

THE STATE OF YOUTH WELL-BEING IN SOUTH AFRICA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

July 2020

This fact sheet presents some of the key findings of a survey of South Africa's youth that was conducted between 29 April and 21 May 2020 during the COVID-19 lockdown. A total of 13 282 young people aged 18 to 35 from all provinces participated.

The survey was undertaken by the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit at the University of Cape Town and UNICEF South Africa via UNICEF's [UReport](#), a social media platform for youth. The poll was in partnership with the Centre for Social Development in Africa, University of Johannesburg; the Children's Radio Foundation; Youth Capital; and Naspers Labs.

This fact sheet presents the preliminary findings of the survey through descriptive data on respondents' experiences and needs during and beyond the lockdown. Further analysis is underway to provide a more in-depth understanding of the trends noted in this summary.

Please note that the findings reported here relate only to the sample of young people who responded to the survey. Further work will be undertaken to establish the level of representativity to the overall youth population.

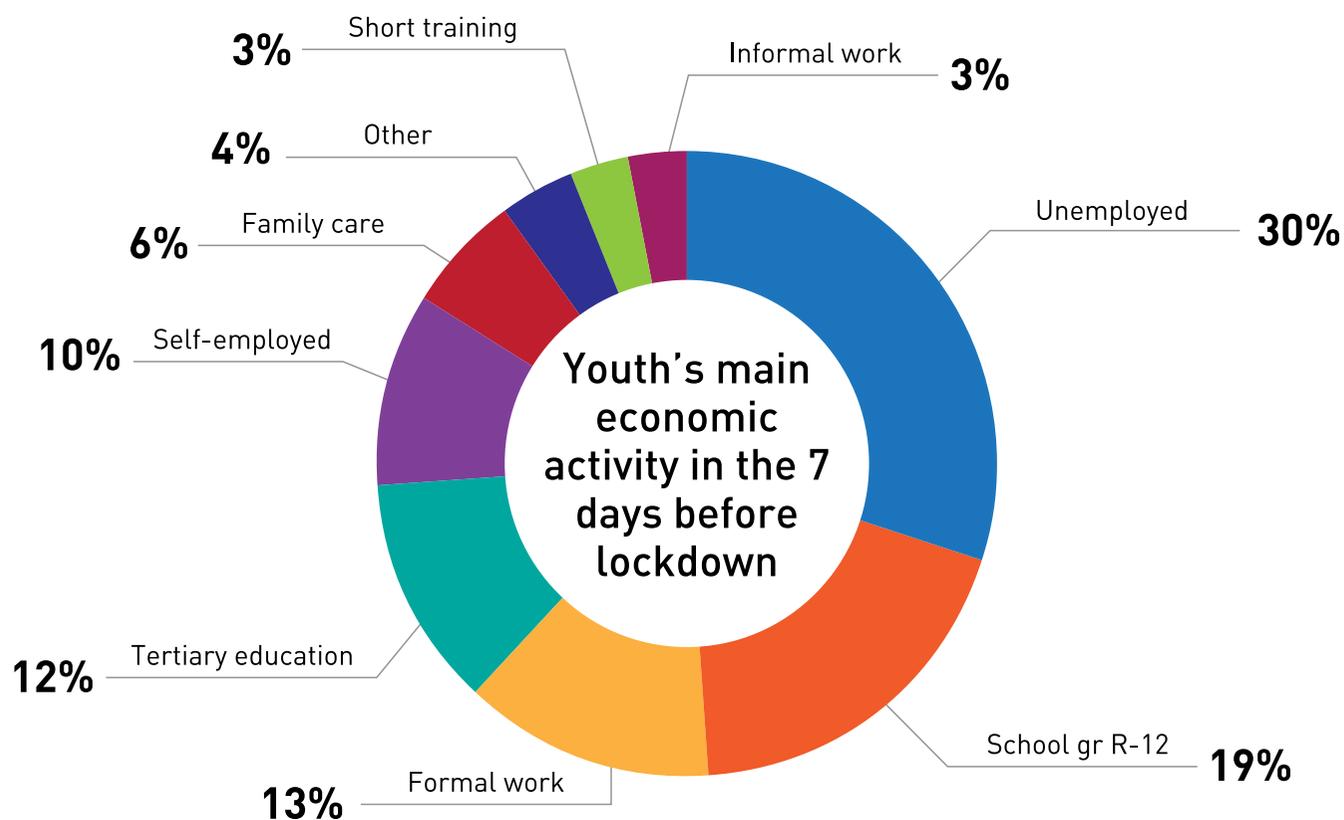
EMERGING KEY FINDINGS

The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown have led to multiple and abrupt shocks in young people's lives: education came to a halt when schools and universities were closed, and the closure of most businesses led to the loss of income for those who were employed. As a result, young people are experiencing increased levels of insecurity, yet in a context where the majority were already vulnerable and disproportionately affected by unemployment and poverty. The survey data illustrate that:

- ▶ Large numbers of young people who participated in the survey and who were employed before lockdown worked in precarious, part-time and low-wage jobs.
- ▶ Of those respondents who were employed before the lockdown, the largest proportions also worked in sectors hard hit by coronavirus infections and lockdown closures.
- ▶ The majority of the employed participants expected not to have a job after lockdown, or didn't know if they still would be working.
- ▶ Similar insecurities were expressed by most of those who were self-employed before lockdown.
