

The equality impact of the COVID pandemic on the Irish labour market

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Coimisiún na hÉireann
um Chearta an Duine
agus Comhionannas
Irish Human Rights and
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Objective

- **Research question:** Did the **structurally vulnerable groups** fare differently from the rest of the population, in terms of employment outcomes, following the COVID-19 pandemic?
- **Definition:** Structurally vulnerable groups = those particularly at risk of inequality or having their rights denied (Equality Acts)
- **Observed equality groups:** gender, age, marital status, family status, educational attainment & ability

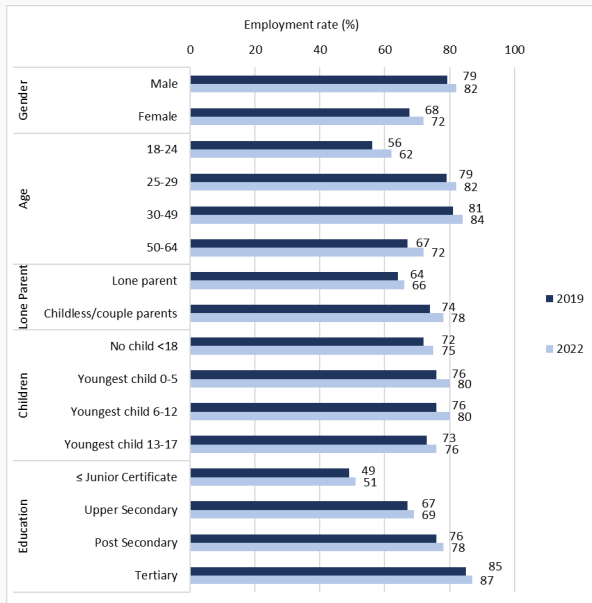
Motivation & background

- COVID pandemic → severe disruption to Irish society
- During the pandemic:
 - Only essential workers could pursue their jobs in workplace
 - **Working from home (WFH)** → key cleavage between workers
 - Those most likely to lose their job:
 - Least education
 - Part-time workers
 - Young people in rural areas
 - Lone parents
 - Public support:
 - Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP) for those who lost their jobs/could not WFH
 - Wage Subsidy Schemes to subsidise severely affected employers & childcare workers
 - At the height: COVID schemes supported 1 million workers & 37,000 enterprises

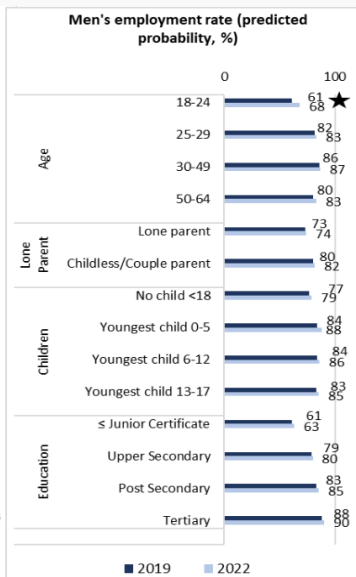
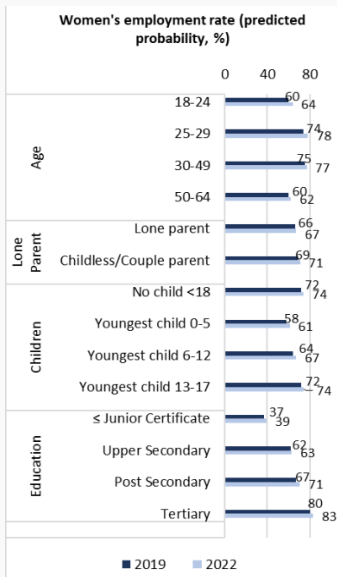
Methodology

- Data:
 - Main analyses: CSO's Labour Force Survey
 - Comparison by disability status: CSO's Survey on Income and Living Conditions
- Years: 2019 and 2022
- Methodology:
 - Probit/OLS regressions with time fixed effects
 - Dependent variables: Employment, unemployment, inactivity, hours of work, part-time status, weeks of work, professional/manager occupation, WFH
 - Groups of interest (interacted with time): gender, age group, lone parent status, children age group, educational attainment & disability.
 - Controls: Region of residence, nationality, industrial sector, occupation & self-employment status.

