



Young Lives, Interrupted: Short-term Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Adolescents in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

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COVID-19 and longitudinal research: opportunities and challenges

May 11th, 2021

Research objective

- ❑ Analyse how COVID-19 has impacted the lives of adolescents in four developing countries (very differently affected by the health crisis), using unique comparable longitudinal data from LMICs.

- ❑ Focus on:
 - Economic situation of the household
 - Subjective wealth
 - Education enrolment
 - Subjective well-being

The Young Lives study

The Young Lives longitudinal study has been conducted since 2002 in Ethiopia, India (Andhra Pradesh and Telangana), Peru and Vietnam with :

- ❑ Two cohorts: Younger cohort (born in 2001-2) and Older Cohort (born in 1994-95)
- ❑ Oversampling poorer areas
- ❑ Comprising five rounds of longitudinal quantitative surveys up to Round 5 in 2016
- ❑ One three-part phone survey built over the sample visited in 2016:
 - ‘**Call 1**’: Early June to mid July (15 minutes).
 - ‘**Call 2**’: Early August to mid October (45 minutes).
 - ‘**Call 3**’: Early November to mid December (15 minutes).
- ❑ Sample retention from 2002 is very high, between 75.8% (Peru) and 91.4% (India)

COVID-19 experiences in the YL countries

- ❑ The four YL study countries have all been very differently affected by the COVID-19 crisis

Table 1. Confirmed COVID-19 cases and deaths per million as at 15 October

Country	Number of COVID-19 cases per million people	Cumulative COVID-19 deaths per million people
Peru	26,075	1,019
India	5,341	82
Ethiopia	759	12
Vietnam	12	<1

