



COVID-19 Analytical Snapshots

The latest research, information and analysis on the effects of COVID-19 on migration and migrants in a fast-moving environment

Migration Research Division

Introduction

COVID-19 is having an unprecedented effect on communities across the world. A quick look at the latest news in 2020 is sufficient to see the vast array of health, economic, and social impacts that have either directly or indirectly been caused by the virus, or have been worsened by the pandemic. Tens of millions of people have contracted the virus. Over a million people have died or faced long-term health effects from the virus. Many millions of people have lost their jobs, and others have seen their businesses shut down, as entire sectors have been forced to grind to a halt. Inequality has deepened. Xenophobia, discrimination, and stigmatization have been exacerbated by misinformation and fake news in the media, especially social media, and the politicization of the health measures meant to address the virus.

Undoubtedly, COVID-19 has had specific impacts, both measurable and immeasurable, [on human mobility, migration and migrants](#). Recognizing the importance of building the evidence to address these effects, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) [began several initiatives](#) to help address the health and socio-economic challenges and risks faced by migrants. One of these initiatives, spearheaded by the Migration Research Division (MRD) starting in March 2020, was the release of a **weekly series of [COVID-19 Analytical Snapshots](#) designed to capture the latest research, information and analysis in a fast-moving environment.** Over two or three pages, each Analytical Snapshot includes a collection of public information, through aggregation of external research and data on different aspects of COVID impact on migrants. Several topics have been updated as analysis has developed.

While initially published separately as discrete editions, **these Snapshots have been compiled into a special volume during its translation into Mandarin Chinese.** When read as a part of a single volume as presented here, the reader may be struck by the changes in the research and analysis of COVID-19 and human mobility over time. Indeed, a growing recognition of the [disparate impacts of the virus on migrants](#), the emergence of a parallel [“misinfo-demic”](#) spreading around the world and the surprising trends of [remittances](#) during the pandemic are but three topics which exhibit the evolving nature of the evidence-base during the intervening months. This volume is not exhaustive, as the research on COVID-19 and migration is likely to grow in the years and decades to come, but it does provide a compilation of the existing robust and balanced analysis, including in IOM’s flagship publication, the [World Migration Report](#).

Translations of snapshots continue. Other than English, the Snapshots are available in Arabic, French, Mandarin Chinese, Russian and Spanish.

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IOM Crisis Response

IOM's [Statement on COVID-19 and Mobility](#) highlights the importance of supporting migrants throughout the ongoing Coronavirus crisis:

“ *Within countries that have been hardest hit, migrants are exposed to many of the same vulnerabilities as other citizens, and often to a greater extent.*

Efforts to support all vulnerable groups ... should be strongly considered to avoid harmful consequences, minimise hardship, as well as reduce public health risk.

Drawing upon its experiences from previous emergencies, IOM's [COVID-19 Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan \(SRP\)](#) aims to support countries which require additional resources, whether financial, technical or operational.

IOM is playing a direct role in:

- ⇒ Risk communication and community engagement;
- ⇒ Crisis and cross-border coordination;
- ⇒ Training government employees;
- ⇒ Population mobility mapping; and
- ⇒ Enhanced surveillance, and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services.

Key Daily Updates

World Health Organization Situation Reports

- ⇒ The [Situation Reports](#) give an update of developments in the preceding 24 hours.
- ⇒ Each report also includes a daily 'Subject in Focus'.

Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker (OxCGRT)

- ⇒ [OxCGRT](#) records government responses across countries and time in a consistent way.
- ⇒ They collect publicly available information on 11 indicators of response and use these to create a "Stringency Index".

WHO Myth Buster

In the face of misinformation and fake news, the WHO has busted a number of [COVID-19 myths](#).



COVID-19 Travel Restrictions Globally

To understand how COVID-19 affects global mobility, IOM's DTM [Global Mobility Restriction Overview](#) maps the various travel disruptions and restrictions in place across the world.

The [Points of Entry Baseline Assessment](#) shows the number and type of restrictions imposed at 1,221 points of entry, and reports which population categories have been most affected by these measures.



Tracking COVID-19 cases around the world

A number of online interactive dashboards have been created to allow public health authorities, researchers and the general public to visualize and track the outbreak of COVID-19 as it unfolds.

These dashboards show the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, fatalities and recoveries at the country level, as well as the change in cases over time.

The most cited dashboards include those hosted by [John Hopkins University](#), [nCov2019](#) and the [WHO COVID-19 Situation Dashboard](#).



BNO News, [nCov2019 Data Map](#)



Migration Research Centre Analysis

Several research centers and migration news websites have already begun asking how COVID-19 has, is and will impact migration and mobility:

COMPAS

⇒ A forum to facilitate brainstorming about what COVID-19 means for our fast-moving world, from cross-border migration and racism to mobile work and the concept of ‘home’.

Migration Policy Institute

⇒ To combat COVID-19, governments have turned to migration management tools. How might these policy changes impact immigration systems in the long term?

Center for Strategic & International Studies

⇒ Five ways that COVID-19 may impact global migration, long after health systems and the economy have bounced back.

Info Migrants

⇒ Updates on how migrants around the world are being affected by COVID-19, including the most vulnerable.

Behind nCov2019

When 17 y-o high school student [Avi Schiffmann](#) found it “hard to get clear, concise and accurate information” on COVID-19 cases, he decided to do something about it. Avi created [nCov2019](#), which scrapes data from [BNO News](#), the [CDC](#) and the [WHO](#) every minute to provide country statistics.

World Economic Forum’s COVID-19 Mapping

The map is a visual representation of how the key issues underpinning COVID-19 — including travel — interact and intersect.

The [migration map](#) (curated by IOM) is also being regularly up-

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Modern mobility systems

The exponential spread of the novel Coronavirus, called COVID-19, is facilitated by the globalized interconnectivity of current mobility systems, the same transit routes and modes of transportation utilized in international migration.

“ It is almost inevitable that as we connect more, as more and more people live in big cities close to airports, which are not only the super-spreaders of the ‘goods’ of globalization, but also the ‘bads’, that contagion would cascade around the world.

Professor Ian Goldin,
Founding Director, Oxford Martin School

Read more about Prof Goldin’s work on pandemics and globalization [here](#).



Mobility tracking globally

IOM’s response to the abrupt changes in international mobility can be found on the [dedicated webpage to COVID-19 response](#). This page also details ongoing IOM work with vulnerable migrants. Notably, IOM is tracking the travel restriction policies of states.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) is the specialized agency of the UN for issues related to civil air transport. It’s COVID-19 portal has [specified Q&A sheets for States, Air Transport Operators, and the General Public](#). A [statistical page](#) also shows the impact of COVID-19 on air travel. The status of airports is also available on ICAO’s Global COVID-19 Airport Status [webpage](#).



Air travel

In 2018, airlines collectively carried over [4.2 billion](#) passengers from origin to destination. In a [data story](#) published in *The New York Times*, researchers analysed the travel movements of hundreds of millions of people. Air travel facilitated the pandemic spread of COVID-19 internationally; restricting travel has been central to the global response to “[flatten the curve](#)”, and is unprecedented historically.

86%

The estimate of infected travelers who went undetected before 23 January 2020.

30 cities in 26 countries

had experienced outbreaks before 31 January 2020.

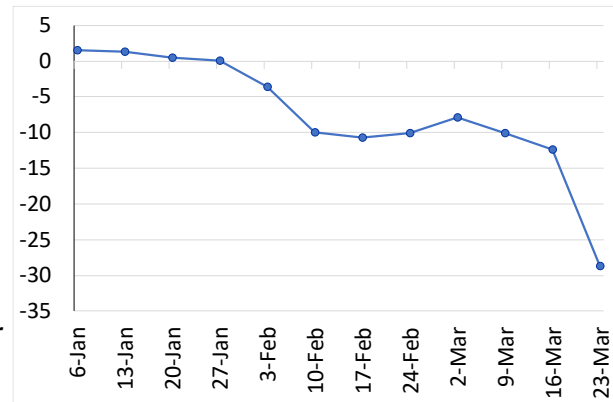


Scheduled flights

To respond to the spread of COVID-19, governments around the world began restricting air travel. Estimates of air travel have found that the number of scheduled flights for the week of 23 March 2020 dropped by **29%** compared to the same week in 2019.

Global scheduled flight change, year over year

Data: OAG Schedules Analyser



Train systems

Preliminary tracing by scientists seems to indicate that a **large train station** in Wuhan, China seems to have been the initial hotspot transmission point for many cases that would eventually cross provincial lines. The timing of the **Lunar New Year** motivated some five million passengers to travel out of Wuhan before the lockdown.

To mitigate the spread of COVID-19, countries with extensive rail systems such as **China, India, and many countries in Europe** suspended or cut back transport service.

Very fast ambulances

In a modification of an existing mode of mobility, authorities in France have converted several TGV trains into “**very fast ambulances**” that transport patients in heavily affected regions of France into other regions with available capacity.



Mobility going forward

Some scholars believe that the pandemic’s effects will have lasting effects on work and transport systems. As cities and States have put up transportation barriers, both physical and legal, many potential vulnerabilities could **borne by labour migrants and migrants caught in crisis situations**.

Transport barriers can lead to situations of **forced immobility** and **steepened inequality**. Barriers to humanitarian assistance is expected to put those already vulnerable at further risk. Part of the challenge for states and humanitarian actors (including UN agencies) is managing the uncertainty created by this unprecedented pandemic. Evidence on the impacts of significantly reduced (both positive and negative) will be crucial in evolving policy deliberations. **A recent publication** by *The Lancet* suggests that there may be a recurring round of COVID-19 infections in the Northern Hemisphere in Fall 2020. States will be needing to re-assess their mobility and transit systems regularly as evidence comes to light.

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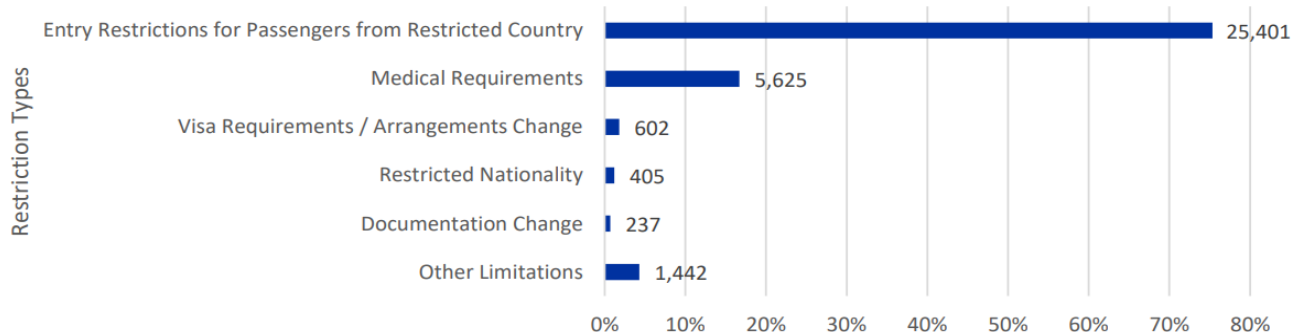
As COVID-19 continues to spread across the world, governments have swiftly moved to impose travel restrictions in an effort to reduce the impact of the pandemic by restricting international mobility. These restrictions have mainly applied to international travel, however, several countries have also implemented strict bans on internal movement.

In addition to travel restrictions, border management measures such as border closures have been introduced, while screening of travelers at airports and border crossings has been enhanced.

IOM’s Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) is [tracking mobility restrictions](#) around the world at a global, regional and country level and as of 23 March 2020, 174 countries, territories or areas had introduced or updated existing travel restrictions related to COVID-19. The most widely imposed restrictions were based on countries of arrival and passengers with medical requirements.

Most Common Restriction Types

Source: IOM (DTM)



Travel restrictions and international protection

Some travel restrictions by some states have resulted in a ban all entry, including of people seeking protection. This has left some asylum seekers stranded at borders and, in some cases, vulnerable to persecution and other abuse. A [recent paper](#) by UNHCR sets out key considerations regarding the implementation of COVID-19 testing/screening measures of those who seek protection, and the principle of non-refoulement or denial of the chance to seek asylum.

Travel restrictions and the work of humanitarian organizations

There are [growing concerns](#) that blanket travel restrictions are limiting the ability of humanitarian organizations to deliver urgent assistance and services to vulnerable populations, including refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Already, travel restrictions have forced IOM and UNHCR to [suspend](#) resettlement travel for refugees, while leaving some stranded or [separated](#) from their families. In its recommendations [for international traffic](#), the World Health Organization advises against the ‘application of travel or trade restrictions to countries experiencing COVID-19 outbreaks’ and stresses that these restrictions may result in adverse consequences, such as on the delivery of aid and technical support.



Impact on border management

With limited capacity at entry points, some countries have come under pressure to quickly enhance capacity at borders, seaports and airports in order to more quickly and efficiently implement travel restrictions, while also ensuring that frontline workers at entry points are well-trained.

As part of its [strategic response](#), IOM is working with multiple countries to support ministries of health and border authorities and partners to strengthen preparedness of key entry and exit points through a range of activities. Some of these include training immigration and border/port officials on standard operating procedures to better respond to travelers who are sick with COVID-19, support active surveillance, including health screening and improving point of entry infrastructure.



Impact of travel restrictions on migrant workers

Mobility restrictions due to COVID-19 fears are having a significant impact on mobility and migration and carry significant implications for migrant workers. Many migrant workers are already [stranded](#) and unable to return home, while disruptions to visa regimes mean that some cannot assume new work or return to their countries or areas of work. Meanwhile, [some predict](#) that migrants’ inability to travel for work could have devastating impacts on the global food supply chain and, should travel restrictions become prolonged, some work previously occupied by migrants may quickly be automated as companies try to mitigate the impact on their productivity.

Travel restrictions and irregular migration

Even with the most recent travel bans and restrictions, some borders [remain porous](#). As COVID-19-related travel restrictions continue to come into effect, there are [growing fears](#) that increasingly desperate people may turn to smugglers and some may even fall into the hands of human traffickers.

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What is consular assistance?

Under the [1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations](#), States have agreed for other States to establish consular posts on their territory. These consular posts usually take the forms of consulates or embassies representing the interests of their State and nationals in the receiving country.

Their [functions](#) most notably include assisting their nationals in situations of emergencies, such as in conflict or disaster situations or during sanitary crises as the current COVID-19 pandemic.



Did you know?

In international law, consular assistance is referred to as ‘[a right of the State](#)’. This entails that, although nationals have the right to seek assistance, they do not have an entitlement to receive it. Whether or not consular assistance will be provided and the type of assistance ultimately depend on the State itself.

Who can benefit from consular assistance during the COVID-19 crisis?

Consular services are limited to the benefit of nationals abroad. In the current COVID-19 pandemic, consular services are more specifically provided to nationals who are stranded in another country due to the increasing number of [travel restrictions](#) passed by countries and territories to contain the virus.

Hence, consular assistance services are currently focusing on:

- ⇒ [tourists](#); and
- ⇒ [migrants](#), such as students and migrant workers.

Consular assistance does not concern refugees who, by [definition](#), do not benefit from the protection of their country of origin.

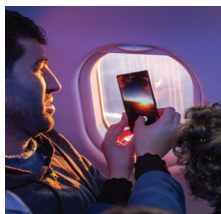
What type of assistance is being provided during the COVID-19 crisis?

The consular assistance services vary from one State to the other. In addition to issuing identity and travel documents, consular services [usually](#) offer repatriation assistance to their nationals stranded abroad in two main forms:

- ⇒ **Logistical assistance:** ranging from information provided to tourists and migrants on how to travel back to their country of origin to their actual repatriation being organized by their country.
- ⇒ **Financial assistance:** financial help provided by the country of origin for tourists and migrants who do not have sufficient financial resources to travel back, sometimes in the form of a [loan](#) that individuals will have to reimburse afterwards.

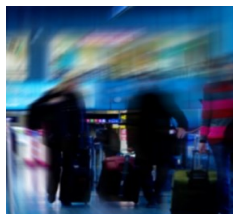
The role of technology in consular assistance for stranded nationals

Some countries are relying on digital technology for their consular authorities to get in touch with their nationals and provide them with the necessary information amidst the COVID-19 crisis.



For instance, [Belgium](#) and [France](#), set up an online platform where nationals have to register, while [Slovakia](#) offers a geolocation service of its nationals via the SIM card of their phones.

IOM Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan



IOM Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan to COVID-19 appeals for USD 116.1 million for supporting the Organization to respond to additional needs which have emerged from the current pandemic.

With respect to consular assistance, IOM supports States with the development of operational guidance and assistance for ongoing emergency consular and visa-issuance activities.



Beyond consular assistance

Of course, not all the [272 million international migrants](#) worldwide will seek consular assistance for their repatriation. Many countries' Ministries of Foreign Affairs have been issuing advisories on COVID-19 and travel restrictions to assist their citizens abroad. As part of its commitment to ensuring the welfare of its citizens, the Philippines' [Department of Foreign Affairs](#) is also tracking the number of COVID-19 cases among Filipinos abroad.

Given the travel restrictions and closure of borders, some countries are also assisting migrants and tourists present on their territory with (free) visa renewal/extension. This is the case in [India](#) and [Qatar](#). [Portugal](#) has announced it will be regularizing all migrants who had previously applied for residence permits in order to ensure they will have access to health care and financial support during the pandemic.

Migrant rights groups are also assisting migrants including by sharing information via social media. The Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants, for example, created a Facebook page [COVID Migrant Monitor](#) to update migrants on travel restrictions, government responses to COVID-19 and initiatives by migrant groups.

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New initiatives

Lancet Migration—a global collaboration to advance migration health—has recently launched its Migration and Covid-19 Working Group. Information on the Group can be found [here](#).

Many scientific publishers are making COVID-19-related research free to access, including [Wiley](#), [Taylor & Francis](#), [Edward Elgar](#), Springer [Nature](#), [SAGE Publishing](#), and [Elsevier](#). An article on this “whole of system” effort can be accessed [here](#).

UK company Emerald Publishing has set up a £20,000 [fund](#) to cover publication fees for social sciences research relating to COVID-19 published on its open access platform.

Elsevier has issued an [open call](#) for papers from social scientists on COVID-19 impacts on societies and cultures. The call closes on 30 April 2020.

Disinformation on COVID-19



The Institute for Strategic Dialogue has launched a new series of briefings by its Digital Research Unit on the information ecosystem around Covid-19. The first briefing compiles research from ISD’s own analysis of online platforms, as well as summarising recent investigations and research on the state of play of disinformation around Covid-19.

“*Anti-migrant and far-right networks are exploiting the Covid-19 situation to spread disinformation targeting migrants, refugees and other vulnerable populations on- and offline.*”

Access the briefing [here](#).

Legal analysis and COVID-19

There has been a substantial amount of legal analysis on aspects of COVID-19 responses undertaken in a range of geographic and thematic settings, including on [international human rights law](#), [travel restrictions](#) and [quarantine](#), [international protection/non-refoulement](#), [border management](#) as well as broader areas such as employment law, contracts/force majeure, taxation and other matters.

This of course also extends to research activities throughout the world, with many universities, research institutes and funding [bodies](#) issuing guidance for researchers on the COVID-19 impacts on research projects underway, including on contractual matters. Some research activities have also been suspended with resources shifting to [COVID-19 research](#).



New research on migration & mobility aspects of COVID-19

[Analysis and forecast of COVID-19 spreading in China, Italy and France](#) by Duccio Fanelli and Francesco Piazza

[The neglected health of international migrant workers in the COVID-19 epidemic](#) by Andrian Liem, Cheng Wang, Yosa Wariyanti, Carl Latkin and Brian Hall

[Preparedness and vulnerability of African countries against importations of COVID-19: a modelling study](#) by Marius Gilbert et al.

[Modelling and Prediction of the 2019 Coronavirus Disease Spreading in China Incorporating Human Migration Data](#) by Choujun Zhan, Chi Tse, Yuxia Fu, Zhikang Lai and Haijun Zhang

[Covid-19: control measures must be equitable and inclusive](#) by Zackary Berger, Nicholas Evans, Alexandra Phelan and Ross Silverman

[COVID-19: Projecting the Impact in Rohingya Refugee Camps and Beyond](#) by Shaun Truelove, Orit Abraham, Chiara Altare, Andrew Azman and Paul Spiegel

[COVID-19 pandemic: Syria's response and healthcare capacity](#) by Mazen Gharibah and Zaki Mehchy

[A Race Against the Clock: Meeting Seasonal Labor Needs in the Age of COVID-19](#) by Kate Hooper and Camille Le Coz

[The effect of human mobility and control measures on the COVID-19 epidemic in China](#) by Moritz Kraemer et al.



#Hackathons

There have been several virtual hackathons on tackling different aspects of COVID-19 (including supporting vulnerable migrants) involving researchers, universities, government, business leaders and others. Examples include:

- ⇒ [#versusvirus Hackathon](#)
- ⇒ [MIT COVID-19 Challenge](#)
- ⇒ [Hack the Crisis Norway](#)
- ⇒ [UNLEASH COVID-19 Hack](#)

COVID-19 impacting social science

This LSE editorial reflects on the potential impacts on social science as medical and other scientists mobilise while social science insights remain muted: [Social science in a time of social distancing](#).

Survey of international education practitioners

The European Association of International Education has released the results of a survey of 800 education staff affected by COVID-19. The report, [Coping with COVID-19: International higher education in Europe](#), highlights that outward mobility of students and staff has been significantly affected during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Migrants' stigmatization and discrimination in crisis situations



Stigmatization of certain groups, such as migrants, during crisis situations is not new. From terrorism to diseases outbreaks, migrants have often been scapegoated for endangering native populations. Diseases have at times been perceived as “foreign”, as was the case, for instance, with cholera in the 1830s, HIV/AIDS in the 1980s or, more recently, with H1N1 influenza.

The COVID-19 pandemic makes no exception as individuals of Asian and European descent and migrants more generally have been stigmatized for spreading the virus. Instances of stigmatization have taken the form of verbal and/or physical assault and social and, sometimes, institutional exclusion from the receiving society. However, compared to previous diseases outbreaks, the issue of stigmatization seems to have received unprecedented attention given the scale of the pandemic, the clear guidance on its naming (from WHO), its media coverage and related commentary on political instrumentalization.



Misinformation, fake news and the instrumentalization of the COVID-19 pandemic

The stigmatization of migrants and instances of discrimination against them have been exacerbated by misinformation and fake news in the media, especially social media, and the politicization of the issue.

The pandemic has been exploited by anti-migrant, far-right and hate groups, with conspiracy theories circulating on the origin of the virus. While some have been claiming that COVID-19 is a bio-weapon or is linked to 5G connectivity, others have pointed to migration and migrants as the cause of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The stigmatization of migrants is here symptomatic of the overload of information on social media over which there is little control and which is instrumentalized for political and other interests.

Learning from the “Spanish” flu

One of the key lessons for COVID-19 from the so-called Spanish flu that engulfed the world in 1918 is highlighted in this article as being *how not to name a pandemic*. Despite not originating in Spain, it became known as the “Spanish” flu because the Spain was the first country to report it publicly. The name led to stigmatization and has continued to cause offence. In Spain it is known as the 1918 flu.

Risks stemming from migrants' stigmatization in the current COVID-19 pandemic

The stigmatization and discrimination of migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic are not only harmful for migrants themselves, but also for the society as a whole.

On the short and medium terms, stigmatization and discrimination of migrants may run counter current responses to contain the virus outbreak and further [endanger](#) the health of populations. As noted by the [World Health Organization](#):



Stigma can:

- Drive people to hide the illness to avoid discrimination
- Prevent people from seeking health care immediately
- Discourage them from adopting healthy behaviours

On the longer term, stigmatization and discrimination may negatively impact on migrants' integration. This would not only undermine migrants' well-being, but more broadly that of receiving societies as [migrants' exclusion can more generally undermine social cohesion](#).



Click on the [photo](#) to watch a short video



Our greatest enemy right now is not the virus itself. It's fear, rumours and stigma. Our greatest assets are facts, reason and solidarity.

WHO Director General, [Opening remarks](#) at the media briefing on COVID-19, 28 February 2020



From discrimination to solidarity in face of COVID-19

The [World Health Organization](#) has provided some tips on countering stigmas. These include spreading the facts, engaging social influencers, amplifying voices, stories and images of those who have recovered from the virus or ensuring balanced media reporting disseminating evidence-based information.

While social media has been used to spread anxiety and hate, it has also served as a space to counter stigmatization and discrimination and display solidarity. A number of [hashtags](#) have gone viral on social media, such as #iamnotavirus launched by Chinese communities. Media outlets are also featuring [stories](#) of how migrants, including refugees, are supporting affected communities. Seven refugees in Italy have for instance managed [UNHCR Italy's Instagram account](#) during a week for spreading messages of responsibility in the face of the pandemic and solidarity.

