

Building Resilient Migration Systems in the Mediterranean Region: *Lessons from COVID-19*

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BUILDING RESILIENT MIGRATION SYSTEMS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

LESSONS FROM COVID-19



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Content of Building Resilient Migration Systems

This book discusses:

- **Mobility disruptions** following the COVID-19 outbreak
- **Risks faced by migrants and their families** in the wake of the pandemic
- **Challenges experiences by receiving countries** due to COVID-19 disruptions
- **Lessons Learned and recommendations** to build more resilient migration systems

The book's main messages could inform the response to different types of shocks

1. **Migration can safely continue** in the wake of large global shocks.
2. **Travel restrictions** are only a **temporary solution** and come with non-negligible costs.
3. Applying **human development policies equally** to migrants and locals in the wake of large shocks keeps locals “safe,” protects migrants, and helps economies restart.
4. Sudden shocks can put **long-term integration at risk**.



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A large, light blue, stylized globe with latitude and longitude lines, serving as a background for the title text.

Migration in the Mediterranean region

The region covered in this report includes 28 countries in ECA and MENA

- 21 countries with a coastline in the Mediterranean Sea
- Jordan also included given its importance as refugee hub
- 6 GCC countries also covered given high inflows of Mediterranean migrants

Map 1.1 The extended Mediterranean region



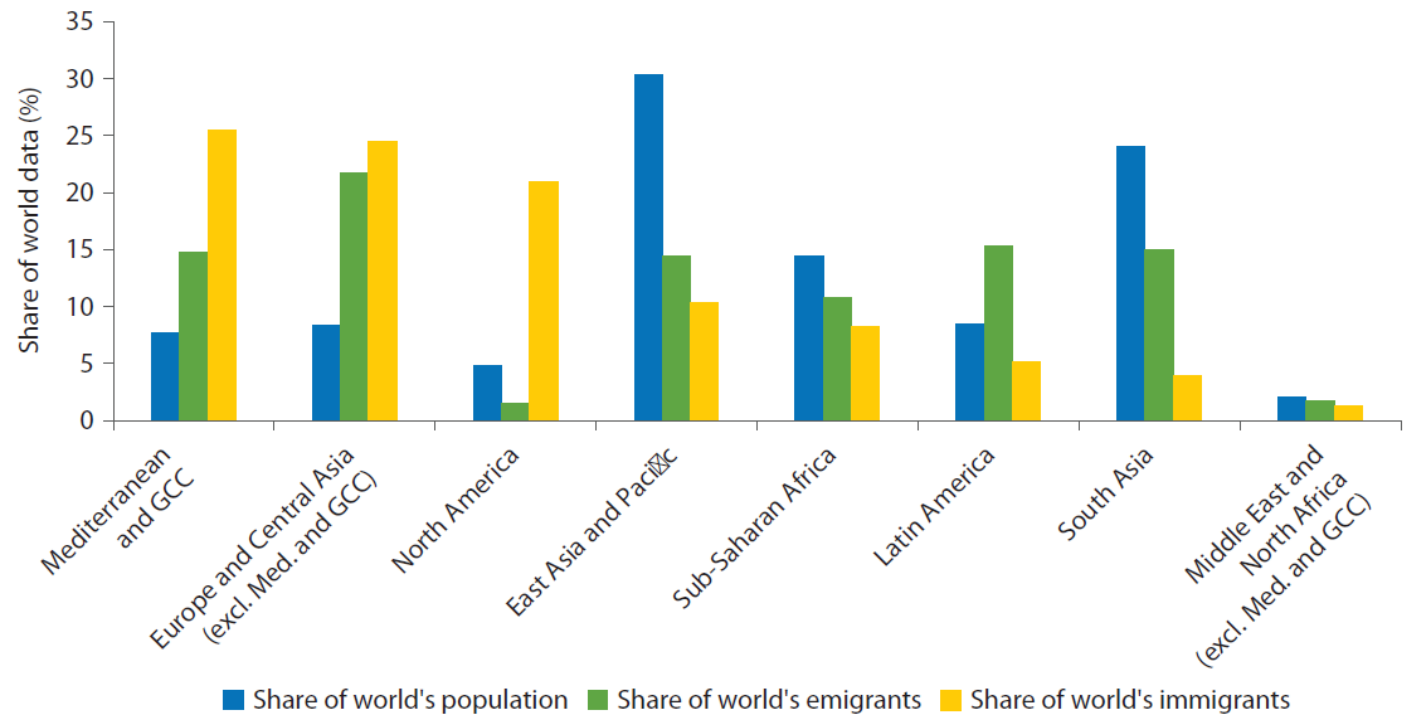
Source: World Bank.

Note: The extended Mediterranean region (shaded blue) includes Albania, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Arab Republic of Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Malta, Morocco, Montenegro, Slovenia, Spain, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Turkey, and West Bank and Gaza. It also includes the Gulf Cooperation Council states: Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

The Mediterranean region is and has always been an important migration hub

- 1 every 4 world's immigrants live in this region
- Stock of immigrants has tripled in the last 30 years
- ~1 every 6 world's emigrants comes from this region
- Almost 60% of Mediterranean emigrants stay in the region

Figure 1.1 Share of world's population, emigrants, and immigrants, by region, 2020



Source: International Migrant Stock 2020 dataset, Population Division, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/content/international-migrant-stock>.



