

education



wellbeing

LOCKDOWN
BUT DON'T LOCK
YOUR HEART
LOUIS THE BREAKFAST CLUB

friendship



engaging
youth 2021

*what research is
telling us about
youth audiences*

hope

work

Introduction

Whilst early insights of the impact of the pandemic pointed to the wellbeing challenges young people faced and the growing socioeconomic divide among UK's youth, research over the past year gives us a more detailed view of what growing up under the curve in the UK has looked like and just what kind of shadow it casts on future prospects.

Within this report there are, as ever, stark realities in the challenges UK's youth face, not least its complex relationship with those in power, the media and how they view themselves and their chances in life. These issues impact young people unequally.

Young people continue to use their voice for change, shaping their ecosystems as well as wider society. In 2021 this comes with an air of realism. A reality of older generations not always doing things at the pace and foresight to benefit young people and after two years of the pandemic, a clarity of what they have faced and will continue to face in future.

There continue to be examples of ingenuity, adaptability and optimism among young people, despite how exponentially many have been impacted by the pandemic. But this shouldn't mask the bigger move to protect, support and enable young people.

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Thank you

To the breadth of charities, organisations and individuals who continue to share research and data on young people. Everything is referenced throughout as well as a hit list and links of where to find the full reports at the end.

Also a massive thank you to everyone who has supported the **Hear It Podcast** over the past year, an opportunity to speak to a breadth of voices on the work, research and insights on young people in a more detailed way, which I know for those working to better engage these audiences, your insights have been hugely informative.

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Work & Future View

Young people in the UK have been the hardest hit when it comes to employment, their future prospects and the ongoing recovery of the economy. Put short, the past two years have been tough but the future view looks tougher, impacting young people disproportionately based on race and socioeconomic factors.

As the competition for jobs continues to rise, for young people of colour and those with a disability, it feels even more competitive¹. Whilst the so-called 'side-hustle' and entrepreneurship more broadly is glamorised across social media, it's young people who have experienced discrimination of some kind that are more likely to opt for entrepreneurship or additional work². We've seen an uplift in young people staying in higher education, something we saw after the 2008 financial crash.

Data does highlight the disparities of youth unemployment based on race however. Before COVID, young Black people were being impacted to a greater extent by unemployment than young White people, but by the end of 2020, the gap was more significant³.

Young people leaving full time education during a recession find it harder to find work and this scarring effect can last several years. It's also higher than youth unemployment rates more broadly⁴.

Those in work have also had a far different employment experience to many other graduates, with many missing out on skill development, learning opportunities and practical experiences work offers, with many reporting a lack of confidence⁵.



Unemployment rates aren't telling the full extent of youth unemployment in the UK right now.



Useful Stats

- Young people were the first to be furloughed. Almost a third of 18-24s in May 2020 compared to less than 15% of 34-44s (Resolution Foundation: Uneven Steps, April 2021)
- Young people saw more pay cuts, nearly two-thirds of the total fall in payroll between Feb 2020 -Feb 2021 (Resolution Foundation: Uneven Steps, April 2021)
- A quarter say the pandemic has destroyed their career hopes (Prince's Trust Tesco Youth Index 2021)
- 60% feel getting a job now feels impossible because of so much competition (Prince's Trust Tesco Youth Index 2021)
- Young people who identify as Black Caribbean are more likely to have been furloughed than other groups and those who identify as Black Caribbean or Asian Pakistani are more likely to have had their hours cut compared to other groups (YE203 Clearview Research: Employment and Prospects for Young People in England post Covid.)
- 55% say they're not confident about working from home (YE203 Clearview Research: Employment and Prospects for Young People in England post Covid.)
- Young people account for 57% of the fall in employment over the past year: (Resolution Foundation: Uneven Steps, April 2021)
- 1 in 4 economically active Black 16-24s (25%) were unemployed compared to 1 in 10 White (10%) (Resolution Foundation: Uneven Steps, April 2021)



- 6-17s who were employed (not in full time education) fell by 1.8% from Nov 2020-Jan 2021, but the proportion in full time education rose by 3.6% (Resolution Foundation: Uneven Steps, April 2021)
- Graduate men had a harder time with unemployment than graduate women, 11.3% vs 8.1% (Resolution Foundation: Uneven Steps, April 2021)

1 IN 4
ECONOMICALLY ACTIVE
BLACK 16-24S (25%)
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White (10%)



1: YE203 Clearview Research: Employment and Prospects for Young People in England post Covid
 2: YE203 Clearview Research: Employment and Prospects for Young People in England post Covid
 3: Resolution Foundation: Uneven Steps, April 2021
 4: Resolution Foundation: Uneven Steps, April 2021
 5: Microsoft Work Trend Index 2021

Education

There's a wealth of content about the impact of the pandemic on children and young people's education over the past year. However, it's how differently these affects are felt according to factors such as race and socioeconomics that are perhaps the most significant, not least in understanding the depth and breadth of support needed to address the widening gaps in education and associated impacts on health and wellbeing.