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There were nearly [70 million forcibly displaced people](#) in 2018 globally, including more than [41.3 million Internally Displaced Persons \(IDPs\)](#) and [25.9 million refugees](#). The spread of COVID-19 threatens to exacerbate the vulnerabilities of those who are displaced, many of whom live in challenging environments.



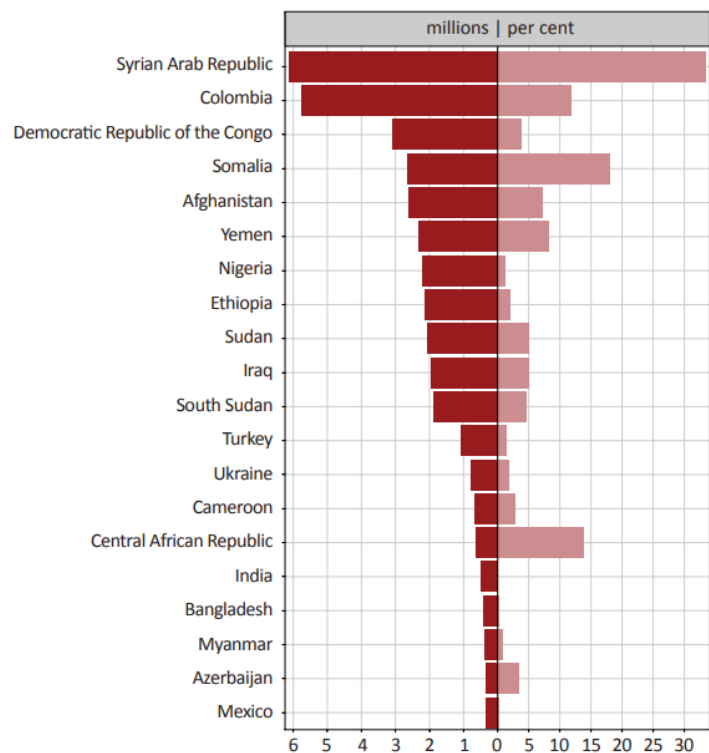
Developing regions

host most displaced people

A significant number of displaced people live in developing countries, many of which already faced significant challenges to their healthcare systems even before COVID-19. Of the more than 40 million IDPs displaced by conflict and violence at the end of 2018, most were in developing countries. Further, an estimated [85 per cent of refugees](#) are hosted in developing regions.

With healthcare systems that are overwhelmed, under-funded and [some battered by on-going conflict](#), displaced populations in these regions risk being further excluded and not getting the healthcare support that is needed.

Top 20 countries with the largest stock of internally displaced persons by conflict and violence, 2018



Source: IDMC 2019 in the [World Migration Report](#)



Crowded conditions

Many IDPs and refugees continue to live in [overcrowded conditions](#), where social isolation, which has become standard advice all around the world, [is nearly impossible](#); a large number live in congested settlements, camps and shelters and there are [growing fears](#) that should COVID-19 enter camps, it could spread quickly and be difficult to contain. Some camps, including the Ritsona open accommodation site in Greece, have already reported infections and IOM is [working to help decongest the camps on Greek islands](#).

Poor living conditions

The environments in which many displaced people live are without easy access to water, sanitation and healthcare services, conditions that make it difficult to control the spread of COVID-19. As part of its [strategic response](#) to the crisis, IOM is enhancing access to water and hygiene measures across its operations. In camps such as those in Nigeria, Ethiopia and Bangladesh, IOM has already [ramped up](#) its Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) responses, ensuring the provision of hand washing stations and hygiene kits including disinfectants and extra soap.

Impact on humanitarian funding

As governments are focused on COVID-19, there are fears that humanitarian funding, which is already limited, [may be further impacted](#). Some donor states are under pressure to divert humanitarian funding toward COVID-19, and there is concern that some may halt funding altogether as their economies struggle. IOM and UNHCR, for example, recently [called for attention](#) to the escalating needs of Venezuelan migrants and refugees, as their conditions have worsened during the COVID-19 crisis. There are [concerns](#) that some of the most serious human catastrophes such as the situation in Yemen could worsen.



COVID-19-related travel restrictions

COVID-19-related travel restrictions are already having wide-ranging impacts, including on displaced populations. The delivery of [critical humanitarian assistance is threatened](#), refugee resettlement efforts have been [halted](#) while some asylum seekers have been left stranded. IOM has also [raised concerns](#) that these restrictions will not only curtail its humanitarian work, but could also hinder the ability of populations in camps to work and provide for themselves and their families.



Inclusion of displaced persons in pandemic plans

Some countries, including host states, are not [sufficiently including](#) displaced persons in their pandemic plans, which could undermine their overall efforts to stem the spread of the disease. Should there be widespread outbreaks in camps, [it is feared that IDPs and refugees may escape again to safety](#), which could trigger backlash from local populations and authorities and potentially result in violence.

Guidance: camps and camp-like settings

To ensure that its staff are well-prepared to respond to COVID-19 in camps and camp-like settings, IOM has issued the [Camp Management Operational Guidance](#), which includes several frequently asked questions. IOM has also jointly with UNHCR, IFRC and WHO released [interim guidance](#), outlining COVID-19 readiness and response considerations for refugee camps and camp-like settings.

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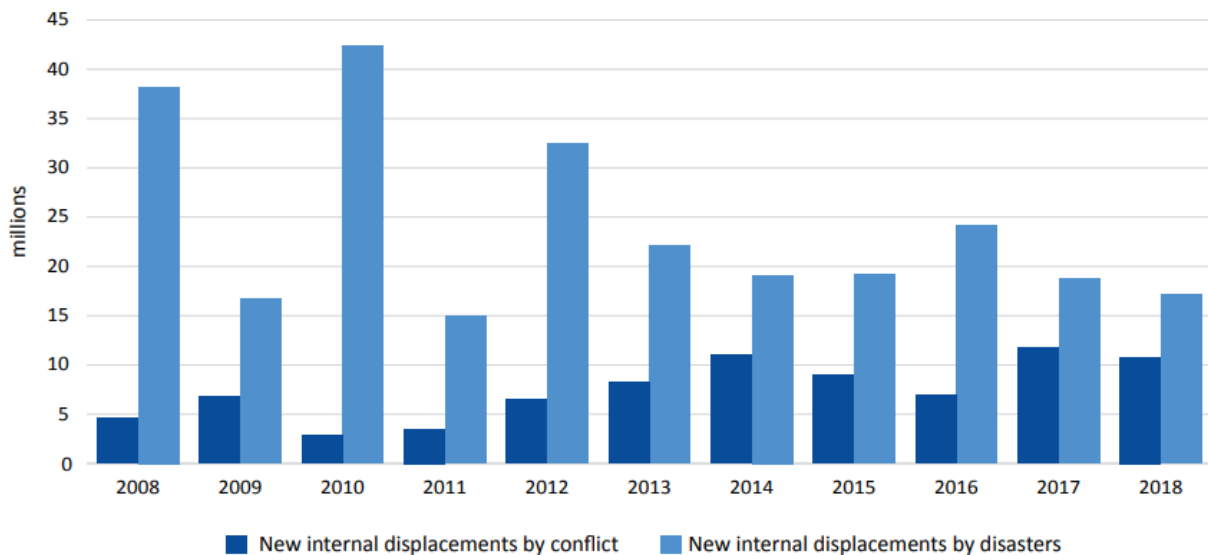
Since the start of COVID-19, there have been several new displacement events, including disasters and conflicts. Some conflicts are not new and continue to drive many people from their homes. The spread of COVID-19 has complicated the ability of governments and organizations to respond to other pressing humanitarian crises, and threatens the effectiveness of future responses to displacement events.

Impact on disaster preparedness

As countries devote significant resources to responding to COVID-19, [concerns](#) that other disaster preparedness efforts are taking a backseat are mounting. Disaster events have consistently been the largest drivers of displacement (see figure below).

New internal displacements by conflict and disasters, 2008–2018 (millions)

Source: IDMC 2019 in the [World Migration Report](#)



Should disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes or wildfires strike during the COVID-19 pandemic, some countries may not be able to respond effectively. Hospitals already overwhelmed by COVID-19 [may not be able](#) to take care of those affected by disasters, while some measures after disaster events such as mass shelters may become untenable, as they could become [hotspots for the further spread of COVID-19](#). These concerns are especially [pronounced in countries such as the United States](#) that are going into disaster season. The recent [powerful earthquake](#) in Croatia after the COVID-19 lockdown had already taken effect also illustrates the complexities of responding to disasters while at the same time dealing with this pandemic.

Impact on the delivery of humanitarian assistance

The spread of COVID-19 has forced governments across the world to impose strict international travel and internal movement restrictions in order to limit the transmission of the disease. These restrictions are having [significant impact](#) on the ability of aid organizations to respond to some of the world's most pressing humanitarian crises.

Large-scale displacement in countries such as Yemen and the Democratic Republic of Congo is of particular concern, with fears over not just over the strain on human resources, but also on much-needed supplies to sustain people affected by these conflicts. In regions such as East and Horn of Africa, where COVID-19 has disrupted [efforts to curb the spread of locusts](#) that have destroyed people's livelihoods, worsening food insecurity could lead to further displacement.

If/when new disasters or conflicts occur during the pandemic, governments and aid agencies would struggle with logistics and transport, as COVID-19 has already taken a toll on humanitarian [supply chains and transportation](#).

Prolonging displacement events

Several countries around the world continue to be [ravaged by conflict](#), even as they scramble to control the spread of COVID-19. There are growing [concerns](#) that the focus on COVID-19 may result in the abandonment of efforts such as peace processes to resolve conflicts, further exacerbating or prolonging them and leading to further displacement. Efforts such as security assistance and peacekeeping could also be affected. Already, travel restrictions are [taking a toll](#) on international mediation efforts, as envoys are stopped from traveling.

Call for a global ceasefire

The United Nations Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, recently [called for an immediate global ceasefire](#) to allow humanitarian organizations to reach vulnerable populations affected by COVID-19.



Impact on funding and relief coordination

A major concern is the impact of COVID-19 on [humanitarian funding](#). With many governments squarely focused on COVID-19, humanitarian agencies may struggle to get the funding needed to respond to large displacement events, as donor states dedicate their resources toward COVID-19. Meanwhile, should rapid-onset, large-scale emergencies occur during the COVID-19 pandemic, [efficient humanitarian coordination](#) and effective response will be more difficult, as personnel, systems, and processes of various organization are already stretched and under significant pressure.

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What is immigration detention?

Immigration detention refers to the deprivation of liberty of migrants for migration-related reasons, usually related to two situations:

- Upon arrival for establishing the identity and nationality of the person concerned or pending the processing of an immigration or asylum claim; or
- Upon removal, for enforcing an expulsion order when, for instance, the migrant is irregularly in the country.

Immigration detention often takes the form of administrative detention, that is, an administrative measure ordered by the administrative or judicial authorities of a State.

Except in countries where unauthorized entry is criminalized, immigration detention is not a criminal measure, as migrants have not committed a crime but an administrative offence. Hence, irregular migrants are to be detained separately from common law criminals, in facilities often referred to as immigration, processing, retention or removal centres.



Risks related to immigration

detention during the pandemic

Concerning places of detention in general, including immigration removal centres, the World Health Organization notes that:



People deprived of their liberty, such as people in prisons and other places of detention, are likely to be more vulnerable to the coronavirus disease [...] outbreak than the general population because of the confined conditions in which they live together for prolonged periods of time. Moreover, experience shows that prisons, jails and similar settings where people are gathered in close proximity may act as a source of infection, amplification and spread of infectious diseases within and beyond prisons.

Risks of contagion can be exacerbated by conditions of detention which are incompatible with the implementation of prevention measures against COVID-19, including social distancing in crowded facilities and basic hygiene measures in substandard sanitary conditions.



The situation of refugees and migrants held in formal and informal places of detention, in cramped and unsanitary conditions, is particularly worrying. Considering the lethal consequences a COVID-19 outbreak would have, they should be released without delay.

[Joint press release](#) from OHCHR, IOM, UNHCR and WHO



Responses amid the COVID-19 pandemic



Given the inability of States to carry out deportations given current travel restrictions in place worldwide, a number of countries have started to release some irregular migrants from immigration detention. This is, for instance, the case in [Spain](#), [Belgium](#) and [the United Kingdom](#).

In other [countries](#), some migrants with underlying health conditions have been released upon [judicial order](#) due to health risks posed by reported cases of COVID-19 infections in their detention facility.

From [UN agencies](#), to [regional](#) and [civil society](#) organizations, including [migration experts](#), calls are being made for States adopt alternatives to detention and release migrants from immigration detention in light of the devastating effects an outbreak of COVID-19 would have in such facilities for migrants and the broader community.

Immigration detention and alternatives to detention in international law

[International human rights law](#) regulates the deprivation of liberty of migrants by prohibiting their arbitrary detention. Detention is a last resort measure which becomes arbitrary if it is not [reasonable, necessary and proportionate](#), including if the grounds of detention are not justified anymore. This is for instance the case of detention upon expulsion when the prospects of removal appear to be neither real nor tangible due to legal impediments or practical obstacles.

When there is no tangible prospects of removal, there exist [alternatives to detention](#), such as:

- Arrangements and accommodation in the community and/or case management; and
- Restrictions to freedom of movements, such as registration of residence requirement, reporting mechanism, designated residence system, bail, bond and surety options or supervision system.

Migrant children

The [principle of the best interests of the child](#) is the primary consideration for all actions concerning children. This entails that their detention on the basis of their migration status or that of their parents is never in their best interests. According to the [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child](#), alternatives for children should be pursued in community-based contexts.

Conditions of detention under international law

[Immigration detention](#) should not be punitive and migrants, as any other persons deprived of their liberty, should be treated with humanity and dignity. This entails sufficient sanitary and living conditions, as well as enjoyment to [health care](#) as provided in the community.

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The global economic impact of COVID-19

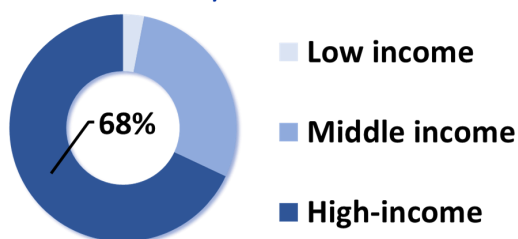
While the most immediate impact of COVID-19 is related to health, the pandemic also raises economic issues. The [International Labor Organization](#) (ILO) has estimated that under an extreme scenario, the pandemic’s impact on economic growth could increase global unemployment by 24.7 million. However, the ILO have since warned that the true number could be [far higher](#) — in the USA alone, almost [16 million people](#) have filed new claims for unemployment benefits in the past three weeks.

Who are migrant workers?

The latest available estimates from the [ILO](#) indicate that there are 164 million migrant workers around the world, accounting for 64% of (the then 258 million) international migrants.

- ⇒ 95.7 million (58%) of migrant workers are male;
- ⇒ 111 million (68%) reside in high-income countries; and
- ⇒ 99.6 million (61%) reside in one of three regions: Northern America; Northern, Southern and Western Europe; and the Arab States.

Migrant workers by destination country income level



The economic impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers

Migrants are particularly vulnerable to the economic impacts of the pandemic: in high-income countries across the world, from the EU and [the UK](#) to [Japan](#), [Argentina](#) and [the US](#), they are more likely to work in industries that are more disrupted by COVID-19, such as [manufacturing and hospitality](#).

While some countries, including [Russia](#) and [the UAE](#), have relaxed rules to make it easier for labour migrants to renew their work permits, elsewhere the imposition of [travel restrictions](#) and halting of the [issuing of work permits](#) has left some migrants unable to reach their place of employment, with no other source of income.

Even in cases where states are stepping in and replacing lost income, workers who cross borders to reach their jobs are [missing out on vital support](#).

1 in 5

doctors practicing in an [OECD country](#) in 2010/11 were born overseas (22%).

COVID-19 and international remittances

In 2019, migrants are estimated to have sent [\\$551 billion](#) in international remittances to family in low and middle income countries, over three times the amount of official aid received. However, as industries shut down, it is becoming [increasingly difficult](#) for migrants to send remittances internationally.

This is not only a cause for concern for [smaller economies](#) that receive large remittances relative to the size of their economies, but also for [larger economies](#) that rely heavily on international remittances in US dollar terms, such as the [Philippines and India](#) — these countries are predicted to see a fall in remittances received while at the same time migrant workers are expected to return and add to the number of unemployed. Countries that rely on international remittances to alleviate poverty are expected to be hard hit. In [Tajikistan](#), international remittances were almost 30% of GDP in late 2019, contributing to food, shelter and other basic needs. Nearby in [Kyrgyzstan](#), remittances have been estimated to reduce the national poverty rate by 6–7 per cent.



The impact on seasonal work

Meeting labour shortages caused by the COVID-19 [travel restrictions](#) is becoming time-critical in the agricultural sector. Long [dependent](#) upon migrant labour, governments across the developed world are working fast to avoid [crop losses](#).

In [Australia and New Zealand](#), which are both mid-harvest, governments are seeking to extend the work permits of seasonal workers before they expire. Where the harvest season is yet to get underway, travel restrictions have been modified to allow the entry of seasonal workers: to ensure their smooth passage [the EU](#) has classified these workers as essential, while [the US](#) has removed the requirement for an interview prior to arrival. In [Germany](#) and [Italy](#), the respective agricultural ministers have proposed lifting working restrictions on asylum seekers.

1 in 6 nurses



practicing in an [OECD country](#) in 2010/11 were born overseas (15%).

Fighting COVID-19 with visas

To enable healthcare workers to focus on the fight against COVID-19, the UK government has [extended](#) the visas of migrant healthcare workers, free of charge, for one year, while migrant nurses have had the deadline for skill tests extended. Similarly, the [Australian](#) government has lifted restrictions on international nursing students to allow them to work as many hours as non-migrants.

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What is development?

Development, one of the main priorities of the UN, is a [multidimensional undertaking](#) to achieve a higher quality of life for all people, encompassing both economic and social elements.

While there is no established convention for the [designation](#) of developing countries, the [criteria](#) used by the UN include country income, education and health levels, and structural vulnerability to environmental and economic shocks.

64% of the [world's population](#) reside in less developed countries (excluding China), and 13% in the [Least Developed countries](#) that face severe structural impediments to development.

COVID-19 and equality

“*COVID-19 is not the ‘great equalizer’...but rather an amplifier of existing inequalities.*”

[Heaven Crawley](#), Professor, Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University, UK



Risks for developing countries stemming from the pandemic

[UNCTAD](#) note that 60% of developing countries, and over 80% of the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) are dependent on commodity exports. The [sharp fall](#) in foreign income from these exports, as well as from tourism and remittances, that is expected due to the pandemic will limit the ability of governments in developing countries to support their populations.

The [informal sector](#) is also particularly large in developing countries, with individuals in these countries making up much of the 55% of the global population that have [no access](#) to social protection. As a result, many of the poorest have to [continue working](#) to earn income, despite the risks of contracting and spreading the virus.

Yet it is in these developing countries, where for many self-isolation is [not an option](#), that conditions are most conducive to the spread of COVID-19. Nearly [75%](#) of those in LDCs lack access to soap and water, many of whom live in densely populated [urban slums](#). In addition, [health systems](#) in these countries — which often have less of the [key equipment](#) needed to tackle the virus, such as tests and ventilators — are underfunded and could soon be [overwhelmed](#) by the pandemic.

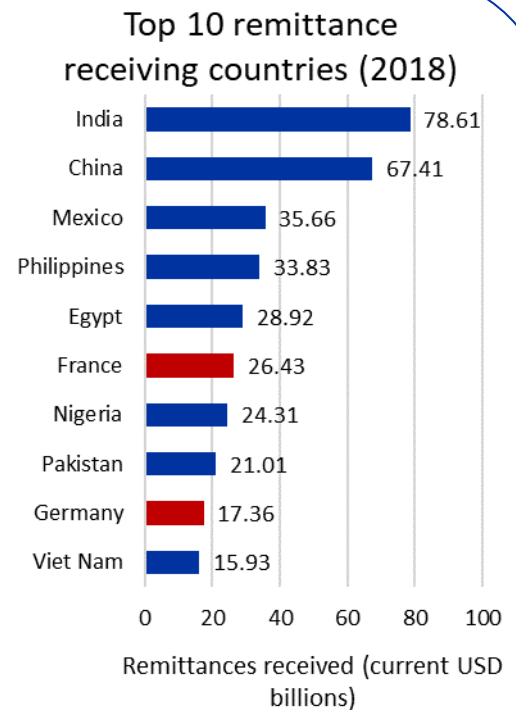
70%

of the 47 countries recognized by the United Nations as the Least Developed are in [Africa](#)

COVID-19 and international remittances

In 2019, migrants sent [\\$551 billion](#) in international remittances to family in low and middle income countries, over three times the amount of official aid received. Remittances have emerged as significant [drivers of development globally](#) as migration has [increased](#) over recent decades. But as destination economies contract, remittances are expected to decline significantly. In one of the major receiving countries of international remittances, [Mexico](#), COVID-19-related economic impacts are expected to reduce by more than 20% in 2020.

In [sub-Saharan Africa](#), the World Bank has projected COVID-19 will cost the region between USD 37-79 billion in output losses in 2020 due to trade disruptions, significantly reduced foreign income (such as remittances and FDI) and other impacts. The first recession in the region for 25 years is forecast.



Source: World Bank, 2019, in the [World Migration Report](#)

Financial support for developing countries

UNCTAD estimate that developing countries are facing a [\\$2-3 trillion](#) financing gap over the next two years. In response, several international organizations have deployed their resources:

- ⇒ [IOM](#) has launched a \$116.1 million Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan to support countries who need additional resources to support their health systems and prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- ⇒ The [African Development Bank](#) has listed the “Fight COVID-19 Social Bond”, which has raised \$3 billion.
- ⇒ The [IMF](#) is providing \$100 billion of emergency funds to support developing countries.
- ⇒ The [World Bank](#) has approved a group of projects to assist 25 developing countries, costing \$1.9 billion.



Tourism and development

As lockdowns and [travel restrictions](#) have been enacted across the world, the [World Tourism and Trade Council](#) has warned that 50 million jobs in the travel and tourism sector worldwide are at risk. This could have huge implications for development — notably in [Central American](#), [Caribbean](#) and [Asian](#) countries where tourism is particularly large — as the sector has been found to be key to [economic development and poverty reduction](#).

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COVID-19: a global governance crisis

With most countries and territories in the world now affected by COVID-19—[185](#) as at 10 April 2020—global governance systems have been under pressure not seen since WWII. While pressures have been felt most on health, economic and social systems, early analysis is also showing that the pandemic is affecting critical areas of security, with [some](#) arguing that the pandemic arrived as our “frameworks to prevent catastrophic confrontation are crumbling”. In his 2011 book, [Pandemics and Peace](#), William Long shows how global economic and political stability could fall victim to a pandemic, such as COVID-19.



Socio-economic impacts and global governance

Beyond the immediate coordinated health response to COVID-19, the UN is assessing and responding to the socio-economic impacts of the pandemic. In the launching the UN’s report “[Shared responsibility, global solidarity: responding to the socio-economic impacts of covid-19](#)”, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres argued that:

“*...we must tackle the devastating social and economic dimensions of this crisis, with a focus on the most affected: women, older persons, youth, low-wage workers, small and medium enterprises, the informal sector and vulnerable groups, especially those in humanitarian and conflict settings.*

More on the UN response can be found [here](#).

Migrants, human rights & COVID-19

Rapid responses to COVID-19 involving the imposition of [travel restrictions](#), new visa requirements, quarantine, limited/no internal movement as well as export restrictions have been central to combatting the spread of the virus. However, some analysts are pointing to the [unexpected boon](#) to nativist nationalists, and likely impacts on longer-term reductions in global mobility. Some travel restrictions [may not be lifted](#), and there are concerns about [human rights abuses](#) being reported that relate to COVID-19 [responses](#).

Migrants can be particularly vulnerable to abuse, especially those who have been displaced, those in immigration detention, and those in communities who may be marginalized, such as irregular migrants. IOM, along with other organisations, has called for the [urgent need to ensure migrant-inclusive approaches](#) in the overall COVID-19 response.

Health in the Global Compact on Migration

The Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) features health as a cross-cutting priority with references to health and health-care access in several objectives. Key health-related objectives within the GCM are outlined in the [Migration and health](#) chapter of the [World Migration Report 2020](#). The GCM provides the health community the opportunity to use it as a tool to advance migrant-sensitive health policies and services within discussions on migration governance, where health often remains left behind.

New articles on COVID-19 and migration governance

[How Will the COVID-19 pandemic reshape refugee and migration governance?](#) by Kristin Sandvik & Adèle Garnier

[“We are all fragile, but we are not all equally fragile”: Humanitarian operations amidst the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
by Andrea Silkoset

[Mekong governments urged to protect migrants workers](#) by Michelle Russell

[COVID-19: consequences for international migration and development](#) by Jason Gagnon

[The coronavirus pandemic could be devastating for the world's migrants](#)
by Marie McAuliffe and Celine Bauoz

[Coronavirus is spreading across borders, but it is not a migration problem](#)
by Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan, Meghan Benton and Susan Fratzke



United Nations
Network on Migration

Working Better Together

The UN [Network on Migration](#) works to ensure effective, timely and coordinated system-wide support to Member States in the implementation, follow-up and review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM).

