

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.



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.

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

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