

COVID-19, Employment and Health in Wales Study: Key Findings and Future Work

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Background

Employment and Health

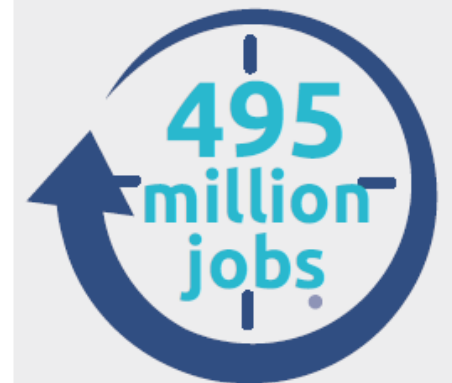
- Relationships between good health and good employment are well established.
- Welsh Health Equity Status report (WHESRI).
 - Health and employment and working conditions.
 - Health and income security and social protection.
- Wales witnessed 16,000 redundancies in the three months to November 2020.
 - Redundancy rate in this period was the highest since 2009.



An estimated
25 million
jobs could be lost
globally due
to the pandemic

Source: International Labour Organization

Working hours
equivalent to



were lost in
the second
quarter of 2020

Source: International Labour Organization and The World Bank

COVID-19, Employment and Health in Wales Study

Study Objectives (to determine)

- The impact of COVID-19 on employment security;
- Identify those groups most at risk of employment and/or financial insecurity;
- The underlying prevalence of precarious employment in Wales;
- The impact of economic, social and public health interventions on employment and health;
- The public perceptions of fair (and future) work

COVID-19, Employment and Health in Wales Study

Design, methods

- Cross-sectional, nationally representative household survey (May/June)
 - Recruitment via invitation letters (x2) to participate in online questionnaire
 - 18-64 years and in paid employment/self employment in February 2020.
- Topics
 - Change in employment (Pre and current)
 - Health and wellbeing
 - Income and household characteristics
- **1,382 adults (20,000 invitations, 6.9% response rate)**
- Analysis Chi-squared, logistic regression models examined associations between demographics, health status and employment outcomes

The impact of COVID-19 on employment security

Groups most at risk of employment and/or financial insecurity

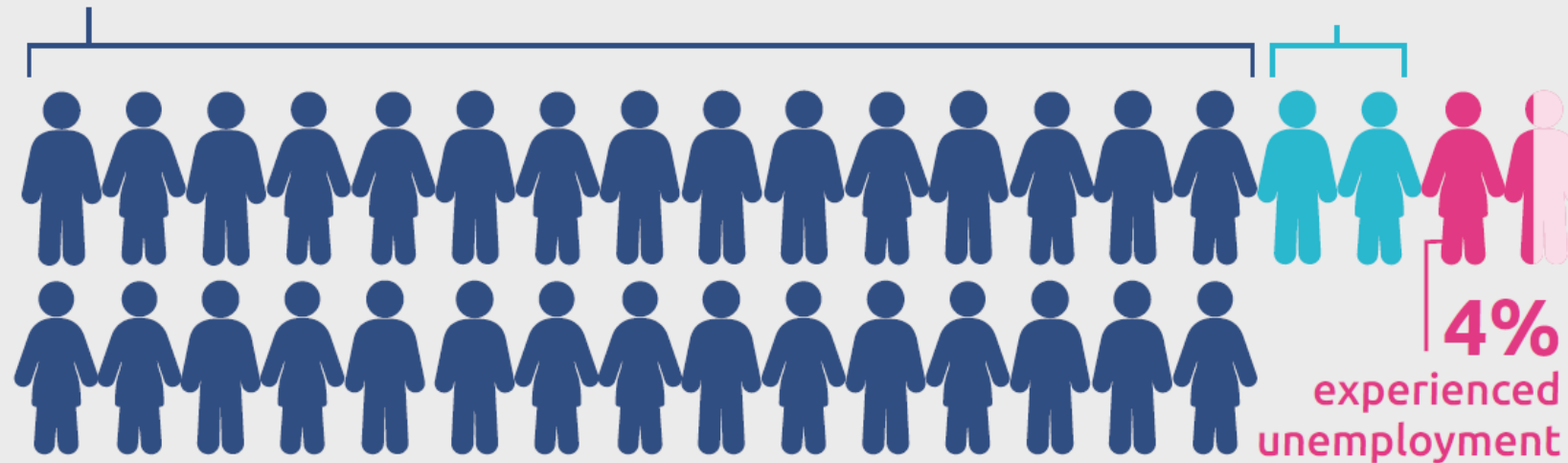
Key Findings

Overall

Our findings suggest that of the Welsh working age population (as of May/June 2020):

