

MRU Employee COVID-19 Impact Survey Results

Institutional Research and Planning

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1 Summary of key results

The employee COVID-19 impact survey was sent to all employees in November 2020 and elicited a 47.9% response rate, with staff/exempt employees more likely to respond than average.

A majority of employees said that they would appreciate the flexibility to continue working remotely as much as 60% of the time when campus reopens. As well, a large majority, 84%, indicated this flexibility was ‘important’ or ‘very important.’

While a majority of employees felt that MRU has done a good job communicating about the operational impacts of COVID-19 (62%) and the University’s ongoing response (82%), a majority did not feel that the University has done a good job of communicating the pandemic’s financial impacts on the University (45%).

COVID-19 has had significant impacts on employee mental health, with 55% of employees saying their mental health has declined ‘somewhat’ and 19% saying it has declined ‘significantly.’

A large majority, 82% of employees, indicating experiencing work-related stress due to the pandemic, with 45% reporting ‘high’ or ‘very high’ levels of stress. The greatest causes of non-work-related stress were feeling isolated from family and friends (39%) and caring for children or others in your home (31%).

COVID-19 has contributed as well to a shifting work environment, with a majority of employees reporting too much work to do (54%) and changing work priorities (57%).

A majority of employees were concerned about possible exposure to COVID-19 on campus and about spreading it to others if they were infected. Employees also worried about the health of students, themselves and colleagues and about balancing work and personal life.

2 Methodology and survey responders

The Employee COVID Impact Survey was sent to 1,948 MRU employees on Friday, November 13, 2020. A reminder email was sent to those who had not yet responded on Wednesday, November 18, 2020. The survey closed for entry at 11:59pm on Friday, November 20, 2020. A total of 933 employees responded to at least one question, a response rate of 47.9%. The margin of error is therefore $\pm 2.3\%$, 19 times out of 20.

Demographic and employment variables were collected using a combination of administrative Banner data and survey responses. The data points provided exclusively from banner are employment category (e.g., staff, faculty, etc), age, number of years at MRU and division (e.g., Academic Affairs, Finance and Administration). As well, data from card scanners on campus was merged into the data file, as a measure of frequency of visits to campus.

Gender was included from Banner, and collected on the survey as well, using a broader set of categories. If a response was not provided to the survey question, then Banner data was used; if a response was provided to the survey question, even if it differed from Banner, the survey response was used.

Table 1: Demographic and Employment Variables (Banner Population)

	Responded <i>N</i> = 933	No Response <i>N</i> = 1015	Combined <i>N</i> = 1948	Test Statistic
Role : Staff/Exempt	47% (436)	22% (220)	34% (656)	$\chi^2_4=276.93, P<0.001^1$
Faculty	39% (360)	41% (414)	40% (774)	
Management	7% (63)	2% (24)	4% (87)	
Credit-Free	4% (34)	12% (126)	8% (160)	
Casual	4% (40)	23% (231)	14% (271)	
Age	38.0 47.0 55.0	31.0 43.0 53.5	35.0 45.0 55.0	$F_{1,1946}=35.38, P<0.001^2$
YearsAtMRU	3 9 15	2 6 13	2 7 14	$F_{1,1946}=37.14, P<0.001^2$
Banner Gender : F	67% (622)	58% (585)	62% (1207)	$\chi^2_2=17.1, P<0.001^1$
M	33% (308)	42% (424)	38% (732)	
N	0% (3)	1% (6)	0% (9)	
Division : AA	77% (720)	89% (900)	83% (1620)	$\chi^2_3=46.48, P<0.001^1$
FA	17% (159)	9% (88)	13% (247)	
Pres	2% (16)	1% (6)	1% (22)	
UA	4% (38)	2% (21)	3% (59)	
# of Card Swipes	1 8 36	0 2 15	0 4 26	$F_{1,1946}=113.86, P<0.001^2$

There were statistically significant differences between responders (i.e., the sample) and non-responders (i.e., the population) on all of the key demographic and employment variables. Full demographic and employment category information, comparing responders and non-responders is shown in Table 1. The difference by employment category was driven primarily by staff/exempt, who were more likely to respond, and casual and credit-free, who

were less likely to respond. Responders were also significantly older (mean age 47 vs 43) and have worked at MRU for longer (median years 9 vs 6). Female-identified employees were significantly more likely to respond,¹ as were those who work in the Division of Finance and Administration. Responders have also been on campus more than non-responders, as measured by card-swipe data (median number of swipes 8 vs 2). While there are statistically significant differences between the sample and the population, it is unclear whether this has an impact on the representativeness of the survey results, as the connection between demographic factors and survey responses is uncertain. It is, as well, theoretically possible that survey response is a proxy for employee engagement.

