

# YOUTH & COVID-19:

IMPACTS ON JOBS, EDUCATION, RIGHTS  
AND MENTAL WELL-BEING





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MENTAL WELL-BEING

SURVEY REPORT 2020

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted every aspect of our lives. Even before the onset of the crisis, the social and economic integration of young people was an ongoing challenge. Now, unless urgent action is taken, young people are likely to suffer severe and long-lasting impacts from the pandemic.

This study reports the findings from the Global Survey on Youth and COVID-19 conducted by partners of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth<sup>1</sup> between April and May 2020. This was at the time when the COVID-19 pandemic had rapidly translated into an economic crisis. The Global Survey aimed to capture the immediate effects of the pandemic on the lives of young people (aged 18–29) with regards to employment, education, mental well-being, rights and social activism. Over 12,000 responses were received from 112 countries, with a large proportion coming from educated youth and those with Internet access. The survey population is representative of students and working youth with a tertiary education, who together account for about a quarter of youth in the countries sampled.

The study finds the impact of the pandemic on young people to be systematic, deep and disproportionate. It has been particularly hard on young women, younger youth and youth in lower-income countries. Young people are concerned about the future and their place within it. This study is their story.

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Of the young people who were either studying or combining study and work before the onset of the crisis, three-quarters (73 per cent) experienced school closures, yet not all were able to transition into online and distance learning. Indeed, COVID-19 left one in eight young people (13 per cent) without any access to courses, teaching or training; a situation particularly acute among youth in lower-income countries and one that serves to underline the sharp digital divides that exist between regions. Despite the best efforts of schools and training institutions to provide continuity through online delivery, 65 per cent of young people reported having learnt less since the pandemic began, 51 per cent believe their education will be delayed, and nine per cent feared their education would suffer and might even fail.

The pandemic is also inflicting a heavy toll on young workers, destroying their employment and undermining their career prospects. One in six young people (17 per cent) who were employed before the outbreak, stopped working altogether, most notably younger workers aged 18–24, and those in clerical support, services, sales, and crafts and related trades. Working hours among employed youth fell by nearly a quarter (i.e. by an average of two hours a day) and two out of five young people (42 per cent) reported a reduction in their income. Young people in lower-income countries are the most exposed to reductions in working hours and the contraction in income that results. Occupation was found to be the main determinant

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.decentjobsforyouth.org](http://www.decentjobsforyouth.org).

for how the crisis has affected young women and men in employment differently, with young women reporting greater losses in productivity as compared to young men.

Severe disruption to learning and working, compounded by the health crisis, has seen a deterioration in young people's mental well-being. The study finds that 17 per cent of young people are *probably* affected by anxiety and depression. Mental well-being is lowest for young women and younger youth between the ages of 18 and 24. Young people whose education or work was either disrupted or had stopped altogether were almost twice as likely to be *probably* affected by anxiety or depression as those who continued to be employed or whose education was on track. This underscores the interlinkages that exist between mental well-being, educational success and labour market integration.

At the same time as recognizing the importance of lockdown measures in safeguarding lives, young people also reported having seen an indirect impact on their freedom of movement. Moreover, one in three (33 per cent) noticed a marked impact on their right to participate in public affairs, while over a quarter (27 per cent) experienced difficulties in exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief. About a quarter of young people (24 per cent) felt the inaccuracies around the pandemic affected their right to access information. Basic needs were an issue too: for a fifth of youth (21 per cent), especially the ones out of work, their right to housing was being challenged as they struggled to make ends meet.

Yet in spite of this, young people remained determined to step up and partner safely and effectively with governments, social partners, civil society and other institutions to “Build Back Better”. Over one in four reported actively engaging in volunteerism (31 per cent) and in making donations towards the COVID-19 response (27 per cent). Furthermore, young people went on to call on governments to continue enforcing containment measures, such as working from home, wherever possible. They want restrictions to be eased gradually, as for them, the health and safety of all workers and citizens is paramount.

The study presents powerful stories and statements by young people from around the globe that include innovative ideas on how to respond to the crisis. At their core are those most at risk, *from* the poor, the migrant workers and the informal workers to the elderly, the health workers on the frontline and the recently unemployed. The voices, energy and resilience of young people are shaping a safe, more inclusive, equal planet for us all.

To support and amplify youth voices and actions, this study calls for urgent, targeted and smarter investments in decent jobs for youth, including in the protection of young people's human rights; employment and training guarantee programmes; social protection and unemployment insurance benefits for youth; greater efforts to boost the quality and delivery of online and distance learning; and stronger complementarities with mental health services, psychosocial support and sports activities. Only by working together, with and for youth, can we prevent the COVID-19 crisis from having not only a negative but a potentially long-lasting impact on young people's lives.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The response of governments around the world to the unprecedented and rapid spread of COVID-19 has resulted in a global economic slowdown. The impacts on people, jobs and businesses are likely to be long-term and hit hard the most vulnerable populations, including young people.

History has shown us that a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic can have protracted and severe consequences for younger populations,<sup>2</sup> who are already starting to be termed the “lockdown generation” (ILO, 2020a). Recent studies are beginning to highlight the multi-dimensional challenge the pandemic poses for young people through the resultant disruption to education and training, amplified vulnerabilities among young workers, and a longer and more arduous transition into decent work (ILO, 2020b). Impacts such as these exacerbate inequalities and risk reducing the productive potential of an entire generation.

In a time of crisis and uncertainty like the present, youth voices and actions can all too easily be pushed to one side. Recognizing the integral part, they have to play in the solution and recovery, the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth seeks to draw attention to young people’s actions and their views on fighting the pandemic. With this common objective in mind, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Major Group for Children and Youth, AIESEC, the European Youth Forum, the European Union Emergency Trust Fund for Africa and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights have joined forces to conduct an online survey on youth and COVID-19.

The Global Survey on Youth and COVID-19 focused on four areas of impacts on young people: namely, employment, education and training, mental well-being, and rights and voices. It explored young people’s actions with regards to social activism and crisis-response behaviours, as well as their perceptions and experience of policy measures.

At a time when survey fieldwork has been either halted or postponed due to lockdown measures, the survey data and analysis presented in this report provide crucial information on how the pandemic is affecting the lives of young people. The online nature of the survey therefore complements data from existing household surveys, as well as from the more innovative, rapid approaches that have been developed for short-term planning and the swift assessment of impacts.<sup>3</sup>

It is important, however, to first point out the limitations of online surveys and understand who the young respondents are who were surveyed. The online delivery of the survey, together with the snowball and opt-in sampling strategy employed, limits the representativeness of the survey population and calls for caution when interpreting survey findings. The survey

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<sup>2</sup> Following the financial crisis of 2008, for example, the global youth unemployment rate grew and has yet to return to pre-crisis levels.

<sup>3</sup> Approaches such as the ILO’s now-casting model that provides impact estimates to the ILO Monitor “COVID-19 and the world of work”, available at: [www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/topics/coronavirus/lang--en/index.htm) [7 July 2020].



population, in particular, is representative of working youth with a tertiary education and of students that combined represent about one-quarter of the youth population in the countries sampled (box 1). Thus, the survey captures the COVID-19 impacts on educated young women and men and of young people who have possibility to participate in online surveys. The findings show that within this group COVID-19 impacts vary considerably across gender, age groups and country income groups.

For those young people under-represented in the sample, primarily young people from low-income countries and young people with at most a secondary education who are no longer studying, the impacts of COVID-19 are likely to be different and more severe as these groups were already in a more vulnerable situation even before the outbreak of the pandemic. This further emphasizes the need for decisive and urgent action to foster decent jobs for youth.

### **Box 1 Survey sampling, representativeness and methodology – A focus on educated young women and men**

The online survey, available in 23 languages, was conducted between 21 April and 21 May 2020 and taken by 12,605 individuals aged 18–34 years. For the purposes of this report, “young people” refers to those in the 18–29 age band, with the 30–34 age band used as a comparison population. Survey participants were recruited globally through online snowball sampling (non-probabilistic). The survey population comprised of young people from 112 countries from across all ILO regions and country income groups. The total youth population (aged 15–29) of these countries amounts to 1.47 billion, or around 92 per cent of the world’s youth population.<sup>4</sup>

The sample represents primarily young workers with a tertiary education and students. Among young workers who are not in education, 89 per cent had attained a tertiary education. Overall, close to two-thirds (65.8 per cent) of the youth sample (aged 18–29) indicated that they were educated to at least a first tertiary degree level (e.g. a Bachelor degree). Of the remaining one-third of youth (aged 18–29) with at most a secondary education, 81 per cent were continuing to study.

Overall, young people in the survey sample are around three times more likely to have attained a tertiary level education, compared to the general youth population in the same age bracket. This discrepancy is greatest for lower middle-income countries, both because in these countries the average level of education is lowest and because the online survey appears to have reached and been taken by a more educated sub-sample of the general population.

When calculating the results, weights were employed to improve the representativeness of the sample and to correct for a non-response bias between women and men, as well as for population biases. In the raw data, women represent 64 per cent of the sample (and 53.5 per cent of the weighted sample). In addition, the number of respondents by country varies considerably. Weights are calculated based on ILOSTAT data on working-age population. Acknowledging that the survey represents individuals with higher levels of education, population weights for

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<sup>4</sup> Using data on working-age population for the 15–29 age bracket for a total of 185 countries, including all 112 countries represented in the survey. Data: ILOSTAT.

individuals with advanced levels of education were used. The weighting methodology corrects for differences in shares of women and men between the survey sample and actual populations and weights results at the level of geographical regions and income groups to correct for population biases.

The narrative that emerges from the analysis, as well as the overall magnitude of key findings, is robust to a variety of different sensitivity checks. This includes testing different weighting methodologies and re-calculating results, leaving out observations from one country at a time in order to check whether results are being driven by observations from one particular country. It suggests a significant degree of validity for the results for the youth groups captured through the survey, namely, young working graduates and students.

The technical annex provides further information on the dataset, weighting methodology, representativeness and robustness checks.

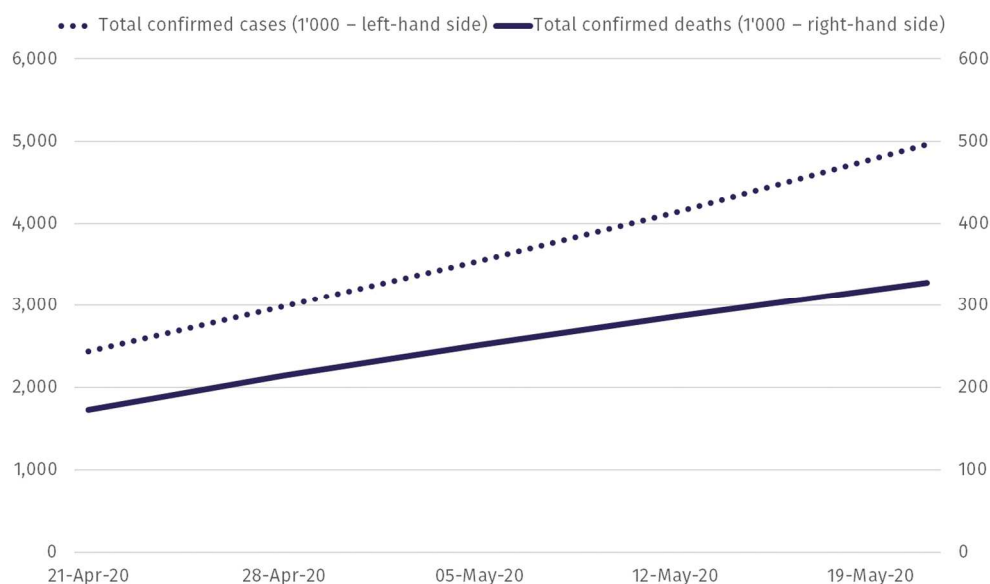
The survey ran online in 23 languages between 21 April and 21 May 2020. It commenced at a time when COVID-19 infections had spread around the world at a significant scale.<sup>5</sup> When the survey was launched, there were 2.43 million confirmed COVID-19 cases worldwide and 172,814 deaths attributed to the pandemic. By the close of the survey, on 21 May, these numbers had grown to 4.96 million confirmed COVID-19 cases and 327,957 attributed deaths, representing a more than two-fold increase in cases over a four-week period (figure 1). While the observed short-term health impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on young people appear to be less severe than for older generations (Ferguson et al., 2020),<sup>6</sup> they are not sheltered from the economic, social and cultural impacts that the pandemic has had and is continuing to have across sectors and societies.

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<sup>5</sup> The World Health Organization declared the outbreak of the COVID-19 disease a pandemic on 11 March 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Ferguson et al. (2020) have shown that the infection fatality rate of COVID-19 in the 20–29 age bracket is about 0.03 per cent, rising to 0.08 per cent and 0.15 per cent, respectively, in the 30–39 and 40–49 age brackets.

**Figure 1 Total confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths at the global level during the survey period**



**Data source:** European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), Our World in Data.

During the survey period, some governments introduced stringent policy measures designed to slow the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 2 plots the Stringency Index of the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker over the survey period for the countries represented in the survey.<sup>7</sup> Almost all survey respondents lived where school closures were mandatory for either a part of or the entire country. Around half of the respondents (48.3 per cent) who participated at the beginning of the survey period lived in countries where closure of all but essential workplaces was required, compared to only around 10 per cent towards the end. Overall, at the time of participating in the survey, one-quarter (25.5 per cent) of the sample lived in countries where all but essential workplaces were required to close, and a further two-thirds of youth in the sample (68 per cent) lived in countries where workplaces were closed for some sectors and categories of workers.<sup>8</sup>

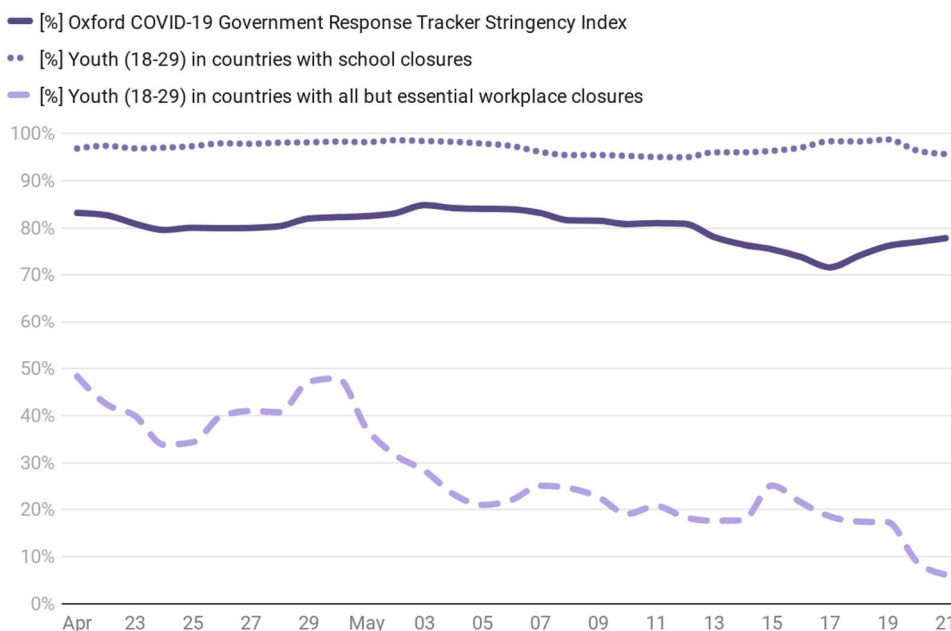
In such a dynamic and unprecedented context, the right of young people to participate must be upheld. Young people’s perceptions, actions and aspirations are critical in identifying

<sup>7</sup>The Stringency Index is a composite measure of nine different policy areas comprising: school closures, workplace closures, cancellation of public events, restrictions on gatherings, closing of public transportation, stay-at-home requirements, restrictions in domestic and international travel, as well as the presence of public information campaigns.

