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GEOECONOMICS CENTER

ISSUE BRIEF

Generational Dynamics of Economic Crisis and Recovery: Prospects for Younger and Older Persons

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The impact of economic shocks is never equal. Certain groups are always hit harder than others, and age demographic dynamics are certainly at play. Today's young and older workers (and early retirees) are up against more than a decade of continuing economic shocks bookended by two major crises: the 2008 recession and the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, from which economies are only starting to recover. Both events highlight the vulnerability of the youth labor market and the volatility of seniors' savings: jeopardizing wealth accumulation, exacerbating generational scarring, and fostering inequality. The impact is felt by individuals, households, communities, and national economies alike.

Generational Dynamics and Vulnerabilities

Younger and older generations are more economically and financially vulnerable to crises for a variety of reasons; some dynamics negatively impact both younger and older people in different ways. Population age structure, earning, learning, saving, and digital dynamics come into clearer focus as they relate to economic growth and recovery. As was the case with the 2008 recession, the economic standing of youth (especially young women) has been disproportionately affected by the pandemic, such that many now refer to today's youth as the "lockdown generation." While seniors experienced the worst of the health impacts—especially in the earlier waves of the pandemic, before the vaccine become available in wealthier nations—they have also been susceptible on the financial front. At the same time, political and sociological factors—while not the focus of this analysis—have ramifications for economic outcomes as well. Social fractures and diminishing faith

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Nepalese youths holding placards maintain social distance as they take part in a protest demanding better and effective response from the government to fight the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) outbreak as the number of infections spikes, in Kathmandu, Nepal June 13, 2020. REUTERS/Navesh Chitrakar

in government among youth and seniors who feel underserved, marginalized, or defenseless against others with decision-making power and financial rule can undermine the aspirations, confidence, and investment necessary for resilient growth.

Population Age Structure

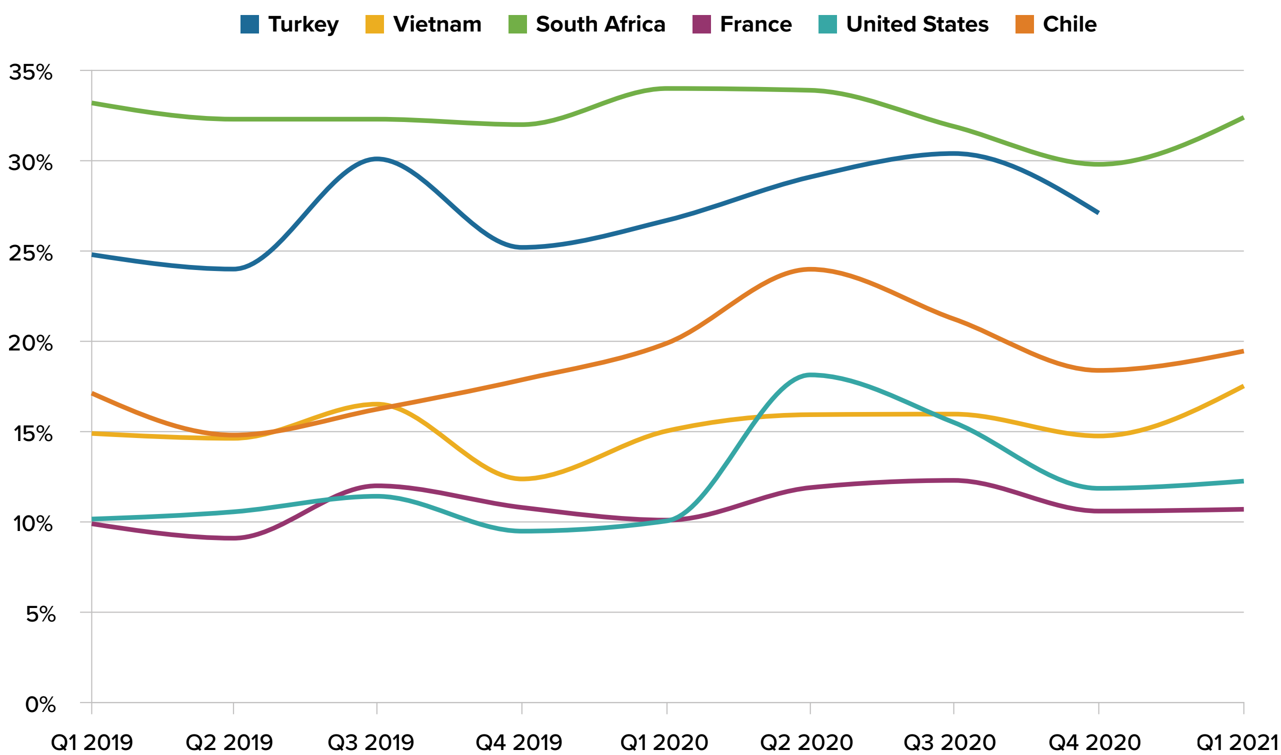
The pandemic reinforces existing dynamics between age and economic growth. Studies of population age and growth point to opportunities and challenges. Across Africa, the median age is nearing twenty. In the Middle East, it is about twenty-five, with relatively high variation by country. In Latin America it is thirty-one, and in Asia thirty-two but with high variation by region (South and Southeast Asia are younger, while East Asia and Oceania are older). The median is thirty-nine in North America and forty-three in Europe.[1] Young populations are generally associated with potential economic growth, and older populations with risk or drag. However, both cohorts have the potential for positive or negative outcomes.

