

The “weight” of education: The effects of educational level on reported levels of overweight and obesity, Umbria, 2006

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Background

- The nutritional status of a population is an important indicator of its health status
- Overweight and obesity affect quality of life and life expectancy and are associated with a number of adverse health outcomes
- Education may be a useful proxy for other social determinants of health

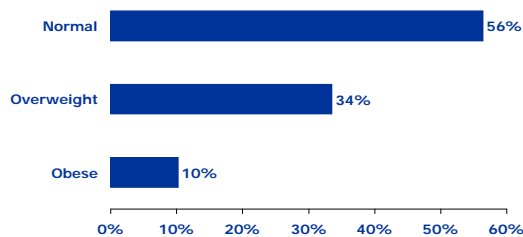
Objectives

- Estimate the prevalence of overweight and obesity
- Evaluate the correlation between educational level and overweight/obesity

Methods

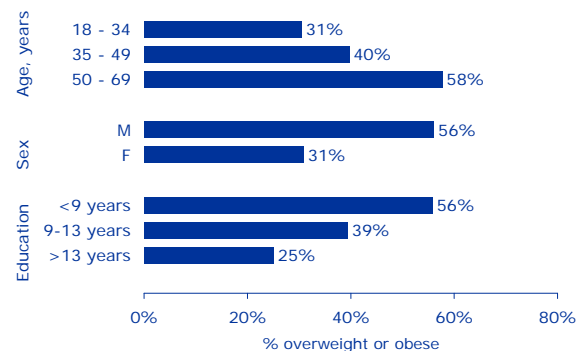
- Cross-sectional telephone survey conducted between March and July 2006 by local health staff of residents 18-69 years chosen randomly from the registers of the four local health units.
- All 4 local health units represented
- 801 respondents (4% refusals, 15% replacements)
- Definitions:
 - body mass index (BMI) = kg/m²
 - overweight: BMI 25.0-29.9
 - obese: BMI ≥ 30.0

Results 1: Distribution of BMI Prevalence



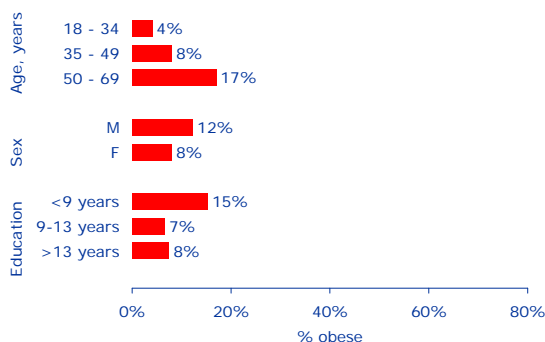
The prevalence of overweight and obesity was high

Results 2: Risk factors for overweight and obesity Prevalence: 43.6% (95% CI 40.2-47.1%)



Men were more likely than women to be overweight or obese. A significant gradient was observed with increasing age and decreasing educational level

Results 3: Risk factors for obesity Prevalence: 10.2% (95% CI 8.2-12.5%)



The same risk factors were observed for obesity alone, although prevalences for high and medium educational level were comparable

Results 4: Multivariate analysis

- Education remained a significant predictor of the outcomes of overweight/obese and obesity alone after controlling for age and sex

Conclusions

- These results confirm the findings of others that low education levels are associated with overweight and obesity, even after controlling for age and sex
- This information underlines the importance of social determinants in health status and will be useful in developing targeted interventions at regional level

Limitations

- Self-reporting may lead to under-estimates in most population sub-groups