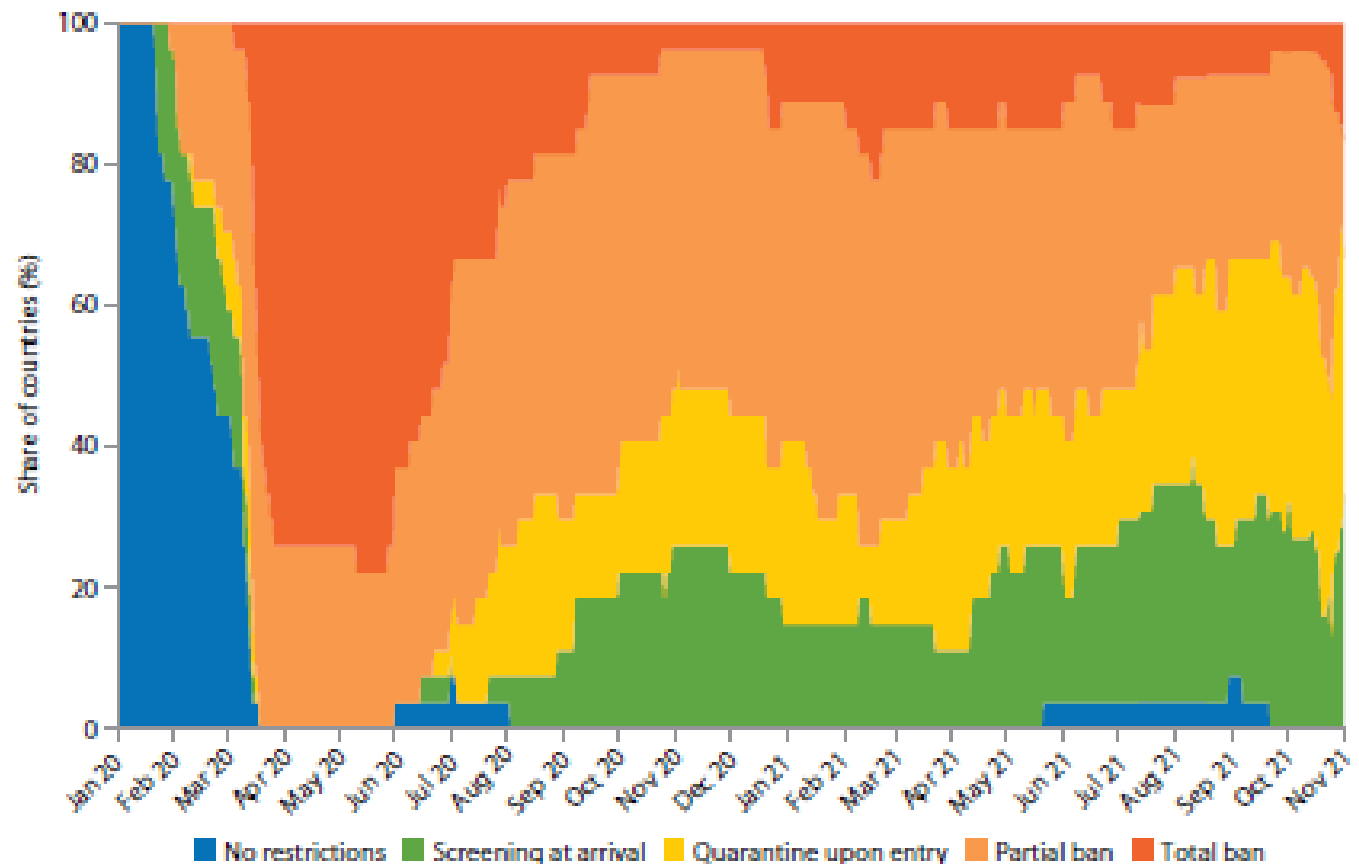
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**How was Mediterranean
migration affected following the
COVID-19 outbreak?**

Following the COVID-19 outbreak all countries in the region limited international mobility

- Between March and May 2020, all Mediterranean countries had a partial or full ban on entry of foreigners.
- Even if lighter, restrictions were still imposed in all countries as of November 2021

Figure 1.8 Share of Mediterranean and GCC countries and economies with mobility restrictions, by type, 2020–21

