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Times of Change: Young Adults' Perceptions on Labour Market Issues Before and During the Pandemic

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Abstract. *Young individuals have consistently constituted a distinctive group within the labour market. They have been and continue to be among the vulnerable categories affected by the changes in the labour market. Thereby, in contrast to previous economic crises, the crisis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted them more significantly and within a considerably shorter time frame. Nevertheless, the impact has varied among individuals, with socio-demographic factors like gender, educational level, residential environment, occupation, and digitalization level playing a crucial role in the observed disparities. In this context, utilizing data from Eurobarometers 91.5/2019 and 93.1/2020, the study aims to analyse how young individuals perceive the economic situation and the labour market issues both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the differences that have arisen as a consequence of this crisis. The paper will also investigate variations in socio-demographic variables. The findings will add to existing research, seeking to comprehend the effects of the crisis resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic on young people in the labour market.*

Keywords: Young individuals, labour market, changes, perception, COVID-19 pandemic

Introduction

Young people have always been a distinct group within the labour market. They have been and continue to be among the most vulnerable groups affected by changes in the labour market. They have always been hit harder by economic crises, and their unemployment rate has always been significantly higher than that of the other age groups, even during periods of economic growth. The crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic was no exception. Nevertheless, in contrast to previous economic downturns, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis on them was more pronounced and occurred over a significantly shorter period. This statement can be made because the impact was also felt on education, the transition from education to the labour market, and the workplaces where young individuals were employed. Moreover, it all happened very quickly, which led to an even bigger shock, especially for young people who were both in the educational system and the labour market, as well as those just entering the workforce.

However, it's crucial to acknowledge that the impact of the crisis varies among individuals, and not everyone is affected in the same manner. This also happened among young people during the pandemic. It is important to say that socio-demographic factors like gender, educational level, residential environment, occupation and digitalization level played a crucial role in the occured disparities.

In this context, this paper aims to analyse the perceptions of young individuals regarding the economic situation and labour market issues, both before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, in order to assess whether the pandemic has influenced their perceptions on these critical aspects of their lives. The study also seeks to investigate whether socio-demographic factors contribute to notable differences in their expectations.

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The paper is structured in the following manner: Section 1 is the introduction, containing some essential ideas about the topic of the paper and the main research objectives. Section 2 offers a literature review highlighting the results and conclusions from various studies concerning young people before and during the pandemic. Additionally, it explores the disparities among them attributed to socio-demographic variables. Section 3 outlines the data and methodology employed in the study. Section 4 provides the empirical results, organized into three sub-sections. The initial subsection develops a profile of EU young people before and during the pandemic. The following subsection explores young people's main perceptions of labour market and economic issues before and during the pandemic, while the last subsection examines the variations among young people based on socio-demographic variables. The last section summarizes the key conclusions.

Literature review

Young individuals have consistently been a focal point of research across various countries, examining aspects such as education, their transition into the workforce, and their adaptation to changes in employment dynamics compared to other demographic groups. Several studies have shown that youth unemployment has always been a persistent phenomenon, regardless of the state of the labour market, but also that young people have always been much more affected by economic crises than other socio-demographic groups (Dimian, 2011; Rotar, 2022; Pisică et al., 2015; Terzo & Giaconia, 2018; Mazurkiewicz, 2022). In 2018, a study conducted in Italy highlighted that those most at risk of long-term unemployment are those making the transition from education to the labour market and looking for their first job, with this risk falling significantly, by more than 60%, if young people have been in the labour market before, as employers tend to prefer workers with professional experience (Terzo & Giaconia, 2018). A more recent study has found that in instances where young individuals face challenges in securing employment within the formal sector, they commonly opt to search for work in the informal sector (Rotar, 2022). That makes them more vulnerable, especially in times of economic crisis.

Despite catching everyone by surprise and impacting individuals to varying degrees, young people were particularly severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. According to a study conducted by ILO (2021) this vulnerability stemmed from the fact that, at the onset of the pandemic, young people were still grappling with the lingering effects of the 2008 financial crisis on the labour market. Another study revealed that the magnitude of job losses in the initial months following the onset of the pandemic was considerably more significant than the cumulative impact observed over several years during the previous financial crisis, which resulted in considerably higher youth unemployment rates compared to other demographic categories, as well as in comparison to previous economic downturns (Montenovo et al., 2022). This is also because some of the sectors most affected by this pandemic crisis are those in which young people tend to start their careers (Blundell et al., 2021). Moreover, the severe challenges experienced by young people during the pandemic were exacerbated by the simultaneous disruption of both employment and education, which was expected to heighten the precariousness of their future prospects (MacDonald et al., 2023). This context not only poses a risk of young people not acquiring adequate skills but also increases the likelihood of their existing skills becoming obsolete if they spend extended periods outside the labour market or education, which can have long-term negative consequences (Terzo & Giaconia, 2018).

While the effects of the pandemic were widespread, the impact on distinct groups of people varied. Hence, the crisis triggered by the pandemic has impacted inequalities in age, gender,

education, wages, employability, ethnicity, and other dimensions that were previously perceived as insignificant, including remote work and home education (Blundell et al., 2021).