- ▶ The abrupt and severe shocks brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic were reflected in respondents' request for immediate food and income support.
- ▶ Survey participants experienced low levels of emotional wellbeing during the lockdown.
- ▶ Requests for support from the government and communities after lockdown pointed to the need for access to information – on learning and job opportunities, as well as on financial support.

MAIN ACTIVITY BEFORE LOCKDOWN

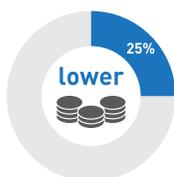
- Almost one in three of the participating youth was still enrolled in some form of education by either attending school (19%) or a tertiary education institute (12%).
- Close to one in three respondents (30%) was unemployed before the lockdown.
- Of the 26% who were working, most were in formal work (50%), while 38% were self-employed and 12% in informal work.
- The top three sectors in which respondents were employed were retail and trade (14%), mining (10%), and construction (9%). These sectors were hit hard by coronavirus closures and infections.
- Most of the employed youth were already vulnerable before lockdown: 45% were in the bottom 40% of wage earners; 44% were in part-time contracts; and their contract duration was limited (32%), 18% (unspecified) or not known (11%).



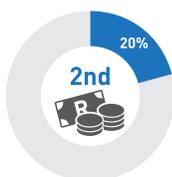
WELLBEING DURING LOCKDOWN

The situation of employed youth respondents during lockdown

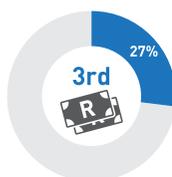
- The majority (58%) of respondents were living, during lockdown, in households where only one or no adult was earning an income.
- The abrupt and large income shock to young people who already were in vulnerable positions was evident from the 43% of employed respondents who were not paid during lockdown, while another 26% were not receiving their full pay.
- The financial shocks caused by the lockdown were also reflected in respondents' top three requests for immediate interventions: family food parcels (44%), basic income grant (33%) and information on income support (28%).
- Job loss and insecurity were a concern to those who were employed before lockdown: 42% didn't know if they would still have a job after lockdown while 24% said they would not; 55% of self-employed respondents didn't think their business would survive, and another 22% didn't know if their businesses would continue.



