







## **PARCHEMINS STUDY**

# Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on health and living conditions of migrants in Geneva

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#### What was already known

Migrants without a residence permit (undocumented) or recently regularized often face numerous economic, employment and housing difficulties that can limit their ability to cope with a crisis situation. On the other hand, they have resources such as support from their family, social and sometimes professional entourage that can help them cope with a crisis situation.

The COVID-19 epidemic and containment led to a major health, social and economic crisis in Geneva during spring 2020. The importance of this crisis was demonstrated by need to set up emergency free food distributions.

#### What our study shows

In order to describe and understand the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the health and living conditions of undocumented or recently regularized migrants in Geneva, researchers interviewed people in the community through an online questionnaire and telephone interviews during April and May 2020. The individuals solicited for these interviews were among the participants of the Parchemins study that began in 2017.

Of the 373 people approached, 108 agreed to complete the questionnaire and we were able to conduct 17 telephone interviews. Participants reported facing several types of difficulties that tended to accumulate over time. For example, 3 out of 4 people reported experiencing a decrease in income related to the reduction or loss of employment. Only one in four had sufficient savings to meet their needs for three months. Even so, half of people continued to send money to their families back home. The majority of people faced difficulties in purchasing food in sufficient quality and quantity, paying rent, or paying for health care. Approximately 10% of the participants went hungry and many people had to forego medical consultations or purchase medicines due to lack of financial means.

Many people were exposed to COVID-19 and had difficulty implementing protective measures for themselves and their loved ones at home due to the large number of people living in the same household. This accumulation of difficulties resulted in frequent psychological distress in the form of anxiety or depression. On average, participants felt that their quality of life had deteriorated.

Despite these difficulties, most individuals sought to cope on their own. Only half sought help outside their closest family or social circle. The fear of not obtaining or renewing a residence permit was frequently mentioned.

Those who had been regularized appeared to be somewhat better protected and reported having more resources to cope with the crisis. Nevertheless, they tended to ask for less help than undocumented migrants.











### **Conclusion and recommendations**

In conclusion, this study shows that although obtaining a residence permit provides some protection to cope with the crisis, migrants in general faced many difficulties. This finding underlines the importance of implementing rapid assistance policies in order to compensate for the sudden loss of income and the impact on food, health and housing.

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