

Anxious Optimism

Ontario youth anxiously optimistic about their future according to survey.

August 5, 2020

The syndicated study, co-authored with The Gandalf Group, surveyed 1,500 young people aged 16 to 30 across Ontario in late May/early June of this year. The study found the majority, even those who had lost jobs or income, were optimistic their financial situation would improve within a year. This optimism is qualified however in other areas – a rising concern about their mental health since COVID-19, a specific concern about contracting the disease, concerns about the growing divisions in society and about their future income and financial state.

“It was important for us, in our work with post-secondary clients, to get a deeper sense not just of intentions this fall, but how mindsets have changed,” said Karen Wreford of SOS. *“Despite much of the anxiety we registered, young Ontarians seem able to motivate themselves to take paths to achieve their goals: whether that is returning to school, managing spending or even voicing their worries and concerns about such things as their mental health. It is a healthy response to the challenges that have been laid before them.”*

“Youth have tended to be optimistic about short-term prospects in our survey research. That has been diminished by the pandemic, but it has not disappeared,” said Alex Swann of The Gandalf Group. *“The optimism in some areas is tempered by longer term concerns about careers and quality of life. There is substantial concern about public health issues among this group. While the situation has been challenging for recent grads or students who lost work, most young Ontarians in their 20s are optimistic things will improve and the majority of students intend to press on with plans for education.”*

The syndicated study was produced for subscribers and clients of the two firms. Other variables in the detailed in-depth study with this cohort measured:

- > trust in social media vs. other sources
- > discretionary spending
- > concerns about COVID-19 & physical distancing

Customized presentations are available. For further information or to discuss the study please contact:

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Backgrounder – Fast Facts

Our recent survey of Ontario students finds the pandemic has made them less likely to defer school this fall: only 1 in 4 said the current situation makes them more likely to delay or defer, twice as many said they're actually less likely to delay or defer till things are normal or because of money.

Delay or defer college or university by a year until things are more like normal on campus:

-47% 25%

Take fewer courses or go part-time because of money or time to work:

-49% 20%

Delay college or university because of money:

-51% 20%

LESS LIKELY (1-2)

MORE LIKELY (4-5)

Our survey found most Ontario youth expected to be better off next year: 18% much better, 45% somewhat better, while only 6% expected to be much worse off.

Looking forward to one year from now, do you think that your personal financial or economic situation will be....?

18%  MUCH BETTER

45%  A LITTLE BETTER

20%  A LITTLE WORSE

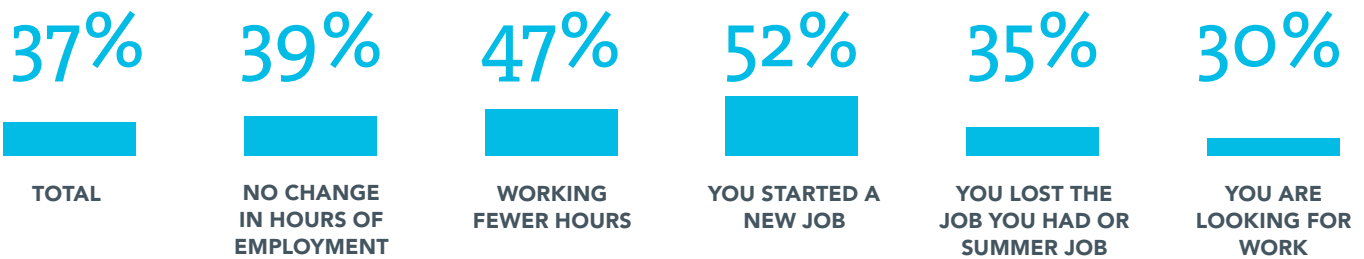
6%  MUCH WORSE

11%  DON'T KNOW

Backgrounder – Fast Facts

A larger pool of unemployed youth is a challenge for the labour force & skills development. Yet our study found those most likely to retrain are in fact currently employed. The newly unemployed are less likely to prioritize going back to school ahead of finding work and income.

% of each group saying they are more likely to take continuing education, seminars or other classes in person or online from a college or university:



Ontario's youth prioritize medical expertise in the pandemic above all. Their trust in social media as a medium is dismally low.

