

HIV Epidemiology among Ukrainian Individuals Migrating to Denmark in 2022

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Introduction

The Ukrainian conflict, initiated by the February 2022 Russian invasion, has forced the emigration of millions of Ukrainians, including people living with HIV (PLWH) (1). In 2022 Denmark received more than 31.000 Ukrainian citizens (2).

Prior to the conflict, in 2021, Ukraine had one of the highest HIV burdens in the entire European Region, with 37.1 new cases per 100.000 population, compared to 2.3 in Denmark (3). The composition of the PLWH in the two countries also varies, with largely men who have sex with men (MSM) transmission in Denmark, and a large proportion of the HIV burden coming from immigration, in comparison with mostly heterosexual and injecting drug use (IDU) transmission in Ukraine and cases with mostly Ukrainian origin (3).

Objectives

The objectives were to investigate the characteristics of the persons notified with HIV in Denmark in 2022, to determine migrant status, mode of transmission and source country of infection. The reason for the investigation was to see if the influx of Ukrainian refugees could explain the unexpectedly high numbers of persons notified with HIV in Denmark in 2022, compared to 2021.

Methods

Danish residents are assigned personal identification numbers, enabling data linkage across national registries. Physicians are mandated to report HIV cases to Statens Serum Institut (SSI) through laboratory and epidemiological notifications. We analyzed HIV cases reported to the national notification system, stratifying them by origin and comparing them with previous years' data.

Results

In 2022, SSI received notifications for 261 HIV cases. Of these, 207 (80%) were from countries other than Denmark, with 84 (40 %) originating from Ukraine and 54 (20 %) from Denmark. In 2021, 134 HIV cases were reported, 91 (68%) of which were from countries other than Denmark, none were from Ukraine.

All the Ukrainian individuals had acquired HIV in Ukraine, apart from two that acquired HIV in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. Almost all (74, 88 %) arrived with known HIV status, and in treatment.

Demographic characteristics of the 84 PLWH from Ukraine, compared to Danish cases in 2022, are shown in Table 1.

Figure 1 shows the development in number of notified HIV cases in Denmark 2018 – 2022, by origin.

Figure 1 Number of notified HIV cases in Denmark 2018-2022, by origin

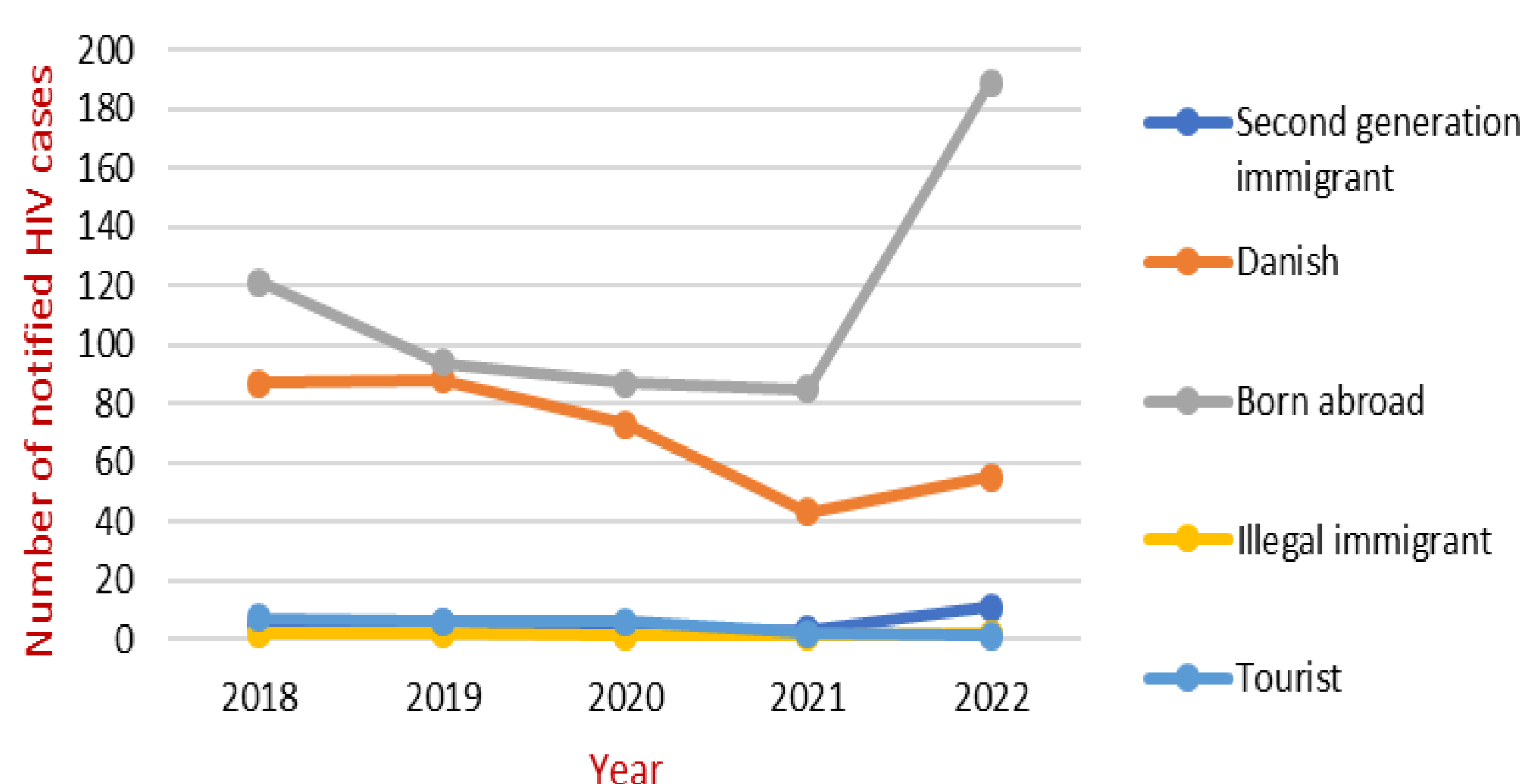


Table 1 Ukrainian and Danish HIV cases notified in 2022 in Denmark

Country	Sex			Mode of infection						Median age
	Male n(%)	Female n(%)	Total n(%)	IDU	HTX	MSM	MTCT	Blood	UNK/Other	Years (range)
2022										
Ukrainian	27 (32 %)	57 (68 %)	84 (100 %)	13 (15.5 %)	40 (48 %)	7 (8 %)	6 (7 %)	3 (3.5 %)	15 (18 %)	40.5 y (7-65 y)
Danish	44 (81 %)	10 (19 %)	54 (100 %)	2 (4 %)	23 (43 %)	24 (44 %)	0	0	5 (9)	50.5 y (20-75 y)

Conclusions

In 2022, Denmark saw a rise in notified HIV cases, compared to previous years. The rise was due to Ukrainian refugees. Most of the Ukrainian PLWH came with known HIV status, although there were ten cases with previously unknown HIV status, emphasizing that continued focus on testing and treatment is crucial to prevent HIV spread.

References

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