Given that youth employment is more vulnerable to economic shocks compared to adult employment (Rotar, 2022), several studies have found that young individuals have been disproportionately affected, experiencing higher increases in unemployment and more significant declines in employability rates compared to adults (Kuroishi et al., 2022; Pisică et al., 2015; Belot et al., 2021; Blundell et al.,2020). This phenomenon is also attributed to the preference of employers to lay off younger workers with less experience and skills compared to older workers, as it is more cost-effective for them and entails fewer losses (Rotar, 2022). Another study conducted in India demonstrated that a young worker (15-24 years old) was about four times more likely to lose their job than an adult aged 35-44. In terms of recovery, young men are 13 times less likely, and young women are eight times less likely to return to work after the crisis than those aged 35-44 (Abraham et al., 2022).

Based on a study conducted in the United States, there has been a shift in the impact of job loss during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to previous crises. While men were typically more affected by job loss in past crises, the roles have reversed, with women experiencing more significant job losses and higher unemployment rates in the current pandemic-induced crisis (Alon et al., 2020). According to a study conducted by ILO (2021), women's employment declined by 5% worldwide, while men's employment decreased by only 3.9%. Young women were the most affected group, experiencing greater impact compared to both adult women and young men (Barford et al., 2021). A challenging period emerged at the onset of the pandemic when, due to imposed restrictions and the closure of schools, women faced a higher likelihood of job loss or reduced working hours. A study conducted across 40 developing countries, including Romania, revealed that during this period, women's probability of unemployment was 8 percent higher than that of men (Kugler et al., 2023). Women and men were impacted differently, depending on the sectors in which they were employed. Women experienced significant job losses in sectors like hotels and restaurants, retail trade, and education, while men were more affected in sectors such as transport and storage, public administration, defense, and the manufacturing of transport equipment (Acheampong, 2021). Furthermore, unlike men who largely returned to work, the impact on women was more severe, with a significant proportion experiencing more permanent job losses (Abraham et al., 2022).

Education has also been a crucial factor in labour market participation during this period. Individuals with low levels of education, particularly young people lacking skills, have been significantly affected, given that they encounter difficulties in finding employment even during periods of economic growth (Dimian, 2011). The decrease in working hours was notably more pronounced for individuals with a low level of education, approximately 8 hours, compared to those with a medium or high level, where the decline ranged between 3 and 5 hours. This was found by Schroder et al. (2020) in their study conducted in Germany. In another study conducted in Japan, it was observed that the likelihood of unemployment is higher among individuals with a low level of education and a low level of income (Kuroishi et al., 2022). Therefore, it is crucial to emphasize that the education system plays a vital role in the successful integration of individuals into the labor market. It serves as the primary means for providing adequate training to young people (Pisică et al., 2015). But younger generations are more likely to bear the brunt of disrupted education and a labour market with fewer opportunities for training and significantly fewer job vacancies than before the pandemic, diminishing their prospects for career advancement (Blundell et al., 2021).

Additional research has shown that individuals with temporary employment contracts, along with those from ethnic minority groups, have also experienced adverse effects due to this crisis (Crossley et al., 2021; Kikuchi et al., 2021). Likewise, job losses have been more significant for individuals in roles requiring face-to-face interaction, while positions that can be performed remotely or are in essential industries experienced fewer losses (Montenovo et al., 2022).

Considering all this information, it is evident that significant disparities exist among individuals based on specific socio-demographic factors that define them. Therefore, this paper aims to contribute to the existing literature in this field and investigates whether there are significant differences between socio-demographic groups of young people in the EU27 regarding their expectations for the next 12 months on various aspects related to the economy and labour market, particularly in the context of the pandemic.

Methodology

This research paper aims to answer the following questions: What are the perceptions of young individuals in the EU regarding the economic and labour market situation both before and during the pandemic? What expectations do they hold for the forthcoming 12 months since the survey? What do they identify as the primary challenges confronting their country as well as themselves on a personal level both before and during the pandemic? Do socio-demographic variables contribute to noteworthy differences in their expectations?

In order to address the aforementioned questions, this analysis draws upon data from Eurobarometer 91.5/2019, conducted pre-COVID-19, and Eurobarometer 93.1/2020, conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Eurobarometer 91.5/2019 collected data between June 7 and July 1, 2019 from 32524 individuals aged 15 years and over, from the EU28 member States and another 6 countries (Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania and Turkish Cypriot Community). A stratified probability sample was used and face-to-face interviews were conducted on topics such as: attitudes towards the EU, Europe 2020 strategy and policy priorities, Financial and economic crisis and related EU policies, European citizenship, Future of the EU, media use and political information. Data for Eurobarometer 93.1/2020 were collected from July 9 to August 26, 2020. This particular survey, conducted amid the COVID-19 pandemic, aimed to investigate the opinions and behaviors of European individuals regarding the economic consequences of the pandemic and the priorities of Europeans. The survey was open to residents of all EU Member States and seven additional non-EU countries (UK, Turkey, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania, Serbia and Turkish Cypriot Community) aged 15 years and over. A mixed probability and non-probability sample was utilized, and a total of 33059 people were interviewed face-to-face or, in some cases due to epidemiological conditions, through a self-administered questionnaire. The Eurobarometer survey covered various topics including: attitudes towards the EU, The EU and the Coronavirus outbreak, Europeans' priorities, European citizenship and EU budget.

