

*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](mailto:research@iom.int).*

## 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.



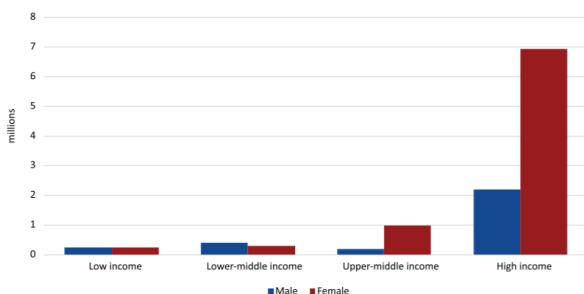
## The need for accurate COVID-19 information in multiple languages

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*



Source: [World Migration Report](#), based on ILO data.



### 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.

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

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