Executive summary[1]

- Latest available data indicate a significant increase in overall migration flows to G20 countries in 2019 with about 12.5 million new temporary and permanent immigrants. This represents a 10% increase compared to the previous year.
- The evolution of migration flows in the first six months of 2020 however shows a dramatic drop in immigration trends. The number of new permits issued declined on average by 45% in G20 OECD countries and by over 50% in Japan, Korea, the United States and Australia for example.
- Measures implemented by governments globally to limit the spread of COVID-19 are also having a profound negative impact on the possibility of people fleeing war and persecution to access the protection they need.
- By mid-2020, the global refugee population reached 26.3 million, increasing by almost a quarter of a million refugees since the record figure reached at the end of 2019. G20 countries hosted 7.6 million refugees.
- During the first half of 2020, there were an estimated 586 100 new claims for asylum lodged globally with States or UNHCR in 'first instance' procedures, 32% less than the same period in 2019. Three-quarters (451 500) were in G20 countries.
- Resettlement, naturalisation and voluntary repatriation of refugees were all significantly reduced worldwide in the first half of 2020. With more people becoming displaced and fewer being able to return, resettle or naturalise, an increasing number find themselves in protracted and long-lasting displacement situations.
- Governments have implemented a broad range of measures in response to COVID-19 including policies to extend work and residency permits, responding to immediate labour needs, ensure access to healthcare for COVID-19 treatment and facilitate the return of stranded migrants. Migrants have also actively contributed to the efforts to limit the immediate effects of the pandemic as frontline workers.
- By highlighting underlying challenges, the pandemic actually offers an opportunity for governments to review their migration policies, draw lessons learnt and be better prepared for future crises.
- In a context of continuing workplace closures and other restrictive measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic, leading to working-hour losses in G20 countries amounting to the equivalent of 315 million full-time jobs in the second quarter of 2020, migrant workers were among the hardest hit. While demand for migrant workers has declined in some sectors, demand has increased in others, such as health care and seasonal agriculture.
- With the socio-economic impact of the pandemic felt heavily by the most vulnerable in society, including refugees and other displaced people, continued solidarity and support to those most in need is critical.
- The impact of COVID-19 on remittances is a mixed picture; in the first half of 2020, total remittances received in some countries of origin dipped while in other countries of origin, they recovered after a dip and the total was higher than remittances received in the same period in 2019.
- Countries of origin and destination should consider migrant workers are included in the national response programmes and enhance protection of their rights, safe return and effective reintegration into labour markets.
- In this regard, bilateral and international coordination and the involvement of social partners remain crucial. International labour standards and fundamental principles and rights at work provide governments and other stakeholders a basis to tackle the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic through fair and effective policy responses to facilitate sustainable and equitable recovery.
- Going forward, identifying common challenges and opportunities, exchanging on good practices and joining forces to improve the availability and quality of international data and evidence on migration and forced displacement will be key to tackle the future of international migration post Covid-19.

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[1] *This document, as well as any data and any map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area. The map in Figure 2 follows the practice of the IOM.*