



SUMMARY OF SURVEY SENT TO ESSENTIAL WORKERS

The PSA sent an email to all MBIE members asking them to complete a survey about essential workers and their experience under Covid 19. We made mention that if they had completed the Contact Centre survey then they did not need to complete this. However, some did. We asked our members to say whether or not they considered themselves as an essential worker as defined by MBIE. Out of the 570 responses 241 said 'Yes'; 329 said 'No'. If the respondent said 'No' then they did not need to complete the survey. However, they did. We included the information in this report as it was rich feedback and provided a more comprehensive picture of how our members were faring under Covid-19. Where the information from essential workers is different to our other respondents then we have shown this separately.

Some of the questions in this survey are similar to those in the Contact Centre survey. For the current survey we added questions about EAP services and whether or not people are feeling valued as an essential worker. We reframed the question about how busy a person is to a self assessment in percentage terms. The survey was sent to members on 8 May 2020 with a deadline of 14 May 2020 which was the first day of Alert Level 2. So the experiences reflected in this document would be from that of Alert Level 3.

The survey is broken into three sections namely Statistical Data; Health & Wellbeing and Work Options.

Statistical Data

What group are you in?

Our essential workers are in a range of groups namely:

- CGI
- Finance & Performance
- Immigration New Zealand (Contact Centres; Border Operations)
- Labour, Science & Enterprise
- Market Services (Contact Centres; Tenancy; Radio Spectrum)
- PDU

Where are you located?

Essential workers only:

Auckland	71
Christchurch	24
Dunedin/Gis/Nelson/Timaru/Queenstown	9
Hamilton	9
Palmerston North	14
Wellington	113

Are you working in the office?

All members:

Yes	No
83	481

Are you working from home?

All members:

Yes	No
472	92

Wellbeing; Health & Safety

How is your mental wellbeing?

All members:

Amazing	Great	Ok	Not so good	If you selected "not so good" please can you please give us some detail
34	197	272	7	58

These comments are only from those who said 'Not so good'. The information for both groups of members were the same namely:

- Feelings of isolation. Lack of social interaction.
- Huge workloads. Feelings of exhaustion.
- Tiredness. Eye strain.
- Depression, anxiety, lack of sleep, lack of concentration, headaches.
- Concerns about losing their job.
- Stress from feeling less productive than usual.
- Trying best to juggle children and work.
- Not everyone is able to communicate well with the people they need to work with. Feelings of frustration.
- Health concerns about moving back into an Activity Based Working environment.
- Some home situations are not ideal/conducive to doing work so some people are looking forward to working more in the office.
- Stress from not being able to visit family in other countries; in hospital, at tangi.

What do you need to support your mental wellbeing?

For this section we felt it was crucial to split comments from our essential workers and non-essential workers especially because a lot of our essential workers have been in the office from the start of lock down.

There were a range of things our essential workers said they wanted:

- Flexibility and understanding of mental health issues - not being penalised for struggling as a result of Covid-19.
- Recognition from managers about the commitment we are making as essential workers. Maybe an extra day or some time off.
- Opportunity for more breaks and a bit of downtime.
- More regular check ins.
- Acknowledgement from managers that productivity won't be the same at the moment.
- Clear communications on what is happening – keeping staff in the loop.
- More connection with other people. For some this was happening slowly.
- More socialisation. It was acknowledged that this will happen more when staff start transitioning back into the workplace.
- Less zoom hui. Note comment above.
- Less desks used for Activity Based Working.
- Support from managers to continue working from home post Covid-19.
- Some of our essential workers don't feel supported to work from home now; and think they will definitely not be able to post Covid.
- MBIE to ensure the return to work for others who haven't been in the office during Covid-19 is managed carefully and not rushed. There were a few comments about this from our essential workers; many of whom have been in the office during the start of lockdown.
- Want to be confident that all health measures are being undertaken ie 'high touch areas' being cleaned like buttons on doors for opening; touch buttons on water dispensers.
- Conception that MBIE is saying work in the office unless you need to stay at home; where other agencies are saying the opposite (work at home unless you need to work in the office).
- Updates about future plans for the workplace.
- Further detail on what jobs will look like going forward, especially as it appears that the Border Closure may continue for some time.
- More confirmation about job security. Our members understand that these are uncertain times. However, some communication to us about little or no change processes where there could potentially be redundancies would be a welcome message right now.

