

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.



Migrant children and youth



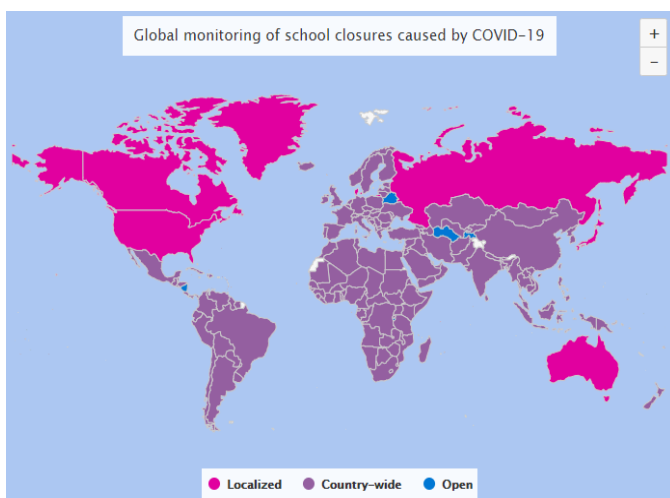
While [children](#) are usually referred to as under 18 years old, youth is defined by the United Nations as individuals between 15 and 24 years old. On this basis, there were more than [56 million migrant children and youth in 2019](#), accounting for nearly 21% of the total number of international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

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

Important disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IOM. The inclusion or presentation of material does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM, or of any of its members or partners.