

7 June 2012

**Economically Active Population Survey (EAPS)  
Module on health problems and their relationship with employment  
Year 2011**

**One in four persons aged 16 to 64 years old claim to have a chronic illness or health problem**

**More than 2.34 million persons indicate that they have limitations in carrying out their everyday activities**

**33.4% of persons with an illness or health problem have to limit the type of work they perform due to their condition**

The 2011 module of the Economically Active Population Survey (EAPS), compiled in collaboration with Eurostat (the Statistical Office of the European Union), studied health problems and limitations in carrying out everyday activities, as stated by interviewees, as well as their relationship with employment.

According to the results of this module, one in four persons aged 16 to 64 years old had a chronic illness or health problem. One in 13 (7.8% of the 29,104,300 persons within this age bracket) indicated more than one illness.

**More than two million persons aged 16 to 64 years old stated *Back or neck problems as the most important ailment*** (accounting for 26.7% of the total), followed by *Leg or foot problems* (9.0%) and *Heart, blood pressure or circulatory problems* (8.6%).

Having a sore back or neck was the main health problem for all ages, except for the youngest, whose most frequent ailment was *Chest and respiratory problems, including asthma and bronchitis*, which affected 21.4% of persons aged 16 to 24 years old.

### The most important illness by sex

The most important chronic illness or health problem stated by persons aged 16 to 64 years old was back or neck pain, which affected 23.9% of men and 29.2% of women. Other illnesses that were more common among women than among men included *Arm and hand problems* (7.8% as compared with 5.1%), *Migraine* (4.3% as compared with 2.0%) and *Depression* (4.4% as compared with 2.4%).

In turn, the ailments that affected men more than women included *Heart, blood pressure or circulatory problems* (10.7% as compared with 6.7%), *Diabetes* (6.9% as compared with 4.2%), *Emotional, nervous system or mental problems other than anxiety, depression or epilepsy* (4.0% as compared with 2.1%) and *Chest and respiratory problems, including asthma and bronchitis* (8.6% as compared with 6.9%).

Regarding economic activity, worth noting was that back or neck problems affected employed persons (30.2%) more than unemployed persons (27.5%) and economically inactive persons (21.7%).

### Persons aged 16 to 64 years old suffering illnesses, classified by the most important illness that affects them and by sex (Absolute values in thousands)

	Total		Men		Women	
	Absolute value	Percentage	Absolute value	Percentage	Absolute value	Percentage
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,607.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>3,546.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,061.2</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Arm or hand problems	497.3	6.5	179.6	5.1	317.7	7.8
Leg or foot problems	683.3	9.0	333.1	9.4	350.2	8.6
Back or neck problems	2,033.2	26.7	845.9	23.9	1,187.3	29.2
Heart, blood pressure or circulatory problems	650.6	8.6	380.3	10.7	270.3	6.7
Chest and respiratory problems, including asthma and bronchitis	586.4	7.7	304.7	8.6	281.7	6.9
Kidney, stomach, liver or other digestive problems	410.7	5.4	218.0	6.1	192.7	4.7
Chronic anxiety	221.8	2.9	76.5	2.2	145.3	3.6
Depression	262.5	3.5	84.0	2.4	178.5	4.4
Epilepsy	50.0	0.7	25.9	0.7	24.0	0.6
Other emotional, nervous system or mental problems	225.8	3.0	140.6	4.0	85.2	2.1
Diabetes	414.2	5.4	244.1	6.9	170.1	4.2
Strong headaches (Migraine)	244.5	3.2	70.6	2.0	173.9	4.3
Cancer	163.9	2.2	64.4	1.8	99.6	2.5
Dermatological illnesses, including allergic reactions and severe deformities	370.5	4.9	204.4	5.8	166.1	4.1
Learning difficulties (reading, writing or mathematics)	34.3	0.5	24.0	0.7	10.4	0.3
Other progressive illnesses (Multiple Sclerosis, HIV, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, etc.)	96.5	1.3	36.7	1.0	59.8	1.5
Other health problems	661.9	8.7	313.7	8.8	348.3	8.6

## Second illness

More than 2.2 million persons aged 16 to 64 years old<sup>(1)</sup> had more than one chronic illness or health problem. The most common problems associated with this second illness were back and neck (19.5% of the total), leg or foot (12.5%) and arm or hand (10.3%) problems.

## Limitations in carrying out everyday activities

A total of 2,342,900 persons aged 16 to 64 years old<sup>(1)</sup> had some limitation in carrying out their basic everyday activities.

For 25.6% of these persons, their main difficulty resided in *Lifting and/or carrying objects*, for 22.1% in *Walking or climbing stairs*, and for 17.0% in *Seeing despite wearing glasses*.

By sex, in the case of women, the difficulties in *Lifting and/or carrying objects* and *Walking or climbing stairs* carried a greater weight. For men, worth noting was *Seeing despite wearing glasses*.

