Session "Vanguards: populations with very low mortality"

Health and mortality:
a longitudinal analysis of the ECHP data

Viviana Egidi – Professor, Department of Demography, University of Rome "La Sapienza". Via Nomentana 41, 00161 Rome. Tel. 0649919519 e-mail: viviana.egidi@uniroma1.it

Daniele Spizzichino – Ph.D. Student, Department of Demography, University of Rome "La Sapienza". Via Nomentana 41, 00161 Rome. Tel. 0649919519 e-mail: daniele.spizzichino@uniroma1.it

Abstract

Individual health status is influenced by different factors, some of them are associated with personal characteristics and behaviours, and others with the impact of collective factors that can either improve or worsen health. With regard to the individual, interactions between physical and psychological aspects and between objective and subjective health are strong, particularly at older ages when health problems are frequently multiple and include physical, psychological and social component (Kaplan et Al., 1988).

Many studies show that self-rated health is a significant independent predictor of survival, persons who rate their health as "poor" have a higher risk of dying compared with people who feel "good". A previous study carried out on Italian data show that self-perceived health is the strongest indicator of elderly survival, also after controlling by gender, age and objective health. However, other variables maintain a significant influence on survival: men have a twofold extra risk of dying than women and by ageing a year induces a 10% increased risk. Other variables, such as objective health status, education or region of residence have no significant influence, with the exception of marital status for which being never married is associated with a 77% extra risk of dying compared to being married.

The aim of this study is to evaluate the role played by other relevant factors such as socio-economic conditions of the family (poverty, housing discomfort) and how the change in health status and socio-economic condition can impact on mortality. Moreover, other European countries will be taken into account to evaluate if the obtained results can be generalised to countries with different cultural features and health organizations.

The data source is the European Community Household Panel (ECHP), a harmonized, cross-national longitudinal survey that focused on household income and living conditions. More than 60,000 households have been interviewed across 14 member states (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Ireland, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Portugal, United-Kingdom) from 1994 (1995 for Austria, 1996 for Finland) to 2001.