

Covid-19 and (Im)mobility in the Americas

ARGENTINA

1. **Poverty rate:** 32% of the total population (2018).¹
2. **Migration data:**
 - a. Sending country: About one million Argentines, or 2% of the population reside abroad, mainly in Spain (25.6%), the US (21.2%), and Chile (7.2%).
 - b. Destination country: Approximately 2,212,879 immigrants, representing about 5% of the total population, reside in Argentina. Principle countries of origin are Paraguay (31.2%), Bolivia (19.3%), Chile (9.8%); in addition, and as is the case throughout the region in recent years, Argentina has received many Venezuelan migrants (approximately 145,000 people).
 - c. Host country for refugees: More than 6,000 people live in Argentina as asylum seekers or refugees. Principal countries of origin are Syria, Colombia, Ukraine, Ghana, Haiti, Cuba, and Nigeria.³
3. **Impact of COVID-19⁴ (as of July 14, 2020)**
 - a. Registered cases: 103,265
 - b. Registered cases as % of total population: 0.22%
 - c. Deaths: 1,926
4. **State responses**
 - Border closures and increased surveillance. The Argentinian government has increased security operations at 237 border crossings. Argentina initially shut its borders only to travelers and migrants from countries with the highest incidences of infections (China, South Korea, the US, the United Kingdom, and the European Union). Subsequently, borders were entirely closed.
 - Provision 1714-2020 extended, for a period of thirty days from original expiry dates, the validity of all temporary and transitory residencies, Certificates of Precarious Residency, and inscriptions to the National Registry of Immigration Applicants (*Registro Nacional Único de Requirentes Extranjeros*) and the National Registry of Immigrants' Powers of Attorney (*Registro Nacional de Apoderados de Inmigrantes*) as of March 17, 2020. This measure also extended the time limits set for responding to notices, citations, and summons by the National Migration Directorate (*Dirección Nacional de Migración*).

¹<https://chequeado.com/el-explicador/pobreza-como-se-mide-en-el-pais-y-que-paso-en-los-ultimos-anos/>

²<https://datosmacro.expansion.com/paises/argentina>

<https://migrantesyrefugiadosven.org/>

https://www.clarin.com/sociedad/diaspora-venezolana-ahora-llegan-argentina-inmigrantes-tierra-mar-avion_0_HjWJOpBc.html

³ <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/derechoshumanos/promocion/pluralismo/refugiados>

⁴ John Hopkins University (2020). "Coronavirus Resource Centre". <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>

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- The government has carried out so-called “*deportaciones acordadas*” (“arranged deportations”). These are deportations of foreign nationals due to their failure to comply with mandated quarantine measures.
- The government has established a subsidy known as “emergency family income” (“*ingreso familiar de emergencia*”). It supports vulnerable Argentine citizens and migrants who have lived in Argentina for at least 2 years.
- On March 31, 2020, the Argentine government issued Decree of Need and Urgency 329/2020, which prohibits layoffs and suspensions for 60 days; this decree benefits migrants with steady work.
- The central government has prohibited evictions for rent-related debt until September 30, 2020.
- By presidential mandate, the National Migration Directorate was put in charge of the gradual and safe reopening of national borders as of April 1, 2020. Authorized land border crossings are the following: the Paso de los Libres/Uruguayana (Brazil); Gualeguaychú/Fray Bentos (Uruguay); Salvador Mazza/Yacuiba (Bolivia); Christ the Redeemer (Chile); and Paso San Sebastián (Chile). In addition, Ezeiza International Airport and Palomar Airport are open for entry by air.
- The national government announced that it would extend financial and health assistance to Argentines who are stranded abroad due to tourism-related travel as well as Argentines residing abroad who have lost their jobs or homes. The assistance provided will include shipments of medicines for cancer and HIV treatments to those in need.
- The government facilitated 18 flights to various countries around the world to repatriate approximately 3,000 Argentines stranded due to the pandemic. These flights took place during the last two weeks of April.

5. At risk populations

- *Immigrants (particularly Venezuelans, but also Bolivians, Haitians, Peruvians, and others)* (this population is extremely vulnerable to Covid-19)
 - o Before the pandemic:
 - Results of the 2020 Migrant Agenda Report, which is based on a survey of approximately 1,000 migrants residing in Argentina, show that only 28% of respondents were working formally prior to the start of the mandatory quarantine. The remainder worked either informally (26.5%), sporadically (28.3%), or were not working (17.2%).
 - o During the pandemic:
 - Results from the 2020 Migrant Agenda Report also show that 58% of respondents stopped receiving a salary or income as soon as the quarantine began. In addition, 77% indicated that they do not receive any type of assistance or social benefits.
 - Many young, irregular migrants from Venezuela are unable to access government assistance; they also work in precarious jobs that pose a higher risk of contagion, such as jobs for Uber, Rappi, Glovo and other delivery platforms.