The analysis of the main perceptions of EU young people regarding the economic and labour market issues was carried out utilizing descriptive statistics and charts. Differences in young people's expectations influenced by socio-demographic variables were also examined, based on the non-parametric Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests and the mean scores.

The analysis exclusively considered individuals aged between 15 and 29 from the EU27 countries. The required analyses were conducted using the SPSS software, version 26. The analyses were performed following the selection of relevant cases and the application of database weighting.

Results

EU Young individuals Sample Profile before and during the pandemic

Out of the overall respondents included in the analyzed Eurobarometers, the subset of young people in the 15-29 age group, considered in this paper's analysis, numbered 5354 in 2019, before the pandemic, and 5181 in 2020, during the pandemic. Among them, 51.2% were males in 2019, and this proportion increased slightly to 52.2% in 2020. The majority were aged 15-24 in both 2019 and 2020, accounting for 64.2% and 64.4%, respectively. In terms of years of education, the majority are still studying, constituting 44.3% in 2019 and 39.7% in 2020. Approximately 30% have completed between 16 and 19 years of education, while 20.1% of respondents in 2019 and 24.5% in 2020 had more than 20 years of education. Those with less than 15 years of education represent a very small percentage.

The majority of young respondents come from small and medium-sized towns, around 44%, with the fewest coming from rural areas (24.6% in 2019 and 25.9% in 2020). Just over 30% come from large cities. In terms of employment status, a considerable proportion of young people were not working (58.4% in 2019 and 60.2% in 2020), while those in employment were 39% in 2019 and 35.8% in 2020. Only 2.6% were self-employed in 2019, and this figure increased to 4% in 2020. Most young respondents belong to the middle class, constituting 48.2% in 2019 and 51.8% in 2020, followed by the working class, accounting for approximately 20%. The lower middle class comprises about 16%, and the upper middle class slightly exceeds 8%. Only around 1% of respondents belong to the higher class. Regarding challenges in paying bills, a significant proportion (63% in 2019 and 66.9% in 2020) rarely or never face difficulties, approximately 24% encounter occasional challenges, while only 8.4% of respondents in 2019 and 6.9% in 2020 experience difficulties most of the time.

Another crucial aspect is the use of the Internet, and the responses indicate that over 97% utilize the internet every day or almost every day, both before and during the pandemic. Slightly over 1% use the internet two or three times a week, while the percentage of those who lack access to the internet or use it very rarely is extremely low, less than 0.5%.

Analysing the main perceptions of EU young people regarding the economic and labour market issues before and during the pandemic

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate young people's perceptions in the EU27 regarding the following issues (country general, national economy, European economy, job personal, financial household, employment country, public services), before and during the pandemic. The data indicates that, except for Financial Household, the number of people perceiving the situation as "very good" in 2020 (during the pandemic) is lower than in 2019 (prior to the pandemic). As well, the percentage of individuals perceiving the situation as "rather good" decreased in 2020 compared to 2019, while a more significant proportion of them expressed pessimism, categorizing the situation as "rather bad" or "very bad". In 2020, about 17% more individuals believed that the national economy, the European economy, and the employment country are "rather bad" or "very bad" compared to 2019. Conversely, a smaller percentage of people perceived their personal job situation to be "rather bad" or "very bad", with only 3 pp increase compared to 2019.

Therefore, it is evident that in 2020, the younger generation has grown significantly more pessimistic about the economic situation and job market, likely influenced by the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on them.

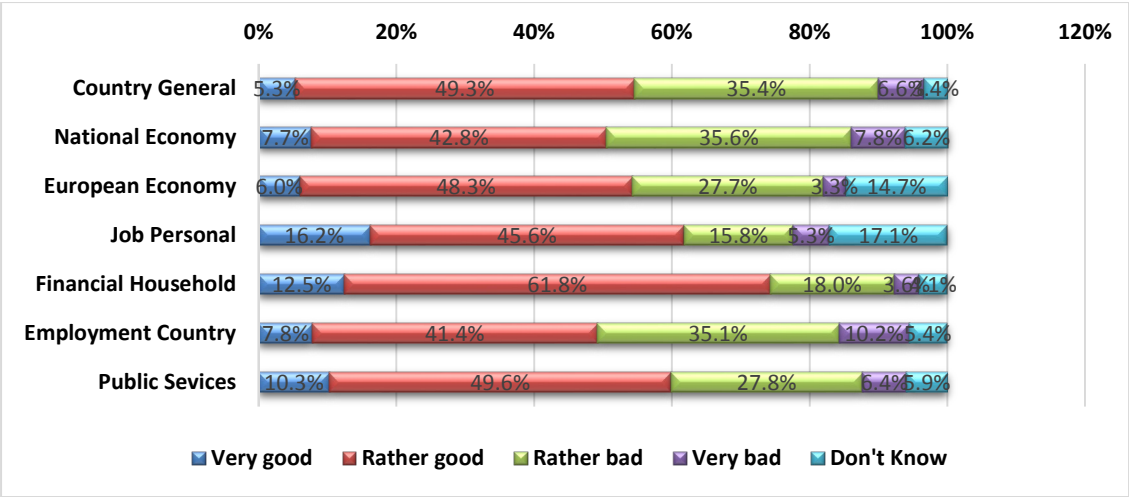

Figure 1. How EU young people judge the current situation in each of the following, in 2019

Source: Author' own research based on data from Eurobarometer 91.5/2019.

