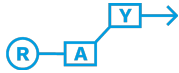


**Research-based
analysis of European
youth programmes**

RESEARCH PROJECT ON THE IMPACT OF THE CORONA PANDEMIC ON YOUTH WORK IN EUROPE (RAY-COR)

2ND LITERATURE REVIEW

V2 | 21 APRIL 2021



1.ABSTRACT

This literature review revisits the topic: youth and the COVID-19 pandemic. The goal of this literature review is to explore the emerging trends of research about young people and COVID-19 pandemic after nearly one year. Research at the onset of the pandemic established the growing disparities between general society and young people in response to containment measures focusing on topics of socialization, mental health and well-being, and economic concerns. As the pandemic continues into a new year, emerging literature on COVID-19 and youth still shows a strong focus on the pandemic's socioeconomic impact. In addition to the overall socioeconomic focus, new literature explores the compounding effects marginalisation and vulnerability have on the experiences of some youth in the pandemic context. Young people with disabilities; those experiencing poverty or homelessness; asylum-seekers, refugees, and migrant youth; and diverse genders and sexualities experience compounded negative consequences of the pandemic in their day-to-day struggles. In the area of mental health and well-being, which dominated research at national level some months ago, a new focus on pandemic-triggered changes in sexuality has emerged. Furthermore, new avenues of research related to youth perspectives on policing the pandemic and recovery, forge a new and necessary path toward youth participation at the decision-making level.

3. INTRODUCTION

A year after the WHO declared COVID-19 a worldwide pandemic, research on its impacts for young people has rapidly increased and diversified. Initial research explored the effects of social distancing measures on young people's employment prospects, education continuation, and mental well-being. The conclusions from the initial literature review still stand: the effects of the pandemic are disproportionate for young people. However, these effects are not uniform for all young people. Youth from marginalized and vulnerable groups face greater risk and adversity than others. Youth unemployment and its related effects on the lives of young people are extensively discussed in reports at the transnational, national, and regional levels in different countries. After long months of dealing with school closures, digital exclusion in the context of education and other inequalities related to education are also discussed at the national level. In the area of mental health and well-being, which dominated research at national level some months ago, a new focus on pandemic-triggered changes in sexuality has emerged. Furthermore, new avenues of research related to youth perspectives on policing the pandemic and recovery build the foundations of new avenues of youth participation at the decision-making level. This literature review briefly explores these emerging themes adding to a deeper, fuller picture of the effects of the pandemic on young people.

4. UNEMPLOYMENT AND EMANCIPATION

The socioeconomic effects for youth in the coronavirus pandemic dominate much of the available research. Not only are youth far more vulnerable than their older counterparts to unemployment, precarious employment among young people has both current and future implications for young people's transitions and independence in the future.

In July 2020, INJUVE (Spanish institute for youth) published the second part of their report on the socioeconomic consequences of the coronavirus on the Spanish youth: an analysis of quantitative data on youth (16 to 29 years) employment from June and July, sourced from public administrations and public institutions across the country (Instituto de la Juventud, [INJUVE], 2020). In their report they describe how unemployment of youth people increased over two-fold more than that of older people (over 29 years) at the beginning of the pandemic, and how close to 30% of the working youth's contracts have been suspended temporarily (ERTE) (23,8%

for older population). Because youth are more likely to be employed precariously and work in sectors that were closed entirely due to the pandemic, many young people have either lost their jobs or are at risk of losing them in the near future. Additionally, since young people usually have lower salaries and less savings compared to the older working population, they have little to no financial buffer to deal with the resulting loss of income. This finding is echoed by Chiara Saraceno in her 2021 report ‘The social dimension of the COVID crisis in Italy’ (‘La Dimensione sociale della crisi COVID in Italia’) where she writes:

Among the most affected professions [by the pandemic] are waiters, bartenders, cooks, clerks and retail sales staff, domestic workers and carers. These are also the sectors with a high concentration of young people of both sexes and women of all ages. ... the pandemic crisis appears to be having more negative effects on female employment, given the type of sectors most affected. Compared with an overall drop in employment in the second quarter of 1.9%, among young people 15-34 the drop over the same period was 3.2%, and for women it was 2.2%’ (Saraceno, 2021, p.3).

Moreover, the amount of young people with temporary contracts in Spain, which had been remarkably stable in the previous years with slight increases in the time from April to December, suddenly decreased by about 6% in the second trimester of 2020. For the inJUVE authors, this is clear evidence that youth who had a ‘vulnerable job’ (temporary contracts, trial periods, etc.) were the first ones to become unemployed. In Italy, the reduction of self-employed workers was 4.1% in 2020, half of which were young people in their thirties (Ipsos, 2020) – an age of self-employment consolidation according to Saraceno (Saraceno, 2021).

In response to the situation, the Spanish youth have stopped actively searching for jobs. July 2020 registered the lowest percentage of active youth (youth that is employed or actively searching for a job) in Spain in the last decade: 47.9% (14.4% searching, 33.5% employed). The INJUVE authors interpret the increase in inactive youth as evidence that young people are turning to studying as a more profitable activity than searching for jobs during the pandemic. Even the seasonal increase in youth employment that

summer usually brings has been lower by about 14% in 2020 than in 2019 (INJUVE, 2020).