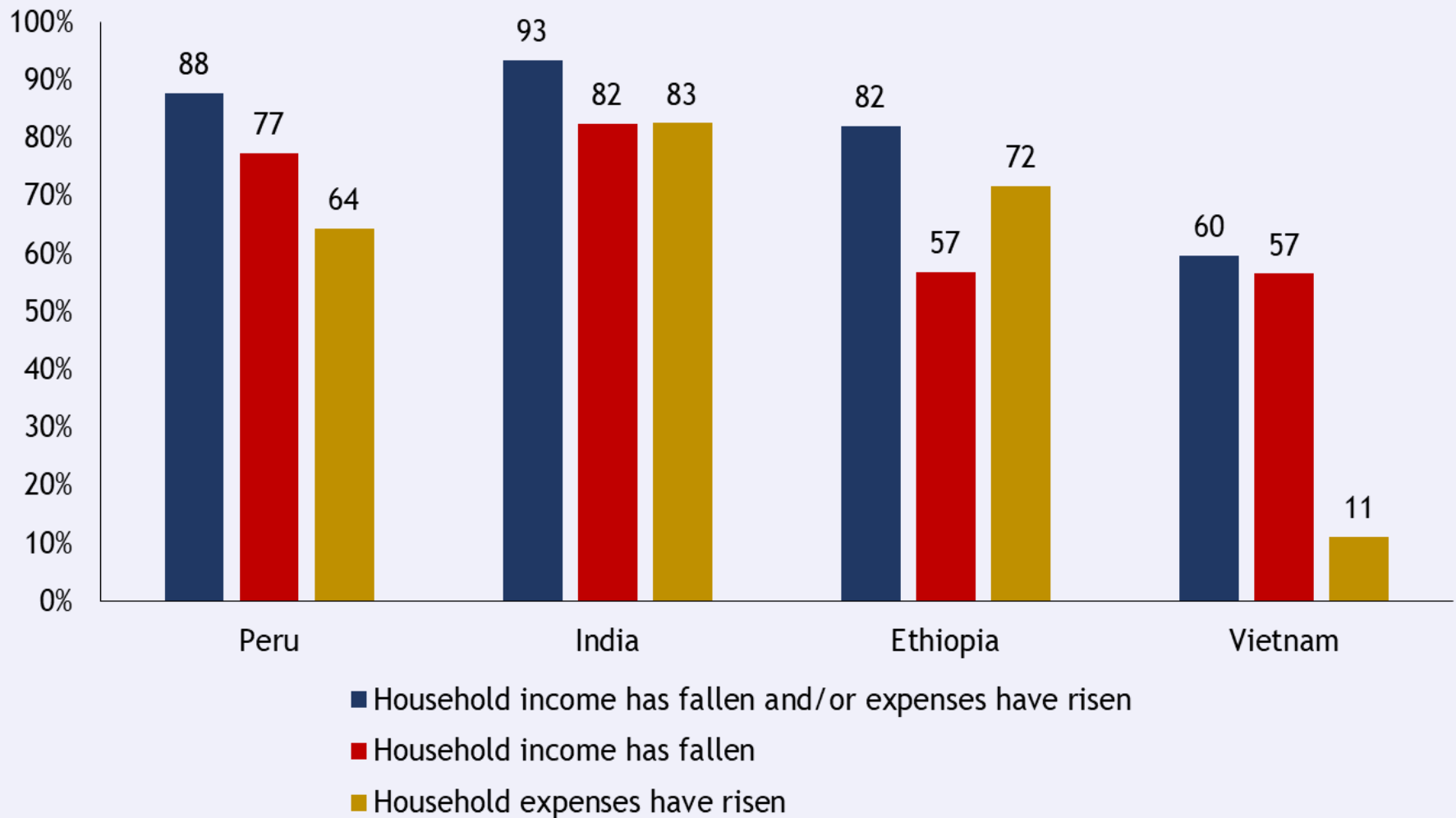
Source: <https://ourworldindata.org>

- ❑ Has this resulted in different experiences for adolescents?

Economic shocks



Figure 2. Economic shocks since the outbreak of COVID-19 on Younger Cohort





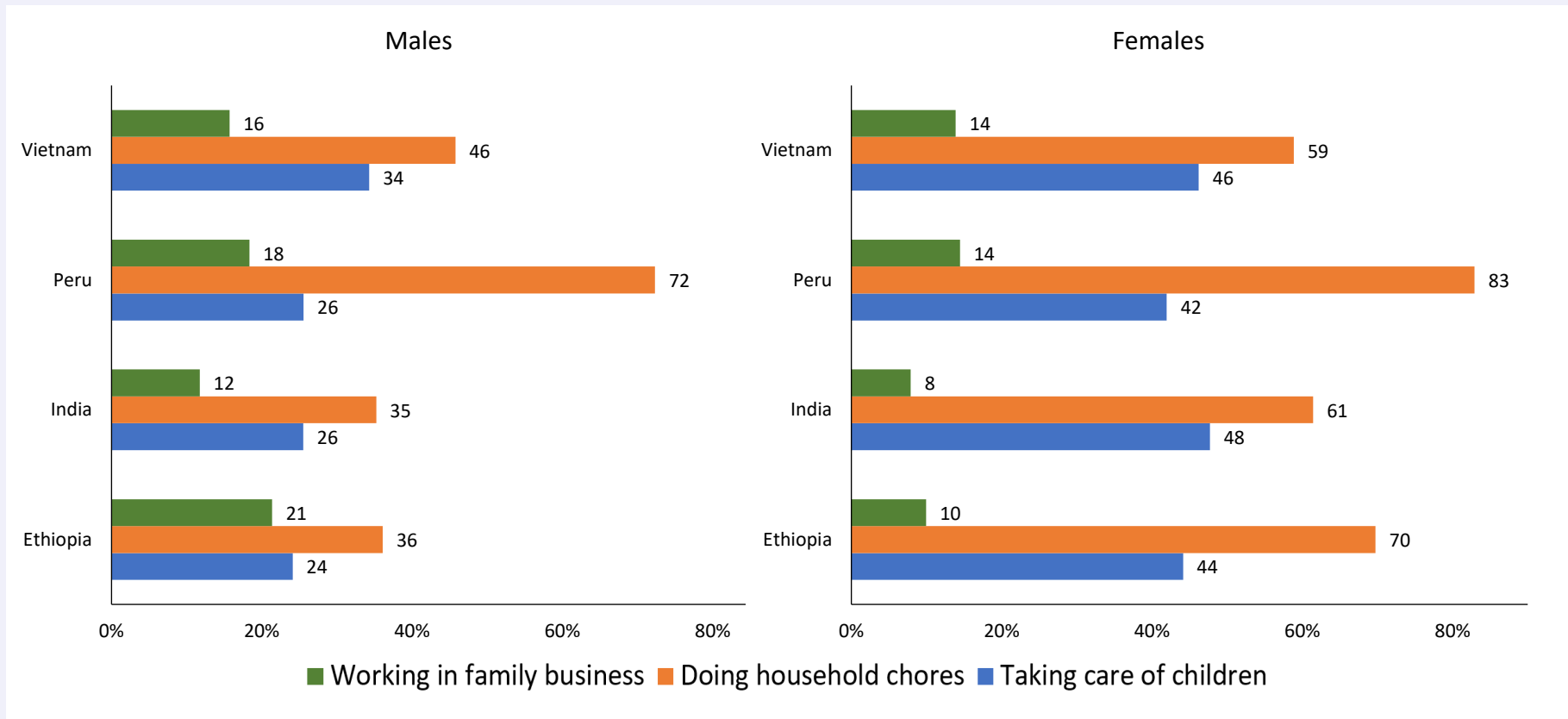
- Education interruptions have varied by country, with Peru being the worst affected
- In Peru, **16 per cent** of the Younger Cohort who were engaged in formal education before the pandemic had dropped out or chosen not to enrol
- There are stark inequalities between countries with regards to access to online learning during the pandemic

