

Abstract

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Covid-19 and related restrictive measures have had a significant impact on population health. The impact has been most pronounced among persons who were at a greater social disadvantage already prior to Covid-19. The aim of this report was to examine the impact of Covid-19 on daily life, health, functioning, mental wellbeing, and quality of life among persons who have migrated to Finland.

Data from the Impact of the Coronavirus on the Wellbeing of the Foreign Born Population (MigCOVID Survey), conducted by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) was used. The survey was conducted between October 2020 and February 2021 and coincided with the second wave of the Covid-19 epidemic in Finland. Altogether 3 668 persons aged 20–66 years participated in the MigCOVID Survey with a participation rate of 60%. A sub-sample of participants of the FinHealth 2017 follow-up Study representing the general Finnish population and belonging to the corresponding age group (n=3 490 participated, participation rate 51%) was the reference group.

Statistically significant differences compared with persons in the general population were observed, with a significantly higher proportion of persons who have migrated to Finland reporting concerns related to Covid-19. Concerns included getting infected with Covid-19 (general population 18% vs. persons who have migrated to Finland 29%), infecting others (31% vs. 39%), a close one becoming infected (40% vs. 52%), being discriminated or avoided because of having Covid-19 (7% vs. 16%), continuation of employment (8% vs. 30%), government's ability to deal with the crisis (14% vs. 25%), and the healthcare system's ability to treat all patients (15% vs. 29%).

Compared with persons in the general population, a significantly higher proportion of persons who have migrated to Finland reported a decrease in feelings of hope for the future (general population 30% vs. persons who have migrated to Finland 38%), and an increase in loneliness (28% vs. 36%), sleeping difficulties (10% vs. 18%), and daily smoking (2% vs. 4%). A decrease in feelings of safety at home was reported by 9% and a decrease in physical activity by 39% of persons who have migrated to Finland. A statistically significant difference was also observed among persons reporting that their financial situation weakened quite a lot or very much (general population 6% vs. persons who have migrated to Finland 23%). For some, Covid-19 also had positive effects. Compared with persons in the general

population, persons who have migrated to Finland more frequently reported an increase in contact with friends (general population 7% vs. persons who have migrated to Finland 16%) and feelings of hope for the future (7% vs. 20%), and a decrease in loneliness (2% vs. 6%), disputes within the family (3% vs. 6%), and consumption of snacks (5% vs. 9%).

Altogether 15% of persons who have migrated to Finland reported they have been treated with less respect, verbally insulted, threatened or harassed during the Covid-19 epidemic. Among persons who reported being treated with less respect than others (11% of all the participants), 46% reported this occurred at least weekly. Out of all of those who were called names or otherwise verbally insulted (7%), 35% reported this occurred at least weekly. Threats and harassment were reported among 5% of the participants. Among those who experienced this mistreatment, 24% reported it occurred at least once a week.

Altogether 81% of persons who have migrated to Finland and 84% of persons in the general population reported being completely able to work. Statistically significant differences were, however, observed compared with persons in the general population in other domains of health, functioning, and wellbeing. Compared with persons in the general population, persons who have migrated to Finland were less likely to report good/rather good self-rated health (general population 80% vs. persons who have migrated to Finland 70%), memory to function well or very well (82% vs. 75%) and quality of life as very good or good (78% vs. 70%), whereas prevalence of psychological distress (11% vs. 20%) and presence of severe functional limitations (5% vs. 11%) were higher compared with persons in the general population.

The impact of Covid-19 on the health and wellbeing of persons who have migrated to Finland was significantly higher in most of the examined domains of health and wellbeing compared with persons in the general population. Further studies should examine the associated background factors, as well as whether the negative impact of Covid-19 epidemic accumulated among certain groups. Also, the observed positive effects of Covid-19 in some of the participants also needs to be examined from the perspective of resilience to crisis.

Keywords: Covid-19; coronavirus; MigCOVID; migrant; migration; health; mental health; wellbeing; discrimination; functioning; concerns; daily life; lifestyle.