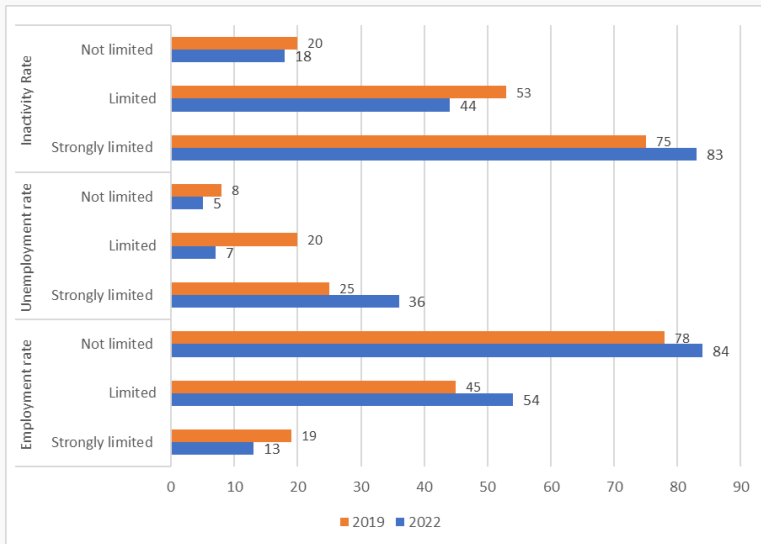
Employment rate went up for all groups (excluding disabled)



Only significant change between groups: 18-24 y.o. men compared to 30-49 y.o.



Employment improved for disabled but worsened for strongly disabled



Although only unemployment & employment results statistically significant

VARIABLE	CATEGORY	EMPLOYMENT		UNEMPLOYMENT		INACTIVITY	
		Main effect	Change 2019-2022	Main effect	Change 2019-2022	Main effect	Change 2019-2022
Disability	Not limited	(ref.)					
	Limited	-0.885***	0.201*	0.550***	-0.352**	0.854***	-0.108
	Severely limited	-1.412***	-0.411*	0.747***	0.364	1.429***	0.235
Year	2019	(ref.)					
	2022	0.094**		-0.213***		-0.025	
Observations (unweighted)		11,983		8,964		11,983	

Source: SILC 2019, 2022.

Notes: Dependent variable for **employment** model: 1 = employed individual; 0 = unemployed or inactive individual. Dependent variable for **unemployment** model: 1 = unemployed individual; 0 = employed individual. Dependent variable for the **inactivity** model: 1 = inactive individual; 0 = employed or unemployed individual. In all models, controls include age, educational attainment, nationality, and region of residence. Significance levels: *** $p < 0.01$; ** $p < 0.05$; * $p < 0.10$.

Hours of work

Prior to the pandemic:

- Women, 18-24 y.o., low educated, lone mothers & mothers (especially of 6-12 y.o.)
→ least weekly hours

Post pandemic:

- ↓ Gender gap
- ↓ Gap between mothers of 6-12 y.o. and non-mothers
(partly thanks to remote work as highest share of remote workers both years)

Hours of work improved for mothers post pandemic

VARIABLE	CATEGORY	Men		Women	
		Main effect	Change 2019-2022	Main effect	Change 2019-2022
Constant		43.207***		42.720***	
Age	18-24	-6.318***	0.346	-4.395***	-0.602
	25-29	-1.180***	0.152	0.126	0.199
	30-49	(ref.)			
	50-64	-0.668**	-0.082	-3.461***	0.472
Children	No child <18	(ref.)			
	Youngest child <6	0.310	0.419	-4.200***	0.412
	Youngest child 6-12	0.688**	0.288	-4.543***	0.785*
	Youngest child 13-17	0.252	0.292	-2.630***	0.085
Lone Parent	Childless/Couple parent	(ref.)			
	Lone parent	-0.456	-0.579	-1.373***	0.565
Education	≤ Lower Secondary	(ref.)			
	Upper secondary	1.166***	-0.292	2.386***	-0.765
	Post secondary	1.721***	-0.033	2.211***	-0.290
	Tertiary	2.555***	-0.630	4.094***	-0.268
Year	2019	(ref.)			
	2022	-0.300		-0.011	
Observations (unweighted)		53,651		50,909	

Source: LFS Q1-Q4 2019, Q1-Q4 2022.

