

Priorities in research on international migration and mobilities: Implications of the COVID pandemic and its legacies

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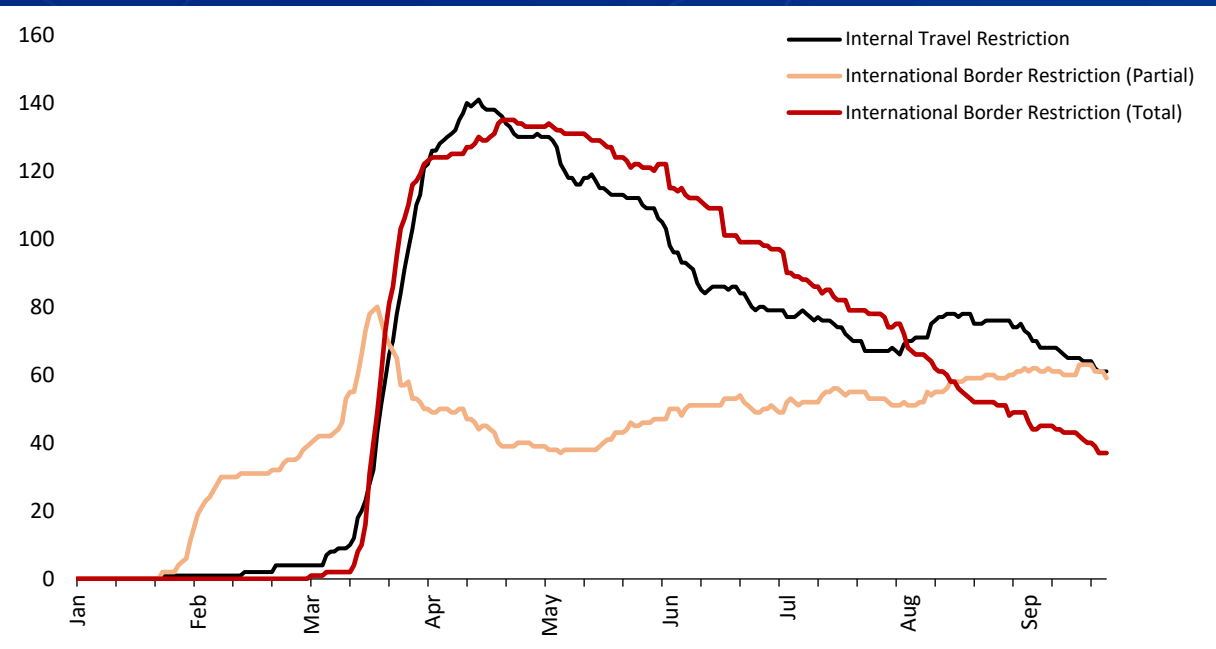
International Organization for Migration

5 November 2020



Commentary outline

1. COVID19, (im)mobility and migration globally: brief recap
2. Emerging research priorities
3. Challenges and opportunities ahead



Immediate impacts

By 3 November, there were over **47.5 million** confirmed COVID-19 cases in the world. Deaths surpass 1.2 million.

Immobility restrictions

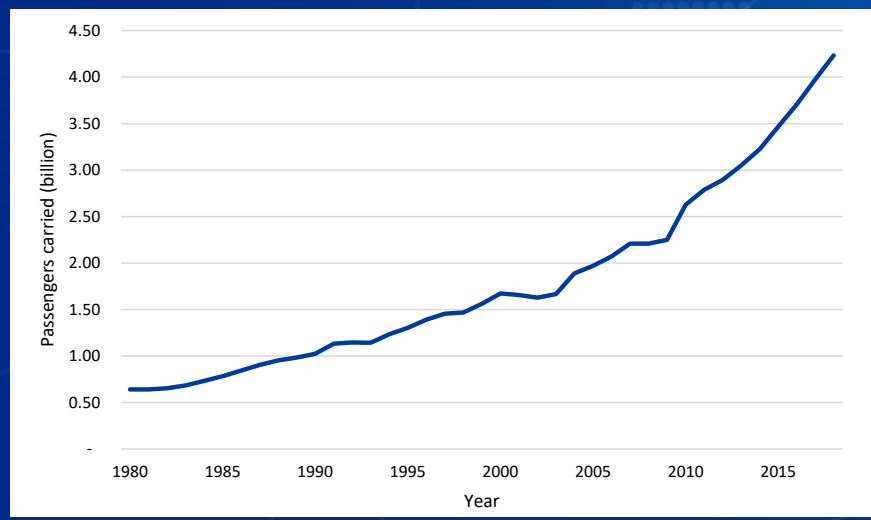
- 97,000+ specific restrictions globally

