



# The morale of young people deeply affected by the health crisis

The health crisis weighs heavily on the morale of young people: surveyed in March and April 2021, 59% have the impression that their current life corresponds to their expectations, i.e. the lowest level observed since the creation of the *DJEPVA Youth Barometer* in 2016. One young person in two thus considers the pandemic period as a very difficult experience. The young people surveyed underline in particular the psychological difficulties and feeling of isolation, placing these ahead of the socio-economic difficulties. In this uncertain context, young people have strong expectations of the public authorities: 29% would like the public authorities to help them find employment, an increase by eight points compared to 2020. Moreover, the pandemic has not hampered the commitment of young people to voluntary organisations or voluntary work; regular volunteering even grew compared to 2020.

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The last issue of the *DJEPVA Youth Barometer* [**'Method' box, p. 2**], published in March-April 2021 by the CREDOC (Research Centre for the Study and Observation of Living Conditions) and INJEP, is the subject of a comprehensive report [**'Bibliography' box, p. 4**]. It reveals in particular the nature of the difficulties experienced by young people during the health crisis: not just a state of mind altered by an uncertain future, a lack of social interaction and the appearance of psychological problems, but also the loss of employment,

accommodation or money for some of them. More frequent visits to the parental home, obstacles to daily mobility and a change in training and professional plans complete this scenario.

## A more negative state of mind in 2021 than 2020 due to the pandemic

In early 2020, young people who were questioned about their state of mind showed renewed optimism. 53% declared a positive state of mind, compared to 46% the previous year, in 2019. In 2021, this wave of optimism reached a dead stop and pessimism was once again on the rise: 46% of young people declare a positive state of mind, whereas an equivalent proportion express negative thoughts (45%) and 13% declare a neutral state of mind.

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**Practically one young person in two (49%) considers that the pandemic (...) has been a particularly difficult experience.**

This pessimism demonstrates the impact of the health crisis on young people. In all, almost one out of two young people (49%) consider that the coronavirus pandemic has been a particularly difficult experience [**graph 1, p. 2**]. One third (33%) give a mark of 'average difficulty' to this period and only 18% consider that the pandemic corresponds to an experience that is not or only slightly difficult. Young women (53%) give marks of difficulty that



method

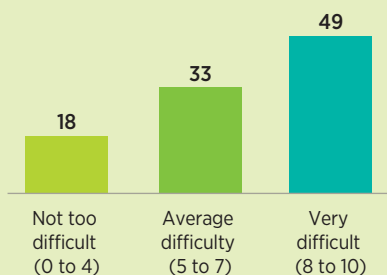
## The DJEPVA Youth Barometer

The result of a collaboration between INJEP and CREDOC at the request of the DJEPVA (Department for Youth, Non-Formal Education and Voluntary Organisations), the *DJEPVA Youth Barometer* has been produced every year since 2016. It supports the aim to provide public stakeholders and all professionals mobilised on behalf of the young with recurrent indicators on the living conditions, desires and expectations of young people. The 2021 survey was carried out on-line between 8 March and 8 April 2021 on a representative sample of 4644 young people residing in France (continental and overseas, excluding Mayotte) between 18 and 30 years of age, selected according to the quota method. The national and regional quotas were calculated based on the results of the most recent general population census (INSEE, *Recensement de la population*, 2017). A regional followed by a national correction was applied to ensure the representativeness of the sample with respect to the national population of young people between the ages of 18 and 30.



graph 1

### Score of difficulty attributed to life during the pandemic. Grouped positions (in %)



Scope: all young people aged between 18 and 30.  
Source: INJEP-CREDOC, DJEPVA Youth Barometer, 2021.

Reading note: 49% of young people attribute a score of 8, 9 or 10/10 to the difficulty of their experience during the pandemic.

are slightly higher than young men, which could be explained by an accentuation of inequality between men and women (Lévy *et al.*, 2020; Hoibian *et al.*, 2021) and greater vigilance by women regarding health matters (Montaut, 2010).

A consequence of this perceived difficulty, the feeling that one's current life corresponds to one's expectations, decreased between 2020 and 2021 (from 65% to 59%), with the indicator at its lowest level since the introduction of the measurement six years ago.

### Increased pessimism among young people facing professional difficulties

The state of mind of young people who have accumulated several difficult experiences during this period is most frequently marked by pessimism. Thus, 61% of young people saying they have encountered three to five different sources of difficulty (from the loss of motivation to the loss of employment) see things negatively, compared to only 27% of those who have experienced the health crisis without encountering any particular difficulty.

The young people expressing a difficult professional situation more frequently describe the pandemic as very difficult: 54% of unemployed young people and 54% in temporary work, compared to 49% of all young people. Unemployed young people are more likely (51% vs 38%) to mention a loss of money related to the pandemic. 34% of young job seekers consider the health crisis to be one of the causes of their unemployment by declaring a loss of employment related to the pandemic (compared to an average of 21%).

