

'Coronavirus & Your Place of Work'

Employee Survey Results

Dec 2020



In October/November 2020, Lawson-West Solicitors conducted an online survey of business employees to gain an understanding of personal views held about the pandemic's impact at their place of work - with particular emphasis on their employers' ability to cope with the pandemic, employment issues, health and safety, redundancies and furlough.

The findings were enlightening, showing that employees are still very much concerned about travelling to and from work, attending places of work and feeling vulnerable despite most commending their employers covid-safe efforts. This is something that our team of experts had anticipated as there has been a rise in health and safety, whistle-blowing complaints leading to claims of unfair, constructive and automatic unfair dismissal.

The Results

Not surprisingly, the results showed many had been asked by their employers to reduce their hours or had been faced with redundancy or the threat of redundancy. Sadly, restructures and redundancies are to be expected at this troubled time.

Employee views and experiences of Covid-19 in the workplace.

- Made redundant?
- Furloughed?
- Anxious about catching Covid at work?
- Worried about job security?
- Unfairly dismissed?

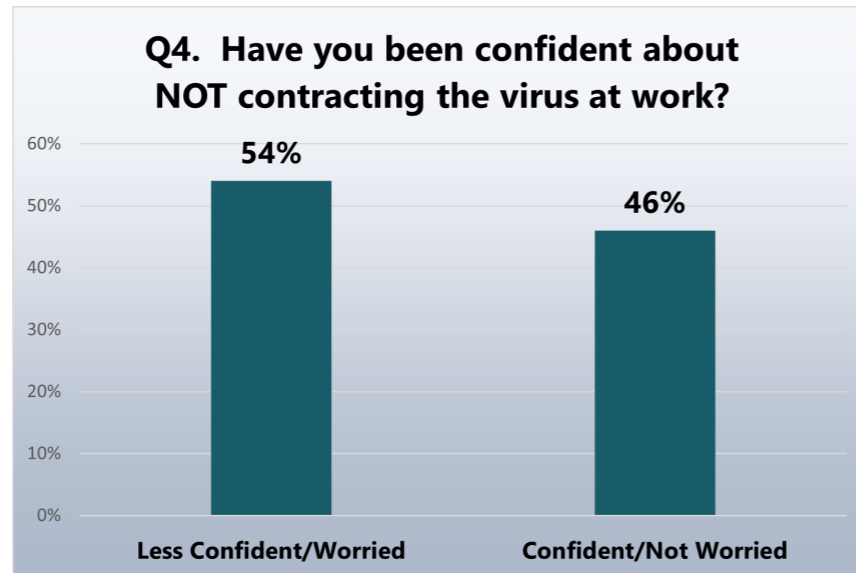
The results show that nearly 26% of businesses had made or considered making redundancies, and nearly half of respondents (47.4%) had been furloughed at some point. Even so, an amazing three-quarters (74%) of employees were complimentary about their employer's actions overall during the pandemic.

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Results of Employee Views: Positive or Negative?

The negative Covid impact

- Over half (54%) of employees are worried about contracting coronavirus at work, even with new health and safety measures
- 60% (57.9%) had employers who had made redundancies, or who had talked about making redundancies
- 54% had scored their employers low (33% scoring 1 to 5), or very low (21% scoring 0) in the handling of furlough matters



