# COVID-19 Remote Working Employee Pulse Survey – Quantitative Findings

The COVID-19 Remote Working Employee Pulse Survey was designed by the OVPED in consultation with the Vice-Deans EDI and with input from UMT to gather data on colleagues' experiences of remote working during COVID-19 and identify groups in NUI Galway that may be particularly impacted or disadvantaged. This is intended to inform the University's response and enable targeted support of staff going forward.

The survey was issued by email to 'All Staff' on June 17th with a closing date of June 26th 2020.

The online survey contained 24 questions designed to provide the following information:

- Background information and the personal circumstances of staff members
- What challenges and opportunities have colleagues faced with regard to remote working?
- What supports can the University provide in the short-term to address these challenges?
- What actions can the University take to mitigate the negative impact on careers in the medium to longer term?
- How do colleagues foresee a return to work and what can be done by them and by the university to support them in that regard?

A number of questions were repeated from the NUI Galway and Western Development Commission (WDC) COVID-19 national Remote Working Employee Pulse survey to enable benchmarking and draw some comparisons with the national data in the future.

**Background information and the personal circumstances of staff members**

Respondents: 1,257 (approx. 51% of all NUI Galway staff) responded to the survey. The response rate by staff category is as follows:

**Table 1: Respondents by staff category**

|  | % |
| --- | --- |
| Academic | 37% |
| PTTA | 2% |
| Researcher | 14% |
| Professional/Support Services/Library/Technical | 46% |
| General Operative/Trade/Craft Worker | <1% |

Overall, 67% of respondents are female, 32% male, 1% chose not to say.

**Table 2: Respondents by staff category & gender**

|  | % Male | % Female |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Academic | 43% | 57% |
| PTTA | 26% | 74% |
| Researcher | 37% | 63% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Professional/Support Services/Library/Technical | 20% | 80% |
| General Operative/Trade/Craft Worker | <1% | <1% |

**Table 3: Respondents by College/Unit/Institute**

| | % |
|---|---|
| Central Professional/Support Services | 25% |
| CSE | 23% |
| CASSCS | 19% |
| CMNHS | 25% |
| CBPPL | 11% |
| Research Institute | 3% |
| Other academic | 2% |
| Prefer not to say | 2% |

68% of respondents work on a permanent full-time basis, 11% work on a permanent part-time basis, 17% work on a temporary full-time basis and 4% on a temporary part-time basis.

53% of respondents have a dependant child/children in one or more of the age categories listed below.

**Table 4: Do you have a dependent child/children? (Please select all that apply)**

| | % | n |
|---|---|---|
| No | 47% | n=492 |
| Yes – under 5 | 18% | n=185 |
| Yes – between 6 and 12 | 32% | n=331 |
| Yes – between 13 and 18 | 22% | n=225 |

30% of respondents have other caring responsibilities including elder care, caring for a disabled or ill person and adult children.
5% (n=49) considered themselves to have a disability whereas a further 5% (n=55) preferred not to say.

50% of all respondents said it was possible to do their job fully working remotely and a further 48% said it was possible to do their job partially working remotely. 2% said it was not possible at all to do their job working remotely.

Academic: 34% academic respondents (27% male, 38% female) said it was possible to do their job fully working remotely whereas 64% said it was possible to do their job partially working remotely (70% male, 61% female).

Research: 42% of research staff said it was possible to do their job fully working remotely ( 35% male, 48% female) whereas 52% said it was possible to do their job partially working remotely (57% male, 47% female).

PMSS: 67% of PMSS respondents said it was possible to do their job fully working remotely (52% male, 71% female) whereas 33% said it was possible to do their job partially working remotely (47% male, 29% female).

**Challenges and opportunities with regard to remote working**

Overall, there were some slight gender differences in how men and women ranked their Top 3 challenges while working remotely. Women ranked not being able to switch off from work and caring responsibilities equally whereas childcare was not included in the Top 3 challenges for men.
Both men and women identified the physical workspace as a challenge in equal proportions.