One extensively surveyed consequence of this unemployment and inactivity rise has been the housing situation of young people. The Spanish council of youth reports that ‘the pandemic sinks youth emancipation: only 17.3% of young people live emancipated, the worst figure since 2001’ (Consejo de la Juventud de España [CJE], n.d.) and that one in five young households does not have any employed members. The newspaper Ara reports that ‘one in four young people in Barcelona has had difficulties paying for an apartment as a result of the covid-19 health crisis’ (Ara, 2020). The townhall of Barcelona recorded in its November 2020 survey to the Barcelonese youth (15 to 34 years) that more than half of the respondents who live in a flatshare do it out of economic necessity and would prefer to live alone. Of their respondents, one in every four young people aged 18 to 24 and 31,6% of young people aged 25 to 34 lived in a flatshare. In these age groups, 64,5% and 15% of respondents still lived with their parents respectively.

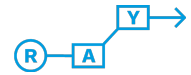
Luppi, Rosina, and Sironi (2020) put these national findings in perspective by investigating the effect that the pandemic had on European youth’s already-existing plans to ‘leave the nest’. Their study included a representative sample of 6000 young people from Italy, Germany, France, Spain and the UK aged 18 to 34 who were interviewed in March and April 2020. They performed an exploratory analysis of these data using an ordinal logarithmic regression model. Of this sample, they concentrated on the people who reported having had plans to emancipate on January 2020 and aimed to find out which variables made it more likely for them to (a) have continued with their plan in spite of COVID, (b) have postponed the plan, or (c) have aborted the plan. The variables they considered were age, gender, education level, employment status, perceived future job/income conditions, country of residence and regional unemployment rate in 2019. In terms of country of residence, youth from Italy, Spain, and the UK were more likely to revise their emancipation plan after COVID compared to Germany and France. Their findings also show that the lower the 2019 regional youth unemployment rate, the more likely European youth were to postpone or cancel their emancipation plans after the COVID pandemic hit. On the other hand, positive expectancy as to future income/job conditions made it more likely for the European youth to continue with their plan as originally set. This means that the state of the job market and the opportunities they perceived within it were crucial for the youth to make their decision as to whether they were ready to continue their transition to adulthood in times of COVID by moving away from the parental home.

A second influential aspect in the decision to continue with the original emancipation plan was level of education. Luppi, Rosina, and Sironi found that young people with higher education were less likely to change their plans due to COVID while those with secondary education had a high probability of delaying or cancelling their plans. This pattern could be explained by appealing to the above-mentioned necessary feelings of financial security being more common for highly educated youth due to their education and to the likelihood that they come from more economically advantaged backgrounds. However, those with less than secondary education were likely to either continue with the plan as set in or cancel it, but were unlikely to delay it. This finding is more difficult to explain. It seems to reflect the ability of those with lower education to have either bullet-proof emancipation plans which could clearly survive COVID, or very unstable ones which would very likely not survive it, that is, they seem to have little room for experimentation and ‘seeing how it goes’.

In general, these reports document how the COVID pandemic has taken the already difficult reality of young people and their oftentimes precarious employment and amplified most weak points (lower salaries, more difficult job accessibility than for other age groups, worse job conditions than other age groups, etc.). This has created an even more difficult future that conditions and hampers the development of the youth. We have seen examples of specific ways in which important life decisions and milestones, like when to emancipate or when and what to study, are affected by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. The selected reports show national data that exemplify European-level trends as described by Mascherini and Sándor in their Eurofound report (Mascherini & Sándor, 2020).

5. DIGITAL EXCLUSION AND SOCIOECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUTH IN EDUCATION

Research at the regional level on the effects of the pandemic on Education explores how, once again, the corona crisis has enlarged the differences between more and less advantaged youth by creating additional difficulties to be faced by already-disadvantaged young people. At the peak of the lockdown, 84,8% of the world’s learners, 1.5 billion of them, were impacted by lockdown measures (UNESCO, 2020). The rapid need for change to digital learning without proper preparation created what Ştefan and Şerban (2020) call a ‘distance learning movement rather than online learning one’ (p.3).



It is important to distinguish a situation in which learning activities are designed to be online (online learning) from ones in which they are delivered online, but were not designed for it (emergency remote teaching, ERT). ERT is a means of providing ‘temporary access to instruction and instructional supports in a manner that is quick to set up and is reliably available during an emergency or crisis’ (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020). The quick transition to online teaching saw teachers kept using methods suited for face-to-face formats and students found themselves with similar demands than in normal school times, but much less support to navigate them. This makes achieving the same educational expectations of in-school learning difficult.

How prepared teachers say they are to produce online video lessons is related to whether they work in the public or private sector, according to a report from the UK-based Sutton Trust on education inequalities and the coronavirus (Montacute, 2020). About seven of every ten private school teachers felt prepared to do video lessons, while only four of every ten teachers at public schools felt prepared. In some contexts, the option to broadcast a class is not even in question. According to the same report, teachers who worked at schools with a high number of socioeconomically disadvantaged pupils were the least likely to be able to broadcast a class (34%) or receive pupil work remotely (53%) in comparison with schools where most pupils are better-off (47% and 73%, respectively).

