



**In Summary:**

**Essential workers’  
experience of work during the  
COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland**

**First findings from the UCD  
Working in Ireland Survey, 2021**

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At least six in ten essential workers in Ireland were subject to a moderate or a high level of risk of contracting Covid-19 in the workplace. Among them, female workers were at a greater risk of contracting the virus than were male workers.



Workers in public administration and defence, and human health were particularly high-risk prone.



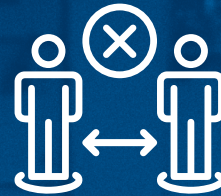
Essential workers' well-being was substantially impaired during the Covid-19 pandemic. This was manifested in pronounced levels of reported anxiety. Again, this was particularly so for female essential workers.



Although essential workers faced enormous pressures and anxieties while at work, they were more likely than remote workers to be able to disconnect from their work once they returned home.



Almost seven in ten essential workers voiced their worries about contracting the virus to management. However, only half of these essential workers reported that their organisations fully addressed their concerns.



Covid-19 mitigation strategies were much better implemented for high earner essential workers than they were for essential workers on lower wages.



Mitigation strategies were reported to be well-implemented in the agriculture and construction sectors, but less so in public administration and defence as well as in the financial services sector.



Essential workers' perceptions of trade union influence during the pandemic are generally positive. There is a modest but significant correlation between a union presence in the workplace and low levels of perceived risk of workers contracting Coronavirus.



A favourable industrial relations environment in the workplace where essential workers expressed trust in their management and believed they were treated fairly was associated with a greater likelihood of staff voicing their concerns of Covid-19 and they being effectively addressed by their employer.



We also found that training and development provision helped to sustain essential workers' well-being and health, particularly in respect of their anxiety levels.



Extensive work effort, measured by whether or not essential workers were working over 40hours/week, was high for those employed in public administration and defence.



High work effort levels were particularly more pronounced among female essential workers and those working in the human health and manufacturing sectors.



There was also a significant correlation between essential workers' levels of intensive work effort and their levels of anxiety; the harder they worked, the higher the level of anxiety they experienced.



Essential workers employed in workplaces where they trusted their management and believed they were treated with fairness and respect, and where there was trade union representation were more likely to report lower levels of work intensification and anxiety.



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The UCD Working in Ireland Survey Website:

[www.smurfitschool.ie/facultyresearch/jobqualitystudy/overviewofstudy/](http://www.smurfitschool.ie/facultyresearch/jobqualitystudy/overviewofstudy/)

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