

Children were neglected during the pandemic. There are important lessons still to be learned, says analysis

November 8 2023



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Children are still suffering the consequences of official neglect during the first 'shock period' of the COVID-19 pandemic, when families were

not widely prioritized by public policies, according to [analysis](#) published this week of 40 countries' responses to the pandemic.

The research from Oxford's Department of Social Policy and Intervention (DSPI) and UNICEF, concludes official policy responses aimed at [children](#) and families tended to be short-term, reactive, and focused more around protecting adults rather than protecting children. In the first nine to 10 months of the pandemic, some 30% of [high-income countries](#) studied created no new policies specifically aimed at supporting children.

Professor Mary Daly, professor of sociology and [social policy](#) at Oxford, who led the study, said, "The immediate and ongoing impact of COVID-19 policies on children has been too little considered and the full story of how well countries responded to children's needs has still to be told.

"Children cannot speak for themselves and face ongoing needs to help them recover from the pandemic and to ensure that future policies better protect them. This report and database fill a pressing requirement for information and intelligence to enable us to learn lessons and not repeat mistakes."

The report calls on countries to undertake a transformative, child-centered approach to social protection and care policies. According to the researchers, [policy makers](#) must continue to provide for the COVID-19 generation of children and reinstate positive measures, which existed prior to the pandemic, including guarantees for children to education and childcare services and explicit target setting around child poverty.

Professor Daly said, "The pandemic remains hugely relevant today—it can teach us many lessons about our priorities and how they need to

change. Children were not as high on the agenda as they should have been, although some countries did a lot better than others. Countries can learn from their own experience but also the experience of others."

Written along with Dr. Sunwoo Ryu, University of Bristol, the study is the first systematic comparative record of measures taken for children's welfare across 40 European Union (EU) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries in 2020.

Using a child-centered perspective, it measures the policy actions across six fields that are most important for children: education, [early childhood education](#) and care, paid [parental leave](#), income support for families, food support, and health-related measures, adding important new evidence to the story of the pandemic for children.

More information: Child-related Policies in the First Year of the COVID-19 Pandemic in 40 Countries. www.unicef-irc.org/publication...in-40-countries.html

Provided by University of Oxford

Citation: Children were neglected during the pandemic. There are important lessons still to be learned, says analysis (2023, November 8) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-11-children-neglected-pandemic-important-lessons.html>

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