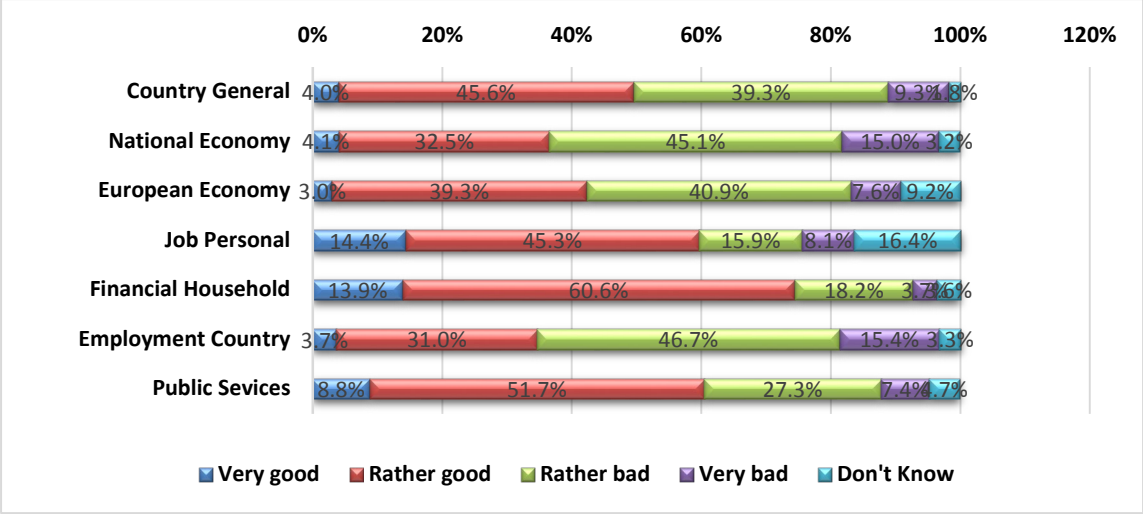

Figure 2. How EU young people judge the current situation in each of the following, in 2020

Source: Author' own research based on data from Eurobarometer 93.1/2020.

Individuals' expectations regarding the situation in the next 12 months have also changed in 2020 in comparison to 2019. Hence, the percentage of individuals anticipating a better situation was lower in 2020, while the percentage of individuals expecting a worse situation increased. With respect to Economic situation country, Employment situation country and Economic situation EU, in 2020 a significant proportion of young respondents expected a worse situation in the next 12 months, whereas in 2019, the prevailing belief among an important part of them was that the situation would be the same. If we consider Financial situation household and Personal job situation, we observe a shift in weights here as well, with the majority anticipating the situation to remain the same, followed by those expecting an improvement. The rise in the percentage of those anticipating a worse situation is relatively modest compared to 2019.

Hence, it is observable that the expectations of young people have shifted in the light of the pandemic. The proportion anticipating a deterioration in the economic and labour market conditions over the next 12 months is notably higher in 2020 compared to 2019.

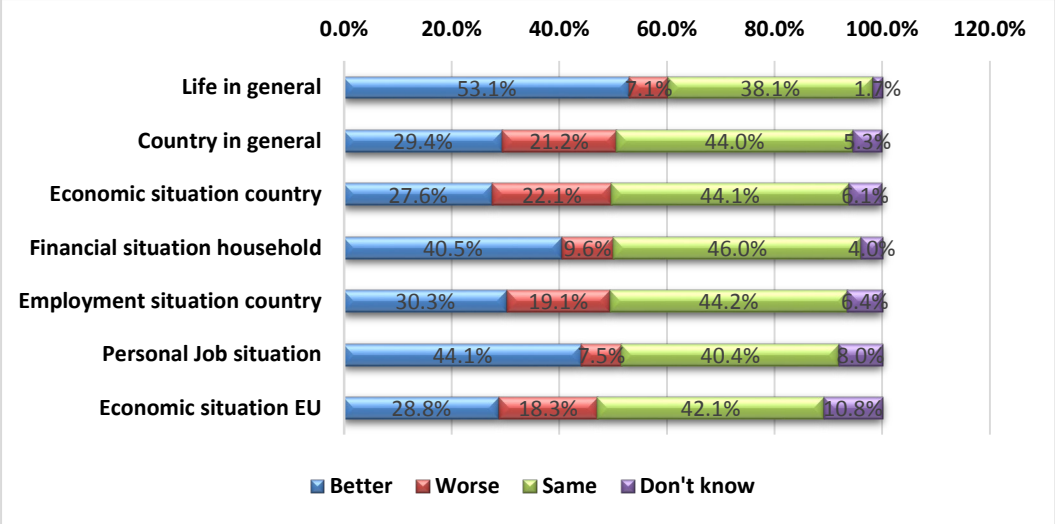

Figure 3. The expectations of EU young people for the next 12 months, in 2019

Source: Author' own research based on data from Eurobarometer 91.5/2019.

