

# UK railway workers 'did not receive timely advice' on responding to pandemic

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

Only half of railway workers believe that they were offered timely advice on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic at work, according to University of Strathclyde research.

Nearly 85% of the 850 [respondents](#) to the researchers' [survey](#) also faced challenges in social distancing while working, while a quarter had experienced a deterioration in their mental health and the same percentage felt they had lacked in work-based support.

Workers also raised concerns about loss of social support, risks and uncertainty and life-work imbalance.

However, the survey also found indications that teams have an important role in addressing railway [workers'](#) perceived worries and risks associated with COVID-19. A small number of respondents also saw [positive changes](#), in areas such as increased family time, outdoor exercise and beneficial impact on the environment—this was among those that were able to work from home.

The survey was conducted between December 2020 and March 2021, partly coinciding with a period of national lockdown in the U.K. The research paper has been published in the *Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*.

Dr. Nicola Cogan, of Strathclyde's School of Psychological Sciences & Health, led the study. She said: "The pandemic has presented significant mental and physical strain for many groups of workers. Essential workers, such as those on railways, have had to continue to carry out their daily duties during the pandemic, while shouldering significant challenges and tensions of increased job demands.

"Railway workers were already potentially exposed to [stressful situations](#), such as accidents and assaults, but also faced a high risk from COVID-19, owing to frequent contact with commuters.

"Our results indicate that a large number of railway workers perceived high levels of risk and burnout relating to COVID-19 stressors; this

indicates the importance of workplace support and well-being during periods of high perceived risks."

Nearly 80% of respondents to the survey were male and just under two-thirds were train drivers, while just over one in ten had pre-existing physical or [mental health](#) problems.

One of the researchers, Dr. Liza Morton, who was at Strathclyde at the time of the research, is now at Glasgow Caledonian University.

**More information:** Nicola Cogan et al, Understanding the mental health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on railway workers: risks and protective factors, *Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine* (2022). [DOI: 10.1097/JOM.0000000000002711](https://doi.org/10.1097/JOM.0000000000002711)

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