

Fieldwork / lone working risk assessment

Use this document **before you start fieldwork** to discuss as a team the various risks that might be relevant to your project, and how you plan to mitigate them. We have suggested “control measures” but you can discuss with your team to see if there is anything else they would like to consider.

Many of these hazards / risks are most relevant to face-to-face qualitative fieldwork, but some (e.g. stress / distress) could be relevant to fieldwork conducted through any channel (e.g. telephone or Zoom/Teams).

Who will be doing this fieldwork			
Hazard:	Control Measures:	Actions with initials of those responsible	Complete
1. Environmental hazards Any hazards that result from visits to offsite locations – including but not limited to, poorly lit areas, insufficient temperature control, areas of high crime and inappropriate meeting spaces.	1. Where possible conduct lone working during daylight hours with good visibility, in public spaces. If not possible, consider as a team what could be done to help everyone stay and feel safe: paired interviews / overnight stays / organising taxis / rearranging interview times or locations / anything else?		

2. Violence or threatening behaviour Working across a diverse range of locations, researchers may be at risk of verbal abuse, physical assault or harassment.	1. If this is a likely hazard, consider whether a) the work could be carried out via Zoom / Teams or telephone, or b) whether paired working would be more appropriate. If not...		
	2. Ensure all have a charged mobile when going on fieldwork		
	3. Utilise personal safety alarms if wanted.		
	4. Use the buddy system to “check in” and “check out” of in-person fieldwork (this should be used for any face-to-face fieldwork, even if perceived risk of this threat is low).		
	5. Communicate to the project team that if they feel at all uncomfortable about a situation or person they must avoid, or leave, the interview immediately. Once they are safely away, they should notify a senior person on the project who can escalate concerns and give support.		

3.Stress Researchers or interviewers working offsite may experience stress due to a number of factors including, but not exclusive to, discussing difficult subject matter during interviews, difficult or emotional participant behaviour.	1. Ensure the team are confident in carrying out the fieldwork, and have received training as necessary.		
	2. For particularly complex or sensitive tasks, check whether the researcher is comfortable participating and give the option to opt out.		
	3. If stress is a likely hazard due to very sensitive fieldwork, consider whether a) the work could be carried out via Zoom / Teams or telephone, or b) whether paired working would be more appropriate.		
	4. For any qualitative fieldwork, regardless of channel (i.e. face to face / online / telephone) or perceived level of risk / sensitivity, ensure all team members are aware of how to respond to a) a participant who is upset or angry, b) a participant who is offensive or aggressive (in particular that they can and should terminate an interview in this latter case).		
	5. Encourage open conversations and regular check ins, including the opportunity to debrief after fieldwork. Discuss with the team what would be helpful.		
	6. Make sure all members of the team are aware of the mental health resources that are available, to use if they feel distressed after fieldwork.		

4.Slips, trips and falls Working in an unfamiliar environment could increase the risk of slips trips and falls.	1. Ensure appropriate footwear and clothing is worn for the task/ conditions.		
	2. Provide personal protective equipment (PPE) if necessary.		

5.Sudden illness whilst working alone. The possibility that a person will become unwell when on fieldwork and be unable to summon help.	1. Ensure the team knows that they should not go on fieldwork if feeling unwell.		
	2. Explain that the team should charge mobile phones before fieldwork and carry it with them.		
	3. Re Lone workers with conditions that might pose a serious risk to their health while they are carrying out fieldwork (e.g. epilepsy, diabetes, a severe allergy). Communicate that they should: a) Notify a senior member of the project team before fieldwork starts (in confidence), who will ask if there is any further support you need to carry out fieldwork safely. b) Only agree to go on fieldwork if they feel safe doing so. c) Take all the necessary precautions you would usually take before travelling anywhere (for example travelling with medication and / or a medical-alert bracelet).		