A number of demographic variables were collected only in the survey and are not available from any other administrative data set: detailed gender identity, sexual orientation, first language spoken at home, self-identified disability status, Indigenous status, and visible minority status. These demographics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic Variables (Survey Responses)

	N		
Gender : Woman	920	67%	(612)
Sexuality : LGBTQ2S+	714	14%	(101)
First Language Not English : Yes	848	19%	(161)
Disability : Yes	789	7%	(56)
Indigenous : Yes	804	3%	(23)
Visible Minority : Yes	778	15%	(113)

Throughout the survey report, overall frequencies and means are first presented, followed by highlighting of statistically significant² differences by demographic and employment variables, where present.

3 MRU’s response to COVID-19

Employees were asked a number of questions as to their perception of MRU’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic.³ Generally speaking, across most questions, employees are satisfied

¹This comparison was done using self-reported gender in Banner; in the remainder of the survey, self-reported gender from the survey was used instead.

²For the purposes of this report, statistically significant is defined as $p < 0.01$. Binary variables were compared using a t-test; variables with multiple categories were compared using an ANOVA, with Tukey’s HSD as a post-hoc test; for continuous variables, Pearson’s r was calculated.

³From this point forward, all results are reported only from those who answered at least one question; non-responders were excluded.

with MRU’s response to the pandemic (see Figure 1).⁴ Employees feel most positively about the measures MRU has taken to protect its employees (84% satisfied) and about receiving timely communication (82% agreement). Only on one question, “I receive clear communication about how the pandemic will impact MRU financially,” were a majority of employees not in agreement (45% agreement).