Young people are less confident regarding their future: 60% of 18 to 30-year-olds say they are confident, compared to 67% in early 2020. Thus, beyond their past and present difficulties, the persons responding to the survey consider that Covid-19 is likely to generate consequences for their future. For the majority of young people (52%), and more specifically for those still in training (56%) or employed (55%), the pandemic has had no consequence on their professional and training plans,

and over one young person in ten (13%) say they are uncertain and prefer to say they have 'no opinion'. Nevertheless, over a third of young people (34%) and up to 44% of unemployed young people say that the health crisis has disrupted their training and professional plans.

### A feeling of loneliness reinforced by the crisis and social-distancing measures

Social-distancing measures have damaged the mechanisms of social interaction among young people: the strict lockdown from March to May 2020, followed by a period from November 2020 to May 2021 during which teleworking and remote higher learning were the rule, when bars and restaurants, cinemas and concert halls were closed, and during which a curfew was enforced in most areas of France. Finally, throughout this period, public authorities encouraged citizens to limit their gatherings, requiring them, for

example, to restrict the number of guests to six for social occasions. In this context and at the time of the survey in March-April 2021, over half (53%) of the young people declare that they leave their homes less frequently than before the pandemic. Job seekers (58%) or people whose households regularly face budgetary restrictions (58%) are more particularly concerned by this decrease in the number of outings.

Consequently, 41% of those who replied declare that they frequently have a feeling of loneliness, including 15% who say 'every day or almost', 26% 'often' and 33% 'from time to time'; 17% say they are only rarely confronted with this feeling and 9% say they never feel lonely [graph 2, p. 3].

The feeling of loneliness grows with the perception that the crisis is a difficult or very difficult experience: 50% of young people who say that the crisis is a difficult experience feel lonely often or almost every day, compared to 28% of those for whom the crisis is not a particularly unpleasant experience. The lack of social interaction with family and friends is what they miss the most. 63% of 18 to 30-year-olds declare that they suffer from a lack of contact with their friends and

acquaintances, one young person in two (50%) with the members of their family, 40% with their classmates or colleagues from work, and a little over one fifth (22%) with their neighbours.

### Psychological distress and socio-economic problems

The pandemic has disrupted the lifestyles of a large fraction of the young population by accentuating pre-existing inequalities (Amsellem-Mainguy *et al.*, 2021). In all, 42% of 18 to 30-year-olds consider that the difficulties they have encountered during the last twelve months are caused by or related to the Covid-19 health crisis. Psychological difficulties predominate over socio-economic difficulties [graph 3]. One young person in two considers that the pandemic is responsible for their lack of motivation (52%), their lack of social interaction or their isolation (52%). 26% mention that they suffer from pandemic-related depression. 28% of young singles or non-cohabiting couples also indicate that an absence of a love life is a consequence. Less than one quarter of young people mention a loss of employment (21%) or a lack of equipment to connect to the internet (16%) directly related to the health crisis; a loss of money is nevertheless attributed to the context by 38% of young people. 25% of the young people not living in their parents' homes indicate that they have lost their accommodation

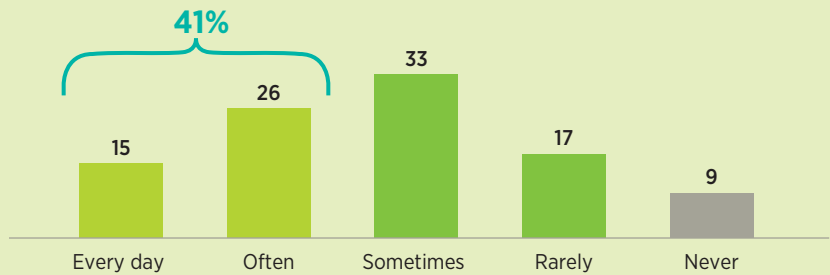
during the last twelve months due to the pandemic. For certain young people, access to residential independence, a non-linear process characterised by intermediate situations between leaving the parental home and arriving in autonomous accommodation (Gaviria, 2016), has been affected by the pandemic. One quarter of the young persons who had returned to live in their parents' homes and were residing there at the time of the survey mention the health crisis to justify their return. This is the second most frequently mentioned reason, behind the more usual reason explained by the end of the academic year or cycle of study.

### Strong expectations regarding public authorities concerning employment

The more difficult living conditions during the pandemic have fed specific expectations regarding public authorities. Uncertainty about future economic developments and the job market seems to worry young people in particular. Expectations towards public authorities concerning employment are high and record the strongest progression compared to 2020 in a list of fields where young people would like to see the State make a stronger commitment. Thus, 29% of young people would like the public authorities to help them find employment,