Migrants on the frontline

- health care workers
- aged/child care workers
- domestic workers
- transportation workers
- Seasonal agriculture workers

In many countries, migrant workers perform the so-called '3D' jobs essential to society; the dirty, dangerous and demeaning jobs. Often more at risk of infection.

Total air passengers carried, 1980 to 2018

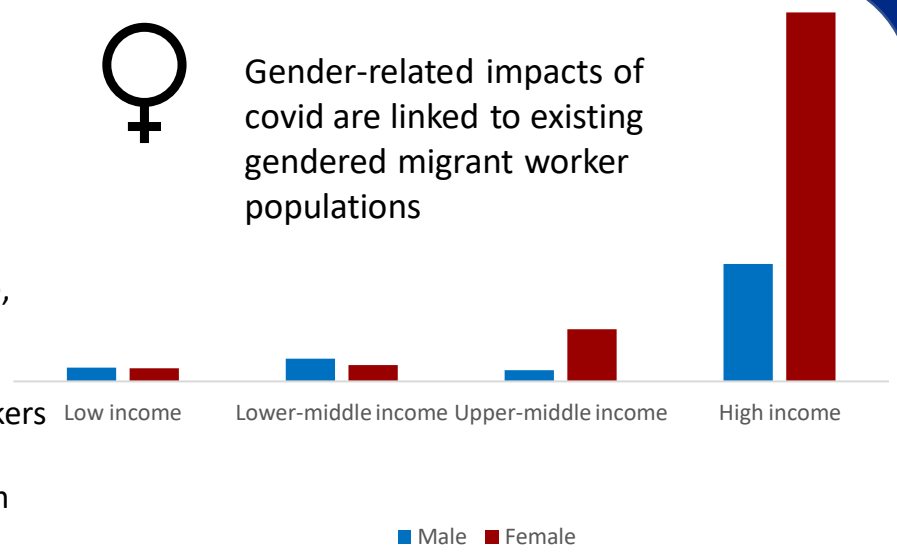


Data source: World Bank, 2020.

Migrants make up almost 20% of all domestic workers globally. Three-quarters of migrant domestic workers were female, with most in high income countries. Female migrant workers also feature in care sectors, making them more likely to be exposed to COVID-19.



