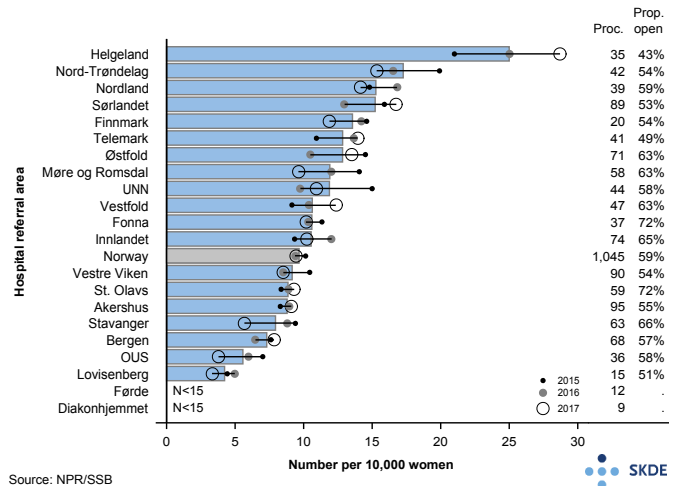


Sterilisation is a highly effective contraception method that involves cutting and blocking the fallopian tubes. This prevents sperm from coming into contact with the eggs released from the ovaries, making fertilisation impossible. The procedure is usually carried out under general anaesthesia as keyhole surgery (laparoscopy). It can also be performed in connection with a planned caesarean section.

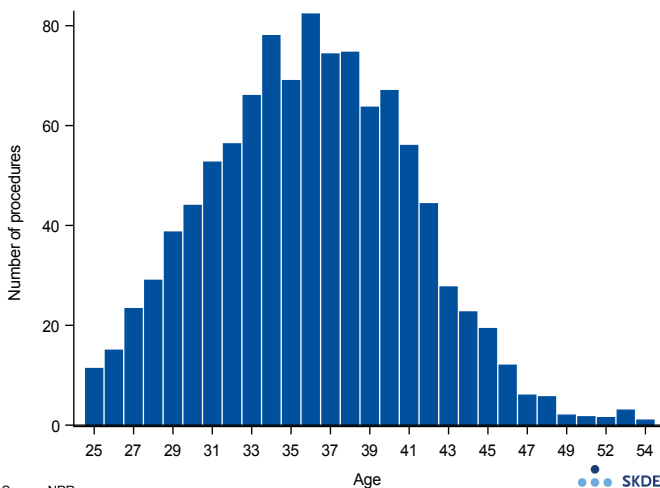
### Background

According to the Sterilisation Act, one has to be 25 years or older in order to ‘submit a request for sterilisation’. The doctor treating the woman fills in an application and submits it to a hospital. The decision is up to the woman, while the doctor provides advice and guidance on the procedure and its consequences. ‘Patient payment’ or higher patient charges have been introduced for sterilisation, and this amount is not included in the basis for exemption cards for user fee group 1. A female sterilisation procedure costs NOK 6,000 in a publicly funded hospital, while the price for male sterilisation costs NOK 1,300. Women who are sterilised in connection with another procedure, for example a caesarean section, are exempt from patient payment as it is a relatively simple procedure to carry out when the abdominal cavity is already open. Patients who cannot use other forms of contraception will have their medically indicated sterilisation covered.



Source: NPR/SSB

**Number of sterilisation procedures per 10,000 women, adjusted for age, average per year 2015–2017 broken down by hospital referral area. Average number of procedures and number of open procedures on the right. The sample is limited to women aged 25–55 years.**



Source: NPR

**Number of sterilisation procedures broken down by age, average per year for the period 2015–2017.**

### Results

During the period 2015–2017, about 1,000 women per year between 25 and 55 years of age were sterilised in Norway. There is considerable geographical variation in the female sterilisation rate. About six times as many sterilisation procedures per 10,000 women were performed on women living in Helgeland hospital referral compared with women living in the Lovisenberg area.

The proportion of open procedures, most of which were performed in connection with a planned caesarean section, was around 50–70% in most hospital referral areas. During the period 2015–2017, about 570 sterilisations per year were performed in connection with caesarean sections. According to the Medical Birth Registry of Norway, about 3,250 planned caesarean sections per year were performed in the same period.

### Comments

There was high geographical variation in the use of female sterilisation. The number of women who chose sterilisation decreased following the introduction of patient payment for female sterilisation in 2002. This coincided with an increase in the number of men who chose to be sterilised. The effect of patient payment, the use of alternative methods and couples who prefer that the man be sterilised can vary between hospital referral areas.

The way in which the provision concerning exemption from patient payment for sterilisation is practised has been known to vary. It is possible that there are still differences in how the rules are practised, and if this is the case, that could lead to differences in the use of sterilisation.

It is also possible that women who have children at a young age are more likely to use sterilisation as a contraception method, and this could have an effect on the observed variation. Practices may also differ between hospital referral areas in terms of counselling and information about alternative contraception methods.

The use of sterilisation must be presumed to largely be controlled by women’s own contraceptive preferences. However, the observed variation is so high that it is natural to ask whether some of the variation can be explained by differences in how the exemption from patient payment is practiced or different practices in relation to counselling and information about alternative methods.