

RESOLUTION 4: IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON WOMEN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women and young people.

Women and young people are overrepresented in industries and occupations hardest hit by lockdowns such as retail, hospitality, and tourism. They are also more likely to work in part-time, casual, and informal employment which has been more adversely impacted.

This has resulted in more women and more young people losing their jobs or having their hours reduced.

While women's employment has declined at a greater level than men's, it is forecast that men's employment level will recover to pre-pandemic levels in 2021 whereas women's employment levels will not. In the Asia-Pacific region it is expected that men's employment levels will surpass pre-pandemic levels, but that women's employment levels will remain below pre-pandemic levels. This will exacerbate the gender gap in participation levels.

The pandemic has also had a disproportionate impact on young workers compared to adult workers. Young women have been particularly impacted, suffering employment losses at a greater level than young men.

Young workers who retained employment were more likely to have suffered a significant reduction of hours. The return to pre-crisis working hours has been much slower among young people.

Women were also more likely to lose hours due to COVID-19. Many women lost hours because of increased caring and home-schooling responsibilities. This resulted in more women leaving the labour-market altogether.

Both young workers and women were also more likely to be excluded from government support programs because of their employment in temporary, insecure or informal work, characterised by fewer hours.

As women and young people are more likely to be employed in frontline and customer-facing occupations, they have been more exposed to contracting COVID-19. This poses both a health risk and economic risk due to the need to self-isolate.

Women and young workers have also been predominate in frontline work and have been subject to increased violence and harassment from customers during COVID-19. More than one fifth of SDA members have been coughed or spat on during the pandemic.

Stay at home public health directives also increased the risk of family and domestic violence globally, and this disproportionately impacts women. These directions have also impacted on the ability for women to access vital support services.

UNI APRO Commerce acknowledges that women and young people are among those who have been hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNI APRO Commerce notes that the COVID-19 response and recovery provides an opportunity to fix some of the inequities built into the current economies and societies.

The measures being considered and implemented must not exacerbate the existing gender inequalities, but instead should ensure a more equal outcome for women.

UNI APRO Commerce calls for action to address the short-term effects of COVID-19 and ensure that long-term economic and social reconstruction and recovery programs and policies are gender-equal, inclusive and aim to undo the damage caused by the pandemic and create decent jobs for women and young people.

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