

UNCERTAIN AGE

The pandemic is taking a toll on young people

IMAGINE BEING 22 years old now. You might have just finished college, be working, or be juggling school, work, and family. Or perhaps you are unemployed or underemployed and struggling to make ends meet. Now imagine all those challenges with the unrelenting weight of the global COVID-19 pandemic as a daily backdrop.

To find out more about how young people are coping with the historic pandemic, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and partners of the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth surveyed more than 12,000 18- to 29-year-olds from 112 countries earlier this year.

The pandemic's effects on young people have been "systematic, deep and disproportionate," the ILO report finds, and it has been particularly difficult for young women and youth in lower-income countries. Education was radically disrupted, with one in eight young people left without access to courses, teaching, or training.

For young workers, the COVID pandemic has been especially unsettling. One in six respondents who

were employed before the pandemic stopped working entirely, with 18- to 24-year-olds hit especially hard. Even for young people with jobs, working hours fell, and two out of five reported earning less.

These dramatic changes, in addition to the stresses of the health crisis, have taken a toll on young people's mental health, with high numbers of respondents reporting anxiety and depression. Despite all of this, the report finds that a high proportion of young people are turning the crisis into an opportunity for collective action by supporting their communities through volunteering and giving.

The report calls for "urgent, targeted, and smarter" investment in "decent jobs" for young people. It also highlights the need to protect human rights, improve employment and training programs (including online learning), strengthen social protection and unemployment benefits, and improve mental health support. **FD**

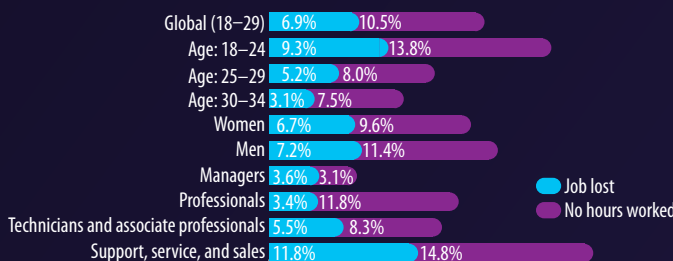
MELINDA WEIR is on the staff of Finance & Development. This feature is based on the August 2020 ILO report *Youth & COVID-19: Impacts on Jobs, Education, Rights and Mental Well-being*.

ICONS: THE NOUN PROJECT

As COVID-19 spread, so did a jobs crisis

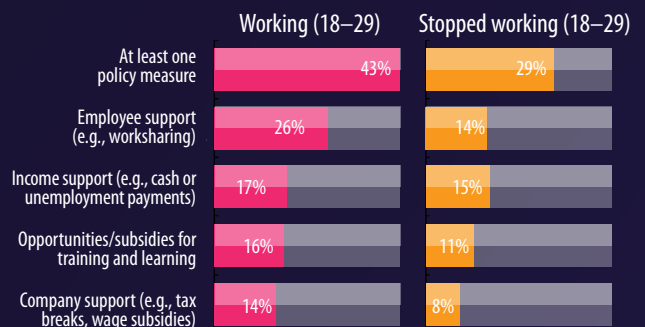
Not hiring

At the start of the pandemic, one in six young people aged 18–29 had either lost jobs or had work hours eliminated fully. Workers in service, support, and sales were especially affected.



Government support... for some

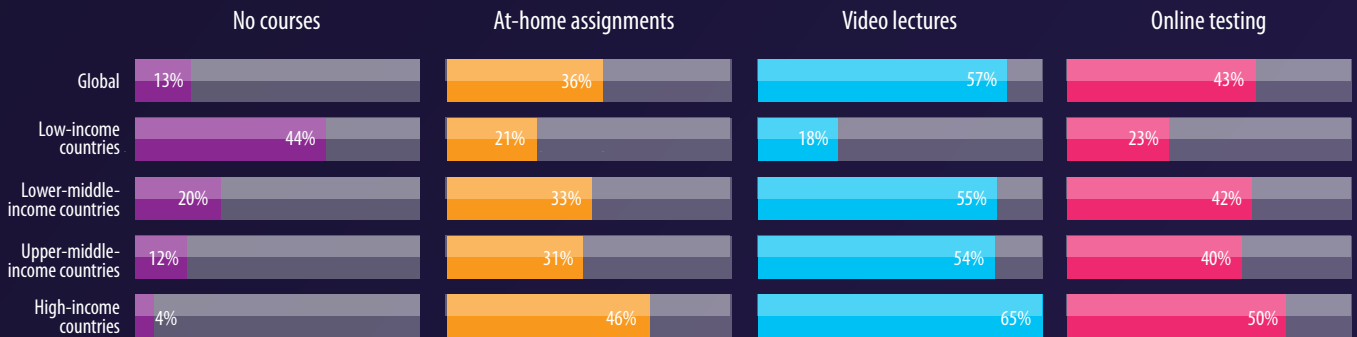
Around the world, young people who stayed employed after the onset of the crisis more frequently benefited from government labor market policy measures than those youth who lost their jobs.



Class dismissed

Zoom school...but not for all

Nearly one in eight young people saw education and training come to a complete stop in spring 2020. 44 percent of survey respondents from low-income countries reported having no courses at all.



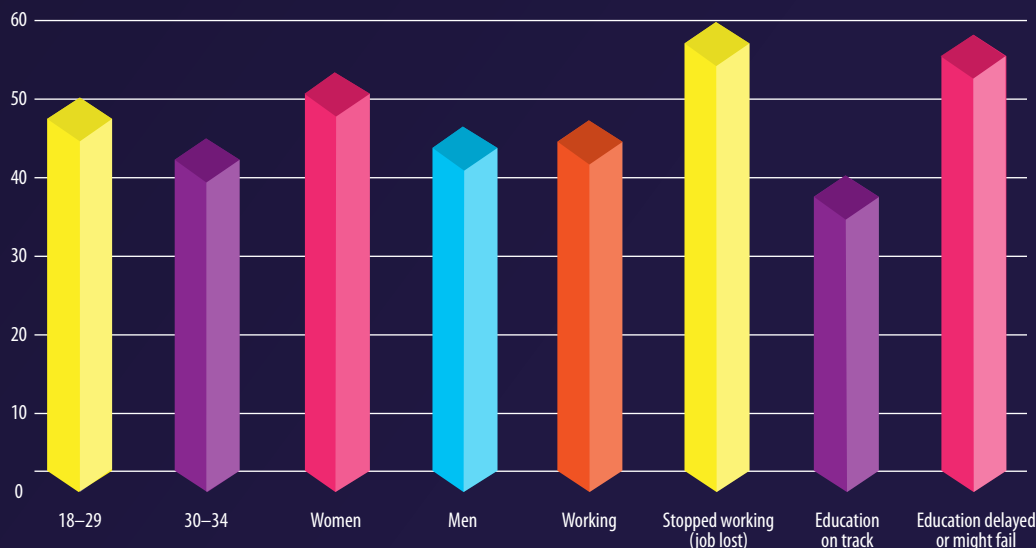
The crisis is affecting mental health



The other pandemic

Approximately half of the young people surveyed indicated possible anxiety or depression, with young women and those who stopped working or whose education is delayed showing the lowest mental well-being scores.

(percent)



**OVER
50%**

of young people aged 18-29 indicated possible anxiety or depression

Note: Share of respondents showing signs of possible anxiety or depression according to the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale.

Source: Decent Jobs for Youth Global Survey 2020 on Youth & COVID-19.