Avg. R406/month



Avg. R1,668/month



Avg. R3,458/month



32% limited contract period



29% contract period unclear



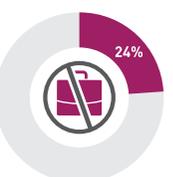
43% not paid during lockdown



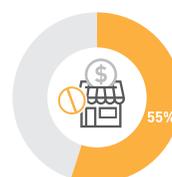
26% not paid in full during lockdown



42% were unclear if still employed



24% no longer employed

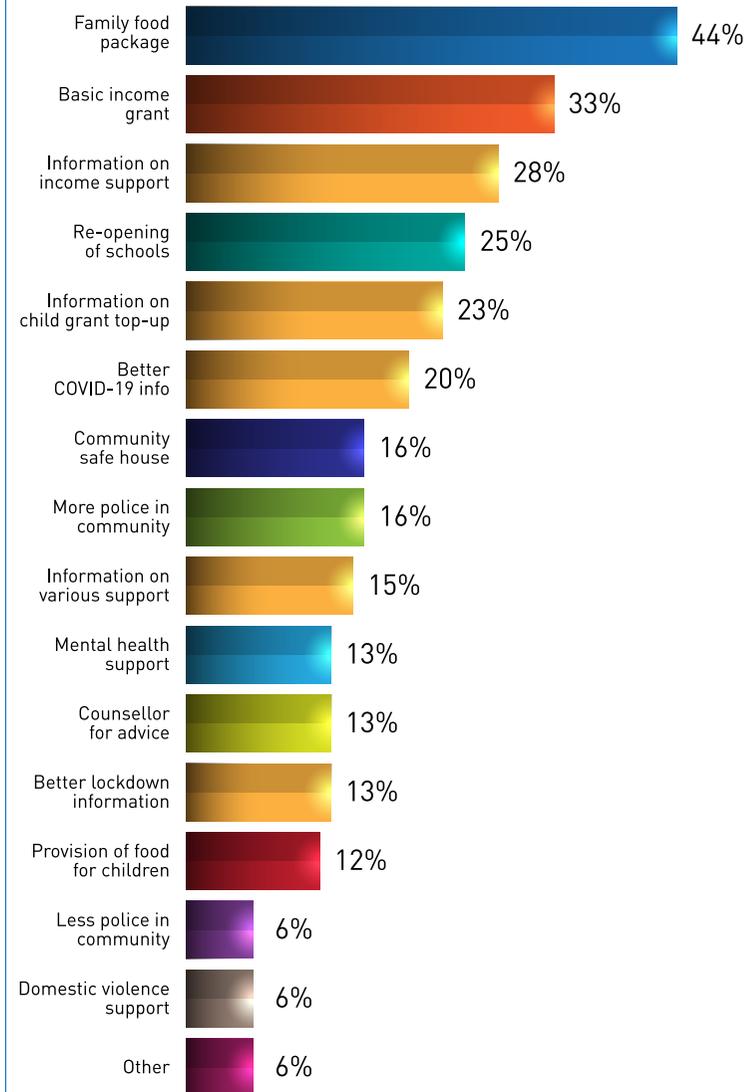


55% said own business will not survive



22% not sure if own business will survive

Immediate interventions needed by youth from government during lockdown



Youth emotional well-being over a prolonged period (5 – 7 days) during the pandemic

- The youth who participated in the survey reported experiencing negative emotions for a prolonged period (5 – 7 days), while 49% felt happy only for a short period of time (less than a day).
- Despite the difficulties encountered, 33% indicated that they remained hopeful.



44%
Difficult to
get going



35%
Felt
bothered



35%
Felt
lonely



33%
Felt
hopeful



32%
Felt
fearful



28%
Felt
restless



26%
Felt
depressed



23%
Mind not
focused



23%
Everything
is an effort



18%
Felt
happy

Access to different items during lockdown

- It is important to understand how interventions can best reach and support young people. While respondents indicated that they had a high level of access to broadcast media, they had low access to devices and connectivity needed for studying, online training or remote working.



