



UNITED NATIONS

ECLAC

## COVID-19 and its impact on inequality in youth



**BOX VI.1****COVID-19 and its impact on young people**

Although the available evidence indicates that young people are less vulnerable than middle-aged adults and older adults to the serious health problems that can be caused by COVID-19, the measures adopted to contain the pandemic have had a strong impact on their surroundings and their development. According to Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of WHO, the interruption in young people's educations, the reduction in available jobs, lockdowns, the alteration of social protection structures and the economic and health-related burdens that families have had to shoulder have all triggered concern, frustration, feelings of isolation and, in many cases, anxiety and depression among young people. This is all in addition to the limitation of their opportunities to engage in physical exercise, which may lead to increased tobacco, alcohol and drug use that will have long-term effects on their health.

According to ILO, the impact of COVID-19 on employment has been disproportionately severe in the case of young workers. One out of every six is currently unemployed. The pandemic has made what was already a grim job outlook for young people before the pandemic (forcing most of them into the informal economy) even worse. The *ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work*, fourth edition, discusses the sharp and substantial rise in unemployment among young people (and especially young women) seen since February 2020.

Adolescents and young people have also been more exposed to domestic violence as a consequence of the lockdowns and, particularly in the case of women, to sexual violence, along with its serious physical and emotional consequences.

Vulnerable groups of young people, such as migrants, refugees, those who are living in the streets, those in detention facilities or prison and those who live in poor or marginal districts, are at an even greater risk. Young people living in crowded conditions and lacking access to clean water and health-care services are more likely to become infected. They also have less access to technology and therefore less or belated access to information about how to protect themselves from exposure to COVID-19.

In order to turn this situation around, the following types of policy and programmatic actions are recommended:

- Ensuring that young people's educational and vocational training opportunities continue to be offered and to be accessible.
- Identifying and supporting sectors that offer the greatest job opportunities for the young people who have been impacted the most.
- Ensuring that young people have access to health-care systems for the treatment of COVID-19 even if they are not covered by contributory health insurance systems.
- Introducing new counselling systems, mental health and addiction treatment services, and support for victims of violence during lockdowns.
- Expanding Internet service and access to new technologies for young people living in poverty and/or in marginalized or excluded settlements.

Once the pandemic has subsided, it will also be important to direct recovery efforts towards the sectors that are most able to create decent and higher-productivity jobs over the long term and to support the development of skills for which there will be a demand in the future.

**Source:** Prepared by the authors, on the basis of *Infosalus*, "OMS avisa de que los efectos secundarios del Covid-19 en mujeres y menores pueden ser mayores que las muertes", 12 June 2020 [online] <https://www.infosalus.com/salud-investigacion/noticia-oms-avisa-efectos-secundarios-covid-19-mujeres-menores-pueden-ser-mayores-muertes-20200612175729.html>; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), "Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) preparedness and response", *Technical Briefs*, 24 March 2020 [online] <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/adolescents-and-young-people-coronavirus-disease-covid-19?page=6%2C0%2C0>; International Labour Organization (ILO), "ILO: More than one in six young people out of work due to COVID-19", 27 May 2020 [online] [https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS\\_745879/lang-en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_745879/lang-en/index.htm).

**INSTITUTIONS**

Various institutions are doing research on the inequality gaps found among young people, including UNFPA, OIJ and ECLAC.

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