90%

were in the same job as they were in February 2020



6%
changed jobs

4%
experienced
unemployment

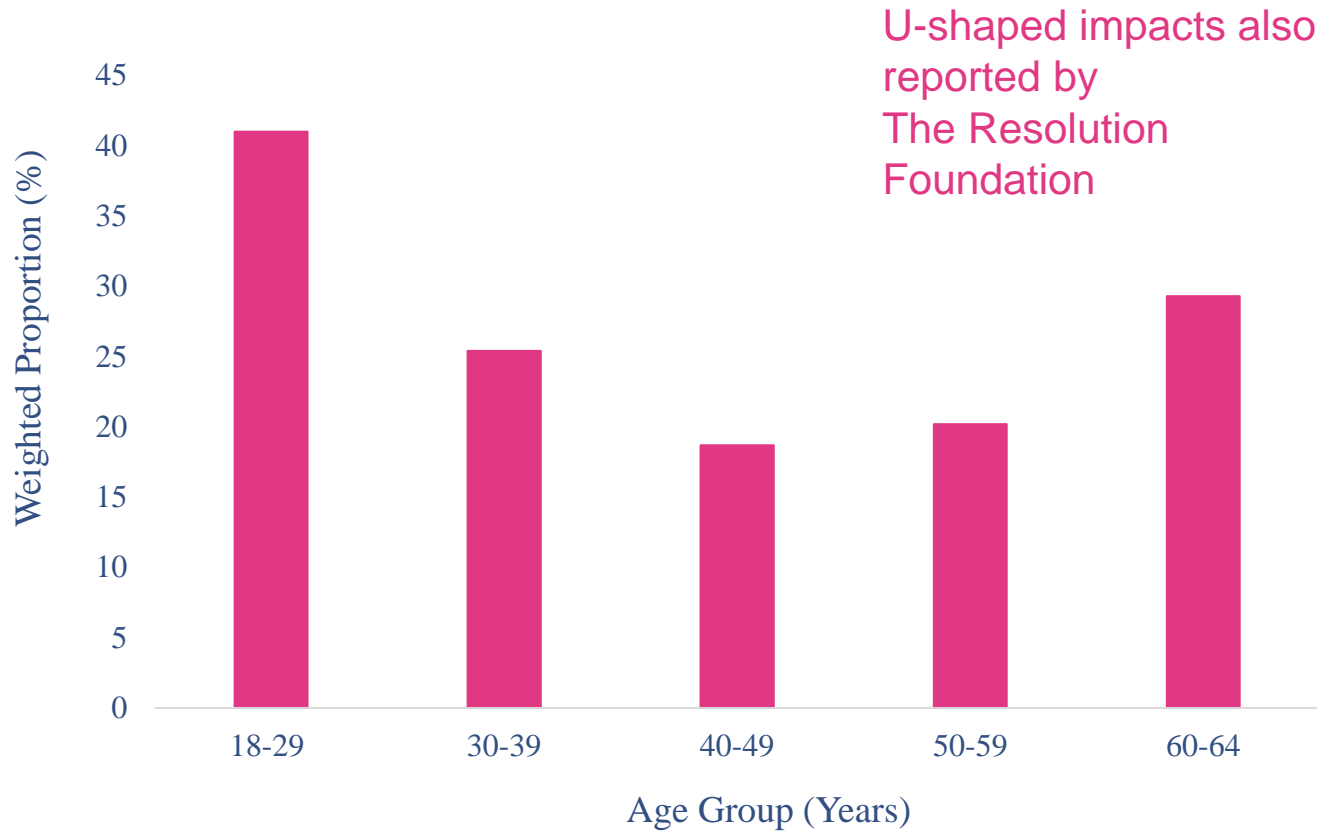


27%
reported
being placed
on furlough

UK furlough figures at the time (May/June 2020) were 22-31%

In May 2020, 316,500 workers in Wales had been furloughed

Furlough by age group



Age

Younger Workers (18-29 years)

- **One in three younger workers (41%) were placed on furlough.**
- **Younger workers were 2.5 times more likely** to have been placed on furlough than 40-49 years age group.

