

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.



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.

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

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