“ *As the world confronts the COVID-19 pandemic, the United Nations Network on Migration salutes the immense efforts to date to combat this crisis and urges that all – including migrants regardless of migratory status – are included in efforts to mitigate and roll back this illness’s impact.* ”

Read the full statement [here](#). See also the Network’s [Community of Practice: Voices from the Ground](#), which aims to facilitate the exchange of factual, constructive, information on COVID-19 responses. Posted contributions include those from PICUM, ICMC, CGD and others.

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Public health governance and irregular migration

Poorly managed, inadequate or discriminatory immigration and health system responses can have multiple negative consequences for the health of migrants and the communities with which they interact.

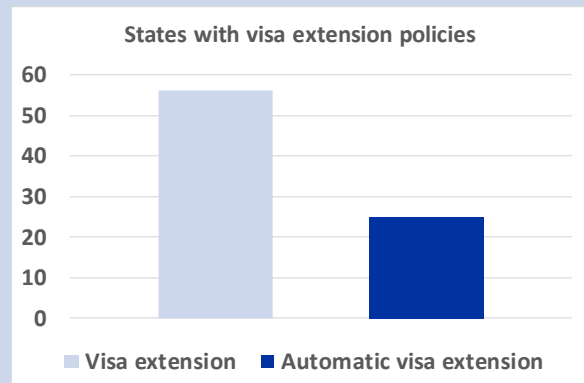
“Migrants in irregular situations, asylum seekers, exploited and trafficked persons may be particularly at risk of COVID-19 because their living or working environment may expose them to the virus without necessary protection.

—UN Special Rapporteurs Felipe González Morales and Maria Grazia Giammarinaro. Click [here](#) for the press briefing note.



Visa Extensions

Visa overstaying is among the primary pathways to irregularity. Recognizing the dilemma faced by millions of workers and other migrants holding soon-to-expire visas, [over 20 countries have automatically extended visa validity periods](#). At least one country from every region of the world has implemented a visa extension policy in response to COVID-19.



Source: [Newland Chase](#); [European Commission](#)



Travel restrictions and smuggling

Even with the most recent travel bans and restrictions, some borders [remain porous](#). As COVID-19 related travel restrictions continue to come into effect, there are [growing fears](#) that increasingly desperate people may turn to smugglers and some may even fall into the hands of human traffickers. The [Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime](#) released a publication that included information about changes in migrant smuggling operations that have occurred in response to COVID-19 measures. For example, [early evidence in Niger](#) suggests smugglers are moving toward more clandestine routes, which may also be more dangerous. [On the Venezuela-Colombia border](#), officials have expressed concerns about migrants forced into making risky mobility decisions that include hiring organized smuggling operations following Colombia’s decision to close many border checkpoints.

Support to migrant workers with irregular status

Irregular migrant workers consistently have [less support](#) in place to ensure their continued employment and [ensure proper protection from COVID-19](#), even in the labour industries [which have been deemed “essential” by governments](#) during lockdowns. Some articles/guides on vulnerabilities and policy responses to protect irregular migrant workers include:

- ⇒ [Guidance for employers and business to enhance migrant worker protection during the current health crisis](#) by IOM
- ⇒ [ILO Standards and COVID-19 \(coronavirus\) FAQ](#): by the International Labour Organization
- ⇒ [Living in fear during the COVID-19 crisis: migrant women with insecure immigration status and domestic violence](#) by Cathy McIlwaine

Essential services access for migrants of irregular status

States, cities and civil-society organizations have taken measures to address disparities in access to essential services among irregular workers. Among these are:

- ⇒ [Portugal](#) has opened access to state support systems to asylum-seekers and irregular migrants.
- ⇒ [New York City](#) is providing many services to all residents [regardless of status documentation](#).
- ⇒ [GCIR](#), a consortium of civil-society organizations, foundations and private companies have organized resources for migrants with regular and irregular status in the United States.

Detention & deportation

Some countries have continued to [detain](#) and [deport](#) irregular migrants during the pandemic, despite the health risks and travel restrictions. A [number](#) of [countries](#) have started to release some irregular migrants from immigration detention. In other cases, [judicial orders](#) have been made for release due to COVID-19 infections in detention facilities.



Information Communication Technology and Smuggling

The use of technology, such as communication apps to share the latest information, including to support clandestine border crossings, [has raised valid questions](#) concerning the extent to which technology has been used to support irregular migration and [smuggling](#), as well as to enable migrants [to avoid abusive and exploitative migrant smugglers and human traffickers](#). ICTs have become even more central to migrant decision-making in the era of COVID-19, when [public health information](#) and [misinformation](#) can be easily spread via messaging platforms such as [WhatsApp](#) or [WeChat](#).

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What is human trafficking?

According to the [2000 Protocol](#) to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, human trafficking is defined on the basis of three main cumulative elements:

an act	+	by means of	+	for the purpose of exploitation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recruitment transport transfer haubouring receipt of persons 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> threat or use of force coercion abduction fraud abuse of power or of vulnerability giving payments or benefits 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> prostitution of others sexual exploitation forced labour slavery or similar practices removal of organs other types of exploitation

Human trafficking, modern slavery and smuggling:

What are the differences?

Often referred to as “modern slavery”, human trafficking is to be distinguished from the smuggling of migrants. Although the [two often blur](#) in practice, contrary to smuggling, trafficking:

- Occurs without consent, entailing coercion or deception
- Is for the specific purpose of ongoing exploitation (which doesn't end



The impact of COVID-19 on victims of trafficking

The [identification](#) of victims of trafficking is difficult because of the underground criminal nature of trafficking. The [pandemic risks](#) further curtailing identification efforts due to measures of confinement, [priorities](#) of law enforcement shifting from the apprehension of traffickers to the monitoring of confinement and other measures against COVID-19, and the closure of social services which play an important role in identifying trafficking victims.

The protection of victims of trafficking may also be impacted by the pandemic, especially when they experienced pre-existing socio-economic difficulties. Their living conditions may put them at increased risk of infection. They have also higher risks of [re-exploitation](#) when they cannot benefit from assistance and care because of the suspension of services or the impossibility the practice preventive measures in victims' [shelters](#).

United in the fight against COVID-19

In Azerbaijan, the trafficking of personal protection equipment outside the region by criminal groups has created shortages. A [group of victims of trafficking](#) in a shelter supported by IOM is producing masks for themselves and the local community, contributing to the fight against the pandemic.



Accrued risks of human trafficking due to the COVID-19 pandemic

The [socio-economic impacts](#) of the pandemic are exacerbating [vulnerabilities](#) in our societies, including systemic issues related to health care, social security, security of employment or working conditions. As in times of [economic crisis](#), increased [insecurity, poverty and marginalization](#) induced by [diseases outbreaks](#) can be key drivers of human trafficking. [Criminal groups such as traffickers](#) are likely to take advantage of people's vulnerabilities for exploitative purposes. Increasing rates of [unemployment](#) which will likely worsen in the forthcoming months will add additional pressures on workers and increase jobs competition, while reducing flows of [international remittances](#) to countries of origin, thereby exposing more families to poverty.

Risks of human trafficking induced by the pandemic can, for example, take the form of:

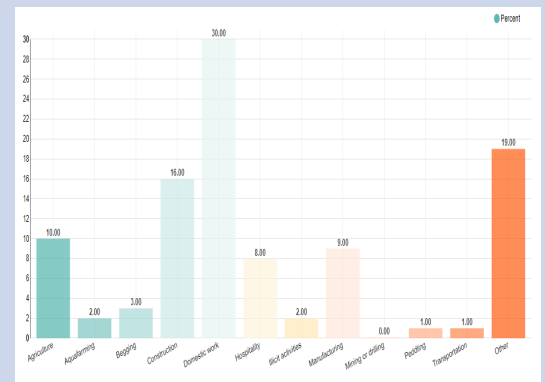
- ⇒ The [disruption of supply chains](#) with little oversight over potentially exploitative working conditions at the other end of the chain.
- ⇒ Factories lending money for workers confined at home without financial resources which may turn out in [debt bondage](#).
- ⇒ [Prohibition of sex work](#) due to lockdown in some countries which risks pushing sex workers underground and increasing their vulnerability to human trafficking.

Main types of exploitation

The [Counter-Trafficking Data Collaborative](#) highlights that the two main types of exploitation of trafficking victims are sexual exploitation (53.66%) and forced labour (41.81%).

Most victims of labour exploitation have been trafficked into the following sectors:

- ⇒ Domestic work (30%)
- ⇒ Construction (16%)
- ⇒ Agriculture (10%)
- ⇒ Manufacturing (9%)
- ⇒ Hospitality (8%)



Click on the [graph](#) for a full view and analysis



Migrants in irregular situations, asylum seekers, exploited and trafficked persons may be particularly at risk of COVID-19 because their living or working environment may expose them to the virus without necessary protection.

[Statement](#) by UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Mr Felipe González Morales, and UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, Ms Marie Grazia Giammarinaro, 3 April 2020

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Migrants' contributions...before the pandemic

The pandemic has hit the world at a time when discussions on migration and migrants are often negatively skewed. Now, more than ever before, it is important to reflect on the contributions that migrants have made, both to their communities of origin and destination. Migrants' contributions globally stretch back hundreds of years, but have arguably become more evident in recent decades, especially in three areas: [sociocultural, civic-political and economic contributions](#). Despite emerging impediments to the recognition of migrants' contributions, COVID-19 is showing us how important migrants are, and how [inter-connected and interdependent](#) our societies are becoming.



Migrants proving essential during COVID-19

The critical contributions of migrants to societies has been highlighted during the pandemic. In [European countries](#), migrants play major roles in essential service sectors, such as agriculture, domestic and care work, public health, food production and transport. In the UK, people are being urged to "[Pick for Britain](#)" to avoid crop loss and [Romanian farm workers](#) are being flown in to assist farmers. Similar problems in farming are occurring in [Australia](#), [Germany](#), [India](#), [Italy](#), [Spain](#), [Thailand](#), [Turkey](#), and [the United States](#).

“*One of the things that this current crisis is teaching us is that many people that we consider to be low skilled are actually pretty crucial to the smooth running of our country and are in fact recognised key workers.*”

UK Member of Parliament, [Steve Double](#)



Migrant health workers

[Health worker migration](#) is linked to the existing global shortage of health professionals, but has been further exposed during the pandemic. As hospitals in Italy began to be inundated with coronavirus patients, health care workers from [Albania](#), [Poland](#), [China](#), [Cuba](#), [Russia](#) and elsewhere flew in to assist.

In many countries, migrants are often over-represented in the health sector compared with other sectors, and have been [serving on the front line](#) in many countries as the health crisis has escalated. Policy changes have been needed, such as:

- ⇒ [Australia](#) lifted working hour restrictions for student nurses
- ⇒ [Germany](#) is enlisting the help of unregistered migrant medics
- ⇒ [New York](#) is now allowing foreign medical graduates with at least a year of graduate medical school to care for patients.



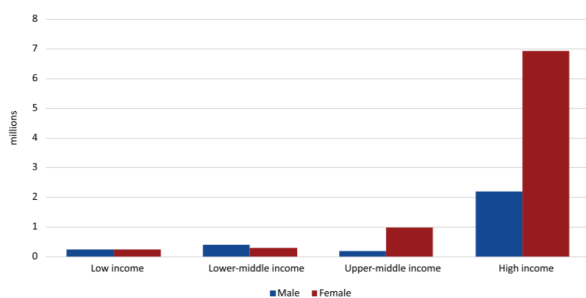
The need for accurate COVID-19 information in multiple languages

Public health information has been critical in the COVID-19 response. In many communities, migrants and migrant associations have come forward to provide translations of essential public health messaging. Migrants in [Italy](#), [Kuwait](#) and across [Africa](#) have been busy translating information into languages to help get clear messages across and avoid confusion. [Doctors of the World](#) has translated coronavirus guidelines into 45 languages for use around the world. In [Sweden](#), message groups on COVID-19 in 15 languages have been set up by migrant associations.

Migrant domestic workers on the front line

Because their work requires them to be in others' homes, and come in close contact with individuals and items that may be carrying the virus, domestic workers are front line workers in this pandemic, and at risk. Most domestic workers are women and many are migrants (see figure below). Read this [article](#), which outlines responses in South Africa, Mexico, USA, the Netherlands, India and Brazil.

Migrant domestic workers by destination



country income level and sex



Refugees against COVID-19

We often hear of the [heightened risk](#) to refugees and internally displaced persons from the coronavirus. There is widespread and deep concern that these already vulnerable populations will be amongst the groups most affected by COVID-19. The [UN response](#) is designed to assist and support these vulnerable groups. We hear less, however, about the refugees around the world who are taking action and contributing to the fight against coronavirus:

- ⇒ In [Iran](#) refugees are making masks and other personal protective equipment
- ⇒ In [Jordan](#), Syrian refugee women are making and distributing soap to support good hygiene practices, and in [Niger](#), refugees displaced from Nigeria are doing the same.
- ⇒ In [Switzerland](#), Syrian refugee volunteers are shopping for elderly and others who need to stay home.
- ⇒ In [France](#), refugees are supporting local authority initiatives by working in farms to harvest crops.

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What are international remittances?

Migrant remittances are cash or in-kind transfers made by migrants to relatives in countries of origin. International remittances also include compensation of employees, such as cross border workers.

According to the World Bank, global remittance flows totaled \$706 billion in 2019, with \$551 billion flowing to low- and middle-income countries. In 2019, India was the top recipient of remittances in US dollar terms (\$82bn), while Tonga was the largest recipient relative to the size of their economy (38% of GDP). The US was the top remittance sending country in 2018 (\$68bn).

On average, migrants send home 15% of their earnings, with one in nine people— or around 800 million people—on the receiving end of these flows.

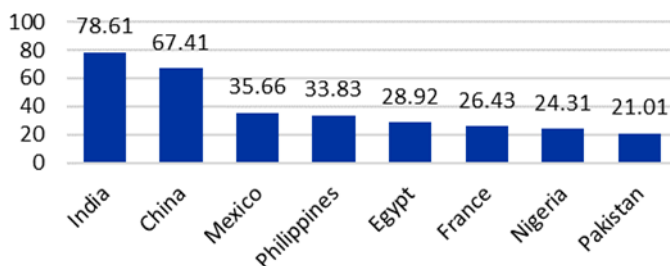
The impact of COVID-19 on remittances

Global remittances are widely expected to decline as a result of the pandemic, with one prediction that US outbound remittances will fall by 7%, or \$6bn, in 2020. Three key factors are driving this:

- ⇒ Some of the largest remittance sending countries—such as the US and Germany—have locked down in an effort to reduce the impact of the virus, leaving many migrants unable to work.
- ⇒ COVID-19 has played a role in the recent collapse of oil prices, which have been found to be closely related to the value of remittances, notably from those migrants residing in Russia.
- ⇒ Even in cases where migrants have money to send home, it has become more difficult to do so — around 80% of remittances are sent physically via a Remittance Service Provider, but these money transfer networks have partially or totally shut down.

Top recipients of remittances

Top recipients by billion US dollars (2018)



Source: World Bank, 2019, in the World Migration Report

In US dollar terms, the top remittance receiving countries have larger economies, with India, China, France and Germany among the top 10 recipients.

When considered as a percentage of gross domestic product, however, the top recipients are countries with smaller economies, such as Tonga, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Haiti.



The impact of declining remittances due to COVID-19

From countries in Africa—such as [Egypt](#) and [Somalia](#)—to those in [Asia](#), [the Caribbean](#) and [Latin America](#), remittances are a crucial source of income, particularly for the poorest.

Remittances often make up [60%](#) of family household income, and [UN DESA](#) estimate that 75% of money received is used to cover essentials, such as food, school fees, and medical expenses.

Many remittance recipients do not have any form of [social protection](#), so are unable to fill any gap in income arising from a decline in remittances received.

As migration has risen, so too has the importance of remittances to [development](#): such flows to [low- and middle-income](#) countries are 3 times larger than development aid and around the same as foreign direct investment. In [66 countries](#), international remittances accounted for 5% or more of GDP in 2019.

Given that remittances can help achieve [at least 7](#) of the 17 [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs), their absence will hinder development. Indeed, the [World Bank](#) cited a fall in remittances due to COVID-19 as one of the disruptions pushing sub-Saharan Africa into its first recession in over 25 years.

70%

The share of remittances [The Gambia](#) receives from major “lockdown economies” (France, Italy, Spain, the UK and the US).



The cost of remittances

As of March 2020, the global average cost of sending \$200 was [6.79%](#) (or \$13.58)—well above the [SDG aim](#) of 3%—a large portion of which arises because cross-border remittance transactions tend to require a currency conversion. However, the economic volatility caused by the pandemic has made it difficult for Remittance Service Providers to set exchange rates, leading to higher [foreign-exchange](#) related fees.

One factor which may offset such fees is a decline in the value of recipient countries’ currencies, which will [increase the value](#) of what migrants send home.



Policy responses

A number of countries have enacted policies designed to combat the forecasted fall in remittances:

- ⇒ According to the IMF’s [COVID-19 Policy Tracker](#), the Sri Lankan government has exempted inward remittance flows from certain regulations and taxes.
- ⇒ In [Zimbabwe](#), money transfer agencies have been allowed to open 3 times a week “to allow for the receipt of foreign currency remittances which cannot be transacted on any digital platform.”

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Migrant children and youth



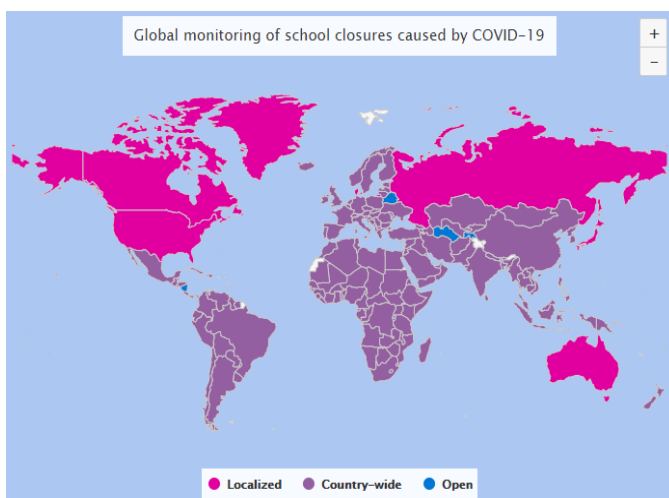
While [children](#) are usually referred to as under 18 years old, youth is defined by the United Nations as individuals between 15 and 24 years old. On this basis, there were more than [56 million migrant children and youth in 2019](#), accounting for nearly 21% of the total number of international migrants worldwide. [31 million of children](#) were displaced globally at the end of 2018.

While the vulnerability of children and youth generally depends on their age and other factors, migrant children may particularly be in a [situation of double vulnerability](#) as children and as migrants. Unaccompanied and separated migrant children are in an even more vulnerable situation as they do not have the protection and care of their parents.



The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education

As of 17 April, [over 1.5 billion pupils and students](#) from pre-primary to tertiary education were affected worldwide by localized or country-wide school closures, representing 91.3% of all learners worldwide.



Click on the [photo](#) for detailed data from UNESCO

While school closures affect all children and youth, distance learning during the pandemic is exacerbating existing [inequalities](#). [Less than 25% of low-income countries](#) provide the possibility of remote learning. Even in countries that do so, [children](#) and youth from marginalized and poorer households, such as migrants, may [not have access](#) to the necessary digital technologies. Migrant children and youth being out of school during the pandemic also risks of dropping school or lagging behind in terms of [language learning](#). They may also not benefit from the support of their parents who may themselves still be adapting to the receiving country of may be working during the pandemic.



Increased risk of sexual exploitation

Despite restrictions on movements both internally and cross-borders, the pandemic is increasing the risk of violence, abuse and [sexual exploitation](#) of children, including of forced [early marriage](#).

Sexual exploitation can occur [online](#) with children and youth spending more time on digital technologies during the pandemic. In circumstances of confinement, children may also be abused within their family, which also leads to higher risk of online sexual exploitation through the upload of pornographic videos.



Risks of labour exploitation

Financial insecurity, poverty and marginalization are often drivers of labour exploitation, including [human trafficking](#). Given their impacts, disease outbreaks can thus increase the risk of abuses and exploitations for children as it was the case in [Western Africa](#) in 2014-2016 with the Ebola outbreak.

Migrant youth are also particularly at risk of labour exploitation both as migrants and youth. The youth population has a [higher likelihood of unemployment](#) during economic shocks as it was the case with the [2008 economic crisis](#). They are indeed [often](#) working in the informal economy, in temporary or gig work, and in sectors most impacted by the pandemic. All these factors are particularly prevalent for migrants who may thus become more vulnerable to labour exploitation.



As the virus continued to spread in other countries I started to consider the possibility to do something for the others. I started registering messages and sharing information on preventive measures and on the disease for other migrants and refugees who do not understand Italian very well, and I never forgot my loved ones in my country of origin.— [Bassilou Dembele](#) helping migrants in Italy

Unaccompanied and separated migrant children

Migrant children who are [unaccompanied and/or separated](#) from their parents and their relatives are particularly vulnerable, all the more during the pandemic. Unaccompanied and separated migrant children have found themselves without sufficient protection, such as in [migrant camps](#) in Greece or France. Despite the temporary [suspension](#) of resettlement and relocation amid the pandemic, some [European States](#) have nevertheless pledged the relocation of 1,600 unaccompanied children from Greece. Luxembourg was the first one to implement this pledge with the relocation of 12 children asylum seekers.

Some children are being kept in immigration detention, while others have been subject to [deportations](#) to their country of origin. A Federal Judge in Los Angeles, United States, recently called for the [release of migrant children from detention](#) after four tested positive in a state shelter in New York.

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Global food supply depends on millions of migrant workers. In many countries, especially in developed economies, migrant workers play a critical role in agriculture and food production. By some estimates, [more than a fourth](#) of global farm work is done by migrant workers. Countries such as the United States, Germany, Australia, Canada, Spain, among others heavily rely on seasonal migrant workers to fill labour shortages in their agricultural sectors and to sustain food production. COVID-19 is already having an impact on migrant farm workers and, consequently, [affecting food production and supply](#).



COVID-19 disruptions to seasonal migrant work for harvesting

Restrictions on movement, including border closures, have left some countries unable to access much-needed farm labour, [leaving food unharvested and even left to rot](#). Across Western Europe, in countries such as Italy, France and Germany, seasonal workers traditionally from Eastern Europe [are absent on farms](#), as travel restrictions have rendered them immobile. COVID-19-related travel restrictions and illness are estimated to result in [a shortage 80,000 agricultural workers](#) in the UK, while Spain has a [shortage](#) of around 70,000-80,000 workers and Italy 250,000.

As countries grapple with acute labour shortages in their agricultural sectors, some have extended seasonal work visas or eased entry requirements for migrant seasonal workers. Australia, which relies on thousands of seasonal workers mostly from Pacific Islands, [extended](#) seasonal work visas to ensure harvesting, while the United States [eased requirements](#) for seasonal farm workers to avoid labour shortages during the pandemic and as the country goes into harvest period. Germany has also [eased border rules](#) to allow migrant farm workers to enter the country. Meanwhile, in the UK, travel restrictions and shut-downs have forced farmers to [charter planes](#) to bring in migrant workers.



Migrants play a substantial role in agri-food systems. Measures affecting the movement of people (internally and internationally) and resulting labour shortages will have an impact on agricultural value chains, affecting food availability and market prices globally.”

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations ([FAO](#))



Globalisation & food crops

Recent research shows that, globally, we are now more connected in culinary terms than ever before. A study of crop origins has found that the most important primary regions of diversity contributing to a country's modern food system are more often located elsewhere around the planet ([Khoury et al., 2016](#)).



Exacerbating food insecurity

As COVID-19 impacts food production, including by disrupting the supply of migrant farm workers, there are concerns that it could [lead to food insecurity](#) and exacerbate these insecurities in already vulnerable communities such as those already grappling with hunger and malnutrition. Countries in Africa could be hit hard, as the continent [accounts for most of the 212 million](#) people who are chronically food insecure. The potential for increased food prices combined with limited purchasing power make many countries in the region especially vulnerable to food insecurity. Meanwhile, countries that [heavily depend on food imports](#), such as small island developing states, could struggle to meet their food supplies.

Farm workers' protection

Many [commentators](#) are highlighting the need to protect farm workers, including seasonal migrants, as essential workers during the pandemic. [PPE](#), testing, health services access and ensuring their labour [rights](#) are upheld are some of the measures being called for. Protection of vulnerable groups, including migrants, is central to the [UN response to COVID-19](#).