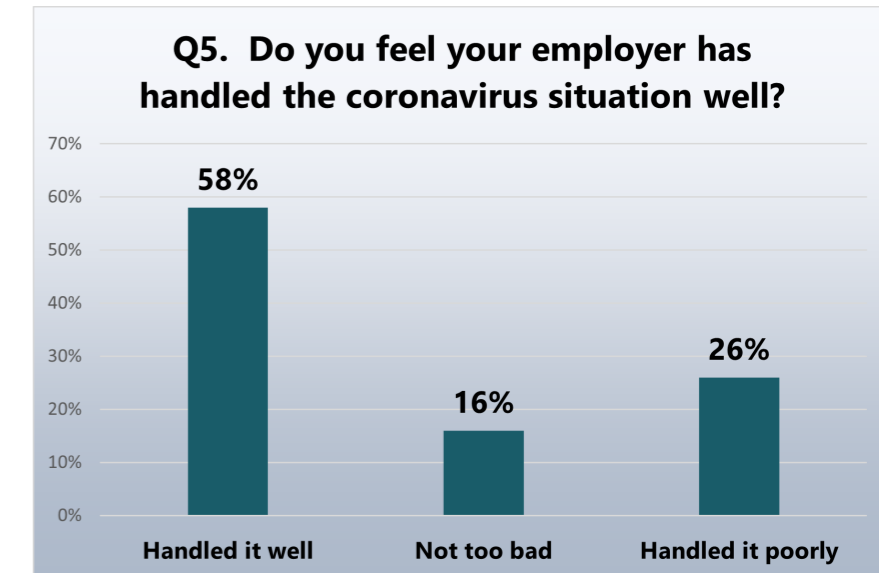
The positive Covid impact

It's not all doom and gloom:

- 58% (57.9%) thought their employer had handled the whole coronavirus situation well
- 60% (57.9%) thought their employer had handled job security and redundancy situations well
- 68% thought their employer had implemented Covid health and safety measures very well
- 46% of employees were confident about NOT contracting coronavirus at work.

This indicates, that although employers had to make some difficult decisions to keep their businesses agile during the pandemic, generally, employees considered that employers had performed well in the face of the new challenges.

“You are equally likely to be made redundant as you are to being invited to reduce your working hours” - see pages 8-9



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Results of Employee Views - Furlough

Furlough – Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)

When you consider that nearly half (47.4%) of respondents had been furloughed at some point in 2020 and a similar number of employees (48%) had scored their employers high (scoring 6 to 10) for the positive handling of furlough matters, then this indicates the employer's actions to swiftly implement the benefits of the government's CJRS has worked reasonably well in practice.

The CJRS was introduced to the UK in March 2020 and this survey was conducted in late October 2020, just before The Chancellor's announcement to extend the scheme.

