

# HERO

Healthcare Worker Exposure  
Response & Outcomes



## HERO Hot Topics: We asked, you answered, and this what we learned.

The HERO program team regularly surveys healthcare workers on timely topics of interest and returns results back to participants while also sharing with the public, researchers, partner organizations, the scientific community, and media. Taking the pulse of the healthcare worker community provides insights into the challenges workers face and the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their health, wellbeing, community, and family members.

### BY SHARING HEALTHCARE WORKERS' VOICES, WE HOPE TO ACCOMPLISH 3 GOALS:

- 1 Bring awareness to the challenges they face, at work and at home
- 2 Identify solutions to better support those on the front lines of pandemic
- 3 Guide future research

### HOT TOPIC THEMES



Employer vaccine requirements



Moral injury



Financial burden



Vaccine willingness



Impact of remote school and childcare



## EMPLOYER VACCINE REQUIREMENTS

As employer requirements for COVID-19 vaccination increase, what can we learn from healthcare worker experiences?

### WHEN DID WE ASK?

July 2021

### WHAT DID WE ASK?

We first asked respondents whether or not their employers currently require vaccination and then asked whether or not requirements were influencing their decision to get vaccinated.

### HOW MANY RESPONDED?

2,700

### WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Only 13% of those responding said that they were currently required by their employer to be vaccinated. Of those who were required to be vaccinated by their employer, 13% said "Yes, I have been or will be vaccinated, but only because of this requirement" and 16% said "Yes, I have been or will be vaccinated sooner than I would have been without this requirement." Less than 1% said "No, I have not been or will not be vaccinated even though my employer requires it."

Of those who were not yet required by their employee to be vaccinated, 3% said "I would be vaccinated only because of this requirement" and 9% said "I would be vaccinated sooner than I would have without this requirement." Almost 3% said "I would not be vaccinated even though my employer required it."

[Learn more](#)

5% of those  
**not required**  
to be vaccinated  
plan to refuse

vs.

<1% of those  
**required**  
to be vaccinated  
plan to refuse

*"I work in food, so I see it as my duty to those that I'm serving food to, to be as safe from COVID-19 as I can be."*

*—Healthcare Food Services Worker & HERO Member*



## MORAL INJURY

“Moral injury” is used to describe the damage done to the conscience or moral compass of people who might witness, be unable to, or fail to prevent acts that go against their own moral beliefs, values, or ethics. We asked HERO members about how moral injury was affecting them during the pandemic.

### WHEN DID WE ASK?

April 2021

### WHAT DID WE ASK?

We asked healthcare workers whether they agreed with two statements:

- I am troubled by having witnessed others’ immoral acts.
- I am troubled by having acted in ways that violated my own morals and values.

*“It is very hard to work in healthcare during this time, putting myself and my family at risk, while watching so many I know blatantly disregarding recommendations for safe behavior.”*

*—Healthcare Worker & HERO Member*

### HOW MANY RESPONDED?

2,000+

### WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Overall, 32% of healthcare workers agreed with the statement, “I am troubled by having witnessed others’ immoral acts” and 10% of respondents said they agreed with the statement “I am troubled by having acted in ways that violated my own morals and values.” Younger participants, aged 18-29 years, were more likely than older people to agree with both statements. Many participants offered comments about disappointment in the public, rationing care in overcrowded conditions, watching people die, and rules restricting visitors to sick and dying patients.

[Learn more](#)

**32%** “I am troubled by having witnessed others’ immoral acts”



**10%** “I am troubled by having acted in ways that violated my own morals and values”



## FINANCIAL BURDEN

While some healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients saw their work hours increase, many others experienced furlough or cuts to their pay or benefits. We wanted to better understand how healthcare workers’ financial situation was affected by the pandemic.

### WHEN DID WE ASK?

January 2021

### WHAT DID WE ASK?

How has the pandemic affected your financial situation?

- Worried about meeting financial obligations
- Reduced income
- Reduced work hours
- Furlough or forced leave of absence

### HOW MANY RESPONDED?

2,000+

### WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Reduced income was the most common financial impact, reported by 22% of participants. The stories of healthcare workers suffering from financial impact ranged from having to leave their jobs to care for their families to having to handle the unexpected loss of a family member’s job. Others incurred unexpected costs associated with being sick from COVID-19.

[Learn more](#)



**22.3%** reported reduced income



**17.9%** reported reduced work hours



**9.1%** reported furlough or forced leave of absence

**3%** reported being more worried about meeting financial obligations





## VACCINE WILLINGNESS

People working in healthcare were among the first to receive emergency-use authorized vaccines for COVID-19 in December 2020. We wanted to measure their willingness to take the vaccine before and after emergency-use authorization.

### WHEN DID WE ASK?

October & December 2020

### WHAT DID WE ASK?

We asked participants whether or not they were willing to be vaccinated before vaccine trial results were available in October 2020 and then again in December 2020 following publication of positive trial results.

### HOW MANY RESPONDED?

2,000+ in October  
1,500+ in December  
(998 overlapped)

### WHAT DID WE LEARN?

As trial data about vaccine safety and effectiveness was made public in November we found that of the people who participated in both polls, 13% shifted their “no” answer to “yes.” The overall number of healthcare workers reporting “yes” in December went up to 76% overall. The largest shift in opinion was seen in physicians (64% - 90%) and nurses (46% to 66%). Fewer than 5% people reported concerns about vaccines in general.

[Learn more](#)

<5%

of HERO participants reported concerns about vaccines



## IMPACT OF REMOTE SCHOOL AND CHILDCARE

The pandemic especially challenged the 40% of all U.S. households with children under 18 as schools and daycares closed, changed schedules, or switched to virtual formats. But for healthcare workers, these changes caused extra challenges and made the balancing act between work and home even harder.

### WHEN DID WE ASK?

September 2020

### WHAT DID WE ASK?

We asked participants how their ability to work had been impacted by changes in schools and childcare facilities.

We asked participants about these factors:

- Not available to work all the hours needed
- Struggling with childcare issues
- More distracted while working
- More anxious while working

*“I am working nights and weekends to help my children with e-learning and I am exhausted.”*

*–Healthcare Worker & HERO Member*

### HOW MANY RESPONDED?

2,000+

### WHAT DID WE LEARN?

As a result of changes to school or childcare, 28% of HERO participants felt more distracted at work and 25% felt more anxious. In addition, 15% were struggling to find and pay for childcare, and 10% were not able to work the number of hours they needed to work. Participants without children also commented that struggled too as they picked up extra shifts to help their coworkers with children.

[Learn more](#)