Time use



☐ Households tended to resort to more traditional gender roles

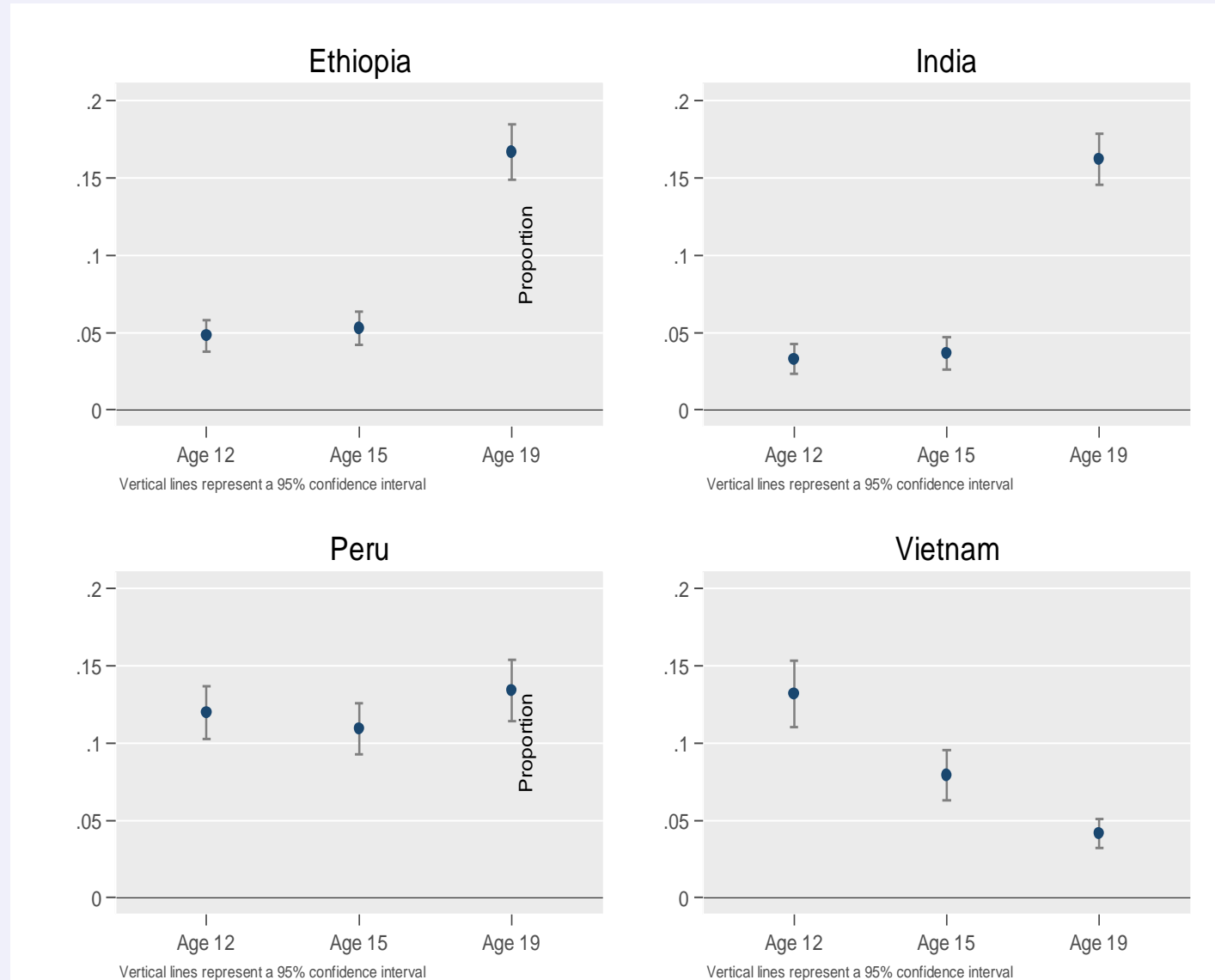
Figure 3. During the lockdown I spent more time on..



