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The value of Human Biomonitoring to assess chemical exposure and support policies: perceptions of the European population

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Abstract

BACKGROUND AND AIM: The development of Human Biomonitoring (HBM) surveys is highly dependent on the cooperation and engagement of the individuals being sampled. As such, in the context of the European Human Biomonitoring Initiative (HBM4EU) an online citizen survey was conducted in Europe to gain insights into the perceptions of the population about HBM and exposure to chemicals. **METHODS:** The survey was undertaken between September 2020 and February 2021 and was available in the languages of all 30 HBM4EU-participating countries (EU, associated countries, Israel) through the HBM4EU website. Dissemination was done by the HBM4EU country representatives (National Hub Contact Points). **RESULTS:** Responses were received from 5391 participants. Around half were 35-54 years old and the majority were female, with higher education and employed. Concerning the perception of the respondents on HBM, the majority considers it should be done (81.7%), even if the chemicals are considered well managed. Most participants consider it a reliable method (84.0%) that should be performed more often (87.3%) and be more coordinated either at a European (86.2%) or at a national level (83.7%). The large majority of the respondents thinks that HBM results are important to evaluate the chemical exposure of the population (96.2%), to study the health impact of chemical exposure (96.3%) and to support the development of health policies (94.9%). The respondents also consider HBM results highly relevant to raise awareness and promote understanding of the impact of chemical exposure amongst the general population (94.3%), health professionals and policy makers. **CONCLUSIONS:** The use of HBM as a tool to assess human exposure to chemicals, allowing its management and health protection, was well perceived by respondents across Europe. Furthermore, the need for more studies conducted in a coordinated way was indicated. Future work should comprise population groups less represented here and should also attempt to understand how perceptions change over time. **KEYWORDS:** International collaboration, Chemical exposures, Community-engaged research, Community outreach, Science communication

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