Youth contributions to the Asian economic "miracle" growth during the 1960s–1990s gave rise to the demographic-div-

1 "World Population Prospects 2019," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2019, https://population.un.org/wpp/.

Youth Market Activity

Youth Not in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET)



Source: ILO

idend phenomenon: a large, well-educated labor supply enters the workforce, driving up productivity, incomes, innovation, and consumption, and being a boon to the economy. At the same time, high numbers of unemployed, economically marginalized youth have been associated with social and civil unrest—in some cases, leading to violence, crime, or destabilization, and undermining economic growth. These consequences are magnified in a recession or depression. This has played out, for example, in countries of the Middle East, Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa.

Older populations have traditionally been associated with economic dependency, and even drag, as they leave the workforce and require social, medical, or other financial support from families or the government—essentially, taking money out of the economy rather than contributing to it. More recently, however, aging populations can bring a "second demographic dividend" in countries with greater health, wealth, and life expectancy—and where older people work longer, are investing aggressively, have a more active retirement, and require less care.

Job Losses and Business Closures

As shown in the graphic above, youth were already facing labor market challenges, only made worse by the pandemic. Around the world, young people have faced significant employment loss, in terms of being let go or seeing their hours cut. Within the first few months of the pandemic, by June 2020, one in six youths had already lost their jobs, and at least one quarter of those still working saw their hours—and, thus, income—cut.[2] Experience suggests that it takes longer for youths to get a job and

2 Youth is a social contract and, therefore, the definition of youth can vary by country, context, and policy. However, most major international data sets (including those of the International Labour Organization and the World Bank) cover individuals aged 15–24 as youth.

Young people wearing protective face masks maintain social distancing as a measure to contain the spread of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) before taking the entrance exam for Mexico's National Autonomous University in the stands of University Olympic Stadium in Mexico City, Mexico, August 19, 2020. REUTERS/Edgard Garrido

enter the workforce than it does for workers who already have a job to find a new one, and they may be more likely to suffer long-term unemployment after job loss, making post-pandemic scarring a serious generational threat.[3] Young women—especially young mothers, who bear a larger share of the burden of care responsibilities—have been more likely to leave the workforce to look after children who are out of daycare or homeschooled, or elderly family members aging in place.

Many of the factors that caused young workers to be disproportionately impacted by the 2008 recession are behind the losses they are experiencing from the coronavirus now. The nature of youth employment is generally lower-wage, contract, part-time, seasonal, or temporary work, which does not carry job security and likely does not offer benefits such as healthcare or paid leave. In lower- and middle-income countries especially, young workers routinely enter the labor market through informal pathways. Further, these jobs tend to be characterized as entry level, and in service or retail sectors that heavily depend on consumer spending. Thus, young workers were more likely to lose hours, be laid off, or experience long-term unemployment as containment measures initiated to

3 "Toward Solutions for Youth Employment: A 2015 Baseline Report," World Bank, October 12, 2015, http://www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/WCMS_413826/lang--en/index.htm.

stop COVID-19's spread all but stopped such economic activities.