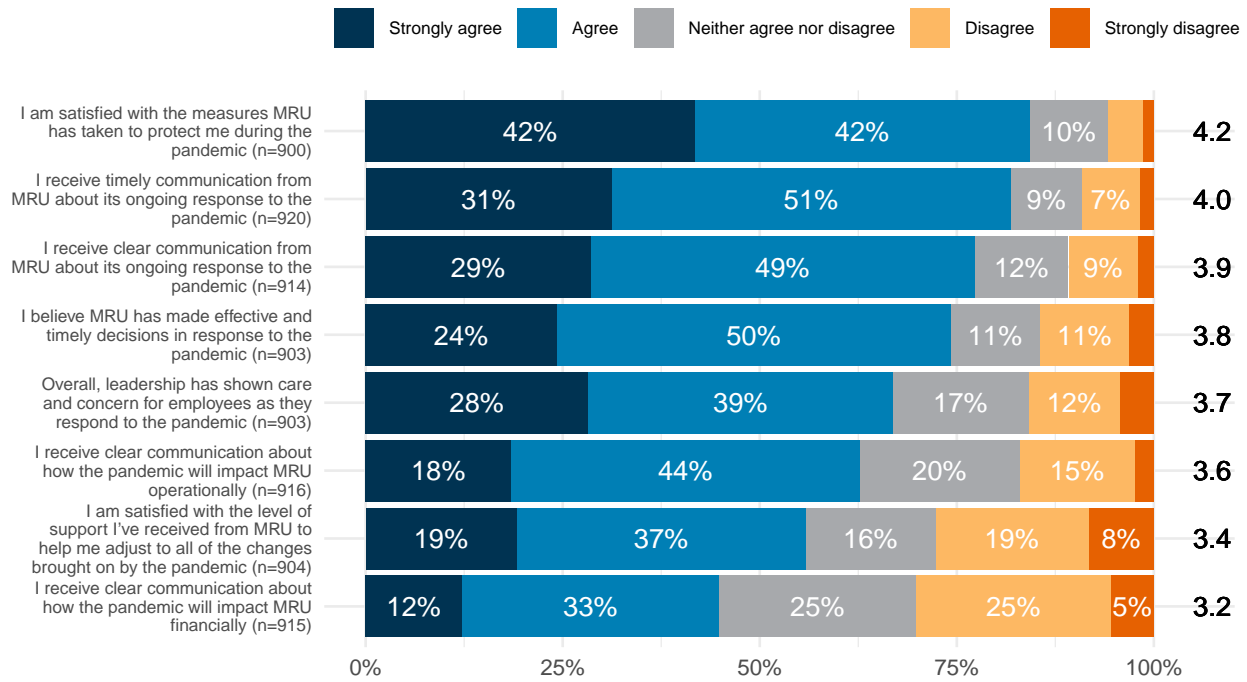


Figure 1: Employee perceptions MRU’s response (with means)

Results were largely consistent across demographic and employment variables, with a few exceptions. When asked if they were “satisfied with the measures MRU has taken to protect pandemic,” male-identified employees (mean=4.07), younger employees ($r = 0.09$), those whose first language is not English (mean=4.04), visible minorities (mean=4.00), and those who have been on campus more ($r = -0.15$) were less positive, yet still predominantly positive. Age was also positively correlated with belief in “effective and timely decisions” ($r = 0.12$) “clear communication about ongoing response” ($r = 0.12$), “clear communication about operational impacts” ($r = 0.12$), and “timely communication about ongoing response” ($r = 0.13$).

⁴Means are computed using the scale “strongly agree” = 5 and “strongly disagree” = 1.

4 Work at MRU during the pandemic

4.1 Work situation

Employees were asked about their current work situation (n=897); a significant majority (63%) responded that they are “working remotely”, followed by “remotely, but occasionally on campus” (19%), “on campus” (11%), and “remotely, but regularly on campus” (7%). Employees in Finance and Administration were significantly more likely to be working on campus; employees in Academic Affairs were significantly more likely to be working remotely ($\chi^2 p<0.001$). Staff/exempt and casuals were significantly more likely to be working on campus; faculty were significantly more likely to be working remotely; management were significantly more likely to be remote, but occasionally or regularly going to campus ($\chi^2 p<0.001$).

A majority of employees (63%) agreed that they had the materials and equipment necessary to do their jobs. There was no significant difference by division ($\chi^2 p>0.01$). There was a significant difference by employment category, with staff/exempt more likely to agree and faculty more likely to disagree ($\chi^2 p<0.001$).

4.2 Work perceptions

Employees were asked seven questions how often they had experienced a number of work-related perceptions since MRU started responding to the pandemic (see Figure 2).⁵ A majority had experienced having too much work to do (54% very often or often) or changing work priorities due to COVID-19 (57% very often or often). A large majority had not experienced having not enough work to do (88% almost never or never).

Responses to these questions were largely consistent across demographic and employment categories, with a few noteworthy exceptions. LGBQ2s+-identified employees were more likely to have experienced “having limited involvement in decision making about your work” (mean=3.2). Those whose first language was not English were less likely to have experience “not having enough work to do” (mean=1.4). Those identifying as having a disability were more likely to experience “having too much work to do” (mean=4.1).

Experience of these work-related perceptions varied significantly by employment category: management were more likely to experience “changing work priorities” (mean=4.1); faculty were more likely to experience having “unclear performance expectations” (mean=3.0); faculty (mean=4.2) and management (mean=4.0) were more likely to experience “having too much work to do”; casual (mean=2.4) and credit-free (mean=1.8) employees were more

⁵Means are computed using the scale “very often” = 5 and “never” = 1.