**Table 5: TOP 3 challenges while working remotely (All Staff)**

|  | % |
| --- | --- |
| 1. Not being able to switch off from work | 37% |
| 2. My physical workspace | 36% |
| 3. Caring Responsibilities | 34% |

**Table 6: Top 3 challenges while working remotely by gender**

| Male | % | Female | % |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. My physical workspace | 36% | 1. Not being able to switch off from work | 38% |
| 2. Not being able to switch off from work | 35% | 2. Caring Responsibilities | 38% |
| 3. Collaboration and communication with co-workers is harder | 33% | 3. My physical workspace | 35% |

There are however more pronounced gender differences by staff category.

Academic: Many more female academics (47%) ranked caring responsibilities as their top challenge than men (31%). Female academics jointly ranked additional work related to COVID-19 (38%) and the physical workspace as their 2$^{nd}$/3$^{rd}$ top challenge (38%). Male academics ranked their physical workspace as their top challenge (33%) followed by caring responsibilities and additional work related to COVID-19 (29%).

Research: Both male and female researchers ranked their physical workspace as their top challenge (46%) followed by Staying Motivated (33%) and not being able to switch off from work (31%).

PMSS: Reponses from PMSS staff are similar to the TOP 3 challenges for all staff (Table 7). More women (36%) ranked caring responsibilities as their top challenge than men (22%). By contrast more men (34%) ranked collaboration and communication with co-workers is harder than their female colleagues (24%).

**Table 7: TOP 3 challenges while working remotely (PMSS)**

|  | % |
|---|---|
| 1. Not being able to switch off from work | 40% |
| 2. My physical workspace | 33% |
| 3. Caring Responsibilities | 33% |

Overall, men and women across all staff categories ranked the same Top 3 advantages with regard to remote working.

**Table 8: TOP 3 advantages of working remotely (All Staff)**

|  | % |
|---|---|
| 1. No traffic and no commute | 74% |
| 2. Greater flexibility as to how I manage my working day | 52% |
| 3. Reduced costs of going to work and commuting | 44% |

Staff were asked to rate their productivity while working remotely during COVID-19 compared to normal. Overall, more staff (33%) said it was about the same. A further 25% said it was higher by between 1% and 20%. Proportionately, more women (15%) rated their productivity as higher by >20% than men (10%). Conversely, more men (20%) rated their productivity as lower by >20% than women (9%) – Table 9.

**Table 9: All Staff - Compared to normal, my productivity while working remotely is:**

|  | % Responses (All Staff) | % Male Responses | % Female Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| About the same | 33% | 32% | 34% |
| Higher by between 1% and 20% | 25% | 20% | 27% |
| Lower by between 1% and 20% | 16% | 17% | 15% |
| Lower by >20% | 13% | 20% | 9% |
| Higher by >20% | 12% | 10% | 15% |

Academic: There was broad agreement between academic men and women except for options at either end of the spectrum i.e. lower by >20% and higher by > 20%. Similar to responses from all staff, more academic women (16%) rated their productivity as higher by >20% than men (7%) and conversely, more academic men (23%) rated their productivity as lower by >20% than women (14%) – Table 10.

**Table 10: Academic Staff - Compared to normal, my productivity while working remotely is:**

|  | % Responses (All Staff) | % Male Responses | % Female Responses |
|---|---|---|---|
| About the same | 31.5% | 30% | 32% |
| Higher by between 1% and 20% | 20% | 21% | 19% |
| Lower by between 1% and 20% | 18.5% | 18% | 19% |
| Lower by >20% | 17.5% | 23% | 14% |
| Higher by >20% | 12% | 7% | 16% |

Research: research staff were more likely to report reduced productivity as compared to normal. Both male (50%) and female (49%) research respondents reported lower productivity whereas more women reported higher productivity (26%) than male researchers (17%).

PMSS: 48% of PMSS staff members reported higher productivity (41% male, 51% female respondents) working remotely as compared to normal and a further 36% respondents (34% male, 36% female) rated their productivity as 'about the same' as compared to normal.