Food insecurity



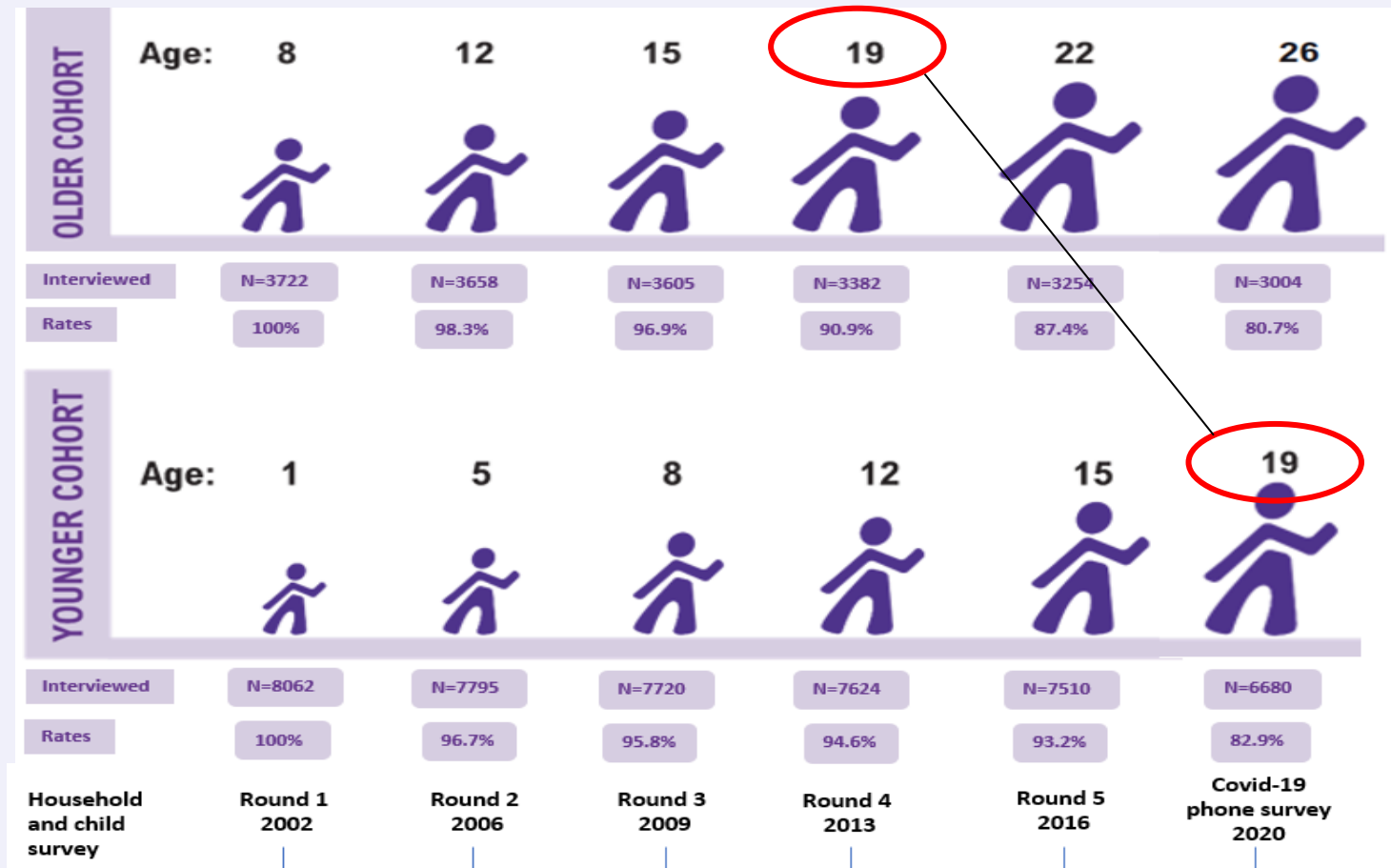
Figure 4. Proportion of households run out of food at ages 12, 15 and 19



