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COMPARISON OF OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY EXPOSURE IN FOREIGN- AND SPANISH-BORN WORKERS IN SPAIN (ITSAL PROJECT)

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Objectives Compare the prevalence of foreign and Spanish-born workers in occupational safety risk exposures.

Methods The ITSAL (Inmigración, Trabajo, Salud) Project explores occupational health conditions of foreign-born residents working in the four Spanish municipalities with the largest foreign-born population. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among a convenience sample of 1841 foreign-born workers, from Colombia, Romania, Ecuador and Morocco, and 509 Spanish-born workers. Data on sociodemographic variables and self-reported occupational exposure was collected through face-to-face interviews. Safety risks explored include working all or almost all of the time exposed to high noise levels, at height, with cutting objects, on slippery surfaces, handling inflammable products, at extreme temperatures and while breathing dust or toxic gases. Findings were expressed as prevalence ratios (PRs) with 95% CIs adjusted by sex, age and education, and stratified by professional category (manual, non-manual) and economic sector (agricultural, services, industry, construction).

Results Immigrants were more likely to report working at height (1.38, 1.05 to 1.82), with cutting objects (1.22, 1.03 to 1.46), at extreme temperatures (1.95, 1.51 to 2.53) and while breathing dust or toxic gases (1.28, 1.03 to 1.60). After stratifying, this pattern is maintained only in non-manual workers and those in the service sector, while in the other categories there were no differences or prevalence was higher for natives.

Conclusions 40% of the migrant population works in the service sector. Although there are limitations regarding differential possibilities in risk perception, results suggest that special attention must be paid to these workers. Understanding the mechanism that explains differential exposure may provide avenues for action.