

Some children have diseases that will affect their health situation for the rest of their lives, such as cancer, diabetes, development disorders, rare metabolic disorders and congenital abnormalities. For these and similar patient groups, good follow-up and treatment is crucial both to their life expectancy and quality of life, and they should be given high priority and access to the necessary resources. However, serious or life-threatening illness is rare, and Norwegian children are, generally speaking, among the healthiest child populations in the world. Many symptoms will also improve or disappear with time even without treatment.

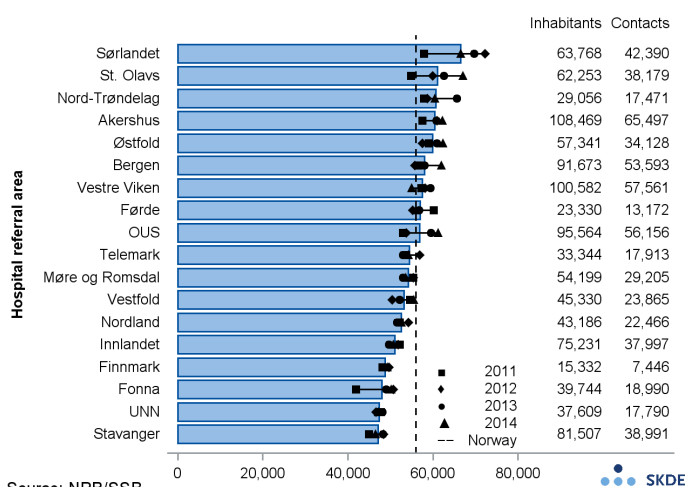
Sample

The sample consists of all medical contacts (admissions, outpatient consultations and day patient treatment) for children in the somatic specialist health service, including specialists in private practice under public funding contracts.

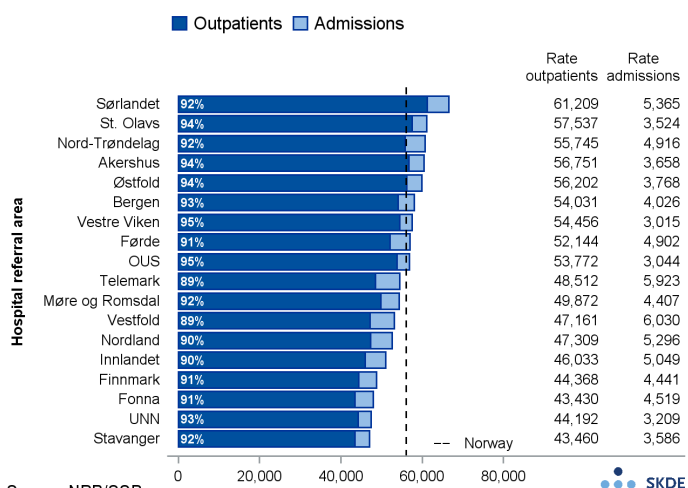
Comments

Medical conditions in children are behind nearly 600,000 outpatient consultations, day patient treatments and admissions per year divided between 235,000 children. Twenty-two per cent of all children are in contact with the specialist health service for a medical condition, and each of these children has an average of 2.5 contacts per year.

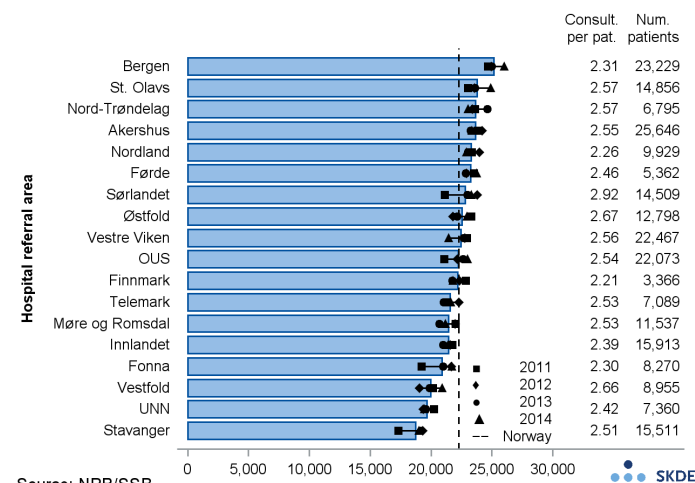
The usage rate is 1.4 times higher for the population of Sørlandet hospital referral area than for Stavanger. The patient rate is 1.2 times higher for Bergen hospital referral area than for Stavanger. The rates seem to vary somewhat more from year to year in the hospital referral areas with the highest usage rates, but there does not appear to be any systematic change through the period.



Source: NPR/SSB
All contacts, medical conditions, age-adjusted usage rates per 100,000 children 0-16 year, per hospital referral area, per year and as an average for the period 2011-2014.



Source: NPR/SSB
All contacts, medical conditions, by type of contact, age-adjusted usage rates per 100,000 children 0-16 year, per hospital referral area and as an average for the period 2011-2014.



Source: NPR/SSB
All contacts, medical conditions, age-adjusted patient rates per 100,000 children 0-16 year, per hospital referral area, per year and as an average for the period 2011-2014. Average number of contacts per patient (contact frequency) and number of patients.

Outpatient and day patient services account for 93% of all patient contacts, but admissions nevertheless take up a considerable proportion of the total resources due to the need for round-the-clock nursing staff and several teams of doctors. The contact frequency varies from 2.21 (Finnmark) to 2.92 (Sørlandet). If the hospital referral area with the highest number of contacts per patient had reduced this number to the level of the area with the lowest contact frequency, that would have resulted in a reduction of 710 contacts per 1,000 patients treated per year.

The volume and variation in usage rates give reason to discuss whether the use of specialist health services for children are proportional to their morbidity.