Notes: Dependent variable: usual hours of work per week in main job. Controls: region of residence, nationality, occupation, economic sector, and self-employment status. Significance levels: *** p<0.01; ** p<0.05; * p<0.10.

Rise in Working From Home for all groups

- 2019: 21% of employed people WFH compared to 36% in 2022
- Higher education: highest shares in in WFH in 2019 + highest growth (significantly higher than low-educated)
- Women: Lower share in WFH in 2019, now same as men (35%)
- 18-25 y.o.: highest growth between years (150%).
But 30-49 y.o.: highest share in 2022 (40%)
- Non-parents: highest growth (92%)
But parents of 6-12 y.o.: highest share in 2022 (38 % - both genders)
- WFH now most common in cities (opposite before).

Key takeaways

Results:

- Employment rose for all groups except strongly disabled
 - Improvement especially for young male workers (18-24 y.o.)
- Reduction in gender gap in remote work and in hours of work
- Mothers of 6-12 y.o.: highest rise in hours of work
 - But need to monitor whether accompanied by drop in unpaid work
- Those with least education benefited the least from the rise in WFH

Policy conclusions:

- Shows efficiency of COVID schemes in mitigating long-term effects of pandemic
- But more support needed for **strongly disabled** population & those with **least education** + issue of **digital exclusion** for people living in **rural** areas (potentially weaker internet coverage)
- **Better data** needed on disability & on unpaid work

Average weekly hours of work (no control)

VARIABLES	CATEGORY	2019 Hours	2022 Hours	% Change 2019-2022
Gender	Male	40.5	39.9	-1.36%
	Female	32.4	32.8	1.13%
Age	18-24	30.5	29.9	-1.75%
	25-29	37.2	37.3	0.32%
	30-49	37.8	37.7	-0.13%
	50-64	36.9	36.8	-0.10%
Lone Parent	Childless/Couple with child(ren)	37.1	36.8	-0.63%
	Lone Parent	31.3	32.0	2.22%
Children	No child <18	37.0	36.7	-0.89%
	Youngest child 0-5	37.1	37.1	0.04%
	Youngest child 6-12	36.2	36.5	0.89%
	Youngest child 13-17	35.2	35.1	-0.49%
Education	≤ Junior Certificate	36.0	36.0	0.04%
	Upper Secondary	34.7	34.3	-1.26%
	Post Secondary	36.7	36.5	-0.52%
	Tertiary	37.8	37.6	-0.60%

Source: LFS Q1-Q4 2019, Q1-Q4 2022.

Notes: Analysis based on all employed aged 18-64. Although included in the analysis, summary statistics for the 'Armed forces' occupation are not shown here as the unweighted number of observations is below the minimum required by the Central Statistics Office to allow publication.

Hours of work (with controls)

VARIABLE	CATEGORY	Main effect		Change 2019-2022 (Time interaction effect)	
		Coefficient	Standard error	Coefficient	Standard error
Constant		45.270***	(0.295)		
Gender	Male	(ref.)			
	Female	-5.346***	(0.127)	0.669***	(0.167)
Age	18-24	-5.190***	(0.227)	-0.179	(0.314)
	25-29	-0.444*	(0.190)	0.214	(0.266)
	30-49	(ref.)			
	50-64	-1.734***	(0.160)	0.110	(0.219)
Lone Parent	Childless/Couple parent	(ref.)			
	Lone Parent	-2.009***	(0.271)	0.358	(0.380)
Children	No child <18	(ref.)			
	Youngest child 0-5	-1.571***	(0.162)	0.391	(0.237)
	Youngest child 6-12	-1.634***	(0.174)	0.521*	(0.239)
	Youngest child 13-17	-1.055***	(0.199)	0.203	(0.277)
Education	≤ Lower Secondary	(ref.)			
	Upper Secondary	1.318***	(0.230)	-0.533	(0.345)
	Post Secondary	1.726***	(0.252)	-0.194	(0.370)
	Tertiary	2.976***	(0.228)	-0.515	(0.323)
Year	2019	(ref.)			
	2022	-0.388	(0.336)		
Observations (unweighted)			104,560		