Additionally, children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to have a device to access the internet on their own or a quiet space to concentrate while learning according to the Sutton report. They are also less likely to receive private tuition than children from more advantaged backgrounds and time away from school (during summer holidays) enlarges the attainment gap between them and their more socioeconomically advantaged peers (Stewart, Watson, & Campbell, 2018). The coronavirus pandemic and the shutting of schools is exacerbating these effects. Because tutoring is an effective way to counterbalance the effect of pandemic-related complications on the learning of pupils, the Sutton Trust asks in its report that private tuition companies and the government invest in it as a recovery strategy.

One further challenge posed by the COVID 19 crisis relates to A level examinations: how to carry them out and how to compare them with those of other years in order to use them to grant access to universities. The Sutton report discourages schools to calculate final grades on the basis of expected grades alone because, according to their research, this is likely to underrate the performance of high-skilled but socioeconomically disadvantaged

children. The same is true, according to them, for systems that rely on teacher assessments.

Lastly, for some disadvantaged children, school is not only a place to learn but also a place to eat healthily or to even eat at all. The Sutton report predicts that lacking the opportunity to eat for free at school due to coronavirus closures will leave the most disadvantaged students without guarantee of a daily meal. It also mentions governmental support systems in place to counterbalance this effect, which may still miss helping families who have started having extreme struggles because of the pandemic and who were not eligible for support before it. In their report on children in Europe and the US and COVID-19, Marchetti and Guiducci discuss a less extreme version of the same effect: how schools provide healthy meals to children that may not have access to them otherwise (Marchetti & Guiducci, 2020). With school closures, these children's health and possibly their ability and energy to learn will decline. The relationship between food insecurity and reduced school performance has also been documented before (Stewart, Watson, & Campbell, 2018).

On a 2021 report from the Reina Sofía Center for Adolescents and Youth, Kuric Kardelis, Calderón-Gómez and Sanmartín Ortí study the main problems experienced by teens and young adults in terms of education triggered by the pandemic (Kuric Kardelis, Calderón-Gómez, & Sanmartín Ortí, 2021). They used an online questionnaire of 1500 young people aged 15 to 29. They found that, even though the large majority (90%) of responding youth could follow the academic year to its end, 70% of respondents reported difficulties reaching academic objectives. More economically advantaged respondents found less difficulties to complete academic objectives due to lockdown and more of them reported being able to follow the academic year perfectly when compared to less well-off respondents. In line with the descriptions on the Sutton report, the top four difficulties reported by young people were not being able to concentrate at home (31.4%), the teachers not being properly prepared (28.9%), it being difficult to follow classes online (27.2%) and having questions that could not be solved on one's own (24.7%). Kuric Kardelis, Calderón-Gómez and Sanmartín Ortí organized the difficulties reported by the youth in a typology (developed through k-means clustering): (a) no important difficulties (52.2%), (b) skill-related difficulties (33.1%), (c) psychosocial difficulties (8.5%), and (d) technical difficulties (5.2%). Through this approach, we also see that skill-related difficulties, which referred to difficulties on the part of the students to solve questions and complete exercises as well as criticisms to the competence of the teachers when it came to teaching online, were the most

common ones. We also see the technical abilities of students when it comes to dealing with computers and technology reflected on the relatively little incidence of technical problems.

6. MARGINALIZED AND VULNERABLE YOUTH

As new literature emerges, the amplifying and complex compounding of effects the pandemic has for young people from marginalized and vulnerable groups comes to light. While not exclusively youth focused¹, ‘Left Out and Locked Down: Impacts of COVID-19 Lockdown for Marginalised Groups in Scotland’ (Amstrong & Pickering, 2020), discusses the difficulties marginalized groups have experienced in lockdowns. Their qualitative report based on interviews, surveys, and social media analysis focused on the impact of COVID-19 restrictions (‘lockdown’) for four groups already experiencing exclusion, isolation and marginalisation: people having a disability or long-term health condition; People involved in criminal justice; refugees and people seeking asylum who were at risk of destitution; and people surviving domestic abuse or sexual violence. In a cross-cutting analysis of results from the four groups, issues related to information; experiences; and services intersected. First, the access to proper information was crucial in determining a person’s ability to navigate risk associated with the coronavirus, but ‘differential access to, comprehension of, and control over information for the four groups’ (p.3) resulted in varying levels of trust in information sources. Next, ‘a shared theme was of lives characterised by both continuity of pre-existing hardship, and change in terms of intensifying challenge through growing constraint of already circumscribed lives’ (p.3). Third, services were stopped, slowed, or shrunk despite need expanding and intensifying. These three trends point to a systematic marginalization of these vulnerable groups compounding the difficulties of managing life in lockdown.