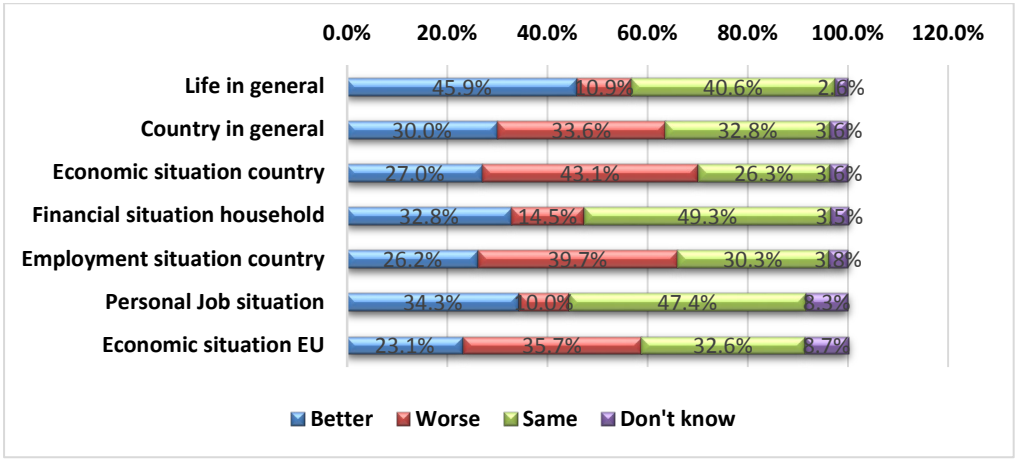

Figure 4. The expectations of EU young people for the next 12 months, in 2020

Source: Author' own research based on data from Eurobarometer 93.1/2020.

Differences were also noted between 2019 and 2020 in terms of the most important issues facing the country. Thus, in 2019, around a quarter of the young respondents considered the unemployment and the environment to be the most significant issues facing their country. More than one in 5 of them considered inflation to be an important problem, while a little over 16% of the young respondents regarded the economic situation and the educational system as significant issues their country was facing at that time. Health and social security was considered an important problem by only 15% of them, but in 2020, after the outbreak of the pandemic, it became the main concern, ranking at the top of the important issues facing the country, with 32% expressing this viewpoint. Both the economic situation and the unemployment were perceived as important problems facing the country by more young people compared to 2019, with 30.2% and 29% respectively expressing this concern. Therefore, we can observe that, in addition to health, the economic situation and the unemployment emerged as the primary concerns after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, significantly impacting young people in particular.

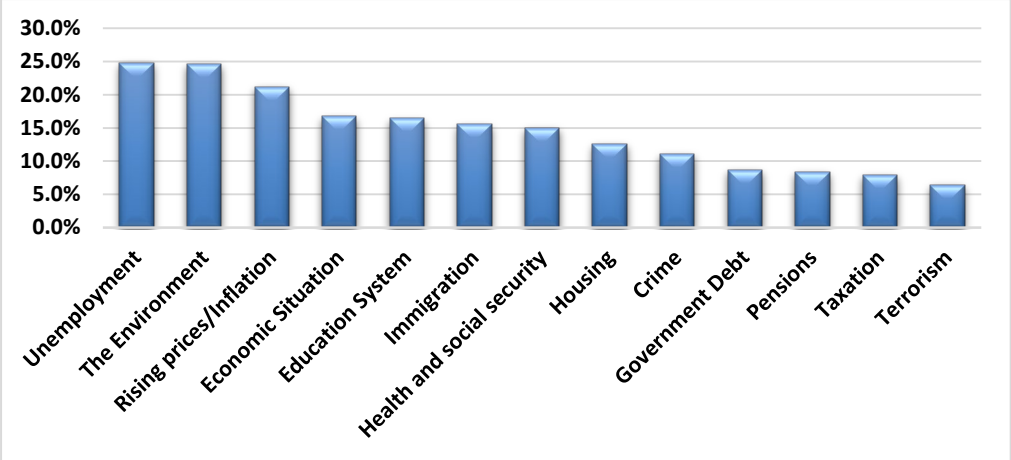

Figure 5. The most important issues the country is facing at the moment, in 2019

Source: Author' own research based on data from Eurobarometer 91.5/2019.

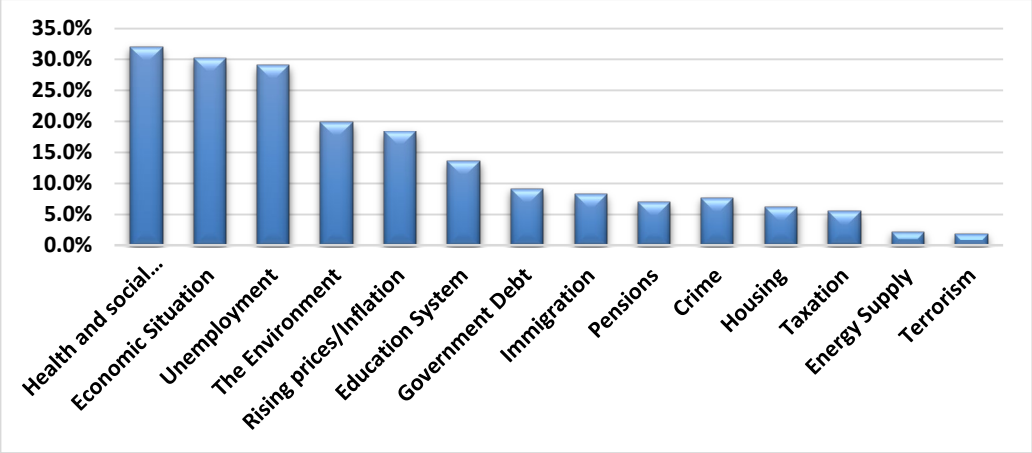

Figure 6. The most important issues the country is facing at the moment, in 2020

Source: Author' own research based on data from Eurobarometer 93.1/2020.