Running out of food during the pandemic was a serious concern for respondents in at least two of the Young Lives countries

Empirical methodology

We compare the Younger Cohort's outcomes at age 19 (in 2020) to the Older Cohort's outcomes measured at the same age but seven years earlier (in 2013)

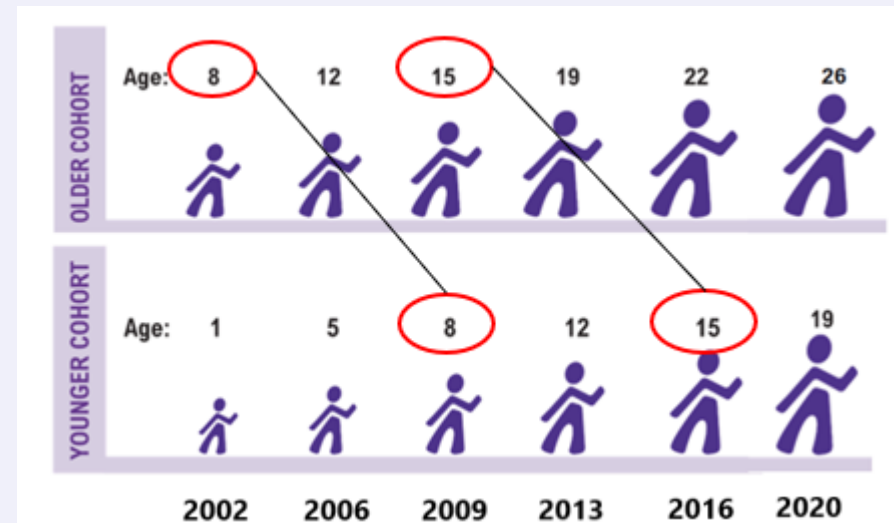


Cross-cohort comparison: before COVID-19

Previous Young Lives research shows significant inter-cohort improvements in critical aspects of human development

Comparing the two cohorts at the same age in the past, we have seen a decline in the prevalence of:

- Stunting
- Time devoted to working



- And a rise in:
- Education enrolment rates
 - Learning outcomes (Peru and Vietnam)
 - Time spent on education
 - Subjective well-being
 - Highest grade completed

Empirical methodology

- We use a difference-in-differences approach and welfare indicators that have been comparable across survey rounds since 2009
- We compare the Younger Cohort's outcomes at age 19 (in 2020) to the Older Cohort's outcomes measured at the same age but seven years earlier (in 2013)
- We account for pre-pandemic differences in outcomes by using a specification in the spirit of a difference-in-difference estimator

$$Y_{ica} = \alpha + \gamma a + \lambda YC_i + \theta(a * YC_i) + \beta(COVID_c * YC_i) + \delta_s + e_{ia}$$



- HH job/income loss
- Subjective well-being
- Education enrolment
- HH subjective wealth

↑
Age

↑
1 if younger cohort, 0 otherwise

↑
1 if 2020, 0 otherwise
↑
Coefficient of interest

↑
Cluster fixed effects

Economic shocks: household job/income loss

- In all countries, the Younger Cohort are relatively more likely to report a job/income loss in the household at age 19

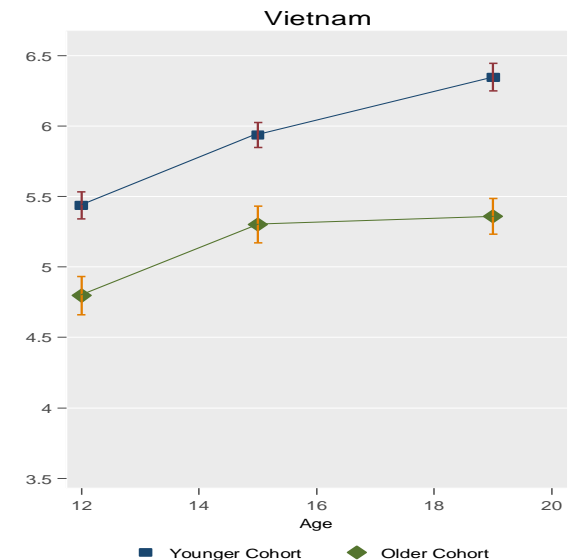
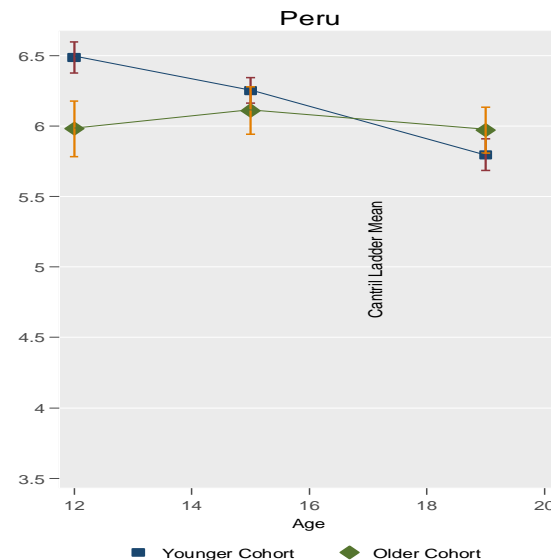
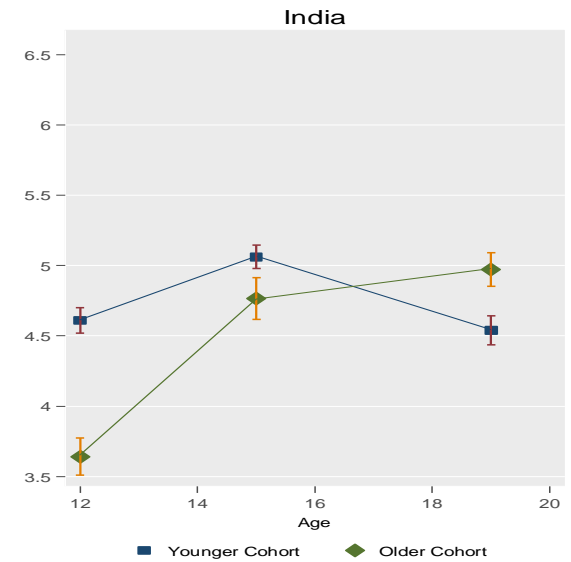
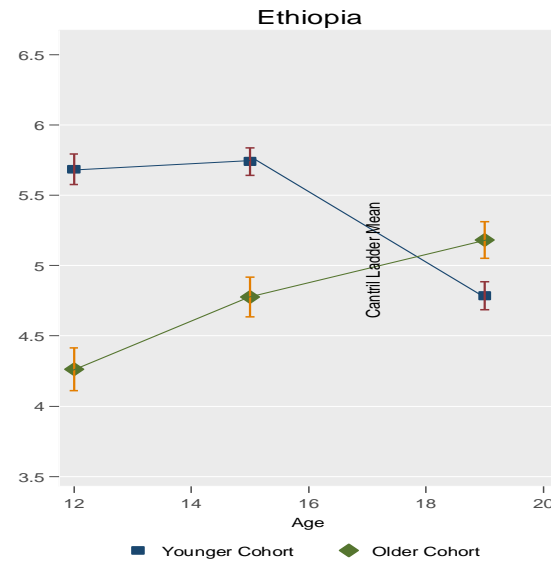
Dependent variable: 1 if someone in the household lost job/main source of income, 0 otherwise