<sup>8</sup> The trends identified in the survey sample mirror closely the trends for all countries worldwide, as governments relaxed lockdown measures with regards to workplace closures in May 2020, as reported in the fourth edition of the ILO Monitor “COVID-19 and the world of work”, available at: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms\\_745963.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_745963.pdf)

sources of vulnerability and informing policy actions. Giving young people a voice in decision-making to articulate their needs and ideas not only improves the effectiveness of policies and programmes, but also gives youth the chance to participate in their delivery.

**Figure 2 Lockdown measures imposed by governments during the survey period**



**Note:** The graph depicts scores provided by the Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker for the duration of the survey period (21 April 2020 to 21 May 2020). For each day the (five-day rolling) average of all survey respondents is plotted based on the scores of respondents' countries of residence. Averages are estimated through a fixed-effects model including dummies for each country-gender combination to minimise sample composition effects when identifying time trends. Survey weights are used as described in Box 1. Data source: Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker.

The report is organized into nine sections. The next section, section 2, describes the survey sample. Sections 3 to 6 present observed impacts and perceptions on outcomes related to employment, education and training, mental well-being and rights. Section 7 discusses the reaction of youth to the crisis through their social activism and behaviours, while section 8 focuses on their ideas about how best to address the crisis and opinions about the response of governments, in particular, the labour market-related measures taken. Finally, section 9 concludes with main findings and puts forward concrete policy recommendations.

## 2. SAMPLE DESCRIPTION AND METHODS

**Analysis is based on 12,605 responses received from people aged 18–34 years.**<sup>9</sup> For the purposes of this report, “young people” refers to the 18–29 age band, while the 30–34 age band is used as a comparison population. Responses are weighted by age, gender and country youth population in order to enhance the representativeness of the results obtained. Thus, the weighted sample is representative of educated women and men. Women account for 53.5 per cent of the weighted observations.<sup>10</sup> The sample has a slightly higher representation of younger youth (two-thirds of the young people aged 18–29 were under 25). One in five youth survey respondents (20.2 per cent) identified themselves as being part of a minority and 6.8 per cent identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex. About one in seven respondents (14.8 per cent) aged 18–29 were either married or lived with a partner, compared to 53 per cent of those aged 30–34. Only 6 per cent of youth had at least one child, as opposed to 33 per cent of those aged 30–34 (table 1).

**The sample comprised primarily of young workers with a tertiary level education and students.** Close to two-thirds (65.8 per cent) of the sample indicated that they had already acquired at least a first tertiary level degree (e.g. a Bachelor degree), while an additional 28.5 per cent indicated they had completed secondary education. A small minority had completed only primary education (4.8 per cent) or had no formal education at all (0.9 per cent). The comparatively high educational achievement of the survey respondents is shown in figure 3; a majority of respondents were enrolled in education up until the age of 23. Furthermore, the proportion of respondents with at most a secondary education decreased swiftly with age, from 84 per cent at age 18 to 14 per cent at the age of 29. From this it can be deduced that most of the students who took part in the survey were pursuing tertiary education.

**With a rise in the age of survey respondents, the proportion transitioning from education to work increased rapidly.** Overall, 45.2 per cent of youth respondents (aged 18–29) were studying, with an additional 15.9 per cent combining study and work. Less than one-third (28.5 per cent) reported work as their main activity, while 10.4 per cent of respondents were neither in employment, education or training (NEET). The shares of young survey respondents that studied compared to those that worked decreased rapidly with age (figure 3). Only 15 per cent of the young people were in work at age 18, compared to 73 per cent at age 29 and 85 per cent in the older 30–34 age group. This pattern is reversed for students: 87 per cent of 18-year-olds were studying, but only 23 per cent of the 30–34 cohort. The share of youth neither working

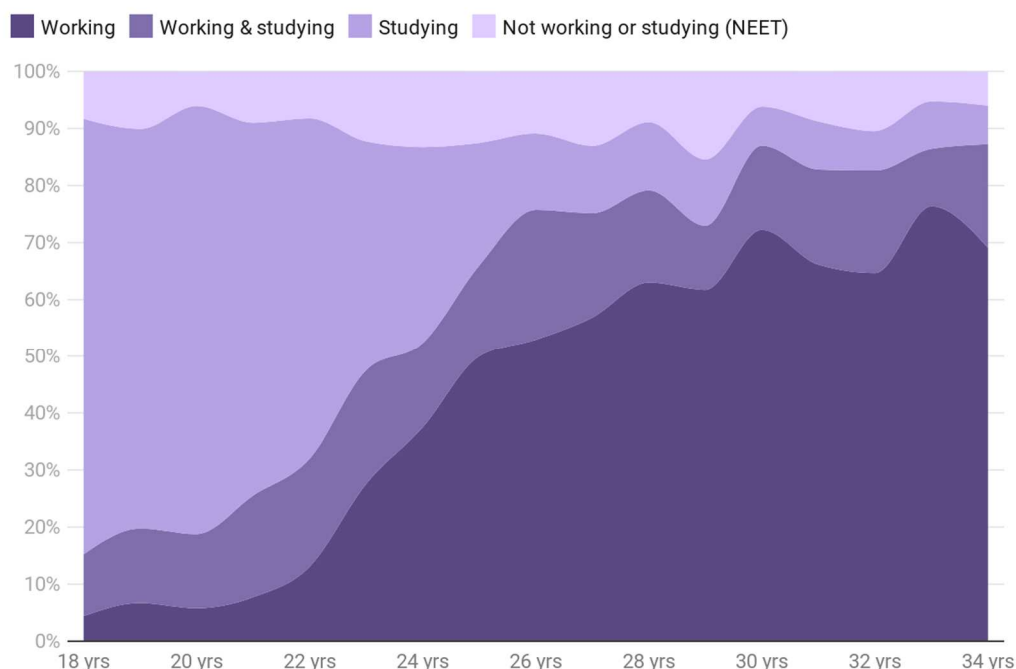
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<sup>9</sup> In addition, 2,141 individuals aged 30–39 answered the survey. Comparisons across age cohorts are presented in selected sections.

<sup>10</sup> Weights are based on population data for young people with an advanced level of education. Among the 112 countries represented in the survey young women more frequently obtain an advanced level of education which explains why in the weighted sample young women represent slightly more than half of the observations (53.5 per cent).

nor studying varies slightly across age groups: 10 per cent among younger respondents (18–24), 12 per cent among the older youth (25–29) and 7 per cent among those aged 30–34.<sup>11</sup>

**Figure 3 Respondents’ labour market status, by age**



**Note:** The graph plots the distribution of survey respondents by age based on answers to the question “Which of the following answers best describes your current situation?”. N: 12,605.

**To a varying degree, the survey sample represents young people from all regions, predominantly from middle- and high-income countries and from urban or suburban areas.** Asia and the Pacific is the region with the largest share of young people in the sample (54.1 per cent), followed by Europe and Central Asia (19.4 per cent), the Americas (18.4 per cent), Africa (6.9 per cent) and a small representation from the Arab States (1.3 per cent).<sup>12</sup> Almost three-quarters (73.8 per cent) of the youth respondents live in middle-income countries<sup>13</sup> and one-quarter (24.8 per cent) in high-income countries. Only 1.3 per cent of respondents came from low-income countries, suggesting that results and comparisons with this group of countries ought to be treated with caution. Within countries, 59.2 per cent of respondents came from urban areas, 21.8 per cent from suburban areas and 19.1 per cent from rural areas.

<sup>11</sup> Note that gender differences in labour market status are small. For the younger age cohort (18–24 years), 28 per cent of women work as opposed to 32 per cent of men, while 77 per cent of women study compared to 75 per cent of men. These differences become negligible among older youth (25–29 years), where 72 per cent of women work compared to 74 per cent of men, and 32 per cent of women and 32 per cent of men study.

<sup>12</sup> As only 141 responses were received from young people living in Arab States countries; results for this region in particular ought to be treated with caution.

<sup>13</sup> Lower middle-income: 36.6 per cent; upper middle-income: 37.2 per cent.

**Table 1** Sample characteristics

Category		Age cohort, 18–29 years		Age cohort, 30–34 years	
		No.	%	No.	%
Labour market status	Working	3,170	28.5	1,027	69.6
	Studying	5,028	45.2	109	7.4
	Study and work	1,775	15.9	230	15.6
	NEET	1,157	10.4	109	7.4
Gender	Female	5,958	53.5	788	53.4
	Male	5,172	46.5	687	46.6
Age group	18–24 years	7,354	66.1		
	25–29 years	3,776	33.9		
	30–34 years			1,475	100.0
Region	Africa	765	6.9	78	5.3
	Americas	2,045	18.4	320	21.7
	Arab States	141	1.3	10	0.7
	Asia and the Pacific	6,018	54.1	733	49.7
	Europe and Central Asia	2,161	19.4	334	22.6
Country income group	Low-income	149	1.3	15	1.0
	Lower middle-income	4,076	36.6	381	25.8
	Upper middle-income	4,141	37.2	620	42.0
	High-income	2,764	24.8	459	31.1
<b>Total</b>		<b>11,130</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,475</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Marital status	Single	5,783	80.0	405	43.4
	Married/Have a partner	1,068	14.8	493	52.7
	Prefer not to say	379	5.2	37	3.9
Children	No	6,797	94.0	632	67.5
	Yes	433	6.0	303	32.5
Area	Urban	4,277	59.2	614	65.6
	Suburban	1,574	21.8	217	23.2
	Rural	1,379	19.1	104	11.2
Highest education level attained	None	64	0.9	8	0.8
	Primary	348	4.8	12	1.2
	Secondary	2,057	28.5	78	8.4
	Tertiary	4,761	65.8	837	89.6

<b>Category</b>		<b>Age cohort, 18–29 years</b>		<b>Age cohort, 30–34 years</b>	
		<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>
Identity	Minority	1461	20.2	172	18.4
	Refugee and migrant	195	2.7	32	3.4
	Person with disability	168	2.3	36	3.8
	LGBTI	491	6.8	46	4.9
<b>Total</b>		<b>7,230</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>935</b>	<b>100.0</b>



### 3. EMPLOYMENT

**Even before the COVID-19 outbreak, young people faced a tough labour market.** Young people aged 15–24 were around three times more likely to be unemployed than those aged 25 and over (ILO, 2020c). The COVID-19 crisis is expected to create more obstacles for young people in the labour market: for jobseekers, a lack of vacancies is expected to lead to longer school-to-work transitions, while young workers risk losing their jobs amid the current wave of lay-offs and the collapse of businesses and start-ups (ILO, 2020b). Prior to the outbreak, globally, 178 million youth were employed in the sectors hit hardest by the crisis, such as accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail trade, manufacturing, real estate and other business activities (ILO, 2020a).

It is against this backdrop that this section describes the impacts that the crisis is having on the jobs, incomes and productivity of the young workers in the Global Survey on Youth and COVID-19.

#### Stopped working since the onset of the pandemic

**One in six young people aged 18–29 (17.4 per cent) had stopped working since the onset of the crisis – highlighting the dramatic impact it is having on youth labour markets all around the world** (figure 4). Those who have stopped working comprise the young people who had already lost their jobs (6.9 per cent), as well as those who reported being in employment but having worked zero hours since the onset of the crisis (10.5 per cent). The latter group may include youth in wage employment with temporary job losses, for example, as a result of furloughing,<sup>14</sup> and youth in self-employment, own-account workers or contributing family workers who had halted income-generating activities. While the differences between young women and men are small, countries at all income levels have experienced falls in youth employment.

**Younger youth aged 18–24 were more likely to stop working.** Almost one-quarter (23.1 per cent) of respondents aged 18–24 who worked before the COVID-19 outbreak had stopped working, compared to 13 per cent among older youth (aged 25–29) and 10.6 per cent in the 30–34 age cohort (see comparable results for the United Kingdom in box 2). Furthermore, youth (aged 18–29) were more prone to losing their jobs than those aged 30–34. A closer examination shows that 40 per cent of those aged 18–29 who had stopped working gave job losses as the reason, compared to 29 per cent among those aged 30–34.

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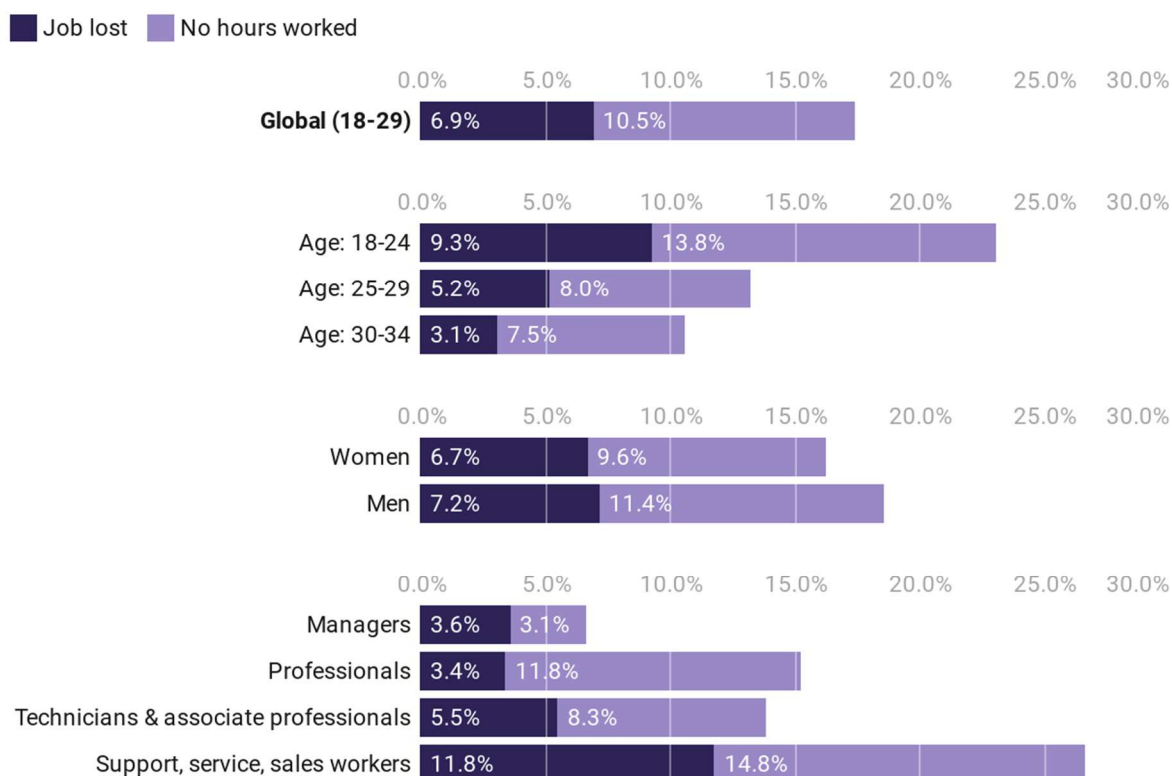
<sup>14</sup> The survey included a general question about working hours, but did not collect further information as to whether respondents were furloughed or not. Moreover, depending upon country-specific regulations, furloughing does not necessarily mean a reduction in working hours down to zero.

