

Elderly people: Health conditions in Italy and in the European Union Year 2015

Life expectancy at 65 years in Italy (18.9 years for men and 22.2 for women in 2015) was one year higher than the European Union value. But among elderly aged 75 years and over, health conditions in Italy were worse than in other EU countries.

As regards chronic diseases, in comparison with the European Union, Italy reported better health conditions among younger elderly people aged 65-74 years with lower rates for almost all chronic diseases. On the contrary, elderly people aged 75 years and over had worse health conditions. In Italy about half of the elderly were affected by at least one severe chronic disease or had more than three chronic diseases (comorbidity). Among the elderly aged 80 years and over the estimates were 59.0% and 64.0% respectively.

37.7% of the elderly reported to have suffered from bodily pain, from mild to very strong, in the four weeks before the interview. This value was lower than the EU mean and was very close to the estimates for Spain.

23.1% of Italian elderly had severe mobility limitations, two points higher than the EU mean value, mainly because of the high percentage of very old women.

Women reported severe chronic pathologies less frequently than men, but more often comorbidity and physical and sensory functional limitations. Women referred bodily pain from mild to very strong more often than men (45.4% vs 27.6%). Among women aged 80 years and over this percentage reached 58.6%, vs 39.2% among men.

In Italy more than one elderly over ten was affected by severe difficulties in personal care activities (known as Activity of daily living, ADL). The Italian percentage of people aged 65-74 years with severe difficulties in personal care activities (ADL) was close to the EU mean, but it was higher among Italian aged 75 years and over, especially for women.

In Italy 11.2% of elderly people referred severe difficulties in at least one Activity of daily living (ADL), for instance having a bath or a shower (10.3%), lay down or stand up in/from bed or chair (7.3%), get dressed and undressed (7.3%). 30.3% of the elderly reported severe difficulties in household activities (known as Instrumental activity of daily living, IADL), for instance preparing meals, do shopping, managing medication, doing housework, taking care of finances and everyday administrative tasks.

Social inequalities were confirmed in health conditions by 2015 Ehis findings. 55.7% of elderly people in the first quintile of household income suffered from comorbidity, compared to 40.6% in the last quintile. The same trend was observed considering the distribution of those having at least one severe chronic diseases (46.4% vs 39.0%), considering those experiencing severe difficulty in at least one activity of daily life (13.2% vs 8.8%) and those having severe difficulties in IADL (35.7% vs 22.0%) or those having severe mobility limitations.

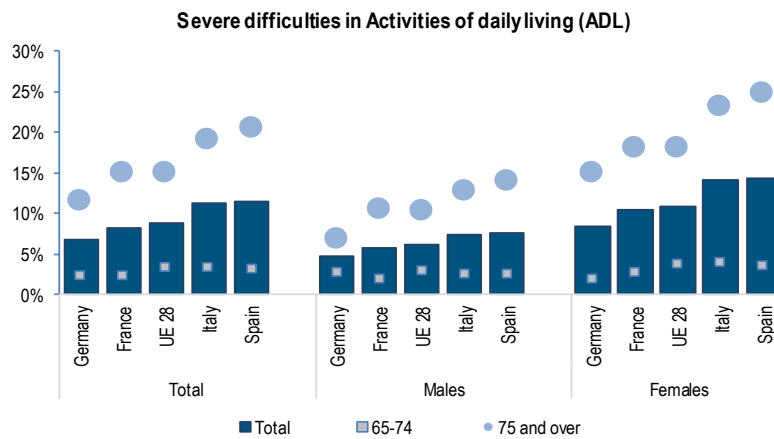
In Southern Italy comorbidity was estimated to be higher (56.4%) than in Northern Italy (42.7%), also taking into account the age distribution. Also the percentage of elderly with at least one severe chronic diseases was higher in the South (49.4% vs 39.4%), as was the percentage of elderly with severe mobility limitations (27.7% vs 17.0%) or severe sensorial limitations (16.5% vs 12.8%) or severe difficulties in personal care activities.

Among elderly with severe difficulty in at least one ADL 58.1% referred they needed (more) help and support. The prevalence of these unmet needs was higher in Southern Italy (67.5%) and among less wealthy elderly persons (64.2%).

More than one elderly person over four (25.9%) reported they could count on a strong net of social support, while 18.0% perceived his/her social support net as weak, and about one over two reported they have an intermediate situation. Elderly people living alone referred more often to receive weak social support, especially men (24.7%) and those living in urban areas in the North and South of Italy.

In spite of their fragile health conditions, 1.7 billion (12,8%) of elderly provided informal care or assistance to relatives and non-relatives at least once per week, as in the rest of EU countries. Almost two third of them were aged 65-74 years, and more women than men.

ELDERLY PEOPLE WITH SEVERE DIFFICULTIES IN PERSONAL CARE ACTIVITIES (ADL) IN SELECTED EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, BY AGE GROUP AND SEX. Year 2015 (a), per 100 persons with the same characteristics.



(a) Most countries carried out the Ehis wave 2 survey in 2014, Italy and other few countries in 2015
 Fonte: Eurostat, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

For more details please refer to the Italian version

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