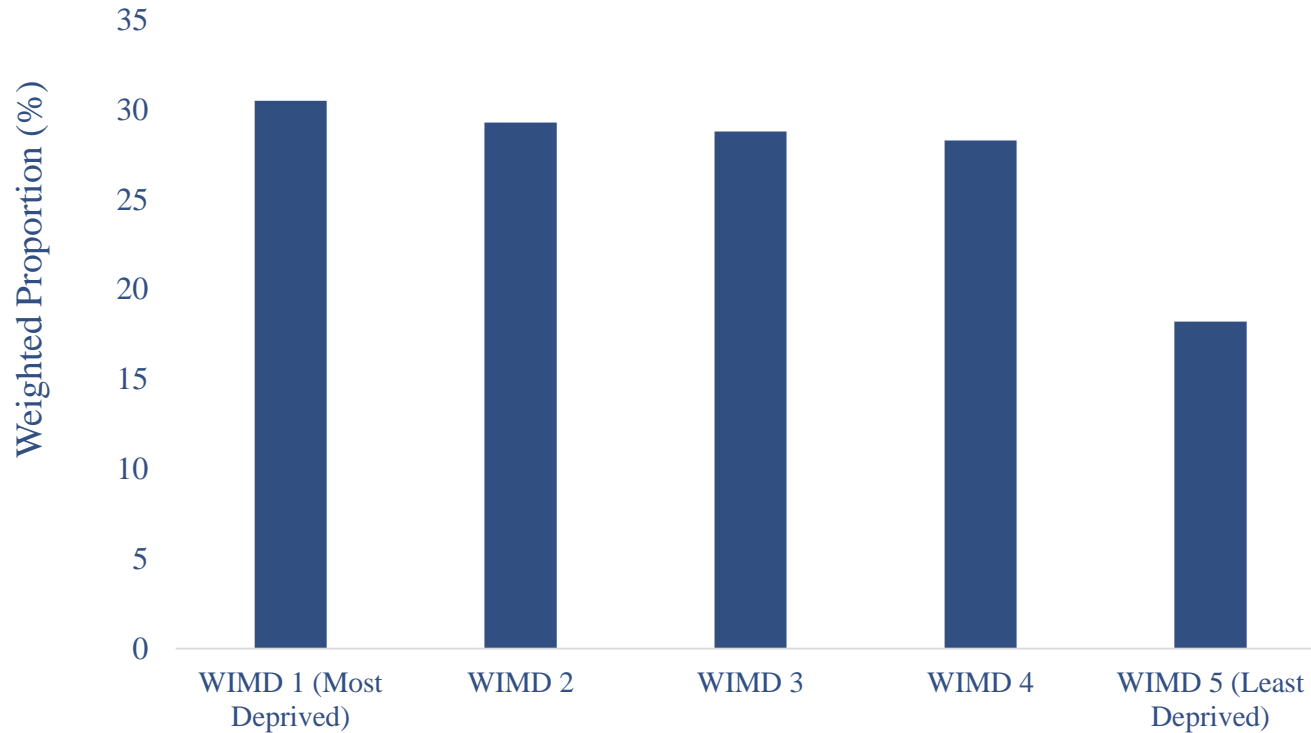
Older Workers (60-64 years)

- **Almost one in three older workers (29%) reported being placed on furlough.**

Older workers were:

- **2 times more likely** to have been placed on furlough than 40-49 years age group.
- **Less likely to have changed jobs or secured a new job** compared to those aged 40-49 years.