### Box 2 Comparable findings on youth employment in the United Kingdom

A nationally representative survey of adults in the United Kingdom conducted between 6–11 May 2020 found, overall, that 18 per cent of employees had stopped working, with younger age groups hardest hit: 33 per cent aged 18–24, 20 per cent aged 25–29, and 19 per cent aged 30–34 had stopped working since the onset of the pandemic. One in three employees aged 18–24 had seen their pay reduced.

Source: Gustafsson (2020).

**Figure 4 Share of respondents who reported having stopped working after the onset of the pandemic**



**Note:** The graphs plots the share of all respondents working before the onset of the pandemic who (i) declared to have lost their job since the start of the coronavirus outbreak or (ii) declared to be working but reported zero daily hours of work during the outbreak. Breakdown for women and men as well as by occupation only includes observation for respondents aged 18-29. Occupations are based on the ISCO-08 classification with “Managers” corresponding to ISCO-08 Major Group 1, “Professionals” to ISCO-08 Major Group 2, “Technicians & associate professionals” to ISCO-08 Major Group 3 and “Support, service and sales workers” to ISCO-08 Major Groups 5 to 9. N: 3,615 (respondents aged 18-29) of which information on occupation is available for 2,483 respondents. N: 1,042 (respondents aged 30-34).

**Most of the job losses among youth resulted from businesses ceasing to operate or else youth being laid-off.** A majority of the young people surveyed (54.0 per cent) who had lost their job since the onset of the pandemic gave either the business they worked for closing down or being let go as the reason. A further one-third (32.4 per cent) indicated that a temporary job had ended, while only a small minority resigned (8.4 per cent) or gave “moving places” as a reason for job loss (5.0 per cent).<sup>15</sup>

**Young workers in clerical support, services, sales, and crafts and related trades were more likely to have stopped working.**<sup>16</sup> Over one in four workers (27 per cent) in these occupations – which are associated with lower levels of formal education<sup>17</sup> – had stopped working, compared to only 7 per cent in management positions, 15 per cent in the professional category and 14 per cent of those in the technical and associate professional occupational categories (see figure 4). Lockdowns and social distancing measures may explain the higher incidence of work halts among workers in occupations where tasks may demand frequent customer contact (i.e. sales) or the performing of subsidiary or support services reliant on a business remaining open.

**Furthermore, younger workers are more likely to be employed in highly-affected occupations** (figure 5). Before age 20, young workers are largely represented in support, services and sales-related occupations. As age increases, young workers, having completed their education, take up occupations in the professional and associate professional category (ISCO 2–3), thereby rapidly changing the composition of the youth workforce. Thus, the change in occupational composition among working youth according to age helps explain why the youngest are at greatest risk.

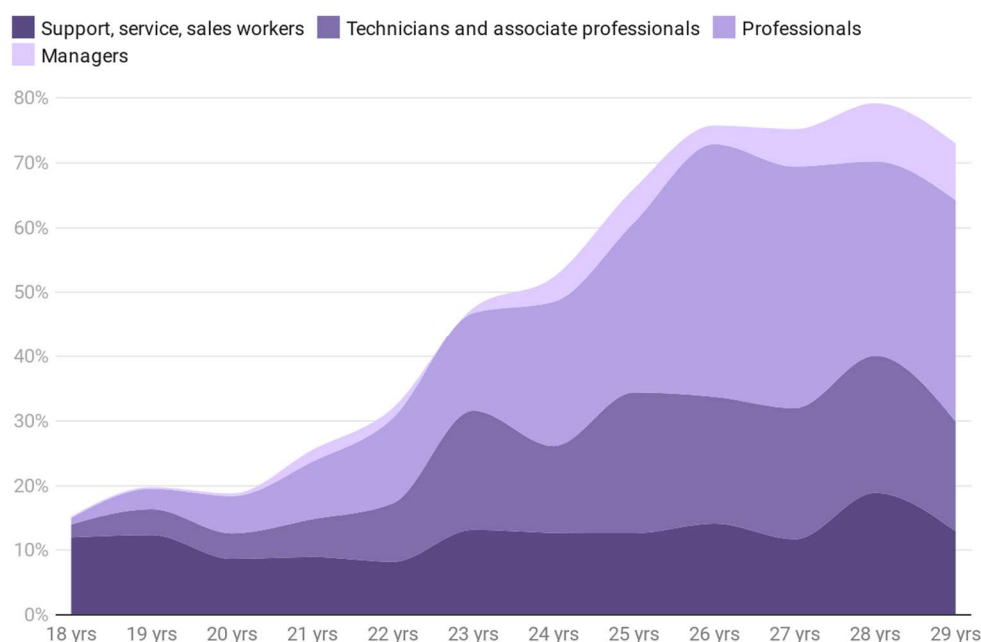
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<sup>15</sup> Job losses for all these reasons can plausibly be a result of the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and the nature of the survey did not allow for (or attempt) the precise attribution of job losses to the consequences of the pandemic.

<sup>16</sup> Occupations were matched to the major groups of the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08). ISCO major group 1 comprises “managers”, 2 “professionals”, 3 “technicians and associate professionals”, 4 “clerical support workers”, 5 “services and sales workers”, 6 “skilled agricultural, forestry and fishery workers”, 7 “craft and related trades workers”, 8 “plant and machine operators and assemblers” and 9 “elementary occupations”. This breakdown by occupation does not amount to a sectoral analysis. For example, services workers (ISCO major group 5) does not include all the occupations to be found in every services-related sector; for example, it does not include “personal service workers” (travel guides, cooks, hairdressers and housekeepers, etc.), “personal care workers” (child care workers, health care assistants, etc.) and “protective service workers” (firefighters, police officers, security guards, and so on).

<sup>17</sup> ISCO-08 maps these major groups to four distinct skill levels which require an increasing level of formal education. Occupation in ISCO major groups 1–3 generally require a tertiary education and 86 per cent of respondents in these occupations had completed a tertiary degree. Occupations in ISCO major groups 4–9 require mostly a secondary education or post-secondary degree but one that is non-tertiary and 44 per cent of respondents in these occupations had attained a primary or secondary education (while 56 per cent had acquired a tertiary degree).

**Figure 5 Working youth (aged 18–29), by occupation and age**



**Note:** The graph plots occupational groups of respondents as a share of all young people participating in the survey. Open-ended answers to the questions “What is your occupation?” and “What was your most recent occupation?” were matched to the major groups of the International Standard Classification for Occupations (ISCO-08) with “Managers” corresponding to Major Group 1, “Professionals” to Major Group 2, “Technicians & associate professionals” to Major Group 3 and “Support, service and sales workers” to Major Groups 5 to 9. N: 3,615.

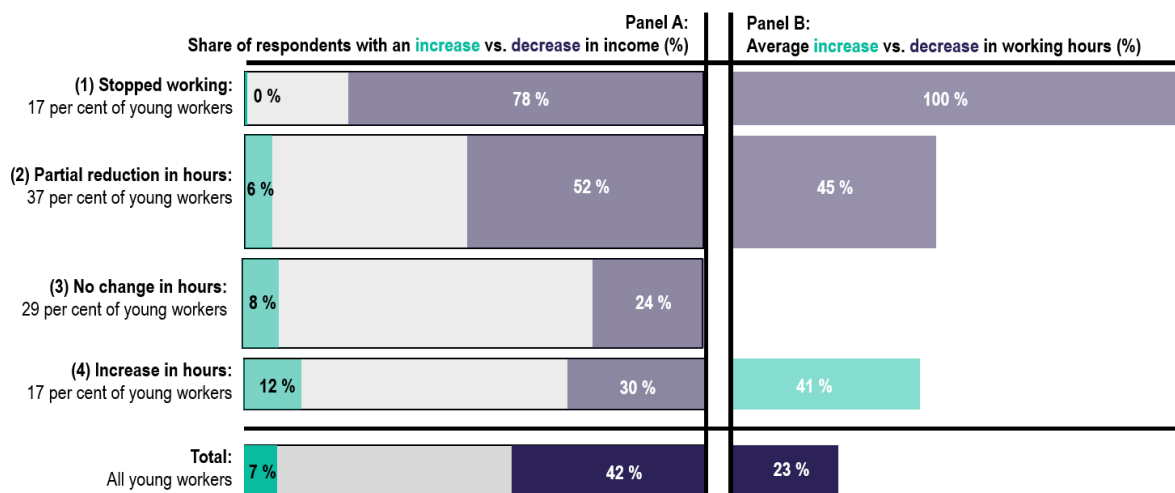
## Impacts on working hours, incomes and productivity

**Young workers in employment before the onset of the pandemic reported on average a 23 per cent reduction in working hours, which for two in five (42 per cent) meant a lower income (figure 6).** Income losses are concentrated among those with either a partial or full decline in working hours to zero. Four in five (78 per cent) of those reporting a full decline also saw a decrease in their income (group 1, figure 6).<sup>18</sup> A majority (52 per cent) of young workers who saw a partial reduction in their hours (on average, a cut of 45 per cent, from 8.4 down to 4.6 hours worked daily)<sup>19</sup> also reported a fall in income. For slightly under one-third of youth (29 per cent, group 3, figure 6), their working hours remained the same; nonetheless, one-quarter still reported their income was lower than before the onset of the pandemic. With greatly diminished revenues, some businesses may have been driven towards reducing pay for the same number of working hours.

<sup>18</sup> Respondents were asked “since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, how has your income changed?” Thus, income includes all types of revenue (wage and non-wage income).

<sup>19</sup> The 45 per cent is calculated by dividing the total hours worked by all those reporting a partial reduction in hours (at least –1 hour worked per day during the COVID-19 outbreak) by the total working hours for this group before the pandemic.

**Figure 6** Share of youth (aged 18–29) reporting a change to income (panel A) and an overall change in working hours (panel B) since the onset of the pandemic



**Note:** This figure distinguishes between groups of young workers who (1) stopped working or had (2) a partial reduction in hours, (3) no change in hours, or (4) an increase in hours. The height of the bar for each group corresponds to its share among all young workers. Panel (A) shows the *share* of respondents reporting an increase or decrease in income. Panel (B) shows the *average reduction in working hours* for each group. N: 3,400 (Panel A), N: 3,615 (Panel B).

**Losses to working hours, income and self-assessed productivity expose young people – many in the midst of a school-to-work transition – to labour market risks at an unprecedented scale.**

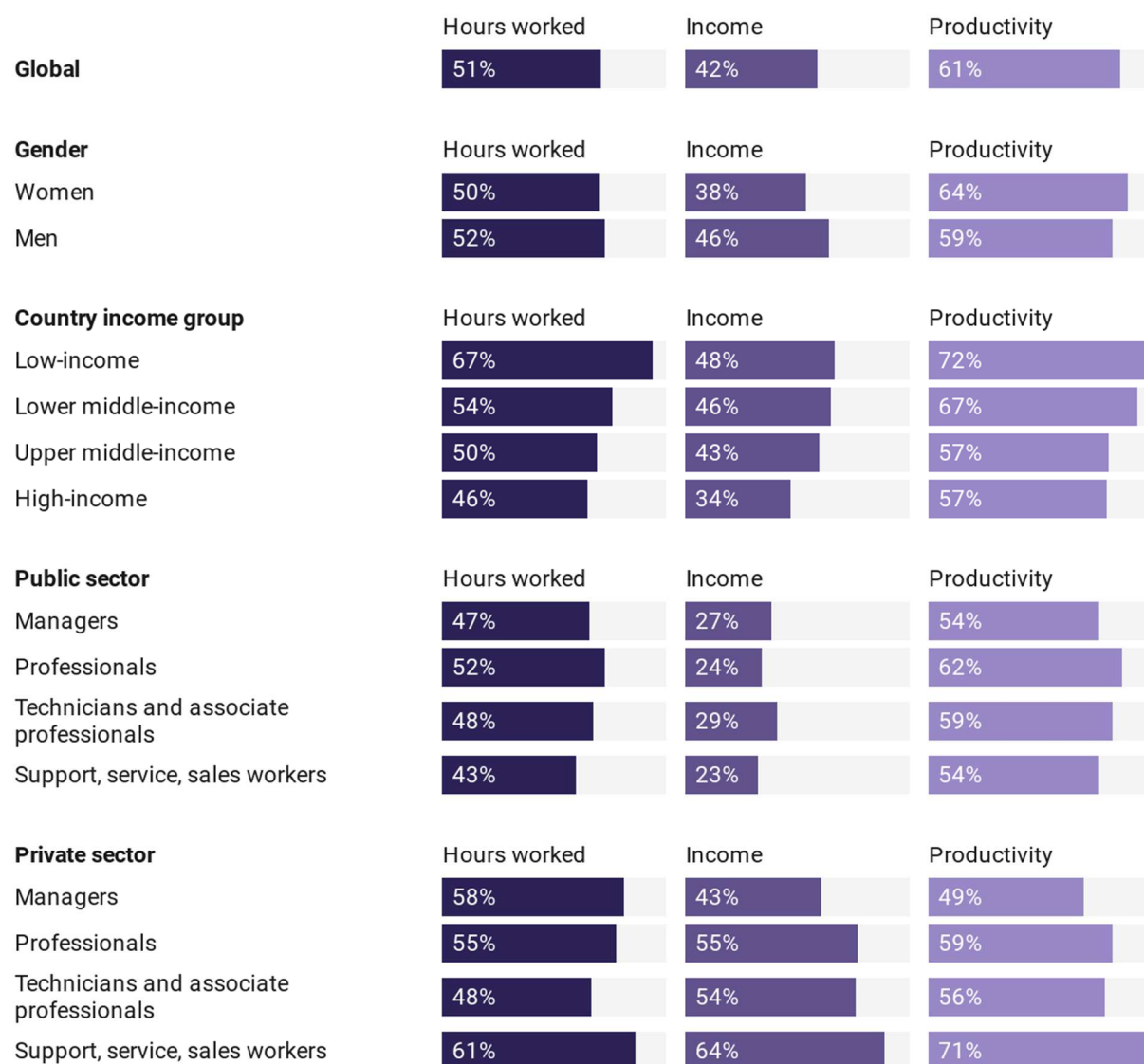
Three in five (61 per cent) young workers reported a self-assessed decline in work-related productivity since the onset of the pandemic. Such a reduction in productivity was more prevalent among young women (64 per cent) than among young men (59 per cent). Young workers still in education who face in income may be unable to complete their studies, while everyone working less may have difficulty making up for the work experience and income they have lost.

