

Abstract

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Accessibility to up-to-date, understandable, reliable and sufficient information is crucial in crisis situations, such as the global pandemic due to the novel coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19, later coronavirus). Accessible and up-to-date information should increase motivation to adhere to preventive measures. Some population groups may be at a more disadvantaged position than others in crisis situations. Disadvantage may arise from inadequate access to information and/or due to a variety of structural factors (e.g. working conditions and living arrangements), which increase the risk for exposure to the coronavirus. In Finland, information campaigns have also been targeted to specific population groups to improve access to critical information and adherence to preventive measures during the coronavirus epidemic.

The aim of this report was to examine access to information, adherence to preventive measures and working conditions among persons who have migrated to Finland using 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). Participants were aged 20 to 66 years (n=3 668, participation rate 60%). When comparative data were available, participants of the FinHealth 2017 follow-up Study (n=3 490, participation rate 51%), representing the general population in Finland were used as the reference group.

A clear majority of respondents who have migrated to Finland (94%) and in the general population (98%) reported they have received sufficient information on coronavirus and preventive measures. Among persons who have migrated to Finland, those with excellent Finnish/Swedish language proficiency reported that they have received sufficient information significantly more often (97%) than those with intermediate (92%) or at most basic (91%) language skills. Respondents reported generally high adherence to preventive measures, especially staying home with flu symptoms (96% among persons who have migrated to Finland and 97% among the general population), improved hand hygiene and good coughing hygiene (93% for both study groups), as well as keeping a safety distance to others (94% among persons who have migrated to Finland and 95% among the general population). A lower proportion reported the use of a face mask (82% among persons who have migrated to Finland and 84% among the general population).

Less well-followed preventive measures particularly among persons who have migrated to Finland were avoiding traveling abroad (84% among persons who have migrated to Finland and 97% among the general population) and downloading the Koronavilkku contact tracing mobile application (43% among persons who have migrated to Finland and 63% among the general population). Significant differences were observed by region of origin among persons who have migrated to Finland. Women were more likely to adhere to preventive measures than men. Persons who have migrated to Finland (30%) reported an increase in remote work significantly less often than persons in the general population (43%). Nearly a quarter of women who have migrated to Finland and were working or in training reported working in healthcare with patient contact. Proportion was highest among women who have migrated from Africa (60%). Slightly more than half (56%) of those working or in training were able to keep a safety distance to others at work. Taking care of good hand hygiene was possible for 72% of persons who were working or in training.

Overall, perceived sufficiency of information on the coronavirus and preventive measures was relatively high. Findings on the differences in perceived sufficiency of information depending on Finnish/Swedish language proficiency emphasise the need to use simple language in communication materials. It also points to the continuous need for multilingual and multichannel material when the recommendations are adapted or specified during the epidemic. It is possible that adherence to preventive measures holds some reporting bias both among persons who have migrated to Finland and the general population. While a number of examined workplace-related factors increasing the risk for exposure to the coronavirus cannot be eliminated due to the nature of the work, employers should pay particular attention to arranging as good working conditions and supervision of these as possible to minimise unnecessary exposures to the coronavirus at the workplace.

Keywords: coronavirus (Covid-19), migration, preventive measures