Regarding the most important issues young people are facing, it can be observed that there were no major changes in 2020 in comparison to 2019. In both 2019 and 2020, the top three most important issues for young people were: rising prices/inflation, the education system and the environment, with slight variations in percentages. Nevertheless, it is noticeable that in 2020, in comparison to 2019, the unemployment, the household financial situation, and the economic situation have climbed in the ranking of personal concerns for young people, indicating that more young individuals are now grappling with these issues than before the pandemic. Therefore, the percentage of individuals confronting unemployment rose from 12.8% to 16.8%. In 2020, 14.1% encountered issues with household finances, an increase from the 10.9% reported in 2019. Additionally, the economic situation emerged as a significant personal problem for 13.5% of young respondents in 2020, compared to only 8.5% in 2019.

Consequently, the COVID-19 pandemic has led young people to confront unemployment and household financial challenges, along with broader economic concerns, to a greater degree than in the preceding period.

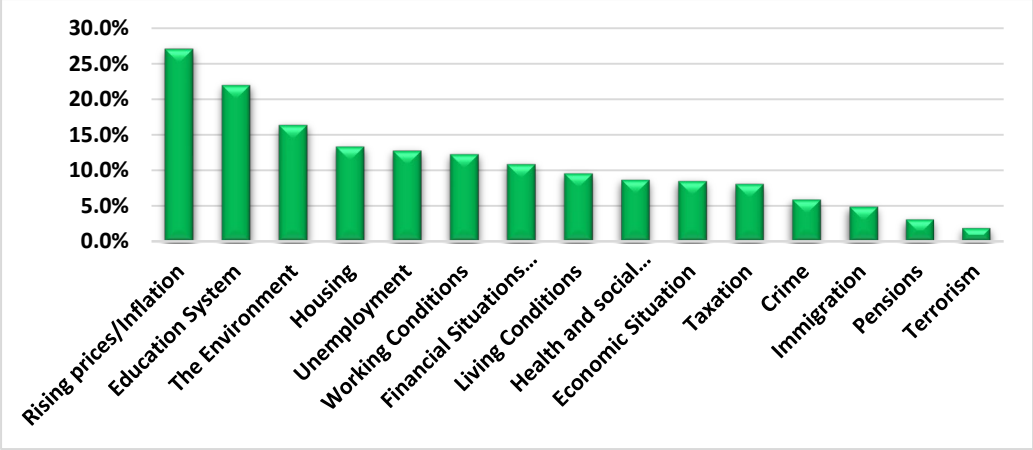

Figure 7. The most important issues young people are facing at the moment, in 2019

Source: Author' own research based on data from Eurobarometer 91.5/2019

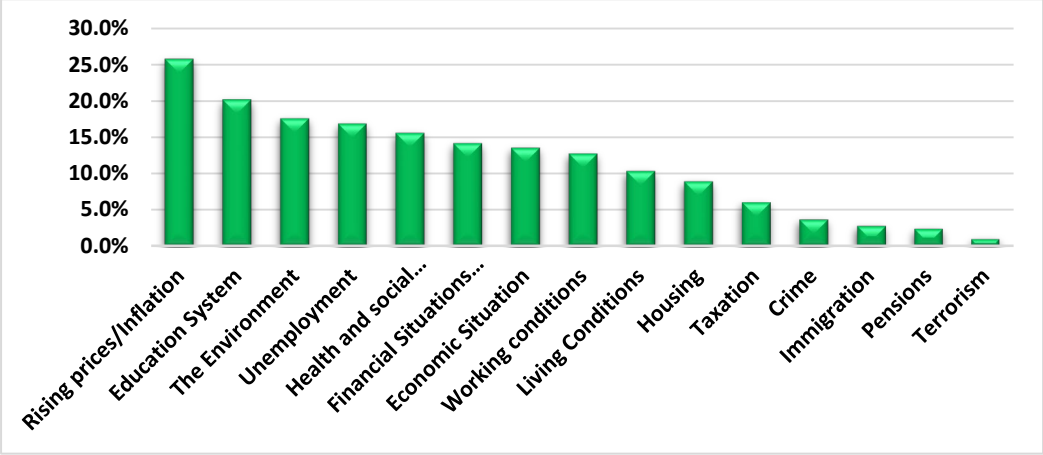

Figure 8. The most important issues young people are facing at the moment, in 2020

Source: Author' own research based on data from Eurobarometer 93.1/2020.

Analysing Socio-Demographic Influences on EU Youths' Economic and Labour Market Expectations Amid the Pandemic

This section aims to explore and comprehend the impact of different socio-demographic factors, including age, gender, and others, on the expectations of young individuals in the European Union regarding economic conditions and challenges in the labour market amid the pandemic. Through this investigation, the paper seeks to pinpoint significant variations and trends in attitudes, shedding light on EU youth's diverse experiences and perspectives in response to the pandemic's effects on the economy and employment landscape. Hence, eight socio-demographic variables were taken into account (as shown in Table 1), and non-parametric statistical tests (Mann-Whitney; Kruskal Wallis) were conducted to determine if there were noteworthy differences in the expectations of young people.