**Young workers employed in the private sector in support services and sales-related occupations appear the most vulnerable** (figure 7).

Three in five young private sector workers (61 per cent) in these occupations reported a reduction in working hours, compared to around two in five workers in the public sector (43 per cent). Most strikingly, 64 per cent of those working for a private sector employer reported a reduction in income, compared to 23 per cent in the public sector.<sup>20</sup> These differential impacts on private sector workers may again be linked to business shutdowns or temporary closure.

<sup>20</sup> Private sector is a combination of being employed for a business (for-profit, 44 per cent) and self-employment (11 per cent), while public sector is a combination of government entities (20 per cent), academia (4 per cent) and all other not-for-profit employers (21 per cent).

**Figure 7** Share of young people (aged 18–29) reporting reductions in hours worked, income and productivity (self-assessed) compared to pre-COVID-19 levels



**Note:** The figure plots the share of young workers who less daily working hours during the outbreak than before the outbreak (column 1, N: 3,340), a decrease in their income (column 2, N: 3,400) and a decrease in their self-assessed work-related productivity (column 3, N: 3,400). Information for occupations (public and private sector combined) is available for 2,364 respondents.

**Reductions in hours worked, income and self-assessed productivity are highest in low-income and lower middle-income countries.** Two in three (67 per cent) workers in low-income countries reported a partial or full decline in working hours, compared to 54 per cent in lower

middle-income countries and 46 per cent in high-income ones (see figure 7). Likewise, the proportion of young workers reporting a reduction in income and productivity was highest for low- and middle-income countries. Differences in impacts across country groups may point to a prevalence of formal employment combined with agile unemployment insurance systems and social safety nets.

**Table 2: Gender differences in employment outcomes**

Labour market outcome	Young women (%)	Young men (%)	Difference (women–men) (%)	Share of the difference accounted for by socio-economic and occupational factors (%)*
Stopped working	16.5	18.6	–2.1	98
Reduction in work hours	20.9	25.7	–4.8	53
Share of respondents reporting a reduction in incomes	38.3	46.1	–7.8	37
Share of respondents reporting a reduction in self-assessed productivity	63.6	58.5	5.1	9

\*Gender differences are modelled through a multivariate (OLS) regressions controlling for age cohorts, employer type, workspace change and the nine ISCO-08 major groups.

**Gender differences regarding impacts on employment, income losses and decreased self-assessed productivity are to a large extent driven by occupational differences between young women and men and other socio-economic factors.** The findings show that among survey respondents young men were more affected by stopping working, reductions to working hours and income losses, whereas young women were more likely to report lower self-assessed productivity.<sup>21</sup> When comparing young women and men of the same age according to employer type (public or private) and major occupational group (ISCO-08), gender differences decrease by one-third (37 per cent) for reported reductions in income, by one-half (53 per cent) for reductions in working hours and all but disappear (98 per cent) for work stoppages (table 2). On the other hand, gender differences in self-assessed productivity are only marginally driven by these factors (9 per cent). This may point to the presence of non-work-related factors, such as increase domestic or care work, disproportionately impacting the self-assessed productivity of young women in the sample. The survey represents young women and men with an

<sup>21</sup> Self-assessed productivity is based on the survey question: “How would you rate your work-related productivity since the start of the outbreak?”.

advanced level of education. Emerging evidence from labour force surveys suggests that overall young women's labour market prospects have been heavily impacted by the crisis (ILO 2020b). Since evidence from past economic crises suggests that recessions often have marked differential impacts on the employment outcomes for men and women (Rubery and Rafferty, 2013), a greater degree of detail is needed in order to understand the gender impacts of COVID-19.

**Young workers reporting an increase in working hours raises concerns about overtime work and difficulties experienced in disconnecting from work during the pandemic.** Seventeen per cent of all the young workers surveyed reported an increase in their working hours from 7.3 to 10.3 hours per day (41 per cent). Of this group, two-thirds (67 per cent) reported working 10 hours per day or more. It is possible that this was to compensate for income losses, as 30 per cent also reported having experienced a decrease in income since the onset of the pandemic.<sup>22</sup> Compared to the young people who underwent a reduction in their working hours, those youth whose hours increased were more likely to have had a tertiary level of education (86 per cent versus 80 per cent, respectively), more likely to work for a non-profit employer (31 per cent versus 18 per cent, respectively) and less likely to work in services, sales and support-related occupations (15 per cent versus 28 per cent, respectively). It is important to note that, although the survey did not differentiate between teleworking and work on a digital platform or other types of working arrangements, the increase in working hours reported may suggest a difficulty in disconnecting from work.

**Nearly three-quarters (72 per cent) of young workers reported working either partly or fully from home since the onset of the pandemic.** For those in managerial (82 per cent), professional (77 per cent) and technical occupations (78 per cent), it is more common to work fully or partly from home than is the case for support, sales and other workers, of whom slightly over one-half (54 per cent) had adopted this practice. Fewer youth with a private sector employer reported working from home (68 per cent) than those employed in the public sector (77 per cent). The share for those working fully or partly from home is higher among young women (75 per cent) than among young men (68 per cent).<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Young people that do not report a change in working hours worked an average 7.9 hours per day and 13 per cent reported working 10 hours per day or more.

<sup>23</sup> Closer analysis reveals that 30 per cent the gender gap in working fully or partly from home is related to the fact that the men in the sample were more likely to work for in the private sector, where working from home arrangements appear to be less prevalent.

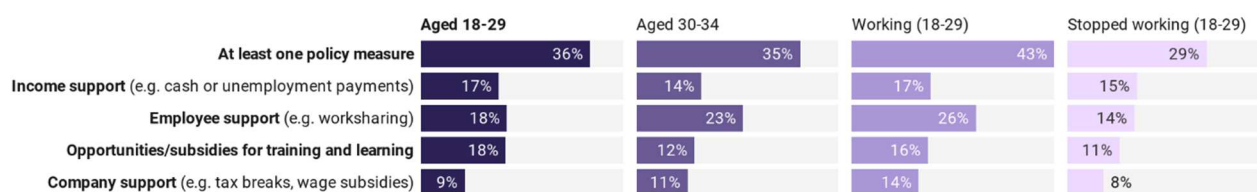


## Labour market policies

**Government responses aimed at addressing the impacts of the crisis on labour markets are more likely to reach young people who remained in employment after the onset of the pandemic.** Twenty-nine per cent of the young people who had stopped working benefited from some form of government response to the crisis,<sup>24</sup> compared to 43 per cent of those who remained in employment and worked at least one hour per day (figure 8). Working youth received significantly higher levels of employee (26 per cent) and company support measures (14 per cent) and similar levels of income support.<sup>25</sup> In fact, employee and income support measures were often conditional on being employed, for instance, through a coverage/wage subsidy for reduced working hours. The higher share of policy coverage among working youth is an indication that many of these measures were provided through companies and work, as intended, in order to prevent the laying-off or furloughing of workers.

**Younger age groups (aged 18–29) were recipients of an equal amount of policy measures, overall, as the older age group (aged 30–34).** That said, the older age group can be seen to have more consistently benefitted from employee (23 per cent) and company (11 per cent) support, while the younger age cohort reported having received more training (18 per cent) and income (17 per cent) support.

**Figure 8 Share of survey respondents in receipt of labour market policy measures**



**Note:** The graph depicts the share of respondents receiving the respective policy measure. Categories are not mutually exclusive. N: 8,683 (aged 18-29), 1,145 (aged 30-34), 2,668 (working, aged 18-29), 577 (stopped working, aged 18-29).

<sup>24</sup> The survey asked young people whether they were currently benefiting from or receiving any of the various measures taken by government in response to the pandemic. Question categories were separated into four types of measure: income support, company support, employee support and training/learning support.

<sup>25</sup> Income support can cover a multiplicity of policy measures, including unemployment benefits (for which working youth by definition are not eligible), and survey respondents may have put payment of wage subsidies into this category. This might explain the comparable level of income support reported between workers and those that had stopped working.

## 4. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Three in five (61 per cent) young people (aged 18–29) who completed the survey were engaged in education and training, with 15 per cent combining education and work. For them, the pandemic may exact a heavy toll through disruption to learning, diminished educational and learning outcomes and lost earnings. Young students risk being pushed off from formal or informal learning systems and may, as a consequence, experience a longer and more arduous transition into employment and decent work.

The closure of schools, universities and training centres affected over 73 per cent of the youth surveyed who were in education or training. As shown in figure 9, the effect of this was felt slightly more by those who were studying only (74 per cent), compared to those studying and working at the same time (69 per cent). Students who had already completed tertiary education were less likely to report school closures as affecting them (64 per cent) than students who had completed secondary education (80 per cent). This could imply that some students with a higher level of education, including those who combine education with work, may already be (either fully or partly) engaged in distance education programmes, with the minimal infrastructure necessary to sustain continuity in education or training during lockdowns. A further 6 per cent of students reported that some classes had been cancelled even while school premises remained open. In total, since the onset of the pandemic, four in five young students surveyed (79 per cent) had had their study or training interrupted.

**Figure 9** Share of youth (aged 18–29) who reported that their studies or training had been interrupted since the onset of the pandemic

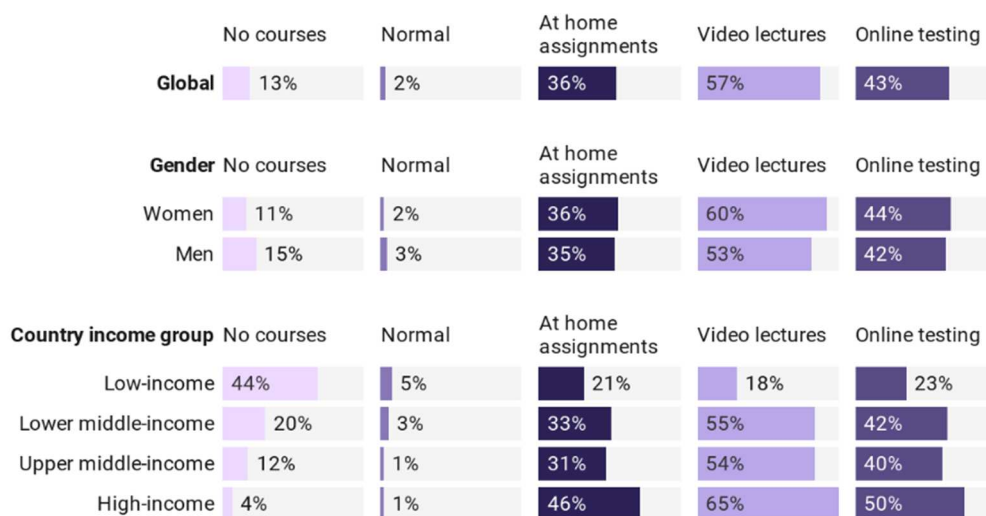


**Note:** N: 6,365, information on education available for 4,901 respondents.

**Nearly one in eight (13 per cent) of young people saw their education and training come to a complete stop, with no courses, teaching or tests set since the pandemic began** (figure 10). This overall finding has, however, considerable regional differences: 44 per cent of young students in low-income countries, 20 per cent in lower middle-income countries and 4 per cent in high-income countries reported not having received any courses. This points to reduced opportunities for the growth and development of youth and an increased risk of having school drop-outs, particularly in lower income countries, where some students, especially young women, may be unable to return to school due to a contraction in household income and the need to sustain a livelihood.

**The transition to online and distance learning appears more widespread among youth in high-income countries, highlighting the large “digital divides” between regions.** Around the globe, education and training institutions closed their doors to students due to the pandemic and switched to delivering alternative learning opportunities.<sup>26</sup> Figure 10 shows that a majority of young people adopted such alternative learning methods after the COVID-19 outbreak. These included video-lectures given by teachers and trainers (57 per cent), online testing (43 per cent) and assignments to be completed at home (36 per cent). Notably, 65 per cent of youth in high-income countries were taught classes via video-lecture, compared to 55 per cent in middle-income and 18 per cent in low-income countries.

**Figure 10 Share of youth (aged 18–29) offered alternative learning opportunities**



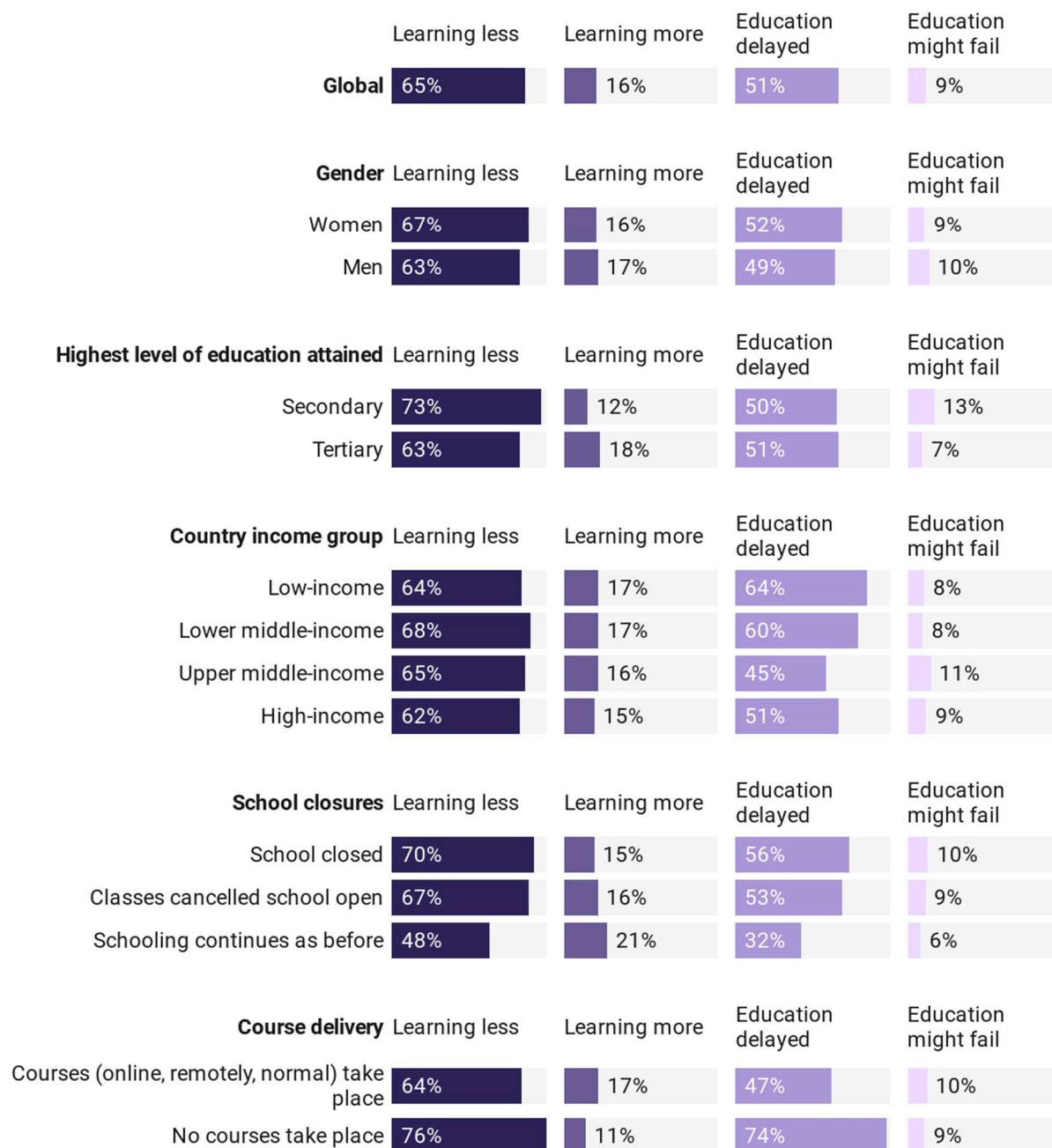
**Note:** N: 6,365.