While the jobs losses suffered among older workers may not have been as widespread, they were not insignificant. Globally, the share of older persons in the labor force has increased by nearly 10 percent in the last thirty years, resulting in significant unemployment impacts.[4] As a result of the pandemic, roughly 11 percent of Americans sixty-five and older have lost their jobs. Older persons who were still on the job may have left work to care for grandchildren, especially in intergenerational households. Around the world, older individuals are more likely to live in poverty, and they experience social exclusion as the risk of poverty increases with age. In some developing countries, the share of older persons living in poverty is as high as 80 percent.[5] Older persons also typically depend on multiple income streams, including paid work, savings, and financial support from families and pensions, all of which have been jeopardized by COVID-19.[6]

The shuttering of businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is likely also having disproportionate impact on seniors, and poses a challenge to recovery opportunities for youths. Small-business owners tend to be older. Baby Boomers (generally those aged 57–75) own more than 40 percent of small businesses in the United States, while Millennials own just 13 percent, and still make up a modest share of new startups worldwide.[7] As many as half of small businesses worldwide closed or lost significant revenues due to lockdowns; older business owners likely felt a large share of this pain.[8] For youth, entrepreneurship and small-business enterprise were already an important path out of the lingering unemployment crisis—including in the informal and semiformal economies that dominate many lower-middle-income countries. Because credit markets were always tight for those lacking collateral or enough financial history, young people relied on wage income or other family savings for startup capital, which has now been wiped out for many and closed this door as a means of recovery, at least in the near term.

Learning and Earning Losses

By April 2020, some 1.5 billion young people worldwide saw their education or training disrupted by the pandemic, as more than 95 percent of educational institutions closed their facilities. While many schools and universities shifted to remote delivery, access was not universal, and the quality of learning was reduced. For young people, these disruptions not only adversely affected their learning potential, and their current social and economic standing, but put future earnings at risk. School closures are expected to cause significant damage to both gross domestic product (GDP) and individual earnings. Per World Bank estimates, global GDP could decrease anywhere from 12–18 percent due to school closures.[9] This economic impact is not exclusive to students, because income losses (and consequential spending reductions) also touch families, households, communities, and markets.

The impact will be especially acute in low-income countries, where education and livelihoods were already challenged, and which now face devastating losses. Projected GDP could decrease by up to 60 percent, while projected individual earnings face a deficit of $2,833; added together, that could be $360 billion. Middle-income countries should also prepare for considerable costs; a drop in GDP of 15–22 percent and a projected individual-earnings deficit of $6,777 could add up to a loss of $6.8 trillion. High-income countries could also suffer an individual-earnings deficit of $21,158—which could total about $5 trillion and diminish GDP by nearly 9 percent.[10]

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4 As with "youth" as a cohort description, the definition of "seniors" or "older person" can vary by context, country, or policy. Many international and national data sets will measure those over sixty-five as "older persons," but there is considerable variation. For example, countries with a lower life expectancy may consider people of a comparatively younger age as seniors or older persons. Rosina Gammarano, "Spotlight on Work Statistics: What about Seniors?" International Labour Organization, May 22, 2018, https://ilostat.ilo.org/what-about-seniors/.

5 "Income Poverty in Old Age: An Emerging Development Priority," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, last visited October 18, 2021, https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/ageing/documents/PovertyIssuePaperAgeing.pdf.

6 Fabio Durán-Valverde, "Social Protection for Older Persons: Policy Trends and Statistics 2017–19," Social Protection and Human Rights, International Labour Organization, 2018, https://socialprotection-humanrights.org/resource/social-protection-for-older-persons-policy-trends-and-statistics-2017-19/.

7 "Small Business Trends: 2021," Guidant, 2021, https://www.guidantfinancial.com/small-business-trends/; Stephen Hill, et al., "2020/2021 Global Report," *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor*, 2021, https://www.gemconsortium.org/file/open?fileId=50691.

8 "The Future of Business Survey," Facebook/OECD/World Bank, 2020, https://www.oecd.org/sdd/business-stats/the-future-of-business-survey.htm.

9 Ibid.

10 George Psacharopoulos, et al., "Lost Wages: The COVID-19 Cost of School Closures," World Bank, May 2020, https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34387.

A protester holds up a banner reading "Fair pensions now!" at a protest to demand better conditions on pensions, housing, health, and public services in Madrid, Spain, October 2, 2021. REUTERS/Susana Vera

Savings and Wealth Accumulation

Older persons—especially minority seniors—suffer declines in net wealth during economic shocks and employment disruptions, as they have more trouble finding a new job, and less time to recover losses or shore up retirement savings. This is not withstanding the fact that only an estimated 20 percent of retired persons in developing countries even receive a pension.[11] While the full extent of COVID-19's impact on savings may not yet be known, data showing the impact of the 2008 financial are instructive. Following the 2008 financial crisis, as many as 60 percent of non-retired Americans slipped into poverty. Across the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), pension assets fell by more than $5 trillion during the crisis, with older workers suffering most.

