

“The beautiful thing was I made a lot of sweets and cooked for my family during the pandemic. We all used to eat together...”

The Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic Among Undocumented Migrants in the UK: findings from the CICADA study

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According to the Pew Research Centre¹, the undocumented migrants are estimated at between 800,000 and 1.2 million people in the UK. These individuals face multiple structural and social challenges when attempting to access benefits of social services. One area of concern is how undocumented migrants negotiate access to health care services. The CICADA study has explored the disabled undocumented migrants' experiences of the pandemic through an intersectional lens. We used mixed methods and remote working throughout. Data were analysed by looking for common patterns and themes in the transcripts and guided by Critical Race Theory and Undocumented Critical Theory. The undocumented migrants shared narratives on fear, survival, and community as these relate to negotiating health and well-being. Psychological distress is common not only for undocumented people but also for their loved ones who are not undocumented. Family was extremely valued in this community, however, some participants specified that they felt disconnected from their families post-covid. In terms of strengths, findings exposed that problem solving is a chief coping strategy for this community. Finally, many participants reported using religion to remain hopeful and optimistic about their future.

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¹ <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/fact-sheet/authorized-immigrants-in-the-united-kingdom/>