graph 2

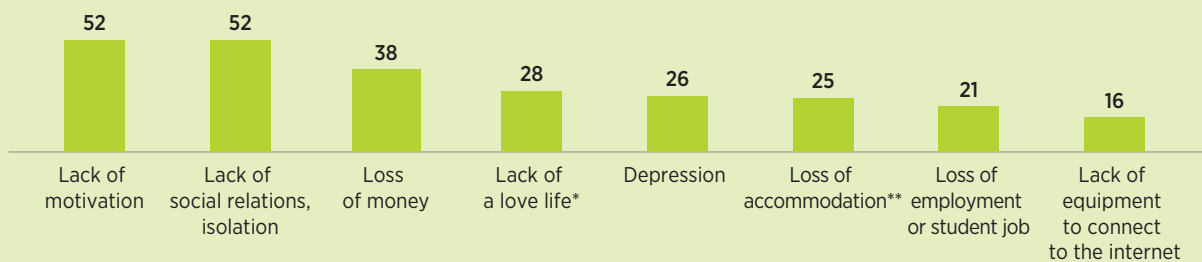
### Stated frequency of the feeling of loneliness



Scope: all young people aged between 18 and 30.  
 Source: INJEP-CREDOC, DJEPVA Youth Barometer, 2021.  
 Reading note: 15% of young people feel lonely every day or nearly every day.

graph 3

### Main difficulties encountered during the last twelve months attributed to the health crisis (in %).

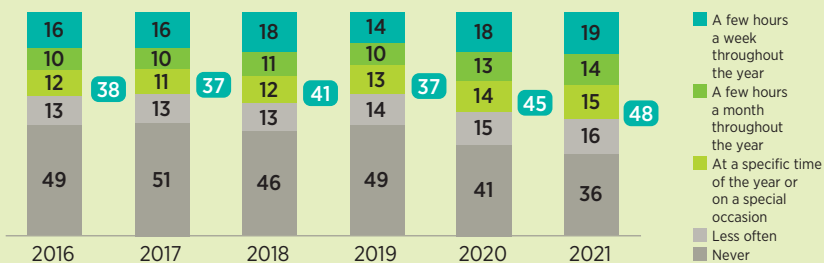


Scope: all young people aged between 18 and 30.  
 \* Scope: this item was only proposed to young single people or non-cohabiting couples with one partner not living in the same accommodation. The results given apply to this field alone.  
 \*\* Scope: this item was only proposed to young people living in independent accommodation. The results given apply to this field alone.  
 Source: INJEP-CREDOC, DJEPVA Youth Barometer, 2021.  
 Reading note: 52% of young people between 18 and 30 have experienced a lack of motivation during the last twelve months, which they consider related to the health crisis. The following questions were asked: 'Have you faced the following difficulties during the past twelve months?: [If yes], in your opinion, are these difficulties related to the health crisis?'



graph 4

## Frequency of voluntary participation in a voluntary or other type of organisation: political party, union, etc.



Source: INJEP-CREDOC, DJEPVA Barometers for Youth, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017 and 2016.

Scope: all young people aged between 18 and 30.

Reading note: in 2021, 48% of young people declared that they performed a voluntary activity, including 15% at a specific time of the year or for an occasional event, 14% for a few hours throughout the year and 19% for a few hours every week throughout the year.

up by eight points for this indicator compared to 2020.

Concerning the various measures of assistance provided to young people that were introduced during the health crisis (Government, 2021), 4% are able to identify all of these measures, whereas 17% have not heard of any of them. Food assistance (58% awareness) and psychological support units (52%) are the support services that are best known to young people, followed by support to businesses for recruiting young people (45%). At least one third of young people know of the existence of the 'Un jeune, une solution' (One Youth, One Solution) platform (38%), financial support for young graduates and former holders of

higher education grants (35%), financial support for young job seekers benefiting from intensive support from Pôle Emploi or by APEC (35%), or the creation of 20,000 student jobs (33%). However, the reinforcement of the youth guarantee was only identified by 28% of young people. Moreover, the notion of inequalities leading to a potential generational conflict (Bonnet, 2014) has been reactivated by the socio-economic consequences and health challenges of the pandemic. Nevertheless, young people are not very inclined to consider themselves disadvantaged with respect to their elders: only 28% of young people consider that older people enjoy an advantage compared to their younger counterparts, whereas

17% mention unequal treatment to the detriment of their elders. 44% of young people indicate that society does not favour either young or old people, and almost six out of ten do not express an opinion on this question.

### Significant increase in the voluntary commitment of young people compared to 2019

The pandemic has not hampered the widespread enthusiasm of young people for participating in voluntary organisations and voluntary commitment. Youth commitment to voluntary organisations remains at the level of 2020: 43% declare that they belong to or have participated in the activities of a voluntary organisation (sports, cultural, leisure, youth, humanitarian, political, etc.) compared to 42% the previous year.

In 2021, nearly one young person in two (48%) declared that they have voluntarily given their time to a voluntary or other type of organisation (political party, union, etc.). The increase in voluntary commitment observed in early 2020 has thus continued during the pandemic. The increase in voluntary commitment in 2020 and 2021 has also been reflected in the increase in very regular volunteer work (5-point increase since 2019) or regular volunteer work (4-point increase since 2019), whereas more occasional or episodic commitment has enjoyed a more moderate increase.



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