Furlough by deprivation quintile

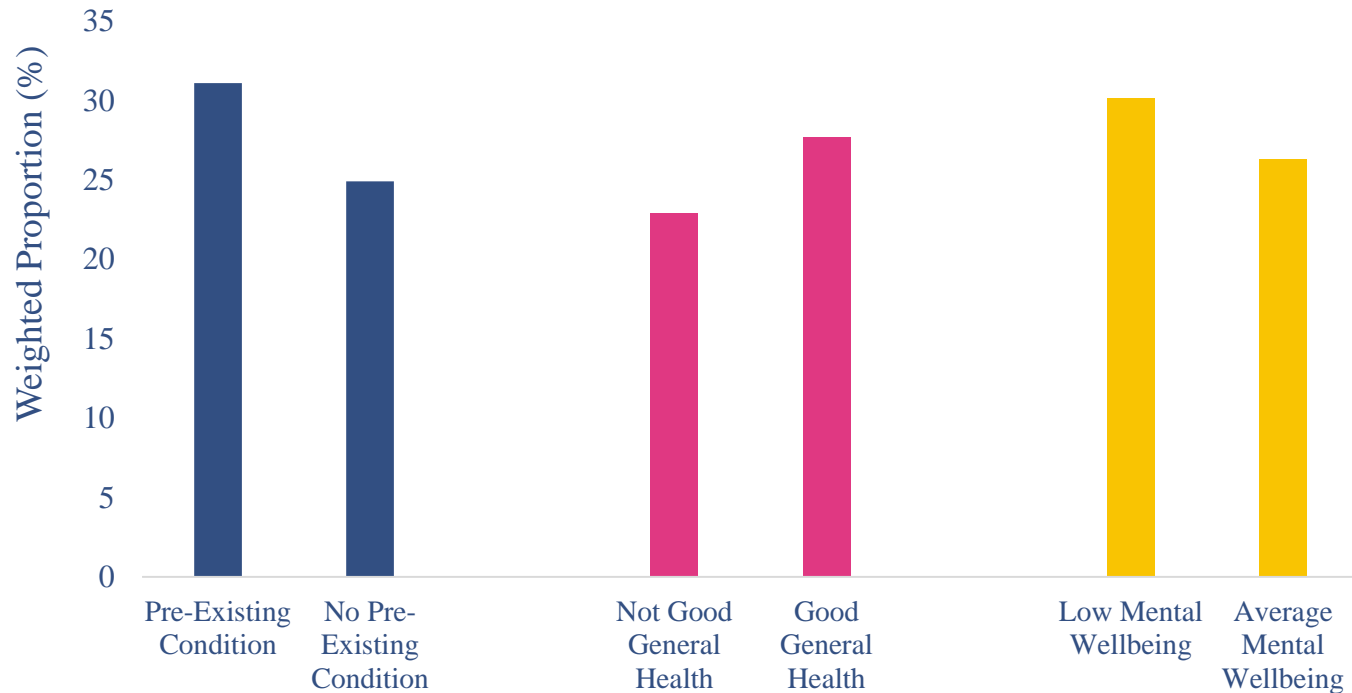


Household Characteristics

Deprivation

- **The most deprived communities (31%) were home to the highest proportion of people on furlough** and the number of people furloughed declined as a gradient across deprivation quintiles to 18% in the least deprived areas.

Furlough by (self-reported) health



Health and Wellbeing

- **Individuals who reported low mental wellbeing were 4 times more likely** to have experienced job losses.
- **Those who reported having 'not good' general health were less likely** to have been placed on furlough.

The inclusion of health status adds to the evidence base.

Pre-existing (health) condition – National Survey for Wales Question – Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?

General Health – National Survey for Wales Question – How is your health in general?

Mental wellbeing determined by The Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (short version)



Job Characteristics

Contract Type

- **Those employed on atypical and fixed term contracts were 11 and 4 times more likely, respectively, to have experienced job losses compared to those on permanent contracts.**
- **A higher proportion of workers with atypical contracts (51%) were on furlough** compared to those on permanent (28%) or fixed term contracts (18%).

- **Those employed on atypical and fixed term contracts were 3 and 2 times more likely** to have changed jobs or secured a new job compared to those on permanent contracts.

Skill Level

- **A higher proportion of low skilled workers (43%) were on furlough, compared to high skilled workers (12%).**

The underlying prevalence of precarious employment in Wales

In progress

Examining the underlying factors contributing to precarious employment in Wales

- Precarious employment associated with poorer health
 - Prevalence not reported widely in Wales
- Understanding which elements within the Employment Precariousness Scale (EPRES) are key drivers in Wales
 - Contract (temporariness)
 - Disempowerment
 - Vulnerability
 - Wages
 - Rights
- 'In paid' employment sub-sample (~1,200)

In progress

Examining the underlying factors contributing to precarious employment in Wales



In progress

Examining the underlying factors contributing to precarious employment in Wales

Emerging Figures

- Over 1 in 4 calculated to be in precarious employment.
- More prevalent in 18-30 years age group (41.0%), females (28.3%) and those with poorer health.
- Association with poorer health was observed in those who reported high wages or vulnerability precarity.

The impact of economic, social and public health interventions on employment and health

In progress

Examining the longer term impact on health and wellbeing

Follow-Up/Longitudinal study

- December 2020 – January 2021
- Re-invited 1,084 individuals, 626 responses (58% response rate)
- Understanding
 - Changes in employment and/or financial changes since pandemic
 - Differences across demographic groups
 - Differences by (self reported) health
 - Differences by health (primary and secondary care), through data linkage

Summary

- In May/June 2020 in Wales, visible impact of employment changes disproportionately impacting
 - younger and older groups
 - more deprived areas
 - those in more precarious employment contract types
 - those in poorer health
- Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (furlough) supportive, but considerable uncertainty for the future.
- Understanding the drivers of precarious employment to help inform action will be important into recovery.
- Impact of immediate and sustained changes to employment on health and wellbeing is less well understood. Work in progress.

Acknowledgements

- Study Participants
- MEL Research
- Co-authors (Dr Richard Kyle, Dr Jiao Song, Prof Alisha Davies) and wider study team (Dr Ciarán Humphreys, Dr Kate Isherwood, Lois Griffiths)
- Any Questions?
- Email: Benjamin.Gray@wales.nhs.uk
- Twitter: @dr_benjamin23
- Evidence Briefing: <https://phw.nhs.wales/publications/publications1/who-are-most-vulnerable-to-employment-changes-during-the-covid-19-pandemic-key-findings-from-a-national-survey/>
- JECH Paper: <https://jech.bmj.com/content/early/2021/06/29/jech-2020-216030>