For each of the four groups within the ‘Left Out and Locked Down’ rapid study, each experienced a unique situation in the pandemic which increased difficulties. People with disabilities and long-term conditions found the pandemic exacerbated pre-existing inequalities interfering with their right to live with dignity and autonomy. The disruption in services along with social distancing measures increased feelings of loneliness and isolation, ‘and contributed to feeling forgotten and invisible’ (p.4); while people subject to criminal justice control experienced greater exposure to

¹ 30.4% of individuals surveyed were between the ages of 18-35.

the coronavirus and increased punitive and traumatizing experiences. Ultimately, for this group, ‘many felt pandemic-related measures were experienced as increased control, rather than effective care’ (p.5). People seeking asylum and refugees arguably have already experienced significant turmoil and uncertainty in their journey to safety. The pandemic amplified these feelings of frustration and loss compounded by feelings of hostility in their attempts to navigate the immigration system when avenues of settlement were almost completely lost (i.e. language classes, volunteering, education). For people surviving domestic abuse or sexual violence, safety was the primary concern. Abuse intensified for those living with their abusers, while it decreased for those not living with their abusers due to limited social movement (Amstrong & Pickering, 2020). However, ‘adverse impacts of Covid-19 restrictions included exacerbation of delays and uncertainties in criminal and civil justice processes; economic difficulties and responsibilities of lone parenting; and the ‘triggering’ effect of the pandemic which mirror experiences and impacts of abuse’ (p.6). These experiences in the lockdown highlight the multifaceted impacts the pandemic has had on groups marginalized within the system.

6.1. YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

Specifically for young people with disabilities, the intricacies of navigating lockdown and pandemic response bring with them optimism for the future. As with many other groups, the pandemic had negative and positive effects for youths with disabilities. Parallel in the ‘Left Out and Lockdown’ report, according to youth interviewed by Mouzon (2020b) in her article, ‘How COVID-19 Has Impacted Youth With Disabilities’ Outlook On Future’, describes how the pandemic has increased feelings of loneliness, difficulty in accessing services, and increased anxiety in contracting the virus due to decreased immune systems. Another young person interviewed in the same article, welcomed the adaptation and awareness of the sunflower lanyard scheme implemented as a subtle signal of hidden disabilities and face mask expectations. People with hidden disabilities (i.e. autism, chronic pain, dementia, etc) may register for the sunflower lanyard scheme in order to receive a sunflower lanyard and an identification badge which is recognized at major UK airports, supermarkets, railway and coach stations, leisure facilities, a number of police, fire and ambulance services, and an increasing number of small and large businesses and organisations. Staff at these venues and institutions will then provide specific support for the person with the lanyard (University Hospital Southampton, 2020). The hope

is that such considerations of young people with disabilities rights to live with dignity and autonomy will continue in the post-COVID-19 world. Moreover, the rather quick transition to home office, implementation of digital learning, adoption of telehealth, and greater consideration of common care and consideration during social distancing shed light on the non-accessibility of the current system (Mouzon, 2020a). The pandemic situation has become an opportunity for youth with disabilities to not only discuss the lack of accessibility in the current system, but know that making it more accessible is 'more possible than we thought it was' (Mouzon, 2020a). The coronavirus response by governments and communities brings forth the possibility of building a system free of previous barriers that prevented youth with disabilities from fully participating in the workforce, education, and everyday living situations.

6.2. POVERTY & HOMELESSNESS

Youth experiencing poverty and homelessness also faced greater hardship in the coronavirus pandemic. Includem, a youth support charity in Scotland, published 'Poverty and the Impact of Coronavirus on Young People and Families in Scotland' (2020) presenting the results of their 126 surveys of young people and families they supported. According to their report, young people and families faced increased financial pressures in: food insecurity, the cost of heating their home, transport costs and access, housing costs and access appropriate housing for their family needs, and accessing the internet. These interviewees reported worsening financial positions with nearly half reported greater increases in debt.

With the implementation of social distancing measures surges in food support demands followed; the Independent Food Aid Network showed a 108% rise in the number of emergency food parcels distributed in July 2020 compared to the same month last year (Includem, 2020). Furthermore, the pandemic situation had a subsequent effect on public transport usage, where nearly half of the families reported struggling to cover additional transportation costs such as the need to pay for more taxi rides due to associated health risks with open public transportation. These families and young people consistently noted their struggles in meeting basic necessities, where 'over half of all families and two-thirds of families receiving social security reported regular issues paying for heating ('about half the time' 'usually' or 'always') (p.4). There was also increased anxiety related to uncertainty in their housing, not just in terms of meeting housing costs but also in being unable to find appropriate housing in their area of choice. Finally, youth and families struggling to meet basic necessities overlap with

those lost in the digital divide previously mentioned in this literature review. Nearly half of surveyed families and young people reported regular issues in accessing the internet, leading to feelings of disempowerment and disconnection in decision-making and undermining children and young people's access to online education.

Centrepont, a UK national charity working with homeless young people aged 16 to 25, reports difficulties in meeting the increased demands of services for homeless youth. Their report 'Youth Homelessness during and beyond the Covid-19 pandemic', published in July 2020, examines the growing homelessness for youth in the pandemic (Centrepont, 2020). Their data comprises survey results from councils in England in May and again in July, analysis of Centrepont's Helpline data for 10 weeks before and after lockdown, along with 5 interviews with practitioners and experts in the field. Their report brings attention to a growing concern for youth housing security. From the council respondents, 78% reported an increase in homelessness in their area with 42% reporting a significant increase. Their findings cite that homelessness for young people is increasingly due to family or relationships breakdowns, while homelessness due to eviction has decreased. This is most likely due to new government issued eviction freezes in place until 31 March 2021 (Shelter, 2020). The growing instability during lockdown and the implementation of social distancing measures have resulted in a doubling of young people 'forced to sleep on the streets rather than sofa surf' (Centrepont, p.4). Yet, in wake of the growing homelessness experienced by young people, 58% of councils said the funding received was not sufficient to prevent and reduce homelessness.