<sup>26</sup> Preliminary results from the ILO–UNESCO–World Bank joint survey of technical and vocational schools and training centres show, for instance, that over two-thirds of training moved to distance learning and nearly every second training centre switched to the online provision of training.

**Despite efforts to ensure continuity in education and training services, 65 per cent of young people reported having learnt less since the onset of the pandemic** (figure 11). With minor differences across country income level, 31 per cent youth reported having learnt significantly less and 35 per cent slightly less. Young women's perception of diminished learning was more acute than young men's (67 per cent versus 63 per cent, respectively). Similarly, those only studying felt a greater impact on learning than those combining work and study (66 per cent versus 62 per cent, respectively), as did those who had completed their secondary education and were enrolled in a first level tertiary or post-secondary non-tertiary degree, compared to students who already gained some tertiary education (73 per cent versus 63 per cent, respectively). Students whose schools had been closed reported a higher rate (70 per cent) of having learnt less, but, even among the minority of students for whom schools continued to operate, almost one in two (48 per cent) registered an impact on learning. This underscores the widespread disruption to learning caused by the pandemic.

**These results highlight the challenges involved in moving learning out of the classroom and into the home.** Even when, to some extent, institutions managed to transition to distance delivery, as shown in figure 9, teachers, trainers and students may not have been adequately equipped to ensure continuity in learning. Factors hampering the effectiveness of online learning may include: (i) low levels of Internet access (ii) insufficient digital (and other relevant) skills to learn and teach remotely, (iii) lack of IT equipment at home, as well as other constraints such as (iv) lack of space, (v) lack of ready materials for remote teaching, and (vi) the absence of group work and social contact, both key components of the learning process. Consequently, students who had received some form of remote teaching reported slightly better learning outcomes than those without courses (see figure 11), but were nonetheless significantly impacted. While distance learning is becoming increasingly normal for many, the impact on learning of the abrupt transition appears to have been cushioned only to a moderate extent.

**Figure 11** Young people’s (aged 18–29) perceptions of changes to learning since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis and assessment of how it will affect the success of their studies and training



**Note:** N: 6,365 (global, gender, country income group, school closures, course delivery), 4,901 (highest level of education attained).

**One in three young people (35 per cent) managed to sustain or improve their learning.** One in six (16 per cent) youth reported having learned more since the outbreak of the crisis, while 19 per cent reported no change to their learning.

**With most young people reporting having learnt less, one-half (51 per cent) anticipated their studies being delayed, with likely impacts on the school-to-work transition.** A slightly larger proportion of young women (52 per cent) expected delays to their studies or training, compared to 49 per cent of young men (see figure 11). Importantly, 74 per cent of those who had stopped all courses and 56 per cent of those whose schools had closed since the outbreak expected delays to their studies. **Furthermore, almost one in ten (9 per cent) of the young students surveyed thought their education or training might fail,** but this was considerably higher for those who had completed secondary education (13 per cent), compared to those who completed some tertiary level education (7 per cent).

**The outlook for career prospects is dominated by uncertainty and fear, as youth make a gloomy assessment of their ability to complete education and training** (see section 5 below). Students' perceptions of their future career prospects are bleak, with 40 per cent facing the future with uncertainty and 14 per cent with fear. They reported high levels of *possible* anxiety or depression,<sup>27</sup> which could be related to the closure of schools and learning institutions depriving young people of social contact.

The biggest issue for me is the impacts on my university education. The alternative exams are different to what would have been given in our regular courses. The new exams will not count towards my final grade and therefore I find it hard to study and I am concerned about how this will affect my future career. Additionally, my apprenticeship placement was cancelled which means that I won't have training or experience once I graduate.

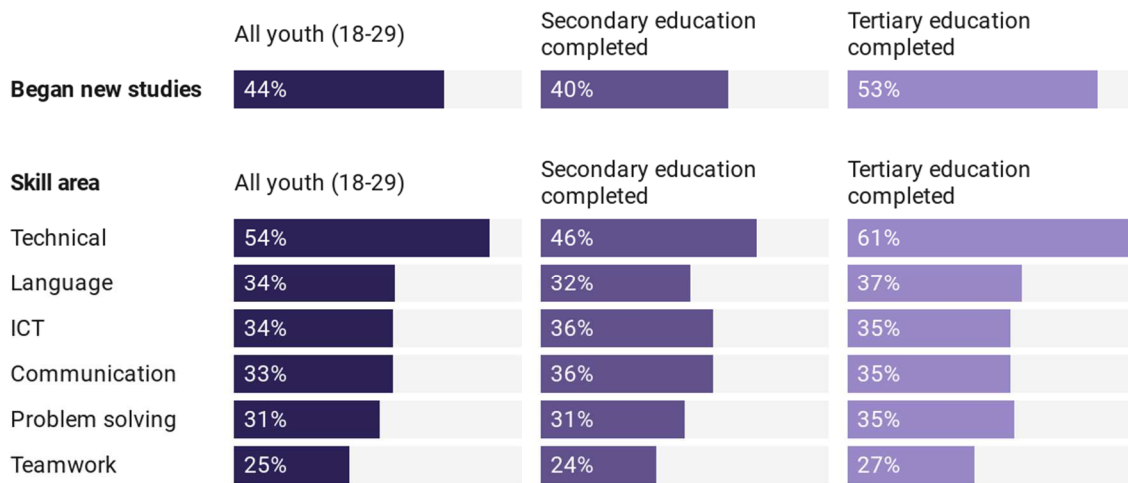
—Nadia Minhas, 20, United Kingdom

**Yet young people haven't given up – about half have sought out new learning opportunities, despite the crisis and school closures.** Forty-four per cent of the young people surveyed had pursued new training courses since the start of the pandemic, with a greater incidence among those who had completed tertiary education (53 per cent), as shown in figure 12. While most young people enrolled in courses to advance job-specific or technical skills (54 per cent), young people reported being interested in a variety of different training offers, from foreign languages, ICT and communication skills to problem solving and teamwork.

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<sup>27</sup>As measured by a test indicating three levels of mental well-being: probable, possible or no indication of depression or anxiety (see section 5 below).

**Figure 12** Share of youth (aged 18–29) who began new courses and the skills areas pursued



**Note:** Respondents (N: 6,365 all youth, 1,834 secondary education completed, 2,728 tertiary education completed) were asked whether they began any new courses or trainings since the start of the outbreak. Only those that affirmed were then asked about the skill area of their classes.

## 5. MENTAL WELL-BEING

**The COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic impacts are expected to affect people's mental health and well-being, a situation which needs addressing with urgency** (UN, 2020a). Family stress, social isolation, risk of domestic abuse, disrupted education and uncertainty about the future are some of the channels through which COVID-19 has impacted the emotional development of children and youth. Half of all mental health conditions start by the age of 14, meaning children and young people are at particular risk in the present crisis (Kessler et al., 2007). It is also worth noting that suicide is the second leading cause of death in young people aged 15–29 (WHO, 2015).

**To better understand the condition of young people's mental well-being, the survey featured a module with the Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS).**<sup>28</sup> SWEMWBS is a validated mental well-being test based on the answers given to seven statements relating to the state of a respondent's thoughts and feelings. These seven statements are positively worded, with five possible response categories, ranging from “none of the time” to “all of the time”. Answers are aggregated into a final score on a scale of 7–35, with higher scores an indicator of better mental well-being. Scores in the range of 7–17 indicate *probable* depression or anxiety, scores of between 18–20 suggest *possible* depression or anxiety, and scores above 20 suggest *no indication* of anxiety or depression.

**The survey found that, globally, 1 in 2 (i.e. 50 per cent) of young people aged 18–29 are possibly subject to anxiety or depression, while a further 17 per cent are probably affected by it** (table 3). The average score for the 18–29 age band was 21 out of 35. By way of comparison, the mental well-being scores for the youth populations (aged 16–25) of Denmark and England in 2016 and of Iceland in 2017 were higher, at 25.8, 22.4 and 23.6, respectively (Koushede et al., 2019).

**The mental well-being of young people (aged 18–29) whose education or work had been disrupted the most since the onset of the pandemic was greatly reduced.** Young workers who had lost their job were almost twice as likely to be affected by *probable* anxiety or depression as those who continued to be employed (23 per cent versus 14 per cent, respectively). Importantly, youth reporting no hours worked since the onset of the pandemic but were still employed (for example, due to furloughing or similar arrangements) did not report mental well-being any worse than for those who were continuing to work (based on *probable* levels of depression or anxiety). Among those who thought that their education would be delayed or might fail, 22 per cent were *probably* affected by anxiety or depression, compared to 12 per cent of students whose education had remained on track. The trends are similar when comparing students who reported learning less. These results underscore the linkage between mental well-being, on the one hand, and educational success and labour market integration, on the other.

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<sup>28</sup> Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) © NHS Health Scotland, University of Warwick and University of Edinburgh, 2008, all rights reserved.



**Table 3** Young people’s mental well-being (SWEMWBS scale)

		Probable anxiety or depression (%)	Possible anxiety or depression (%)	No sign of anxiety or depression (%)	Average score (7–35)	N
<b>Age cohorts</b>	18–29	16.7	50.2	49.8	21.0	7,589
	30–34	11.1	45.0	55.0	21.4	1,002
<b>Gender (18–29)</b>	Women	18.3	53.4	46.7	20.7	4,904
	Men	14.8	46.5	53.5	21.4	2,685
<b>Labour market outcomes (18–29)</b>	Working	13.5	47.3	52.7	21.3	2,358
	Stopped working (no hours worked)	13.6	52.3	47.7	20.8	306
	Stopped working (job lost)	22.6	59.8	40.2	20.0	195
<b>Education outcomes (18–29)</b>	Learning unchanged/more	10.7	37.7	62.3	22.4	2,110
	Learning less	21.5	57.8	42.2	20.2	3,034
	Education on track	11.8	40.3	59.7	22.2	2,354
	Education delayed or might fail	21.9	58.2	41.8	20.1	2,790

**Note:** Scores are based on the Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEWMBS) and range from 7 to 35. Higher scores indicate higher positive mental well-being. Scores of between 7–17 represent *probable* depression or anxiety; scores of between 18–20 suggest *possible* depression or anxiety; scores of between 21–35 give *no indication* of anxiety or depression.

**Average mental well-being was lower for young women.** In comparison to the young men surveyed, young women were 7 percentage points more likely to show *possible* anxiety or depression, and 4 percentage points more likely to exhibit *probable* anxiety or depression.<sup>29</sup> This could be an indication that young women are more subject to stress-inducing responsibilities within the home.

<sup>29</sup> Young women students were 7.8 per cent more likely than young men students to exhibit signs of *possible* anxiety or depression. The gender gap found among young workers was very similar at 7.4 per cent. There was, however, no difference discernible in working hours among young workers, where, on average, young women worked 6.2 hours per day, compared to the 6.1 hours per day worked by men. This suggests that gender differences in mental well-being are not driven by differences in labour market outcomes or status (studying or working).

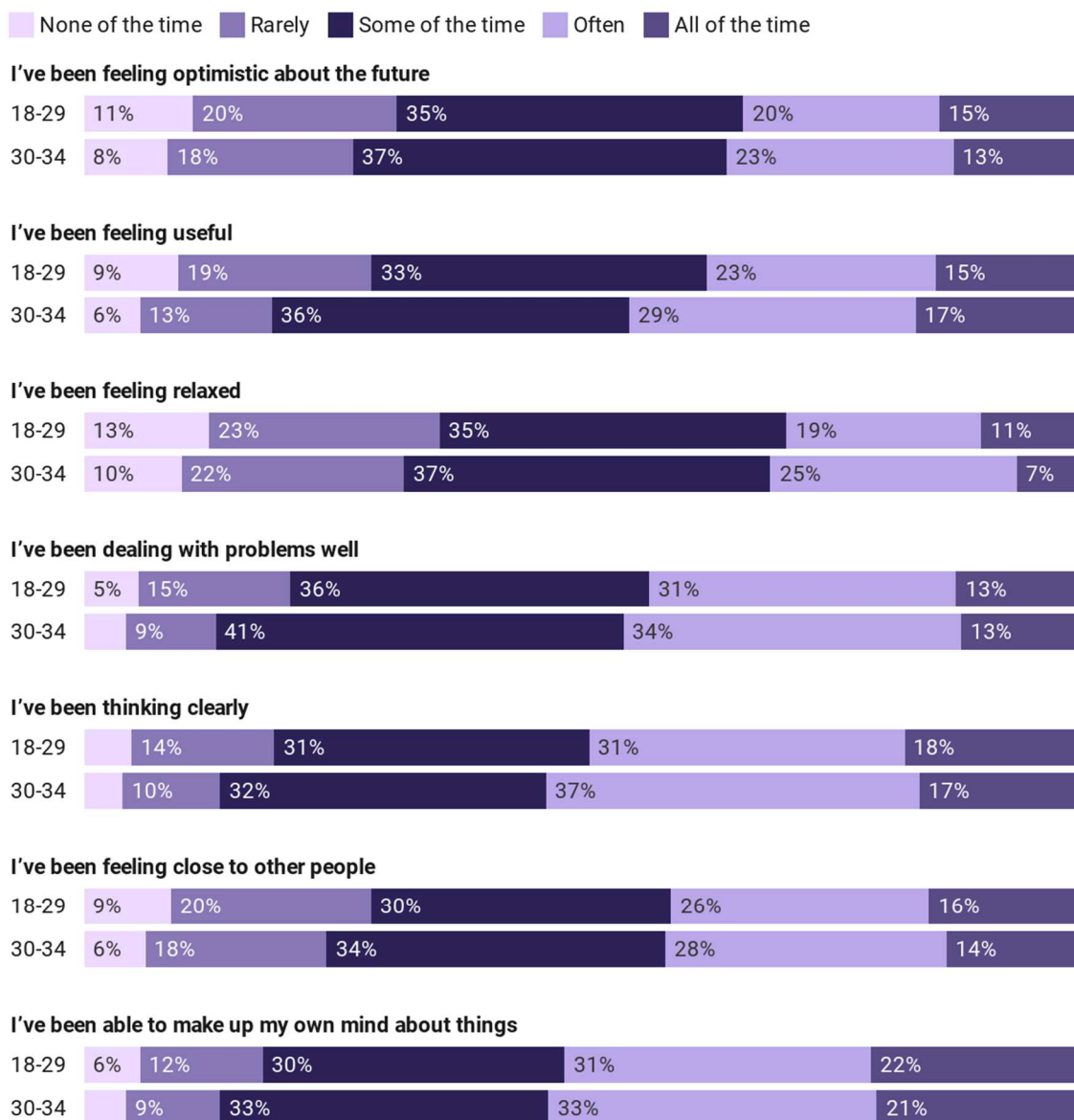


I've delivered food to friends and kept in daily contact with all of my friends and family. I would do more but I also need to prioritize my own mental health which I feel has suffered since the lockdown began. I would like to see a doctor but I am fearful to go out.