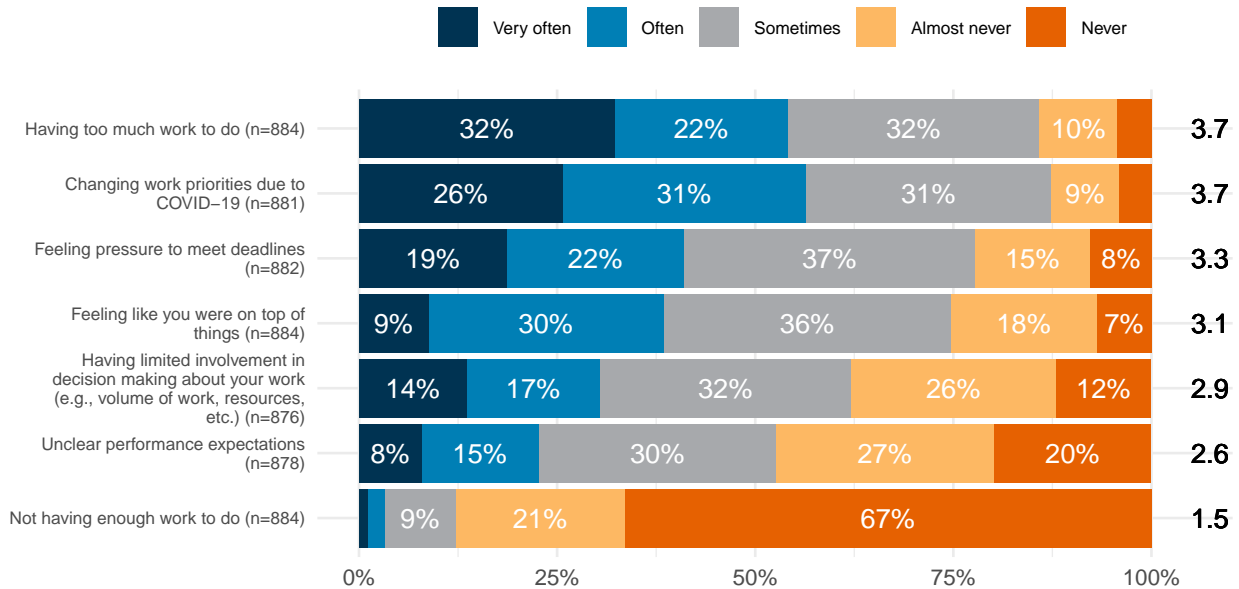


Figure 2: Employee work-related perceptions (with means)

likely to experience “not having enough work to do.” Faculty (mean=3.6) and management (mean=3.8) were more likely to experience “feeling pressure to meet deadlines.” Faculty (mean=3.3) were more likely to experience “having limited involvement in decision making about your work” (mean=3.2) and less likely to experience “feeling like you were on top of things” (mean=2.8).

Responses were largely consistent by division, with two exceptions: employees in Academic Affairs were more likely to report having “unclear performance expectations” (mean=2.7) and to experience “having too much work to do” (mean=3.8).

4.3 Work safety

Employees who reported currently working “on campus” or “regularly on campus” (n=161) were asked “Given your current knowledge about the COVID-19 situation, how safe would you feel if more employees start returning to work on campus,” with most (60%) saying they would feel “pretty” or “very” safe (n=142). There were no significant differences by division or employment category.

Conversely, employees who reported working remotely or only “occasionally” going to campus (n=763) were asked “Given your current knowledge about the COVID-19 situation, how comfortable would you feel returning to work on campus,” with a sizable majority (78%) saying they are “not at all” or “not very” comfortable (n=701). There were no significant differences by division. There were, however, significant differences by employment

category, with credit-free (mean=2.4) and casual employees (mean=2.4) more likely to feel comfortable, compared to a group mean of 1.8, where “very comfortable” is 4 and “not at all comfortable” is 1.

4.4 Work concern

Employees were asked nine questions as to their level of concern with a number of work-related COVID-19 issues (see Figure 3). A large majority of employees reported concern about on campus exposure, with 85% “very concerned” or “concerned” about “being exposed ... on campus and spreading it to family or friends”, 82% “very concerned” or “concerned” about “being exposed ... by students” and 78% “very concerned” or “concerned” about “people on campus not following safety measures. Sizable majorities reported fear of being exposed by colleagues (71%) and potentially spreading to others on campus (60%). Responses were roughly neutral about “being available to care for others in or outside of your home” and “the overall effectiveness of safety measures on campus.” While a majority of employees did not answer the question about “organizing childcare,” for those that did (n=344), it was not a significant concern, with 61% reporting little to no concern. There was very little concern with exposure while commuting, with 76% reporting little to no concern.