While UK-centric, these reports shed light on a growing situation for youth experiencing poverty and homelessness during the pandemic. The reduction of services or insufficient funding to expand services comes at a time when support is most needed. The ability to meet basic needs and provide shelter in a safe and accessible place are paramount to ensure young people can shield themselves from greater risk from the coronavirus.

6.3. GENDER

Gender is another compounding variable impacting young people's experiences in the pandemic. Ausín, González-Sanguino, Ángel Castellanos, & Muñoz's article 'Gender-related differences in COVID impact in Spain' (2021) uses longitudinal data from March and April 2020 to compare the effects of confinement on women's health. According to their results, 'women were the ones that suffered the greatest impact in all the variables studied and the lowest level of spiritual well-being ... Men presented fewer

depressive, anxious and PTSD symptoms, less loneliness and greater well-being in both measurements. Women suffered a greater impact from prolonged confinement in all the studied variables' (Ausín, González-Sanguino, Ángel Castellanos, & Muñoz, p. 34). Overall, their results point to a growing discrepancy in experiences in the pandemic and lockdown between genders. This presents an opportunity for support organisations to address the greater burden of care as well as increases in domestic violence for women during times of crisis (Ausín, González-Sanguino, Ángel Castellanos, & Muñoz, 2021).

Before the outbreak of COVID-19, the United Nations estimated 243 million women and girls between the ages of fifteen and forty-nine worldwide were subjected to sexual or physical violence by an intimate partner in the last twelve months (*Mlambo-Ngcuka*, 2020). Experts have characterized the increased risks of young women and girls as an 'invisible pandemic' of domestic violence during the COVID-19 crisis as a 'ticking time bomb' or a 'perfect storm' (Bettinger-Lopez & Bro, 2020). In 'Voices from Lockdown: A chance for change' published by Agenda (2020), the particular vulnerabilities for young women and girls during the pandemic notes the dire situation. This report is based on survey responses collected in June 2020 from 72 geographically representative voluntary sector organisations providing support to women across a number of areas of need. This report highlights an increasing vulnerability women and girls to violence and abuse during the pandemic:

Our respondents highlighted the fact that necessary measures in lockdown, such as staying at home and having little contact outside your household, had increased violence and abuse in the home, economic abuse, coercion and control and homophobia from family members for some women and girls. Stalking was also highlighted as something that had been enabled by the conditions of lockdown (p. 6).

On the surface, initial data indicates a drop in incoming reports, but new barriers during the lockdown such as closures of support organisations, programs moving online, and women not wanting to feel like a 'burden' on services, creates a situation of concealed demand and underestimates the true impact of the lockdown on vulnerable women and girls.

The pre-existing inequalities affecting young women and girls are only compounded in the economic impacts of the pandemic. This coincides with 46% of organisations reporting a worsening financial position during the lockdown (Agenda, 2020). Furthermore, their report highlights the

compounding influence the pandemic has on fuelling vulnerability, where ‘research conducted in April found that close to 90 percent of 137 BAME-led organisations who responded to the survey were at risk of closing permanently within months’ (p. 35). This paints a worsening picture of support for women and girls facing greater risk of worsening mental well-being and vulnerabilities to violence and abuse.

6.4. LGBTQI YOUTH

According to Akram Kubanychbekov, Senior Advocacy Officer of ILGA-Europe, the pandemic has intensified the difficulties of LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer/questioning, Intersexual) people, where many already face consistent structural discrimination and stigmatisation (2020). Previous research in this literature have already established that social distancing and lockdown measures impact economically disadvantaged people and LGBTQI people who are precariously employed or unemployed at a disproportionately greater than average rate. Also, ‘an estimated 25-40% of young people experiencing homelessness is estimated to identify as LGBTI’ (Kubanychbekov, 2020).

In turn, these economic hardships amplify issues of mental well-being for LGBTQI youth. According to the Trevor Project, the world's largest suicide prevention and crisis intervention organization for LGBTQ young people, there already was a significantly greater risk for depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicidality (Russell & Fish, 2016) prior to the pandemic for LGBTQI youth. This has the potential to intensify given that social distancing measures have limited social connections that could have once protected LGBTQI youth. According to the research by the Trevor Project, ‘social connections have been found to buffer stress, reduce depression, and improve well-being’ (Cohen, 2004). Participation in the larger LGBTQI community is particularly important for LGBTQI youth as a crucial buffer from social stigma and fulfilling a need for belonging that may not be found at home (Green, Price-Feeney, & Dorison, 2020). However, maintaining these necessary social connections becomes difficult and for some youth impossible in lockdown.