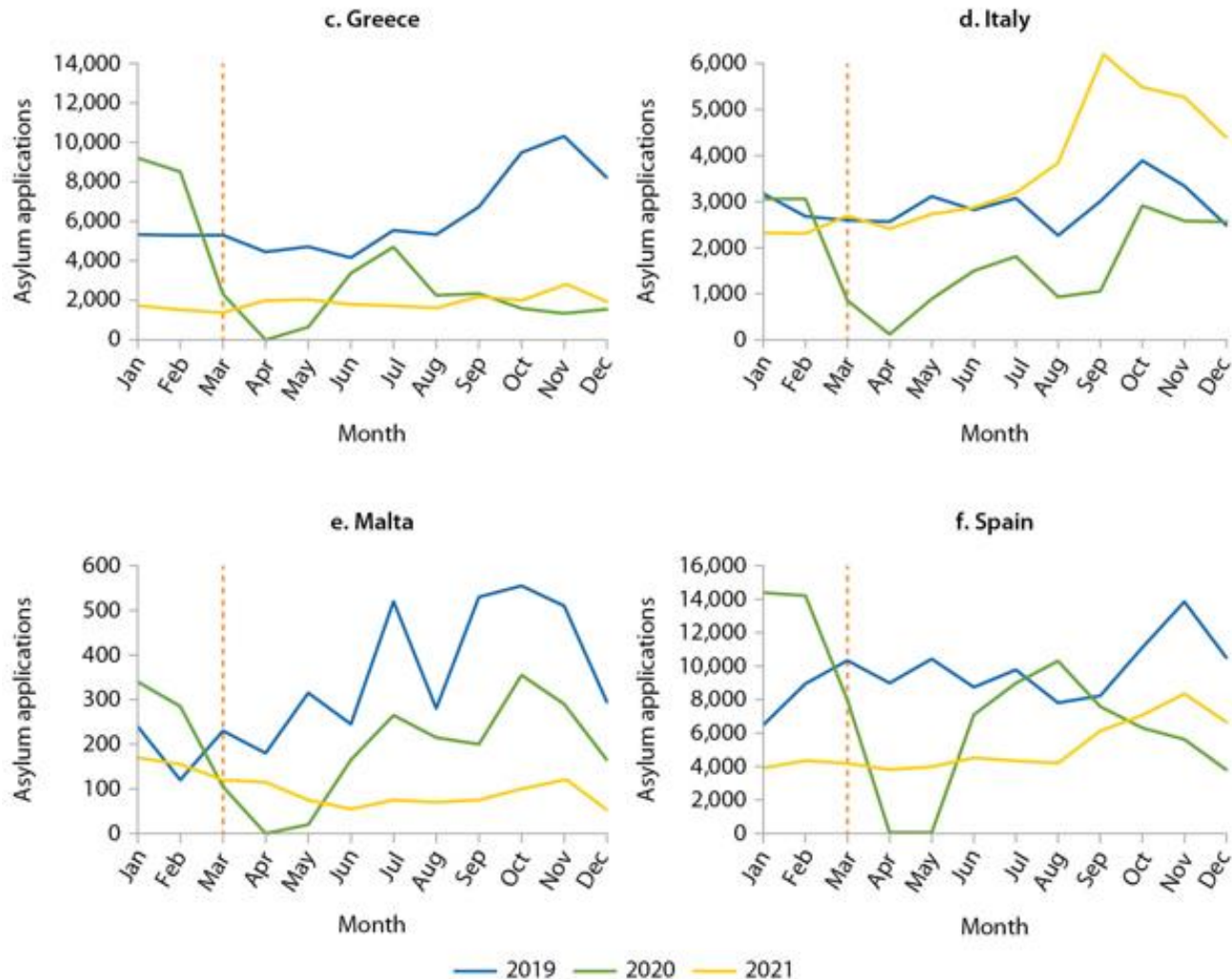


Source: Hale et al. 2021.

Migration flows were affected by the mobility restrictions imposed during the pandemic

- Large drops in **asylum applications** for most of 2020 in Europe.
- In 2020, significant decrease in **permanent migrants** in France (21%), Spain (38%), and Italy (35%).
- In KSA, number of **work visas** 91% lower in 2020 Q3-Q4 than in 2019.

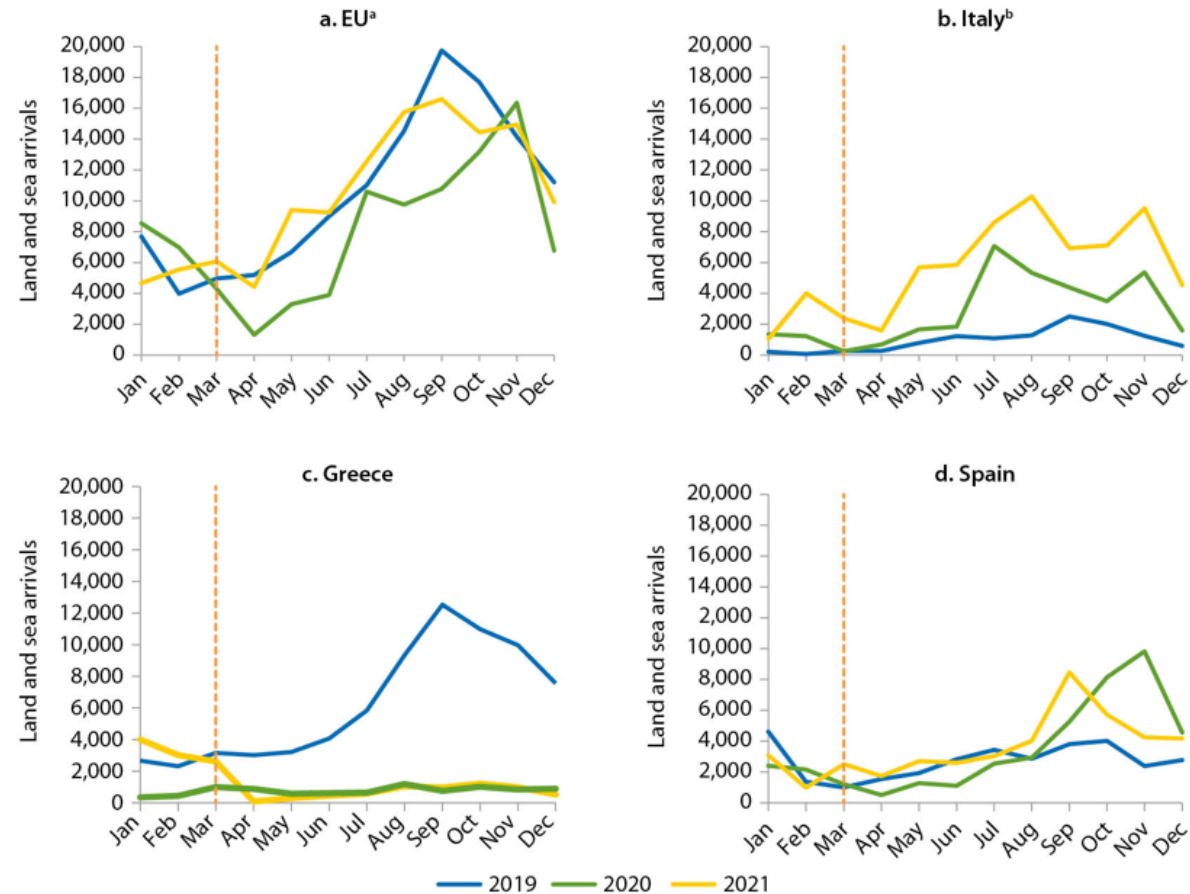
Figure 1.10 First-instance asylum applications in selected European Mediterranean countries, 2019 to 2021