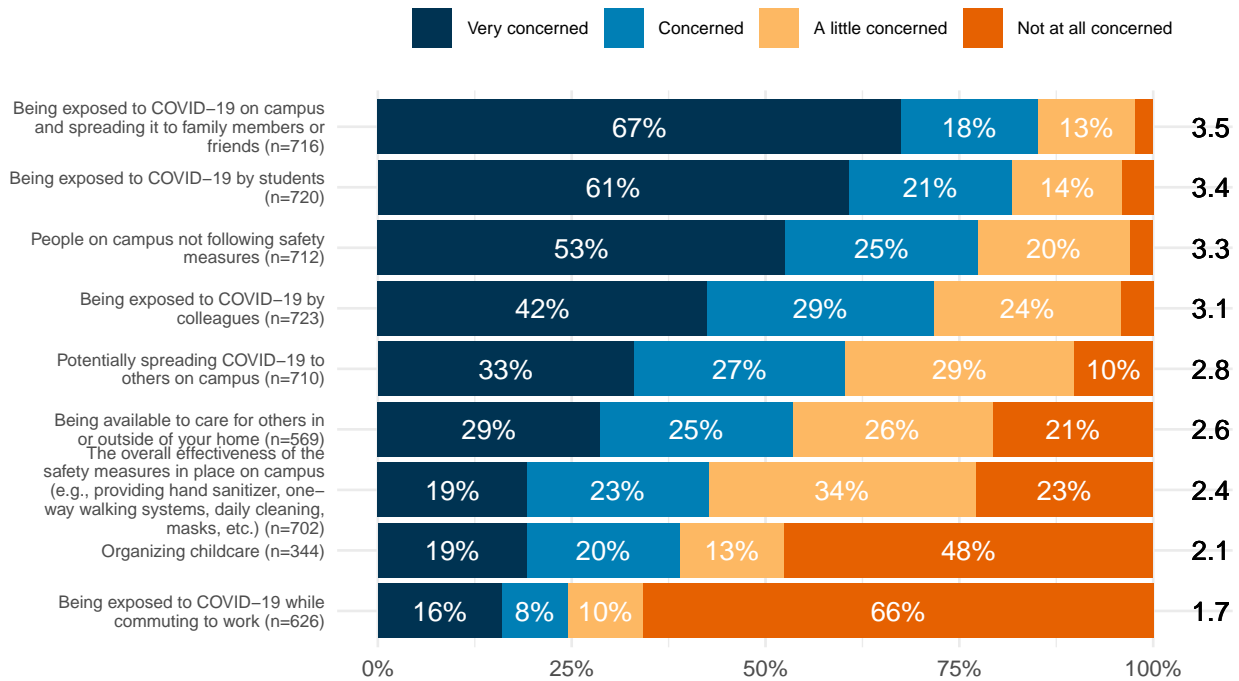


Figure 3: Employee work-related concerns (with means)

Responses were fairly homogeneous across demographic and employment variables, with a few exceptions. Those whose first language was not English were statistically more concerned about “people on campus not following safety measures” (mean=3.47) and “being exposed to COVID-19 while commuting to work” (mean=2.04). Those with disabilities were more concerned about “the overall effectiveness of safety measures on campus” (mean=2.80) and “people on campus not following safety measures” (mean=3.56). Visible minorities were more concerned about “people on campus not following safety measures” (mean=3.46), “being available to care for others in or outside the home” (mean=2.90), “Potentially spreading COVID-19 to others on campus” (mean=3.09) and “Being exposed to COVID-19 while commuting to work” (mean=2.19). Younger employees were more concerned about organizing childcare ($r = -0.26$).

Employees in Academic Affairs were statistically more concerned about “being exposed ... by students” (mean=3.43) and employees in Finance and Administration were more concerned about “the overall effectiveness of safety measures on campus” (mean=2.56). Staff/Exempt were more concerned with being exposed by colleagues (mean=3.22), and staff/exempt and faculty were more concerned with being exposed by students (staff mean=3.40; faculty mean=3.49), being exposed on campus and spreading it to family or friends (staff mean=3.58; faculty mean=3.51) and with being available to care for others in or outside the home (staff mean=2.62; faculty mean=2.73).

Those employees who have been to campus more as measured by swipe card data are statistically less likely to be concerned with being exposed by colleagues ($r = -0.115$), overall effectiveness of safety measures on campus ($r = -0.134$) and with potentially spreading to others on campus ($r = -0.104$).

