PRESS RELEASE

World Youth Skills Day 2021

Worse mental health and wellbeing and making up for missed education are seen as long-lasting outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic for children and young people

On average, almost four in ten across 29 countries (a global country average of 37%), think worse mental health and wellbeing among children and young people will be a long-lasting outcome of the pandemic, according to new global study from Ipsos. Over a third (a global country average of 35%) also believe that children will be unable to make up for missed formal education resulting in worse qualifications. Despite this, six in ten on average across the 29 countries (62%) think school closures are or were an acceptable price to pay to reduce the spread of Coronavirus, while around a quarter (a global country average of 27%) think primary and secondary should be a priority area for public spending after the pandemic, after healthcare and social security/financial support. The poll, carried out to mark World Youth Skills Day 2021, explores public attitudes towards COVID-19 and its impact on children's education, wellbeing and skills development among online adults aged 16-74 across 29 countries.

Key Findings:

Maintaining focus and concentration on schoolwork is seen as the biggest issue affecting children and young people of all age groups as they return to the classroom.

Respondents were asked to select up to three issues that they think will have the biggest impact on the wellbeing of children and young people whose schools have closed as they return to in-person education.

- On average, four in ten think that maintaining concentration on schoolwork will be among the biggest issues facing children and young people aged up to 17 as they return to school.

- Almost a third on average in 29 countries think adjusting to changes in the school environment and reintegrating with other pupils, teachers and staff will be among the biggest issues facing children aged under 11 (mentioned by a global country average of 32% and 31%, respectively), while maintaining good behaviour and discipline is expected to be a bigger issue for children aged 12-15 (mentioned by a global country average of 32%).

People think that worse mental health and wellbeing will be a long-term outcome of the pandemic for children and young people.

- In many countries polled, worse mental health and wellbeing is mentioned as a long-lasting outcome of the pandemic, with almost four in ten (37%) on average across 29 countries identifying this as a long-lasting outcome for children and young people. Mental health and

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wellbeing was mentioned most often in Sweden (by 51% of respondents), Canada (50%) and Chile (46%) and least often in Mexico (23%) and Saudi Arabia (19%).

- Over a third (a global country average of 35%) believe that children will be unable to make up for missed formal education resulting in worse qualifications, while three in ten (30%) on average in 29 countries think that children and young people will face higher unemployment rates and lost earnings in the future – two issues that may be linked. Concerns around missed education and worse qualifications are highest in South Korea (55%) and Malaysia (51%) and lowest in Australia (19%). Concerns around high unemployment rates are highest in South Africa (56%) and lowest in Germany (15%).

- Nevertheless, some people do think that there will be positive outcomes to the pandemic. Almost one in five (a global country average of 19%) think improved digital communication skills will be a long-lasting outcome of the COVID-19 pandemic for children and young people, rising to almost two in five in Singapore (37%).

On average across the 29 countries surveyed, most think that school closures are or were an acceptable price to pay to reduce the spread of the virus.

- A global country average of around six in ten (62%) think school closures are an acceptable price to pay to reduce the spread of Coronavirus, though there is a lot of variation between countries. People are most accepting of school closures in Mexico (81%), Peru (81%) and Colombia (80%), and least accepting in Italy (42%), Japan (41%), and South Korea (33%). People with higher levels of education are particularly supportive of school closures (a global country average of 66% think school closures are acceptable).

Support for families who need it to fund school uniforms, books, transport, and other education-related expenses is perceived to be most important to improving access to education, followed by increasing high-speed internet access and providing IT equipment.

Respondents were asked to select up to three actions, if any, that they think will be most important for improving access to education for children and young people in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Support for families who need it to fund school uniforms, books, transport, and other education-related expenses is, on average, the most frequently mentioned action for improving access to education (mentioned by a global country average of 41%). Support for education-related expenses is especially important to people in Mexico (where 59% of people cited it as a most important action), Russia (59%), Colombia (56%) and South Africa (54%).