Arrivals of migrants were only temporarily halted, and migrants' journeys became more dangerous

- After initial decline, **arrivals to Spain and Italy higher** in 2020 and 2021 than in 2019.
- **Only in Greece** significant **drop** in 2020, which lasted in 2021.
- Migrants used **more dangerous routes**

Figure 1.11 Land and sea arrivals at the EU's main points of entry and in selected Mediterranean countries, 2019 to 2021

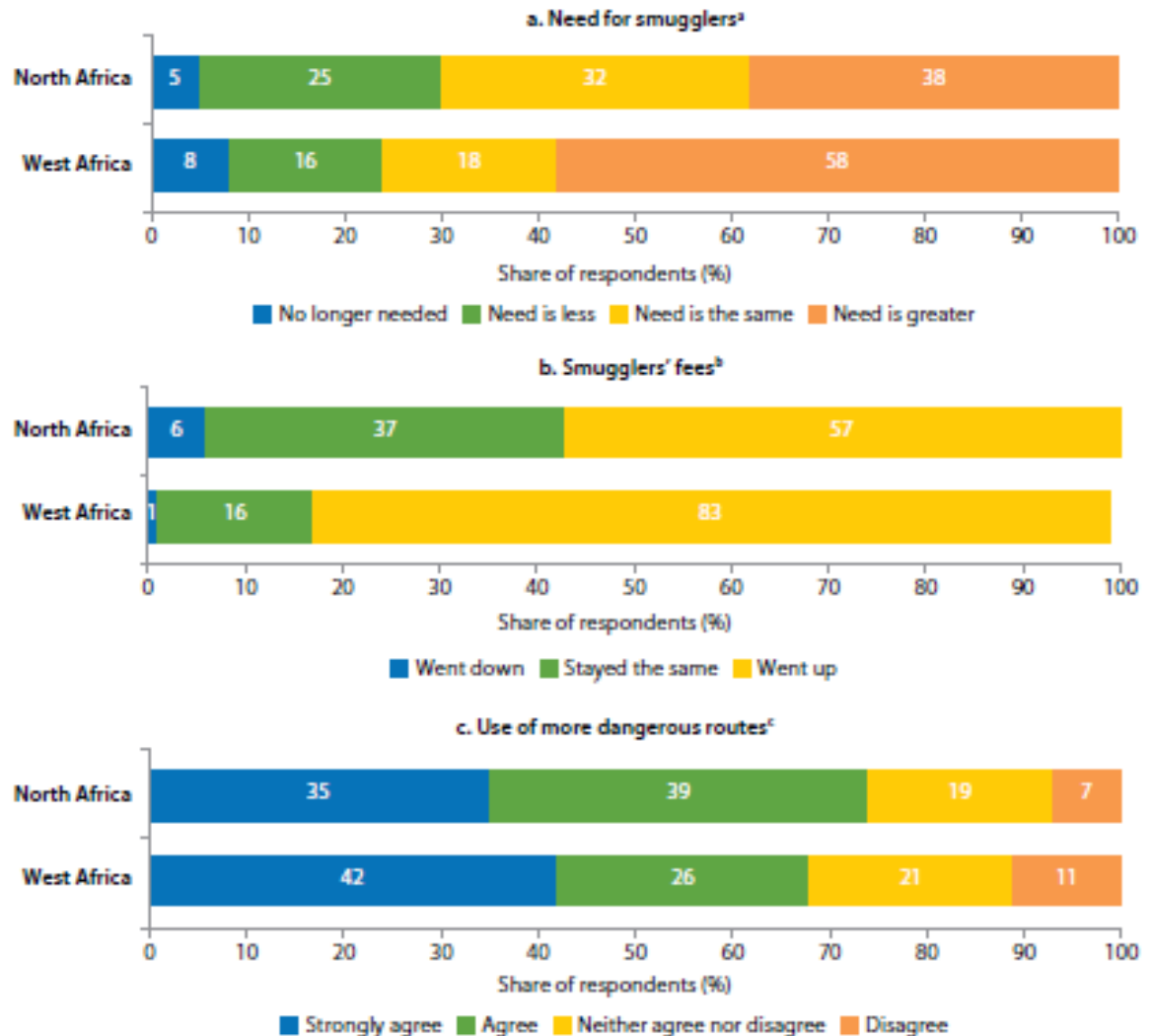


Source: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Operational Data Portal on Refugee Situations, Mediterranean Situation monthly data (<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/mediterranean>).

Those who moved during the pandemic report facing higher risks

- Prolonged mobility restrictions may further limit regular migration and increase smuggling and trafficking.
- Vulnerabilities are particularly severe for women, including domestic workers.

Figure 2.2 Changes in smuggling of migrants from West and North Africa since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, as of July 2020