## Persons aged 16 to 64 years old<sup>(1)</sup> who claim to have limitations in carrying out their everyday activities, classified according to the main difficulty limiting them and by sex (Absolute values in thousands)

Type of difficulty	Total		Men		Women	
	Absolute value	Percentage	Absolute value	Percentage	Absolute value	Percentage
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,342.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,015.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,327.3</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Seeing despite wearing glasses	398.5	17.0	192.5	19.0	206.0	15.5
Hearing despite using a hearing aid	186.9	8.0	106.4	10.5	80.5	6.1
Walking or climbing stairs	518.4	22.1	219.0	21.6	299.4	22.6
Sitting down or getting up	110.6	4.7	38.9	3.8	71.7	5.4
Remembering or concentrating	82.6	3.5	32.5	3.2	50.0	3.8
Communicating (understanding others or making oneself understood)	35.8	1.5	22.1	2.2	13.7	1.0
Reaching something or stretching	46.6	2.0	16.4	1.6	30.3	2.3
Lifting and/or carrying objects	600.6	25.6	239.7	23.6	360.9	27.2
Bending	220.5	9.4	100.7	9.9	119.9	9.0
Holding, grasping or turning objects	142.3	6.1	47.4	4.7	94.9	7.2

By age group, 32.8% of persons aged 16 to 24 years old stated that the main difficulty limiting them was *Seeing despite wearing glasses*.

More than 1.16 million persons had more than one limitation in carrying out their basic everyday activities. The most frequent impediments were *Lifting and/or carrying objects* (affecting 25.2% of the total), *Bending* (18.6%) and *Sitting down or getting/standing up* (14.9%).

<sup>(1)</sup> This figure does not consider those persons in a critical or terminal state, as they are only asked about their most important illness.

## Impact of limitations and illnesses on the labour market

74.1% of persons aged 16 to 64 years old<sup>(1)</sup> who claimed to have an illness and/or impediment to carrying out their everyday activities indicated that the **weekly number of hours** that they could work was not affected by their health problems or limitations.

By sex, the percentage of men whose working day was not limited was higher than the percentage of women (78.8% as compared with 70.2%).

The percentage of persons without limitations to their working day decreased as age increased, going from 86.9% for the group aged 16-24 years old to 66.2% for the group aged 45-64 years old.

On the other hand, one in three persons (33.4%) ensured having limited the **type of work** that they could perform due to their illness.

This limitation affected women (35.9%) more than men (30.6%). It also increased with age (21.1% for the group aged 16-24 years old as compared with 39.5% for the group aged 45-64 years old).

## Persons aged 16 to 64 years old<sup>(1)</sup> who claim to have some illness and/or limitation in carrying out their everyday activities, according to whether or not they limit the type of work they can perform, by sex and age group

Sex and age	Percentages						
	Total	With limitations				Without limitations	Does not know
		Total	Chronic illness	Difficulty	Both		
<b>Both sexes</b>	100.0	33.4	22.2	2.3	9.0	64.4	2.2
16-24	100.0	21.1	16.2	1.4	3.5	75.4	3.5
25-44	100.0	26.0	19.1	1.6	5.4	72.5	1.5
45-64	100.0	39.5	24.8	2.8	12.0	58.0	2.5
<b>Men</b>	100.0	30.5	20.5	2.3	7.7	67.7	1.7
16-24	100.0	24.4	17.9	1.2	5.3	72.9	2.7
25-44	100.0	24.5	17.9	1.7	4.8	74.5	1.0
45-64	100.0	35.4	22.7	2.8	10.0	62.5	2.1
<b>Women</b>	100.0	35.9	23.5	2.2	10.1	61.5	2.6
16-24	100.0	18.2	14.6	1.7	1.9	77.6	4.3
25-44	100.0	27.5	20.1	1.5	5.8	70.6	1.9
45-64	100.0	42.8	26.5	2.8	13.5	54.4	2.8

## Need for assistance in working

Among the more than 7.4 million persons aged 16 to 64 years old<sup>(1)</sup> with some illness and/or limitation in carrying out their everyday activities, a total of 573,000 required personalised assistance in order to be able to work (328,600 women and 244,400 men). In turn, 599,500 needed special equipment (341,400 women and 258,100 men).

<sup>(1)</sup> This figure does not consider those persons in a critical or terminal state, as they are only asked about their most important illness.

There were 982,800 persons who claimed to require special conditions in order to work (such as to be able to carry out only secondary tasks, only teleworking, have a flexible schedule or having a job that was not exhausting).

### **Reasons other than health that affect the ability to work**

A total of 686,900 persons aged 16 to 64 years old<sup>(1)</sup> stated that they had reasons other than health problems that interfered with their ability to work.

The main reason was *Family responsibilities or care for persons*, as stated by 184,400 individuals. 161,900 of these persons were women, and 110,900 were workers working for others.

Moreover, another 144,600 persons stated that the *Lack of adequate job opportunities* was affecting their ability to work. There was a predominance of men (78,600) in this group, as well as workers working for others (109,500).

---

<sup>(1)</sup> This figure does not consider those persons in a critical or terminal state, as they are only asked about their most important illness.

## Methodological note

The 2011 module of the EAPS studies chronic or permanent illnesses or health problems in all persons aged 16 to 64 years old, warning them at the beginning, in an introductory text, that only those limitations and/or health problems with a duration longer than six months will be considered.

Once the information is obtained on illnesses and health problems, questions are asked regarding the limitations that the persons might have in carrying out basic everyday activities, and subsequently, their possible limitations related to the labour market are analysed.

This methodological focus is different from that used in the 2002 module, in which an initial question was posed to persons aged 16 to 64 years old regarding the health problems or disabilities that they might be afflicted with, or a duration longer than or equal to six months. Those persons that responded that they did not have any health problems did not answer any other question in the module.

This different approach to the problem leads to the resulting higher number of persons with illnesses in 2011, with regard to 2002.