Virus Watch Community Cohort

As part of [Theme 3 of PROTECT](#), data from [Virus Watch](#) – a large community cohort study across England and Wales – is being used to investigate how COVID-19 virus infection risk differs between occupations, what causes this variation, and what can be done to control it.

This information will be useful to stakeholders in the UK Government, including the Health and Safety Executive, and international stakeholders such as the International Labour Organisation, as well as employers, workers and other members of the public. Crucially, this will include untangling the role of occupation in relation to other social and demographic factors. It will also help use understanding what does cause work-related COVID-19 risk, and inform effective control measures.

The research questions the project aims to address include:

- How does COVID-19 risk vary across occupations, beyond variation accounted for by other socio-demographic factors and non-work-related activities?
- What characteristics of workplace contact best explain occupational differences in risk?
- How are workplace control measures promoted, perceived, and adhered to, and how does this vary by sector?
- Which occupational sectors are of concern due to a combination of low vaccine uptake, high exposure risk and high proportions of workers with chronic illness?
- What is the relative contribution of workplace exposure to national transmission of the COVID-19 virus and how has this varied throughout the pandemic?

Participants in the Virus Watch study report all respiratory illnesses, positive COVID-19 tests, vaccinations, and, in a subset of over 20,000 individuals, antibody blood tests for prior COVID-19 infection. This data is also linked to the national immunisation register and national COVID-19 laboratory data. The combined data is being used to investigate how occupation is related to COVID-19 virus infection risk.

Participants also complete detailed monthly surveys to allow more detailed assessment of social contact and relevant behaviours. The team will use data from diaries about contact at work and in other locations to understand how work-related contact and exposure has changed across the pandemic. They are also developing monthly surveys to investigate control measures at work.

If you would like more information about the Virus Watch study or are interested in participating, please visit the [Virus Watch website](#).

Project team

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