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- The Argentine government has focused, at least in the most visible ways in various media, on tourists as the most significant potential carriers of the virus. They have emphasized the need for tourists to comply with quarantine measures and have deported those who do not comply. The most visible image portrayed in the media and shared among the population is that coronavirus is a virus of “the rich” and that it comes “from the north.” This image of the pandemic obscures the realities faced by the most vulnerable migrants.
 - Migrants with fewer than two years of residence, and asylum seekers and refugees, are excluded from the Emergency Family Income program. According to survey results of the 2020 Migrant Agenda Report, over 80% of migrants in Argentina did not have access to this aid. Of those 80%, 49% did not have the required two years of residence, and 31% were registered but did not access the benefit.
- *Internal migrants (workers, known as “golondrinas” [swallows], from Salta and Jujuy, Tucumán, and Santiago del Estero who work seasonally in Mendoza’s grape harvests)*
- During the pandemic:
 - Hundreds of harvesters and their families, including children, women and the elderly, were stranded in the Mendoza terminal unable to return to their home provinces after having completed piecework on Mendoza’s farms.
- *Deported tourists:*
- During the pandemic :
 - Several hundred tourists were deported (the exact number is still unknown) through the mechanism of “*deportaciones acordadas*” (“arranged deportations”), in particular South Koreans but also Europeans and, to a lesser extent, South Americans (including nine Colombians).
 - Tourists were placed under intense surveillance in order to monitor compliance with quarantine measures.
 - Some travelers and tourists, including families with children and migrants in need of protection, were detained and transferred to other locations. In addition, some travelers and transportation companies have faced official investigation.
- *Indigenous women stranded outside their communities:*
- During the pandemic:

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- Indigenous women--internal migrants who travel outside their communities for work--have been stranded in areas throughout the country, unable to return to their home communities due to quarantine measures and lack of resources. Numerous crimes against them have been reported, including the abuse and detention of women from Tafi del Valle, deaths from malnutrition of Wichi children in Salta, violent attacks on the Mapuche community of Buenuleo (*Lof Mapuche Buenuleo*), and the rape of a young girl from the Wichi community in Sauzalito.

6. Social Responses

- *Migrant struggle:*
 - Bolivians have returned or attempted to return to their country to complete quarantine in their areas of origin.
- *Solidarity networks:*
 - The ARSA (Association of Senegalese Residents in Argentina) organized a food donation drive to support people in Buenos Aires in urgent need. Other civil society and religious groups have made similar efforts in La Plata and Mendoza.
 - In Córdoba, a group of Senegalese and Haitian migrants who work in the informal sector along with the Program of Migration and Mobilities in Critical Perspective (*Programa Migración y Movilidades en Perspectiva Crítica*) (CIECS, CONICET / UNC and CEA, FCS / UNC) organized a campaign to raise money to purchase food for approximately 50 families.
 - Networks of Bolivian families and communities are completing a form of collective quarantine in some of the most impoverished areas of the city of Buenos Aires.
 - The Catholic Church has provided support in various towns and villages where a significant number of migrants reside.
 - Migrant Venezuelan doctors and nurses have offered their services to the Argentine government in order to help combat the health crisis.
 - Various migrant organizations, through the initiative known as "2020 Migrant Agenda," have pressured the government to provide urgent assistance for the internationally protected migrant population, advocating in particular for this population to be considered in socioeconomic relief plans.
 - The Mendoza Human Rights Network--which comprises unions, neighborhood organizations, student organizations, and human rights organizations--is demanding that local authorities send food and offer shelter, medical care, and accommodation, if necessary, to workers who traveled for employment during the grape harvest and were stranded in the Mendoza terminal.
 - The Indigenous Women's Movement for Wellbeing (*Movimiento Mujeres Indígenas por el Buen Vivir*) has publicly denounced the lack of relief for indigenous women stranded far from their communities. This group is asking that the government provide assistance, just as it did to Argentine citizens repatriated from abroad, to those stranded within the country to return to their home communities.

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- *Xenophobia*

- The Argentinian government and media have promoted discrimination against travelers and tourists, particularly South Koreans and Europeans, by associating them with COVID infections. Travelers and tourists have been subjected to excessive surveillance, sanctions, and deportations.

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*For more detail go to the digital archive that we created:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1Jx9nN9MFOuZXXCCLrebR1hF1iki8emVg>

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