—Kaja Raščan, 25, Slovenia

**Mental well-being during the crisis is shown to be correlated to some extent with age, with younger groups experiencing poorer well-being outcomes.** Within the youth age group 18–29 years, 17 per cent of respondents were assessed as being *probably* subject to anxiety or depression, compared to 11 per cent in the 30–34 age cohort (see table 3). While younger age cohorts performed worse in answer to every one of the seven statements in the SWEMWBS test, three areas in particular stand out (figure 13): young people (aged 18–29) disproportionately reported feeling *never* or *rarely* “relaxed” (35 per cent combined), “optimistic” (31 per cent combined) or “close to other people” (29 per cent combined). These results are likely to be the result of the widespread school and workplace closures affecting young people, as well as worries related to their health and that of family and loved ones.

**Figure 13 Short Warwick–Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale statements and possible answers (age groups 18–29 and 30–34 years)**

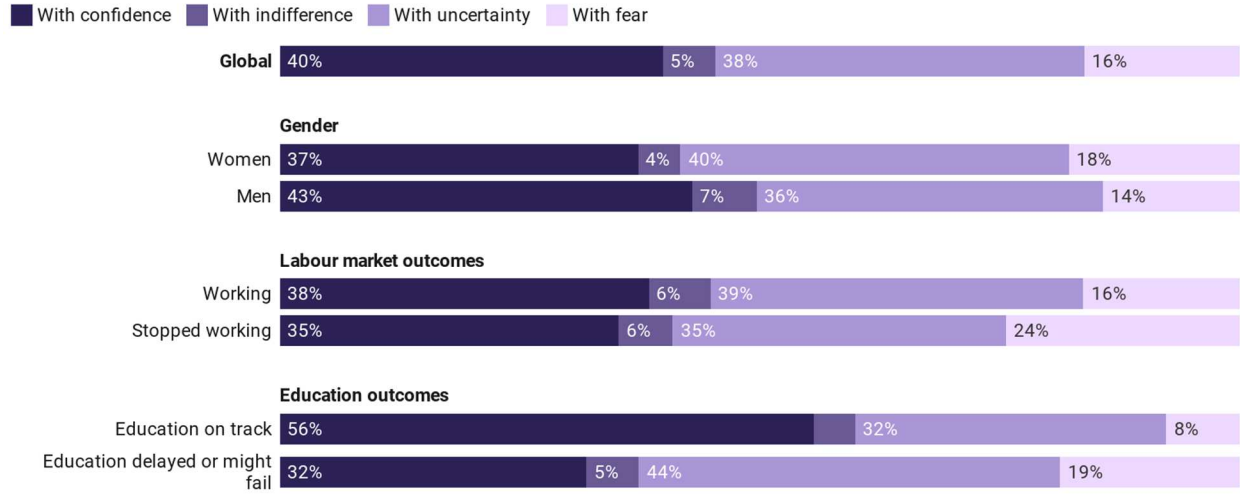


**Note:** N: 7,589 (aged 18-29), 1,002 (aged 30-34).

**Aspirations and their realization are an integral part of a young person's mental well-being and play an important role in determining a successful transition into decent work.** Many young people have seen their futures impacted by the pandemic; schools have been closed, examinations not held and economies are contracting. A young person's level and type of aspiration is in large part determined by the external environment. The constant fear, worry and stressors in the population during the COVID-19 crisis could have long-term, detrimental consequences for youth, including for example a deterioration in social networks.

**Thirty-eight per cent of young people, globally, are uncertain of, and 16 per cent are fearful about, their future career prospects** (figure 14). Young people who stopped working since the onset of the pandemic voiced stronger concerns, with 24 per cent reporting to feel fearful about their career prospects. Likewise, young students whose education was disrupted by the crisis considerably more often reported to feel uncertain (44 per cent) than students whose education remained on track (32 per cent). Young women were, on average, less confident and more uncertain about the future than young men.

**Figure 14 Young people’s (aged 18–29) perceptions of future career prospects**



**Note:** N: 9,501 (global, gender), 3,583 (labour market outcomes), 6,364 (education outcomes).

## 6. YOUTH RIGHTS

**Young people – similarly to many vulnerable groups (OHCHR, 2018) – have often had difficulty accessing their rights.** This includes exercising the right to education; affordable housing; health services, including for mental health; civic participation; as well as rights at work. While everyone is entitled to human rights, irrespective of nationality, gender, race, religion, ethnic background or any other status, some groups of people, including young people and especially young women, face more barriers than others to accessing their rights. Age restrictions have been used to discriminate against young people with regards to employment, legal capacity and voting rights (Equinet, 2016; European Youth Forum, 2016).

**The pandemic and its associated safety measures have exacerbated the vulnerabilities of young people in accessing their human rights (UN, 2020b).** Countries around the world have taken decisive action in response to the pandemic, including the adoption of “stay-at-home” measures to slow its spread. An unavoidable corollary to this has been the limiting of young people’s freedom of movement, which has had a severe impact on the rights of youth to leisure, to participate in public affairs and to practice their religion or beliefs (see figure 15).<sup>30</sup> Sixty-eight per cent of young people reported significant limitations on recreational activities, including going out, meeting up with friends, pursuing sport and cultural interests and travel, as a result of the pandemic. Young women registered a greater impact on their right to leisure (71 per cent) than did young men (65 per cent).

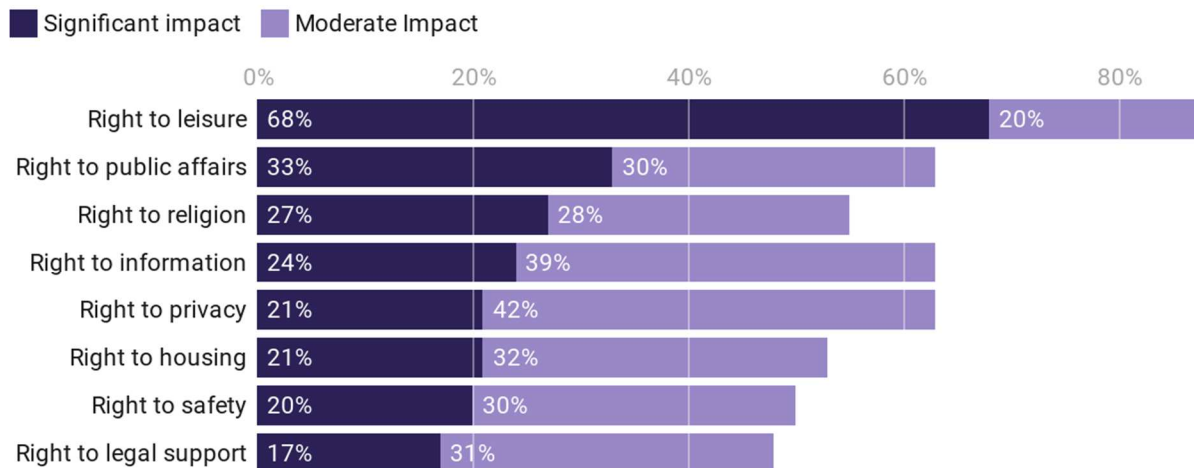
**One in three young people had noticed a significant impact on their right to participate in public affairs.** This impact is higher for youth in low-income countries (40 per cent) compared to those in lower-middle (36 per cent) and high-income countries (28 per cent). Young people face challenges to participating in political processes, institutions and policy-making at the best of times, owing to factors such as their presumed lack of experience, limited opportunities and legal barriers, for example, the minimum age required to run for office being higher than the one required to vote. A pre-COVID-19 study by the Inter-Parliamentary Union found that less than 2 per cent of the world’s members of parliament were under 30 years of age, compared to the 14 per cent under 40 and the 26 per cent under 45 (IPU, 2016). Online rallies and digital alternatives are being used to circumvent physical distancing measures and these contribute to giving young people voice (Murray, 2020); however, unequal Internet access means most young people do not have this option (IANYD, 2020).

**More than one in four young people (27 per cent) stated that the pandemic has significantly impacted their right to freedom of religion or belief.** Young men and women have been affected in near equal measure. The impact has been more significant on youth in lower income countries (i.e. 51 per cent in low-income and 37 per cent in lower middle-income countries) than it has on those in high-income countries (19 per cent).

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<sup>30</sup> Survey respondents self-assessed the extent to which their rights across eight areas were affected. There were five response categories: “a great deal”, “a lot”, “a moderate amount”, “a little” and “not at all”. “Significant impact” comprises the answers “a great deal” and “a lot”, while “moderate impact” comprises the answers “a moderate amount” and “a little”.

**Figure 15 Extent of impact on youth rights (aged 18–29)**



**Note:** This chart shows the percentage scored for each possible response to the question: “To what extent have your rights been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic in the following areas?”. Some of the survey questions on rights were simplified to facilitate understanding. Right to “practicing religion/belief”, “personal safety including protection from violence” and “access to legal support or representation and/or access to justice (e.g. courts)” were used instead of “right to freedom of religion/belief”, “right to freedom from violence” and “right to legal aid”, respectively. N: 7,815.

**Nearly one in four young people (24 per cent) reported a significant impact on their right to information.** The spread of misinformation about COVID-19, particularly through social media, has been rampant during the pandemic. In response, young people across the globe have channelled their creativity into countering its spread by helping to raise awareness in their communities.<sup>31</sup>

**Young people identifying as an ethnic, religious or other minority noted more pronounced impacts than other youth groups as regards to rights to freedom of religion or belief, housing, freedom from violence and the right to legal aid.** Among youth who self-identified as a minority, 44 per cent reported significant impacts on the right to freedom of religion, compared to 37 per cent of other youth. Similarly, 27 per cent and 25 per cent, respectively, of minority youth reported a significant impact on the right to housing and freedom from violence. This is in comparison to 20 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively, of other youth who noted these same significant impacts.

**Young people who had stopped working more often reported their right to housing being affected.** This highlights how the widespread labour market impacts of the pandemic can translate into serious challenges for young people in affording and maintaining their present

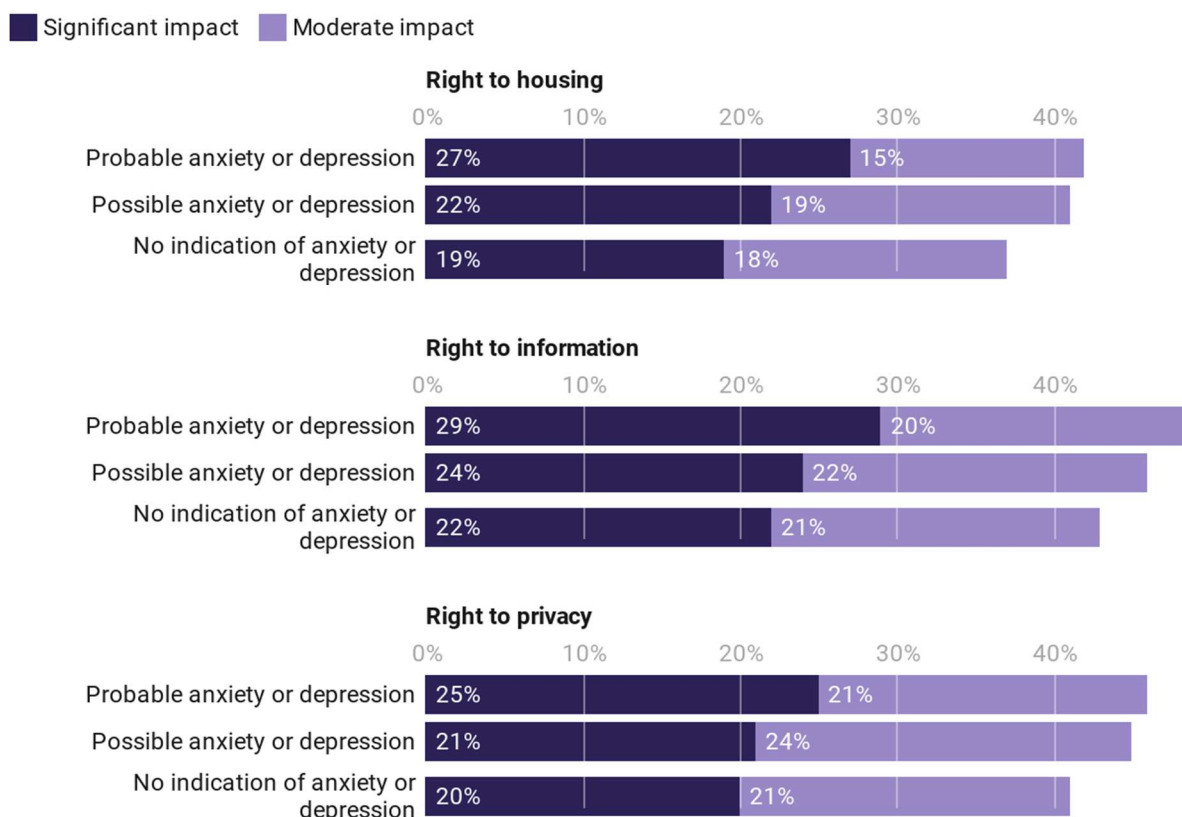
<sup>31</sup> See examples in the Decent Jobs for Youth Blog Series: Youth Rights and Voices: “Ye! Community: Innovation, hope and the future – A young Nigerian redefines innovation during COVID-19”, “Youth Volunteers help to turn the tide on coronavirus” and “Youth driving action against the pandemic in Nairobi’s Mathare slum”. Available at: [www.decentjobsforyouth.org/blogs](http://www.decentjobsforyouth.org/blogs).

accommodation. Almost one in three (32 per cent) that had stopped working since the outbreak of the pandemic reported that their right to housing has been significantly impacted, compared to 21 per cent of those that had continued to work.