4.5 Continuing remote work

Finally, employees were asked two questions about the amount they would prefer to continue to work at home, and how important that is to them. Asked “when you are able to return to campus full time, about what percentage of the time would you prefer to continue to work remotely?” a majority responded 60% or more of the time, with a mean value of 55.8% (n=722). Those who had worked longer at MRU were statistically less likely to prefer to work remotely ($r = -0.114$), as were those who have been on campus more as measured using swipe card data ($r = -0.134$).

Asked how important “the flexibility to work remotely”, the vast majority (84%) said it was “important” or “very important” (mean=3.38, where “not at all important” = 1 and “very important” = 4, n=723). This flexibility was statistically more important for employees

in Finance and Administration (mean=3.63) and University Advancement (mean=3.57), and more important to staff/exempt (mean=3.53). It was statistically less important to those who had been at MRU longer ($r = -0.101$).

5 Employee wellbeing

5.1 Stress and mental health

In the final section of the survey, employees were asked 17 questions related to health and well-being. Asked about their work-related stress, a plurality of employees (37%) indicated that it was “moderate” with 28% indicating it was “high” and 17% saying “very high” (mean=3.41, n=871). Higher levels of work-related stress were reported by employees with disabilities (mean=3.78), faculty (mean=3.68) and management (mean=3.73).

Most employees (60%, mean=3.60, where ‘strongly agree’ = 5 and ‘strongly disagree’ = 1) agreed that MRU “encourages employees to get mental health related help if they need it” and that MRU “shares useful resources and information on mental health” (61%, mean = 3.58) (see Figure 4). Women were significantly more likely agree that useful resources were shared (mean=3.66); employees whose first language was not English were less likely to agree that MRU shares useful resources (mean=3.39) or that it encourage employees to seek help when needed (mean=3.42). Faculty were also less likely to agree with both questions (sharing of resources mean=3.31; encouragement to seek help mean=3.26).

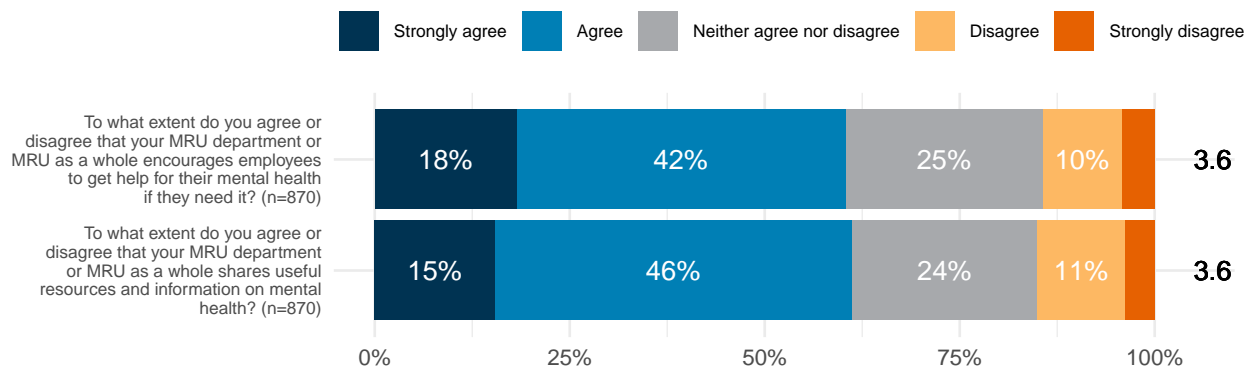


Figure 4: Encouragement to get mental health help and sharing of mental health resources (with means)

5.2 Worry about work

Employees were asked seven questions about how much they worried about several different work-related aspects, on a scale of 1=Never to 5=Very Often (see Figure 5). Across all seven questions, 90% had worried at some point about the various questions. A majority (58%) worried about the health and well-being of students and their own health (56%). A majority likewise worried about the health and well-being of colleagues (53%), but less intensely, with fewer responding “very often.” 50% of respondents worried about balancing work and personal life. A majority did not worry very often or often about losing connection with colleagues (41%), doing your job effectively (41%) and losing your job (40%).

