

This snapshot updated # 14. These COVID-19 Analytical Snapshots are designed to capture the latest information, research 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.



New research and analysis on COVID-19 and human trafficking

[Vulnerability, human trafficking & COVID-19](#)
by M. McAdam

[Aggravating circumstances: How coronavirus impacts human trafficking](#) by L. Wagner and T. Hoang

[The plight of migrants and refugees in the pandemic](#) by L.F. Freier, S. Castillo Jara and M. Luzes

Reports

[COVID-19 Position Paper: The Impact and Consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Trafficked and Exploited Persons](#) by M. Grazia Giammarinaro, Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children

[Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on trafficking in persons](#) by UNODC

[Addressing emerging human trafficking trends and consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, Guidance](#) by UN Women

Impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerabilities to human trafficking

As set out in a recent report published by the [Global Initiative against Transnational Organized Crime](#), the pandemic has had diverse impacts on people's vulnerability to human trafficking, including migrants:

1. Intensifying drivers and root causes of human trafficking
2. Heightened and changed forms of exploitations
3. Multifaceted impacts on children
4. Shift towards informality in both formal and informal sectors of global supply chains
5. Increased irregular migration flows
6. Disruption in victim assistance and support services
7. Reduced enforcement, policing, investigation and justice system capacities
8. Interrupted financial support and funding



Identification and referral of victims during the pandemic



While [identification](#) of trafficked victims is already complex in "normal" times, it has been increasingly challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic as States have diverted their efforts and resources onto COVID-19 response. Lockdowns have also impacted the identification of victims, with 5 per cent fewer victims referred in the [United Kingdom](#) between April and June compared to the same period in 2019. The types of exploitation have also moved from forced labour to criminal exploitation due to the closure of non-essential businesses and lockdown measures.

Accrued risks to trafficking for Venezuelan migrants

Since 2014, around [5 million Venezuelan migrants](#) have left their country, some finding themselves without a regular migration status in destination countries and relying on the informal labour market.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, some [Venezuelan migrants](#) have lost their jobs and not been able to benefit from social protection. They have been evicted from their accommodation because they were unable to pay their rent and ending up living in the streets. According to existing evidence:

- ⇒ In [Peru](#), a survey of 406 Venezuelan migrants reported that, by mid-June 2020, more than 40 per cent has lost their employment since the beginning of the quarantine, and nearly 50 per cent considered being at risk of eviction.
- ⇒ In [Colombia](#), out of 779 Venezuelan migrants surveyed, 48.3 per cent reported to have lost their job by mid-June 2020, while another 15.8 per cent was already unemployed before the confinement. More than 80 per cent considered they were at risk of eviction, among which 50 per cent considered the risk to be high.

Given their precarious situation, it was estimated that the first four months of 2020 accounted for a [20 per cent increase in the number of victims of trafficking in Colombia](#) compared to the entire year 2019, with the majority being Venezuelan migrants.



Trafficking survivors stranded abroad

Transnational trafficking can entail the movement of victims from one country to another, often lured into false promises of employment abroad. With the closure of international borders to limit the spread of the pandemic, some victims have found themselves [stranded abroad](#), without the immediate possibility to be repatriated back home. [Two Nigerian women](#) trafficked into forced prostitution in Ivory Coast have, for instance, managed to escape their trafficker but were still waiting for repatriation nearly four months later.



Counter-trafficking operations continuing amid the pandemic



Amid the pandemic in April 2020, [Interpol](#) led an operation with law enforcement from Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philippines that deployed along a known terrorist route in South-East Asia. The operation resulted in the rescue of over than 130 victims of human trafficking and the arrest of more than 180 individuals, including one individual suspected of being affiliated to the terrorist Abu Sayyaf Group.

As noted by the Assistant Director of Interpol counter-terrorism unit, Karel Pelán, “The COVID-19 pandemic will not stop terrorist and organized crime groups from pursuing their activities, which means law enforcement operations must, and do, continue”.

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

Important disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of IOM. The inclusion or presentation of material does not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IOM, or of any of its members or partners.