

# **ILO: More than one in six young people out of work due to COVID-19**

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**The ILO's latest analysis of the labour market impact of COVID-19 exposes the devastating and disproportionate effect on young workers, and analyses measures being taken to create a safe return to work environment.**

**GENEVA (ILO News)** – More than one in six young people have stopped working since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic while those who remain employed have seen their working hours cut by 23 per cent, says the International Labour Organization (ILO).

According to the ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. 4th edition, youth are being disproportionately affected by the pandemic, and the substantial and rapid increase in youth unemployment seen since February is affecting young women more than young men.

The pandemic is inflicting a triple shock on young people. Not only is it destroying their employment, but it is also disrupting education and training, and placing major obstacles in the way of those seeking to enter the labour market or to move between jobs.

At 13.6 per cent, the youth unemployment rate in 2019 was already higher than for any other group. There were around 267 million young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) worldwide. Those 15-24 year olds who were employed were also more likely to be in forms of work that leave them vulnerable, such as low paid occupations, informal sector work, or as migrant workers.

“The COVID-19 economic crisis is hitting young people – especially women – harder and faster than any other group. If we do not take significant and immediate action to improve their situation, the legacy of the virus could be with us for decades. If their talent and energy is side-lined by a lack of opportunity or skills it will damage all our futures and make it much more difficult to re-build a better, post-COVID economy,” said ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder.

The Monitor calls for urgent, large-scale and targeted policy responses to support youth, including broad-based employment/training guarantee programmes in developed countries, and employment-intensive programmes and guarantees in low- and middle-income economies.

## **Testing and tracing pays off**

The 4th edition of the Monitor also looks at measures to create a safe environment for returning to work. It says that rigorous testing and tracing (TT) of COVID-19 infections, “is strongly related to lower labour market disruption... [And] substantially smaller social disruptions than confinement and lockdown measures.”

In countries with strong testing and tracing, the average fall in working hours is reduced by as much as 50 per cent. There are three reasons for this: TT reduces reliance on strict confinement measures; promotes the public confidence and so encourages consumption and supports employment; and helps minimize operational disruption at the workplace.

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In addition, testing and tracing can itself create new jobs, even if temporary, which can be targeted towards youth and other priority groups.

The Monitor highlights the importance of managing data privacy concerns. Cost is also a factor, but the benefit-to-cost ratio of TT is “highly favourable”.

“Creating an employment-rich recovery that also promotes equity and sustainability means getting people and enterprises working again as soon as possible, in safe conditions,” said Ryder. “Testing and tracing can be an important part of the policy package if we are to fight fear, reduce risk and get our economies and societies moving again quickly.”

### **Loss of working hours**

The Monitor also updates the estimate for the decline in working hours in the first and second quarters of 2020, compared with the fourth quarter of 2019. An estimated 4.8 per cent of working hours were lost during Q1 2020 (equivalent to approximately 135 million full-time jobs, assuming a 48-hour working week). This represents a slight upward revision of around 7 million jobs since the third edition of the Monitor. The estimated number of jobs lost in Q2 remain unchanged at 305 million.

From a regional perspective, the Americas (13.1 per cent), and Europe and Central Asia (12.9 per cent) present the largest losses in hours worked in Q2.

The Monitor reiterates its call for immediate and urgent measures to support workers and enterprises along the ILO’s four-pillar strategy: stimulating the economy and employment; supporting enterprises, jobs and incomes; protecting workers in the workplace; relying on social dialogue for solutions.