

Title	Can working conditions explain differences in eating patterns during working hours?
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Abstract	<p>Objective: The aim of this study was to examine whether there are associations between working conditions and the use of staff canteen or packed meals among Finnish employees.</p> <p>Setting: Data were obtained from cross-sectional surveys on working conditions, conducted triennially (1997, 2000, 2003) since 1997.</p> <p>Subjects: In each survey, the subjects were 25–64-year-old employed Finnish employees: 3096 men and 3273 women.</p> <p>Results: Employees at large workplaces used canteens far more often than those at smaller workplaces. Working conditions played a different role in canteen use at small and large workplaces, as well as among the different sexes. At small workplaces, physically demanding jobs held by female employees and low job control encouraged employees to use the canteen. On the other hand, at large workplaces, low social support at work encouraged the use of canteens among men whereas high mental strain at work meant they used the canteen less. Among women, eating packed meals was not related to working conditions, but among men, low social support and high mental strain at work were associated with more frequent use of packed meals.</p> <p>Conclusions: The use of a staff canteen is largely determined by the size of the workplace and by employee education. The underlying factor could be the availability of canteens, a question which must be confirmed in further studies, since well-planned mass catering at workplaces has major effects on public health, well-being and the nutrition education of employees.</p>