Furthermore, these young people may be stuck in unsafe, unsupportive, and abusive home environments. Such environments force youth to choose between maintaining safety and being their authentic selves (Green, Price-Feeney, & Dorison, 2020). Not only are the immediate threats to mental well-being and safety more pronounced for LGBTQI youth, but the limitations in future prospects intensify negative impacts. As discussed earlier in this literature review many young people face the prospects of



delayed emancipation due to the economic impacts of the pandemic. This paints a particularly less hopeful picture of LGBTQ youth hoping to escape their unsupportive or dangerous home environments when they older: ‘LGBTQ minors who are not in supportive environments and have been waiting until they were able to graduate high school or become the legal age to move to a more supportive environment, perhaps for school and/or work, might feel as though the pandemic is halting or postponing their ability to live as, and embrace, their true selves’ (Green, Price-Feeney, & Dorison, 2020).

Similar findings are supported by Gato, Leal & Seabra’s (2020) article, ‘When home is not a safe haven: Effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on LGBTQ adolescents and young adults in Portugal’. In their survey of 403 individuals belonging to a sexual or gender minority, ranging from 16 to 30 years of age, the authors investigate sociodemographic and psychosocial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of participants. Using bivariate correlations and hierarchical regression models on mental health outcomes, Gato, Leal & Seabra find ‘educational level was the only significant and weak predictor of participants’ mental health outcomes, ... [while] Individual impact and family climate were both positive and weak predictors for both depression and anxiety’ (p.94). Their findings support research claims that individuals with lower educational levels have less access to resources and support, which increases their vulnerability to negative mental health effects during the pandemic. The authors recognize the large role family climate has in levels of depression and anxiety for LGBTQI youth and conclude that Youth facing stigma and non-acceptance in their families are at greater risk of negative health effects during the pandemic.

7. PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING: CHANGES IN SEXUAL BEHAVIOURS

Amidst the large volume of studies on mental health during coronavirus times, a new research interest has emerged in late 2020 with studies from Poland (Fuchs et al., 2020), England (Jacob et al., 2020), Italy (Panzeri et al., 2020) and France (Landry, Chartogne & Landry, 2020) adding to this topic: changes in sexuality due to the pandemic.²

All of these studies were conducted through online questionnaires and there were consistently more female than male respondents – 60-70% in all

² These studies are not aimed specifically at the youth, but a fair amount of their samples are young people (average ages are close to 25 years), so their findings may be relevant for the youth.

studies except for that of Fuchs et al., which was conducted at a clinic and selected only female participants who were contacted by email.

During the times of self-isolation, about four in ten of UK respondents engaged in sexual activity at least once a week, and men, younger people, alcohol drinkers, and people who had been in isolation for longer did so more often (Jacob et al., 2020). Also, women reported being less aroused, feeling less sexual pleasure, less sexual satisfaction and less sexual desire on average during lockdown compared to before lockdown (Fuchs et al., 2020; Panzeri et al., 2020). Fuchs et al. used a diagnostic questionnaire called Female Sexual Function Index (FSFI) that asks the participants to report the desire, arousal, lubrication, orgasms, satisfaction and pain they experienced in the last four weeks. Their participants answered this questionnaire twice: right at the beginning of the pandemic, before any lockdown measures had been implemented in Poland, and then again four weeks into lockdown. The FSFI gives a score to each respondent ranging from 2 to 32, and the larger the score, the better the sexual function of the respondent. Scores lower than 26 are considered to represent sexual dysfunction. Fuchs et al. found that the average score of the participants decreased from 30 to 25.8 from the first to the second time they answered the FSFI, with all areas of investigation showing lower scores. This means that from the four weeks previous to lockdown to four weeks into lockdown, Polish women felt less sexual desire, were less aroused, produced less lubrication, had less or worse orgasms, less sexual satisfaction and more pain related to sex, on average.

It is possible that this change in sexual function happened because of the effect of the lockdown on women's mood. Indeed, the way in which people experienced the lockdown (positively or negatively) affected their sexuality (Landry, Chartogne, & Landry, 2020). Stress and worry caused by the pandemic, together with not having a private space due to lockdown seemed related to the decrease in arousal, pleasure, satisfaction and desire (Panzeri et al., 2020).

Together, these studies show that time in isolation due to the pandemic has affected (young) women more than men in terms of their sexuality and that it has done so negatively.

8. NEW DIRECTIONS

Emerging literature regarding youth participation in the pandemic have begun to emerge. These new directions highlight the discrepancies between generations not only in perceptions of how the containment of the virus has been handled, but how differences in experience should influence the recovery approach of the pandemic.

8.1. YOUTH PERSPECTIVES & PARTICIPATION

We must not assume youth only take on a passive role in the COVID-19 pandemic, nor can we assume the ‘superspreader’ narrative of youth is all to be said of young people’s involvement in the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the United Nations Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (UN IANYD), ‘Young people are part of the solution, actively contributing to efforts to reduce the spread of the virus and mitigate the pandemic’s impact’ (April 2020). Young people are open and eager to contribute to their communities’ responses by initiating projects promoting European solidarity³, providing community support⁴, and launching digital campaigns advocating for a just and fair recovery⁵.

