

French economic outlook

At the end of 2021, in the context of the Covid epidemic, sick leave impacted the volume of work paid by companies

In 2021, on average over the year, the volume of work paid by companies in the private sector (► [Methodology](#)) remained 2.1% below its 2019 level. It fell back by 9.4% in 2020 compared to 2019, a fall on a scale unprecedented since the post-war period, to be likened to the drop in gross domestic product (GDP) by volume (-8.0%) or in production in the non-agricultural market branches (-9.6%).

At the height of the health crisis, and until May 2021, the take-up of short-time working accounted for the majority of the decline in the volume of paid work (► [Focus](#) in *Economic Outlook* of 17 November 2020). Since then, with the end of the third wave of the epidemic and the gradual lifting of restrictive measures up to mid-2021, recourse to short-time working has declined significantly. At the end of 2021, the main factor affecting the volume of paid work was that of worker absences, mainly due to sick leave (► [Figure](#)). Thus, in December 2021, the volume of paid work was 1.9% above its December 2019

level, due in particular to an increase over two years in the volume of employment contracts, associated with the rise in payroll employment, and which contributed +4 points to the difference compared to December 2019. However, absences due mainly to sick leave slowed down this overall change, contributing -1.2 points.

The intensity of the waves of the Covid epidemic in fact caused employees to take a great deal of sick leave, which also includes leave for childcare and periods of isolation, although the information declared by companies each month in the Nominative Social Declaration (DSN) does not specify the reason for the sick leave. Compared to the situation before the health crisis, sick leave in December 2021 represented an additional work deficit of around 200,000 full-time equivalent jobs in the private sector. This estimate is relatively homogeneous across sectors of activity and size of employing establishment as well as by department. ●

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Methodology

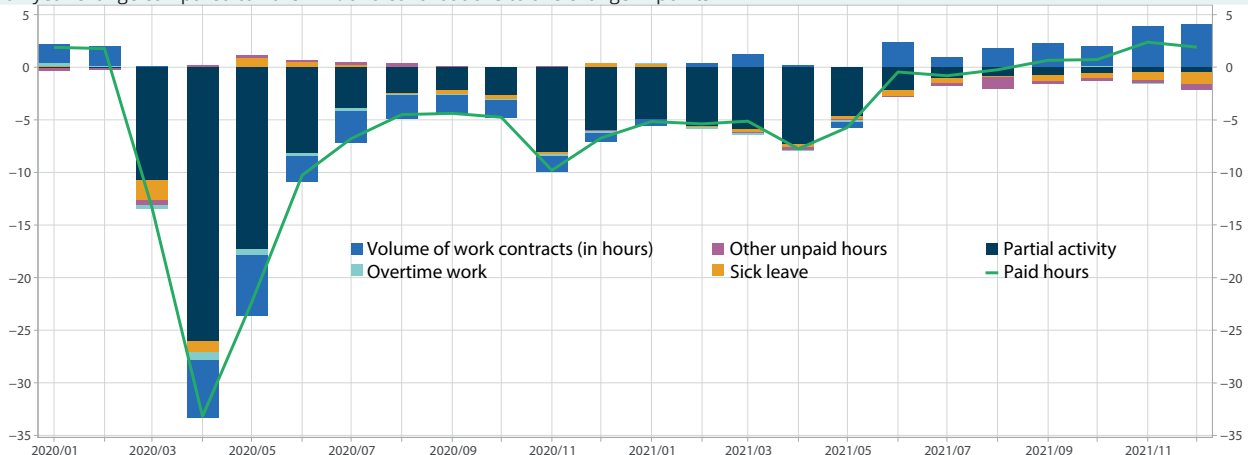
The estimate presented in this Focus is the result of a provisional analysis of the Nominative Social Declarations (DSN) sent in by companies every month. The volume of paid work corresponds to the duration for which the employee is paid over the period, which in particular includes overtime but also absences for which the employee receives remuneration (paid leave, public holidays, days attributed for reduced working time). From the DSNs, it is also possible to estimate the duration of unpaid absences (unpaid leave, sick leave with or without pay being maintained, period of short-term working, etc.) and determine the main reasons. ●

Bibliography

INSEE, (2020), "The volume of work paid by companies, an invaluable indicator for analysing the current crisis", *Economic outlook* du 17 November 2020. ●

► Volume of paid work compared to 2019 and contributions to this change

year-on-year change compared to 2019 in % and contributions to this change in points



Note: changes are calculated in relation to the same month in 2019.

Source: DSN; provisional processing INSEE