

Young people during the COVID-19 crisis

Insights from research on mental health

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 **SOLUTION**
SOLIDARITÀ &
INCLUSIONE



There was much focus on mental health from the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic

Significant percentages of the population reported mental health issues early during the pandemic:

- 6–15% Anxiety
- 15–48% Depression
- 7–45% Posttraumatic Distress
- 8–82% Stress

Some people are especially at risk for mental health issues during the pandemic

These groups, on average, have higher risks for mental health problems during the pandemic:

- Women / girls
- Younger people
- People with pre-existing physical or mental diseases
- Students

Young people have the highest stress levels during the pandemic

Many young people experience elevated stress levels, social isolation, health related worries, disturbed eating behaviour, sleep disturbances or depressive thoughts

There are different aspects that make the COVID-19 crisis especially stressful for young people

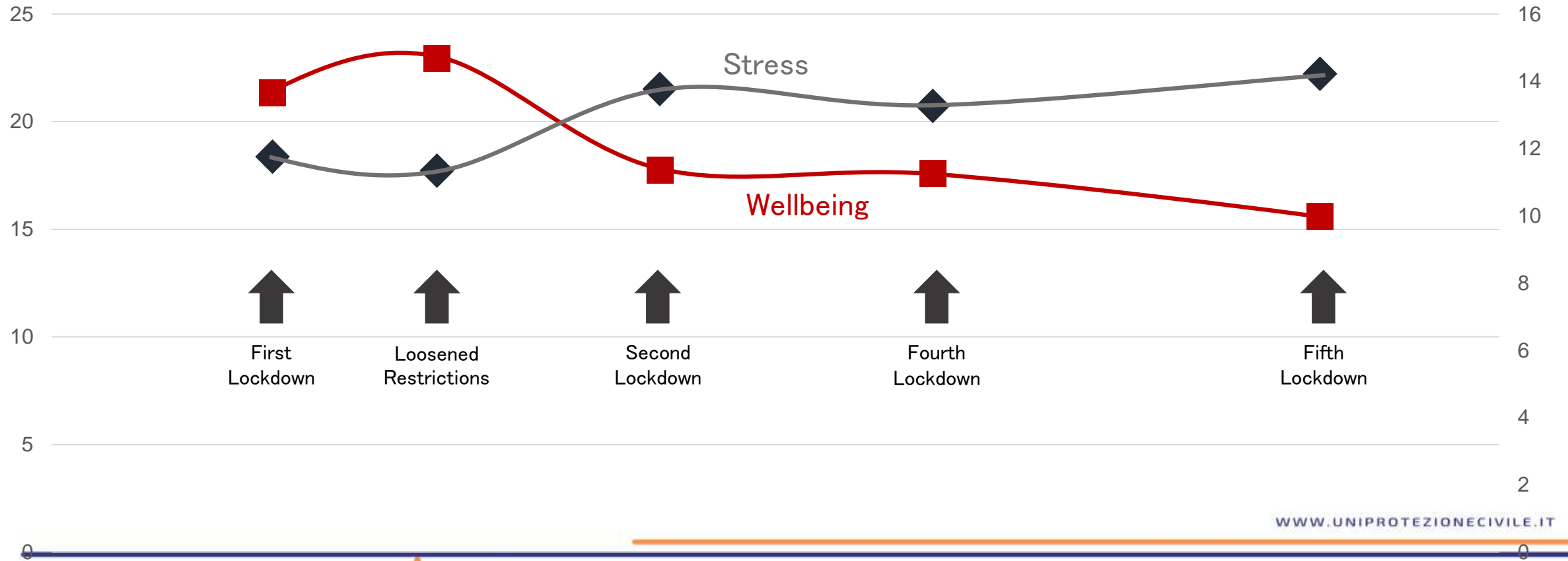
- Often young people like meeting in large groups and making new contacts and miss these opportunities during the COVID-19 restrictions
- The crisis interferes with opportunities at school, university or work
- Some people do not enjoy distance learning
- Young people more often lost their jobs during the crisis and their financial situation is often less stable
- Many young people worry about the people around them getting severely sick with COVID-19

Distance learning can be stressful – but might also be a opportunity

- Online exams are often difficult and cause test anxiety in some students
- Switching from in-person to distance learning was often chaotic and caused planning difficulties
- The main downfall of distance learning are missing opportunities for social contacts
- Technical difficulties often cause problems in distance learning
- How successful distance learning was, was very depended on teachers' engagement and their willingness to adapt and be flexible

Despite the difficulties, many university students wanted to keep the possibility of distance or hybrid learning because they see advantages regarding flexibility

On average, wellbeing is decreased and stress-levels increased during the pandemic



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Experiences during the pandemic changed with its duration

During the first lockdown, the situation was frightening for many but it was also new and somewhat agitating.

When the pandemic prolonged, the experiences changed to increased fatigue and hopelessness and young people started to feel fed up with the situation.

But there also are upsides

- 61% developed new insights of what is important in live
- 57% accepted more that they need other people, 54% learned that they can rely on others during difficult times and 46% invest more into their relationships
- 47% know now better how to cope with difficulties
- 39% are better at accepting that there are things they cannot change
- 39% developed new interests
- 37% became more ready for necessary changes
- 36% discovered that they are stronger than they thought

There are things you can do to protect your mental health during pandemic restrictions

People feel better when they:

- Sleep regularly
- Have a stable social network
- Exercise sporting and creative activities
- Successfully manage conflicts with other people

Other recommendations include: Keep up a time structure, do not use alcohol or other drugs to cope with the situation, keep in touch with your friends, take a break from negative news when necessary

For more details, see the [WHO #HealthyAtHome](#)

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What can you do when you or someone you know is not feeling well mentally

- Keep in touch:
 - You and others your age can support each other by sharing common experiences
 - Older people can help you by sharing their experiences with other crises
- Call a helpline where you can anonymously talk to someone – some also offer anonymous online-chat support
- Get professional help – even if you feel like your problems are “bad enough”, you can always talk to a professional who can point you to further options

Sources

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