Young people are not only actively engaged in fighting the spread of the coronavirus and supporting other vulnerable groups through youth-led initiatives, they are appealing to decision-makers to change the narrative: ‘images of so-called ‘corona parties’ broken up by police and young people not adhering to social-distancing rule have been widespread since the start of the pandemic, increasingly creating an image of a young generation that is seemingly careless about vulnerable age groups in society’ (Brzozowski, 2020, para. 5). However, the reality is disjointed from the media imagery. Young people are often just as concerned with corona and as likely to adhere to social distancing measures than their older counterparts (Life with Corona Network, 2020).

8.2. YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON POLICING THE PANDEMIC

The containment of the coronavirus through social distancing measures and subsequent lockdowns brings to light young people’s perceptions regarding effective enforcement strategies of social distancing measures and lockdowns. According to ‘Leaders Unlocked: Policing the

³ The #seEUtomorrow is an initiative from Italy inspired to give voice to stories focused on a narrative of everyday solidarity and cohesion within the European Union (2020). While, the European Youth Forum has launched the #SeperatedbutUnited campaign in order for youth work organisations to share stories of adaptation and best practices in the COVID-19 pandemic response (European Youth Forum, 2020a).

⁴ One example of many, Coronahjälpen (Corona Help) in Sweden initially started as a way to help isolating people receive groceries and support, but has evolved into a national platform offering a wide variety of assistance including study groups and tutoring (UN Office of the Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth, 2020).

⁵ Social media campaigns such as #YouthLeadingChange, #BuildBackBetter, #JustRecovery, #NextGenerationEU, #RecoveryPlan are youth-led in order to convey to policymakers the need for a better recovery plan beyond simply returning to normal.

Pandemic: Exploring Young People's Experiences and Recommendations” (2020) report based on a youth co-created survey on 3,914 youths between 13 and 25 in England and Wales from May to June 2020, perceptions of effective and fair policing were mixed. This report coincided with emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement, therefore issues of police brutality and systematic racism become intertwined with the act of policing during the pandemic. Unfair treatment of young people, especially those of BAME backgrounds (Black, Asian, minority Ethnic) and young people in vulnerable situations, lead to perceptions of police overreaching their power and unnecessarily criminalizing youth were consistent problems. While crime has perhaps temporarily decreased, the overall feeling of being safer did not follow for young people who were further feeding into an already heightened sense of fear and anxiety in these uncertain times. Increased drug and alcohol use as a possible coping mechanism along with an increase in anti-social behaviours, racism, and hate crimes create an intensifying environment of fear and feelings of unsafety for youths in certain areas. Ultimately, Leaders Unlocked calls on law enforcement to change their narrative of villainized youths and recognize their unique vulnerability in pandemic. The report calls for a renewed focusing of police training to challenge biases, stereotypes, and develop greater empathy and compassion.

Additionally, the Leaders Unlocked report states policing the pandemic has been rife with misinformation, where ‘26% felt well informed about what the police were doing to ensure people follow COVID restrictions in their area [but] 43% said they did not know much or anything about what the police were doing to ensure people follow COVID restrictions’ (p. 9). The lack of proper information is a recurring theme throughout much of the pandemic research. According to the Center for Countering Digital Hate (CCDH), the COVID-19 pandemic has two fronts: one biological and one social. The ‘infodemic’ has caused the spread of misinformation, which seriously hinders the efforts to fight the spread of the virus (CCDH, 2020). Without clear, accessible information communicated to youth from police, many young people may be confused or unsure what behavior is allowed or is not allowed in public. An under-researched, but very important aspect to consider in the pandemic is youth’s interaction with the criminal justice system in the wake of social distancing measures. The European Forum for Restorative Justice, touched on how new restrictions for behaviour in public life can have long-lasting effects for young people (Berger, n.d.). Berger reports that in the Netherlands, children ‘receive smaller fines than adults for violating the [social distancing] rules.’ and ‘These will not lead to a criminal record.’ But for young people over the age of 18, ‘the fine for not complying with the rules

is 390 euro. This offence will be registered and therefore will create a criminal record.’, which ‘could entail difficulties when applying for jobs and internships’ (Berger, n.d., para. 4).

These two examples demonstrate the importance of considering the realities of young people in creating social distancing measures. There were virtually overnight transformations of rules in public life that limited their ability to interact with their peers and closed or limited access to socialisation areas. To then add the additional pressures of lacking clear information, criminalisation, and over-policing undoubtedly adds to stressors for young people in the coronavirus pandemic.

8.2.1. PANDEMIC RECOVERY FOR YOUTH

In light of the 2008 financial crisis, the possible economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic question the potential recovery plan policy-makers have in mind. Mascherini’s and Sándor’s (2020) shed light on the dangers of dismissing the disproportionate effect of the pandemic for young people. In their findings, young people are under greater threat of mental well-being issues and vulnerabilities in the labour market, but the authors highlight higher levels of trust of young people in the European union. This higher level of trust, ‘should not be wasted or betrayed. Both the EU and national governments should act to preserve this capital by putting in place measures to prevent the explosion of another youth unemployment crisis in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis’ (Mascherini and Sándor, 2020). While Mascherini and Sándor conclude at the moment that history is not repeating itself, they strongly stipulate decision-makers moving forward to carefully consider recovery with a youth lens.

