

Editorial

We are living in uncertain times. The COVID-19 pandemic is threatening our economies, our jobs, our businesses, but most importantly the health and well-being of millions. It is disrupting nearly all aspects of our everyday lives. However, people of different ages are experiencing its impacts in different ways.

When the pandemic hit, young people had yet to recover from the consequences of the 2007-2008 global financial crisis. Indeed, youth shouldered much of the long-term economic and social consequences of that crisis: the share of youth not in employment, education or training (NEET) in OECD countries rose to 18% and the number of unemployed young people increased by 20% between 2007 and 2014, leaving one in eight 18-25 year-olds in poverty.¹

Today, young people across OECD countries enjoy unprecedented access to information, education and technology, which offers new opportunities to work, learn and interact across borders. Yet, more than a decade after the global financial crisis, young women and men experience high levels of economic uncertainty. On average across OECD countries, today's youth have less income at their disposal than the previous young generation and they are 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed than the middle-aged.² Economic uncertainties and societal challenges are motivating young people to raise their voices, as demonstrated by the youth-led demonstrations on climate change. The COVID-19 pandemic, with its uncertain prospects for those entering the job market, has increased anxiety among young people about their aspirations and outlook. Consequently, less than half of young people (45%) across OECD countries have expressed trust in their government.³

We must not allow the COVID-19 crisis to result in a “Generation Lockdown.” Public governance – our laws, policies, public institutions, and the way we make decisions and allocate public resources – will be crucial to these efforts.

The OECD report on “*Governance for Youth, Trust and Intergenerational Justice: Fit for all Generations?*” could not have come at a more timely moment. It shows what governments can do to reinforce young people's trust, unlock their potential to better contribute to their societies and economies, and ensure the well-being of current and future generations.

Furthermore, it demonstrates why acting now is essential. When youth succeed in becoming independent, societies and economies can harness their productive potential. On the other hand, when they struggle to become autonomous, society bears the costs of compounding inequalities over their lifetime. Countries with an inclusive, well resourced, and accountable youth policy tend to see higher interest among young people in politics. When young people are systematically engaged in policymaking, they are more likely to express satisfaction with policy outcomes. Moreover, in countries with lower levels of inequality among different age cohorts, life satisfaction tends to be higher.

The report also provides comparative evidence from 42 countries and the European Union on “how to get it right” for all generations across the core functions of government: from rulemaking, to public budgeting and decision-making. Its recommendations provide a solid foundation for developing a forward-looking OECD agenda on youth empowerment and intergenerational justice.

To reach its conclusions, the report draws on OECD's extensive research and experience through its Public Governance and Regulatory Policy Committees. It complements and delivers on the OECD flagship initiatives on Inclusive Growth, Future of Work, Going Digital as well as the OECD Action Plan for Youth. It also holds valuable insights to inform the 2020 G20 agenda on youth empowerment and the 2020 OECD Ministerial Council Meeting, both of which recognise the importance of empowering youth and promoting intergenerational justice for a strong, resilient, green and inclusive recovery from COVID-19.

As highlighted by Minister Giffey and Commissioner Gabriel in the preface, we need to benefit from the valuable evidence, benchmarks and good practices provided in the report to chart a course for action. Investing in younger generations must remain at the core of our efforts and we must join forces for tangible impact on the ground.

The pandemic is a call to renew our commitment to strengthen social cohesion and resilience for today's young and future generations. The OECD stands ready to advance the global debate on youth empowerment and intergenerational justice, and to fully support countries in taking this crucial agenda forward.

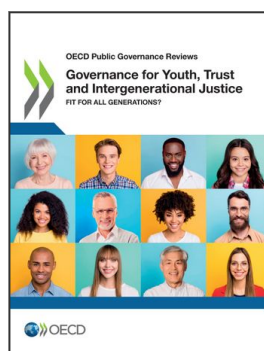


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¹ Data is compared between 2007 and 2014. OECD calculations based on OECD Short-Term Labour Market Statistics (database). OECD calculations based on OECD Income Distribution (database). NEET rates refer to those aged 15-24 while poverty rates refer to those aged 18-25. OECD (2020), "Youth-and-COVID-19-Response-Recovery-and-Resilience", OECD Publishing, Paris, https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=134_134356-ud5kox3g26&title=Youth-and-COVID-19-Response-Recovery-and-Resilience.

² OECD calculations based on OECD *Labor Force Statistics* (database), for 2018.

³ OECD calculations based on Gallup World Poll Database (2019 or latest year available).



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