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Research Note 63

Strikes in the public and private sectors

In May 2008 the TaxPayers' Alliance warned of a "looming winter of discontent". With a crisis in the public finances, there are likely to be significant battles between any government that looks to cut spending and the labour unions. But cuts have not yet got underway on a significant scale and the private sector has borne the brunt of the recession. Despite that, this new research note shows that public sector staff are already striking **fifteen times more** than those in the private sector, a far greater ratio than ten years ago. Statistics on strike days and employment are from the Office for National Statistics.

Table 1: Comparison of strike days, public and private sector, 2009

	Public sector	Private sector
Employment, 2009	6,070,000.00	22,804,000.00
Working days lost to labour disputes, 2009	353,000.00	88,000.00
Working days lost per worker, 2009	0.0582	0.0039
Public sector rate/private sector rate, 2009	15.07	

Table 2: Comparison of strike days, public and private sector, 1999

	Public sector	Private sector
Employment, 1999	5,221,000.00	21,895,000.00
Working days lost to labour disputes, 1999	70,000.00	172,000.00
Working days lost per worker, 1999	0.0134	0.0079
Public sector rate/private sector rate, 1999	1.71	



To arrange broadcast interviews or discuss the
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