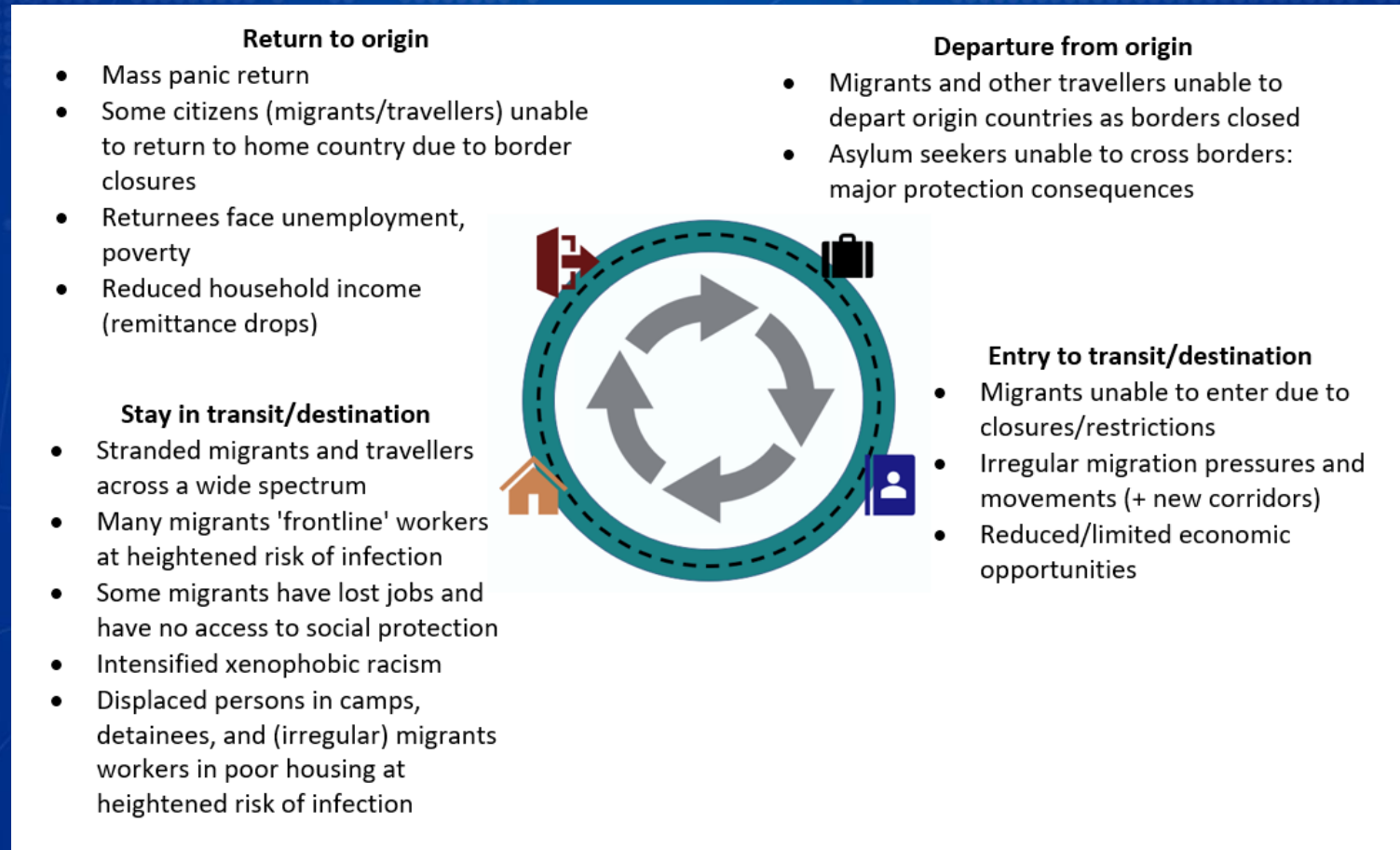
Gender-related impacts of covid are linked to existing gendered migrant worker populations