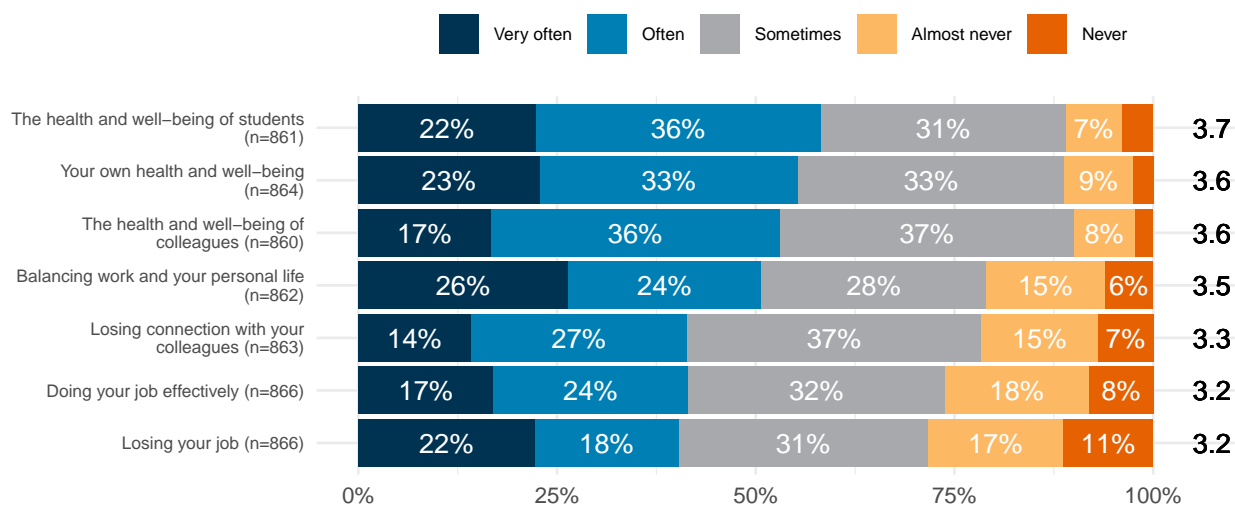


Figure 5: Employee work-related concerns (with means)

There were a handful of statistically significant differences by demographic and employment variables. Women were more likely to worry about the health and well-being of students (mean=3.73). Those with disabilities were more likely to worry about balancing work and personal life (mean=3.87) and their own health and well-being (mean=3.94). Those who have been present more on campus, as evidenced by swipe card data, were less likely to worry about doing their job effectively ($r = -0.114$), losing connection with colleagues ($r = -0.092$), balancing work and personal life ($r = -0.119$), and the health and well-being of students ($r = -0.114$).

Employees in Academic Affairs were less likely to worry about losing their job (mean=3.11) and more likely to worry about the health and well-being of students (mean=3.83). Employees in Finance and Administration were less likely to worry about doing their job effectively (mean=2.73), about losing their connection with colleagues (mean=2.97), and balancing work and personal life (mean=3.03).

5.3 Causes of stress

Asked about seven different potential causes of stress, employees generally did not indicate that all categories did not cause stress to a ‘very large’ or a ‘large’ extent (see Figure 6). The largest causes of stress were being isolated from family and friends (39% ‘very large’ or ‘large’ extent, mean=3.1, where 5 = ‘very large’ and 1 = ‘not at all’) and caring for children or others in your home (31%, mean=2.6). The vast majority, 72%, were not worried about feeling pressure to come to campus (mean=1.5), and a majority, 52%, were not worried about being restricted from working on campus (mean=1.8).