Given that older women have less access to income than men—because of fewer assets, higher unemployment, lower wages, and smaller or nonexistent pensions—they are more likely to experience the pain of economic downturn. Women make up nearly 65 percent of those above retirement age (60–65, or older) without any regular pension.[12] For young people, the earnings loss and disruption have put their abil-

11 "Policy Brief: The Impact of COVID-19 on Older Persons," United Nations, May 2020, https://unsdg.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Policy-Brief-The-Impact-of-COVID-19-on-Older-Persons.pdf.

12 Ibid.

ity to save and invest at risk. Home buying, a foundation of wealth accumulation for generations, is all but out of reach for millions of youths who were already facing adverse conditions and rising prices in the housing market—which are at their highest levels in decades worldwide.[13]

Digital Divide

COVID-19 containment measures that closed school facilities, shuttered businesses, and locked down economic and social activity acutely intensified reliance on digital tools for learning, commerce, and communication. This reliance exposed and reinforced digital divides that affect both young people and seniors. International Telecommunication Union Director Doreen Bogdan-Martin says, “COVID-19 has thrown into sharp relief the connectivity chasm we call the digital divide.”[14] Young people are more likely to be tech-savvy digital natives and have the skills. But, those from poorer, disadvantaged, or rural homes or communities tend not to have adequate Internet or device access, or connectivity for remote education (leading to “homework gaps”) or work. Older people may be more likely to have the financial resources for digital products or services, but often find themselves behind the curve in terms of digital literacy and skills to use or adapt to e-commerce, online work, social media, or virtual communications platforms. While the pandemic likely brought more people online, a 2017 AARP study found that in Turkey and China, only about 12 percent of seniors aged 55–74 use the Internet; it’s roughly 20 percent in Mexico and about 30 percent in Brazil.[15]

Policy Landscape

These dynamics have been recognized by policymakers and private-sector decision-makers, and numerous policy and programmatic measures are being introduced across contexts. In this regard, it is important to assess the wide-ranging “build back better” landscape on two levels: measures introduced for the general population that have potential to reach (but might not reach) younger/older cohorts; and those measures designed and targeted for youth or older persons—which seem fewer in number.

Emergency Social Protection and Unemployment

Across lower-, middle-, and high-income countries alike, social-protection measures such as direct payments, food assistance, or supplemental emergency unemployment insurance have featured prominently in pandemic response, with many measures being extended into recovery. Young people and seniors, however, may not be seeing the benefits proportionate to the heavier toll COVID has taken on them. For example, despite their heightened vulnerability to the virus and need for income support during COVID-19, only a few countries implemented social-protection responses specifically for older people, such as pension support.[16] According to the International Labour Organization, there were eighty measures affecting pensions in fifty-five countries in mid-August 2020, but only six of those represent new benefits or programs, and only seventeen increase the benefit levels of pensions. For example, in April, Ukraine targeted low-income pensioners with a one-off pension increase of one thousand hryvnia, along with a recurring monthly top-up of five hundred hryvnia for retirees aged eighty and over. Bangladesh’s stimulus package guaranteed twelve billion takas for the old-age (and widow) allowance-expansion program, and Mexico chose to frontload old-age and disability pension payments by eight months.

To directly support young people, Canada implemented the Emergency Student Benefit (CESB), a novel taxable benefit amounting to $1,250 each month.[17] Income relief to displaced or furloughed workers has been widespread—including, in some cases, interventions targeted specifically to youth workers or entrepreneurs or to worker groups that tend to skew younger, such as freelancers.[18] In the United States and the United Kingdom, for example, supplemental

13 Valentina Romei and Chris Giles, “Pandemic Fuels Broadest Global House Price Boom in Two Decades,” *Financial Times*, August 1, 2021, https://www.ft.com/content/491a245d-4af7-4cad-b860-6ba51b86b45f.

14 “The World Bank, WEF, GSMA and ITU Mobilized in the Fight Against COVID-19,” World Bank, April 21, 2021, https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/statement/2020/04/21/the-world-bank-wef-gsma-and-itu-mobilized-in-the-fight-against-covid-19.

15 “The Aging Readiness & Competitiveness Report,” AARP, 2019, https://arc.aarpinternational.org/.

16 Florian Juergens and Flavia Galvani, “Social Protection for Older People During COVID-19 and Beyond,” HelpAge, September 2020, https://socialprotection.org/sites/default/files/publications_files/Social%20protection%20for%20older%20people%20during%20COVID-19.pdf.

