

Bardazzi, Rossella; Bortolotti, Luca; Pazienza, Maria Grazia (2021). To eat and not to heat? Energy poverty and income inequality in Italian regions. *ENERGY RESEARCH & SOCIAL SCIENCE*, vol. 73, pp. 1-15, ISSN:2214-6296

Abstract

Energy poverty is broadly associated with the more general concept of income poverty. However, this phenomenon is more rarely linked to socio-economic inequalities. Recent works in the related literature are pursuing this line of research to explore if energy poverty is associated with a social vulnerability status with roots in structural inequities (Simcock et al. 2018). These factors are unevenly distributed in space and therefore, determine a geographical variability of energy poverty. Following Galvin (2019), in this paper we study if a relation between economic inequality and energy poverty exists also in the highly heterogeneous context of the Italian territory. We test this relationship on households living in Italian regions controlling for other variables influencing between-regions variation in energy poverty. Moreover, in the empirical analysis we use both consensual and expenditure-based indicators – and also a combination of them – to verify the extent to which the two methods to measure energy poverty contribute to understanding this complex phenomenon, as claimed in some of the literature. Our multivariate analyses confirm that income inequality significantly correlates with energy poverty indicators when Italian regions are the units of analysis. This suggests that strategies to address energy poverty should be comprehensive and spatially implemented.