The issue of race in education continues to challenge everything from the majority white teacher workforce¹, exclusions² and this past year the impact of bias in teacher assessed grades³.

The issue of race in education continues to challenge everything

Other reports highlight how isolated LGBTQ+ young people have felt during the pandemic⁴, continue to experience a lack of positive messaging and support at school and for young trans people this often leads them to leaving education altogether⁵.

Young people with a disability are less likely to return to education or training following the pandemic⁶ and this gives a picture of marginalised young people who are feeling more isolated and excluded from society both now and in the future.

The gap in attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers stopped closing in 2020 and had re-emerged at Primary school for the first time since 2007. Those most disadvantaged experience the biggest gaps in learning attainment and it is expected that these gaps will continue to widen over 2021-22, dividing young people even further in terms of education, prospects and longer-term social mobility.

Useful Stats

- Those not in full-time education but have an undergraduate degree are two-times more likely to have a job than those who haven't
(YE203 Clearview Research Employment and Prospects for young people in England post Covid.)
- 14% say they'll continue/return to education due to COVID
(YE203 Clearview Research Employment and Prospects for young people in England post Covid.)
- Black Caribbean students are 3.5 times as likely to be excluded from school than other students at primary, secondary and SEND schools Temporary Exclusions, Education, Skills & Training.
(Temporary Exclusions, Education, Skills & Training, UK Gov. Feb 2021.)

Young people with a disability are

3 times

more likely **NOT TO RETURN TO EDUCATION OR TRAINING POST COVID-19**



- Black Caribbean girls were permanently excluded from school at a rate double that of White British Girls.
(Agenda, September 2021)
- 92% of teachers in the UK are white.
(Runnymede Trust 2020)
- Young people with a disability are three-times more likely not to return to education or training post COVID-19
(YE203 Clearview Research Employment and Prospects for young people in England post Covid.)
- Being placed in lower sets has a bigger impact on boys self esteem than girls, aged 14
(Young People's Mental & Emotional Health, Education Policy Institute and the Prince's Trust Jan 2021)
- Half LGBTQ+ young people say they've received no positive messaging about being LGBTQ+ at school
(Just Like Us February 2021), 27% of trans young people left education as a result of homophobia, biphobia or transphobia
(Addressing Inclusion, LGBT Youth Scotland, 2020)

27% of trans young people left education as a result of **HOMOPHOBIA, BIPHOBIA or TRANSPHOBIA**



1: Race and Racism in English Secondary Schools, 2020
2: Agenda, the alliance for women and girls at risk. Data gained through FOI to Department for Education, September 2021. Also Temporary Exclusions, Education, Skills & Training, UK Gov. Feb 2021.
3: Summer 2021 student-level equalities analysis- GCSE and A level, Ofqual
4: Just Like Us, February 2021
5: YE203 Clearview Research Employment and Prospects for young people in England post Covid.
6: YE203 Clearview Research Employment and Prospects for young people in England post Covid.
7: Education Policy Institute Annual report 2020

03 Relationships and Friends



Lockdown has led to a number of shifts in how young people have been able to develop their relationships, explore their sexuality and identity as well as in the ways in which they have maintained and developed friendships.

Bullying has increased dramatically over the past year with lives shifting online amplifying the issues experienced by young people on social media as well as increased feelings of loneliness¹. We've also seen this shift to online as a way to explore as well as seek out ways to make money, with online harms becoming a growing threat².

The impact of the lockdown on income and prospects on young people, anxiety over finances and the inability to see people outside their household, has also meant they have been more likely to experience a relationship breakdown during the pandemic³. However, almost half of young adults within a relationship said it had been better than usual over the past year⁴.

In light of growing pressure for online platforms to become safer for young people, not least when it comes to exposure to pornography, so too have young people expressed that their education when it comes to sex and relationships, is lacking for the reality they experience⁵.

When it comes to friendship, combined with patterns of decreasing happiness with life more broadly during the pandemic so too has happiness dropped for young people with their friendships⁶. Friendships have been particularly important during the pandemic, with some data indicating closer ties to friends as a result⁷.