17 “Policy Responses to COVID-19,” International Monetary Fund, July 2021, https://www.imf.org/en/Topics/imf-and-covid19/Policy-Responses-to-COVID-19.

18 Al-mardi Charfadine, “Tchad: le Fonds pour l’Entrepreneuriat des Jeunes de 30 Milliards FCFA est Opérationnel,” Tchadinfos, July 11, 2020, https://tchadinfos.com/tchad/tchad-le-fonds-pour-lentrepreneuriat-des-jeunes-de-30-milliards-fcfa-est-operationnel/.

unemployment insurance extended to the self-employed, supporting the growing number of gig-economy workers.[19]

Wage Subsidies and Employer Support

In addition to direct support to workers and individuals, governments worldwide are providing demand-side relief and sustenance through the private sector, with wage subsidies and replacement or maintenance grants. Few, however, have been directed toward young or older workers. And, among those that were—such as the European Union's youth guarantee or South Africa's controversial youth wage subsidy—these private-sector incentives to hire youth were already in place to address existing joblessness and high unemployment persisting since the 2008 recession, and are being extended. In the case of South Africa, cost-sharing incentives to keep young persons employed reduce employers' payouts and tax burdens.[20]

Generalized employment support to firms is being offered in countries in all regions and at all income levels, across large and small economies alike (as part of international financial support in less wealthy nations). For example, the United States, Botswana, Bulgaria, Indonesia, Ireland, New Zealand, Peru, and Vanuatu have all introduced such measures. Though the threshold for support and level of coverage varies—Botswana covers 50 percent of salaries, while Ireland offers a flat payout amount, and Peru's subsidy ranges from 35–55 percent—the majority are conditional on the firm keeping employees on the payroll. In some cases, such as Cyprus and Mauritius, wage relief that has been targeted to industries core to the economy and most susceptible to pandemic shock—such as tourism and hospitality—may indirectly have a larger benefit for young workers, who tend to work in these sectors in greater numbers than older workers, or than younger workers in other sectors.[21]

Recognizing the longer-term employment risks and the exacerbated education disruption, several countries include, or complement wage-subsidy programs with, measures and incentives to invest in and provide training to existing or pipeline workers. Australia's "jobseeker" support includes a skills package, while the Kenya and Senegal response and stimulus packages include new youth-employment schemes.

Digital Interventions

Given that the pandemic showed digital needs and gaps in stark relief, interventions from countries and donors are on the rise. As of March 2021, nearly one third of lower-middle-income economies have initiated measures to expand Internet access, speed, or affordability, as have 25 percent of upper-middle income economies, according to the World Bank (and depicted in the map below). While at least one third of high-income economies have new measures in place, only 11 percent of low-income economies do so.[22] The majority of measures fall into one of two categories: interventions to improve digital infrastructure, such as spectrum or broadband regulation, reduction or suspension of fees, tax relief, network expansion, and traffic management; and interventions to improve digital services, such as e-learning, digital payments, telemedicine, and e-government. Public-sector-supported digital-skills education and training interventions are also increasing, as are activities led by, or in collaboration with, the private sector.

In Egypt, for example, the government is partnering with Microsoft to launch a national youth capacity-building program, "Tamayoz," to create ten thousand specialists in the technology fields needed to carry out Digital Egypt projects, alongside cooperation in implementing the "Tawar w Ghayar" initiative aiming to upskill two hundred thousand young people every year.[23] Seniors from South Carolina in the United States to Odisha state in India are benefitting from digital-literacy education and technology-provision initiatives that meet them where they are—on tablets and smartphones, respectively. Intergenerational

19 Bruce Brumberg, "Unemployment Benefits for the Self-Employed, Independent Contractors, and Gig-Economy Workers: Lawyer on the Front Lines Answers Common Questions," *Forbes*, May 1, 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/brucebrumberg/2020/05/01/unemployment-benefits-for-the-self-employed-independent-contractors-and-gig-economy-workers-lawyer-on-the-front-lines-answers-common-questions/?sh=719f9e4bd7b6. Support for households included a six-month extension of the furlough scheme (although this will be tapered from July) worth around £20 billion (the self-employment part of this was more generous than expected, at £13 billion alone).

20 "Coronavirus (COVID-19) Tax Developments in EMA," KPMG, last visited September 2021, https://home.kpmg/xx/en/home/insights/2020/03/coronavirus-covid-19-tax-developments-in-ema.html.

