

Differenze occupazionali nello stato di salute e negli stili di vita nell'indagine ISTAT sulla salute 1999-2000¹

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KEY WORDS

Perceived health; lifestyles; occupation; social class; Italy

SUMMARY

«Differences of perceived health and lifestyle by occupational groups in the Italian ISTAT (Central Statistic Institute) health survey». **Background:** Little is known about the distribution by occupation of chronic illness, disability, morbidity, and lifestyles which put health at risk. **Objectives:** To provide a map of the social inequalities in various dimensions of health and lifestyle by social class and for specific occupational groups. To formulate a hypothesis about the mechanisms which generate these inequalities. **Methods:** Prevalence rate ratios and prevalence odds ratios of perceived health, chronic illness, disability, absenteeism, trauma, smoking, and obesity calculated with data from the 1999-2000 Italian ISTAT (Central Statistics Institute) health survey; the study population includes adults (aged over 18 years) employed, or searching for a job, or withdrawn from the workforce. **Results:** Among workers in manual unskilled labour, construction and agriculture are noted for worse health and more unhealthy lifestyles than average. For example, perceived bad health is more widespread among agricultural labourers (OR=1.63), masons and construction machine operators (OR=1.75), transport drivers (OR= 1.40), male caretakers, custodians, janitors and domestic help (OR=1.46), electro-technicians (OR=1.44), leatherworkers and shoemakers (OR=3.58), miners and quarrymen (OR=2.60), earthenware and stone workers (OR=2.14), garment and furnishings workers (OR=1.86); in female workers excess risk for perceived bad health was present among agricultural labourers (OR=2.08), caretakers, custodians, janitors and domestic helpers (OR=1.49), waitresses, cooks and bartenders, (OR=1.44), and textile workers (OR=1.67). Smoking was more widespread among chemical workers (OR=1.41), and in miners and quarrymen (OR=1.30). An excess risk of smoking of 20-25% was evident in spinners, weavers and finishers; masons, (and) builders; waiters, cooks and bartenders; garment and furnishings workers; porters and warehouse workers. The risk was 10% higher among foundry workers and forgers, plumbers, carpenters and welders, and transport drivers. Among women the propensity to smoke was higher among waitresses, cooks and bartenders (OR=1.37), cleaners, commerce and service workers (OR=1.22). Other occupational groups

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with an increased smoking prevalence, where women were less represented, included: chemical workers (OR=2.25), butchers (OR=1.97), postwomen (OR=1.58), plastics workers (OR=1.56), shippers (OR=1.37). Conclusions: It can be hypothesized on the one hand that there are factors and mechanisms common to the various occupational groups belonging to the same social class; on the other, there are factors and mechanisms specific to certain occupational categories. The latter can generate specific health subcultures. A greater integration between qualitative and quantitative research is recommended, which would yield better explanations of the observed inequalities.