Migrant farm workers at increased risk

Many migrant farm workers are at an increased risk of being infected with COVID-19, which could not only threaten their lives but also put global food supply at risk. For most, social isolation is nearly impossible, as they often both live [and work in very close proximity](#) to one another. Migrant farm workers living in [crowded camps with poor sanitation](#) are even more vulnerable to the disease and there is growing concern that COVID-19 could [spread rapidly](#) if it hits these environments. Many migrant farm workers also often [live in areas with poor transport links and with limited medical facilities](#), while the pre-existing conditions some have, sometimes caused by their working conditions, puts them at greater risk.

In the United States, there are concerns that [fewer people will apply for H-2A visas](#) for temporary agricultural workers, as workers choose to stay in their countries for fear of COVID-19. In parts of Europe, and in countries such as Thailand, thousands of migrant farm workers have [already returned to their countries of origin](#) to avoid the risk of getting the disease.

Internal restrictions on movement are also affecting countries like [India](#) as seasonal farm workers are unable to travel internally during the COVID-19 lockdown.

In a [recent brief](#), the FAO issued a set of policy recommendations in response to the current pandemic and its effect on migrant workers, including those who work in agricultural sectors. These include extending expiring visas of migrants working in all agricultural sub-sectors, ensuring the safe movement of agricultural workers and ensuring that safety and health measures are put in place, among others. Read more [here](#).

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Misinformation, fake news and the instrumentalization of the COVID-19 pandemic

The [stigmatization of migrants and instances of discrimination](#) against them have been exacerbated by misinformation and fake news in the media, especially [social media](#), and the politicization of the issue.

The pandemic has been exploited by anti-migrant, far-right and hate groups, with [conspiracy theories](#) circulating on the origin of the virus. While some have been claiming that COVID-19 is a bioweapon or is linked to 5G connectivity, others have pointed to [migration and migrants](#) as the cause of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The stigmatization of migrants is here symptomatic of the overload of information on social media over which there is little control and which is instrumentalized for political and other interests.

Misinformation and the “bots” who spread it

Some anti-migrant or xenophobic actors have created social media accounts that impersonate individuals [but merely proliferate misinformation](#). Find out a few tips to distinguish real users from the “bots” [here](#).

The COVID-19 “misinfo-demic”

The proliferation of misinformation about migrants and migration has only intensified with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. UN Secretary General António Guterres has called the parallel outbreak of falsehoods an [“misinfo-demic”](#) and called for care in the dissemination of information to prevent confusion during this public health crisis.



Click [here](#) to connect to the video.

IOM Social Media Campaign in Mexico

IOM’s Office in Mexico City has begun a social media campaign directed to counteract [misinformation and fear](#).

“**What is sought is to inform, train and sensitize citizens and public officials that any migrant is as vulnerable to COVID-19 as any other, and that it is necessary to promote public policies for the elimination of these specific vulnerabilities and stigmas that these people face.**

- Christopher Gascon, IOM Chief of Mission, Mexico

Resources on COVID-19, misinformation and migration

[Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) advice for the public: Myth busters](#) by the World Health Organization. (Also available in [Arabic](#), [Mandarin](#), [French](#), [Russian](#) and [Spanish](#).)

[Covid-19 Disinformation Briefings #1](#) and [#2](#) by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue

[When Facts Don't Matter: How to Communicate More Effectively about Immigration's Costs and Benefits](#) by Natalie Banulescu-Bogdan

[Here's how social media can combat the coronavirus "infodemic"](#) by Joan Donovan

[5 charts that bust myths about migration](#) by Marie McAuliffe and Adrian Kitimbo

Distinguishing the real from the fake

Beyond the immediate public health concerns faced by migrants living in close quarters, there is also a concern that misinformation may exacerbate the spread of COVID-19 among migrants and refugees.

Erroneous information spread [via messaging groups and social media](#) sometimes promotes treatments that have [no proven record of effect on COVID-19 symptoms](#). Some messaging app companies [have tried to take action](#) to prevent the transmission of falsehoods, but it remains an issue.

In other cases, rumors spread online can keep people [fearful of accessing crucial essential goods](#), including food or health care. When trust in governmental institutions [was low prior to the outbreak](#), the setup of emergency programs directly to service migrants can still be met with skepticism.

SIFT approach to migration & health news

Stop

Investigate the source

Find better coverage

Trace claims, quotes and media to the original context.



Misinformation data as migration data

Following the outbreak of COVID-19, public health experts have begun suggesting that [misinformation must be tracked](#) and classified with the same rigor as shown in the traditional corpus of public health data. In parallel, tracking misinformation and disinformation as integral parts of migration data may help future analyses.

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New COVID-19 portals & pages

There has been a surge in COVID-19 output globally, the new portals and dedicated resource pages emerging almost daily. Here are some of the new ones on migration and mobility aspects:

- ⇒ [COVID19 Social Science Research Tracker](#)
- ⇒ [Migration Health Evidence Portal for Covid-19](#)
- ⇒ [COVID-19 mobility impacts portal](#)
- ⇒ [Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker \(OxCGRT\)](#)
- ⇒ [ALNAP COVID-19 Response Portal](#)
- ⇒ [CMS Covid-19 Migration Developments](#)
- ⇒ [ICVA COVID-19 Resources](#)
- ⇒ [IATA Govt Measures Related to Coronavirus](#)
- ⇒ openDemocracy & Ryerson University's [Pandemic Borders](#) blog.

Forum on science journalism

A group of health-research organizations will be conducting [a virtual forum](#) for Spanish-speaking media in early May on the standards and processes for [high-quality scientific journalism](#). The forum will have a focus on coverage of COVID-19 and invite participants from all disciplines. Register [here](#).

On migration, mobility and pandemics before COVID-19...

[Where are the Migrants in Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Plans?](#) (2018) by Kolitha Wickramage et al.

[Human Mobility Networks, Travel Restrictions, and the Global Spread of 2009 H1N1 Pandemic](#) (2011) by Paolo Bajardi et al.

[Pandemic influenza preparedness and response among Immigrants and refugees](#) (2009) by Benedict Truman et al.

International Survey on Coronavirus

An international team of researchers from 12 institutions, including Harvard, IESE, Cambridge, and Warwick University, MIT, among others is collecting survey data on how citizens prepare and cope with the spreading coronavirus. More than 110,000 respondents in 58 countries have responded so far. The survey is currently open and can be accessed [online](#) in multiple languages.

Anonymized data will be made available for non-commercial research use by the researchers. See the [website](#) for details.



New research on migration & mobility aspects of COVID-19

[COVID-19 in humanitarian settings and lessons learned from past epidemics](#) by Ling San Lau, Goleen Samari, Rachel Moresky, Sara Casey, S. Patrick Kachur, Leslie Roberts & Monette Zard

[Venezuelan migrants “struggling to survive” amid COVID-19](#) by Joe Parkin Daniels

[Refugee and migrant health in the COVID-19 response](#) by Hans Henri Kluge, Zsuzsanna Jakab, Jozef Bartovic, Veronika D'Anna and Santino Severoni

[Undocumented U.S. Immigrants and Covid-19](#) by Kathleen Page, Maya Venkataramani, Chris Beyrer, and Sarah Polk

[Estimating the number of people infected with COVID-19 in Wuhan based on migration data](#) by Zheng Wang, Zi-xia Yuan and Zu-yao Jia

[Demographic Determinants of Testing Incidence and COVID-19 Infections in New York City Neighborhoods](#) by George Borjas

[Association of Population Migration and Coronavirus Disease 2019 Epidemic Control](#) by Yu Ding, Sihui Luo, Xueyng Zheng, Ping Ling, Tong Yue, Zhirong Liu, Jian ping Weng

[A crisis within the crisis: the mental health situation of refugees in the world during the 2019 coronavirus \(2019-ncov\) outbreak](#) by Jucier Gonçalves Júnior, Jair Paulinode Sales, Marcial Moreno Moreira, Woneska Rodrigues Pinheiroe, Carlos Kennedy Tavares Lima and Modesto Leite Rolim Neto



COVID-19 & migration webinars

Migration-related webinars are being conducted on a range of COVID-19 issues by research centres, think tanks, and forums, including:

- ⇒ [Migration Policy Centre](#) at EUI
- ⇒ [Migration Policy Institute](#)
- ⇒ [Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies](#)
- ⇒ [Global Forum on Migration and Development](#)



Demography & COVID-19

The International Union for the Scientific Study of Populations (IUSSP) has set up a [website](#) that brings together demographers' analysis of the COVID-19 pandemic. Demographers (or population scientists) play key roles in evaluating the death toll linked to a pandemic, analysing how it affects fundamental aspects of social life (e.g., marriage, fertility, residential arrangements, migration and mobility), and recommending the planning/prioritizing of social services to mitigate its impact on wellbeing.

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IOM crisis response

IOM's [Statement on COVID-19 and Mobility](#) highlights the importance of supporting migrants throughout the ongoing Coronavirus crisis:

“ *Within countries that have been hardest hit, migrants are exposed to many of the same vulnerabilities as other citizens, and often to a greater extent.*

Efforts to support all vulnerable groups ... should be strongly considered to avoid harmful consequences, minimise hardship, as well as reduce public health risk.

Drawing upon its experiences of previous emergencies, IOM's [COVID-19 Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan](#) (SRP) aims to support countries which require additional resources, whether financial, technical or operational.

IOM is playing a direct role in:

- ⇒ Risk communication and community engagement;
- ⇒ Crisis and cross-border coordination;
- ⇒ Training government employees;
- ⇒ Population mobility mapping; and
- ⇒ Enhanced Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) services.



Policy responses

IMF Policy Tracker

⇒ [Records](#) the key responses from governments to limit the human and economic impact of the pandemic.

IGC [COVID-19 tracker](#)

⇒ Provides details of policy interventions to address the pandemic in the developing world

ILO [Country Response](#)

⇒ Outlines the measures enacted to support the labour market and protect workers in each country.

Oxford [COVID-19 Government Response Tracker](#) (OxCGRT)

⇒ Records the stringency of government responses across countries and time in a consistent way.

COVID-19 travel restrictions globally

IOM's [Mobility Impacts](#) dashboard shows the number and type of restrictions in place at 3,808 points of entry, maps the various travel disruptions and restrictions enacted across the world and reports which population categories have been most affected by these measures.

As COVID-19 has spread, governments in many jurisdictions have implemented a range of temporary immigration-related measures to contain the virus. A country-by-country overview of these migration policy developments has been compiled by [Fragomen](#).

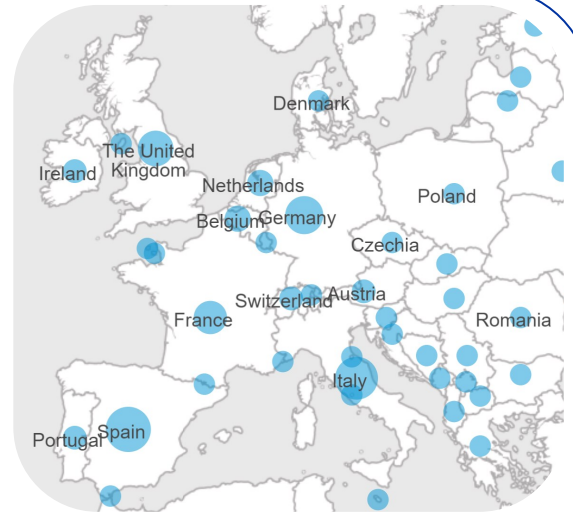


Tracking COVID-19 cases around the world

A number of online interactive dashboards have been created to allow public health authorities, researchers and the general public to visualize and track the outbreak of COVID-19 as it unfolds.

These dashboards show the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, fatalities and recoveries at the country level, as well as the change in cases over time.

The most cited dashboards include those hosted by [John Hopkins University](#), [nCov2019](#) and the [WHO](#).



Source: WHO [COVID-19 Situation Dashboard](#)



Migration-related analysis

Migration research centers and others have begun asking analysing COVID-19 impacts on migration and mobility:

[COMPAS](#)

⇒ A forum to facilitate brainstorming about what COVID-19 means for our fast-moving world, from cross-border migration to racism and the future of mobile working.

[Migration Policy Institute](#)

⇒ To combat COVID-19, governments have turned to migration management tools. How might these policy changes impact immigration systems in the long term?

[Center for Migration Studies](#)

⇒ A summary of COVID-19 migration-related developments, including policy analysis, research and dispatches about the pandemic.

[IOM Migration Research Series](#)

⇒ Provides an initial analysis of the specific ways that migrants have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, and the measures to mitigate these adverse impacts.

WHO Resources

WHO Situation Reports

⇒ The [Situation Reports](#) give an update of developments in the preceding 24 hours.

WHO Myth Buster

⇒ In the face of misinformation and fake news, the WHO has busted a number of [COVID-19 myths](#).

COVID-19 analysis in the developing world

⇒ Brooking's [Africa in Focus](#)

⇒ [Let's Talk Development](#), from the World Bank

⇒ Oxford [Latin America Centre](#)

⇒ OECD [Development Matters](#)

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The engagement of cities and local authorities for migrants

[Cities and local authorities](#) are the main spaces where migration and inclusion policies are implemented and are usually the best placed to understand the needs of their residents, including migrants.

Some cities are following an [interculturalist approach](#) to migrants' reception and inclusion, developing their own policies and measures to foster diversity. Among them, so-called "[sanctuary cities](#)" in the [United States](#) and Canada, for instance, have adopted policies and practices to accommodate irregular migrants. For example, New York City issues [ID cards](#) for all its residents, irrespective of their migration status, to secure access to diverse services.

The policies and measures adopted have sometimes been at odd with national migration policies, creating [tensions](#) with national authorities. This has for instance been the case concerning the protection of irregular migrants against deportation carried out by national authorities [even during the pandemic](#).

The role of cities in the pandemic

Cities have been [epicenters](#) of the COVID-19 pandemic due, most notably, to their population density. Together with other local authorities, they thus have an important role to play in handling the pandemic and are thus, for instance, duly integrated into [IOM Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan for COVID-19](#).

The [level of preparedness of cities](#) to disease outbreaks however varies among cities as it is also contingent on their level of development and their socio-economic situation. While cities in Europe have had difficulties to maintain their health services, [cities in the 'Global South'](#) are facing other challenges, especially when it comes to informal settlements with high population densities, limited services, and where the population mostly works in low-income and high risk jobs.



Leaving no one behind

Since COVID-19 first reached our city's doorstep, we have been working around the clock to ensure all our residents are secure and supported, including our immigrant and refugee communities, who are among the most vulnerable to the impact of this pandemic. Here in Chicago, saying 'we are all in this together' means that during this crisis, no one gets left out and no one gets left behind.

[Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot](#), City of Chicago, 7 April 2020



Local authorities' support for migrants amid the pandemic



The response of local authorities to the pandemic and the level of support they have provided to migrants vary greatly. In [Uganda](#), for instance, support measures for urban refugees has been difficult to adopt because of the lack of accurate data local authorities have on these refugees. Other cities have taken inclusive measures to ensure migrants are included in COVID-19 responses and to limit the propagation of the virus. Below are some illustrations of measures adopted by local authorities.

Ensuring access to health care:

- ⇒ Some local jurisdictions such as [Ontario](#), [Québec](#) and [British Columbia](#) (Canada) have taken measures to ensure equal access to testing and treatment for COVID-19, including for those in an irregular situation.

Securing access to social services:

- ⇒ Extension of access to social emergency services to all individuals living in a precarious situation in the city of [Geneva \(Switzerland\)](#).
- ⇒ Social support for basic needs provided in [Toronto \(Canada\)](#).
- ⇒ Housing Support Programmes provided in [Chicago \(USA\)](#).

Limiting the economic impact of the pandemic:

- ⇒ Some municipalities in [South Africa](#) have lifted restrictions on informal food trade, a sector in which [migrant workers](#) are also involved.
- ⇒ Financial support to small businesses, including those run by migrants, provided by [Chicago \(USA\)](#).
- ⇒ Cash payments to irregular migrants in [California](#) who are not included in the stimulus package approved by Congress.
- ⇒ Funding of diverse social and medical services by the [Regional Government of Campania \(Italy\)](#) for supporting African migrants harvesting the fields.

Addressing racism, discrimination and xenophobia

- ⇒ The [Coalition of Latin American and Caribbean Cities against Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia](#) released a statement emphasizing the need for solidarity and addressing discrimination of vulnerable populations, such as displaced persons and migrants, during the pandemic.

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Increase in mobility restrictions



As governments around the world continue to try to contain the spread of COVID-19, the number of mobility restrictions, both internationally and domestically, has risen sharply in recent weeks. This has included measures such as border closures and the enforcement of quarantines and lockdowns. By early April, more than [9 in 10 people globally](#) lived in countries with travel restrictions. And [recent estimates](#) by IOM show that by April 23, 2020, COVID-19-related travel restrictions had reached 52,262, implemented by 215 countries, territories and areas. The number of restrictions has significantly increased since 1 April 2020, when they stood at [43,781](#).



Nearly all global destinations impose restrictions

A [new report](#) by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) shows that by 6 April 2020, 96% of global destinations had introduced travel restrictions:

- ⇒ 100% of Africa
- ⇒ 100% of Asia and the Pacific
- ⇒ 100% of Middle East
- ⇒ 93% of Europe
- ⇒ 92% of Americas

Training of border staff

As part of its response to COVID-19, IOM continues to [train](#) officials on surveillance in airports, sea ports and land border crossings.

In countries such as Costa Rica, in anticipation of increased migration flows from Nicaragua and Cuba, IOM has provided technical assistance on how to implement [safe and appropriate](#) border management measures.

While in Bangladesh, IOM is supporting [the government](#) “at sea, land and air borders through the provision of equipment, training of health and immigration staff, and strengthening inter-agency coordination at points of entry.”



NEW IOM Migration Data Portal Page

The newly released thematic page, [Migration data relevant for the COVID-19 pandemic](#), compiles and analyses existing data on migrants, including in the countries hardest hit by COVID-19.

Restrictions at airports

The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is providing regular updates on airports around the world. The [website](#) lists countries and the restrictions they have imposed at airports.



International protection

People seeking asylum are among the most affected by travel restrictions. Several countries have closed entry to all foreigners, including asylum seekers. Countries such as Uganda, which long had an open door policy to asylum seekers and refugees, [suspended](#) receiving new arrivals as part of its overall response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the United States, the recent decision to [expel/return](#) undocumented migrants upon arrival, as a measure to limit the spread of COVID-19, is feared to constitute [refoulement](#), potentially exposing asylum seekers to further persecution. In the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman sea, hundreds of Rohingya are stuck on boats, after being [denied entry](#) into Malaysia due to COVID-19 fears. There are [growing fears](#) of a repeat of the [2015 crisis](#), when smugglers abandoned Rohingya at sea on unsafe, crowded boats.

Discriminatory

movement restrictions

The manner in which some countries/areas have implemented mobility restrictions is coming under increasing scrutiny, particularly in relation to migrants, including refugees.

[Recent media reports](#) show that measures such as curfews, in some locations have targeted specific groups of migrants. This has raised concerns that harsh restrictions aimed at migrants could hamper their ability to access basic care and services.

The UN Network on migration recently released a [statement](#) emphasizing that “any limitations on freedom of movement do not unduly affect human rights and the right to seek asylum, and that restrictions are applied in a proportionate and non-discriminatory way.”



Implications for gender-based violence

Some refugee camps have seen a rise in gender-based violence, as GBV services are scaled back and as restrictions on movement prevent those affected from seeking help.

In Cox’s Bazar, where hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees continue to live, there has been [an increase](#) in both intimate partner violence and child marriage. Strictly enforced movement restrictions are limiting the ability of women and girls to access support services.

In response and to mitigate the increased risk of gender-based violence, some Rohingya women have [self-mobilized](#) to raise awareness on COVID-19 in the camps, including conducting door-to-door visits.

Suspending immigration



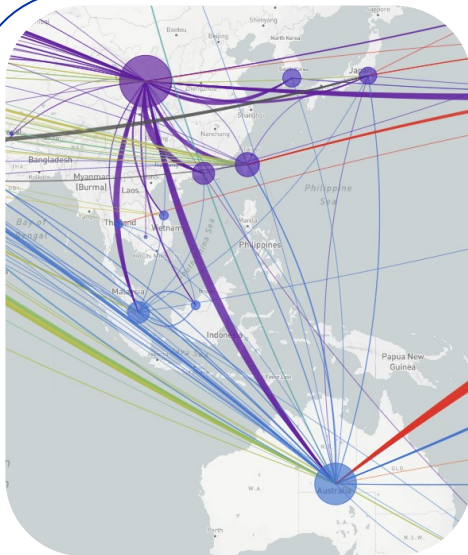
While travel restrictions have been widely imposed around the world, some countries, such as the United States, have gone further- suspending immigration altogether. The United States’ government, on April 23 2020, [temporarily suspended](#) immigration to the country for a period of 60 days, but with some [exemptions](#), such as seasonal farm workers, who can still enter the country.

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Source: [Nextstrain](#)

The role of big data in understanding COVID-19

“ This is, in essence, a big data problem. We’re trying to track the spread of a disease around the world.

[James Hendler](#), Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Understanding how COVID-19 spreads is crucial to stopping the virus. [Nextstrain](#) is an open-sourced project which uses big data to provide data, sequencing, and visualizations showing the [evolution and spread](#) of [COVID-19](#). By sharing the genetic sequencing of 700 cases of the virus, for example, the project contributed to the [corroboration](#) of the assessment that the virus’s virulence (or severity) has not changed as it has spread to other countries.

Tracing COVID-19 using new tech

Technology has been central to government efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19. In [China](#), for example, citizens must have the correct health code in order to pass checkpoints, while those in China’s [Hong Kong Special Administrative Region](#) wear wristbands that use geofenced technology. In [Russia](#), meanwhile, facial recognition technology is combined with urban center security camera monitoring.

In Singapore, citizens have been encouraged to install the contact tracing app [TraceTogether](#), which uses Bluetooth signals to identify if users have come into contact with anyone exposed to COVID-19. Based on the Singapore app, the Australian government is encouraging its population to download its [COVIDsafe app](#). In [South Korea](#), private developers have developed similar apps.

[Apple and Google](#)—whose operating systems power 99% of the world’s smartphones—are collaborating to develop their own contact tracing technology. This involves a decentralized / anonymised contact tracing system, and the companies have pledged to [disable the service](#) once the outbreak



Population surveillance: a COVID-19 legacy?

Many have raised [concerns](#) that once the current crisis has passed, governments could repurpose surveillance technology to track and monitor groups of interest, including [migrants](#). However, in some countries the ability to surveil populations through the use of new technology already exists. In the US, for example, AI facial recognition technology is used by immigration authorities to conduct [mass monitoring](#) of people in traffic flows to detect undocumented migrants.



Tracking innovations around the world

The surge in innovations to support and strengthen the response to COVID-19 can be visualized on the [Coronavirus Innovation Map](#).

Launched by StartupBlink, together with the Health Innovation Exchange and the Moscow Agency of Innovations, the map is a directory of hundreds of innovations and provides information on [five categories](#) of innovation: prevention, diagnosis, treatment, information, and life and business adaptation, as well as showing ways in which people can get medicines without leaving their home.

View the map [here](#).



Source: [Coronavirus Innovation Map](#)



The COVID-19 innovation challenge

The California-based 3D modelling company [CAD Crowd](#) has launched a month-long prototypes competition, calling for inventions to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. To date there have been 138 entries, ranging from hands-free door openers to UV light disinfectant cash drawers.

The risks of rapid data generation

While [new technologies](#) are making it possible to gather and analyze huge quantities of data in near real-time that can tell us about the virus's characteristics, such as its transmissibility and fatality rate, the data produced can be inaccurate.

This means that an open peer review process is vital in ensuring that what is discovered is reliable, although even this process can be supported by AI tools that [assist funders](#) in identifying specialists to peer review proposals.



Treating COVID-19 with AI

As healthcare systems around the world come under immense [strain](#), machine learning is being used to [develop solutions](#).

Several tools have been adopted to triage patients, from [radiology software](#) that is capable of scanning a patient and calculating a probability of infection in 10 minutes, to [chatbots](#) that diagnose users based on their symptoms and medical history and advise them on whether to stay at home or seek medical help. Machine learning tools are also being used to [rapidly screen](#) for antibodies with a high probability of success, and could soon be used to predict how the virus will impact healthcare [resource needs](#).

Innovation in conflict zones

A team of 12 volunteers in Idlib—the last rebel stronghold in Syria, where many hospitals lie in ruin—have used homemade equipment to design a [makeshift ventilator](#) to combat the pandemic, with plans to build hundreds more.

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Gender analysis on COVID-19

A new [Rapid Gender Analysis](#) on COVID-19 has revealed that a significant number of gender dimensions are already being witnessed as the impacts of the pandemic emerge over time and in different settings. These include:

- ⇒ Women are experiencing a care-giving burden
- ⇒ Inequality of access to health care is related to gender
- ⇒ Gender based violence is increasing
- ⇒ Women require targeted information on COVID-19 .