Source: MMC 2020.



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What was the impact of the pandemic on migrants and their families?

Migrants tend to be more exposed to the virus and more vulnerable to its health impacts

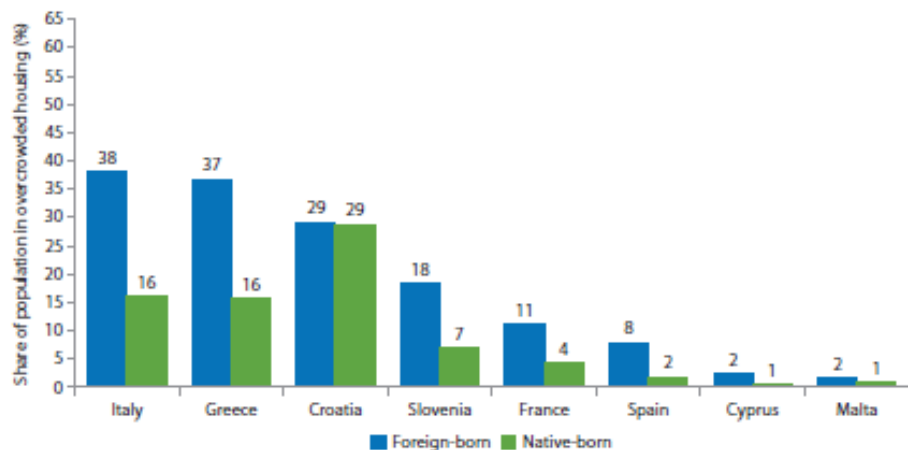
Factors that increase exposure

1. Living conditions
2. Type of jobs
3. Limited access to healthcare
4. Pre-existing health conditions

Examples of health impacts:

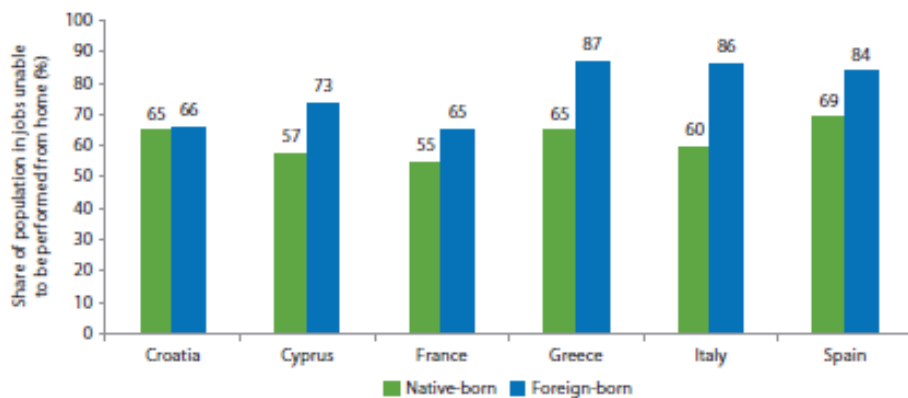
1. In France, between Mar-Apr 2020, excess mortality among the foreign-born twice that of native-born compared to 2019
2. In Italy, non-nationals more likely to be admitted in hospital too late and then needing ICU
3. In Kuwait, in February-April 2020, foreigners have double the odds of death or admission in ICU than natives

Figure 2.4 Share of population in overcrowded housing, by origin status, in selected northern Mediterranean countries



Source: World Bank, based on the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) 2016 dataset.

