**Table 1 Characteristics of localised and non-localised low back pain**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Characteristic** |  | **Localised low back pain****(n = 609)** | **Non-localised low back pain****(n = 3,820)** |
|  |  | **N** | **%** | **(95%CI)** | **N** | **%** | **(95%CI)** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Sciatica in past month** |  | 183 | 30.0 | (26.4,33.9) | 1,836 | 48.1 | (46.5,49.7) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Sciatica in past 12 months** |  | 233 | 38.3 | (34.4,42.3) | 2,238 | 58.6 | (57.0,60.2) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Total duration in past month** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1-6 days |  | 369 | 60.6 | (56.6,64.5) | 2,067 | 54.1 | (52.5,55.7) |
| 1-2 weeks |  | 123 | 20.2 | (17.1,23.6) | 783 | 20.5 | (19.2,21.8) |
| >2 weeks |  | 112 | 18.4 | (15.4,21.7) | 947 | 24.8 | (23.4,26.2) |
| Not known |  | 5 | 0.8 |  | 23 | 0.6 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Total duration in past 12 months** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 1-6 days |  | 180 | 29.6 | (26.0,33.4) | 740 | 19.4 | (18.1,20.7) |
| 1-4 weeks |  | 263 | 43.2 | (39.2,47.2) | 1,661 | 43.5 | (41.9,45.1) |
| 1-12 months |  | 162 | 26.6 | (23.1,30.3) | 1,403 | 36.7 | (35.2,38.3) |
| Not known |  | 4 | 0.7 |  | 16 | 0.4 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Disabling in past month** |  | 288 | 47.3 | (43.3,51.3) | 2,447 | 64.1 | (62.5,65.6) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Led to medical consultation in past 12 months**  |  | 255 | 41.9 | (37.9,45.9) | 1,974 | 51.7 | (50.1,53.3) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Attributed sickness absence in past 12 months (days)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 0 |  | 475 | 78.0 | (74.4,81.2) | 2,707 | 70.9 | (69.4,72.3) |
| 1-5 |  | 83 | 13.6 | (11.0,16.6) | 674 | 17.6 | (16.4,18.9) |
| 6-30 |  | 29 | 4.8 | (3.2,6.8) | 238 | 6.2 | (5.5,7.0) |
| >30 |  | 10 | 1.6 | (0.8,3.0) | 85 | 2.2 | (1.8,2.7) |
| Not known |  | 12 | 2.0 |  | 116 | 3.0 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Onset of most recent episode** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Sudden while at work |  | 167 | 27.4 | (23.9,31.2) | 1,176 | 30.8 | (29.3,32.3) |
| Sudden not while at work |  | 110 | 18.1 | (15.1,21.4) | 530 | 13.9 | (12.8,15.0) |
| Gradual |  | 318 | 52.2 | (48.2,56.2) | 2,015 | 52.7 | (51.2,54.3) |
| Not known |  | 14 | 2.3 |  | 99 | 2.6 |  |