- Actions related to digitalisation and online learning are also seen as key to improving access to education. Almost four in ten on average across the 29 countries cited 'better access to a high-speed internet connection for all' (37%) and 'funding for computers, laptops or tablets' (36%) as a most important action. Teaching children how to use digital technology is seen as less

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important, with a global country average of just 26% mentioning 'funding for IT training programmes to improve digital skills'.

- Access to a high-speed internet connection was mentioned most often in Malaysia (66%), Peru, (59%) and Chile (55%), while funding for computers, laptops and tablets was mentioned most often in Turkey (56%), Malaysia (55%) and Hungary (52%). People in Sweden were least likely to think that either are most important (13% and 17%, respectively), which may reflect existing high internet penetration rates.[1]

People have competing priorities when it comes to public spending and only around a quarter (a global country average of 27%) see spending on primary and secondary education as a priority.

Respondents were asked to identify up to three areas, if any, that they think should be priority areas for public spending in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

- In almost every country surveyed, people are more likely to see spending on public health as a top priority than any of the other options (with a global country average of 58%). On average, social security and financial support for people ranks second, with four in ten (40%) on average across the 29 countries citing it as a priority area for public spending, while primary and secondary education ranks third (with a global country average of 27%).

- Financial support for businesses ranks above primary and secondary education in Malaysia (38% vs 16%), Turkey (37% vs 27%), China (30% vs 25%), Italy (31% vs 24%) and Japan (28% vs 10%), while government training programmes to enhance employability ranks above primary and secondary education in South Africa (42% vs 24%), Singapore (34% vs 8%), Australia (30% vs 15%), India (29 vs 24%%) and South Korea (29% vs 14%).

- On average, only 15% across the 29 countries see higher education, or vocational education and training, as a priority area for public spending. Vocational training does not rank in any country's top three. Few people see improving internet access as a priority (a global country average of 15%), despite recognising its importance to improving educational access.

- People want their governments to prioritise domestic spending above overseas spending. Just 4% on average across the 29 countries think that spending on overseas development and foreign aid should be a priority. Among the high-income G8 countries, a similar share (just 4% on average) want their governments to prioritise spending on overseas development/foreign aid.

[1] https://www.government.se/496173/contentassets/afe9f1cfeaac4e39abcdd3b82d9bee5d/sweden-completely-connected-by-2025-eng.pdf

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Tech note:

These are the results of a 29-market survey conducted by Ipsos on its Global Advisor online platform. Ipsos interviewed a total of 20,010 adults, aged 18-74 in the United States, Canada, Malaysia, South Africa, and Turkey, aged 18-65 in Singapore, and age 16-74 in 23 other markets between Friday, May 21st and Friday, June 4th, 2021. Data collection in Singapore took place between 11 and 15 June.

The sample consists of approximately 1,000 individuals in each of Australia, Belgium, Canada, mainland China, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Spain, and the United States, and 500 individuals in each of Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Hungary, India, Malaysia, Mexico, the Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Singapore, South Korea, Sweden, and Turkey.
The samples in Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Poland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and the US can be taken as representative of their general adult populations under the age of 75.

The samples in Brazil, mainland China, Chile, Colombia, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa, and Turkey are more urban, more educated, and/or more affluent than the general population. The survey results for these countries should be viewed as reflecting the views of the more "connected" segment of their population.

The data is weighted so that each country's sample composition best reflects the demographic profile of the adult population according to the most recent census data.

The "Global Country Average" reflects the average result for all the countries and markets where the survey was conducted. It has not been adjusted to the population size of each country or market and is not intended to suggest a total result.

Where results do not sum to 100 or the "difference" appears to be +/-1 more/less than the actual, this may be due to rounding, multiple responses, or the exclusion of "don't know" or not stated responses.

The precision of Ipsos online polls is calculated using a credibility interval with a poll of 1,000 accurate to +/- 3.5 percentage points and of 500 accurate to +/- 5.0 percentage points. For more information on the Ipsos use of credibility intervals, please visit the Ipsos website.

The publication of these findings abides by local rules and regulations.

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ISIN code FR0000073298, Reuters ISOS.PA, Bloomberg IPS:FP www.ipsos.com

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