More than 1 in 5 15-24s  used dating apps prior to the **Spring 2020** lockdown, **Tinder** being most popular.

1: Ditch the Label Annual Report, 2020
 2: Voicebox: Onlyfans and young people. Empowerment or Exploitation? Apr 2021
 3: UCL Covid-19 Social Study
 4: UCL Covid-19 Social Study
 5: Sex and Relationships among students, Higher Education Policy Institute, 2021
 6: Good Childhood Report, Children's Society, 2020
 7: Snapchat Friendship Report 2020

Useful Stats

- Bullying has increased 25% over the past year (Ditch the Label Annual Report, 2020)
- A quarter said that they feel lonely all of the time (Ditch the Label Annual Report, 2020)
- Two-thirds said they've felt lonely since the pandemic started (66%), 8% higher than pre-COVID-19 (Snapchat Friendship Report 2020)
- 88% of UK respondents say they have lost touch with a friend over the past year and would like to reconnect (Snapchat Friendship Report 2020)
- More than 1 in 5 15-24s used dating apps prior to the Spring 2020 lockdown, Tinder being most popular. (Ofcom: A Nation's Online Migration 2021)
- 18-29-year-olds were more likely to report a relationship breakdown (35%) compared to adults aged 60 and over (12%) (UCL Covid-19 Social Study)
- Gen Z and Millennial singles (33% 18-24 and 31% 25-34) are accessing self-help tools more coming out of the pandemic (The Way We Are Now. Relate 2021)
- Undergraduate students enter higher education with a range of prior experiences: 43% 'had never had sex with anyone', one-quarter (25%) had not 'intimately kissed anyone' and 18% were 'in along-distance relationship' (Sex and Relationships among students, Higher Education Policy Institute, 2021)
- 58% of new students say making friends was more important than finding sexual partners (Sex and Relationships among students, Higher Education Policy Institute, 2021)



Bullying has increased dramatically over the past year with lives shifting online

04 Wellbeing

Throughout the pandemic, mental health issues among young people have risen¹ alongside growing physical health issues². The pandemic has broadened the effects and sharpened focus on the systems around young people in the UK; from funding cuts to youth services, rise of online use and its safety, through to accessibility of sport and health messaging.

Wellbeing tends to decline from childhood through to adolescence, with girls reporting greater levels of unhappiness with families, friends, school and personal appearance whereas boys display a greater drop in self-esteem as they progress at secondary school³. These factors are linked to their overall mental health; how young people see themselves and support structures around them is intrinsically linked to how they feel about their life⁴.

1 in 7

girls at the end of primary school say they are **unhappy with their appearance**, rising to



1 IN 3 BY AGE 14

Childhood obesity continues to grow and as with all issues of wellbeing, its effects on young people highlight inequality. Those from the most deprived backgrounds are more likely to be living with obesity than their classmates. These increased risks of mental and physical health problems can continue into adulthood contributing to lower quality lives and shorter life expectancy⁵.

We also see LGBTQ+ young people struggling disproportionately with their mental health, with many being forced to stay home where they may not be able to be open about their identity and feeling increasingly lonely⁶.

Those not in full time education or employment (NEETS) are also experiencing factors impacting their wellbeing to a greater extent, from feeling unable to cope to suicidal thoughts, with studies highlighting a breadth of issues the pandemic has caused impacting these young people more significantly⁷.



Girls reporting greater levels of unhappiness with families

Useful Stats

- 1 In 7 girls at the end of primary school say they are unhappy with their appearance, rising to 1 in 3 by age 14 (Young People's Mental Health & Emotional Health, Education Policy Institute, Prince's Trust and Tesco, 2021)
- Low levels of physical activity link to low self esteem for boys and girls throughout adolescence (Young People's Mental Health & Emotional Health, Education Policy Institute, Prince's Trust and Tesco, 2021)
- 35% of 10-11-year-olds in England are overweight or obese (Institute for Public Policy Research The Disease of Disparity, Institute for Public Policy Research, 2021)
- Heavy social media use had a negative impact on all age groups (Young People's Mental Health & Emotional Health, Education Policy Institute, Prince's Trust and Tesco, 2021)
- LGBTQ+ young people are twice as likely to feel lonely and more than twice as likely to worry for their mental health on a daily basis (Just Like Us Feb 2021)
- 7 in 10 LGBTQ+ young people say their mental health has been worse since the pandemic, compared with half of non LGBTQ+ (Just Like Us Feb 2021)
- A third of trans young people feel daily tensions where they live compared to 1 in 5 non-trans (Just Like Us Feb 2021)
- 1 in 4 16-25s feel unable to cope with life rising to 40% of NEETS (Prince's Trust Tesco Youth Index 2021)