The following is what our non-essential workers said about what they wanted to support their mental wellbeing:

- Less talk from MBIE about productivity and a focus on staying in communication with each other so we are connected.
- Right hardware if we are to continue working from home.
- Similar thoughts to our essential workers around the ability to work from home throughout this time. Feelings of being pushed to go back into the office at the moment.
- The ability to input into decisions that are being made regarding returning to work.
- Confidence that returning to the open office will be safe.
- Certainty about ongoing employment. Confidence that MBIE senior leadership are doing everything they can to protect jobs.
- Social drinks via zoom after work. Some members are already doing this.
- Understanding from managers that working while also caring for children presents challenges.

- Better actual support from managers rather than just talking about it/more help/balanced workloads.
- Acknowledgement from managers that some people cannot do 100% of their job under the current situation.
- Having people/friends/work colleagues available to talk with. To be able to have and do something that is light-hearted and fun. To have a laugh with your work colleagues.

Are you aware of EAP services?

Yes	No
533	27

Great to see almost everyone is aware of EAP services. We maybe should have given the option to say why you had not heard of the services.

Have you accessed EAP during covid-19?

Yes	No
19	547

Like the above comments, maybe we should have asked people to say why they accessed EAP. Some people did mention accessing EAP in the question asking ‘How is your mental wellbeing’.

Do you feel valued as an MBIE essential worker?

Essential workers only:

Yes	No
156	85

The following are comments from our essential workers who said ‘Yes’ to the question:

- The main feedback from our essential workers was around acknowledgement from managers for the work they had been doing.
- Members commented about their great management structure that cares about health safety and wellbeing.
- Members felt valued when they received regular feedback about their work and how it is being used to help make decisions.

Our essential workers who said ‘No’ provided the following feedback:

- Little acknowledgement from managers about what essential workers are doing.
- Some members feel that people within MBIE know what work is being done but that the wider society doesn’t.
- No because communication to staff was initially ‘spotty’ but it is getting better.
- Took too long to get equipment for home.
- Know the work is important and valued - just can't say that I personally feel particularly valued.
- Mixed messages from SLT.
- There’s the thought that essential workers in other agencies have been compensated some how.
- At the early stages of the lockdown, people weren’t feeling valued when they were told that they could not get equipment because it needed to go to the people who needed it more.

What do you need to ensure your office environment is healthy and safe?

Clear guidelines for people coming back into the office eg proper induction	Everyone has individual sanitisers and wipes to clean desks at the beginning and end of each shift	Micro breaks for everyone working at a desk	Exercise programmes ie yoga, meditation, tai chi	Other (Please Specify)
462	421	313	185	119

Other suggestions:

Appropriate cultural sessions i.e karakia / waiata. Managers to send people home if showing signs of unwellness. Reinforce the messaging to be patient, be kind and encourage Mahi Tahī while we are transitioning to a normal way of working. Proper spacing in meeting rooms and communal areas. Non-judgemental language in comms. Not requiring anyone to come back to the office until NZ has had no new cases for 4 weeks. Won't feel 100% safe coming back to the office until there is no chance of a 'second wave'. Gym. Less hot desking. Ability to work non-standard hours at the office to avoid peak hour traffic. Then work remaining hours at home. A bulletin board to leave sticky notes to tell a person how great they are doing or how they inspire people. Confidence that MBIE are doing deep cleaning especially in communal areas. Options for parking. Proper distancing. An understanding from management that transitioning back into the office is an anxious time. Maybe a lunch schedule.

How busy are you now compared to pre covid-19?

0%	25%	50%	75%	100%	If you are working 50% or less what are some of the reasons for this ie limited connection to network, don't have office equipment etc (see below)
13	21	29	146	213	139

Main reasons for working 50% or less:

Don't have access to a number of resources so this requires a work around etc. Closed borders; limited flights; less work. Primary ICC lines are closed to assist on Covid-19 response. Visa work stopped. Limited capacity to take calls from home due to privacy issues. Children at home. Connection to the MBIE network is patchy. Outlook freezing. Still no laptop so not doing work. Not enough BAU work yet. During first few weeks we weren't so busy but lately it has been full on and our team has lost staff due to redeployment. Training - access restricted to some portals. Still in training.