Source: IOM World Migration Report 2018, using ILO data

Immobility: the ultimate international migration disrupter

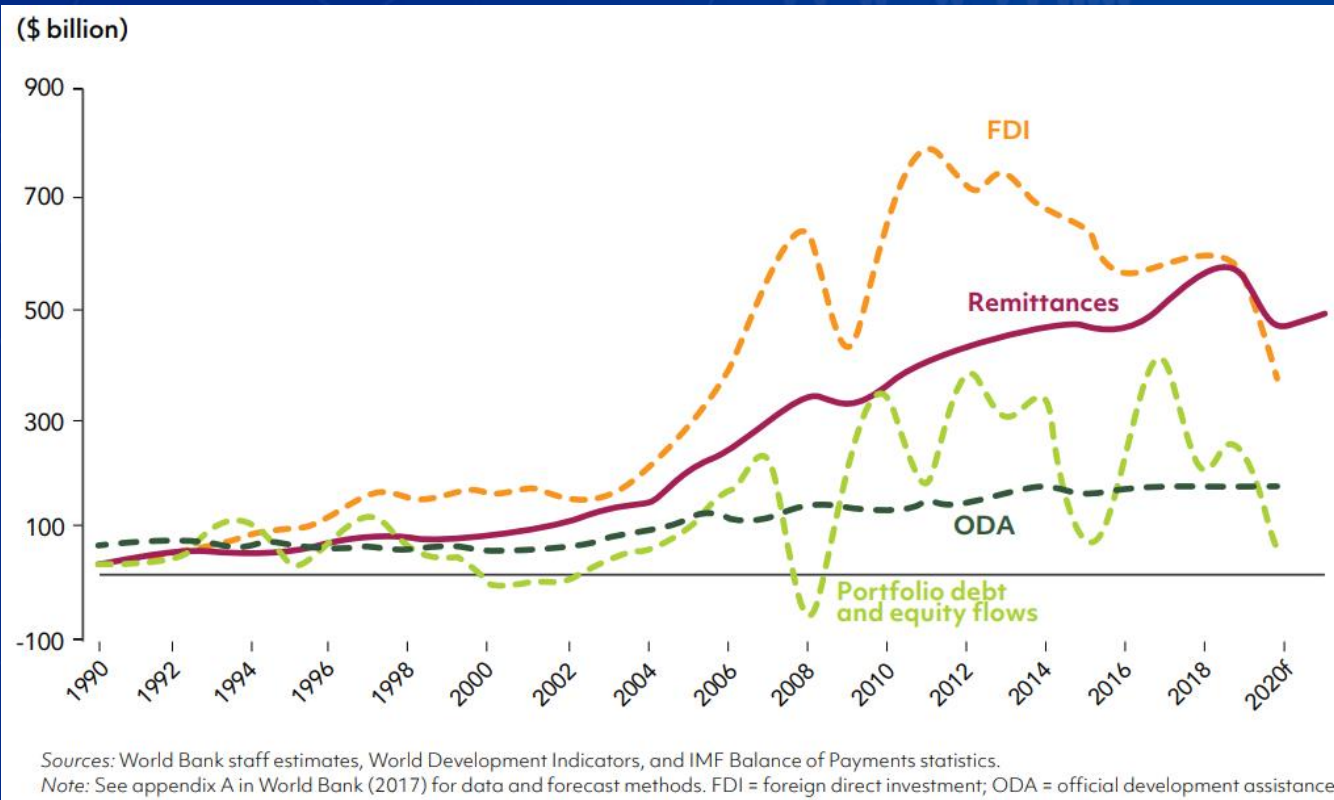
As a result of COVID19 movement and border restrictions, migration systems are being disrupted right along the migration cycle, with significant implications for human rights.



Source: McAuliffe, Skeldon & Freier, forthcoming

International Remittances: What *is* happening?

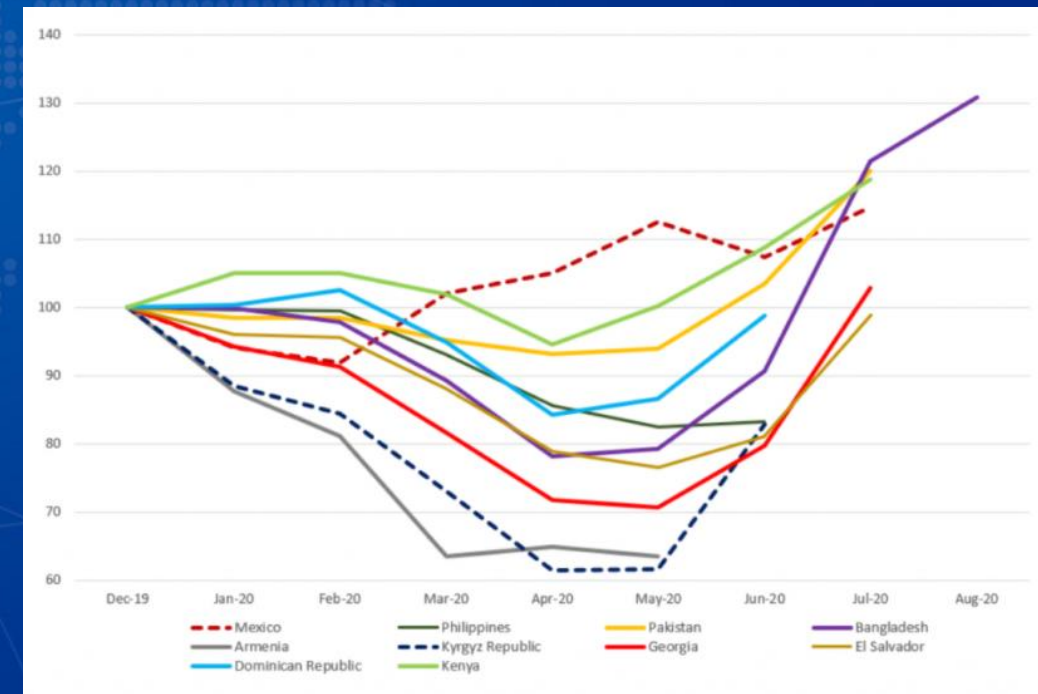
- Migrants are responding to COVID19 by sending more money home
- **Increases in inflows** are being reported in Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, Nepal, Philippines, Kenya, Zimbabwe; this likely to be occurring elsewhere too
- Increased inflows to origin occurred in previous pandemics (Source: Kalantaryan and McMahon, 2020)
- Shifts from *informal* remittances to *formal* channels likely to mask overall declines
- COVID19 recovery will depend on increasing remittances flows: whether internal/international, by supporting economic recovery and expanding access to remittance tools



