



SEGUNDO EJERCICIO de las pruebas selectivas para el ingreso en la Escala de Titulados Superiores del Instituto Nacional de Seguridad e Higiene en el Trabajo

Convocadas por Resolución de 19 de diciembre de 2024, de la Subsecretaría (BOE, núm. 313 de sábado, 28 de diciembre de 2024), con modificación por Resolución de 24 de febrero de 2025 (BOE, núm. 53 de lunes, 3 de marzo de 2025).

30 de mayo de 2025

INGLÉS



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Women and the ageing workforce: implications for occupational safety and health

Why is gender relevant to the management of age-related occupational safety and health (OSH) and sustainable work?

The workforce in the EU is ageing; therefore, age-related OSH strategies are crucial. However, men and women face different age-related challenges and are differently affected by issues in the workplace throughout working life. Therefore, in order to inform policy, debate and future research on sustainable work, it is important that we identify and understand these differences.

Age-related differences between men and women in the workplace

Ageing is associated with a number of changes in physical ability and health. Such changes can be influenced by sex-related (i.e. biological) and gender-related (i.e. socially constructed) factors.

Sex-specific differences between men and women in the workplace

The most obvious sex-specific age-related change is the menopause. However, many other age-related conditions that can influence working ability affect women more often than men, including osteoporosis, osteoarthritis and breast cancer. Such differences between men and women should be considered when developing strategies to promote OSH and sustainable working.

Gender-specific differences between men and women in the workplace

Vertical and horizontal gender segregation exist in the workforce and, therefore, women in general, and older women specifically, are exposed to different risks from their male counterparts throughout their working lives.

Vertical segregation results from a lack of promotion opportunities and career mobility, leading to a concentration of women at the lowest levels of the job hierarchy. This can result in prolonged exposure to certain workplace hazards, such as repetitive work or work that requires awkward postures.

Horizontal segregation arises because women and men tend to work in different economic sectors. For example, older women in particular are over-represented in health and social work, education and other service sectors. It is important not to underestimate the physical and emotional demands of these jobs often carried out by women: manual handling, highly repetitive and paced work, shift work, the risk of violence and harassment, and stress are all issues that affect retention and the quality of working life in many areas in which women work.



Tackling the age-related differences between men and women in the workplace

Strategies for OSH and sustainable working should be both age and gender sensitive. Such strategies should address the sectors and jobs in which women predominate, such as health care, education, cleaning and retail, as well as male-dominated sectors, such as construction, and should also consider how age-associated declines in physical ability and health can be managed in a gender-sensitive way.

Gender-sensitive OSH strategies across the life course

A life long approach to sustainable work should encompass risk education and prevention for girls and boys in schools and ensure that OSH education addresses the risks associated with jobs in which women predominate. Furthermore, OSH should be highlighted as part of the vocational training for typical women's jobs.

Age and gender should be considered in risk assessment and strategy development

It is important that we create sustainable working patterns for older workers, with a specific focus on older female workers, through measures that address workloads, work tasks, flexible working hours, the work-life balance, support in the workplace for specific gender-related health issues and workforce development. However, more research and practical tools are needed on the intersection between age and gender in relation to OSH and sustainable work.



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