54%
Television



41%
Smartphone



38%
Radio



24%
Normal cell



17%
Data bundle



11%
Study area



11%
Laptop



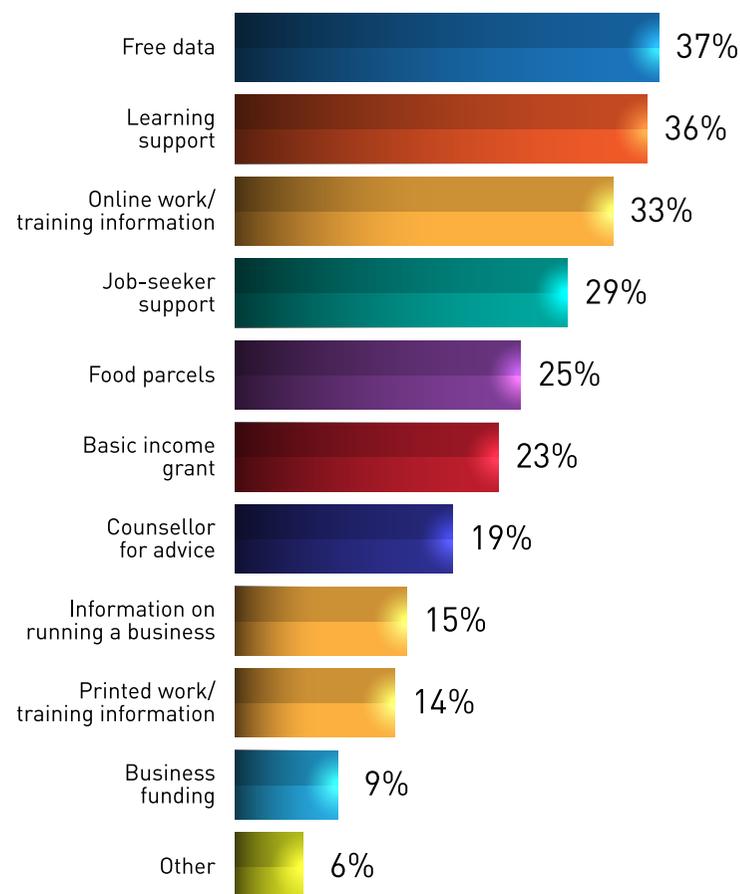
11%
Internet

WELLBEING AND SUPPORT AFTER LOCKDOWN

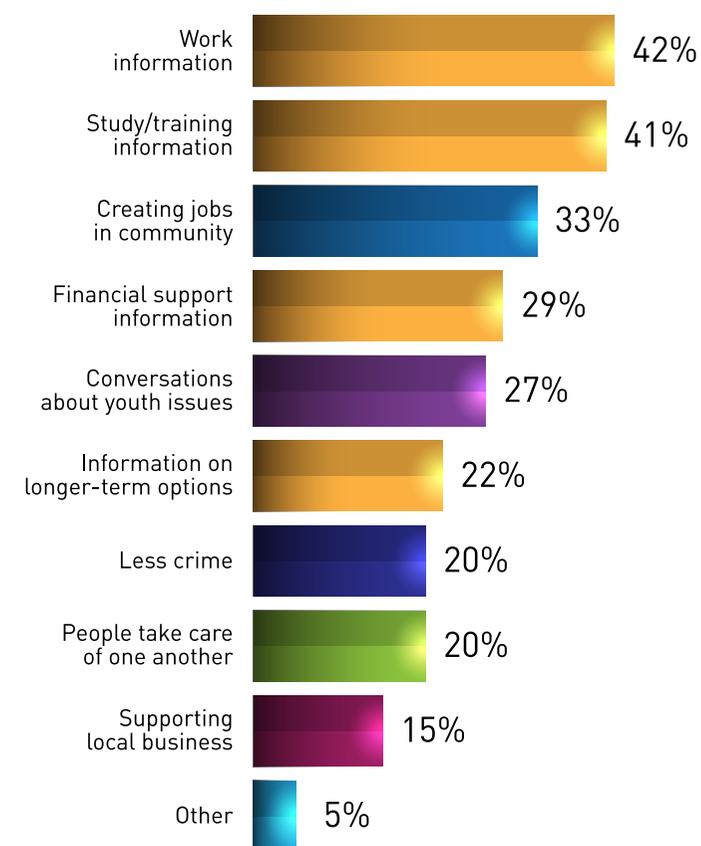
Given the impact of COVID-19 and the lockdown on young people's livelihoods, it was not surprising to find that their requests for support from government and communities reflected the wish to get themselves back on to a path of learning and/or work.