Participants were asked to rate their productivity in various aspects of work while working remotely as compared to normal. Responses by gender are presented for academic and research staff seperately below.
There are some gender differences across the various aspects of work and as expected there are some key differences between academic and researcher respondents in terms of applicability.

Proportionately, fewer academic women (29%) rate grant application activity as 'about the same' (compared to normal) as men (40%) and more women (36%) rated this activity as 'not applicable' than men (20%). Similarly, fewer academic women (25%) rated writing papers as 'about the same' (compared to normal) as men (35%) and more academic women (40%) reported lower productivity for writing papers than men (35%). In terms of overall workload, the data show that women consistently reported a higher workload across the rating options (Table 11).

**Table 11: Academic - Compared to normal, my productivity in the following aspects of work while working remotely is:**

|  | Higher by >20% | Higher by between 1% and 20% | About the same | Lower by between 1% and 20% | Lower by >20% | Not applicable |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Research Activity (in general) | | | | | | |
| Male | 8% | 13% | 26% | 17% | 34% | 2% |
| Female | 8% | 12% | 25% | 17% | 29% | 8% |
| Laboratory Activity | | | | | | |
| Male | 0 | 0 | 2% | 1% | 33% | 64% |
| Female | 0 | 0 | 2% | 1% | 16% | 80% |
| Grant application activity | | | | | | |
| Male | 3% | 8% | 40% | 11% | 18% | 20% |
| Female | 3% | 8% | 29% | 8% | 17% | 36% |
| Research Team Activity | | | | | | |
| Male | 2% | 6% | 30% | 22% | 23% | 17% |
| Female | 3% | 12% | 22% | 17% | 17% | 28% |
| Writing Papers | | | | | | |
| Male | 10% | 16% | 35% | 14% | 21% | 4% |
| Female | 9% | 14% | 25% | 16% | 24% | 11% |
| Reviewer Activity | | | | | | |
| Male | 4% | 18% | 45% | 8% | 12% | 13% |
| Female | 5% | 12% | 36% | 9% | 15% | 23% |
| Teaching | | | | | | |
| Male | 8% | 20% | 38% | 16% | 13% | 5% |
| Female | 18% | 16% | 35% | 14% | 7% | 9% |
| Assessment | | | | | | |
| Male | 13% | 18% | 46% | 11% | 9% | 4% |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Female | 19% | 18% | 41% | 10% | 4% | 9% |
| **Contribution** | | | | | | |
| Male | 9% | 15% | 45% | 15% | 12% | 2% |
| Female | 18% | 17% | 41% | 11% | 7% | 6% |
| **Administration** | | | | | | |
| Male | 20% | 20% | 37% | 15% | 7% | 2% |
| Female | 30% | 22% | 34% | 6% | 3% | 4% |
| **Meetings** | | | | | | |
| Male | 24% | 21% | 35% | 14% | 6% | 0 |
| Female | 32% | 27% | 30% | 7% | 3% | 1% |
| **Overall workload** | | | | | | |
| Male | 20% | 31% | 28% | 13% | 7% | 1% |
| Female | 31% | 36% | 23% | 6% | 3% | 1% |