7 in 10



LGBTQ+ young people say their **MENTAL HEALTH HAS BEEN WORSE** since the pandemic

1: Young People's Mental Health & Emotional Health, Education Policy Institute, Prince's Trust and Tesco, 2021
 2: Summarising what we know so far about the impact of COVID-19 on young people, Association for Young People's Health, Feb 2021
 3: Young People's Mental Health & Emotional Health, Education Policy Institute, Prince's Trust and Tesco, 2021
 4: Young People's Mental Health & Emotional Health, Education Policy Institute, Prince's Trust and Tesco, 2021
 5: The Disease of Disparity, Institute for Public Policy Research, 2021
 6: LGBT Young People Mental Health, Just Like Us, 2021
 7: Prince's Trust Tesco Youth Index 2021

05

Hope & What's Needed

Despite the challenges faced over the past 18 months and how they shadow the future, many young people do think a better future exists, but they perhaps now see themselves as the ones who need to make it happen. The confidence of Gen Z changemakers seems somewhat replaced with a resilient realism, no longer convinced older generations and those in power will stand up for their future.

Providing opportunities for young people to be involved in decisions, projects or even campaigns, that enable them to develop their skills as well as outcomes for themselves and peers are incredibly important. And of course, paying for their time is key.

- Three quarters (74%) agree that "my generation can chance our future for the better" *(Prince's Trust Tesco Youth Index 2021)*
- 58% say they would like to become an entrepreneur but young people who have experienced discrimination based on ethnicity, age, colour or gender are more likely to consider entrepreneurship or side hustles *(Employment and Prospects for Young People in England post Covid, YE203 Clearview Research)*

For many young people, remaining in education, or staying in the job they currently have is an immediate fix, a safety solution. But looking at research following the 2008 financial crash, it's the scarring done to groups of the workforce in terms of their longer-term careers that's something to consider now as it not only impacts their careers but also health and wellbeing.

Young people, particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds, need support developing their career prospects, from work experience through to skills training, mentoring and career progression.

Organisations and brands have to work with young people to really amplify and engage with issues they care about.

Research indicates **lower wages for young people** stuck for longer



- Research indicates lower wages for young people stuck for longer *(K Henahan, Class of 2020: Education leavers in the current crisis, Resolution Foundation, May 2020)*
- The disadvantage gap was already prevalent in the jobs market leading into the pandemic. Those not in employment or education were hit with unemployment for long term periods *(Establishing the Employment Gap, Impetus and The National Institute of Economic and Social Research, 2019)*
- 32% said work experience is a key support opportunity useful to them right now *(Employment and Prospects for Young People in England post Covid, YE203 Clearview Research)*
- 43% in England said life skills training, including financial education, is in their top 3 support opportunities that would be most useful to them now *(Employment and Prospects for Young People in England post Covid YE203 Clearview Research)*

Organisations and brands have to work with young people to really amplify and engage with issues they care about. Whether that's a campaign on sustainability or recruitment of young people from diverse backgrounds, then performative campaigns and tokenism won't cut it. Youth audiences are equipped to explore how supporting comments for Black Lives Matter, gender equality and environmental credentials really translate to policies, culture and action.

Working with young people to better understand their relationship with key issues and then developing your work is important, but so is developing ways in which to empower young people where they are already developing projects, content and solutions to tackle issues they feel passionately about.

37% feel powerless to change the future



31% feel their opinions on issues **don't matter**

- Issues that have motivated them the most this year: Black Lives Matter followed by climate change *(Prince's Trust Tesco Youth Index 2021)*
- Young people already felt discriminated against due to race before the pandemic but felt that following the BLM movement, companies hiring more diverse people feels more performative than supportive *(Employment and Prospects for Young People in England post Covid, YE203 Clearview Research)*
- Over a third (37%) feel powerless to change the future and nearly one in 3 (31%) feel their opinions on issues don't matter *(Prince's Trust Tesco Youth Index 2021)*

Research Sources: Engaging Youth 2021

SOURCE	LINK
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Ditch the Label Annual Report, 2020	https://www.ditchthelabel.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Annual-Bullying-Survey-2020-2.pdf
Voicebox: Onlyfans and young people. Empowerment or Exploitation? April 2021	https://voicebox.site/assets/OnlyFansReport.pdf
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