- Survey participants' top three requested types of post-lockdown support from the government reflected the need for a broad range of learning, training or jobseeker support: free data (37%); learning support (36%); and online work or training information (33%).
- The most preferred support from their families after the lockdown were financial support (51%); allow them time to "figure out [their] life" (41%), study support (39%) and learning opportunities (34%).
- Several of the types of support that these young people requested from their communities after lockdown related to respondents' need for different types of information: on work (42%), on studying or training (41%), on financial support (29%), on their longer-term options (22%).
- Young people clearly indicated their wish to access various types of information (indicated by the yellow bars in the different graphs) to help them move their lives forward. It is imperative to think about the best ways and formats to provide information to young people and to consider the continuing barrier of high data costs in South Africa.

Support needed by youth from the government after lockdown



Support needed by youth from the community after lockdown



ABOUT THE YOUTH WHO COMPLETED THE SURVEY

- The majority of survey respondents were in the age group 20 – 24 years, male, and black.
- Most participants had a matric or equivalent educational qualification, or grade 10 or 11.
- Most participants were from urban formal or rural areas.
- While young people from all provinces participated, the highest numbers were from the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, Gauteng and the Western Cape.

Demographics of youth (aged 18 – 35 years) who responded to the survey

	INDICATOR	TOTAL NUMBERS	PERCENT
AGE GROUP	18 – 19	3 893	29.3
	20 – 24	6 888	51.9
	25 – 29	1 686	12.7
	30 – 35	815	6.1
	Total	13 282	100
GENDER	Female	4 548	36.0
	Male	8 089	64.0
	Total	12 637	100
RACE	Black	11 042	89.7
	Coloured	768	6.2
	Indian/Asian	76	0.6
	White	424	3.4
	Total	12 310	100
LANGUAGE	Afrikaans	477	3.9
	English	2 031	16.6
	SePedi	1 054	8.6
	Sotho	1 095	8.9
	Tswana	1 105	9.0
	Xhosa	2 960	24.1
	Zulu	2 719	22.1
	Other specify	822	6.7
	Total	12 263	100

	INDICATOR	TOTAL NUMBERS	PERCENT
EDUCATION LEVEL	Less than grade 9	773	6.4
	Grade 9	1 255	10.4
	Grade 10/11	3 906	32.3
	Matric equivalent	4 311	35.6
	Post-matric	1 045	8.6
	Other specify	814	6.7
	Total	12 104	100
GEO AREA	Rural	4 351	36.9
	Urban formal	4 617	39.2
	Urban informal	2 450	20.8
	Other specify	375	3.2
	Total	11 793	100
PROVINCE	Eastern Cape	2 323	18.8
	Free State	861	7.0
	Gauteng	1 958	15.8
	KwaZulu-Natal	2 122	17.1
	Limpopo	1 299	10.5
	Mpumalanga	915	7.4
	Northern Cape	320	2.6
	North West	967	7.8
	Western Cape	1 626	13.1
	Total	12 391	100

For more information, contact:

A/Prof Ariane De Lannoy (lead researcher) Ariane.Delannoy@uct.ac.za; Dr Gibson Mudiriza (data queries) Gibson.Mudiriza@gmail.com
 Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town, www.saldru.uct.ac.za