Figure 2.5 Share of population in jobs that cannot be performed at home, by place of origin, in selected northern Mediterranean countries, 2018

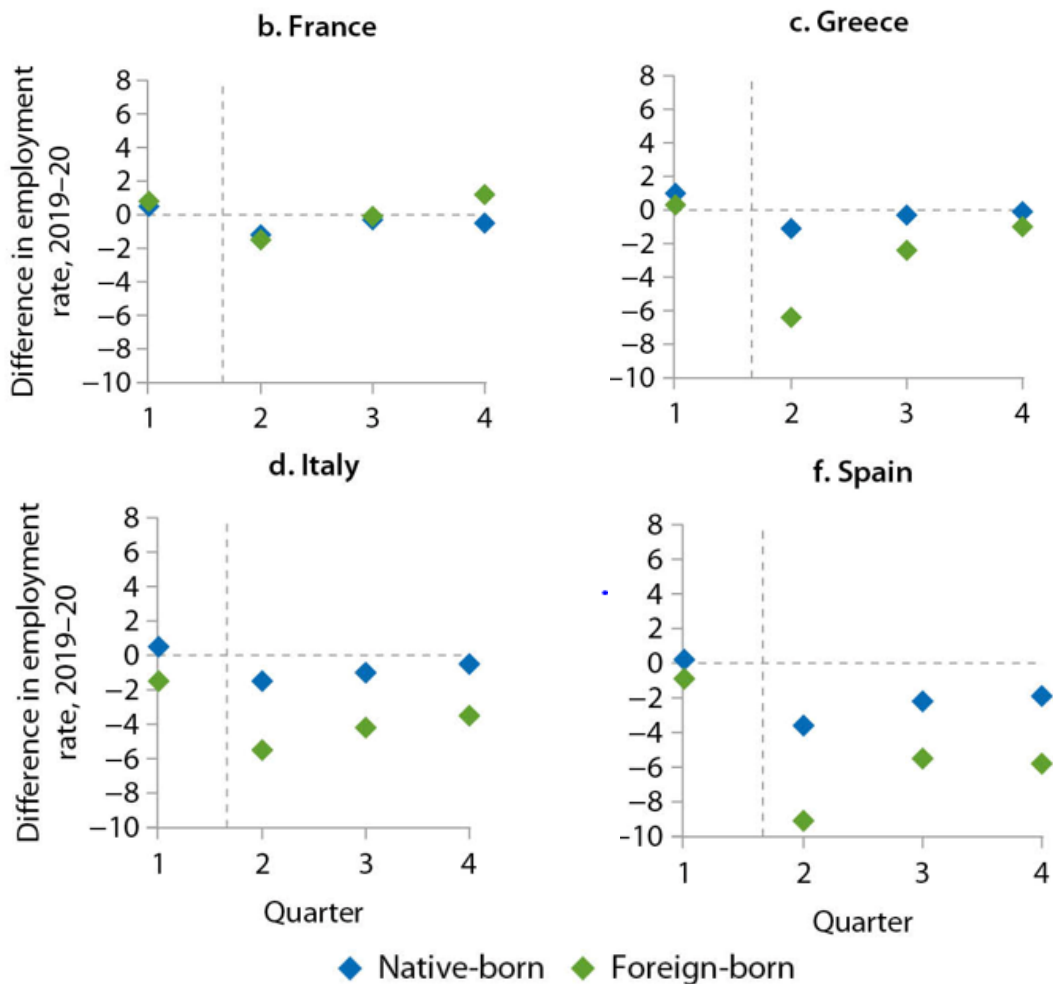


Source: World Bank, based on Dingel and Neiman 2020 and the European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2018 data.

Migrants more likely to experience strong economic losses with potential impacts on source countries

- Higher **drops in employment rates** for migrants in several **EU** countries in 2020.
- Similar negative impacts for **Syrians** in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon.
- In the **GCC**, many migrants remained **stranded** after losing their jobs.
- Overall, **remittances** were resilient, but large drops in Lebanon and Jordan.

Figure 2.8 Difference in employment rate between 2019 and 2020, by quarter and place of origin, in selected northern Mediterranean countries



Source: Eurostat data (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>).



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What were the implications for receiving countries?

Receiving countries also experienced challenges following the COVID-19 outbreak

- Migrants are 8-37% of key lower skilled jobs and 6-11% of high skilled jobs in EU Mediterranean countries
- Between 79 and 96% of the workforce in the GCC is foreigner
- In Turkey, refugees account for approximately 20% of the agricultural workforce
- Between January 2020 and June 2021, global food prices rose by 40% due to pandemic-related uncertainty, macroeconomic conditions, and disrupted supply chains.