**Table 12: Research - Compared to normal, my productivity in the following aspects of work while working remotely is:**

| | Higher by >20% | Higher by between 1% and 20% | About the same | Lower by between 1% and 20% | Lower by >20% | Not applicable |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Research Activity (in general)** | | | | | | |
| Male | 8% | 5% | 37% | 19% | 27% | 3% |
| Female | 1% | 24% | 29% | 16% | 26% | 3% |
| **Laboratory Activity** | | | | | | |
| Male | 0 | 0 | 8% | 5% | 41% | 46% |
| Female | 0 | 0 | 5% | 1% | 27% | 67% |
| **Grant application activity** | | | | | | |
| Male | 2% | 15% | 29% | 8% | 12% | 34% |
| Female | 6% | 10% | 17% | 11% | 7% | 48% |
| **Research Team Activity** | | | | | | |
| Male | 5% | 10% | 30% | 23% | 25% | 7% |
| Female | 8% | 13% | 25% | 20% | 24% | 10% |
| **Writing Papers** | | | | | | |
| Male | 10% | 29% | 25% | 10% | 8% | 17% |
| Female | 11% | 18% | 24% | 9% | 9% | 28% |
| **Reviewer Activity** | | | | | | |
| Male | 5% | 21% | 36% | 3% | 3% | 31% |
| Female | 5% | 14% | 26% | 5% | 3% | 48% |
| **Teaching** | | | | | | |
| Male | 0 | 2% | 25% | 3% | 5% | 65% |
| Female | 1% | 0 | 9% | 3% | 10% | 76% |
| **Assessment** | | | | | | |
| Male | 0 | 2% | 27% | 8% | 2% | 62% |
| Female | 1% | 3% | 13% | 5% | 6% | 72% |
| **Contribution** | | | | | | |
| Male | 0 | 7% | 39% | 12% | 9% | 33% |
| Female | 5% | 13% | 24% | 13% | 12% | 34% |
| **Administration** | | | | | | |
| Male | 7% | 12% | 40% | 10% | 7% | 25% |
| Female | 7% | 20% | 32% | 6% | 5% | 31% |

| Meetings | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | 15% | 20% | 43% | 15% | 7% | 0 |
| Female | 13% | 22% | 40% | 11% | 13% | 2% |
| Overall workload | | | | | | |
| Male | 7% | 15% | 41% | 24% | 12% | 2% |
| Female | 3% | 27% | 36% | 17% | 15% | 1% |

Not all activities listed were applicable to all staff cohorts. Where applicable, 79% researchers (50 of 63 respondents) reported that their productivity was 'lower by >20%' in laboratory activity and productivity in research team activity was generally lower overall (45%).

**Actions the University take to mitigate the negative impact on careers in the medium to longer term**

Respondents expressed mixed feelings when asked if they were concerned that COVID-19 will impact on career progression, promotion prospects, probation period and future employment prospects in the University. Overall, 43% indicated that they were concerned about the impact on career progression, 39% indicated that they were concerned about the impact on promotion prospects and 36% indicated that they were concerned about the impact on future employment prospects.

While there was no discernible difference between men and women overall, gender differences were more apparent at a staff category level.

Academic: Female academic respondents (56%) are more concerned that COVID-19 will impact negatively on their career progression and prospects than their male colleagues (38%) -Table 13.

**Table 13: Academic – Are you concerned that COVID-19 will impact on your:**

| | Yes | No | Not applicable |
|---|---|---|---|
| Career Progression | | | |
| Male | 38% | 52% | 10% |
| Female | 56% | 41% | 4% |
| Promotion Prospects | | | |
| Male | 37% | 48% | 14% |
| Female | 53% | 41% | 6% |
| Probation Period | | | |
| Male | 4% | 35% | 61% |
| Female | 10% | 36% | 53% |
| Future employment prospects in the University | | | |
| Male | 25% | 48% | 28% |
| Female | 30% | 39% | 30% |

Research: Research staff are most concerned that COVID-19 will impact negatively on their career progression (59%) and future employment prospects in NUI Galway (59%). Proportionately, more men were concerned than women for each option presented and in particular for career progression – Table 14.

**Table 14: Research – Are you concerned that COVID-19 will impact on your:**

|  | Yes | No | Not applicable |
|---|---|---|---|
| Career Progression | | | |
| Male | 70% | 25% | 5% |
| Female | 52% | 40% | 8% |
| Promotion Prospects | | | |
| Male | 46% | 31% | 24% |
| Female | 31% | 43% | 26% |
| Probation Period | | | |
| Male | 14% | 43% | 43% |
| Female | 7% | 45% | 48% |
| Future employment prospects in the University | | | |
| Male | 63% | 27% | 10% |
| Female | 58% | 38% | 4% |

PMSS: More PMSS staff said they were not concerned about the impact of COVID-19 on their career progression (57%), promotion prospects (56%), probation period (45%) and future employment prospects in the University (52%) than those who said they were concerned. Women were less concerned than men for each option presented.