**Table 2 Associations of localised and non-localised low back pain with personal and occupational risk factors**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Risk factor** | **No low back pain in past 12 months** |  | **Localised low back pain** |  | **Non-localised low back pain**  |
|  | **N** |  | **N** | **PRRa** | **(95%CI)** |  | **N** | **PRRa** | **(95%CI)** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Sex** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  Male | 2,265 |  | 292  | 1 |  |  | 943  | 1 |  |
|  Female | 3,236 |  | 317  | 0.8 | (0.6,0.9) |  | 2,877  | \*\*\*1.2 | (1.1,1.3) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Age (years)** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  20-29 | 1,502 |  | 175  | 1 |  |  | 783 | 1 |  |
|  30-39 | 1,737 |  | 208  | 1.0 | (0.8,1.2) |  | 1,189  | \*\*1.1 | (1.1,1.2) |
|  40-49 | 1,446 |  | 147  | 0.9 | (0.7,1.1) |  | 1,203  | \*\*\*1.2 | (1.1,1.4) |
|  50-59 | 816 |  | 79  | 0.9 | (0.7,1.1) |  | 645  | \*\*\*1.2 | (1.1,1.4) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Smoking** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Never smoked | 3,631 |  | 339  | 1 |  |  | 2,349 | 1 |  |
| Ex-smoker | 727 |  | 91  | 1.3 | (1.0,1.7) |  | 579  | 1.1 | (1.1,1.2) |
| Current smoker | 1,124 |  | 176  | 1.3 | (1.0,1.7) |  | 885  | 1.1 | (1.1,1.3) |
| Not known | 19 |  | 3  |  |  |  | 7  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Activity in average working day** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Lifting weights ≥25 kg | 1,684 |  | 266  | 1.4 | (1.2,1.7) |  | 1,599  | 1.2 | (1.1,1.3) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Psychosocial aspects of work** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Work for >50 hours per week | 1,394 |  | 176  | 1.0 | (0.8,1.3) |  | 601  | †1.0 | (0.9,1.1) |
| Time pressure at work | 3,948 |  | 456  | 1.0 | (0.8,1.2) |  | 3,046  | \*1.2 | (1.1,1.3) |
| Incentives at work | 1,605 |  | 168  | 0.9 | (0.7,1.1) |  | 1,054  | 1.0 | (0.9,1.1) |
| Lack of support at work | 1,104 |  | 126  | 1.0 | (0.8,1.3) |  | 1,190  | \*\*1.1 | (1.0,1.2) |
| Job dissatisfaction | 1,087 |  | 128  | 0.9 | (0.8,1.1) |  | 817  | 1.0 | (0.9,1.2) |
| Lack of job control | 1,136 |  | 134  | 1.1 | (0.9,1.3) |  | 864  | 1.0 | (1.0,1.1) |
| Job insecurity | 1,652 |  | 220  | 1.1 | (1.0,1.3) |  | 1,277  | 1.1 | (1.0,1.2) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Number of distressing somatic symptoms in past week**  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  0 | 3,871 |  | 406  | 1 |  |  | 1,631  | 1 |  |
|  1 | 983 |  | 127  | 1.2 | (1.0,1.5) |  | 943  | \*\*\*1.4 | (1.3,1.5) |
|  2+ | 596 |  | 70  | 1.1 | (0.9,1.4) |  | 1,200 | \*\*\*1.7 | (1.5,1.8) |
| Missing | 51 |  | 6  |  |  |  | 46  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Mental health** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  Good | 2,417 |  | 225  | 1 |  |  | 1,137  | 1 |  |
|  Intermediate | 1,628 |  | 181  | 1.1 | (0.9,1.3) |  | 1,157  | 1.2 | (1.1,1.3) |
|  Poor | 1,418 |  | 198  | 1.2 | (1.0,1.5) |  | 1,504  | \*\*1.4 | (1.3,1.5) |
| Missing | 38 |  | 5  |  |  |  | 22  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Adverse beliefs about back pain** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  Work-relatedness | 1,472 |  | 215  | 1.3 | (1.1,1.5) |  | 1,617 | \*1.3 | (1.2,1.3) |
|  Physical activity | 999 |  | 119  | 0.9 | (0.7,1.1) |  | 669  | 0.9 | (0.9,1.0) |
|  Prognosis | 598 |  | 86  | 1.2 | (1.0,1.4) |  | 709  | \*\*1.2 | (1.1,1.3) |

aPrevalence rate ratios relative to no low back pain in past 12 months derived from a single Poisson regression model for each pain outcome, with random intercept modelling to allow for clustering by occupational group

\*Risk significantly higher for non-localised when compared directly with localised low back pain (p<0.05)

\*\*Risk significantly higher for non-localised when compared directly with localised low back pain (p<0.01)

\*\*\*Risk significantly higher for non-localised when compared directly with localised low back pain (p<0.001)

†Risk significantly lower for non-localised when compared directly with localised low back pain (p<0.01)

**Table 3 One-month prevalence of low back pain at follow-up according to localisation of low back pain at baseline**

Analysis was restricted to the 9,188 cases with satisfactory information about low back pain at follow-up

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category of low back pain at baseline** |  | **Number of cases at baseline** |  | **Low back pain in past month at follow-up** |
|  |  | **Number of cases** | **Prevalence % (95%CI)** |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Localised with no sciatica in past 12 months |  | 282 |  | 144 | 51.1 | (45.1,57.0) |
| Localised with sciatica in past 12 months |  | 158 |  | 94 | 59.5 | (51.4,67.1) |
| All localised low back pain |  | 440 |  | 238 | 54.1 | (49.3,58.8) |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Non-localised with no sciatica in past 12 months |  | 1,199 |  | 718 | 59.9 | (57.0,62.6) |
| Non-localised with sciatica in past 12 months |  | 1,695 |  | 1,181 | 69.7 | (67.4,71.8) |
| All non-localised low back pain |  | 2,894 |  | 1,899 | 65.6 | (63.8,67.4) |