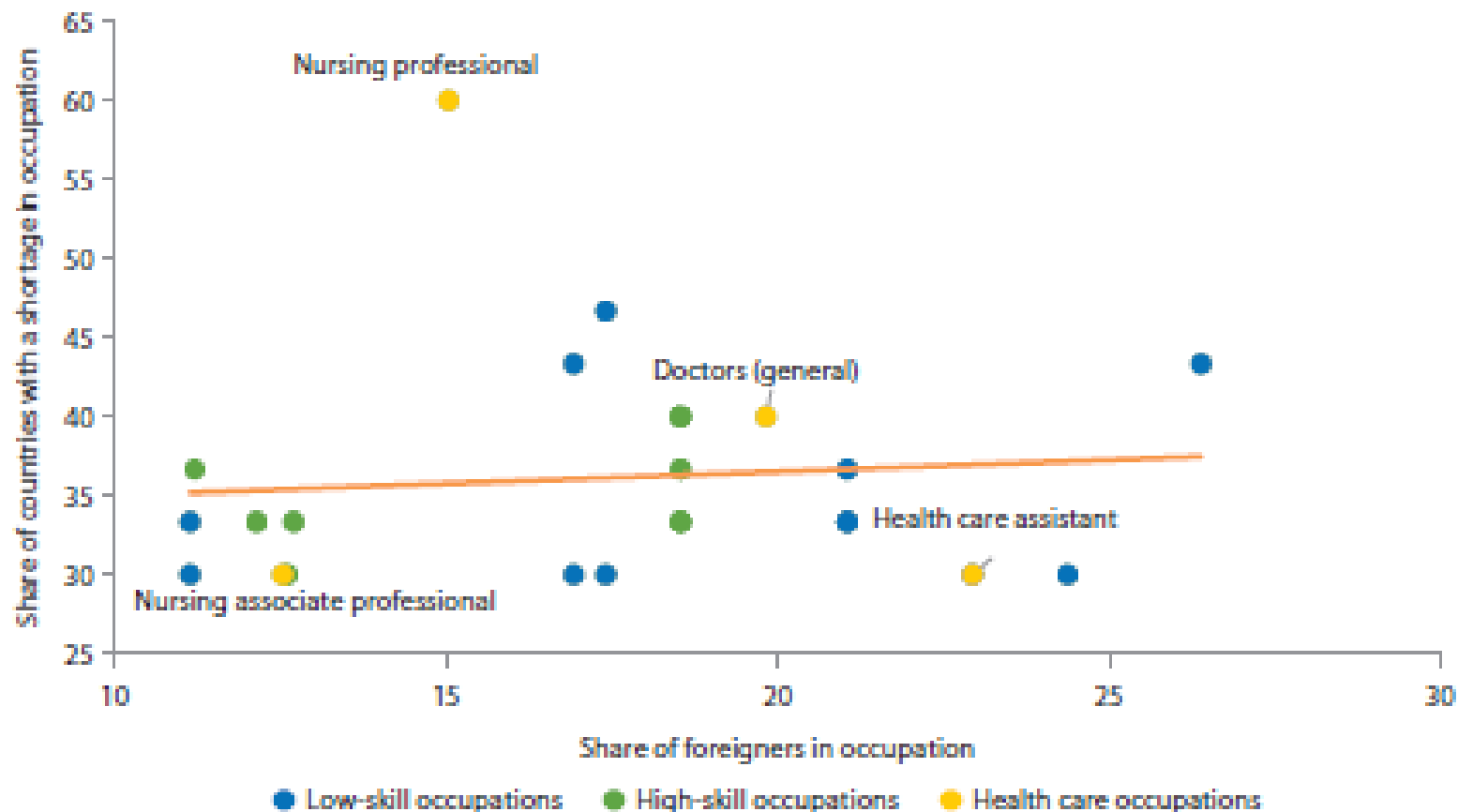
Figure 3.1 Share of foreigners in key occupations, by place of birth, in selected northern Mediterranean EU countries, 2018



Source: European Union Labor Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2018 data from Eurostat (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>).

COVID-19 may have exacerbated pre-existing labor shortages, especially among nursing professionals

Figure 3.2 Share of European countries with labor shortages, by occupation, and share of foreigners in those occupations, 2018 to 2019

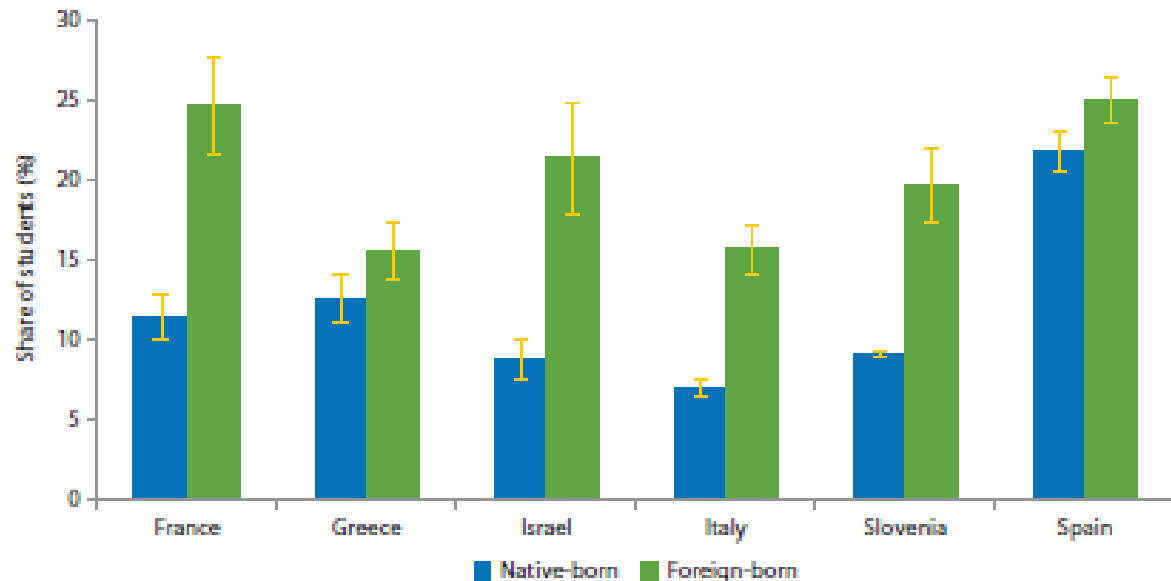


Sources: European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) 2018 data, Eurostat (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/>); EC 2020.