**Youth who were married or had a partner experienced a greater significant impact on their right to freedom from violence than did single youth.** The difference is four percentage points for young women (15 per cent for single women and 19 per cent for those with a partner) and three percentage points for young men (20 per cent for single men, compared to 23 per cent for those with a partner). This finding is in line with reports of higher levels of domestic violence during the pandemic.

**A greater impact on rights is associated with lower mental well-being.** Figure 16 shows that youth who are *probably* subject to anxiety or depression were also more likely to report a significant impact on some of their rights, compared to those with *no indication* of anxiety or depression. These rights include the right to housing (27 per cent versus 19 per cent, respectively), the right to information (29 per cent versus 22 per cent, respectively) and the right to privacy (25 per cent versus 20 per cent, respectively).

**Figure 16 Mental well-being and the extent of the impact on youth rights (aged 18–29)**



**Note:** The graph depicts the extent of impacts on youth rights disaggregated by level of mental well-being (probable anxiety or depression, possible anxiety or depression, no sign of anxiety or depression, see Table 3). N: 7,589.

## 7. SOCIAL ACTIVISM AND YOUTH BEHAVIOURS

Young people's social activism<sup>32</sup> and behaviours are contributing to mitigating the economic and social impacts of COVID-19, through compliance with government measures, volunteering, donations and outreach (United Nations Programme on Youth, 2020, p. 6). Despite the limitations imposed by the pandemic, the survey shows that young people are turning the crisis into an opportunity for collective action, by supporting their communities through volunteering and giving.

**While young people have been highly compliant with stay-at-home measures, they have still managed to stay connected to friends and family.** Four in five (80 per cent) of the youth (aged 18–29) surveyed reported staying at home to a large extent, while 66 per cent reached out to friends, family and loved ones to a great extent (figure 17). Young women did both to a great extent than young men. This could be related to the fact that young working women reported working from home more than did young men (75 per cent versus 68 per cent, respectively). This shows the high regard in which “stay-at-home” policies are held, as well as the importance of staying in contact with networks, despite many only rarely or never being able to meet friends and family face-to-face. It also demonstrates the digital connectivity of young people who are able to stay in touch through online social networks and platforms.



I am fighting against the spread of misinformation and fake news about COVID-19. I am telling my friends and family to be human and to spread love and kindness to our health and safety workers: our doctors, police, sanitation workers and any worker battling on the COVID-19 frontlines.

—Nikhat Akhtar, 29, India



I volunteer on an online counselling service to offer mental healthcare support to people in need. I joined the board of "Red Cross Support Group" where we raise funds to buy and distribute food for the less fortunate. I joined the Kenyan Ministry of Health as a youth advocate to support a training of private security personal on how to use PPEs effectively.

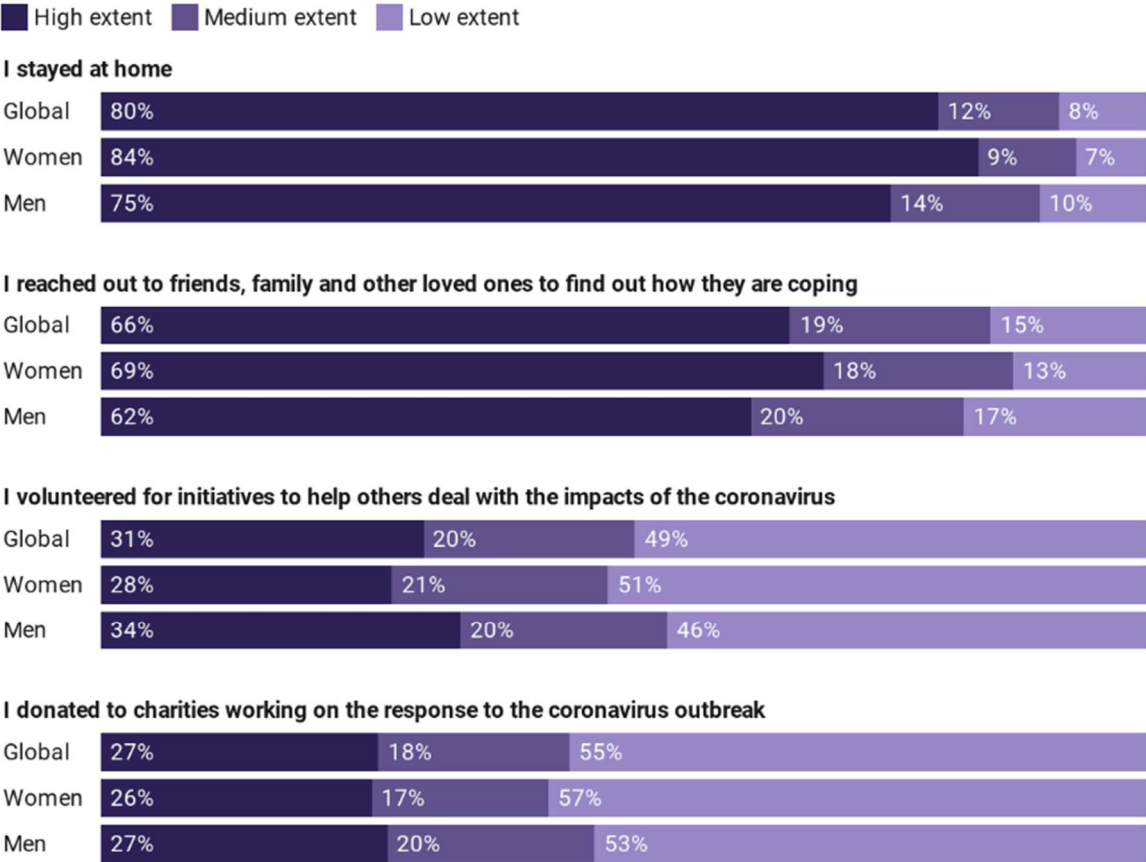
—Mari-Lisa Njenga, 26, Kenya

<sup>32</sup> Social activism is defined as any intentional action to provide immediate support and relief to affected groups other than oneself, especially the most vulnerable populations, as well as the act of working towards or advocating for long-term recovery.



Over one in four young people reported a high degree of engagement in volunteerism and making donations towards the COVID-19 response, with only small gender differences observable (see figure 17). Thirty-one per cent of youth indicated a high degree of volunteering, while 27 per cent donated to a great extent, thereby demonstrating considerable altruistic behaviour.

**Figure 17 Youth (aged 18–29) level of social activism**



**Note:** Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which the statements describe their behaviour, from 1 (Does not apply at all) to 10 (Applies very much). “High extent” represents the proportion of respondents who rated the statement between 7–10, “medium extent” who rated it between 4–6, and “low extent” who rated it between 0–3. N: 7,815.

**Analysing time trends in behaviour, young people (aged 18–29) steadily increased the extent of their volunteering in response to the crisis over the survey period.** While at the start of the survey around 20 per cent of youth reported a high degree of volunteering, this had grown to 38 per cent by the end (figure 18). By contrast, youth’s donation to charity did not fluctuate significantly over time. This can be attributed to the containment measures adopted during

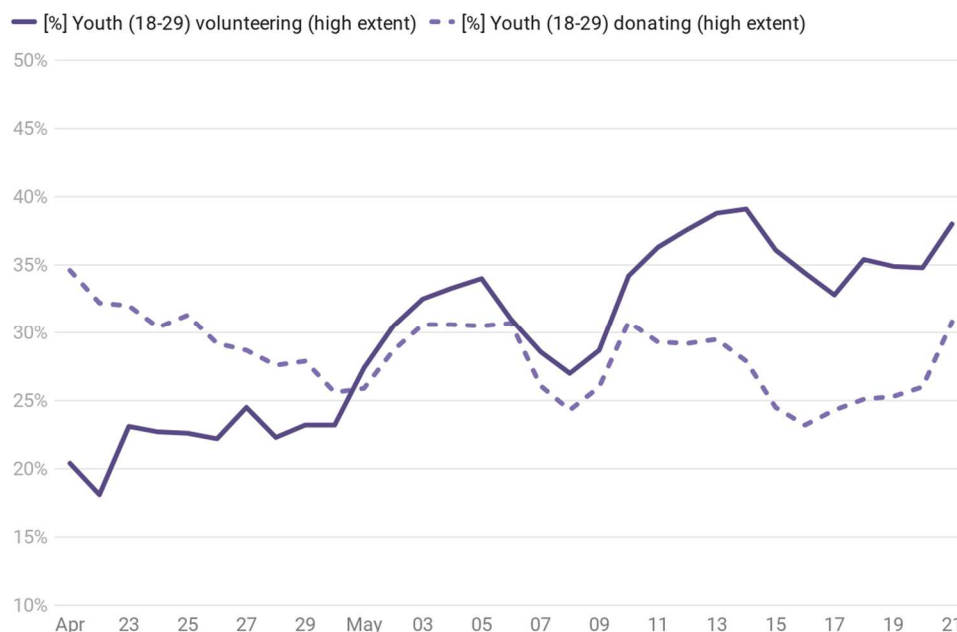


I have created a Facebook group for people to be updated about Coronavirus outbreak in Afghanistan, share articles and research with them and keep them informed.

—Sayed Ahmad Fahim Masoumi, 23, Afghanistan

the early survey period, such as social distancing rules, which made it easier to donate (online, for example) than to volunteer. It may also be due to the loss of income loss over the survey period, which restricted youth's ability to make material donations. As lockdown restrictions gradually relaxed and youth initiatives and volunteering networks became more organized, young people increasingly turned out to support their communities in grappling with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Figure 18** Young people's (aged 18–29) social activism over time



**Note:** For each day the (five-day rolling) average of all survey respondents is plotted based on the scores of respondents' countries of residence. Averages are estimated through a fixed-effects model including dummies for each country-gender combination to minimise sample composition effects when identifying time trends. N: 7,815.

**The survey received 4,119 responses to the open-ended question “How did you help others?”, yielding key insights and examples of young people’s social activism.** Among the major trends to emerge were self-discipline and caring for close ones, along with examples of taking personal responsibility by following rules and protecting oneself, and extending emotional support to family and friends. Many young people provided examples of how they were fighting misinformation by raising public awareness of where to find accurate sources of information

about COVID-19 and also by initiating and joining online campaigns. Youth played important roles in their communities by participating in initiatives to support and mobilize resources for those in need, including the elderly, migrants, the poor, women and children facing domestic violence, minority/ethnic groups and people with disabilities.

**Young entrepreneurs and employers are also playing an important role in helping others, through financial and work-related support for employees and partners, and by ensuring health and safety in the workplace.** They are also using their skills by supporting online education; by offering material and monetary donations and fundraising; and by making and distributing free personal protective equipment (PPE), food and hygiene products.



I have signed up to volunteer for 4 different initiatives. I have called family and friends regularly, organized a quiz for friends to join on an online call, organized regular catch ups with colleagues for a “what’s the tea?!” break online, helped set up a WhatsApp group for colleagues who have been furloughed, started to make a list of things I can do at home...

—Emma Wildsmith, 27, the United Kingdom

## 8. COVID-19 POLICY RESPONSES: YOUTH VOICES AND PERCEPTIONS

**Young people have a right to participate in the decision-making processes that affect them.** It is therefore key that governments integrate youth participation mechanisms into the design and implementation of measures to tackle the effects of the pandemic. There is much to gain through substantive youth involvement in relief interventions, as young people are already actively organizing recovery measures within their local communities and beyond. Additionally, as this section highlights, young people bring with them perspectives that are critical, forward-looking and grounded in their particular experiences.

**To demonstrate what kind of direction youth can give to relief measures when involved in decision-making, the survey asked young people: “If you were the leader of your country, what would you do?”**<sup>33</sup> Their responses illustrate a great awareness of the pandemic, its impact, the related policy responses and their effectiveness. Young people are concerned about the impact of the crisis on vulnerable populations, including the poor, migrant workers, informal workers, the elderly, frontline health workers and the recently unemployed. Their ideas can be clustered into four groups: (1) containment measures; (2) measures to protect workers and support enterprises, jobs and income; (3) measures to boost health services to address the sanitary crisis; and (4) governance measures to boost policy effectiveness.

### Containment measures

**While sixty-three per cent of youth respondents were in favour of stronger measures, many respondents also highlighted the negative employment effects the measures have taken on groups such as informal and migrant workers** (figure 19). As leaders of their countries, young people would continue social distancing measures, while favouring safe income generating activities. They called on governments to continue enforcing working from home wherever possible and to ease restrictions gradually, with an emphasis on the health and safety of workers. Support for increasing containment measures was notably weaker among those that had stopped working since the outbreak of the crisis (55 per cent), while there was no discernible difference between students who expected their education to be delayed and others.

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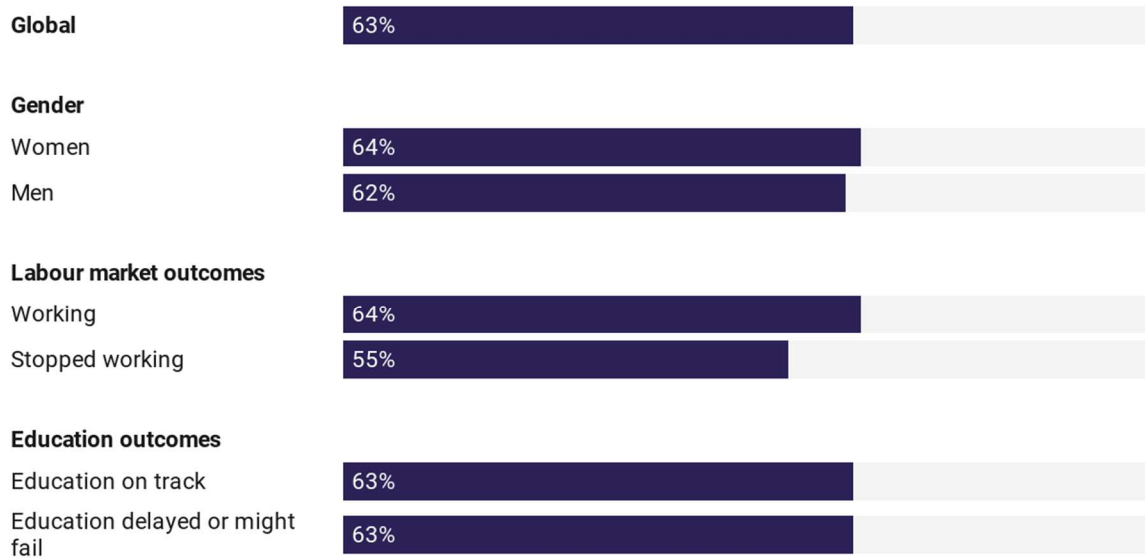
<sup>33</sup> The survey received 4,997 responses to the open-ended question: “We want to know what type of measures you recommend to be put in place. If you were the leader of your country, what would you do?”



