

These COVID-19 Analytical Snapshots are designed to capture the latest research, information and analysis in a fast-moving environment. Topics will be repeated from time to time as research and analysis develops. If you have an item to include, please email us at research@iom.int.

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

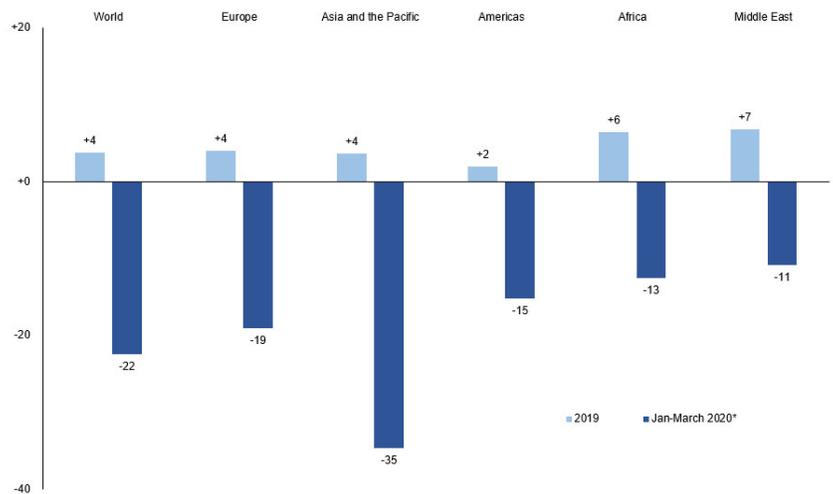
[Pandemics, tourism and global change: a rapid assessment of COVID-19](#) by Stefan Gösslin, Daniel Scott, Michael Hall

[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.

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

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