Long-term challenges can also emerge from learning disruptions

- Severe implications of school closures on learning and future earning, particularly for marginalized groups.
- Large shares of foreign-born students aged 15 do not speak the language of instruction at home
- Foreign-born students less likely to have a computer and internet connection at home and more likely to come from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- Most countries ended in-person courses with impacts on migrants' long-term employability

Figure 3.3 Share of 15-year-old students whose mother tongue differs from the language of instruction at school in selected Mediterranean countries, 2018

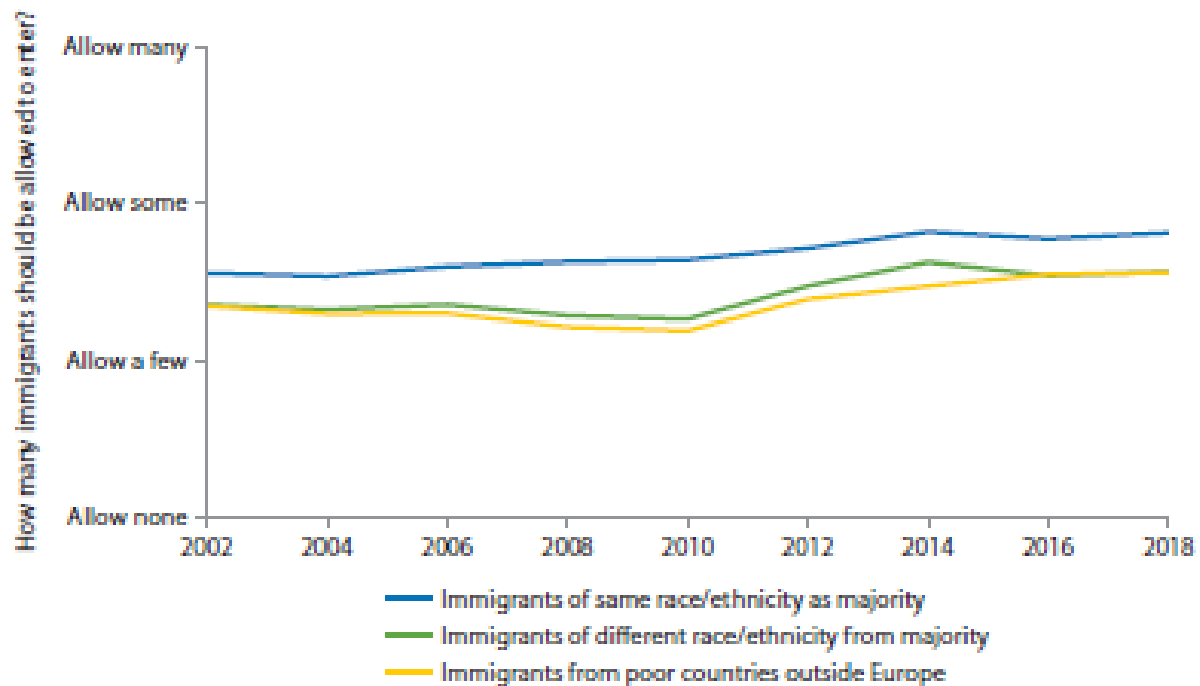


Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 database (<https://www.oecd.org/pisa/data/2018database/>).

The COVID-19 crisis may increase opposition to migration, but this is not an inevitable scenario

- An emerging number of studies points to an increasing anti-foreigner sentiment around the world during the pandemic
- Migrants' essential work during the pandemic may also positively affect attitudes towards migration
- Attitudes towards immigration in EU Mediterranean countries did not change much following previous crises in the last 20 years

Figure 3.7 Public opinion toward immigration in EU Mediterranean countries, by type of immigrant, 2002 to 2018



Source: European Social Survey data (<https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/data/>).

- Ultimately, whether opposition to migration will increase depends on whether migration will be perceived as a more salient issues in the years to come



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**How can countries respond to
address these issues?**

The following reform agenda can help Mediterranean countries build more resilient migration systems

Safely continue migration and preserve long-term integration

1. Establish and follow agreed-upon health protocols
2. Support migrant learners with access to internet, equipment, tutors

Make migration systems more shock-responsive

3. Automatically simplify procedures to allow entry of essential workers
4. Expand migrants' access to healthcare and social welfare during crises
5. Expand access to employment policies to migrants during crises

Address preexisting issue to ensure the sustainability of migration

6. Address de facto barriers limiting utilization of key services
7. Expand and strengthen mobility schemes
8. Ensure that camps and accommodation meet requirements
9. Address misinformation and raise awareness of migrants' contributions
10. Strengthen data capacity to support migration policy making

Potential Implications for operational work of the World Bank

Receiving countries:

- Carry out extensive system assessments to identify areas to become more shock-ready
- Ensure the migrants are covered in pandemic-response plans
- Review existing mobility schemes to ensure that essential labor can flow to fill shortages

Sending countries:

- Facilitate reintegration of migrants
- Support potential re-emigration, ensuring that health protocols are established and followed
- Enter in mobility schemes that maximize the benefits of migration for economic development in source countries and are incentive-compatible for migrants and receiving countries



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Thank you