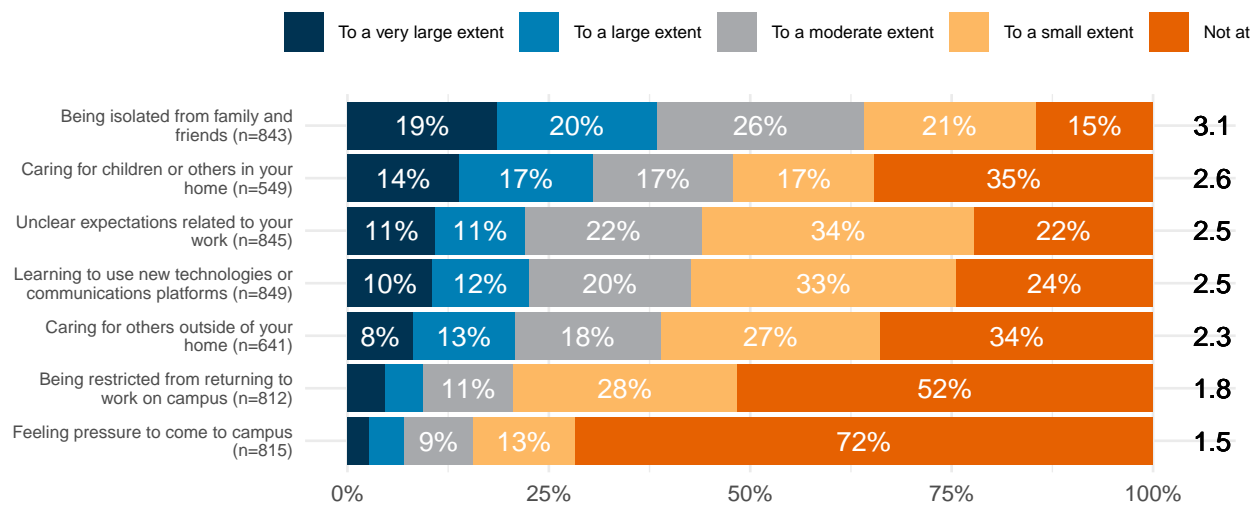


Figure 6: Causes of stress (with means)

Looking at statistically significant differences by demographic and employment variables, there were several differences. LGBTQ2s+ individuals were more likely to feel stress about being isolated from family and friends (mean=3.37); female-identified employees were more likely to feel stress about learning to use new tech or communications platforms (mean=2.63) and being isolated from family and friends (mean=3.18). Individuals whose first language was not English were more likely to feel stress from feeling pressure to come to campus (mean=1.82). Visible minorities were more likely to feel stress from feeling pressure to come to campus (mean=2.00) and from caring for others outside of your home (mean=2.68). Older employees were more likely to feel stress about learning to use new tech or communications platforms ($r = 0.249$) and from caring for others outside of your home ($r = 0.108$), but less about feeling pressure to come to campus ($r = -0.144$).

Employees in Academic Affairs were more likely to feel stress about learning to use new tech or communications platforms (mean=2.71) and from being restricted from returning to work on campus (mean=1.91) and less from feeling pressure to come to campus

(mean=1.46). Faculty were more likely to feel stress from unclear expectations related to your work (mean=2.83) and from caring for children or others in your home (mean=2.90). Management were less likely to feel stress about learning to use new tech or communications platforms (mean=1.82). Staff/Exempt were more likely to feel stress about feeling pressure to come to campus (mean=1.68). Faculty (mean=2.07), credit-free (mean=2.14) and casuals (mean=2.46) were more likely to feel stress from being restricted from returning to work on campus.

5.4 Effect of on mental health

Finally, employees noted that, compared with the pre-COVID-19 period, the last several months have had an impact on their mental health, with 55% saying it has been slightly declined and 19% saying it has significantly declined (mean=2.2, where 1=Significantly Declined and 5=Significantly Improved, n=857, see Figure 7).

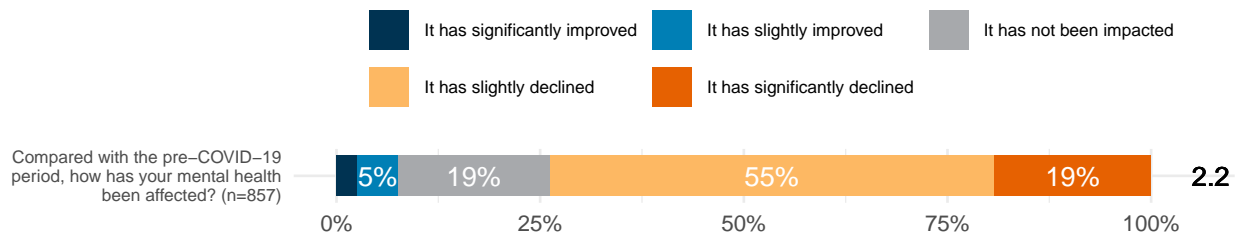


Figure 7: Effect of COVID-19 on mental health (with mean)

This effect was fairly uniform across demographic and employment variables, excepting employees with disabilities, who experienced a greater decline (mean=1.78), and older employees who were less likely to experience a decline ($r = 0.091$).