Read about these and additional gender dimensions in the analysis by Care and IRC [here](#).



Implications for gender-based violence (GBV) in displacement

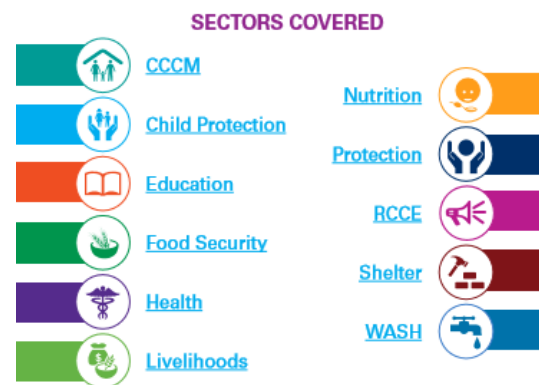
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In response and to mitigate the increased risk of gender-based violence, some Rohingya women have [self-mobilized](#) to raise awareness on COVID-19 in the camps, including conducting door-to-door visits.

Guidelines for Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action —NEW COVID-19 Resources

Evidence on the increase in GBV resulting from COVID-19 measures is of great concern to practitioners on the front line. Accordingly, a new addition on COVID-19 to the GBV [Guidelines Knowledge Hub](#) provides practitioners with key resources to support the integration of GBV risk mitigation into COVID-19 response. The sectors covered include:



Access resources, such as this IASC brief, [here](#).

Why we need women's leadership in the COVID-19 response

In this World Economic Forum [Agenda](#) blog, the authors argue the case for more women in leadership positions, highlighting that:

- ⇒ Women comprise the majority of frontline healthcare workers globally, meaning that female representation is vital in tackling the coronavirus crisis.
- ⇒ 70% of global healthcare staff are women, but only 25% of global leaders are female.
- ⇒ Without women in these positions, women's issues could fail to be addressed throughout the crisis.

Similar issues are being raised by [commentators](#) globally, with some asking why it is that women are such

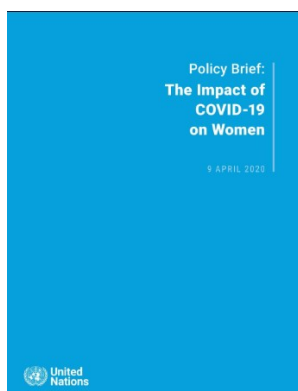


UN Policy Brief on COVID-19 and Women

The year 2020, marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, was intended to be ground-breaking for gender equality. Instead, with the spread of the COVID19 pandemic, even the limited gains made in the past decades are at risk of being rolled back. The pandemic is deepening pre-existing inequalities, exposing vulnerabilities in social, political and economic systems which are in turn amplifying the impacts of the pandemic.

A new [policy brief by the UN Secretary-General](#)

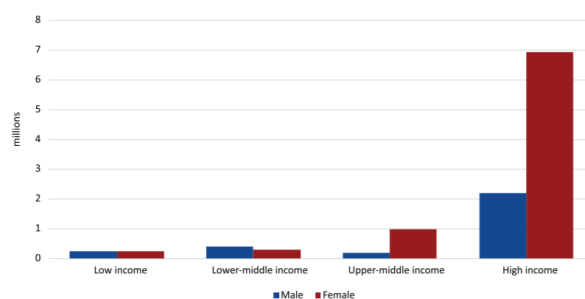
explores how women and girls' lives are changing, and outlines priority measures to accompany both the immediate response and longer-term recovery efforts.



Female migrant domestic workers on the front line

Because their work requires them to be in others' homes, and come in close contact with individuals and items that may be carrying the virus, domestic workers are front line workers in this pandemic, and at risk. Most domestic workers are women and many are migrants (see figure below). Read this [article](#), which outlines responses in South Africa, Mexico, USA, the Netherlands, India and Brazil.

Migrant domestic workers by destination country



income level and sex

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As detailed in [Analytical Snapshot #17](#), nearly all countries worldwide have enforced travel/movement restrictions in an effort to contain the spread of COVID-19. Measures such as border closures, curfews and internal lockdowns have had wide-ranging implications for both internal and international migrants, leaving many unable to return to their countries/areas of origin or to reach their intended destinations.



Unable to return home



Many migrant workers in different parts of the world are unable to return home, stuck in their countries/areas of work without employment. With little or no assistance from their countries of origin or destination, thousands are stranded in [crowded, squalid living environments](#), putting them at a [higher risk](#) of contracting COVID-19.

- ⇒ Migrants in Gulf States, who make up significant proportions of several countries' populations, are already [disproportionately affected by the pandemic](#). Nepal [put a stop](#) to all citizens returning home, leaving the many Nepalese workers in Gulf States trapped. India also recently halted the repatriation of its citizens from the Gulf. But some destination countries, such as Kuwait and Bahrain, are [conducting repatriation flights](#) in coordination with some countries of origin.
- ⇒ For aspiring labour migrants and those who had gone back to their countries of origin to process their documents, border closures mean they are [stuck in their countries of origin](#) without work and at risk of becoming indebted.
- ⇒ International migrant workers are not the only ones affected by travel restrictions and lockdowns; internal labour migrants in countries such as India have been [stuck in cities and industrial areas](#) without work or income since the country's lockdown came into force. Millions of people in India migrate from rural areas in [search of work](#), with many ending up in a range of sectors, such as domestic work, construction, transportation, among others. Some Indian states, such as Uttar Pradesh, have recently [sent buses](#) to return stranded migrant workers.



Visa extensions for stranded migrants

To help migrants cope with the current travel restrictions, including lockdown measures and border closures, several countries have granted visa/permit renewals, extensions or [temporary amnesty](#). For example, Thailand has implemented [a 3-month extension](#) until end of July to foreigners holding all types of non-immigrant visas. New Zealand has also [extended visas](#) for migrant workers that were expiring at the beginning of April. The Russian Federation's Presidential Decree "to regulate the legal status of foreign nationals for an interim period of three months" [was welcomed by IOM](#), as it allows migrants to retain their legal status, find work more quickly and not have to pay for permits.



Asylum seekers refused entry

Asylum seekers have been heavily impacted by the current pandemic, as many countries have closed their doors to all foreigners, including those seeking protection.

Hundreds of Rohingya, for example, remain [stranded](#) in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman sea, after being denied entry into Malaysia. Various organizations, [including the UNHCR](#), have expressed concern and called for responsibility sharing by States to avoid a repeat of the [2015 crisis](#) when thousands of Rohingya were abandoned by smugglers and left stranded at sea.

In Latin America, the closure of borders has left many migrants stuck in transit countries; thousands of migrants are remain in Panama after Costa Rica closed its borders, while many are stranded between the Honduras/El Salvador border. Border areas in Mexico also continue to host [stranded asylum seekers](#) who are no longer able to cross into the United States.



IOM assisting stranded migrants



In various parts of the world IOM is assisting thousands of migrants who have been affected by movement restrictions and unable to work or return home.

- ⇒ In Niger, border closures have resulted in a surge of stranded migrants; a [joint initiative](#) between IOM and the EU is offering support to more than 2,300 of these migrants, hosted in IOM's six transit centres.
- ⇒ In Panama IOM, in collaboration with the government and UNHCR, is [providing humanitarian assistance](#) to migrants stranded in three immigration reception stations at Panamá's borders with Colombia and Costa Rica.
- ⇒ Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is a key transit country for migrants traveling from Greece to other countries in the EU, has around 8000 migrants stranded in the country because of COVID-19-related movement restrictions. With IOM support, [a 1000-bed camp](#) for homeless migrants is now operating.
- ⇒ In countries such as Thailand, IOM has also been tracking the number of stranded migrants. Between March 26 and 23 April 2020, IOM recorded [660 stranded migrants](#) across five locations in the country.



— NEW ISSUE BRIEF —

In a new [IOM Issue Brief](#) by the Immigration and Border Management Division, recommendations cover immigration, consular and visa procedures, including the need to adapt regulations to uphold legal frameworks, while incorporating necessary adjustments for migrants to stay in compliance with immigration rules. This entails, for example, governments to, when possible, allow 'for regular stay after expiry of a specific visa or residence permit', and to 'facilitate regular stay of general visa holders' among other recommendations. Read more [here](#).

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Protecting children during the pandemic

COVID-19 appears to have so far entailed less [severe infections](#) for children than adults, with a higher number of children being asymptomatic or experiencing mild or moderate symptoms.

However, the pandemic still has important [negative impacts](#) on children around the world, especially on those from populations in vulnerable situations, such as migrants and displaced persons. The [UN Secretary-General](#) identified four main risks for children that need to be addressed to ensure children's protection:

- Education
- Health
- Food
- Safety



Thankfully, children have so far been largely spared from the most severe symptoms of the disease. But their lives are being totally upended. I appeal to families everywhere, and leaders at all levels: protect our children.

António Guterres, UN Secretary-General, 16 April 2020



Click [here](#) to read the full statement and/or watch the recording



Continued education

While schools are starting to reopen in some countries, the pandemic has at some point forced more than [1.5 billion of pupils and students](#) out of school worldwide due to school closures in [many countries](#). As underlined by [UNESCO](#), school closures severely impact children, especially those in most vulnerable situations. In addition to interrupted learning and the risk of an increase in dropout rates, school closures can have adverse consequences on children's nutrition, create gaps in children care and expose children to social isolation, abuse, violence and exploitation.

Inclusive learning opportunities through distance learning have been developed to mitigate school closures. The [Global Education Coalition](#), for example, seeks to support States, communities, families and children, providing a list of [national learning platforms](#) and [distance learning solutions](#). As children in [most vulnerable situations](#), such as migrants and displaced persons, may not have access to the necessary technology, calls are made to support children's [access to digital technologies](#) while [other innovative solutions](#) are also explored to ensure a minimum of continuity of education for migrant children.

Socioeconomic consequences for migrant families and risks for their children

With little savings and sometimes no health insurance, migrant parents may be forced to continue working during the pandemic. In addition to heightened risks of infection for them and their household, their children may be left at home on their own due to school closures with the [risk](#) of:

- ⇒ Social isolation, with increased [psychological distress](#).
- ⇒ When they have access to digital technologies, no assistance in continued remote education solutions that may exist and insufficient surveillance of their [online activities](#) where they may be at risk of sexual exploitation.

With the increase in [unemployment](#) worldwide in sectors where migrants often work and a decrease in earnings due to the global recession, migrant parents may find themselves in precarious economic situations, unable to provide for the basic needs of their family. This may also be the case for parents who have migrated to work abroad leaving their children in the country of origin and who may not be able to support their family by sending [remittances](#) or may have to return to their country of origin because of unemployment. The risks for their children include most notably:

- ⇒ Increased anxiety and stress within the household, with heightened risk of [abuse, violence and exploitation](#) for migrant children, including [gender-based violence](#).
- ⇒ Higher [school dropout rates](#) for lack of sufficient financial means and/or because children may be forced to find alternative remunerated activities with the risk of being [exploited](#) and falling into the hands of [human traffickers](#).



Specific risks for displaced children



While displaced children may experience similar risks as migrant children, their specific vulnerability linked to displacement and their living conditions may expose them to acute risks to their development, well-being and safety amid the pandemic, such as:

- ⇒ While around [4 million refugee children](#) were already out of school in 2017, prolonged periods of school closures during the pandemic entail the [risk of higher dropout rates](#) even after schools reopen. [Organizations](#) are addressing this risk by setting up solutions for continued education.
- ⇒ Higher health risks, especially of contagion to COVID-19 due to no proper access to [water, sanitation and hygiene facilities](#) in crowded camps, with no possibility to keep the necessary social distances and insufficient health care. A solution has been the [decongestion](#) of crowded camps, as well as relocation to other countries of [unaccompanied children](#) living in those camps.
- ⇒ Lack of access to humanitarian assistance for (displaced) [children caught up in situations of conflict](#). On 23 March, the UN Secretary-General called for a [global ceasefire](#) to focus efforts on humanitarian needs amid the pandemic.

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Immigration policies following the COVID-19 outbreak

Immigration policies refer to [government positions](#) concerning the entry, stay, selection, settlement and deportation of foreign citizens in the country, covering a [range of fields](#), including family migration, labour migration, and refugee/asylum migration. While recent years have seen a trend toward more complex, and often more restrictive, policies in [more highly-regulated contexts](#), the COVID-19 outbreak represents a significant fork in the road—the pandemic could reinforce restrictive immigration policies, but it could equally mark an inflection point towards policies that better reflect the need for forms of mobility.

Policy flexibility and agility in action

In light of closures to immigration office and service providers that make compliance with requirements for status determination difficult, many countries have granted [flexibility](#) on immigration processes. Among other countries, [France](#), [Russia](#) and [the UAE](#) have automatically extended, or simplified extension procedures for, visas in a move to prevent [widespread irregularity](#) due to the pandemic. [Portugal](#) has temporarily regularized all migrants who applied for a residence permit before the pandemic to ensure that migrants have access to social security and healthcare, while a similar program is being discussed in [Italy](#). [Jordan](#) has waived labour-related fines and fees for migrant workers wanting to return to their home countries and has cre-

Tracking immigration policies

Fragomen has provided a summary of the confirmed immigration restrictions and concessions that global jurisdictions are currently imposing to contain COVID-19. You can

Long term impacts?

The pandemic has drawn attention to the fact that migrants are vital to many sectors in developed countries—[healthcare](#) and seasonal [farm work](#), for example—while driving a [decline](#) in migration and mobility at the same time.

The longer-term impacts are not yet clear but the implications of reduced mobility are the subject of growing attention. For example, [Singapore's](#) “hub city” model is under increasing threat. Within Europe, harvest season has required [new flexibility and agility](#).

International migration and mobility are deeply intertwined with labour markets and [globalization](#), so as we start to see the economic downturn take hold, the changes to [long-term migration patterns](#) will only then emerge. It won't be uniform globally.

Rethinking skills & labour migration

In a recent Migration Policy Centre webinar, Prof. Martin Ruhs, Prof. Bridget Andersson and Dr. Friedrich Poeshchel discussed how the COVID19 outbreak has changed the way countries measure skills and the value they place on lowskilled migrants in policymaking. Click [here](#) to watch the webinar.



Mobility bubbles

The notion of a “[trans-Tasman](#) bubble”, whereby border restrictions between Australia and New Zealand would be relaxed, has been raised by the respective governments following both countries relative [success](#) in containing the spread of COVID-19.

The idea is seen as one way of boosting the countries’ economies, with the New Zealand to Australia migration corridor the [third most popular](#) involving Oceanic countries.

Similarly, the idea of a [Singapore-New Zealand](#) bubble has also been raised.

UK post-Brexit immigration policy

In February 2020, the UK government unveiled plans for a [points-based](#) immigration system to be implemented following the country’s exit from the EU that would limit migration, particularly of low-skilled individuals. However, since the pandemic the proposal has come under criticism, with [MPs](#) and [think tanks](#) noting that many of the workers who have garnered praise during the pandemic would not have been [permitted entry](#) under the proposed system.

“*One of the things this current crisis is teaching us is that many people we consider to be low-skilled are actually pretty crucial to the running of our country, and are in fact recognized as key workers.*

[Steve Double](#), UK Member of Parliament

Suspending immigration to the US

On 22 April the US President signed an executive order to [temporarily halt](#) the provision of green cards for those immigrating to the US. The suspension, which will initially last for 60 days but could be extended ‘based on economic conditions at the time’, has been introduced with [the aim](#) of stopping imported infections and reducing competition to US-born workers for jobs. The Migration Policy Institute estimate that based on the categories included in the executive order, approximately [52,000 green cards](#) will be blocked over the 60 day period, although they note that the order may have little practical effect in the short term as the State Department has largely [suspended](#) in-person interviews for visa applicants as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

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Migrants' stigmatization and discrimination in crisis situations

While it is true that the COVID-19 virus itself “does not discriminate” in its transmission, extensive [research](#) and [reporting](#) has shown that the pandemic has exacerbated pre-existing social and economic disparities, with migrants among the groups facing the [additional burdens](#) of stigmatization and discrimination. Refer to [Analytical Snapshot #6](#) for more on earlier analysis.

Discriminatory mobility restrictions

The manner in which some countries/areas have implemented mobility restrictions is coming under increasing scrutiny, particularly in relation to migrants, including refugees.

[Recent media reports](#) show that measures such as curfews, in some locations have targeted specific groups of migrants. This has raised concerns that harsh restrictions aimed at migrants could hamper their ability [to access basic care and services](#).



Click [here](#) to watch a video on one of IOM's COVID-19 responses to reduce stigma and discrimination.

Xenophobic stigmatization

Stigmatization of migrants has led to a rise in xenophobic confrontations. The [Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council](#) has documented [1,500 discriminatory and xenophobic incidents](#) in the United States since the onset of the pandemic. Reports from several countries indicate that discrimination and anti-migrant behaviour has induced [food insecurity](#) and [return migration](#) to migrants' origin countries.



Population surveillance: a COVID-19 legacy?



Many have raised [concerns](#) that once the current crisis has passed, governments could repurpose surveillance technology to track, monitor and discriminate against groups of interest, including [migrants](#). However, in some countries the ability to surveil populations through the use of new technology already exists. In the US, for example, AI facial recognition technology is used by immigration authorities to conduct [mass monitoring](#) of people in traffic flows to detect undocumented migrants.

Articles on COVID-19, discrimination and stigmatization against migrants

[“If I wear a face mask, everyone treats me like a disease”: the mask debate](#) by Juan Zhang

[Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: an initial analysis](#) by Lorenzo Guadagno

[How discrimination towards Africans and China’s surveillance state will reset a migration trend](#) by Roberto Castillo

[The Other Problematic Outbreak](#) by Yasmeen Serhan and Timothy McLaughlin

[Why xenophobia is bad for the health of all in South Africa](#) by Jo Vearey

[The many facets of pandemic vulnerability](#) by Alison Mountz

[The coronavirus pandemic could be devastating for the world's migrants](#) by Marie McAuliffe and Celine Bauloz

Access to Health Care

Due to a range of explicit and implicit policies, migrants in many places face unique obstacles when attempting to access health care during a pandemic. Among other barriers, these obstacles include [a scarcity of facilities](#), [a lack of health insurance](#) and [fears related to immigration status](#).



Addressing racism, discrimination and xenophobia

The [Coalition of Latin American and Caribbean Cities against Racism, Discrimination and Xenophobia](#) released a statement emphasizing the need for solidarity and addressing discrimination of vulnerable populations, such as displaced persons and migrants, during the pandemic.

Vulnerabilities at work



Migrants provide a significant labour source for essential industries. These workplaces have now [become epicenters of COVID-19 transmission](#). For example, in the absence of adequate protection equipment has led to hundreds of outbreaks across the United States in places that disproportionately affect migrants.

In other sectors, migrants workers face [a precarious employment status](#) with only [inconsistent access](#) to social protection benefits.

Discrimination via environmental hazard

[Two](#) separate [studies](#) have given preliminary evidence that links [long-term exposure to air pollution](#) to increased vulnerability to COVID-19. Migrants disproportionately live in areas with [high-levels](#) of [pollution](#) and environmental hazard.

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Migrants with disabilities

Many states fund broad social protection schemes designed to support people with disabilities. In many cases, state health care support depends upon [a worker's contributions during formal employment](#). This presents a barrier to disability services in a public health and economic crisis.

[Without adequate supports](#), migrants who have disabilities face multiplicative barriers which make it all the more difficult to have access to basic food, shelter and health necessities.

Additional considerations for people with disabilities

Robust support of migrants during the COVID-19 outbreak includes additional considerations for people with disabilities (PWDs).

Due to a variety of factors, a person with a disability may be at greater risk of contracting COVID-19, may have a more difficult time obtaining correct public health information and may face barriers that prevent access to health services or social supports.

Risks of exposure to COVID-19

Depending on each individual situation, people with disabilities can face greater risks of exposure to COVID-19. According to the WHO, these risks are due to:

- ⇒ Barriers to basic hygiene measures, such as hand-washing
- ⇒ The necessity of touching surfaces to obtain information or for physical support
- ⇒ Difficulty of social distancing due to support needs or living in group environments

PWDs can also be at greater risk for more severe cases of the virus, due to:

- ⇒ The exacerbation of existing health conditions
- ⇒ Obstacles to accessing health care
- ⇒ Disruptions in the support systems typically in place

Assessing the needs of migrants with disabilities

[Access to services for Migrants with Disabilities \(AMiD\)](#), an EU-funded programme, developed the Needs Assessment Tool. This survey provides an [accessible method](#) to give migrants with disabilities the opportunity to express needs and preferences during integration.

AMiD - Access to services for migrants with disabilities

This Needs Assessment Tool (NAT) is developed under the European project AMiD: Access for Migrants with Disabilities, which aims to support the efficient management of the reception and integration of asylum seekers and migrants with disabilities in EU.



About the tool



Go to tool



Organisations

Source: [AMiD project](#).

Resources on COVID-19 for people with disabilities

[COVID-19 response: Considerations for Children and Adults with Disabilities](#) from UNICEF

[Toward a Disability-Inclusive COVID19 Response: 10 recommendations from the International Disability Alliance](#)

[COVID-19: Who is protecting the people with disabilities?—UN rights expert](#) from OHCHR

[Migrants with Disabilities: Ensuring access to quality services](#) by the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities

Considerations for children with disabilities

The [communication channels](#) frequently utilized for conveying safety information to children—early childhood programs and schools—may not be accessible to children with disabilities. By engaging [young people as sources of information](#), communication strategies can be tailored to the needs of local communities and individuals.

“ To face the pandemic, it is crucial that information about how to prevent and contain the coronavirus is accessible to everyone...Organizations of people with disabilities should be consulted and involved in all stages of the COVID-19 response.

—[Catalina Devandas](#), Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities

IOM's work with refugees living with disabilities

[About 5%](#) of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh live with some form of disability. IOM is working to address these barriers in Rohingya refugee camps. Click [this link](#) or the image at right to learn more about IOM's work.



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The diaspora has long harnessed the benefits of migration to help address the socio-economic and political challenges in their countries of origin. Their contributions toward development, such as through international remittances, are well-established. The important role diasporas play toward development is also reflected in the Global Compact for Migration (GCM) which, [under objective 19](#), aims to “create conditions for migrants, and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in all countries.”



How the diaspora is contributing to COVID-19 responses

As governments and societies all over the world continue to grapple with COVID-19, diaspora communities globally are stepping in and playing key roles in supporting their countries' efforts to fight the pandemic.

- ⇒ A [recent information sharing session](#) between doctors in New York and Yerevan, which also involved representatives of the Armenian diaspora, provided a chance for doctors in the United States to share with their Armenian counterparts trends, treatment methods and experiences in tackling COVID-19 in New York hospitals.
- ⇒ The Bangladeshi diaspora in the United States has [come together](#) to mobilize resources and support people affected by COVID-19 in their country of origin. This has also involved raising funds to provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to healthcare workers and doctors in Bangladesh, a country whose healthcare system is not as robust.
- ⇒ In South Sudan, the Rwandan diaspora has [raised thousands of dollars](#) to support fellow citizens in Rwanda as the country continues efforts to contain the spread of the disease.
- ⇒ Lebanon's diaspora in Australia has been instrumental in providing [testing kits](#) while in Eritrea, its diaspora had contributed [nearly USD 4 million](#) by mid-April in support of government efforts.





Renewed interest in diaspora bonds?

The COVID-19 pandemic, and its devastating effect on many developing economies, could renew interest in diaspora bonds, according to the World Bank. The Bank anticipates diaspora bonds could generate about [USD 50 billion](#) a year for developing countries and could potentially make up for the current sharp decline in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). FDI to developing economies is expected to drop by [37 per cent](#). [Diaspora bonds](#), which allow migrants to support their countries of origin, “have been [a key alternative](#) to borrowing funds from more expensive lenders such as other governments” including in times of crisis. Countries such as [India and Israel](#) have been very successful in raising funds through this mechanism.



Global Diaspora Virtual Exchange

To engage the diaspora in responses to COVID-19, IOM recently organized the Global Diaspora Virtual Exchange on COVID-19 Response. The exchange has two objectives:

- ⇒ creating a space for collaboration that allows diaspora groups to share COVID-19-related best practices and experiences
- ⇒ showcasing and bringing attention to already on-going work by diaspora groups.

The first Exchange, opened by IOM Director General António Vitorino, was held on 22 April 2020. Read more [here](#).



Supporting the diaspora

COVID-19 has taken a toll on many countries’ diaspora, inflicting job losses, closure of businesses and even loss of life. Several governments have initiated support services for their citizens living abroad to help them cope during the pandemic. In Turkey, for example, the Indonesian Mission is holding [virtual meetings](#) with its citizens to discuss and address issues such as those related to immigration and employment. The government of Ireland has established a [dedicated COVID-19 Response Fund](#) to support organizations that deliver services to the Irish diaspora.



