

YOUTH AND CAREER START

Key findings

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(Citibank)*



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THE RESEARCH

Today young people have to plan their lives and careers in volatile and ever-changing situations in the labor market. There is a number of positive trends that offer new employment options to young people, but many of them find it difficult to adapt to the uncertainty. The new opportunities are mostly for the more advanced and successful young people with good education and startup potential in big cities. The growing importance of soft and interdisciplinary skills has a negative impact on the competitiveness of young people with low starting opportunities, because they have fewer chances to gain these skills while they study.

The report is aimed at identifying the barriers for young people with low starting opportunities at the inception of their career. It describes and analyses the infrastructure supporting these young people and provides recommendations for possible program activities to support them on their path to decent employment.

For the purpose of the report the young people with low starting opportunities potential are people aged between 15 and 25 from low-income families living in towns with population less than 1m., residential care leavers, and young people with health issues including disabilities.

The report presents the findings of research of young people's perceptions of the labor market, their expectations of various types of jobs (first employment, permanent, temporary and part-time jobs), the barriers that exist for employment of young people in the sphere of education, relationships with employers and infrastructure for the support of young people entering the job market.

The problems of young people from low-income families and towns with population less than 1 m. were identified through a quantitative survey of 1,000 respondents from different regions, and a qualitative research into the young people's employment experience in online forum group format. In-depth interviews with experts and a foresight session were carried out to identify and explore the specific problems of care leavers and young people with disabilities.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S PERCEPTIONS OF THE JOB MARKET

Despite the changing environment and new employment and education pathways the majority of young people have quite limited ideas of the jobs available, the regulations of the job market and career-building opportunities and prefer to adhere to traditional models. Young people have low awareness of the changes expected in the employment structure and the potential future professions in demand.

Overall, young people in Russia start to seek employment and to work quite early: the majority of young people aged between 15 and 25 (87%) have the experience of job search, but the jobs they managed to find did not always meet their expectations. Young people miss the opportunities to gain practical job experience during their education – they do not view volunteering, temporary jobs or student intern programs as stages of their career pathway. Volunteering in general is not popular among young people: only 9% respondents indicated that they viewed volunteering as a way to gain professional experience.

Eventually young people enter the job market lacking experience and competencies required by the employers while at the same time placing unreasonably high demands on their first job and expecting to have a workplace mentor who will teach them their profession. In reality these expectations are rarely fulfilled, which results into disappointment, frustration and further disorientation on the job market. Only one out of three young people gets training from their first employer. Despite the development of information technologies and new forms of employment only 18% of young people noted they had the opportunity to choose their working hours and schedule or work from home (10%).

BARRIERS FOR THE YOUNG PEOPLE

ENTERING THE JOB MARKET

The majority of young people lack motivation and confidence, they rely upon external factors and circumstances, e.g. they believe that one can only get a good job through acquaintances and liaisons and are reluctant to take up responsibility for their own career. University students and graduates are better aware of career opportunities on today's job market.

Despite this, the majority of respondents (69%) give themselves quite a high assessment as potential employees and consider their basic skills such as ability to learn new things, working capacity, and general knowledge as competitive advantages on the job market.

Young people are generally likely to trust their educational institutions when it comes to job market preparation and expect to get support there. However, the majority of educational institutions are quite formal about internships and career counseling – their programs in the field are outdated and do not meet the current job market demand. Therefore, half (53%) of young people have to deal with the lack of skills and knowledge required for employment.

Less than half of respondents (39%) received any career counseling or training required for employment. Very few young people took additional training outside their educational institution, and only one out of three young people paid for this training. Although there are a lot of online opportunities for additional education and training including career counseling, only 15% of young people aged between 15 and 25 used online courses. Very few of them used individual career advice or training services (less than 15%).

University students are more motivated, and more likely to seek career planning advice and training, learn teamwork, project management, social and presentation skills.

Many companies in Russia still have poorly developed talent management and human resources functions: they do not allocate enough resources to work with new and unexperienced employees and prefer to hire those who have already worked in similar positions. Large state funded and private vertically integrated companies both national and international demonstrate the most systemic approach to HR and talent management.

BARRIERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH LOW STARTING OPPORTUNITIES ON THE JOB MARKET

Young people with low starting opportunities have the same difficulties when entering the job market as young people in general. However, certain false perceptions and barriers are aggravated by their low social and financial status.

These young people have even less understanding and knowledge of the job market; they have difficulty formulating what kind of support they need and are less likely to make ambitious plans about working for large companies. Only 56% have actual work experience.

Young people with low starting opportunities have lower self-assessment and lower demand on development – they are generally more pessimistic about the level of their own general knowledge, ability to work, creativity, determination and managerial skills.

Low-income young people are more likely to have no employment experience. They are 15% more likely to indicate this as a barrier for temporary employment. Young people in this category are also 25% more likely to believe that they lack job search skills and 20% more likely to think that they lack knowledge and skills for their first employment.

Young people from vulnerable groups generally tend to underestimate their own abilities, demonstrate uncertainty about their future and lack basic social skills. Employers are reluctant to offer jobs to these young people due to negative stereotypes and tend to avoid any interaction with them in general.

SUPPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

NGOs are the key support providers for young people with low starting opportunities on the job market. There are at least 90 NGOs working in the field in Russia distributed across the majority of the country's regions (around 65). With their programs, NGOs mostly target care leavers and young people with health issues including disabilities. They develop new effective formats of work including assisted employment¹ and mentoring programs. Within these programs NGOs target both employees and employers. The majority of these programs are implemented in large cities – they have very limited presence in the regions.

Federal government does not have any programs to support young people on the labor market, but these programs can be implemented on the regional level – the regions at their own discretion can make decisions on additional measures of support for different categories in their legislation on employment. However, the support for vulnerable groups is largely underdeveloped. Moscow is one of the leaders in the field of youth employment support.

Big companies make efforts to develop talent pipelines and provide mentorship to young employees, but as these efforts are limited by their market segment, only a few young people can benefit from them.

The majority of young people entering the job market in Russia experience a lack of information and support.

When it comes to employment, 58% of young people are likely to trust and rely on support from state-funded organizations, 56% - from their educational institutions, 47% - from profit-making organizations, and only 34% would turn to NGOs for support. Young people are mostly unaware of the programs and resources offered by NGOs.

Young people consider websites (58%) and mobile applications (41%) the most useful tools for job search.

¹ Assisted employment is a model where the workplace is adjusted to the needs of a young employee while at the same time providing the employee with a mentor and selecting an adequate job for him/her.

KEY AREAS FOR SUPPORT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Young people from smaller towns and students of secondary vocational educational institutions would benefit from programs aimed at development of skills and competences required to start their own business, grants for small business development, mentoring and guidance for startups; development of skilled volunteering, scholarships for advanced education at top-level universities, access to online education, development of managerial and soft skills. They need mentoring for career development, information on current job market trends, career guidance and training for job interviews. It is important to develop project approach for student intern programs and involve interns in dealing with practical business issues.

The most effective areas of support for residential care leavers and young people with disabilities are assisted employment and mentoring support for development of practical skills, improvement of their individual wellbeing and social skills. These efforts should be accompanied by hands-on training in job search, CV writing and job interview preparation.

Guidance for parents of young people with disabilities providing information on potential areas for development of their children could be a useful additional tool for support of this target group. Online formats could be used to maximize the outreach of such programs and the number of beneficiaries assisted (online mentoring, training, information platforms, etc.)