When considering age as a factor, notable differences emerge in the expectations between individuals aged 15-24 and those aged 25-29, particularly regarding: personal job situation, life in general, financial situation household, country in general, economic situation country and economic situation EU. The only aspect where expectations are similar between the two analyzed groups is regarding the employment situation in the country. If we consider gender, significant

differences between women's and men's expectations emerge particularly when it comes to: country in general, employment situation in the country and financial situation household. Considering both years of education and occupation of the individuals, significant differences are observed between the expectations of the analyzed groups across all seven areas. The type of community and social class lead to different expectations among individuals in five of the seven surveyed areas, except for country in general and economic situation EU in the case of community type and except for life in general and financial situation household regarding social class. And between those who use the Internet daily and those who use it less frequently or not at all, there are significant differences in their expectations regarding the surveyed areas, except for economic situation in the country. Moreover, if we examine difficulties in paying bills, we observe distinct expectations between the analyzed groups in five of the seven surveyed areas, with the exception of life in general and employment situation in the country.

When expressing their expectations for the seven surveyed areas, individuals were provided with four options: 1. Better, 2. Worse, 3. Same, and 4. Don't know. The mean of the responses for each subgroup was calculated to assess how socio-demographic variables influence young people's expectations (Table 2). This enables us to identify which types of individuals tend to be more optimistic and which types tend to be more pessimistic regarding expectations related to economic and labour market issues during the COVID-19 pandemic. The lower the score, the more optimistic individuals are about improvements in the next 12 months, whereas higher scores suggest that individuals believe things will either remain the same or worsen in the next 12 months.

In this context, individuals aged 25-29 exhibit a higher level of optimism regarding the economic situation EU, financial situation household, employment situation country and personal job situation, whereas those in the 15-24 age group express greater optimism regarding the economic prospects of the country, life in general and country in general. When considering both gender and education levels, it can be seen that men and individuals with over 20 years of education exhibit a slightly higher level of optimism compared to other analyzed groups, specifically in terms of their expectations regarding economic and labour market developments. Regarding the occupation, we see that the self-employed are the most optimistic about the evolution of the presented aspects, except for the employment situation country, where the lowest score is found in the group of the employed individuals.

Residents of larger cities tend to harbor greater optimism regarding their household financial situation and the employability situations, both at the individual and national levels, while individuals living in smaller cities maintain positive expectations about the economic situation but also life in general and country in general. Concerning social class, individuals in the higher class tend to be the most optimistic about the majority of the presented issues. However, when examining the frequency of internet use, the most optimistic expectations are observed among those who use the internet about once a week. Another aspect considered is the difficulty in paying bills, where positive expectations regarding the household financial situation, the employment situation country as well as the personal job situation arise more commonly among those who face difficulties in paying bills frequently. Conversely, individuals who do not encounter these difficulties tend to be more optimistic about the future evolution of the economic situation, both within their country and the EU.

As a result, considering both optimistic and pessimistic views regarding the future economic and labour market conditions, the chart below illustrates a comparison between individuals with optimistic expectations and those with pessimistic expectations, as determined by the averages provided earlier.

Figure 9. Comparative Profiles: Individuals with Positive Expectations versus Individuals with Negative Expectations in Economic and Labour Market Perspectives

Source: Author' own representation.

Conclusions

This study focused on analyzing the perceptions and expectations of EU young people regarding the economic and labour market issues before and during the pandemic, based on data from Eurobarometer 91.5/2019, conducted pre-COVID-19, and Eurobarometer 93.1/2020, conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis revealed a notable divergence in the perceptions and expectations of young people during the pandemic compared to the previous period. They exhibited increased concern and a more pessimistic outlook on the economic and labour market situations in the subsequent period. This observation underscores the negative impact of the pandemic on young people, as reflected in their heightened worries and negativity regarding their future prospects.

The study also investigated whether individuals have divergent expectations based on their socio-demographic characteristics. In this context, the analysis uncovered noteworthy differences in the expectations of young individuals. Hence, the analysis performed found that the impact of

the pandemic varied among young people, and socio-demographic factors such as age, gender, level of education, as well as others including occupation, type of community, internet use or social class, played a crucial role in shaping distinct expectations concerning economic challenges and labour market issues.

The findings of this study add to the existing literature that focuses specifically on the impact of the pandemic on young people.

However, this study also has some limitations. While the study provides valuable insights into perceptions before and during the pandemic, its temporal scope may limit a comprehensive understanding by excluding long-term changes or post-pandemic dynamics. The swift evolution of the COVID-19 crisis and its economic repercussions underscores the potential for rapidly shifting perceptions, rendering the study's findings susceptible to becoming outdated with emerging developments. Thus, this research could be expanded by examining the perceptions and expectations of young individuals across the EU27 before, during, and after the end of the pandemic. This analysis would shed light on whether the pandemic's effects were enduring or if conditions reverted to their pre-pandemic norms. Additionally, conducting country-level studies within the EU27 could reveal significant variations in how the pandemic has impacted young people across different nations.

