ “scorched-earth” approach to strikes over the last two years cost the economy £3.3 billion in lost productivity, including £1.7 billion from NHS industrial action alone.

If the trend continued for another term of Conservative government, the UK would have been projected to lose 13.5 million working days, costing the economy just under £5 billion in lost productivity, said Labour.

Under Rishi Sunak's premiership the UK lost on average just under three million working days a year to industrial action, twice as many a year as France, said Labour.

Overall since May 2010 the UK lost 9,873,000 days to strike action, while from 2016 to 2022, the number of hours lost to strikes increased more than sevenfold, with the number of stoppages in 2022 hitting a 30-year high.

In 2022, the UK had 65 times more days lost to strike than Sweden, 11 times more than Germany and twice as many as Spain, the government added.

Soon after winning the general election in July, the government resolved long-running disputes involving junior doctors and train drivers.

The government added that industrial action during the 14 years of the Conservatives cost the UK economy £3,307,455,000 in lost output and £1,207,221,075 in lost taxes for HMRC.