



Workers accepting of risk divide in face of pandemic

by: Jennifer Wilding

April 02, 2021

People who work remotely shoulder fewer risks during the pandemic than people who must work face to face. The [American Voices Project](#) interviewed workers on both sides of this risk divide. The project explored whether this [change in the structure of work](#) is leading to new types of interworker relations and conflict. The Federal Reserve Banks of Atlanta and Boston and the Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality are co-sponsors of the project.

The American Voices Project, a national qualitative study, is monitoring the effects of the COVID-19 crisis on everyday life. It provides real-time reporting on how the country is faring, with a special focus on people of color, the low-income population and other groups that are being disproportionately affected. This second report in the series focuses on employment while the first explored the pandemic's effect on young people.

For the employment report, researchers talked to people about their work, changes in income, strategies for making ends meet and policy recommendations. They also explored how workers are reacting to the differences in risk between face-to-face and remote workers. One might have expected unequal risk bearing to generate resentment and conflict. Instead, interviews showed a pattern of stoicism, fortitude and even acceptance of existing class inequalities and the disproportionate risks they entail.

Young people experience a time of stillness

In its first report, the American Voices Project focused on the [experience of adolescence](#) during the spring and summer of 2020.

Adolescence is a stage of development brimming with promise and expectation. It is a time of transition, a time when profound biological, neurological, psychosocial and emotional changes occur. By definition, adolescence entails movement.

But in 2020, COVID-19 interrupted lives and imposed restrictions. The report describes a period of *stillness* when the relentless activity of everyday life paused. That stillness imposed costs on young people, for whom 2020 represents lost opportunities and shattered dreams. But stillness also came with benefits for some, who gained time with family, learned new skills and

enjoyed time away from everyday stresses.

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Jennifer Wilding, a community development specialist for the Kansas City Fed, provides communications, engagement, and research for the community development department. Wilding edits the Kansas City Fed's community development newsletter, "[Community Connections](#)" and takes on special projects. For example, she serves as project director for a community-engaged research partnership. The Kansas City Fed, a nonprofit and a neighborhood organization joined together to hear from neighborhood residents about broadband internet. The report will be shared nationwide. Before joining the Kansas City Fed in 2018, she was executive director of Consensus KC, a nonprofit consulting firm specializing in public policy and civic engagement. She worked on philanthropically funded projects in metro Kansas City, and for clients here and around the U.S. Wilding holds a B.A. in urban affairs from the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Her hobby is letterpress printing, using a 1,500-pound cast-iron press from the late 1800s. Highlights of her work include: [Getting to 'We Have a Deal.'](#) The three-part article shares how Investment Connection bridges bankers and community-based organizations. The article is on [Fed Communities](#), the national website about the Fed's work in communities. [Disconnected: Seven lessons on fixing the digital divide.](#) A layperson's guide to putting broadband, devices and training within reach of a community. [Focus groups with unemployed individuals](#) and with people from nonprofits that serve them, held in Chicago, Detroit, Denver and Kansas City. **About the Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City** The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City is one of 12 regional Reserve Banks that, along with the Board of Governors in Washington, D.C., make up our nation's central bank. We work in the public's interest by supporting economic and financial stability. The Kansas City Fed's territory includes Colorado, Kansas, western Missouri, Nebraska, northern New Mexico, Oklahoma and Wyoming. Our headquarters is in Kansas City, with branch offices in Denver, Omaha and Oklahoma City. The Kansas City Fed Community Development Department promotes economic development and public understanding that leads to progress for lower-income individuals and communities. Our focus areas include community development investments, digital inclusion, small business / entrepreneurship, and workforce development.