

## **PRESS RELEASE**

Croatian Medical Journal  
Zagreb University School of Medicine  
Šalata 3b  
10000 Zagreb  
Croatia

Phone: ++385-1-4590-254

Fax: ++385-1-4590-222

Mail: [dario.sambunjak@mef.hr](mailto:dario.sambunjak@mef.hr)

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### **Majority of people in Bosnia and Herzegovina suffer from war-related distress**

ZAGREB – More than a half of citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH) suffers from at least one of the symptoms of psychological distress caused by the 1992-1995 war, shows a new study published in Croatian Medical Journal. About 13% of BH citizens suffer from 7 or more out of 15 investigated distress symptoms. The most common symptoms were “a persistent sense of foreshortened future” and “recurrent and bothersome thoughts or memories about a traumatic war related event”. Symptoms of distress were found more often in women than in man, and in Bosniac ethnic group than in Croat or Serb ethnic group.

Norwegian researchers surveyed in 2003 a representative sample of 3313 BH citizens to assess the intensity of war-related distress, and to compare it with the level of exposure to war events. The study showed that even 8 years after the end of war, many people in BH suffer of psychological consequences of armed conflict. Persons who directly experienced war events (for example, bombardment, rapes, killings or wounding) more often suffered from distress than those that experienced war events only indirectly.

The study also assessed the influence of societal support on the mental state of respondents. The results indicated that having lived in ethnically heterogenic neighborhoods may have reduced the war-related distress. Furthermore, persons with higher education and better earnings less frequently suffered from distress.

In conclusion, authors of the study that a huge proportion of BH citizens still suffer from psychological consequences of war, and that there is still a need for psychological, medical and social follow-up services for the war victims and their families.

**Correspondence to:**

Gerd Inger Ringdal

Department of Psychology

Norwegian University of Science and Technology

NO-7491 Trondheim

Norway

*gerd.inger.ringdal@svt.ntnu.no*