

More than half of Ukrainian refugees and displaced people lack access to health services and medicine

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Research from the University of Southampton has found around 58% of Ukraine refugees and displaced people are struggling to access health

care in their new location.

The study also found over 70% of respondents reported having at least one long-term chronic disease.

The findings were gathered through an [internet survey](#), translated into Ukrainian, and distributed via social media.

The survey, conducted from April 2022, generated around 9.5K responses and asked a series of questions about the person's health needs. These included displaced groups within Ukraine and also people who have crossed into a new country where they are refugees.

Report author and Senior Research Fellow at the University of Southampton, Dr. Michael Head said: "The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that it is vital to provide [real-time data](#) during a [public health emergency](#)."

The research was set up in response to the invasion of Ukraine, in order to help support the humanitarian response.

Michael added: "By providing detailed findings around a range of health issues, we can help to support Ukraine response planning and decision-making by governments and humanitarian agencies."

Dr. Ken Brackstone, report co-author, added "The aim here was to use the power of social media marketing for public good as part of the humanitarian response.

"We've shown here that this kind of innovative approach can be used to collect data quickly and usefully."

The results are now being considered by high-level stakeholders,

including the World Health Organization and the UN Population Fund.

Survey Results

In this study, 57.9% of respondents reported difficulties in accessing health care. These difficulties included:

- Not having access to health care facilities and also not knowing where they are in the community (19.3%)
- Knowing where health care facilities are, but not having access to them (19.2%)
- Having access to health care facilities but not knowing where they were (19.4%)

Access to health care was highest among respondents in Ukraine (52.3%) and Moldova (50.0%), and lowest among those located in Romania (26.1%) and Bulgaria (27.1%).

Over 70% of respondents reported having at least one long-term chronic disease. Among respondents who reported a chronic disease, the most common conditions included:

- Persistent back pain (40.5%)
- Depression or anxiety (37.5%)
- Hypertension (30.4%).

Similar results were found with medication, where access varied greatly across different disease areas and geographical locations.

For example, where respondents require medicine to manage back pain or hypertension (high blood pressure):

- Those displaced within Ukraine reported greater access to

hypertension (74.9%) and back pain (70.5%) medication, respectively

- Access to hypertension and back pain medication was much lower among refugees with hypertension in Germany (51.4% and 33.8%, respectively) and Poland (45.1% and 36.2%, respectively)

Within the study population, those within Ukraine were better able to access health care and medicine to some extent, though the research does not examine the quality of health care received.

Michael said: "All refugees have the right to access [health services](#), and it's important that countries ensure that health care and medication is available to them.

"Factors such as [language barriers](#), local bureaucracy and inability to access welfare payments, may have contributed to the difficulties seen here."

Dr. Inna Walker, a Clinical Research Fellow in Public Health and a public health doctor, commented, "Here we report on the health of the people who have fled their homes, whilst fully appreciating that those left behind face own, unprecedented challenges. The survey has captured self-reported [health data](#) for a large sample and in short period of time, and the results can guide decisions on health care provision for this highly vulnerable population."

Data collection is ongoing and other findings from the study can be found on the [project website](#).

Provided by University of Southampton

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