	Ethiopia	India	Peru	Vietnam
Younger Cohort * 2020	0.314***	0.600***	0.610***	0.281***
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Younger Cohort	-0.001	0.011	0.043**	0.086***
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Age Trend	-0.005	0.005*	0.022***	0.015***
	(0.01)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.00)
Younger Cohort * Age Trend	-0.027***	-0.000	0.008	-0.054***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Constant	0.146***	0.012	-0.005	-0.018
	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
Cluster Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	8,141	8,305	7,982	8,323
Number of individuals	2,862	2,915	2,640	2,964

Results: Subjective wellbeing

Figure 5. Subjective well-being at ages 12, 15 and 19

- There has been a **striking fall in relative well-being** of the Younger Cohort when compared to the Older Cohort at the same age (VN is an exception)



Education enrolment

- In all countries, the Younger Cohort experience a significant fall in relative enrolment loss compared to the Older Cohort at age 19

Dependent variable: Are you currently enrolled / planning to enrol in full-time education ?

	Ethiopia	India	Peru	Vietnam
Younger Cohort * 2020	-0.209***	-0.136***	-0.530***	-0.123***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Younger Cohort	-1.155***	-0.054**	-0.195***	-0.080***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Age Trend	-1.157***	-0.191***	-0.196***	-0.241***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Younger Cohort * Age Trend	0.131***	0.105***	0.169***	0.079***
	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
Constant	1.204***	1.139***	1.226***	1.281***
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
Cluster Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	8,135	8,588	7,312	8,073
Number of individuals	2,862	2,915	2,640	2,964

Subjective wealth

- ❑ Call 2 asked about perception of current wealth, but also asked to give an assessment of the wealth just *before* the pandemic began
- ❑ Ran **two** separate regressions, one using the pre-pandemic wealth (green) and one using wealth during the pandemic (red)
- ❑ Comparing the two regressions allows us to approximate the impact of the pandemic on the relative change in wealth