Impact on remittances



While the diaspora continues to play an outsized role in supporting their countries to tackle COVID-19, many have also been hard hit by the pandemic, limiting the ability of some to contribute to their countries of origin. One of the most affected contributions is remittances. According the [World Bank](#), remittances to low and middle income are projected to fall by nearly 20 per cent in 2020. Read more about COVID-19’s impact on remittances in [analytical snapshot 16](#). The reduction in remittances has significant implications for the people, communities and countries that heavily rely on them.

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Socioeconomic impacts on migrants

The socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 are progressively becoming a major area of [analysis](#) in recognition of the longer-term implications the pandemic will have. It is [estimated](#) that around 49 million people worldwide could be pushed into extreme poverty in 2020. The pandemic has already revealed and exacerbated pre-existing socioeconomic [inequalities](#), including those of migrants, and will affect as well their country and communities of origin. Despite [migrants' contributions](#) to the pandemic response worldwide, some migrants thus risks being particularly vulnerable to the longer-term effects of the pandemic.



International migrants

Some [migrants](#), including refugees, have returned to their country of origin because of the global slowdown, and are experiencing difficulties reintegrating in labour markets. The pandemic may reduce the attractiveness of some destination countries, it may also push some to [\(irregularly\) migrate](#) to wealthier countries comparatively less affected by the pandemic. [Sub-Saharan Africa](#) is expected to be the region hit hardest in terms of extreme poverty.



Displaced populations

Often in vulnerable situations prior to the pandemic, [refugees and internally displaced persons](#) risk further being marginalized. [Some countries](#) have closed entry to all foreigners, including asylum seekers. Poor and over-crowded living conditions may worsen if there are cuts in humanitarian [funding](#) due to the diversion of aid to fighting COVID-19 domestically.



Migrant workers

[Migrant workers](#) are often working in sectors that are the most affected by the pandemic, such as manufacturing and hospitality. With rising unemployment rates, they are particularly impacted, together with their relatives who may be reliant on the remittances they send back home. Some employed in [seasonal work](#) have also been unable to work due to travel restrictions



International remittances

According to the [World Bank](#), [international remittances](#) risk falling by 20% in 2020, the “sharpest decline in recent history”. This is a cause of [concern](#) for [smaller](#) but also larger economies that heavily rely on international remittances, as well as for migrants' [relatives](#).



Inclusion and social cohesion

[Stigmatization and discrimination](#) have led to a rise in [xenophobia](#) against migrants that risks having longer-term implications for their socioeconomic inclusion and, more broadly, the social cohesion of their receiving society.

The UN Framework

On 19 March, the [UN Secretary-General](#) called for solidarity and an urgent and coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As articulated in its report [Shared Responsibility, Global Solidarity: Responding to the Socio-Economic Impacts of COVID-19](#), this global response is to focus on 3 priorities:

- 1) Tackling the health emergency
- 2) Focusing on the social impact and the economic response and recovery
- 3) Helping countries to recover better

**SHARED
RESPONSIBILITY,
GLOBAL
SOLIDARITY:**
Responding to
the socio-economic
impacts of COVID-19

March 2020

A [UN COVID-19 Response and Recovery Multi-Partner Trust Fund](#) has been launched by the Secretary-General to finance these [three objectives](#), especially for the poorest and most vulnerable communities in low- and middle-income countries.

Concerning objective 2 and the urgent socioeconomic response, the UN is focusing on [five critical pillars](#):

- 1) Protecting health services and systems
- 2) Social protection and basic services
- 3) Protecting jobs and small and medium sized enterprises
- 4) Macroeconomic response and multilateral collaboration
- 5) Social cohesion and community resilience.

IOM's role

Recognizing that migrants will be among the most vulnerable populations to be socioeconomically affected, [IOM](#) expanded its appeal on 15 April from USD 116.1 million to USD 499 million for its COVID-19 [Global Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan](#). Immediate responses rolled out in various parts of the world include those in Bangladesh, Tunisia, Panama, Uganda, Italy, Ukraine and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (read more [here](#)).

Part of the IOM response is also focused on mitigating the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic on migrants (Strategy Priority 4). In this respect, the work of IOM includes:

- rapid analysis to assess the immediate socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19;
- monitoring the secondary impacts of the pandemic;
- identifying and piloting efficient and scalable mechanisms for mobilizing health migrant workers and broader migrant communities;
- enhancing employers' commitment to migrant workers' protection; and
- prioritizing livelihoods and job creation in displacement affected communities.

In this context, IOM staff in the field are contributing to rapid analysis of the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on migrants to support inputs to UN country teams and resident coordinators.

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Xenophobic racism

COVID-19 itself “does not discriminate”, however, extensive [research](#) and [reporting](#) is showing that the pandemic is exacerbating pre-existing inequality, with migrants among the groups facing the [additional burden](#) of discrimination. See [Analytical Snapshots #6](#) and [#29](#) for earlier analysis.

While not new in crisis situations, there has been high visibility of [coronaracism](#) on display during the pandemic, especially on social media platforms. Social media shines a light on discriminatory behaviours, and can also be used as a medium to [promote tolerance](#). **#Tolerance**

New research articles on COVID-19 and racism

[Racism and discrimination in COVID-19 responses](#) by Delan Devakumar, Geordan Shannon, Sunil Bhopal & Ibrahim Abubakar

[Covid-19 and the rise of racism](#) by Melanie Coates

[The pandemic of social media panic travels faster than the COVID-19 outbreak](#) by Anneliese Depoux, Sam Martin, Emilie Karafillakis, Raman Preet, Annelies Wilder-Smith & Heidi Larson

[First COVID-19 suicide case in Bangladesh due to fear of COVID-19 and xenophobia: Possible suicide prevention strategies](#) by Mohammed Mamun and Mark Griffiths

IOM Director General speaks

about the critical need to address xenophobia

IOM Director General António Vitorino held an online press conference on 7 May with media from the United Nations Geneva press corps and others from all over the world. In a wide-ranging session, DG Vitorino outlined the challenges facing the Organization and migrants in the COVID-19 era. Amongst other things, the Director General outlined the danger to our societies posed by the misinformation feeding xenophobia and the stigmatization of migrants and other vulnerable groups.

Watch the video [here](#).



“What can I do?”

Leaders who maximize trust and minimize fear are critical to [reduced anxiety](#) and more effective responses during times of uncertainty and crises. This relates to political leaders, private sectors leaders as well as leaders in civil society. However, it does not stop with leaders and there a lot that [individuals](#) can do on a day-to-day basis, such as:

- ⇒ Spread facts
- ⇒ Engage social influencers
- ⇒ Amplify voices of those with lived experience
- ⇒ Promote ethical journalism
- ⇒ Actively portray ethnic diversity
- ⇒ Correct myths and stereotypes
- ⇒ Challenge those who portray bias.

With more and more people able to self-publish through social media, it is more important than ever to act responsibly.

Biggest social media influencer?

For the week of 20 April, the biggest social media influencer on COVID-19 was Lady Gaga at [81.2 million interactions](#) due to her online concert [Together at home](#), which raised USD 128 million for the WHO’s Covid-19 Solidarity Response Fund.



Communications in the media

Misinformation and hate speech are spreading with devastating consequences for migrants, refugees and other vulnerable groups. IOM has issued [guidance](#) on producing communication campaigns during the pandemic and other migration contexts. A new bulletin by the European Union Agency for the Fundamental Rights includes a section on [disinformation, privacy and data protection](#), as it relates to the xenophobia in the media on COVID-19.

Organic mentions of COVID-19

Countering xenophobia in online media is a challenge. For the week commencing 9 March, [Synthesio](#) reported that there had been **39.2 million** organic mentions of COVID-19 on social media, while [Sprinklr](#) detected **20 million** mentions across social media, blogs and news sites in a single 24-hour period.

Advice for parents and caregivers



Children can be particularly vulnerable to the effects of xenophobic racism. The US National Association of School Psychologists has issued [guidance](#) for parents and caregivers of children who experience COVID-19-related racism during the pandemic. Designed to minimize children’s anxiety, the guidance highlights (amongst other things) the need to display acceptance and compassion toward others.

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New research & analysis on environmental migration & COVID

[More than a health crisis? Assessing the impacts of COVID-19 on climate migration](#) by Dina Ionesco and Mariam Traore Chazanoël

[Climate, migration and COVID-19](#) (video presentation) by Alex Randall

[Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: An initial analysis](#) by Lorenzo Guadagno

[Managing disasters amid COVID-19 pandemic: Approaches of response to flood disasters](#) by Mikio Ishiwatari, Toshio Koike, Kenzo Hiroki, Takao Toda and Tsukasa Katsube

[Building resilience against biological hazards and pandemics: COVID-19 and its implications for the Sendai Framework](#) by Riyanti Djalante, Rajib Shaw and Andrew DeWit

[Strengthening Prevention with Better Anticipation: COVID-19 and Beyond](#) by Emily Munro

[Cities and Covid-19: Food access for vulnerable communities in practice](#) (forthcoming webinar)

COVID-19 and environmental mobility

[Environmental stress](#) underpins migration decisions for millions of people globally every year. However, as with other drivers, movements related to environmental stress have largely stopped as governments around the world have enforced mobility restrictions in response to COVID-19.

For further information on environmental migration and displacement, IOM's [Environmental Migration Portal](#) includes relevant news, research and policy briefs on the topic.

Small Island States facing dual crises

[Small island countries](#) face the immediate effects of environmental change and now grapple with [global COVID-19 pandemic](#). [Food insecurity](#), the [drop in tourism](#) and environmental risks may have continued impacts on [labour migration and remittances](#) to small islands in the years ahead.



Health care and displaced persons during disasters

Hospitals already overwhelmed by COVID19 may not be able to take care of those affected by disasters, while some measures after disaster events such as mass shelters may become untenable, as they could become [hotspots](#) for the further spread of COVID-19.



Displaced and stranded populations due to disasters

As countries devote significant resources to responding to COVID-19, [concerns](#) that other disaster preparedness efforts are taking a backseat are mounting. Disaster events have consistently been the largest drivers of displacement. According to the latest data, [IDMC](#) estimates that 24.9 new displacements occurred as a result of natural disasters in 2019. Should disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes or wildfires strike during the COVID-19 pandemic, mobility restrictions will hamper [effective emergency assistance](#). Read more in snapshot [#8 on displacement events](#) and snapshot [#26 on stranded migrants](#).

Governance of environmental change and mobility during the pandemic

While [historic](#), the temporary drop of greenhouse gas emissions due to government stay-at-home policies will not alter the underlying forces driving environmental change and mobility. [Experts have emphasized](#) that long-term climatic transformations do not occur from *ad-hoc* policies during a pandemic, but from coordinated work at all levels of governance.

International environmental governance

The pandemic disrupted the [annual United Nations climate conference](#), including the [migration-related discussions](#) and the [Task Force on Displacement](#).



[Regional-level policy reviews](#) are due to take place on the topic of The Global Compact for Migration, a crucial international agreement. These dialogues could be [delayed](#).

National-level governance

Long-term exposure to air-pollution has been linked to greater vulnerability to COVID-19, leading France to [increase support](#) in mobility systems that do not depend on fossil fuels.



Sub-national and municipal level governance

[Informal settlements](#) can be found in many cities where rapid labor migration from rural to urban places has occurred without [complete administrative and regulatory oversight](#). Since informal settlements typically feature densely-packed houses with ad-hoc access to city services, [many fear](#) that the residents of informal settlements face dual exposures to [public health and environmental risks](#).



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New research & analysis on civil society responses & COVID

[First, Save Lives: Solutions for the COVID-19 Pandemic and New Solidarity with Migrants and Refugees-A Global Civil Society Statement](#) from the Civil Society Action Committee. For the list of signatories, click [here](#).

[Coronavirus: civil society's role in West Africa](#) by Ayisha Osori

[Civil Society and the Coronavirus: Dynamism Despite Disruption](#) by Saskia Brechenmacher, Thomas Carothers and Richard Youngs

[Civil Society and COVID-19 in India: Unassuming Heroes](#) by Mohammed Sinan Siyech and Naweeda Jouhar

Civil Society Survey on misinformation about COVID-19

The UN is requesting feedback on its communication and the topic of misinformation from the perspectives of CSOs who are responding to the crisis. Click [here to access the survey](#).

Civil society responds to COVID-19



Many civil society organizations working with migrants and refugees have contributed to the response to the dual public health and economic shocks caused by COVID-19. In many cases, this has meant [advocating against xenophobia](#), providing [research and analysis](#) to ensure inclusion of vulnerable populations, [filling in the gaps](#) in social protection systems and removing the barriers that prevent migrants' access to [essential health services](#).



UN-civil society briefing

On 18 May, the United Nations will host a [civil society briefing](#) entitled "Fighting Stigma, Xenophobia, Hate Speech and Racial Discrimination related to COVID-19." Separately, the UN has issued a [call for stories of CSOs](#) responding to the effects of COVID-19.



Photo credit: [UNICEF-USA/](#)

[@katchyaphotos](#)

Civil society statements on migration and COVID-19

The [Global Forum on Migration and Development](#) has published two webinars and compiled the public statements issued by various civil society organizations in response to the pandemic. To access the page, click [here](#).

Combating xenophobia and disinformation

Racist abuse and violence against perceived foreigners has proliferated in parallel with the pandemic. Many CSOs have begun countering these trends, such as Art.1 MN, a [Dutch anti-discrimination organization](#) that launched a campaign against xenophobia and abuse. A Polish NGO is producing material to counter [conspiracy theories](#) about the virus.

Filling gaps in social protection

CSOs continue to fill gaps in public service delivery around the world. Médecins Sans Frontières has dispatched medical teams [around the world](#) to support clinics in providing specialized COVID-19 health care for elderly, homeless and migrant populations. In India, over 90 CSOs have coordinated their extensive networks to [distribute food and masks](#) to [millions](#) of people, including many migrant labourers.

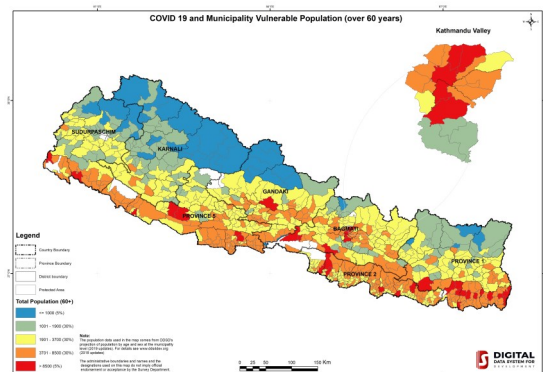
Community organizing and advocacy

For years, NGOs in [Singapore](#) have been advocating [for improved migrant worker living spaces](#), but with the recent outbreak resulting from inadequate public health measures, this work has now received greater [recognition](#). A [coalition of migrant collectives](#) in Brazil have pushed for increased access to basic public services for migrants living in Brazil, [regardless of status](#).



Analysis on critical issues

A key role of CSOs is to collect, analyse and present data on topics of importance to the public. Civil society groups in the [United States](#) have [chronicled, tracked and collected data](#) on the labour conditions of migrants in the agricultural and livestock sectors. A [number of Nepal based-CSOs](#) have developed apps and applied analyses to ensure inclusion of vulnerable populations in health policy responses.



Source: [DD4Dev](#)

Joint Civil Society Statement on Digital Surveillance



[Surveillance technology](#) has been repurposed for contact tracing and monitoring mobility during the pandemic. In a [joint statement](#), over 100 organizations urged governments to

“ *show leadership in tackling the pandemic in a way that ensures that the use of digital technologies to track and monitor individuals and populations is carried out strictly in line with human rights.*”

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New research & analysis on privacy, mobility systems & COVID

[Privacy-Protective Mobile Big Data Analytics and COVID-19 Response: Challenges and Opportunities for Telecommunication Companies](#) by Sai Sri Sathya, Gunjan Sinha, Santanu Bhattacharya and Ramesh Raskar

[Can we fight COVID-19 without resorting to mass surveillance?](#) By Yves-Alexandre de Montjoye and Florimond Houssiau

[Surveillance Won't Stop the Coronavirus](#) by Petra Molner and Diego Naranjo

[Covid Notions: Towards Formal Definitions -- and Documented Understanding -- of Privacy Goals and Claimed Protection in Proximity-Tracing Services](#) by Christiane Kuhn, Martin Beck and Thorsten Strufe

[COVID-19 Mobile Positioning Data Contact Tracing and Patient Privacy Regulations: Exploratory Search of Global Response Strategies and the Use of Digital Tools in Nigeria](#) by Iniobong Ekong, Emeka Chukwu and Martha Chukwu

Extraordinary measures becoming ordinary?

Unprecedented levels of population surveillance and data exploitation are occurring around the world as part of responses to the pandemic. Similar to travel restrictions and lock-down provisions, many of these privacy-related measures are based on extraordinary powers, only to be used temporarily in emergencies. Exemptions in data protection laws to share data are also being utilised. UK-based *Privacy International* is tracking the global response to COVID-19 by monitoring changes in privacy-related measures. Easing of travel restrictions and lock-down provisions are relatively easy to monitor, but this is not the case for some other measures. Access its COVID-19 webpage [here](#).

Protecting privacy and data while using apps and biometrics

As part of its COVID-19 policy brief series, the OECD has published a [brief](#) on the development and use of digital tools for population surveillance, arguing that:

“*Digital technologies provide powerful tools for governments in their fight to control the COVID-19 pandemic, but their privacy and data protection implications must be recognised. Contact-tracing apps should be implemented with full transparency, in consultation with major stakeholders, robust privacy-by-design protections...*”



Joint Civil Society Statement on Digital Surveillance

Surveillance technology has been repurposed for contact tracing and monitoring mobility during the pandemic. In a [joint statement](#), over 100 organizations urged governments to:

“ show leadership in tackling the pandemic in a way that ensures that the use of digital technologies to track and monitor individuals and populations is carried out strictly in line with human rights.

COVID-19 and Data Protection

The Council of Europe has established a dedicated [webpage](#) on COVID-19 and data protection. The page includes declarations, fact-sheets, analytical articles and links to additional resources.



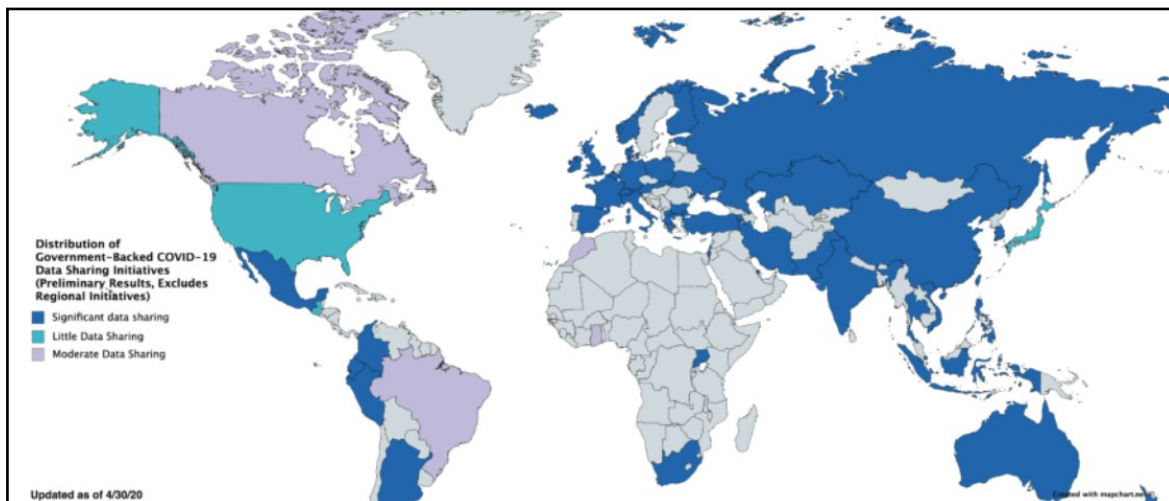
www.coe.int/dataprotection

Source: Council of Europe



COVID-19 Data Protection and Privacy Resources

The UN Global Pulse page contains a select list of data protection and privacy resources related to the COVID-19 epidemic. The page is being updated regularly as the landscape around data protection and privacy and COVID-19 evolves. The below infographic on the [Global Pulse page](#) represents distribution of government-backed COVID-19 data sharing initiatives.



Source: UN Global Pulse see <https://www.unglobalpulse.org/policy/covid-19-data-protection-and-privacy-resources/>

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New research & analysis on global talent mobility & COVID

[The potential impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on occupational status, work from home, and occupational mobility](#) by Amit Kramer and Karen Kramer

[How does global talent mobility function during a pandemic?](#), by global mobility platform TOPIA.

[Immigrant Key Workers: Their Contribution to Europe's COVID-19 Response](#), by Francesco Fasani and Jacopo Mazza.



The future of mobile staff in global supply chains

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the [vulnerabilities](#) of global supply chains, and specifically jobs which require a high amount of international travel, from plant managers to engineers. [Over half](#) of respondents to a survey of Japanese companies operating in Thailand said that measures such as quarantine has obstructed business activities, for example.

As a result, it has been [predicted](#) that once the crisis has passed, companies will localize their supply chains and expertise, reducing their reliance on [globetrotting staff](#).



Not all expertise can be put on Zoom or Skype, some expertise has to travel and now all the flights are grounded.

[Alex Dolya](#), Procurement Specialist, BCG Singapore



Talent of tomorrow

With statistics from [Denmark](#), [Australia](#) and the [US](#) indicating that large numbers of international students remain in their country of study to work following their graduation, the COVID-19-induced [disruption](#) to universities poses a significant obstacle to global talent recruitment. A recent survey of prospective international students found that [around 60%](#) had changed their study plans due to the pandemic. However, [around half](#) were interested in starting their studies this year even if it meant doing the beginning of the course online.



Did you know?

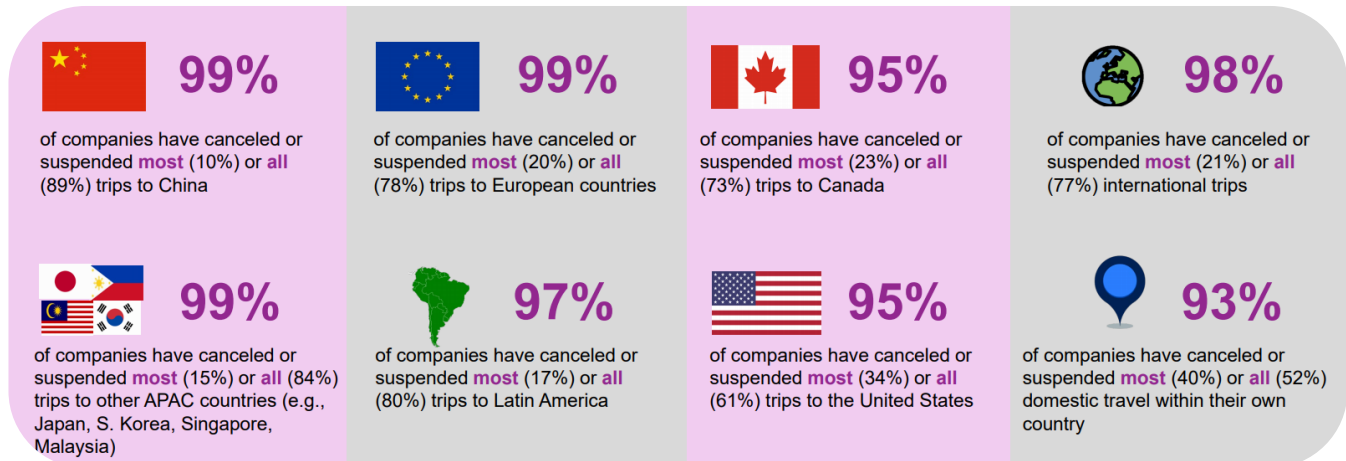
The [Global Talent Competitiveness Index](#) analyses which countries are best at recruiting high-skilled migrants.

Taking into account countries' ability to enable, attract, grow and retain high-skilled workers, the [2020 report](#) found Switzerland, Singapore and the United States to be the most competitive, with 13 European countries in the top 20. You can view the [results](#) here.



The impact of COVID-19 on business travel

COVID-19 has almost completely halted business travel in the short term—98% of companies who responded to a [Global Business Travel Association](#) (GBTA) poll in April 2020 said they had cancelled or suspended ‘most’ or ‘all’ international business trips. The majority expect domestic travel to resume within 2 to 3 months (62%), while 39% believe international travel will resume in 6 to 8 months.



Source: [Global Business Travel Association](#) (28 April 2020)

The pandemic has driven a huge rise in the use of video conferencing platforms—according to Eric Yuan, CEO of *Zoom*, in April the platform had more than [300 million](#) daily meeting participants, compared to [10 million](#) in December 2019. Similarly, Chinese platform *Dingtalk* had to add 20,000 [temporary servers](#) to support their increase in traffic. It is unlikely that this move towards digitalisation will be completely reversed once the pandemic has passed.