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Appendix

Table 1. Differences in young people's expectations based on socio-demographic variables

	Age Mann-Whitney Test (Sig. 2-tailed)	**Gender** Mann-Whitney Test (Sig. 2-tailed)	**Years of Education** Kruskal Wallis Test (Sig.)	**Occupation** Kruskal Wallis Test (Sig.)	**Type of community** Kruskal Wallis Test (Sig.)	**Social class** Kruskal Wallis Test (Sig.)	**Internet use** Kruskal Wallis Test (Sig.)	**Difficulties paying bills** Kruskal Wallis Test (Sig.)
Expectations: Life in general	2763710.500 (0.001***)	3179652.500 (0.608)	28.738 (0.000***)	16.509 (0.000***)	10.871 (0.004***)	3.906 (0.419)	14.362 (0.006***)	3.906 (0.142)
Expectations: Country in general	2819502.500 (0.035**)	3067663.500 (0.006***)	63.243 (0.000***)	17.005 (0.000***)	4.351 (0.114)	46.534 (0.000***)	12.872 (0.012**)	35.654 (0.000***)
Expectations: Economic situation	2825472.500 (0.045**)	93127385.000 (0.116)	65.129 (0.000***)	12.653 (0.002***)	8.862 (0.012**)	42.661 (0.000***)	7.776 (0.100*)	32.499 (0.000***)
Expectations: Financial situation HH	2776960.500 (0.002***)	3106952.500 (0.042**)	42.259 (0.000***)	18.024 (0.000***)	4.863 (0.088*)	5.175 (0.270)	21.478 (0.000***)	29.986 (0.000***)
Expectations: Employment situation country	2872586.000 (0.323)	3084555.000 (0.015**)	17.905 (0.001***)	5.336 (0.069*)	19.000 (0.000***)	20.951 (0.000***)	9.720 (0.045**)	2.462 (0.292)
Expectations: Personal Job situation	2695420.000 (0.000***)	3149178.500 (0.254)	111.256 (0.000***)	46.404 (0.000***)	29.401 (0.000***)	30.731 (0.000***)	13.336 (0.010***)	7.904 (0.019**)
Expectations: Economic situation EU	2829861.000 (0.060*)	3190370.500 (0.782)	37.035 (0.000***)	6.723 (0.035**)	0.606 (0.738)	47.202 (0.000***)	10.901 (0.028**)	23.862 (0.000***)

Note:

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.10 level (two-tailed).

Source: Author' own research based on data from Eurobarometer 93.1/2020.

Table 2. Mean scores of young people's expectations regarding economic and labour market issues based on socio-demographic variables

		Expectations: Life in general	Expectations: Country in general	Expectations :Economic situation	Expectations :Financial situation HH	Expectations: Employment situation country	Expectations: Personal Job situation	Expectations :Economic situation EU
Age	15-24 years old	1.97	2.09	2.06	2.26	2.13	2.35	2.29
	25-29 years old	2.06	2.12	2.08	2.18	2.10	2.20	2.23
Gender	Man	2.01	2.07	2.05	2.21	2.08	2.28	2.27
	Woman	1.99	2.14	2.09	2.26	2.15	2.32	2.27
Years of education	up to 15 years	2.35	2.46	2.43	2.34	2.30	2.39	2.60
	16-19 years	2.05	2.19	2.13	2.22	2.15	2.24	2.29
	20 years or over	1.93	2.03	2.01	2.11	2.06	2.09	2.17
	Still studying	1.99	2.05	2.02	2.31	2.10	2.46	2.28
	No full time education	1.88	2.13	2.08	2.63	2.18	2.61	2.51
Occupation	Self-employed	1.84	1.93	1.86	2.03	2.10	1.99	2.12
	Employed	2.07	2.15	2.08	2.20	2.08	2.21	2.25
	Not working	1.97	2.08	2.07	2.27	2.14	2.37	2.29
Type of community	Rural area or village	2.07	2.13	2.11	2.28	2.15	2.42	2.25
	Small/middle town	1.97	2.09	2.04	2.23	2.14	2.26	2.29
	Large town	1.99	2.09	2.05	2.21	2.05	2.24	2.26
Social class	The working class	2.02	2.22	2.17	2.21	2.19	2.28	2.39
	The lower middle class	2.00	2.09	2.04	2.17	2.07	2.22	2.22
	The middle class	1.99	2.07	2.03	2.23	2.12	2.32	2.24
	The upper middle class	1.91	1.95	1.89	2.27	1.99	2.23	2.13
	The higher class	1.94	1.71	1.99	2.11	1.87	1.51	1.88
Internet use (index)	Everyday/Almost everyday	2.00	2.09	2.06	2.24	2.12	2.30	2.27
	Two or three times a week	1.79	2.29	2.02	1.92	2.07	2.14	2.23
	About once a week	1.95	2.51	1.82	1.84	1.88	1.75	1.67
	Two or three times a month	1.33	1.41	2.09	2.09	2.00	2.07	2.00
	No internet access	2.73	2.42	2.48	2.83	2.71	2.90	2.74
Difficulties paying bills	Most of the time	1.90	2.21	2.21	2.03	2.09	2.21	2.38
	From time to time	2.01	2.19	2.13	2.15	2.15	2.22	2.33
	Almost never/never	2.00	2.05	2.02	2.26	2.10	2.31	2.22

Source: Author' own research based on data from Eurobarometer 93.1/2020.