I would give food for the people so they can stay home and avoid contacting with each other. You can't force the people to stay home if they can't eat.

—Aimee Bechara, 30, Lebanon

**Figure 19** Share of youth (aged 18–29) in support of increasing containment measures further



**Note:** N: 8,693 (global, gender), 3,248 (labour market outcomes), 5,896 (education outcomes).

## Measures to protect workers and support enterprises, jobs and income

With a view to protecting vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, young people proposed enhancing income support for the recently unemployed, preventing large-scale job losses through negotiation with employers, providing stimulus packages for small- and medium-sized enterprises, and moving towards strengthening social protection floors as a way to extend the coverage of safety nets. Young people also proposed taking immediate relief measures, such as food distribution, while a small number mentioned the need to standardize prices for essential goods, and called for the freezing of taxes, rents, loans and education fees.



I would impose strict penalties on employers who put profit before people; who have unnecessarily furloughed or fired people. I would ensure the survival of key sectors, but not at the expense of human lives.

—Ali Thameem, 24, Sri Lanka

**Overall, young people have a positive impression of the response measures taken by governments to protect workers, jobs and businesses from the impacts of the pandemic.** Fifty-six per cent of young people regarded the response taken by their government positively, compared to 30 per cent who regarded it negatively.<sup>34</sup> Perceptions of government responses did not vary significantly between women and men, nor between youth who had stopped working since the onset of the pandemic and those who continued working. However, students who anticipated a delay to or even the potential failure of their education appeared to approve of government response measures less (56 per cent versus 65 per cent, respectively).

**As regards their opinion of specific labour market-related policies,<sup>35</sup> young people broadly supported the actions taken by governments so far.** Eighty-six per cent of respondents supported at least one in four policy measures, as shown in figure 20. Income support (78 per cent) and employee support (75 per cent) were the most popular. Overall, support for policy measures is higher among young people who continued working after the onset of the pandemic (91 per cent in support of at least one policy measure) than among those who had stopped working (82 per cent in support of at least one policy measure). This appears to be related to who is currently benefiting from the policy measures on offer (see section 3 on the employment measures reportedly received by youth).

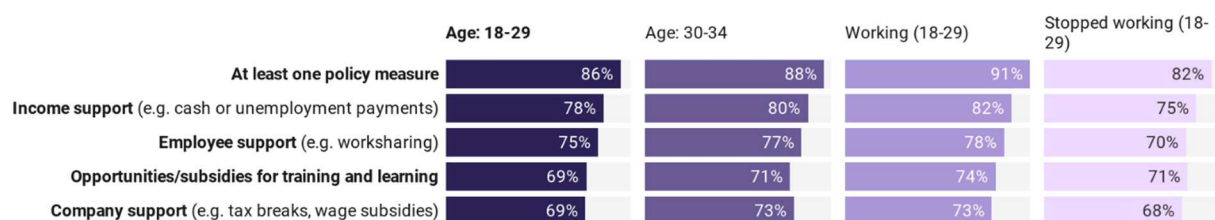
**Being older correlates positively with a higher approval of government measures.** Generally, older group in the sample (aged 30–34) expressed slightly stronger approval for response measures, which may be linked to their higher rate of participation in the workforce, as compared to younger people (aged 18–29) (see figure 20).

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<sup>34</sup> Positive assessment: rating the government response as “sufficient” or “somewhat sufficient”. Negative assessment: rating the government response as “somewhat insufficient” or “insufficient”. Difference to 100 per cent are those in the category “neither sufficient nor insufficient”.

<sup>35</sup> The survey asked young people if they support various government response measures. Question categories were separated into four types of measure: income support, company support, employee support and training/learning support.

**Figure 20** Share of survey respondents in support of policy measures



**Note:** The graph depicts the share of respondents supporting the respective policy measure. Categories are not mutually exclusive. N: 8,683 (aged 18-29), 1,145 (aged 30-34), 2,668 (working, aged 18-29), 577 (stopped working, aged 18-29).



My advice is to provide income, training and employment support for young people in the community including for vulnerable people such as the elderly and disabled. I call on our authorities to implement tracing and tracking measures and provide free masks and sanitizers to allow people to go back to work safely.

—Ivy Tecla Nabwire, 26, Kenya

## Measures to boost health services to address the sanitary crisis

**Youth voices were directed towards improving public health infrastructure and equipment for frontline workers while at the same enhancing testing and tracing.** As leaders, young people put a major stress on ensuring that adequate PPE is available to nurses and doctors. They would work closely with private health care services in the immediate term while at the same time increasing spending on public healthcare to ensure coverage and quality of health services for all. A small number of respondents said they would increase funding for medical research.

## Governance measures

**As leaders, young people would ensure equal access to information while at the same time boosting the accountability and coordination of government responses.** Young people valued highly the provision of accurate and timely information about COVID-19, as well as the preventive measures needed to avoid and reduce infection, and information on how to take advantage of government support. They stressed the need for greater accountability by government and greater scrutiny to prevent corruption. In regard to the decentralized approach observed across countries, young people called for better coordination between central and regional governments and municipalities to ensure interventions reach rural areas, and advocated for the addressing of region-specific problems over a generalized approach. Although to a lesser extent, young people also pointed to the importance of fostering investments in ICTs to enable more people to work remotely and access online services, from learning to coaching and employment services, especially in rural areas.

## 9. KEY FINDINGS AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT POLICY ACTIONS

The Global Survey on Youth and COVID-19 finds that the impacts of the pandemic on young people, particularly among women, younger youth and youth in lower income countries, are systematic, deep and disproportionate. The survey documents the impacts the pandemic has had on young people's lives and their rights in four major areas: namely, employment, education and training, mental well-being, and other rights. It also documents young people's actions, including their social activism and crisis response behaviours, as well as attitudes towards policy measures. The following conclusions highlight key findings and reflect on the necessary policy action to be taken by governments, social partners, youth and civil society organizations and others in response to the pandemic.<sup>36</sup>

### Employment

The COVID-19 pandemic has pushed young people aged 18–29 out of the global workforce, with one in six youth reporting having had to stop working since the onset of the crisis. Younger workers (compared to those aged 30–34), as well as those in clerical support, services, sales, crafts and related trades were more likely to have stopped working. Young people (aged 18–29) working before the onset of the pandemic reported an average 23 per cent reduction in working hours and a 42 per cent reduction in income.

- Young people living in lower income countries were more prone to experience reductions in working hours and a contraction in income and self-assessed productivity as a result. Whereas young men are most affected by this (largely explained by the differences in occupation between young women and men), young women were more likely to report decreased productivity.
- Around 17 per cent of young workers reported an increase in working hours, which raises concerns about overtime work and the difficulty in disconnecting from work during the pandemic. This is in a context where close to three-quarters of young workers reported having had to work either partly or fully from home.
- Immediate government responses aimed at mitigating the impacts of the crisis on labour markets were more likely to reach those young people who remained in employment after the onset of the pandemic, compared to those who had stopped working.

**Urgent, large-scale and targeted employment policy responses are needed to protect a whole generation of young people from having their employment prospects permanently scarred by**

<sup>36</sup> See ILO (2020b) for more information on policy responses to address the impact of the pandemic on labour market outcomes of youth. Available at: [www.un.org/victimsofterrorism/sites/www.un.org.victimsofterrorism/files/un\\_-\\_human\\_rights\\_and\\_covid\\_april\\_2020.pdf](http://www.un.org/victimsofterrorism/sites/www.un.org.victimsofterrorism/files/un_-_human_rights_and_covid_april_2020.pdf)



**the crisis.** In light of the experiences reported by young people in the survey, specific measures should aim to do the following:

- Counteract youth unemployment and re-integrate into the labour market those young people who have lost their jobs or who reported a reduction in working hours to zero after the onset of the pandemic. Such measures should include macroeconomic (fiscal and monetary) policies that direct public expenditure towards providing hiring subsidies or youth guarantees, as well as investment in economic sectors with the potential to absorb young jobseekers.
- Ensure unemployment insurance benefits cover all young people who have lost their jobs in order to avoid even greater losses in income and make access to benefits easier for those actively looking for a job.
- Integrate targeting and profiling strategies to ensure public and private responses to the crisis reach the most affected youth, e.g. younger youth and those in the occupational categories covering clerical support, services, sales, and crafts.
- Expand the support given to those who have remained in employment during the crisis by securing them access to social protection and making young workers eligible for work-sharing and short-time work compensation schemes.
- Maintain and expand active labour market support and broaden access to employment services in order to ensure both job readiness and quality transitions for young people. This implies strengthening those public employment services and private providers able to rectify information asymmetries and advise young people on job and career prospects or pathways into continued education.
- Encourage social dialogue in order to boost young workers' access to enterprise and income support measures, while at the same time fostering their labour rights, the right to disconnect and opportunities for on-the-job training. The interaction between social dialogue actors and institutions such as Economic and Social Councils is key to enhancing youth representation in the design of national youth policies, national action plans on youth employment, and other governmental measures in support of decent jobs for youth.

## Education and training

**As the delivery of education and training has moved from the classroom and to online and remote learning, findings from the survey have revealed the deep digital divides that exist, especially for youth in lower income countries, as well as the gloomy outlook that young people hold as regards learning outcomes.**

- Over 70 per cent of young people who were either studying or combining study and work at the time of the survey were adversely affected by the closing of schools, universities and training centres. Nearly one in six saw their education and training come to a complete stop, with no courses, teaching, or tests set since the onset of the pandemic.

- While the world as a whole underwent a massive transition from classroom to online and distance learning, young people living in lower income countries reported a far more restricted access to video lectures and online testing than did those living in high-income countries.
- Despite efforts to ensure continuity in education and training services, 65 per cent of young people reported having learnt less since the onset of the pandemic; a perception that highlights the vast challenges involved in moving learning from out of the classroom and into the home.
- Half of young people (51 per cent) believed their studies would be delayed, while 9 per cent thought that they might fail; an assessment more commonly made by youth who had completed secondary education, compared to those who had completed their tertiary education.
- Despite reporting diminished learning outcomes, about one-half of the young people who were in education or training sought new learning opportunities, the most popular being courses to improve their technical and job-related skills.

**Delay or failures in education trajectories are likely to impede the speed and effectiveness of the school-to-work transition of today's youth cohort.** In order to mitigate this risk, it is important to:

- Provide access to alternative learning opportunities. Online learning and training opportunities need to adapt, so as to improve learning experiences reliant on better broadband connectivity, and provide access to ICT equipment, digital tools and teaching and learning materials, and quality curricula tailored to a virtual audience of students.
- Strengthen the use of digital technologies across education and skills development providers, with a strong focus on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programmes.
- Increase investment in digital solutions for practical skills development and improve access to and develop capacity of teachers, trainers, principals and managers on delivering the online, distance and blended learning with a particular focus on TVET and skills development institutions and programmes.
- Improve and modernize job counselling and career guidance to help young people plan a job and career path in industries and sectors with the capacity to absorb an influx of young graduates.
- Public and private efforts to boost the quality and relevance of education and training systems so they can better respond to the demands of the labour market in a post-pandemic world.

## Mental well-being

**The survey found that, globally, one in two young people aged 18–29 are *possibly* subject to anxiety or depression, while a further 17 per cent are *probably* affected by it.** Average mental well-being is worse for young women, as well as for younger youth.

Young people whose education or work had been disrupted the most since the onset of the pandemic exhibited greatly reduced mental well-being. They were almost twice as likely to be *probably* affected by anxiety or depression as those who continued to be employed. This underscores the linkage between mental well-being and educational success and labour market integration.

Thirty-eight per cent of young people, globally, are uncertain about their future career prospects and 16 per cent fearful.

**The increased sense of anxiety and fear that this crisis has instilled in many young people threatens to delay recovery in education and youth employment outcomes.** Recognizing that youthhood is a period of transition and that younger youth are still in a period of physical development, it is important to:

- Safeguard young people's mental well-being through mental health services, psychosocial support and sports activities, acting as stand-alone or modular measures integrated within youth employment and education interventions.
- Offer mental well-being services, particularly to young people whose school-to-work trajectory has been impacted due to disrupted educational careers or job losses. This implies upscaling mental well-being interventions within training and education institutions and public employment services.
- Foster measures that create a positive environment in the workplace for the return to work and the continued support of young workers.

## Youth rights

**For all young people, and especially those facing discrimination and disadvantage, human rights that include labour rights and the right to education provide the basis on which they can make their voices heard, organize, assert their interests, create systemic change and find work that is both productive and decent.** The stay-at-home measures adopted across the globe have been necessary in order to counter the COVID-19 pandemic, but have constrained everyone's freedom of movement. Young people's perceptions of this reflect the important adverse effects it has had on their rights beyond just employment, education and mental health, notably:

- One in three young people surveyed felt a significant impact on their ability to participate in public affairs, including making peaceful protest.
- More than one-quarter of young people (27 per cent) stated that the pandemic had significantly impacted their ability to exercise the right to freedom of religion or belief. Young people identifying as an ethnic, religious or other minority felt a more pronounced impact in this regard than did other youth groups.
- Nearly one in four young people (24 per cent) reported a significant impact on the right to information.
- Young people who had stopped working more often reported that their right to housing had been adversely affected, most likely due to loss of income, whereas youth who

were married or had a partner noted a greater impact on their right to freedom from violence than did single youth.

**A rights-based approach in youth employment investments that takes into consideration the specific situation of young people is fundamental to “building back better” after the pandemic.**

## Social activism and youth voices on the pandemic and policy responses

**Young people’s social activism is contributing to mitigating the economic and social effects of COVID-19, through compliance with government measures, volunteering, donations and outreach, notably:**

- Four in five youth (aged 18–29) reported staying at home to a large extent, while two in three reached out to friends, family and loved ones to a large extent.
- Over one-quarter of young people reported a high degree of engagement in volunteerism and making donations towards the COVID-19 response. Youth’s involvement in volunteering increased over the period of the survey (21 April to 21 May).
- As the world witnessed drastic changes to social and economic activities, young people shared their perspectives on governments’ actions to counteract the pandemic:
- Most youth were in favour of stay-at-home measures with the goal of protecting workers, jobs and businesses. They advocated for a strong measures to protect the health and livelihoods of those most vulnerable, including migrant workers and those in the informal economy.
- Youth called on governments to, wherever possible, ease restrictions gradually, with an emphasis on the health and safety of workers.
- Youth proposed taking complementary measures to boost health services and secure proper governance through information, accountability and coordination mechanisms.

Evidence from the survey, together with young people’s stories about giving back to society, shows that despite being adversely affected by the pandemic, young people were able to demonstrate their solidarity through charitable donation and resilience, and by positioning themselves at the core of finding and implementing solutions.

**We all need to ensure that young people are fully able to exercise their right to actively participate in decision-making. Young people are already working to rebuild their societies. By supporting them in an equal, collaborative way we can ensure a faster, stronger Build Back Better.**

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