

Fishing among worst jobs for health

May 30 2019



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People working in the fishing industry have among the poorest health of all workers in England and Wales, new research suggests.

University of Exeter researchers studied [census data](#) and found 2.8% of

fishermen and women reported "bad" or "very bad" [health](#), and 10.3% said their activities were limited "a lot" or "a little" by long-term illness.

When adjusted to take account of other factors like age, [health outcomes](#) among fishers were statistically only better than workers in two other industries—[coal mining](#) and a small number of people who engage in "subsistence" activities.

The researchers say their findings demonstrate the need for specific occupational health services to support UK fishing communities.

"Poor health outcomes among fishers extend beyond the risk of fatal accidents," said Dr. Rachel Turner, of the Environment and Sustainability Institute on the University of Exeter's Penryn Campus in Cornwall.

"We found evidence of poorer general health and higher rates of illnesses or disabilities that can impede [everyday life](#).

"Action to improve fishers' health could help support productive fisheries in coastal communities that are facing social, environmental and political change."

The census relies on people reporting information about themselves, and the data do not reveal the specific causes of the health issues highlighted in the new study.

"Further research is needed to understand the causes of poor self-reported health among UK fishers, in order to target interventions to improve health," said Nigel Sainsbury, also of the University of Exeter.

"A growing number of initiatives are emerging to support fishers, including specialised physiotherapy, quayside health checks and mobile

dental services. Our findings strengthen the case for more widespread provision of these services."

The study examined people working in the census category "fishing and aquaculture". It was not possible to separate the two, but the relative size of those industries in England and Wales means this group is likely to be mostly fishers.

The paper, published in the journal *Marine Policy*, is entitled: "The health of commercial fishers in England and Wales: Analysis of the 2011 census."

More information: Rachel A. Turner et al, The health of commercial fishers in England and Wales: Analysis of the 2011 census, *Marine Policy* (2019). [DOI: 10.1016/j.marpol.2019.103548](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.marpol.2019.103548)

Provided by University of Exeter

Citation: Fishing among worst jobs for health (2019, May 30) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2019-05-fishing-worst-jobs-health.html>

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