International remittances were projected to fall by 20% in 2020. But will this happen?

In April, the World Bank predicted int'l remittances to decline by 20% in 2020 due to COVID-19, with serious consequences for receiving countries.

- Revised down to 14% decline



Top 3 COVID-19 migration research priorities for 2-5 years

1. Mobility restriction impacts

- Beyond acute health crisis
- Stranded migrants
- New mobility regimes? Intensifying inequality?

2. Protections / vulnerabilities

- Trafficking/smuggling
- Displaced persons (IDPs, refugees)
- 'Essential' migrant workers
- Social protection
- Alternatives to immigration detention
- Demographics (e.g. sex/gender, ethnicity)
- Xenophobic racism and stigmatization

3. International remittances

- Improving analysis of remittances data
- Behavioural aspects in crises
- Tech dimensions



Cross-cutting issues of
human rights of migrants
and
migrants' contributions to socio-economic recovery
and
global inequalities

Challenges? Opportunities? for migration & mobility research

Opportunities

- Re-conceptualization of migration and mobility
- Methodological innovations
- Inclusive collaboration: bridging geographic & disciplinary divides through tech
- Improved virtual learning
- More data than ever before!

Challenges

- Conceptual issues: who and what is in scope? Any why?
- Migration 'basics' more distance
- Dataset/methodological limitations: do no harm?
- 'Datafication' reduces overall quality of research and knowledge?
- Social sciences (again)
- Warp speed...

Recommended: Ron Skeldon's 2018 paper "International migration, internal migration, mobility and urbanization: Towards more integrated approaches"

UN Research Roadmap for the COVID-19 Recovery

*“COVID-19 has served as a grand revealer for the depth of consequences caused by the structural problems we have long known we need to address. Indeed, many of the priorities emerging from this UN Research Roadmap process are not actually new; however, COVID-19 makes some priorities **newly essential...**”*

Research Roadmap Lead: Steven J. Hoffman JD PhD LLD
Scientific Director, CIHR Institute of Population & Public Health

Five steering groups chaired by:

Pillar 1 - Health Systems - Jeremy Farrar, UK, and Glenda Grey, South Africa

Pillar 2 - Social Protection - Angela Liberatore, EU, and Bhushan Patwardhan, India

Pillar 3 - Economic Recovery - Ted Hewitt, Canada, and Nísia Trindade Lima, Brazil

Pillar 4 - Multilateral Collaboration - Thilina Kumari Kandanamulla, Sri Lanka, & John-Arne Røttingen, Norway

Pillar 5 - Social Cohesion - Kellina Craig-Henderson, USA, and Aisen Etcheverry, Chile

Thank you