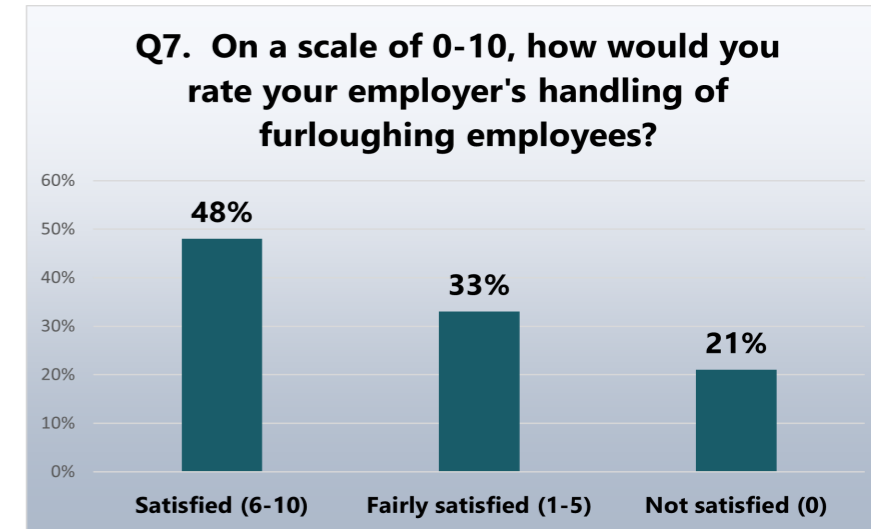
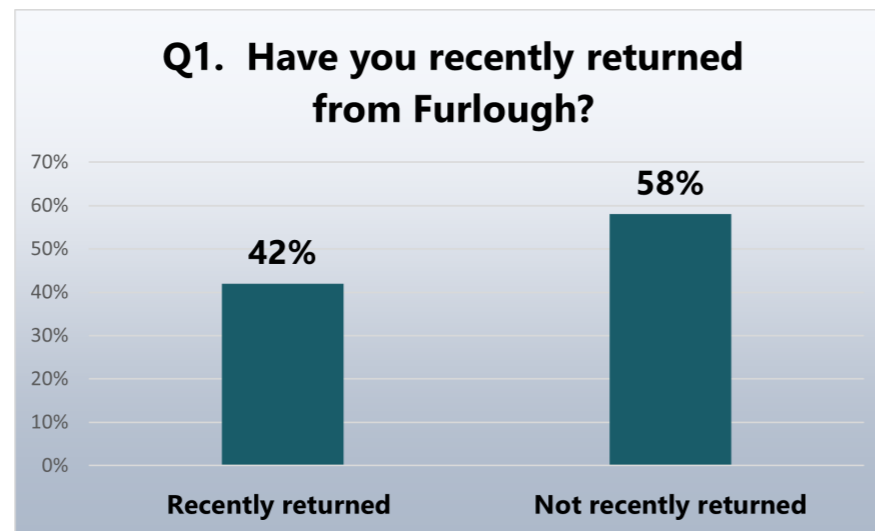
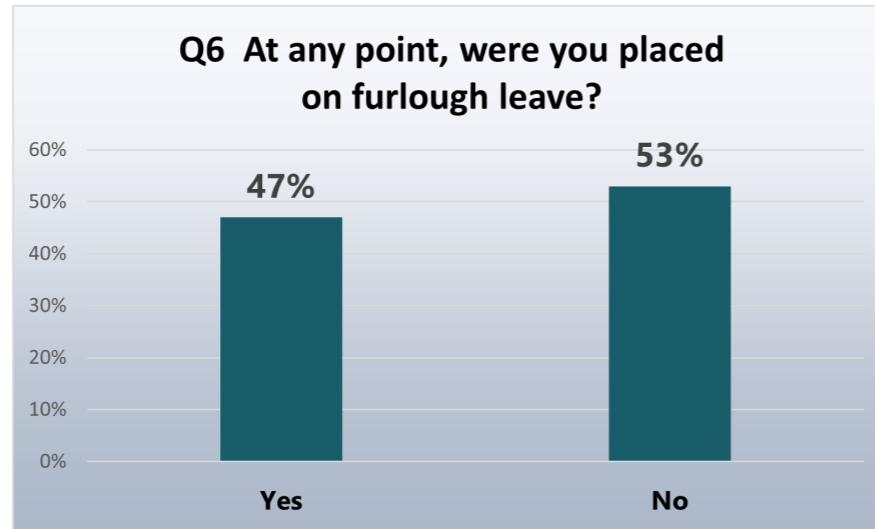
In this survey, nearly 42% of employees had recently returned from furlough.

This shows, unsurprisingly, that many employers were bringing staff back from furlough in October because they thought the scheme was coming to an end and they either had to make people redundant, or bring them back into the workplace, either on a full time or part time basis.



Head of Employment, Vaishali Thakerar adds:

"If 95% of our respondents are female and 47.4% had been furloughed at some point, then it seems to me that a large proportion of furloughed people are women. This could be because some women requested to be placed on leave owing to the school closures that took place also earlier in the year making it difficult to undertake their working responsibilities alongside their home schooling duties."



Furlough – Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS)

It is telling that 42% of our respondents are on part-time contracts, also indicating vulnerability. We can therefore say that:

- Part-time workers are more likely to have been furloughed
- Those with primary childcare are more likely to have been furloughed

Whilst it is not possible to cite discrimination maybe involved, it does beg the question why so many women working part-time appeared to be those placed on furlough leave as part of the Job Retention Scheme.

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Results of Employee Views - Health and Safety

Health and Safety in the Workplace

Even though 68% of respondents considered employers Covid safety measures satisfactory, a staggering 42% still thought their employer could have done better with workplace anti-covid measures and several thought that their employer had not complied fully with all the government recommendations.

These are worrying findings as this could mean that some employees are at being placed at greater risk and exposure.

In addition, it means that some employers may be ignoring the regulations and rules and/or some are simply not receiving the correct support and guidance.