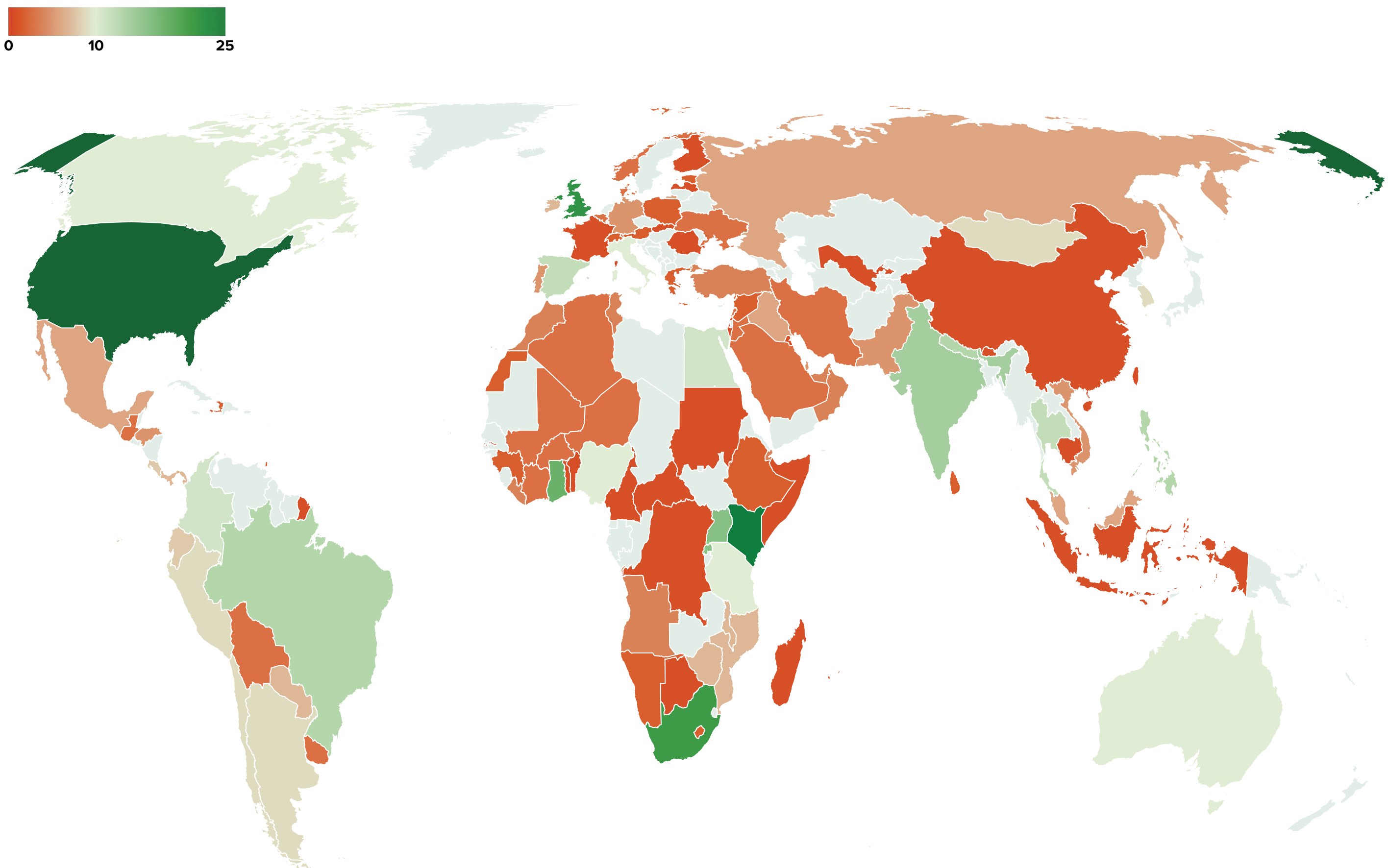
21 "Policy Responses to COVID-19."

22 Rami Amin, "Global Digital Development Policy Response Database," World Bank, March 2021, https://dataviz.worldbank.org/views/DD-COVID19/Overview?:embed=y&:isGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&:display_count=n&:showAppBanner=false&:origin=viz_share_link&:showVizHome=n.

23 "ICT Minister Witnesses Signing Two MoUs with Microsoft to Upskill Youth," Egypt Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, press release, July 11, 2021, https://mcit.gov.eg/en/Media_Center/Press_Room/Press_Releases/63501.

