

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 travel restrictions & COVID

[Stranded: the impacts of COVID-19 on irregular migration and migrant smuggling](#) by Gabriella Sanchez and Luigi Achilli

[Migration and Immigration: Uganda and the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) by Agnes Igoye

[The Migrant-Citizen Nexus in View of the Coronavirus Pandemic: Can We De-Migrantize Responses?](#) By Janine Dahinden



In recent months, the world has witnessed unprecedented levels of mobility restrictions, as countries across the world try to reign in the spread of COVID-19. As reported by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), [100% of global destinations](#) had imposed travel restrictions by April 20, with far reaching socio-economic ramifications which many countries are currently grappling with. However, as COVID-19 infections and deaths start to fall in some parts of the world, the tide is beginning to turn, and several countries are starting to ease travel/movement restrictions.



Access challenges and the implications of border restrictions

In May UNHCR and IOM issued a brief detailing [access challenges and the implications of border restrictions](#). The brief stresses that exceptions to travel restrictions are needed “to safeguard basic rights, including for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants”. The brief also notes that often these exceptions are not being observed by many governments, putting human rights at serious risk.

Easing travel and movement restrictions

Newly released research from UNWTO, published at end of May, shows that [3% of global destinations](#) had started to reduce travel restrictions, with [7 destinations](#) easing travel restrictions for tourism, while several had begun discussions on reopening borders.

Italy, one of the worst hit European countries and which imposed one of the toughest lockdowns, [reopened its borders](#) to tourists from Europe on June 3. [Norway and Denmark](#) also planned ease travel between the two countries as early as mid-June, while the [Baltic States](#) - Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – were among the first to establish the so-called ‘travel bubble’, allowing free movement between the three countries.

Countries such as [India](#) and [South Africa](#), also concerned about the toll that the lockdowns are having on their economies, have started to ease internal lockdowns, even as infection rates continue to rise.

Increase in migrant smuggling and human trafficking

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) recently released a [research brief](#) which explores scenarios of how smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons across borders to Europe and North America could be impacted by the current pandemic. The brief shows that despite travel and movement restrictions, smuggling of migrants continues and demand for people smugglers may even increase, as many flee conflict, violence, human rights abuses, and risky living conditions. The brief also notes that the heavy toll that the pandemic and related measures to curb its spread are having on economies worldwide, resulting in high unemployment, are likely to drive up cross-border trafficking in persons.



Supporting stranded migrants

Many migrants remain stranded across the world, unable to return home due travel restrictions and not able to work because of internal lockdowns. IOM continues to support migrants in these situations; in countries such as Egypt and Tunisia, for example, [the IOM-EU join Initiative](#) is providing urgent assistance to stranded migrants in the form of food vouchers as well as non-food items such as hygiene kits. In West African countries such as [Cote d'Ivoire](#), IOM has been providing essential items to stranded migrants. The Organization also recently provided urgent medical support to some of the [hundreds of Rohingya refugees](#) who had been stranded at sea upon their disembarkation near Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

The Swiss National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) has created the [Citizenship Migration and Mobility in a Pandemic \(MMP\) tool](#), which provides detailed information on International travel restrictions and mobility and border controls.



Global guidelines to restart tourism

As various countries around the world start to ease travel and movement restrictions, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has released [guidelines](#) for countries to restart tourism. The tourism sector is expected to be hard hit by the pandemic, with tourist arrivals projected to decline by [60-80 per cent](#) in 2020, risking between [100-200 million](#) jobs. To learn more about COVID-19's implications for tourism, read [Analytical Snapshot #41](#).

In a recent [video](#) launching a UN policy brief on [COVID-19 and People on the Move](#), UN Secretary General António Guterres says that:

“more than 150 countries have imposed border restrictions to contain the spread of the virus. At least 99 states make no exception for people seeking asylum from persecution.”

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

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