As the second wave has been ramping up, these are matters that really should have been resolved a long time ago, to help combat the spread. The survey identified several wanted more working from home and stricter adoption of rules:



Health and Safety Negatives:

"We could of worked from home."

"More sanitiser. More cleaning procedures and higher standard of cleaning. Stop pen-sharing."

"Enforcement of mask wearing. Making sure people stick to the rules."

"Not ignoring government guidelines."

"Follow the government guidance to the letter."

"Being more strict on customers not wearing masks without exemption reasons."



Employment Solicitor, Sejal Patel looks at the positive and negative workplace views of health and safety at work.

Health and Safety Positives:

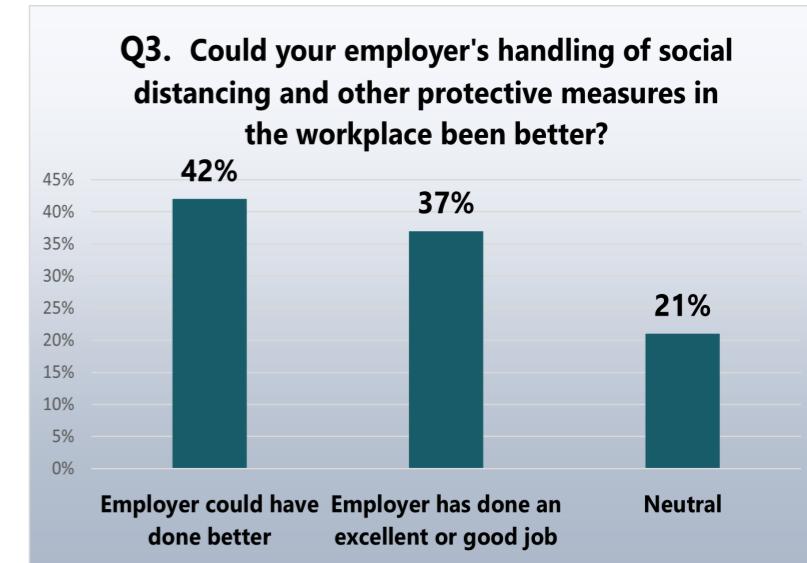
In contrast, 37% thought their employers had done an excellent or good job with coronavirus actions and safety measures:

"Nothing else, it's all very good."

"I feel they can't do any more than they are doing."

"They have done a good job with the guidelines."

"Nothing, they've covered all bases and have been amazing and understanding."



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Results of Employee Views - Redundancy