Many suggestions from academic staff as to what actions the University can take to address any potential negative impacts were concerned with ensuring academic promotional opportunities will continue and taking constraints (increased teaching and administration workload and childcare responsibilities) into consideration when assessing research outputs in future promotion rounds. Other suggestions include acknowledging that COVID-19 has a greater impact on parents of young children than those who have no childcare responsibilities.
Male and female researchers suggested extending research project timelines and contracts. Female researchers also suggested greater support for clear career pathways and job security at this uncertain time.
Several PMSS staff proposed that the university continues to fill vacant posts and support the career development and progression of existing staff members to equip them to successfully compete for new posts. In particular PMSS staff expressed disappointment that the FEP scheme was paused and called for it to be reinstated.

**Supports can the University provide in the short-term to address these challenges?**

The following options to support effective remote working were ranked in order of importance by all staff:

1. Financial scheme to purchase IT and/or office equipment (
2. Clarity on workload and workload planning to identify priority areas of work for short and medium term
3. Access to your office to retrieve equipment
4. Training supports to work remotely

There was strong agreement across staff categories as to the order of importance of proposed supports with the exception of respondents on temporary teaching contracts who ranked clarity

on workload and workload planning to identify priority areas of work for short and medium term as most important.

Overall, there was strong agreement that NUI Galway is regularly communicating with staff (88%). Similarly, 75% of staff said they felt informed by NUI Galway and 71% believe the University is doing its best in the circumstances. Women in each staff category were more likely than men to positively rate the University's performance for these indicators.

53.5% of all staff disagreed/strongly disagreed that NUI Galway is providing them with ergonomic and health & safety advice for working remotely.

**How do colleagues foresee a return to work and what can be done by them and by the university to support them in that regard?**

Colleagues expressed greatest concern regarding increased workload due to new ways of working followed closely by concerns about the ability to social distance in the office, laboratory, meetings. 27% (n=281) respondents indicated they were very concerned about access to childcare. This is significant as it represents 78% of those who reported having a child/children under the age of 12 (Table 4).

**Table 15: Main concerns about returning to work on campus (All Staff)**

|  | Very concerned | Slightly concerned | Not at all concerned/not applicable |
|---|---|---|---|
| Health risks for me arising from COVID-19 | 37% | 48% | 14% |
| Access to childcare | 27% | 12% | 61% |
| Risk associated with public transport | 12% | 16% | 72% |
| Increased workload due to new ways of working | 43% | 40% | 18% |
| Ability to social distance in the office, laboratory, meetings | 41% | 42% | 18% |
| The impact COVID-19 conditions might have on daily social interactions with colleagues | 40% | 49% | 11% |

A number of measures that the University and individual staff members can take to support returning to work on campus were proposed in the survey. There was greatest support for flexible working patterns to reduce the numbers present on campus at the same time (84% of all respondents) and continued remote working where possible (83% of all respondents).

1045 staff members provided a wide-range of suggestions as to what measures the University and individual staff members can take to support returning to work on campus in an open ended question.

The suggestions are listed below in order of importance.

1. Provide PPE and ensure other hygiene measures on campus
2. Introduce and communicate policy on wearing face masks
3. Open single occupancy offices for those who have unsuitable working conditions at home
4. Clarify working arrangements for staff who are in a high risk category or have vulnerable family members
5. Open research labs as soon as possible
6. Provide clear guidelines on what an "on-campus experience" for students will be
7. Reduce workload for staff members with young children
8. Develop policy on remote working beyond the crisis
9. Communicate health and safety protocols to students coming on campus
10. Actively monitor compliance with health and safety protocols

Finally, staff were asked whether they would like to continue working remotely after the crisis is over. There was overwhelming support for the possibility to continue working remotely in some capacity (90%) with the majority expressing an interest in working remotely several times a week (58%) if they had the choice.

**Table 16: If you had the choice, would you like to continue working remotely after the crisis is over? (All Staff)**

|  | % |
| --- | --- |
| Yes – I would like to work remotely daily | 15% |
| Yes – I would like to work remotely several times a week | 58% |
| Yes – I would like to work remotely several time a month | 17% |
| No – I do not want to work remotely | 10% |