Aviation analyst [Mark Manduca](#) believes that the potential for [quarantine requirements](#) upon arrival, or entry restrictions based on recent travel history, could lead to a change in the structure of those business trips which do occur. For example, a number of individual trips could instead be replaced by a “three-month, meetings-filled stint”.

These shifts may lead to a longer term decline in business travel. While it is difficult to predict the extent to which business travel will decline, Ben Baldanza, the former CEO of *Spirit Airlines*, has predicted a permanent loss of 5-10% compared to before the pandemic.

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New research & analysis on social protection & COVID-19

[Social protection for migrants during the COVID-19 crisis: The right and smart choice](#), by Mauro Testaverde

[Migrant farmworkers face heightened vulnerabilities during COVID-19](#), by Ella Haley et al.

[Social protection and jobs responses to COVID-19: A real-time review of country measures](#), by Ugo Gentilini, Mohamed Almenfi and Ian Orton

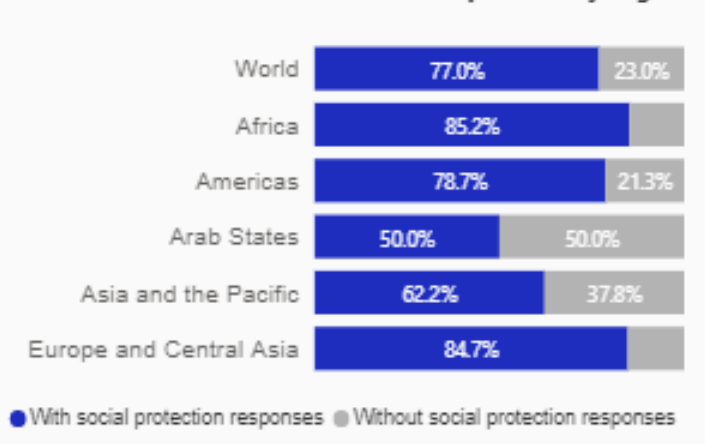
[Social protection response to the COVID-19 crisis: Options for developing countries](#), by François Gerard, Clément Imbert and Kate Orkin

The importance of social protection amid the COVID-19 pandemic

With [projections](#) that the pandemic could push around 49 million people worldwide into extreme poverty, social protection has become an [essential component](#) of COVID responses to ensure access to health care, as well as job and income security. As noted by [ILO](#), evidence from past crises shows that countries providing robust universal social protection systems are better prepared to respond to crises such as the current pandemic and its socioeconomic impacts.

Between 1 Feb and 12 May, the [ILO Social Protection Monitor](#) recorded 915 social protection measures taken by 168 countries around the world to respond to the crisis (see figure below for regional shares).

Share of countries with and w/o responses, by region



[Migrants](#) are particularly at risk of being left out of these social protection measures, especially temporary/seasonal migrant workers, those self-employed, working in the informal economy and irregular migrants.

Did you know...?

In 2017, it was estimated that only [45% of the global population](#) was effectively covered by at least one social benefit, with [4 billion](#) left without any such protection.

Welfare and social safety net measures

Social safety nets involve direct provision of cash, goods or services (food or accommodation, such as [Indonesia's 'rice ATMs'](#)) to alleviate impacts of the pandemic. [Some countries](#) have extended eligibility of such programmes to migrants, including by temporarily regularizing migrants and asylum seekers who had applied for residency (Portugal).



Indonesia's 'rice ATMs' provide rice for eligible residents (Source: [AP](#) A. Ibrahim)

[Other countries](#), such as Italy, New Zealand, [Australia](#), Myanmar, and Uzbekistan, have adopted new programmes to respond to the pandemic which cover as well migrants, especially those with a residence permit or temporary working visa. Specific measures targeted at migrants have also been adopted in some countries, such as in [Panama](#) for some 2,500 stranded migrants through the provision of food and accommodation.

Access to health care

With only [33 to 49%](#) of the world's population covered by essential health services in 2017, migrants often do not have or have insufficient access to health care, let alone health coverage. Recognizing the global health risks, migrants in some countries have been granted free access to COVID-19 testing and treatment, such as temporary migrant workers in [Kazakhstan](#), migrant workers in South Korea or irregular migrants in [Malaysia](#).

Irregular migrants

The situation remains difficult for [irregular migrants](#) who often fall outside support programmes and measures. Some States and [local authorities](#) have however included irregular migrants in their COVID-19 responses:

- ⇒ The Pandemic Unemployment Payment in [Ireland](#) applies irrespective of migration status for “employees or self-employed people who have lost their job or have been laid off due to COVID-19”.
- ⇒ The US state of [California](#) is giving cash payments to irregular migrants affected by the pandemic as they were left out from the pandemic stimulus package.

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New research & analysis on international students & COVID

[Drop in international students would imperil university finances](#) by Jack Britton, Elaine Drayton and Laura van der Erve

[How COVID-19 is impacting prospective international students at different study levels](#) by Quacquarelli Symonds

[Student Exchanges in Times of Crisis](#) by Wim Gabriels and Rasmus Benke-Åberg



The COVID-19 pandemic has upended the lives of many international students, caught in a crisis they could not have predicted or prepared for. Recent estimates put the number of international students in tertiary education globally at 5.3 million in 2017. China, India and Germany were the top 3 countries of origin of international students while the largest destination countries included the United States, Australia and the United Kingdom.

Stranded

Travel and movement restrictions, imposed by nearly every country in the world, have left many international students stranded. Those who were unable to return home before the restrictions came into force and were not repatriated by their countries of origin have found themselves stuck, some on [deserted university campuses](#). A [survey](#) on the impact of COVID-19 on exchange student mobility in Europe by the Erasmus Student Network, for example, shows that the inability to return home was among the students' major concerns. Many students in other countries outside Europe, such as [Australia](#), [Senegal](#), [China](#) and others were also left stranded.



Did you know?

International students are significant contributors to several countries' economies. In 2018-19, for example, international students contributed almost USD [41 billion](#) to the economy of the United States while in Australia, their contributions in fees, taxes and spending amounted to more than [38 billion](#) last financial year (up 15% on the previous year).

QS Survey of prospective international students

An [ongoing QS survey](#) of prospective international students showed that by mid-April, more than 50 per cent of those who responded stated that COVID-19 had affected their plans to study abroad, with 46 per cent saying they plan to defer or delay their entry until the following year.



Lacking access to basic needs

International students have not been spared by lockdowns, curfews and business closures. Many have lost jobs and left in [precarious circumstances](#), without income to fulfil basic needs such as housing and food. In Senegal, university closures, coupled with the suspension of flights, left some international students [homeless](#). In countries such as the United States, while some local students have benefited from [federal government stimulus](#) to colleges in response to COVID-19, international students are not included in such aid. While in Australia, COVID-19 is expected to take a toll on international students' ability [to pay rent](#). And [with little to no government help](#), some international students also face the prospect of not completing their studies.

Racism and xenophobia

Some international students have been subjected to and have had to endure incidents of racism and xenophobia, with some people associating them with the spread of COVID-19. In the United Kingdom, Chinese international students have reported [increased racism and discrimination](#). Incidents of racism, including [racist attacks](#) on [Asian students](#), have also been reported in Australia. Meanwhile, racism linked to COVID-19 against students from African countries in China led to some students being [hounded out of their accommodation](#). IOM and other UN agencies have come out in recent weeks to condemn all incidents of racism. Read more about combating xenophobia and racism in [Analytical Snapshot #33](#).



Supporting international students

Several countries – through their federal or state authorities – have stepped up efforts to support international students who are stranded and without work. In Canada, for example, the government has implemented [several measures](#) to help international students, such as [temporarily allowing](#) them to work more than the 20 hours they are permitted to work while classes are in session, as long as they are working in sectors deemed essential. This not only ensures that there are enough workers in essential sectors but also allows international students to sustain themselves financially. In Australia, several state governments, in the wake of COVID-19, have [put in place support packages](#) for international students struggling during the pandemic.



The significant contributions of international students

International students not only play key roles in [knowledge production and circulation](#) in destination countries, but also make significant economic contributions to both the institutions they attend and the [local economies](#) where they live. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has restricted student mobility and closed universities threatens to roll back these contributions, at least in the short-term. A recent [study](#) in the United Kingdom, for example, shows that should there not be enrollments of new international students in the next academic year, the higher education sector would lose about 10 per cent of income.

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New research & analysis on returning migrants & COVID

[Transnational mobilities of COVID discourse: The Question of Return](#), by Laavanya Kathi-ravelu and Arok-kiaraj Heller

[COVID-19 forces migrants and refugees back to crisis-ridden Venezuela](#), by the Norwegian Refugee Council

[India's coronavirus mass migration: how we've misunderstood the Indian migrant labourer](#), by Suganda Nagpal and Vatsalya Srivastava

The fastest million

Hastened by COVID-19, New Zealand's population has reached 5 million. According to [Statistics New Zealand](#), the 'fastest million' in the country's history was aided by 'unusual international travel and [migration](#) patterns', with New Zealand citizens returning home after living overseas while those already residing in the country were 'unable or reluctant' to travel.



Returning home in a pandemic

Although the [lockdowns and travel restrictions](#) enacted in an attempt to reduce the spread of COVID-19 have curbed the majority of mobility, they also triggered large flows of return migration, with migrants returning home in response to the adverse impact of the virus on [economic activity](#) and to avoid being [stranded](#) overseas. This has been witnessed all over the world, but has particular ramifications for migrants living in countries with limited social protection, or in countries in which migrants may be ineligible for social protection, making them especially vulnerable and at risk of starvation and homelessness in a lockdown. More on the social protection of migrants can be found in snapshot [38](#).

The world's largest repatriation

[Many](#) countries have [repatriated](#) citizens stranded overseas due to the pandemic, but none of these operations are bigger than India's repatriation exercise. In the first phase of the world's [largest ever](#) peacetime repatriation, [India](#) is deploying commercial jets, military aircraft and naval warships to bring up to 1.8 million migrant workers, international students and vulnerable citizens back to the country. Those [returning home](#) are required to pay for their journey and are screened for COVID-19 symptoms before departure, with only asymptomatic Indians permitted to board. In the [United Arab Emirates](#) alone, where an estimated 3 million Indians live, almost 200,000 have applied for repatriation.



The return of stranded Nepali workers

Officials in Nepal, which left many migrant workers [stranded](#) after placing a ban on most citizens returning home, are expecting up to 400,000 migrants to [return](#) following the anticipated relaxation of the country's lockdown on June 2—100,000 of them immediately.

Malaysia and four Gulf states alone [accommodate](#) 1.5 million Nepalis, where many are [out of work](#) due to COVID-19 induced lockdowns.

The stigmatization of return migrants

The fear that returning migrants bring the virus [with them](#) has meant that many migrants have faced stigmatization upon their return.

When the pandemic began to unfold in Europe, for example, many [Senegalese](#) migrants opted to return, paying fishermen to bring them across the (by then closed) border. However, some boats were prevented from docking by residents, while [newspapers](#) portrayed the returnees as sneaking into the country. [Guatemalan](#) returnees have been subject to similar stigmatization.

You can find out more about the stigmatization of migrants during the pandemic in snapshots [6](#) and [29](#). Combating xenophobia and racism is in snapshot [33](#).

COVID-19 and the return of Venezuelan migrants

Over 4.5 million Venezuelans have fled the country's economic and political [crisis](#) in recent years, with over a third fleeing to neighbouring Colombia. Many of those residing in Colombia do not have [regular status](#), and work in the [informal economy](#) without social protection or access to the country's health system. The lockdowns imposed due to the pandemic have halted this informal work and in turn forced [hundreds](#) of Venezuelans—facing [eviction](#) with no access to water in their adopted countries—to return home where they know they will have a [roof](#) over their heads.

With flights grounded and no public transport, some are organising private [buses](#). However for others—such as those making the journey [on foot](#)—the return journey is fraught with [risks](#): migrants have been threatened by armed groups and irregular movements may play into human traffickers' hands. Those who do return are required to quarantine for two weeks, but some have voiced [concerns](#) that these quarantine facilities are dirty and overcrowded, often without the provision of food and water.

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New research & analysis on tourism & COVID

[Migrant Workers in the Tourism Industry: How has COVID-19 Affected Them, and What Does the Future Hold?](#) By Helen Dempster and Cassandra Zimmer

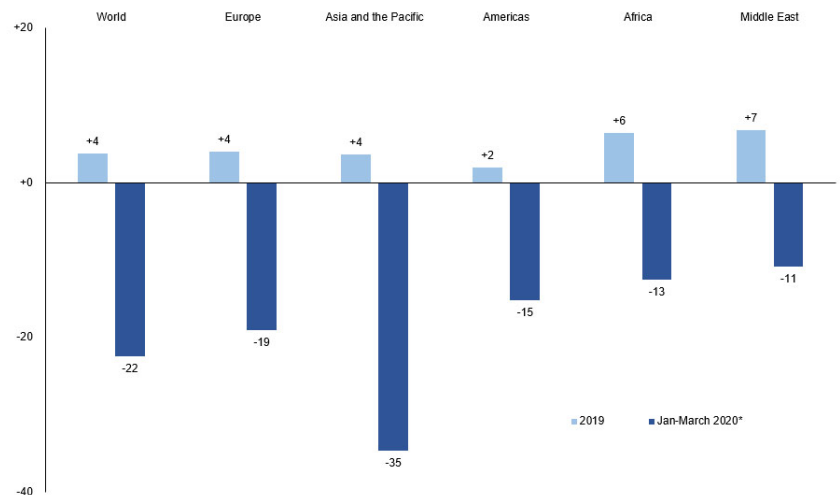
[Pandemics, tourism and global change: a rapid assessment of COVID-19](#) by Stefan Gösslin, Daniel Scott, Michael Hall

[Migrant Workers in the Tourism Industry: Impact of COVID-19 \(Video\)](#) by Center for Global Development

Did you know? In 2019 the travel and tourism industry was a [USD 9 trillion industry](#), which contributed [10.3 per cent](#) to global GDP and accounted for [1 in 10 jobs](#) worldwide.



International tourist arrivals, 2019 and Q1 2020 (% change)



Source: UNWTO

Asia saw the steepest decline in tourist arrivals in the first quarter of 2020, with a drop of 33 million arrivals.

Tourism has been hard hit by COVID-19. The pandemic, and related travel and movement restrictions have driven down demand while inflicting heavy jobs losses on the sector. By April 20, the UN World Tourism Organization (WTO) [reported](#) that 100% of global destinations had imposed travel restrictions, representing the toughest restrictions on international travel in history and the [worst crisis](#) that the tourism sector has faced since records began in 1950.

In just the first 3 months of 2020, COVID-19 had led to a 22% drop in international tourist arrivals. Depending on how long travel restrictions last and speed of containment, tourist arrivals are expected to see declines of 58 per cent to 78 per cent, which could potentially result in direct job losses of between [100-120 million](#).

The International Labour Organization (ILO) projected that subsectors including accommodation and food services are the [most likely](#) to experience drastic declines in economic output.



Impact on developing States



For many developing countries that heavily depend on international tourism, travel restrictions and lockdowns, combined with a small local customer base, have meant a sharp decline in much-needed foreign exchange. Many tourism sectors in Africa, for example, have few local internal/local tourists and largely rely on [high-paying international tourists](#) to keep their industries afloat. The pandemic has all but brought international tourist arrivals to a grinding halt. COVID-19 has also inflicted a heavy toll on the tourism sectors of Small Island and Developing States (SIDS), which are [highly dependent](#) on international tourism and whose capacity to absorb the economic shock of the current crisis is limited; the tourism sector, on average, accounts for nearly [30 per cent of Gross Domestic Product \(GDP\)](#) of SIDS and generates around [USD 30 billion per year](#).



Migrant workers stuck at sea

Tourism subsectors such as the cruise ship industry, which is heavily reliant on migrant workers, has been devastated by the pandemic.

By end of April, [over 100,000 crew workers](#) were stranded at sea while at least [50 were infected](#) and several have died from suspected COVID-19. Of note is the cruise ship Ruby Princess, which had hundreds of Filipino crew and only recently returned them home. [Hundreds of Indian workers](#), unable to return home, have also been stranded on cruise ships. In addition to being prevented from disembarking and with limited communication with their friends and families, some crew members have also been subjected to [pay cuts](#) and remain vulnerable to contracting COVID-19.

In this 2018 Migration Research Series paper, "[International migration, internal migration, mobility and urbanization: Towards more integrated approaches](#)", Professor Ronald Skeldon argues that "tourists are an integral part of development around the world and are linked to other forms of population movement." He recommends that tourism be integrated into the global framework on migration, including in both debates on migration and development and in migration management policies.



Heavy losses for migrants in the tourism sector



COVID-19 has been especially devastating for millions of migrant workers who work in tourism across the world. In the United States and Europe, for example, migrants comprised [20 per cent and 16 per cent](#) (respectively) of tourism workers while in Australia, the sector is heavily dependent on [temporary work visas](#). Travel restrictions, and the fact that many tourism subsectors such as hospitality and food services have been forced to temporarily close or to significantly cut back their services, have resulted in a significant number of migrants being [furloughed](#) or incurring reduced salaries. This has also affected their ability to send money to their family friends, with international remittances now projected to fall by [20 per cent in 2020](#). Read [Snapshot #16](#) for more information on international remittances.

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New research & analysis on the human rights impact of COVID-19

[Human rights law in the time of the coronavirus](#), by A. Ponta

[COVID-19 and inequalities: Protection the human rights of migrants in a time of pandemic](#), by M.G. Giammarinaro and L. Palumbo

[COVID-19 and migrants—Gaps in the international legal architecture?](#), by P. Pillai

[Borders and pandemics: Human rights impacts of COVID-19 technology on migration](#), by D.P. Molnar

[COVID-19 and human rights: Protecting the most vulnerable](#), webinar organized by the UN Global Compact Academy

[Human rights and coronavirus: What's at stake for truth, trust, and democracy?](#) By A.E. Yamin and R. Habibi

The human rights impacts of measures to combat COVID-19

While COVID-19 threatens the health of all individuals, the measures taken to counter the pandemic have at times impacted the human rights of migrants throughout the migration cycle:

- ⇒ *Departure from the country of origin:* mobility restrictions sometimes impacting the [right to leave any country](#).
- ⇒ *Entry into a transit or destination country:* [border closures](#) and entry restrictions which have at times impacted the [right to non-refoulement](#)
- ⇒ *Stay in a transit or destination country:* insufficient or no [access to basic services](#) for migrants, including health care; continued [immigration detention](#) in unsafe conditions; [discrimination, stigmatization and xenophobia](#); tracing measures which may raise issues with the [right of privacy](#)
- ⇒ *Return to the country of origin:* mobility restrictions impacting one's ability to leave any country and enter into his/her own country; [stigmatization](#) in communities of origin; continued deportation of irregular migrants despite public health risks.

While some of these measures have been adopted by States in the context of a global public health emergency, international human rights law provides that any [limitations](#) or [derogations](#) to one's human rights should be reasonable, necessary and proportionate, including non-discriminatory. Some human rights, such as the [principle of non-refoulement](#), are however absolute and cannot be limited/derogated from.



14 principles of protection for migrants, refugees and other displaced persons

Experts from the University of Columbia, Cornell Law School and the Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility have identified [14 principles of protection of migrants, refugees and other displaced persons](#), stemming from international law, to inform and guide State action. Endorsed by nearly 800 international experts, these 14 principles concern:

1. Equal treatment / non-discrimination
2. Right to health
3. State obligations to combat stigma, racism and xenophobia
4. Restriction on movement between States
5. Restriction on movement within States
6. Non-return and access to territory
7. Enforcement of immigration law, including detention
8. Right to protection of life and health for persons in camps, collective shelters, and settlements
9. Right to information
10. Protection of privacy
11. Gender considerations
12. Marginalized groups
13. Labor rights of workers
14. Rights and their limitations

In its April report on [COVID-19 and human rights](#), the UN recalls that “[h]uman rights are critical—for the response and the recovery”. Migrants are referred to as a potential vulnerable group.

COVID-19 and Human Rights
We are all in this together

APRIL 2020

“ *The Network calls on States to suspend forced returns during the pandemic, in order to protect the health of migrants and communities, and uphold the human rights of all migrants, regardless of status. Successfully tackling the pandemic cannot be achieved without upholding human rights.*

UN Network on Migration
[Statement](#), 13 May 2020

Guidance on COVID-19 and the human rights of migrants

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has issued [guidance](#) on the human rights of migrants in the context of the pandemic. The guidance highlights the need to include migrants in public health and recovery response to protect migrants’ rights, avoid xenophobia and protect “the health of society as a whole”, with specific measures to protect those in vulnerable situations. Similar calls have been made by other [UN agencies](#), including IOM and UNHCR. The UN Committee on Migrant Workers and the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants have also just issued a [joint guidance note](#) on the topic.

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New research on the migration and mobility aspects of COVID-19

[Migration and Mobility after the 2020 Pandemic: The End of an Age?](#), by Alan Gamlen

[Stranded: The Impacts of COVID-19 on Irregular Migration and Migrant Smuggling](#), by Gabriella Sanchez and Luigi Achilli

[Why coronavirus is likely to be bad news for Europe's radical right](#), by James Dennison and Andrew Geddes

[How Should Policy Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic Differ in the Developing World?](#), by Alon et al.

[Migration and development: What now with Covid-19?](#), by Tanja Bastia & Ronald Skeldon

[Migration and Immigration: Uganda and the COVID-19 Pandemic](#), by Agnes Igoe of the Ugandan Ministry of Internal Affairs

[From Low-Skilled to Key Workers: The Implications of Emergencies for Immigration Policy](#), by Mariña Fernández-Reino, Madeleine Sumption and Carlos Vargas-Silva

[The challenge of real-time analysis: making sense of the migration and mobility implications of COVID-19](#) by Marie McAuliffe, Céline Bauloz and Adrian Kitimbo

[COVID-19 and migration governance: A holistic perspective](#) by Andrea Milan and Reshma Cunnoosamy

COVID-19 research and analysis from IOM

The latest Migration Research Series paper (no 60) is [Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic: an initial analysis](#) by Lorenzo Guadagno.

There is also a new [Migration Policy Practice](#) issue on COVID-19, migrants and migration policy across the world.



The Migration Health Evidence Portal for [COVID-19](#) contains an open-source searchable [repository](#) of COVID-19 research publications relating to migrants, migration and mobility, and Evidence Briefs, which synthesize key information relevant to IOM's [COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan](#).



IOM's Migration, Environment and Climate Division are hosting a new [forum](#) where practitioners and researchers can share experiences, knowledge and ideas on the linkages between COVID-19 and aspects of environmental migration, disaster displacement and the environmental impact of people's movement decisions.



COVID-19 pages and portals

Following a surge in COVID-19 research output globally, there are now a huge number of portals and dedicated resource pages. The most cited pages and portals relating to migration and the pandemic include:

- ⇒ Lancet Migration's [Migration & Covid-19](#) Forum
- ⇒ [ICVA COVID-19 Resources](#)
- ⇒ [COVID-19 mobility impacts portal](#)
- ⇒ COMPAS's [Coronavirus and Mobility Forum](#)
- ⇒ [IATA Government Measures Related to Coronavirus](#)
- ⇒ [CMS Covid-19 Migration Developments](#)
- ⇒ openDemocracy & Ryerson University's [Pandemic Borders](#) blog
- ⇒ [Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker \(OxCGRT\)](#)



A visual analysis of COVID-19

The Financial Times has created an up-to-date, free-to-read [visual narrative](#) of the spread of COVID-19. The page visually presents data relating to confirmed cases, government responses and deaths/excess mortality across the world.

They have also produced an interactive COVID-19 [trajectory chart](#), which allows users to compare how cases and death rates have developed in different countries, and a [visual representation](#) of government responses, using data from the [Oxford Government Response Tracker](#).



COVID-19 & migration webinars

Migration-related webinars are being conducted on a range of COVID-19 issues by research centres, think tanks, and forums, including:

- ⇒ [Migration Policy Centre](#) at EUI
- ⇒ [Oxford Department of International Development](#)
- ⇒ [Centre for Global Development](#)
- ⇒ [Global Forum on Migration and Development](#)



ApartTogether

Coordinated by Ghent University, the [ApartTogether](#) survey seeks to understand how refugees and migrants experience the psychosocial impact of COVID-19, and how they have dealt with the challenges that have arisen.

Available in 30 languages and with audio, the survey will be used to inform organisations and decision-makers about how they can better support migrants and refugees, both during and after the pandemic.

You can take part in the survey [here](#).

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New research & analysis on cities, local authorities & COVID-19

[What can we learn from Latin America's solidarity cities?](#), by M. Godoy and H. Bauder

[Migrants and mayors are the unsung heroes of COVID-19. Here's why](#), by R. Mughah and V. Zanuso

[We need sanctuary cities and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), by G. Hudson

[UNESCO learning cities' response to COVID-19 — Refugees and migrants](#), by UNESCO (webinar)

The importance of migrants for cities and local authorities

Migrants primarily live in urban spaces, contributing to the socioeconomic, cultural and, at times, political life of cities. While their importance in cities' labour market has been long-standing, the pandemic has revealed for some their crucial [role on the frontline](#) in times of crisis.