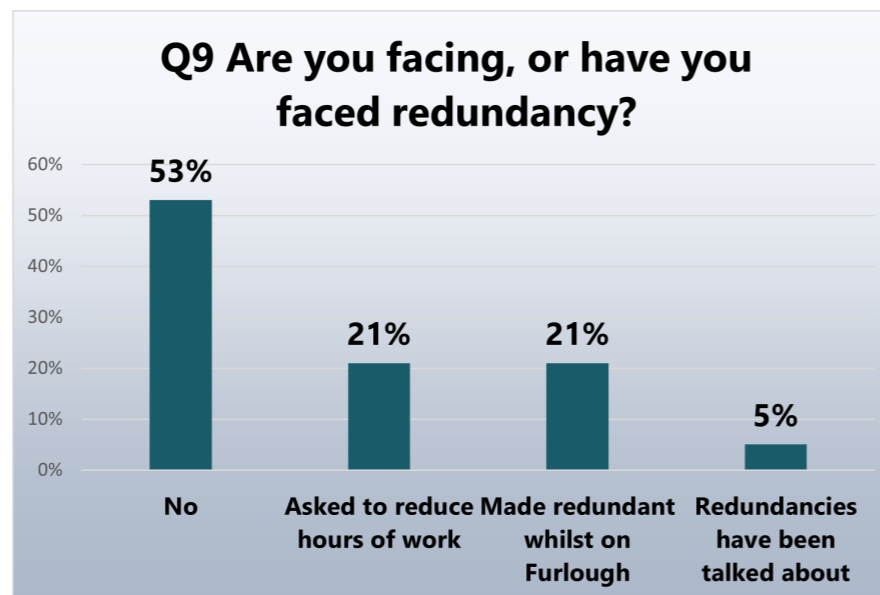
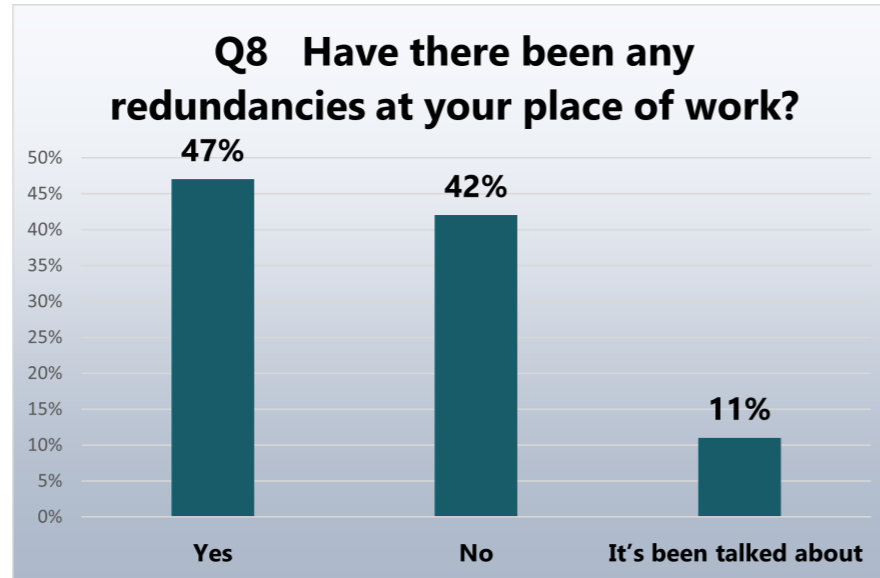
Redundancy

The employee results show that nearly 26% of employers had made or had considered making redundancies. Of those, 21% of employees surveyed had actually been made redundant and this was either whilst they were on furlough leave (75% of those made redundant), or whilst in Lockdown (25% of those made redundant).

These are painful results as it does appear to have some correlation that those placed on furlough leave, have been the vast majority then considered for redundancy, which is what employees feared at the outset of the CJRS.

The greatest proportion, 53% of employees, had not been made redundant, or were not facing redundancy, but a further 21% had been asked to reduce their working hours.

Note:
See Page 12 for personal comments from respondents about their experiences of workplace redundancy.



"You are equally likely to be made redundant as you are to be invited to reduce your working hours."



Nearly half (47.4%) of respondents had been furloughed at some point.

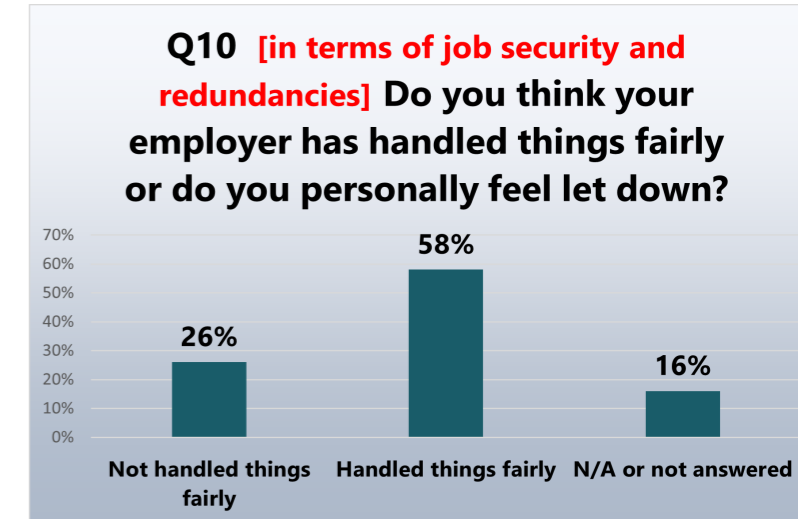


Carrie-Ann Randall, Employment Associate:

"It appears from our survey that employers have made redundancies or reduced working hours of staff where they have been needed for business survival and they have also embraced the Job Retention Scheme and actively chosen to place employees on furlough leave when needed.

