

Access to SARS-CoV-2 vaccination in immigrants in Italy, by geographical area of origin

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Eliana Ferroni, Nicola Gennaro, Giovanni Maifredi, Olivia Leoni, Francesco Profili, Cristina Stasi, Laura Cacciani, Enrico Calandrini, Anteo di Napoli, Alessio Petrelli, Manuel Zorzi

Objective

Immigrants are commonly considered disadvantaged and at high risk of not receiving appropriate care, including vaccination. This study aimed to evaluate the access to SARS-CoV-2 vaccination in immigrants, by geographical area of origin, compared with Italian citizens. We also evaluated sex differences in vaccine's coverage by geographical area of origin.

Methods

We performed a retrospective observational study in four Italian regions, including all resident subjects aged 5-69 years, and undergoing first dose SARS-CoV-2 vaccination in the period 28th December 2020- 3rd April 2022. We estimated cumulative coverage percentages, by age class and geographical area. To compare first-dose vaccine coverage by geographical area of origin, we estimated, through a Poisson analysis, Vaccine Coverage Ratios (VCR) with 95 % confidence intervals (95 %CI), adjusting for age and sex.

Results

We included 16,294,785 Italian citizens and 2,534,351 immigrants aged 5-69 years and resident in the four regions considered. Regarding the geographical area of origin, 40.7 % of immigrants came from Eastern Europe, 13.5 % from North Africa and 13.1 % from Western Asia. A great variability in the first dose vaccine coverage emerged. We documented substantial heterogeneity in the first-dose vaccine coverage within immigrant's population, expressed with Italy as a reference, ranging from 0,768 (95 %CI: 0,766-0,769) in Eastern Europe countries to 1,013 (95 %CI: 1,009 - 1,018) in Eastern Asia. The chance of being vaccinated was found higher in males compared with females for African countries (VCR 1.07, 95 %CI 1.06-1.08) and Western Asian countries (VCR 1.08, 95 %CI 1.07-1.09).

Conclusion

We observed substantial heterogeneity in first-dose SARS-CoV-2 vaccination coverage in immigrants, suggesting a different propensity to vaccines according to the geographical area of origin. These data can help define appropriate and tailored strategies in order to improve vaccine coverage in some specific immigrant groups at the local health district level.

Keywords: Coverage; Covid-19; Migrants; Vaccination.

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