Dependent variable: subjective wealth

	Ethiopia		India		Peru		Vietnam	
	<i>Before</i>	<i>During</i>	<i>Before</i>	<i>During</i>	<i>Before</i>	<i>During</i>	<i>Before</i>	<i>During</i>
Younger Cohort * 2020	0.179*** (0.05)	0.025 (0.05)	0.121*** (0.05)	-0.079* (0.05)	0.383*** (0.04)	0.183*** (0.04)	0.304*** (0.04)	0.254*** (0.04)
Younger Cohort	0.252*** (0.06)	0.251*** (0.06)	0.082 (0.06)	0.082 (0.06)	0.171*** (0.06)	0.171*** (0.06)	-0.472*** (0.05)	-0.472*** (0.05)
Age Trend	0.076*** (0.02)	0.075*** (0.02)	0.046** (0.02)	0.046** (0.02)	0.150*** (0.02)	0.150*** (0.02)	-0.120*** (0.02)	-0.120*** (0.02)
Younger Cohort *	-0.122***	-0.121***	-0.041	-0.041	-0.112***	-0.112***	0.157***	0.157***
Age Trend	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Constant	3.117*** (0.06)	3.116*** (0.06)	3.623*** (0.06)	3.641*** (0.06)	3.270*** (0.05)	3.248*** (0.05)	4.001*** (0.05)	4.018*** (0.05)
Cluster Fixed Effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Observations	8,218	8,218	8,609	8,609	7,924	7,924	8,433	8,433
Number of individuals	2,862	2,862	2,915	2,915	2,640	2,640	2,964	2,964

Conclusion

- ❑ We show that, in the pandemic year, the previous gains of the Younger Cohort in well-being have largely disappeared (with the exception of VN), while losses in perceived wealth (in three countries) and educational interruption (in all countries) are also observed
- ❑ The results show a worsening of the life-chances of a cohort of young people affected by a global pandemic at a crucial time in their life

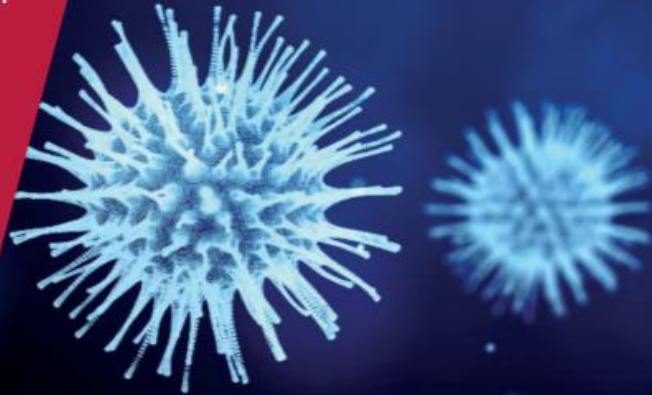
Long-term consequences

- ❑ A crisis leading to a sharp drop in well-being may also have mental health consequences, and a body of evidence documents a vicious cycle between poverty and mental health
- ❑ Research on the Older Cohort indicates that young girls who drop out of school are more likely to get married (early) and have a child during adolescence

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172

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Issue 67, 4 February 2021

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Date submitted: 29 January 2021; Date accepted: 30 January 2021

We examine how the lives of adolescents in Low- and Middle- Income countries have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic downturn using data from a large-scale phone survey conducted in four countries as a part of Young Lives, a 20-year longitudinal study. The phone survey asked detailed information about the COVID-19 pandemic experiences as well as collecting welfare indicators that are comparable across rounds. This allows a unique opportunity to compare a cohort of young people born around the turn of the Millennium (Younger Cohort) with an Older Cohort born in 1994, measured at the same age but seven years previously; both cohorts have been surveyed by the project since 2002. We find that relative gains in multidimensional well-being of the Younger Cohort found in survey rounds up to 2016 had largely disappeared in 2020. The significant (absolute and relative) downturn in self-reported wellbeing and economic circumstances is apparent in India, Ethiopia, and Peru, though not in Vietnam, the country which has had the most success at controlling the virus. However, educational enrolment has been affected in all countries. We suggest that the consequences of education dropout and links to

Thank you



Young Lives is a collaborative partnership between research institutes, universities and NGOs in the four study countries and the University of Oxford.

The study has been core-funded by UK aid from the Department for International Development (DFID).

We are hugely grateful to our collaborators, research teams, wider staff and funders.

Special thanks are owed to the children and families who participate in Young Lives, without whom this study would not exist.

