

Youth support critical to battle COVID-19-related employment challenges

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Researchers from The University of Western Australia's Centre for Social Impact say supporting young people is more important now than ever, highlighting the long-term impact on youth unemployment as the result of shutdowns and restrictions from COVID-19.

The researchers have published a paper that shows [younger people](#) will likely face a deep impact to their [employment prospects](#) for years to come unless immediate action is taken over the next six months. It examines how they may be supported through the immediate and long-term challenges, revealing [young people](#) from regional areas and disadvantaged backgrounds are most vulnerable.

UWA Centre for Social Impact Director Professor Paul Flatau said the youth labour market was characterised by higher levels of employment in consumer facing roles- such as in retail, hospitality, events, fitness and entertainment industries- with considerably higher rates of part-time employment and casual work than the general population.

"In December 2019 [youth unemployment](#) was already high at 11.5 percent, more than double the [general population](#)," Professor Flatau said.

"During the COVID-19 crisis, these characteristics of the youth labour market have meant young people are more susceptible to losing their jobs and also having their hours reduced, as businesses face an [uncertain future](#)."

Professor Flatau said the April 2020 Labour Force Statistics report revealed the COVID-19 crisis had had the largest one-month impact on employment that Australia had ever seen.

"In one month alone, an estimated 213,000 young people aged between 15 and 24 lost their jobs: this represents 35 percent of the close to 600,000 Australians who lost work in April," he said.

"The government responded with a temporary increase of \$550 per fortnight to the JobSeeker Payment, relaxation of mutual obligation requirements, and the introduction of the JobKeeper Payment scheme, but because young people are more likely to be casuals working in insecure employment, many were not eligible for the JobKeeper Payment. And certain sectors such as [higher education](#) were simply removed from JobKeeper arrangements.

"The present youth labour market is a very concerning situation. However, of bigger concern is the longer term impact when you look at previous crises such as the [global financial crisis](#) and the early 1990s recession in particular that resulted in crowding of the labour market post-crisis and great employment challenges for young people."

Professor Flatau said support of young people and the establishment of pathways to support future job security was crucial.

"Personalised support of our young people that can address multiple barriers to employment such as qualifications, transport, disadvantage, job readiness and communication skills is important," he said.

"It's also important for policy leaders to address the increasing casualisation of the workforce and ensure they support those who are most vulnerable."

"It highlights the importance of the higher education sector in helping young people develop skills important for employability and to support them for future challenges. There is the need for greater integration of higher education with the quality Vocational Education and Training sector."

More information: COVID-19 and Youth Unemployment:
[www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/c ... uth_unemployment.pdf](http://www.csi.edu.au/media/uploads/c...uth_unemployment.pdf)

Provided by University of Western Australia

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