Digital Development Responses, Q2 2020 - Q2 2021

Number of Digital Service and Infrastructure Policy Measures



Sources: World Bank

initiatives that match tech-savvy youth with more analog elders are showing great promise for digital inclusion and empowerment in Europe.[24] In terms of access, the National Telecommunications Commission (CONATEL) of Honduras announced an investment of $50 million to reduce the digital divide throughout the country, and to subsidize free Internet for seventy-five thousand households with school-age students to support virtual learning.[25] In South Africa, the telecommunications regulator, the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), released additional broadband spectrum as an emergency response measure to help meet the surge in Internet demand, easing network congestion during the lockdown and helping to maintain overall service quality.[26] The Philippines Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) is coordinating with eight other agencies to streamline processes and reduce bureaucratic barriers around shared telecommunications

24 "Advancing Digital and Social Inclusion through Intergenerational Learning and Empowerment," United Nations Economic Commission for Europe, April 15, 2019, https://unece.org/population/news/advancing-digital-and-social-inclusion-through-intergenerational-learning-and.

25 "As a Contribution to Education CONATEL Will Subsidize 75 Thousand Low-Income Households with the Internet to Continue with Virtual Classes," Honduras Comisión Nacional de Telecomunicaciones, January 2021, https://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/CDS/REG4COVID/Display.asp?ID=56469.

26 Wendell Roelf, Hugh Lawson, and Mark Potter, "S. Africa Makes More Spectrum Available to Meet Internet Demand," Reuters, April 6, 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-safrica-telecoms/update-1-s-africa-makes-more-spectrum-available-to-meet-internet-demand-idUSL8N2BU2P2.

infrastructure, including procedures to accelerate tower construction.[27]

Concessionary Lending and Debt Forgiveness

In addition to supporting workers and employee retention, governments and public financial institutions are providing: concessionary capital; revenue-replacement loans that are key for SMEs to stay clear of liquidity crises and invest in technology or other operational investments; and debt restructuring vital for easing existing debt burdens, in addition to allaying risk for creditors and lenders. Looking ahead, startup funding initiatives are already being established or expanded to support the millions of workers who face permanent unemployment as a result of the pandemic, and for whom entrepreneurship or self-employment may become a more attractive or necessary choice. In New Zealand, the government is stimulating small-business growth by providing loans of up to NZ$100,000 through 2023 for businesses employing fewer than fifty persons. In Mexico, the Ministry of Economy has granted loans to SMEs amounting to about sixty-five billion pesos (or $3.3 billion), with optional repayments. The country also initiated financing facilities that will allow commercial, as well as development, banks to direct resources to SMEs. These facilities are valued at $17.6 billion.

Beyond business lending, education loans and housing finance have also been part of the response in some countries. At the national level, international financial institutions have provided debt relief (though many argue not enough) to borrowers in low-income countries. At the individual level, debt forgiveness is an important coping measure for many in wealthier nations, where personal lending is a principal means of financing education, housing, or other investments. In the American Rescue Plan, student-loan debts are excluded from taxable gross-income amounts related to the discharge of certain student-loan debt until the end of 2025. Kazakhstan's plans to restore economic growth include a subsidized mortgage program for households, with a segment targeting youth specifically.[28]

Innovative or Industry Measures

Other novel, promising measures include support for civil society, public sectors, and recovery or growth industries that employ, or have potential to increase work opportunities for, young or older people—such as tourism, hospitality, food system, professional services, logistics/construction, information and communications technology (ICT), care, or the gig economy. As part of its "Build Bhutan" strategy, the specialized-firms program initiated by the Bhutan government promotes youth employment and engagement in the construction sector. One of the more interesting, distinct policy initiatives is in Jordan, where one year of military service has been reinstated as a means to engage and employ youths, and to mitigate pandemic joblessness.

Way Forward

Around the world, young and older persons' lives have been upended by the pandemic and the rapidly transforming economic, social, and geopolitical landscape that surrounds them. Collectively, they are generational hinges upon which nations' economic trajectories swing. In moving from crisis response to economic recovery, there are several measures that cross-country experience and emerging evidence suggest will go further in ensuring young and older persons are able to contribute to, and benefit from, growth. These policies and initiatives are likely to generate more inclusive growth, with demographic dividends that ultimately benefit all. Further, the design and implementation of any approach should consider and account for geopolitical and sociological factors—including the breakdown of trust and weakening of social contract—that can hinder or contribute to reach and impact.