It also appears that you are equally likely to be made redundant as you are to be invited to reduce your working hours, which is, of course, dependent on the type of role you have and the type of business you work in."

"I have seen a rise in employees being 'let go' with no process, no consultation or reason given."



"I hope that the employers that are facing these tough decisions are obtaining the correct legal advice in advance of any decision-making as it is imperative that redundancy and restructures are undertaken correctly.

Whilst there may be no strict process to follow, there are real guidelines from precedent cases that make it clear there are certain elements and requirements. I have seen a rise in employees being 'let go' with no process, no consultation or reason given.

A fair selection process and criteria making sure each and everyone who undertakes the same role must be adhered to, in order for the employer to demonstrate they have not simply cherry-picked an employee."



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Employees: Results and statistics

Q1 Have you recently returned from Furlough?

- Nearly 42% of employees had recently returned from Furlough

Q2 Has your employer satisfactorily implemented Covid Safety Measures into the workplace?

- 68% of employees thought their employers HAD implemented Covid safety measures very well (scoring 8, 9 or 10 out of 10)
- 27% scored their employers poorly for safety measures (scoring 5 or below)

Q3 Could your employer's handling of social distancing and other protective measures in the workplace be better?

42% thought their employer could have done better with workplace anti-covid measures and several thought that their employer had not complied fully with all the government recommendations. Several wanted more working from home:

- "More working from home."
- "Bigger screen around the reception area."
- "We could of worked from home."
- "Less travelling."
- "More sanitiser. More cleaning procedures and higher standard of cleaning. Stop pen-sharing."
- "Enforcement of mask wearing. Making sure people stick to the rules."
- "Follow the government guidance to the letter."
- "Being more strict on customers not wearing masks without exemption reasons."
- "Not ignoring government guidelines."

In contrast, 37% thought their employers had done an excellent or good job with coronavirus actions and safety measures:

- "I feel they can't do any more than they are doing."
- "They have done a good job with the guidelines."
- "Nothing."
- "All considered, well."
- "Nothing else."

Q3 contd...

"We are all remotely working from home so protective measures are not applicable. If anyone goes into the office they are requested to wipe the surfaces."

"Nothing, it's all very good."

"Nothing, they've covered all bases and been amazing and understanding. They also gave us an option to temporarily reduce hours by 20% during lockdown to help with childcare or for mental health."

Q4 Have you been confident about NOT contracting the virus at work?

Just over half of employees are worried about contracting coronavirus at work:

- 54% of employees had worried about contracting the virus at work - less confident (scoring 0-5)
- 46% of employees were confident about NOT contracting the virus at work (scoring 6-10)

Q5 Do you feel your employer has handled the coronavirus situation well?

74% of employees thought their employer had handled the whole coronavirus situation well, or fairly well:

- 58% (57.9%) of employees thought their employer had handled the coronavirus situation well
- 16% (15.8%) of employees thought their employers had not been too bad in handling the coronavirus situation
- 26% (26.3%) of employees thought their employer had handled the coronavirus situation poorly

Q6 At any point, were you placed on furlough leave?

Just under half of employees surveyed had been on furlough leave at some point in 2020:

- Yes, furloughed at some point – 47.4%
- Not furloughed at any point – 52.6%

Notes:

Who responded to this survey?

The majority (95%) of survey respondents were on full-time or part-time work contracts, 95% (94.7%) were from the East Midlands (where Lawson-west Solicitors is based in Leicestershire), 95% were female, nearly half (47%) were aged 46-60 years, and the majority had been employed 2-5 years duration (37%) or 10 years or more (31%).

Q7 On a scale of 0-10, how would you rate your employer's handling of furloughing employees?

48% of employees were satisfied with the way their employers had handled furloughing staff, but of those who were negative 21% of employees scored their employers extremely low (scoring 0).

