



Weather Sensitivity in Germany – A representative survey in 2013

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There is evidence that weather affects health and well-being from numerous epidemiological studies. Representative studies about the prevalence of weather sensitivity, however, are rare. The objectives of this study, funded by the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, are to identify the prevalence of weather sensitivity in Germany in 2013 and to compare the findings with data surveyed in 2001 (Höppe et al., 2002).

In order to compare our findings with the previous survey we used the same questionnaire and conducted the survey in the same month (January) as Höppe et al. (2002).

In January 2013 50% of the interviewees (N=1653) thought that weather affects their health either “to a strong degree” (18%) or to “some degree” (32%) and thus are “weather sensitive”. Compared to the survey of 2001 the amount of the weather sensitive individuals was slightly lower (2001: 54%) but the difference was not significant. As in 2001 head-aches and migraines are still the most frequent symptoms (2001: 61%; 2013: 59%) followed by fatigue (2001: 42%; 2013: 55%; $p \sim 0.07$). In 2012 about 24% of the weather sensitive subjects belonging to the working population have been incapable to work for one or more days (2000: 25%). The average number of sick days due to weather related symptoms increased substantially from four in 2000 to seven in 2012.

Our study shows that weather sensitivity still affects about 50% of the population in Germany and is a relevant health and economic issue. Thus, human-biometeorological forecasts and information are important services that can help weather sensitive individuals to cope better with atmospheric influences and may be able to reduce weather related economic losses.

References:

Höppe P, von Mackensen S, Piel E (2002): Prävalenz von Wetterfühligkeit in Deutschland. Dtsch Med Wochenschr, 127: 15-20.