

## **Health Status of Refugees from Former Yugoslavia: Descriptive Study of the Refugees in the Netherlands**

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**Aim.** To describe the health status of formally recognized refugees from the former Yugoslavia in the Netherlands, and analyze the relationship between experienced traumatic events and health status.

**Methods.** A random sample of refugees was taken from randomly selected municipalities. One hundred and two persons received a postal questionnaire. Forty percent filled out the questionnaire completely. Well-validated self-assessment scales were used to measure six dimensions of health status. Traumatic experiences were assessed by the Harvard Trauma Questionnaire. Physical aspects of health status were measured by the three dimensions of the Medical Outcome Study (MOS) Short-form General Health Survey (SF-20) which consisted of the dimensions "physical functioning", "subjective health", and "pain". Social health was measured by the two dimensions of the SF-20, "role fulfilling" and "social functioning".

**Results.** The refugees showed vulnerable health. A significant group had an accumulation of health problems. These were mostly unrelated to sociodemographic variables. Many of the refugees experienced several traumatic events. These experiences were clearly related to all health problems.

**Conclusions.** The refugees from the former Yugoslavia scored low on standardized health measurement scales. This was primarily due to their traumatic experiences in combination with their refugee status. There is a need for health services to prevent the accumulation of (future) health problems.

**Key words:** health status; the Netherlands; PTSD; refugees; trauma