Within the emerging literature on youth perspectives, researchers and young people are partnering together to explore what recovery with a young lens would entail. Bardardo’s ‘Devalued by Forces Beyond Your Control’ (Sewel, Harvey-Rolfe, & Stagg, 2020) report based on 113 interviews detailing the experiences in lockdown of youth supported by their organization summarizes young people’s commitment to a more just and inclusive future. In particular, within these interviews, ‘Young people wish decision makers would do more to understand both the existent complexity of their lives and the way in which lockdown has additionally contributed to this’ ((Sewel, Harvey-Rolfe, & Stagg, 2020, p. 33). Young people especially, have already taken it upon themselves to conceptualize outlooks of the post-pandemic world committed to building a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world.

The European Youth Forum represents over 100 youth organisations to empower young people to participate actively in society to improve their own

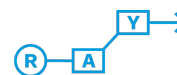
lives by representing and advocating their needs and interests as well as their organisations. Echoing these calls for greater social solidarity and understanding of the complex situation young people face, ‘The European Youth Blueprint to Recovery’ (2020) written by the European Youth Forum are policy recommendations for the post-COVID-19 world outlining three pillars of reconstruction:

- Social & economic inclusion - preventing the lockdown generation;
- Human rights, civic space and participation - maintaining and strengthening our democracies;
- Beyond recovery - sustainable alternatives to build back better (p.4)

The European Youth Forum is adamant in its mission to prevent the creation of a so-called ‘lockdown generation’ and avoiding the mistakes of the 2008 financial crisis with subsequent austerity measures. For each pillar, the blueprint suggests a 3-phase approach detailing emergency response, mid-term recovery, and long-term change in order to propose solutions for a more equitable and just recovery.

The pillar of social and economic inclusion focuses in the short term upon prioritizing solidarity and systems of support that help the most vulnerable with a rights-sensitive and sustainable solution. Mid-term recovery calls for greater investments in youth, supporting sustainable and fair youth employment rather than relying on flawed recovery plans established in the 2008 crisis, and making youth transitions easier focusing on quality. While long-term change is a commitment to social inclusion beyond simply employment, meaning removals of age-based qualification schemes for support and tackling the root causes of poverty.

The second pillar looks at the impacts of the pandemic on the quality of democracy in Europe, as ‘during this pandemic, while safety measures were essential to protect the population, we have witnessed several alarming measures affecting our civic space. Indeed, some governments have taken advantage of the public health crisis to implement emergency measures to put ‘democracy under quarantine’; and others silenced dissenting voices, and clamped down on the work of civil society organisations and young activists’ (p. 1). This pillar in particular highlights the ever-present need for youth voices in policy decision-making, more so now than ever. Young people and the youth sector need to once again be empowered to ‘build an enabling - physical and digital - environment for citizenship education and youth participation’ (p. 16). In order to deal with this matter in the emergency response level calls for involving young people and youth organisations as



co-creators of emergency response and sector investment policies. In the mid-range, implementing support for rights-based active citizenship education including capacity building of critical thinking and media literacy skills. While finally, the long-term change would include recognising youth as rights holders and strengthening youth participation.

The final pillar addresses vulnerability, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic has been seen as an exacerbator of the inequalities in society. Much of the rhetoric from policy makers appears to emphasise returning back to normal. However, according to the European Youth Forum the pandemic has revealed the unsustainability and inequality of the current economic system. Therefore, the Blueprint underlines that ‘instead of rebuilding a broken system, we must consider the policies required to build back better so that our economy delivers social and ecological wellbeing’ (p. 20). Economic sustainability is tied into ecological sustainability in this final pillar. Emergency responses should be mindful of supporting the most vulnerable, and focusing economic policies and bailouts on socially and environmentally sustainable business and attaching when necessary environmental conditions. Mid-term recovery calls for refocusing our understanding of economic growth toward the implementation of well-being indices rather than GDP as a measure of economic prosperity. Finally, long-term change can be achieved with proper investment in sustainable development and stronger, reformed welfare systems.

9. CONCLUSION

The first literature snapshot published last July illustrated only a small part of greater things to come, noting certain research focuses were lacking. After nearly a year into the pandemic and two waves of lockdown in many countries, we are beginning to see more of these greater things in research. The briefly mentioned youth-led initiatives deal with in this literature snapshot and explored in another thematic literature snapshot highlight the growing diversity of localities. While concerns for youth’s mental well-being, employment, and education are still dominant, what can now be seen is a careful and deepened look at what it means to be a young person currently. Emerging reports are beginning to understand the full extent of the digital divide as much of our daily lives turns to online mediums. The discussion of delayed emancipation due to the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic can already be a small window into what the future repercussions of the pandemic will be. We are beginning to see the difficult situation of stalled transitions that will hopefully not become permanent waiting rooms.

Furthermore, researchers are now asking not just how youth are experiencing the pandemic, but what is their perspective in effectiveness of managing the pandemic. Research within the context of young people's lives in the coronavirus pandemic is beginning to shed light on the intricate role inequality plays for young people for marginalized and vulnerable groups. The creation of new vaccines added to the fight against COVID-19 brings about new directions for recovery from the perspective of young people. In the research we have seen the consistent higher levels of trust youth have for the European Union. It is the hope of young people and youth organisations that policy recommendations illuminate a new path of recovery based on social inclusion, intergenerational solidarity, and sustainability.

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