1. Increase targeting of social-protection and recovery measures.

Many of the policy interventions and emergency-protection actions were generalized for the population. As nations extend and expand these payments or measures, and begin to transition to longer-term recovery and sustainable-growth efforts, it will be important to introduce further targeting and measures designed specifically to reach young and older persons. Youth could benefit, for example, from direct youth-jobs guarantees, future-skills training, or specialized-lending programs, while seniors need increased pension payments and protections, care for vision, hearing or other impairments or disabilities associated with aging that hinder one's work, or food-security measures.

27 Joseph Waring, "Philippines Makes Tower Sharing Progress," Mobile World Live, July 2020, https://www.mobileworldlive.com/asia/asia-news/philippines-makes-tower-sharing-progress.

28 "Kazakhstan_COVID Country Profile," United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, March 23, 2021, https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/2021-03/Kazakhstan_COVID%20Country%20profile%20230321.pdf.

A woman presents documents as she waits to receive cash assistance from the government following the imposition of two-week lockdown to prevent the spread of the coronavirus Delta variant, at an elementary school in Manila, Philippines, August 11, 2021. REUTERS/Lisa Marie David

Targeting should also include ensuring that younger and older people know of, and are easily able to access, the resources and supports available to them. Information campaigns that meet people where they are—through new and old media, service providers, and families—are an important complement to the products and services themselves. Similarly, streamlined processes that minimize navigational or bureaucratic hurdles should be put into place.

2. Incentivize private-sector investment in education, training, and hiring.

Human capital is a critical component of economic growth. As the pandemic accelerated existing trends shaping the future of work and magnified educational inequalities, having skills—the right, relevant skills—is necessary to participate in economic recovery. As the private sector reopens and seeks to speed up productivity, loosen supply-chain blockages, and increase services, it has much to gain from a more prepared workforce and entrepreneurial class. At the same time, cash-strapped governments forced to redirect fiscal resources to prop up health systems, and provide emergency supports and social protection, may not be able to make the necessary investments in education systems, reforms, and upgrades. The "what" and "how" of learning needs is rapidly changing. There is a key role for the private sector to play by making concrete investments in its own employee training and reskilling, and also by participating in the systems preparing future workers—informing curricula, content, and instructional materials, supporting infrastructure, and providing experiential learning and training opportunities.

3. Double down on digital.

The value of digital affordability, access, and aptitudes—which was already accruing rapidly with technological transformation and diffusion—has been further compounded by the pandemic. Adopting digital practices saved 37 percent of US small businesses during the pandemic from complete or partial closure, according to a survey by the Connected Commerce Council.[29] While the impediments may differ, both young and older persons have much to gain from general and targeted digital interventions, which can also be a force multiplier for growth dividends. Continued and expanded investment by public and private sectors—independently and in cooperation—is necessary. For young people, measures that improve infrastructure (including that of educational institutions), increase the availability and lower the cost of devices and adequate connectivity, or provide training for in-demand ICT-related jobs are likely to have the most impact. In addition, activities that help older workers and seniors gain digital literacy and e-commerce skills, including intergenerational programs, should be accelerated.

4. Ensure access to financial services and credit.

Though the pandemic quelled new entrepreneurial activity, many see opportunity in new sectors, products, services, and business models spurred by the pandemic, as well as climate-change adaptation and technological advancement. Ensuring access to startup, operational, and growth capital will be critical for sustaining small business and unlocking entrepreneurship as a path forward in recovery and growth. At the same time, without specific targeting, demographic dynamics discussed above suggest older persons may be more likely to benefit from the SME lending programs that have been widely introduced, including those by national governments, multilateral banks, and donor-support institutions. For youths who may be less likely to know of, or have ability to access, special lending relief, targeted programs and products—including fintech—can help.

5. Increase rigorous research and collection of age-disaggregated data on economic and COVID-related indicators.

Whether studying new or existing policy measures, further qualitative and empirical research is needed to understand the impact on economic recovery and growth policy measures, to better determine what works to reach young and older persons (and what does not work). Moreover, many data—especially for systematic, internationally comparative indicators—are not disaggregated by age. Such cohort-specific data are needed to better monitor progress, and to identify and address ongoing deficits. Further efforts are also needed to collect, leverage, and utilize "big data" sources that might be more available and relevant for young and older persons and can help fill gaps in data-poor economies, and where disaggregation is lacking.

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29 "Digitally Driven 2021," Connected Commerce Council, March 2021, https://connectedcouncil.org/digitallydriven2021/.

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