

Research questions

1. To what extent did the COVID-19 pandemic affect **wellbeing of young people** over time, what were the main **drivers**, the groups most at **risk** and which **protective factors** mitigated negative consequences for wellbeing?
2. Did **policy initiatives** to support young people during the pandemic focus on the groups most at risk, and what can we learn from the **development** and **implementation** of these programs them for future crises?

Project aims

- To bring together findings from **statistical analyses** on **drivers of wellbeing** with a **qualitative assessment of policy responses** and evaluate whether policy measures focused on the drivers and risk groups determined in the statistical analyses
- to foster **young people's resilience** in future pandemics or crises
- and provide insights that will **help in designing policies** aimed at supporting wellbeing of young people

WP1: Study wellbeing of young people using longitudinal survey data

Wellbeing trajectories through the pandemic

Source: Swiss Household Panel (2017-2022)

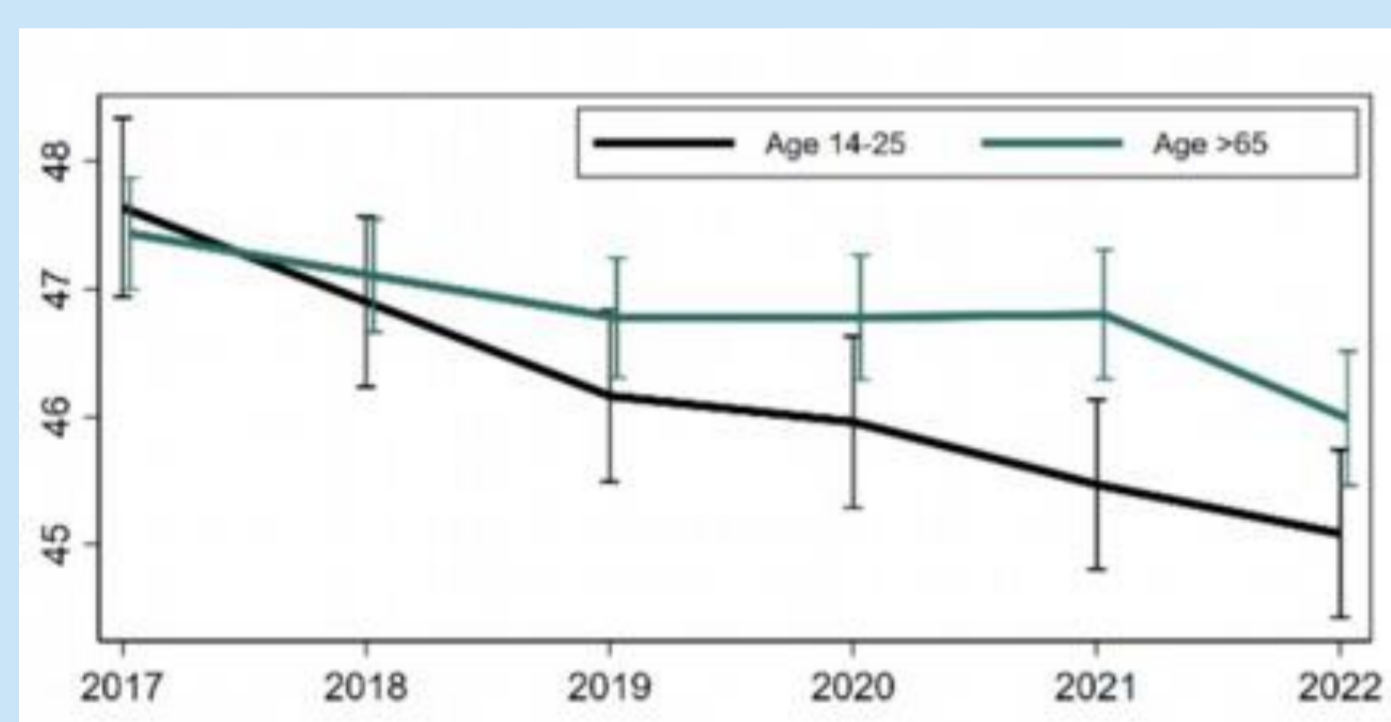


Figure 1. Age-specific average trajectories of positive affect and life satisfaction

- Wellbeing of young people was already declining before the pandemic, in absolute terms and relative to other age groups