81% were fairly satisfied or satisfied with the way their employers had handled furloughing of staff:

48% of employees scored employers high (scoring 6 to 10) for handling furlough matters
33% of employees scored employers low (scoring 1 to 5) for handling furlough matters
21% of employees scored employers very low (scoring 0) for handling furlough matters.

Q8 Have there been any redundancies at your place of work?

Nearly half of our respondents (47.4%) said there had been redundancies at work and 60% (57.9%) had either had redundancies talked about, or redundancies made:

Redundancies Yes – 47.4%
Redundancies No – 42.1%
It's been talked about – 10.5%

Q9 Are you facing, or have you faced redundancy?

53% - said no
21% - were asked to reduce hours of work
21% - were made redundant whilst on furlough leave or in lockdown

Q10 [in terms of job security and redundancies] Do you think your employer has handled things fairly or do you personally feel let-down?

58% (57.9%) did think their employer had handled things fairly during coronavirus
26% (26.3%) did not think their employer had handled things fairly
16% non-applicable/no response

Q11 [if you answered No to Question 10] - Why do you feel let-down?" - see comments over.

Q12 What type of employment contract do you have?

53% - Full Time Contract
42% - Part Time Contract
5% - Minimum Hours Contract

Q13 How long have you been employed with your current employer?

Less than a year – 11%
1-2 years – 5%
2-5 years – 37%
6-10 years – 16%
10 years+ - 31%

Q14 Where is your employment located?

95% (94.7%) of respondents were from the East Midlands
5% (5.3%) were from other parts of the UK

Q15 Male or Female?

95% of respondents were female, 5% were male.

Q16 Age?

19-30 yrs – 16%
31-45yrs – 26%
46-60yrs – 47%
61+yrs – 11%

Q11 [if you answered NO to Question 10] - Why do you feel let-down?"

"They never made my money up in furlough, they made me take all my holiday in furlough after they made me redundant (bare in mind I couldn't go anywhere) although they kept me on furlough for 3 months rather than just paying me as they had to give me 3months notice due to the length of time I'd been there (13yrs) just so they could milk the government scheme.

I just find it totally shocking how they can say you won't be back anyway but we are claiming for you off the government rather than paying you..... goodbye. Plus, they never paid me the holiday they owed me, told me its tough, and the pay I got was literally the minimum, awful."

"No formal notice of role being placed at risk, no consultation prior to redundancy.

No detailed account of how my role was selected for redundancy, no voluntary redundancy offered to colleagues or self, redundancy notice given by email after 15 years of service.

Details of redundancy incorrect in notice email (ie. notice period, pay), no information given on rights or how/ if an appeal can be made, no contact from line manager since redundancy notice, 4 redundancies made (1 male full-time worker, 3 part-time working mums)."

"The lack of communication made about returning back to work and how our pay would be affected.

My pay was affected and the majority of my holidays were used as a mandatory measure while furloughed. Then all staff that had worked throughout were given an extra week of leave as a thank you.

The majority of staff that worked throughout are on very well-paid salaries and some have extra benefits. They did not lose a penny during this, yet lower salaried staff did and they can't really afford to lose pay.

I've been moved departments and been warned to watch my back with my new manager and director so honestly I'm concerned about my job stability."

"This question is wrong as I feel it has been handled fairly."

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Contact us

"I would like to say the service and support I have received from Sejal during my case has been outstanding."

"I was very happy with the service and how quickly everything was sorted out. Thank you Vaishali !!"

"Very impressed with Carrie-Ann and would thoroughly recommend her to others. Not condescending in any way and when I went to meetings with my employer, Carrie-Ann would predict how it would go and predict likely questions and answers. That is a skill in itself."

"Many thanks Vaishali. I really can't thank you enough for all you have done for me."

"Ashley, you have always been extremely professional, provided good advice and always acted in my best interests. I have found your understanding of all issues to be exact and your speed of response to be excellent."



If you would like to find out more about our employment law services, please contact Vaishali Thakerar on:

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