

COVID-19 marginalising women, youth, threatening social cohesion



Inter-generational and gender inequalities have been dramatically exacerbated by the devastating impact of COVID-19 across the EU, picking apart a decade of progress in just six months. New results for young people show that despite improvements in some indicators between April and July, the experience of young people during the COVID-19 pandemic has been characterised by rising unemployment and plummeting well-being, with 18-34 year olds most likely to feel downhearted and depressed and just 56% of people in this age group feeling positively about themselves. At the same time the findings reveal women are facing greater job loss as a result of the pandemic, but also major and disproportionate declines in work-life balance for those who manage to stay in employment. In many social and economic indicators young women have been the group most adversely affected by COVID-19.

These are the most recent results from Eurofound's unique **Living, working and COVID-19** survey which tracks the experiences of citizens in its April and July editions. The report details the social, economic, labour market, and quality of life findings of **87,477 respondents** across the EU in **the only survey that provides a trend perspective** of the situation during the crisis. While it shows a relative improvement in the situation of people in many parts of Europe with regards to working hours and job security between April and July, it also reveals an alarming cumulative social and economic impact of the pandemic on people's lives that undermines social cohesion in Europe.

Young people are shown to be the age group most marginalised by confinement measures and restrictions. They report being most likely to lose their jobs, most likely to be at risk of depression, and most likely to feel excluded from society – with more than three out of 10 young adults reporting social exclusion in Hungary, Sweden and Bulgaria. Young adults were also less likely to feel positive about themselves than older age groups. These social and well-being impacts were exacerbated by disproportionate job loss and a more precarious labour market situation. Young women were the group most likely to report job loss, with 11% losing their jobs as a result of the pandemic (compared

to 9% of young men and 8% of total respondents). These indicators risk defining the lockdown generation for years to come.

Overall, women were more likely to lose their jobs than men, and those that were still in employment reported major work-life stressors, with increases in some indicators such as feeling too tired to do domestic work between the April and July surveys. Women with children under 12 reported the greatest levels of work-life stress, with 38% worrying about their job when not working, 36% reporting being too tired to do domestic work, and 35% saying that their job prevents them giving necessary time to their families. COVID-19 moved employment into the home for millions of people across Europe, leading to a breakdown of work-life balance for many and an exacerbation of already existing domestic inequalities.

Labour market findings, particularly those in relation to employment, hours worked, and job security also reveal broader implications for socio-economic convergence in Europe. Southern and eastern Member States have been much harder hit by job loss: 16% of respondents in Spain reported losing their jobs since the onset of the pandemic, and more than one in ten reported being in this situation in Cyprus, Greece, Hungary, Latvia and Bulgaria. In comparison, just 3% reported losing their jobs in Sweden. Respondents in southern and eastern Member States also reported a much higher probability of losing their job in the next three months, although this declined between the April and July waves of the survey.

Speaking about the final results of the research, Juan Menéndez-Valdés, Eurofound Director said ‘The cumulative social and economic impacts of COVID-19 have been devastating for people across Europe, most notably for women and young people. However, this crisis is not beyond our control. Eurofound research shows that interventions such as financial support measures, where they have been taken, have proved effective in reducing financial hardship. Targeted, ambitious, adequately financed and cooperative policies that balance economic and health priorities must form the basis of Europe’s recovery and prevent long-term ramifications of this pandemic.’

More information:

- Full report: [Living, working and COVID-19](#)
- Data: [Living, working and COVID-19](#)