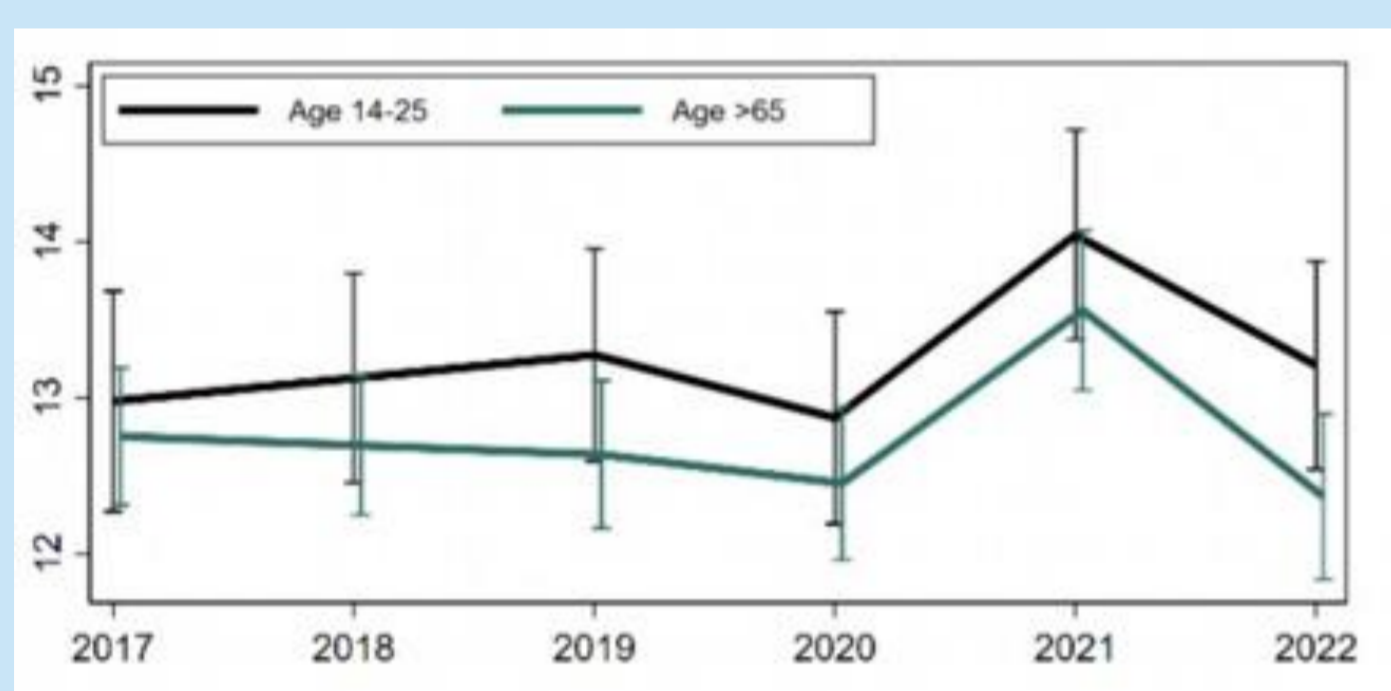


Figure 2. Age-specific average trajectories of negative affect

- All age groups experienced an increase in negative affect in later phases of the pandemic
- This increase was larger for women and young people not in employment or education
- Young people did not go back to pre-pandemic levels, other age groups did

WP2: Policy inventory and expert interviews

Policy inventory at the federal/national level

- Some pre-existing policies expanded during the pandemic
- Measures consisted mostly of helplines and online platforms but also of opening spaces or allowing activities contributing to young people's well-being (i.e. schools, social and cultural activities)

Expert interviews with 8 experts from federal offices and national organizations

- Preliminary findings
 - Young people not considered a group at risk during the early phase of the pandemic – effects on mental health not at the foreground
 - Issue of young people's mental health put on the agenda by groups of mental health professionals (e.g. psychiatrists, school psychologists) and organisations working with young people
 - Wellbeing and mental health broadly conceptualized as a result of structural conditions involving a number of domains (schools, families, social relations, physical health...) and actors
 - Young people's mental health already a social problem before but the situation worsened and became more visible with the pandemic
 - Structural challenges (lack of a legal mandate at federal level, difficulties of the coordination across federal instances and with cantons, limited resources, diversity across cantons)

Next steps

- Understanding the relationship between NEET and wellbeing during the pandemic
- Examining the buffering effect of social support on wellbeing during the pandemic
- Comparison of wellbeing of young people during the pandemic to earlier cohorts

Next steps

- Revision and completion of inventory at federal level
- Sampling of cantons for case studies
- Integration of cantonal policies into the inventory
- Expert interviews at cantonal level

Output and knowledge transfer

Submitted papers

Gondek, D., García Garzón, E., Sánchez-Mira, N., Vandecasteele, L., Steinmetz, S., & Voorpostel, M. (2024). Going beyond the single item: Deriving and evaluating a composite subjective wellbeing measure in the Swiss household Panel. *FORS Working Paper Series, paper 2024-1*. Lausanne: FORS. DOI: 10.24440/FWP-2024-1.

Gondek, D., Vandecasteele, L., Sánchez-Mira, N., Steinmetz, S., Mehmeti, T., & Voorpostel, M. The COVID-19 pandemic and well-being in Switzerland – worse for young people? Under review by *Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Mental Health*.

Outreach activities

- <https://covidgeneration.ch>
- Policy Advisory Board meeting (4 September 2023)

¹ FORS, Lausanne

² University of Neuchâtel

³ University of Lausanne

a) Policy Advisory Board

Federal Office of Public Health
Eidgenössische Kommission für Kinder- und Jugendfragen
Federal Social Insurance Office
Die Konferenz der kantonalen Sozialdirektorinnen und Sozialdirektoren
Gesundheitsförderung Schweiz

Further links, contacts & info

<https://covidgeneration.ch>
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