



# Health-related quality of life and occupation

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## BACKGROUND

Traditional physical and chemical exposures have been reduced among workers in the industrial countries the past years. An increased focus has been put on various psychosocial occupational stressors that leads to health problems that are difficult to observe, such as musculoskeletal symptoms and mental health problems.

## OBJECTIVE

To compare the level of self-rated physical and mental health between occupational groups with varying level of physical and psychological stressors.

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| <b>Legislators, senior officials and managers</b>  | <b>3 196</b> |
| Legislators and senior officials   | 18           |
| Corporate managers   | 2 087        |
| General managers   | 1 091        |
| <b>Professionals, technicians and clerks performing non-personal services</b>  | <b>4 522</b> |
| Physical, mathematical and engineering science and life science professionals  | 275          |
| Professionals in public administration, academic education and business  | 275          |
| Physical and engineering science associate professionals   | 1 099        |
| Associate professionals in finance, sales, business services and administration  | 745          |
| Office clerks  | 2 303        |
| <b>Professionals, technicians and service workers providing personal services</b>  | <b>8 584</b> |
| Health professionals   | 373          |
| Teaching professionals (at least 4 years of tertiary education)  | 680          |
| Other professionals: legal professionals; archivists, librarians; social sciences; writers and creative or performing artists; religious professionals | 301          |
| Life science and health associate professionals (1–3 years of tertiary education)  | 789          |
| Teaching associate professionals (1–3 years of tertiary education)   | 1 289        |
| Other associate professionals: police officers; social workers; artistic, entertainment and sports; religious; journalists and librarians              | 351          |
| Armed forces   | 78           |
| Service workers and shop and market sales workers  | 3 710        |
| Customer service clerks  | 308          |
| Elementary service occupations including cleaners  | 705          |
| <b>Agricultural, forestry and fishery workers</b>  | <b>488</b>   |
| Skilled agricultural workers   | 405          |
| Skilled forestry workers   | 2            |
| Skilled aquaculture workers  | 14           |
| Skilled fishery workers, hunters and trappers  | 29           |
| Agricultural, forestry and fishery labourers   | 38           |
| <b>Craft and related trades workers including mining/construction labourers</b>  | <b>1 866</b> |
| <b>Plant and machine operators and assemblers</b>  | <b>783</b>   |
| Stationary plant and related operators   | 166          |
| Machine operators and assemblers   | 357          |
| Manufacturing and transport labourers and freight handlers   | 260          |
| <b>Drivers and mobile plant operators</b>  | <b>690</b>   |
| <b>No information given on occupation</b>  | <b>2 183</b> |

## METHOD

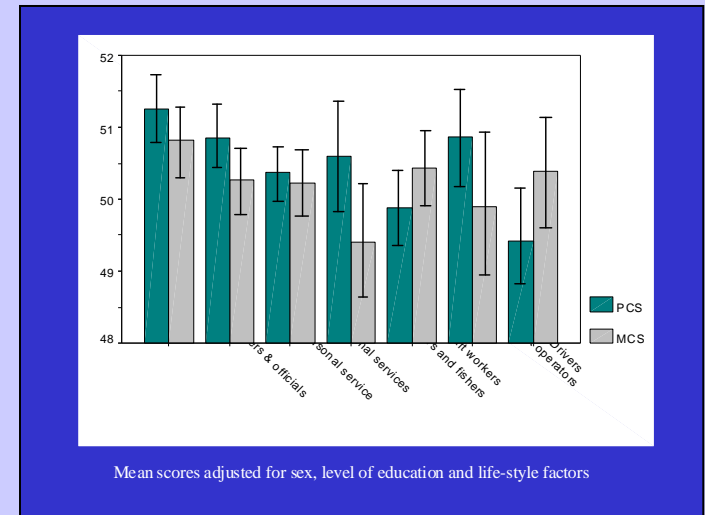
The Hordaland Health Study, conducted 1997-99, included all individuals in Hordaland County born 1950-51 and 1953-57. The response rate was 60% for men and 72% for women, including a total of 10,261 men and 12,051 women.

Self-rated health was estimated in 7 defined occupational groups using the physical (PCS) and mental (MCS) component summary scales of the SF-12 Health Survey. Mean scores were adjusted for the effect of sex, level of education, smoking, alcohol consumption, body mass index and physical activity using a 6-way analysis of covariance.

## RESULTS

Legislators, senior officials and managers scored highest on both the physical and the mental component. Workers in transport scored lowest on the physical scale probably reflecting known physical stressors for this type of work. Farmers and fishers scored lowest on the mental scale.

All results were statistically significant with  $p < 0.001$



## CONCLUSION

The marked differences found in the SF-12 scales probably reflect the effect of various occupational health stressors. The low scores of mental health among farmers and physical health among workers in transport can be related to known risk factors in these occupations.

The SF-12 seems to be a responsive and an adequate measure of the accumulation of the health effects caused by such stressors.