



Rannsóknastofa í vinnuvernd

Self-assessed BMI of Occupational Groups in Iceland

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Background

- Overweight and obesity a growing problem in many prosperous countries inviting major risk for several chronic diseases
- BMI mortality association varies by cause of death
- Studies in Iceland show that this problem is growing both among youngsters and adults

Background cont.

- Former studies show that there is a wide difference in dietary habits of occupational and educational groups among men
- Unskilled workers, lower service workers, employers, fishermen and farmers consume more fat than other groups
- Dietary habits vary less between groups of women

(Steingrimsdóttir, Þorgeirsdóttir, Ægisdóttir. Könnun á mataræði Íslendinga (Survey on dietary habits in Iceland), 1992).

Material

- Data obtained in various studies
- Questionnaires sent to three national samples
- Questionnaires sent to personnel within geriatric care, bankers, farmers, doctors, female cabin crew, nurses, and teachers in elementary schools

Calculation of body mass index

BMI



- People were asked about their height and weight
- $BMI = \text{weight in kilograms} / \text{height in meters}^2$

Methods

- BMI was analyzed by using analysis of variance, taking into account age, gender, and regular exercise, when available
 - BMI <18,5 underweight
 - BMI 18,5-24,9 = normal weight
 - BMI 25-29,9 = overweight
 - BMI 30-39 = obesity
 - Above 40 = Very obese
- (WHO, 2008)

Results – men (2001)



Jobtitle	Mean BMI	SD (n)
Managers	26,9	4,3 (152)
Professionals	26,0	4,6 (112)
Service/Clerks	26,7	3,8 (148)
Skilled workers	26,0	3,5 (255)
Unskilled workers	25,9	3,3 (100)
Fishermen	27,1	4,3 (50)
Farmers	26,9	3,7 (40)

Results – women (2001)



Jobtitle	Mean BMI	SD (n)
Managers	24,5	3,2 (63)
Professionals	24,3	3,8 (87)
Service/Clerks	24,5	3,8 (307)
Skilled workers	24,8	4,0 (175)
Unskilled workers	25,3	4,0 (115)
Fishermen	-	-
Farmers	25,4	5,6 (17)

Results – men (2002)



Jobtitle	Mean	SD (n)
Managers	28,8	6,8 (34)
Professionals	26,1	3,1 (71)
Service/Clerks	27,1	5,4 (37)
Skilled workers	26,5	4,2 (91)
Unskilled workers	25,5	3,6 (24)
Fishermen & farmers	27,2	3,5 (53)

Results – women (2002)



Jobtitle	Mean	SD (n)
Managers	25,4	3,4 (14)
Professionals	24,0	3,7 (79)
Service/Clerks	25,9	4,8 (69)
Skilled workers	27,0	5,8 (16)
Unskilled workers	26,3	4,7 (42)
Fishermen & farmers	-	-

Women in geriatric care –BMI 2000



Job title	Mean BMI	SD (n)
Department chefs	26,2	4,4 (147)
Skilled workers	25,4	3,9 (346)
Unskilled workers	25,6	4,6 (619)

Resultat – women (2000)

Job title	Mean	SD	n
Flight attendants	22,3	2,5	248
Nurses	25,4	4,2	387
Teachers	25,3	4,2	364

Discussion

- Majority of occupational groups in Iceland are on average overweight
- Variation great within groups
- Average BMI useful from public health aspect
- BMI does not take the proportion of muscles and fat into account

Discussion cont.

- Flight attendants (BMI 22,3) and female doctors (BMI 23,9) had the lowest mean BMI
- People not likely to exaggerate their weight
- Burden for the individual, the health care system and for the taxpayers, however, studies with controversial results
- Weight gained with age

Why were we so thin? What to do?

How it was:

- Diet – was otherwise
- The assortment of food in the stores was much more simple
- Lifestyle was otherwise

What to do?

- Teach people to be aware of what they eat
- Adapt a healthy lifestyle that lasts for life
- Do not smoke!

Age is not an excuse

- Sophia Loren, born 1934.
- 71 years. Always beautiful, always slim, always charming