The city of [Buenos Aires](#), Argentina, has thus authorized Venezuelan migrants whose foreign qualifications were not yet recognized to work in health care systems. Some German states, such as [Saxony](#), have also lobbied national authorities to allow migrant doctors to provide medical assistance during the pandemic.



Did you know?

While global statistics on the number of migrants in cities are not readily available, it is estimated that [19% of the world's foreign born population lives in global or world cities](#).

Pre-existing inequalities in urban spaces

The pandemic has revealed and exacerbated pre-existing inequalities for people living in some cities, especially for those from marginalized groups, including migrants. This is not only the case in [megacities](#) and other big cities with important informal settlements, such as slums or favelas, that are hosting more than [1 billion people](#) worldwide. Inequalities have also been revealed and exacerbated in cities of [OECD countries](#), such as the [United States](#) and [Canada](#). [Reducing inequalities](#) is increasingly presented as a prerequisite for effective preparedness and response to the COVID-19 pandemic and future crises.



Worldwide solidarity cities



As mentioned in [snapshot #22](#), so-called ‘sanctuary cities’ and mayors primarily located in North America have been actively engaged in supporting migrants during the pandemic. From [New York City](#), [Los Angeles](#), [Nashville](#), and [Chicago](#), to [Toronto](#), support measures for migrants have included the sharing of information on COVID-19, cash payments, access to testing and healthcare and/or broader access to benefits and services irrespective of their migration status.

But, beyond these typical sanctuary cities, a number of cities and local authorities worldwide are showing solidarity for migrants in the context of the current pandemic. Similarly as in sanctuary cities, solidarity has taken the form of distribution of food (such as in [Soacha](#), Colombia, and [Kerala](#), India), accommodation support for homeless persons (such as in [São Paulo](#), Brazil), cash assistance for vulnerable groups of the population (such as in [Bogotá](#), Colombia).



Relocation of migrant children



Some [ten European cities](#) have proposed to EU leaders to relocate unaccompanied migrant children from Greece. These include Amsterdam, Barcelona and Leipzig. Out of these ten cities, seven are in countries which have not pledged to participate in the European Commission’s relocation efforts.

Supporting cities

As epicenters of the pandemic, some cities face important financial challenges to address the many impacts of COVID-19, including for those faced by marginalized groups. Some [philanthropic foundations](#) have come to their support, such as the [Open Society Foundations](#) which for instance supports the cities of [New York](#), Budapest and Milan through USD 130 million funding dedicated to respond to COVID-19. Support through sharing of good practices has also been provided by [coalitions of cities](#).

Selected resources listing good practices of cities and local authorities

- ⇒ Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, in [Intercultural Cities: COVID-19 Special page](#), Council of Europe
- ⇒ [Cities and regions share practices on COVID-19 information for migrants](#), European Commission

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New research & analysis on travel restrictions & COVID

[Stranded: the impacts of COVID-19 on irregular migration and migrant smuggling](#) by Gabriella Sanchez and Luigi Achilli

[Migration and Immigration: Uganda and the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) by Agnes Igoye

[The Migrant-Citizen Nexus in View of the Coronavirus Pandemic: Can We De-Migrantize Responses?](#) By Janine Dahinden



In recent months, the world has witnessed unprecedented levels of mobility restrictions, as countries across the world try to reign in the spread of COVID-19. As reported by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), [100% of global destinations](#) had imposed travel restrictions by April 20, with far reaching socio-economic ramifications which many countries are currently grappling with. However, as COVID-19 infections and deaths start to fall in some parts of the world, the tide is beginning to turn, and several countries are



Access challenges and the implications of border restrictions

In May UNHCR and IOM issued a brief detailing [access challenges and the implications of border restrictions](#). The brief stresses that exceptions to travel restrictions are needed “to safeguard basic rights, including for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants”. The brief also notes that often these exceptions are not being observed by many governments, putting human rights at serious risk.

Easing travel and movement restrictions

Newly released research from UNWTO, published at end of May, shows that [3% of global destinations](#) had started to reduce travel restrictions, with [7 destinations](#) easing travel restrictions for tourism, while several had begun discussions on reopening borders.

Italy, one of the worst hit European countries and which imposed one of the toughest lockdowns, [reopened its borders](#) to tourists from Europe on June 3. [Norway and Denmark](#) also planned ease travel between the two countries as early as mid-June, while the [Baltic States](#) - Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – were among the first to establish the so-called ‘travel bubble’, allowing free movement between the three countries.

Countries such as [India](#) and [South Africa](#), also concerned

Increase in migrant smuggling and human trafficking

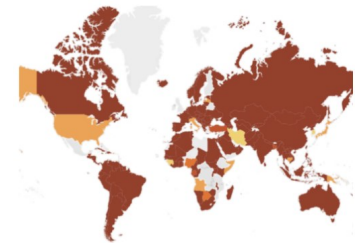
The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) recently released a [research brief](#) which explores scenarios of how smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons across borders to Europe and North America could be impacted by the current pandemic. The brief shows that despite travel and movement restrictions, smuggling of migrants continues and demand for people smugglers may even increase, as many flee conflict, violence, human rights abuses, and risky living conditions. The brief also notes that the heavy toll that the pandemic and related measures to curb its spread are having on economies worldwide, resulting in high unemployment, are likely to drive up cross-border trafficking in persons.



Supporting stranded migrants

Many migrants remain stranded across the world, unable to return home due travel restrictions and not able to work because of internal lockdowns. IOM continues to support migrants in these situations; in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, for example, [the IOM-EU join Initiative](#) is providing urgent assistance to stranded migrants in the form of food vouchers as well as non-food items such as hygiene kits. In West African countries such as [Cote d'Ivoire](#), IOM has been providing essential items to stranded migrants. The Organization also recently provided urgent medical support to some of the [hundreds of Rohingya refugees](#) who had been stranded at sea upon their disembarkation near Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

The Swiss National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) has created the [Citizenship Migration and Mobility in a Pandemic \(MMP\) tool](#), which provides detailed information on International travel restrictions and mobility and border controls.



Global guidelines to restart tourism

As various countries around the world start to ease travel and movement restrictions, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has released [guidelines](#) for countries to restart tourism. The tourism sector is expected to be hard hit by the pandemic, with tourist arrivals projected to decline by [60-80 per cent](#) in 2020, risking between [100-200 million](#) jobs. To learn more about COVID-19's implications for tourism, read [Analytical Snapshot #41](#).

In a recent [video](#) launching a UN policy brief on [COVID-19 and People on the Move](#), UN Secretary General António Guterres says that:

"more than 150 countries have imposed border restrictions to contain the spread of the virus. At least 99 states make no exception for people seeking asylum from persecution."

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New research & analysis on the economic impacts of COVID

[Potential Responses to the COVID-19 Outbreak in Support of Migrant Workers](#) by the World Bank

[Neglect of low-income migrants in covid-19 response](#) from the BMJ

[International remittance flows and the economic and social consequences of COVID-19](#) by Guy Abel and Stuart Gietel-Basten

The economic impacts of COVID-19 and human trafficking

In a recent [research brief](#), the UNODC has warned that the sharp increase in unemployment rates caused by the pandemic is likely to increase cross-border trafficking in persons from countries experiencing the fastest and longest-lasting drops in employment.

However, they argue that these risks can be mitigated by investments in job creation and economic recovery, across both developed and developing



The economic impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers

Research has found that migrants in high-income countries across the world are more likely than other workers to be exposed to the economic impacts of the pandemic:

⇒ [Garrote-Sanchez et al.](#) (2020) create several measures of labour market exposure to the pandemic in the European Union, and find that migrants are overrepresented in occupations that are exposed to COVID-19-related job losses

⇒ [Gelatt](#) (2020) looks at the prevalence of migrants in industries that are essential and in industries that are hard-hit by the outbreak in the US, finding that migrants are overrepresented in both types of job.

The negative effects of job losses are also likely to be more significant for migrant workers because they often work in informal jobs and so lack safety nets in case of job loss or illness. This is particularly the case for migrants in [developing countries](#) and [temporary migrants](#) where social protection tends at most to be limited to work injury compensation or health benefits.

These challenges are even more profound for [irregular migrants](#), who in addition to often being ineligible for social protection benefits, are easy for firms to fire due to their lack of employment protections.



COVID-19 and international remittances



In 2019, migrants are estimated to have sent [\\$551 billion](#) in international remittances to family in low- and middle-income countries, over three times the amount of official aid received. These remittances are a crucial source of income for the world's poorest, often making up [60%](#) of family household income, with [75%](#) of the money received used to cover essentials, such as food, school fees, and medical expenses.

However, with the [20 countries](#) with the most cases of COVID-19 (as of mid-May) hosting 55% of the world's migrants who send 54% of the world's remittances, remittance flows are predicted to fall by [20%](#) in 2020. This decline is largely due to the fall in wages and employment of migrant workers resulting from the economic disruption caused by [measures](#) enacted to curb the spread of the virus. Even in cases where migrants have money to send home, it has become more difficult to do so — around [80%](#) of remittances are sent physically via a Remittance Service Provider, but many of these money transfer networks have partially or totally [shut down](#).

10.7%

The decline in working hours in the second quarter of 2020 relative to the final quarter of 2019 estimated by the [ILO](#), equivalent to 305 million full-time jobs.



Economic support for migrants around the world

Across the world, governments are providing economic support to migrants. In some countries, this support is being provided through an expansion of eligibility of existing social protection [programmes](#), while in others new programmes have been created that are available to migrants. Migrant workers holding residence permits in [Italy](#) and [Ireland](#), for example, can apply for income subsidies, while foreign workers in [Uzbekistan](#) are eligible for skills training and, in [Myanmar](#), internal and returning international migrants are among the vulnerable groups eligible for an emergency cash transfer.

The long-term economic impacts

Persistently depressed economic conditions could mean lower [demand](#) for migrant workers in the longer term, such as in [Singapore](#), where migrant workers supplement the workforce when there is a labour shortage but are cut back when the economy is weak. This could be exacerbated if prolonged travel restrictions induce [technological progress](#) that replaces human labour.

However, there is evidence that households do not consider migration to be viable in the longer term either: a survey by [Listening to Citizens of Uzbekistan](#) found that the number of household members considering seasonal migration fell by 95% compared to the previous year.

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New research & analysis on misinformation & Covid-19

[Immigrants are not to blame for global epidemics: Insights from past and present](#), by T. Shams

[Types, sources, and claims of COVID-19 misinformation](#), by J.S. Brennen et al.

[Battling the pandemic of misinformation](#), by C. Pazzanese

[Fake news swamping interpersonal communication in the times of corona virus](#), by K. Patel and H. Binjola

[The challenge of real-time analysis: Making sense of the migration and mobility implications of COVID-19](#), by M. McAuliffe, C. Bauloz and A. Kitimbo



The human cost of misinformation

As presented in [snapshot #19](#), misinformation on COVID-19, including conspiracy theories, [continue to invade the digital landscape](#). The [human toll of coronavirus misinformation](#) has resulted in poisoning, critical illnesses, racial tensions and violent attacks. As with [previous disease outbreaks](#), misinformation has been circulating on the alleged role of migrants in spreading COVID-19 globally.

“One crucial but overlooked point dismantles these fears about immigrants being active vectors: while [human mobility](#) transforms region human-to-human transmission into global outbreaks, immigrants and [refugees](#) are relatively static compared to seasonal travelers. Unlike tourists and business travelers, who travel back and forth across borders on a temporary but regular basis, immigrants and refugees have settled in their adopted countries fairly permanently. Their often-limited resources prohibit frequent travel.—[T. Shams](#)”

The UN verified campaign

“Good communication saves lives”

The United Nations has launched “[Verified](#)”, a new initiative to combat the growing scourge of COVID-19 misinformation. “As we contain the virus, we must also contain misinformation”.



Preventive practices taken by countries and social media platforms

Social media platforms and [countries](#) have all ramped up efforts to identify and take down COVID-19 misinformation.

- ⇒ [The European Digital Media Observatory project \(EDMO\)](#): The project collaborates with media organizations and experts to better limit the phenomenon of disinformation and increase societal resilience to it.
- ⇒ [Twitter COVID-19 Stream](#): Twitter [announced](#) that they are introducing “new labels and warning messages that will provide context and information on some Tweets containing disputed or misleading information related to COVID-19”
- ⇒ [Facebook Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior Report](#): The report included networks that have been taken down due to their violation of Facebook’s policies against harmful health misinformation.

IOM’s Migrants as Messengers initiative

[IOM’s Migrants as Messengers initiative](#) has proved to be helpful in combatting misinformation and preventing the spread of COVID-19. [Volunteers from West African countries](#) produced and shared videos to raise awareness within their own communities.

In [Guinea](#), returned migrants have participated in training sessions that were organized by IOM that focused on awareness-raising around COVID-19 especially with female community members.



5 measures to prevent the spread of misinformation

- ⇒ **Be critical** when you look at social media
- ⇒ **Challenge false information** by politely **asking** the person who shared it **to remove it**.
- ⇒ **Report** the false information to the platform administrators
- ⇒ When in doubt, **take the time to verify** the shared information
- ⇒ **Make more noise** than people who share false information

Source: [Nadia Naffi](#) also available at [The Conversation](#)

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New research and analysis on internal movements and COVID-19

[India's coronavirus mass migration: how we've misunderstood the India migrant labourer](#), by Sugandha Nagpal and Vatsalya Srivastava

[Should internal migrants be held accountable for spreading COVID-19?](#), by Qiuji Shi and Tao Liu.

[COVID-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens](#), by the World Bank.

[COVID-19 is reducing domestic remittances in Africa: what does it mean for poor households?](#), by Samik Adhikari

[The Schengen Area and the Coronavirus Pandemic](#) by Jolanta Szymańska

[Lockdown Strategies, Mobility Patterns and COVID-19](#) by Nikos Askitas, Konstantinos Tatsiramos and Bertrand Verheyden



Internal mass movement

In the days following the country's lockdown in March, India witnessed the largest internal mass movement since partition in 1947, with [7.5 million](#) moving from urban centres to rural areas by 23 May. According to the [World Bank](#), the lockdown has impacted the livelihood of a large proportion of India's internal migrants, who often work in the [informal sector](#) without social protection.

The government [responded](#) by setting up camps with basic provisions to provide shelter, however, many opted to return home—some travelling over [1,000](#) kilometres. Upon reaching their home villages, some returning migrants have been subject to [stigma](#) as villagers fear that they are carriers of the virus, even after quarantining for 14 days.

COVID-19 and domestic remittances

While the importance of international remittances in supporting the human development is widely [documented](#), less attention is given to the crucial role that domestic remittances play. [Research](#) indicates that internal remittances reach more African households, including more of the very poorest, likely because the number of people who migrate within countries is far [higher](#) than those who move across borders and, due to the high upfront costs of migrating abroad, involves [poorer](#) individuals. As a result, the decline in domestic remittances induced by the pandemic may leave [rural households](#) without a key source of supplementary income which, in turn, may result in increased poverty.

Why internal migrants aren't to blame for the spread of COVID-19

When COVID-19 initially swept through China, some pointed to mass internal migration during the Chinese Spring Festival as the key driver. However, in a recent analysis [Shi and Liu](#) dispute this, instead finding that those cities which were first affected were megacities that connect with Wuhan through business and tourism as opposed to internal migration. They also note that the spread of COVID-19 in Europe, despite the region being out of holiday season, highlights that no one or no group should be blamed for the spread of the virus—mobility has become increasingly the norm, they argue.



Closing internal borders

In April, as the COVID-19 pandemic began to intensify in [Australia](#), several states opted to erect water barriers and road checkpoints to prevent all but essential travel to and from neighboring territories, the first time such measures have been taken since the Spanish flu 100 years ago.

In mid-June, these internal borders began to [reopen](#), with South Australia relaxing its border controls for most states, although they remain in place for the two most populous states—New South Wales and Victoria—where most COVID-19 cases were reported. These borders are expected to be opened in late July.

Halting of free movement of people

Under the [Schengen Agreement](#), any person is permitted to cross the internal borders of the Schengen Area—which encompasses most EU states—without being subject to border checks. However, the onset of the pandemic saw many states unilaterally reintroduce [border controls](#) in an attempt to slow the spread of the virus. As cases in Europe begin to [fall](#), states have begun to lift these [restrictions](#). Slovenia opened its borders on May 15, while the majority of Schengen countries – from France and Italy to Poland and Greece – lifted restrictions in [mid-June](#). Sweden, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands, [meanwhile](#), did not close their borders at any point. The EU has launched the web platform [Re-open EU](#), which provides real-time information on borders and available means of transport in member states.

ECOWAS, Africa's largest free-movement area, imposed border restrictions in [mid-March](#), leaving those on the move in the region [stranded](#) without access to the labour market or social protection. Government ministers have since proposed to reopen internal land, air and maritime borders in July as part of a [three-phase plan](#). Similarly, [Kenya](#) closed its borders to fellow East Africa Community members in May, and nine [mobile laboratories](#) have been deployed to provide systematic testing at the EAC's internal borders, particularly along the border between Kenya and Uganda.

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New research & analysis on migrants in informal economies & COVID

[COVID-19 and the world of work. Third edition](#) by the International Labour Organization (ILO)

[Policy opportunities and challenges from the Covid-19 pandemic for economies with large informal sectors](#) by Rajneesh Narula

[Potential Responses to the COVID-19 Outbreak in Support of Migrant Workers](#) by the World

Women are [overrepresented](#) in high-risk informal sectors. [42%](#) of women workers are working in those sectors, as opposed to [32%](#) of men.

As has been widely reported, COVID-19 impacts have sent shockwaves across the economies of most, if not all, countries. The pandemic has heavily [disrupted labour markets](#), pushed [unemployment](#) to unprecedented levels in some countries and sharply [driven down](#) economic growth. But the economic fallout from the pandemic is especially devastating for those who work in the informal sector. Lacking secure employment [contracts](#) and no [workplace protection](#) or [representation](#), workers in the informal sector, where migrants are overrepresented, are some of the most affected by the pandemic.

What does 'informal economy' mean?

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines the [informal economy](#) as “all economic activities by workers and economic units that are – in law or in practice – not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements.”

There are an estimated [2 billion workers globally](#) who derive their livelihoods from the informal economy, representing [62%](#) of all workers in the world. In low income countries, the informal economy accounts for 90 per cent of employment, while this figure stands at [67%](#) in middle-income countries and [18%](#) in high-income countries.

Lack of protections



Many informal workers, including migrants, are without access to health and employment benefits, which means that when they get sick, they do not always have [guaranteed access](#) to medical care. Moreover, many, including those in low-skilled employment areas such as construction, agriculture and domestic services work in [conditions that expose them to safety and health risks](#), such as those without access to water and sanitation, raising their risk of contracting COVID-19. Irregular migrant workers in the informal economy are in even more precarious situations, as they are often not covered by any [formal arrangements](#) to access recovery measures put in place by governments.



Impact on internal remittances



Urban informal workers are responsible a large share of domestic remittances. As the informal sector in cities undergoes heavy disruption due to the pandemic, it is expected there will be [a reduction in income](#) generated from remittances in rural areas. Domestic remittances are often a lifeline for recipients, especially those in rural areas and are [a key source if non-labour income](#) for these households. These effects will especially be felt by countries such as India, which have large numbers of internal seasonal and non-seasonal migrants. Nearly [90% of India's 500 million workers](#) belong to the informal economy, while this figure is over [85% in Bangladesh](#). The earnings of informal workers globally is projected in to fall by [60%](#) in the first month of the crisis and on continents such as Africa and Latin America, this figure could be as high as [81%](#).

Double burden

Informal workers have bit hit by twin shocks- a [reduction in both supply and demand](#) as governments have imposed various measures to contain the spread of COVID-19.

The closure of borders and movement restrictions in subregions such as East Africa have [constrained supply chains](#), while reduced spending from people, largely driven by the pandemic, has resulted in unemployment and loss of income for many in the informal sector, many of whom are migrants from countries within the subregion.

Supporting informal sector workers

Several governments have taken steps to support informal sector workers who often are not beneficiaries of social or employment benefits. Some, such as Vietnam, have [expanded existing social assistance](#) programs to include more people, including informal sector workers. The Philippines, on the other hand, has [established emergency employment measures](#) for informal sector workers. In India, the government has prepared an [action plan](#) to reskill migrant and informal sector workers without jobs.

The International Growth Centre recently hosted a webinar on *the impact of COVID-19 on informal and migrant workers in India*. Watch it [here](#).



This recent statement by IOM on [COVID-19 and Mobility](#) highlights the **challenges faced by migrant workers**, including that they are

“...likely to be employed in daily-wage, short-term, or precarious work in the informal economy often with limited provision for, or fear of seeking access to, social protection, adequate food, housing, health and social services.”

This COVID-19 Analytical Snapshot has been produced by [IOM Research](#) (research@iom.int).

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These COVID-19 Analytical Snapshots are designed to capture the latest information and analysis in a fast-moving environment. Topics will be repeated from time to time as analysis develops.

If you have an item to include, please email us at research@iom.int.



New research & analysis on the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19

[Socio-Economic Impact of COVID-19 in Ethiopia](#) by UNCT Ethiopia

[The socio-economic implications of the coronavirus pandemic \(COVID-19\)](#) by Maria Nicola and Ziad Alsafi

[COVID-19 and Africa: Socio-economic implications and policy responses](#) by OECD

[The social and economic concerns of immigrants during the COVID-19 pandemic](#) by S. LaRochelle-Côtei & Sharanjit Uppal

Migration-related socioeconomic impacts on developing countries

In this [IOM Issue Brief](#), the migration-related socioeconomic impacts are explored in detail:

- ⇒ Developing countries are integrated into global goods & labour supply chains and are experiencing effects of declining demand;
- ⇒ travel restrictions are impacting communities reliant on tourism;
- ⇒ many developing countries rely heavily on labour migration, so drops in remittances are being keenly felt.



Policy Brief: COVID-19 & People on the Move

On 3 June, [the UN Secretary-General](#) launched the latest [UN policy brief on the pandemic](#), which reminds countries of their obligation to protect people on the move. Concerning the socio-economic crisis, the report stated that people on the move are among the hardest hit by reduced incomes, increasing [unemployment](#), as well as increasing expenses. Furthermore, the crisis has also exacerbated the already precarious [situation of women and girls on the move](#).

The policy brief offered four basic tenets to guide response plans:

1. Exclusion is costly in the long-run whereas inclusion pays off for everyone
2. The response to COVID-19 and protecting the human rights of people on the move are not mutually exclusive
3. No-one is safe until everyone is safe
4. People on the move are part of the solution



Internally Displaced People (IDPs) at Risk

According to [UNDP](#), 1/3 of the world's IDPs live in 10 countries most at risk to the COVID-19 socio-economic impacts

The socio-economic impacts of Covid-19

As presented in [snapshot #32](#), the pandemic has already revealed and exacerbated pre-existing socio-economic inequalities, including those of migrants, and will affect them as well their country and communities of origin. A recent [Statistics Canada](#) study reveals that immigrants and refugees are more likely than Canadian-born individuals to be worried about the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the measures taken to counter the pandemic are likely to leave long-term [lasting scars](#) through multiple channels, especially for migrants:

- ⇒ **Poverty:** Recent [studies](#) have shown that pandemics leave the poor even farther behind. It has been [shown](#) that years after pandemic events, the employment of those with advanced levels of education is scarcely affected, whereas the employment of those with only basic levels of education falls sharply, by more than 5 per cent at the end of five years.
- ⇒ **Unemployment:** Migrant workers tend to be particularly vulnerable, [more than native-born workers](#), to losses of employment and wages during an economic crisis in their host country. In [Eastern Ukraine](#), for instance, forty-nine per cent (49 per cent) of firms owned by internally displaced persons (IDPs) had to cease operations.
- ⇒ **Inclusion and Social Cohesion:** Some [countries](#) have used the pandemic as a pretext to prejudice against migrants and blame them for the spread of the virus. COVID-19 [response measures](#) that are not inclusive of migrant workers in the informal economy further situated workers and families at risk of exploitation.



Remittances in Crisis: How to Keep Them Flowing

The projected a drop of [20 percent](#) in international remittances worldwide amounts to a fall of around US\$110 billion. For this reason, [the United Nations Capital Development Fund \(UNCDF\)](#) and [the United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#) announced their [joint support](#) for a Member State-led initiative to improve migrants' access for sending and receiving remittances, and to reduce transfer costs during the ongoing pandemic of COVID-19 outbreaks.



According to [IOM](#), the suspension of “non-essential activities” to limit the spread of COVID-19 in West and Central Africa has had a heavy socio-economic impact on some 34,000 returning migrants.



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