

# **COVID-19: What impact has it has on Equality and Workers' Rights?**

This is an initial key finding report analysis for the purpose of sharing internally with the STUC Equalities Structures and STUC staff. A more in-depth report including recommendations from the STUC will be produced and be made public. The STUC will liaise with Equalities Committees and affiliates about taking key findings forward.



## **Who? What? Why? How? When?**

### **The basics (overview)**

- The STUC conducted a survey to gain insight into the impacts of COVID-19 on Equality related workplace issues. The survey asked 29 questions (7 demographic Qs) and incorporated a range of Equality related themes.
- An equality focussed survey emerged from a joint call from all of the STUC Equality Committee structures. There was cross-equalities support that the STUC should further explore the unique impacts that COVID-19 may be having on Equalities and Trade Unionists with protected characteristics in Scotland. This would complement ongoing STUC research on the pandemics impacts on workers.
- All STUC Equalities Committees were given the opportunity to suggest themes/questions. All committee members were also invited to test the survey before it went live.
- The survey was open from early September 2020 – early November.
- The survey was produced and conducted via survey monkey. Just shy of 1000 people participated.



# Equalities Survey: Initial Key Stat Findings.

- Almost 50% of Workers' have said that their Mental Health has been negatively affected by the impacts of COVID-19.
- 50% of workers would not feel comfortable disclosing or discussing their Mental Health concerns, issues or illnesses with their employer.
- 67% of people who have disclosed they have a mental health issue or illness have been offered no form of reasonable adjustment for their mental health.
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- 63% of people who are on a zero-hours contract have seen a drop-in income in comparisons to those on a contract.
- 80% of Disabled Workers are worried at the impacts that next 6 months will have on their mental health.
- For workers' whose mental health has

improved throughout COVID-19 this has said to be because of being away from their workplace environment, increased flexibility and control.

- 50 % of those on zero-hour contracts fear they will face redundancy in the next 6 months. Those on no contract are much more concerned about redundancy and loss of income.
- 43% of people have been offered no form of home working risk assessment.
- 20% of Disabled Workers have lost their reasonable adjustments because of home working.
- Younger Workers' (u25) and Older people (55+) have been more likely to be affected by a loss of income.
- Workers' caring responsibilities have increased for all genders. Although men's caring responsibilities have increased, women's caring responsibilities are still greater.
- Of those surveyed, men are more likely to be offered flexible working than women.
- Balancing work commitments with



caring responsibilities in the next six months is of deep concern.

- 52% of Disabled People are worried about balancing caring and work in the next 6 months.
- The impacts of COVID-19 on Workers' living situations is unclear. However, more LGBT+ people have expressed that COVID-19 has impacted on their family/home relationships.
- Some Women participants openly shared that COVID-19 has impacted on

their relationships and experienced an increase of coercive control and gender-based violence.

- More u25s who completed the survey were furloughed and made redundant because of COVID-19.
- Young Workers' and Older Workers' are most worried about-facing redundancy in the next six months.
- Employers are failing to put in place reasonable adjustments.
- There is a strong feeling of anger and

distrust in employers on a range of Equality and Health and Safety issues.

- Working from home has had mixed impacts. However, working from home should not be imposed.

- 65% of LGBT+ People are worried about how the next 6 months will impact their mental health.

## **Some direct quotes from workers'**

*"I am disabled and live alone. It has been isolating, plus working from home put an immense amount of pressure on me due to having to learn to work in a completely different way. It has been distressing to go out for essential shopping as I have been pushed and shoved."*

*"I was signed off because of severe mental health issues which were exacerbated by Covid-19"*

*"I'm terrified in work as I work in a school and the schools are not safe"*

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*“I am constantly worrying about money and the effect of lock down has only made worse existing mental health problems. I'm also locked down with my partner who during lock down got mentally abusive and coercive.”*

*“I have felt under more pressure due to increased workload, new ways of working, & an inability to get in contact with people working from home”.*

*“My line managers treat staff as a nuisance rather than an asset and have zero empathetic skills”.*

*“The managers are aware I am seriously struggling with mental health as I am in permanent fight or flight mode with the team leaders and often in tears - however the action plan from occupational health continues to be ignored or not even reviewed with me. I am soldiering on as you do to keep my permanent full-time job”*





*“As an Asian woman in the media I feel constantly undervalued and demoted. Working twice as hard for poor pay and having to answer questions and “solve” diversity problems. The emotional toll has been exhausting”*

*“The Government do not care about school staff. Only care that kids are in the building. We have a completely different set of rules to everyone else. They don't care at all. We are expendable.”*

*“Any concerns are literally shrugged off. I am made to feel like a hysterical malcontent when I raise H&S violations or mention my health (physical and mental) concerns.”*

*“My employer monitors us and denigrates the quality of our work more than they did before lockdown. They seem to be using it as a bullying exercise.”*

*“I think employers forget reasonable adjustments and flexible working should exist when working at home too. Just because we are not physically in a building we are still working and I don't feel our reasonable adjustments are respected.*





*“Lots us low paid, labelled lower skilled workers and those self-employed have lost incomes and our jobs. So many of us are being offered nothing. The most frightening thing is the Scot and UK Gov is offering no hope or vision of what things will be like at end of pandemic-so we'll have been locked down for best part of year and will emerge from this with no job or hope of getting one.”*

*“I was not given support with my mental health by my employer, just phone calls and voicemails asking when I would be back to work.”*

*“Deployed abandoned complete lack of trust.”*

*“Very little support from management/ expected to carry on as normal and do non-urgent type visits thus putting clients/patients at risk who have complex underlying health conditions. This is simply unacceptable”*

*“My Company is in denial about the negative mental health impacts. They talk about it and do awareness sessions but they seem unaware how difficult it is for people to speak up and the social*

*“I would never speak to any of my work colleagues or employers about my mental health. I don’t trust they would take it seriously or put support in place”*

*“My employer has put cost cutting over keeping me safe”*

*“I feel I'm being gaslighted by the Scottish Government. They tell me I cannot meet with one other household inside a house, but it's safe for me to teach 180 pupils a day in a classroom built for 20 pupils. They're in groups of 30 (so room 50% over capacity BEFORE social distancing) for up to 100 minutes with no masks. I'm being told this is safe despite rising cases in under 19s. I feel physically sick going to work and no longer sleep at night”*

*“There is no equity of treatment of public sector workers”*

*“In mental health terms, we are effectively treated as “worker bees “to obey without question and remain silent. We are not treated as people. However, this was the situation before WFH, too*