We didn't give the option of more than 100%. Some members made comments about being more than 100% busy now than before covid. For some respondents there are extra requirements - more meetings, more emails, requirement to correspond by email rather than face to face.

What resources do you need to work from home?

Chair	Desk	Laptop	Headphones	Access card for network
267	200	233	178	118

Other suggestions:

Own monitor /second monitor. Ability to connect second screen to laptop. Keyboard. Mouse /special mouse. Wireless keyboard; wireless mouse. Docking station. Writing pads Calendar. Calculator. Good back support. Cellphone to enable connection to zoom. HDMI/Display cord. Arm rest. Headset. Sit/Stand desk. Mobile printer – toner and paper. Footrest. Job-specific Software and Hardware.

Some members have ordered equipment which is yet to arrive.

What else do you need to support your work whether in the office or at home?

Other things were:

- More stable network and clear priorities.
- MBIE to pay for extra costs (heating and internet usage); tea, coffee etc. Winter heating allowance.
- Colleagues to interact with, a good work environment.
- Good support network.
- Regular information updates.
- One on one communications.
- Flexibility to choose work from home.
- Flexibility with children’s needs.
- Wellbeing checks with those on site to just talk about covid19, home life, work life.
- More robust and reliable digital systems. More immediate response from ICT.
- In the longer term Windows 10 and Microsoft Teams would help if they are compatible with the job specific tools we need.

Have you taken annual leave over the last six weeks?

Yes	No	Don't have any leave	Can't due to staff required to be at work	Other (Please Specify)
59	466	10	8	26

Other:

Dont want to, want my leave to use when is something to do. Had 2 weeks just before lock down. Had travel and leave booked but obviously had to cancel both. Need the annual leave for travel overseas that has to be postponed due to covid-19 - hotels did not pay our money back and we need to use them when we can travel or we lose thousands of dollars which we are not prepared to do. Have taken some TOIL built up from working more than my .8fte. Time off in lieu and split shifts. Time off in lieu for working overtime for COVID related matters. Took time in lieu for a couple of days to refresh. Haven't needed to take annual leave, but will as we progress to normality. Have not taken annual leave but have used an alternate day. Have taken bereavement leave and sick leave. Only just joined MBIE so don't have any leave to take. Took mental health leave that is considered separate from regular sick leave by HR. Wish I could have it has been very busy. Typically been working 6 days a week. No but they did give us all a shift pattern off to help with family and early finishes. Only took two days that had originally been agreed with my manager. RSM Inspectors were instructed in writing that no leave will be approved. Special leave for one shift. Though was cancelled one day as lockdown occurred and I was asked to return to work.

Work options

Post covid 19 where would you prefer to work?

Home	Office
291	264

Option to rotate three days in the office and two days from home

Yes, agree	No, I like working from the office	Like working from home	Unable to work in the office due to commitments (children, elderly etc)	Other (Please Specify)
338	54	85	24	64

Other:

Prefer a 3 or 4 day home roster. Preference to work fully from home due to health condition. Prefer flexible or part time options as have a family to care for. Shift workers so maybe 2 days home 2 at work. Prefer the other way around. Some members have a similar set up already. Some people thought this was a more disruptive option than the next one. Like the idea but wonder about having to take equipment from home into the office and back again which could be annoying. Prefer only working from home when the need arises.

Option to rotate one week in the office; one week from home

Yes, agree	No, I like working from the office	Like working from home	Unable to work in the office due to commitments (children, elderly etc)	Other (Please Specify)
239	89	92	24	87

Other:

Most of the comments were about not liking this option.

A range of other options were proposed like 4 days in the office; one at home and vice versa. People preferred to be given the choice rather than having to choose an option. Respondents who wanted to work completely from home mentioned their health vulnerabilities and/or health vulnerabilities for people who reside in the same home. The view of a people leader was that this wouldn't work for their role. Better to have a consistent weekly routine than to have each week being different. Don't like this option at all as it would be too difficult maintain structure to my way of working. Think one week away from the office is too long. Concerns about not seeing colleagues for a whole week. Need stability to organise childcare. Unable to do this, work requires printers, regional travel etc. None of the above. Prefer a flexible approach that enables alignment to my partner's work pattern. Like this option but currently not set up at home. Some people did this pre covid and would like to continue to do so.