

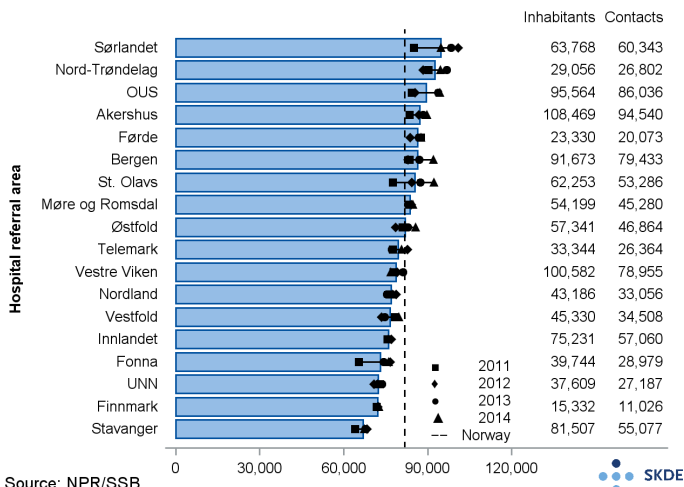
Children – all contacts

The specialist health service

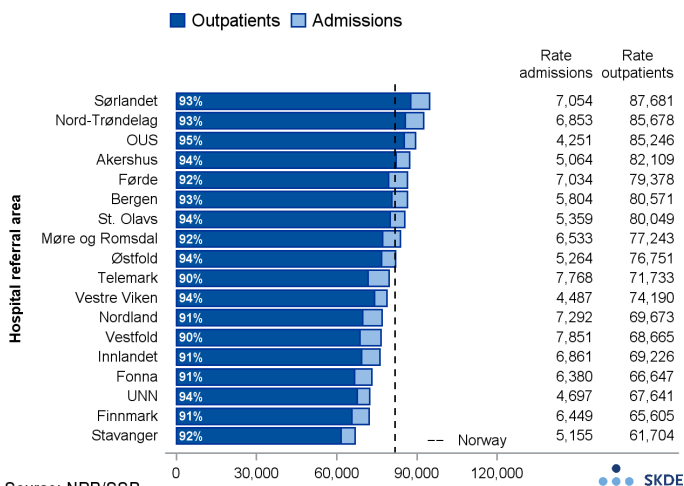
This describes the overall use of somatic specialist health services for children aged 0-16 years in the course of a four-year period. All outpatient consultations, day patient treatments and admissions to Norwegian hospitals and specialists in private practice under public funding contracts are included in the figures. This shows the overall use of specialist health services for children in Norway.

Sample

The sample consists of all 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.



Source: NPR/SSB
All contacts, 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.



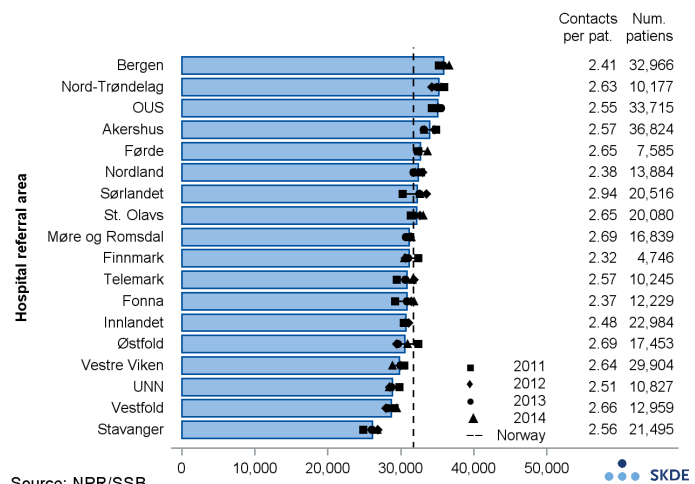
Source: NPR/SSB
All contacts, by type of contact, age-adjusted usage rates per 100,000 children 0-16 year, per hospital referral area and as an average for the period 2011-2014.

Comments

Each year, 335,000 children aged 0-16 years undergo 865,000 admissions, outpatient consultations and day patient treatments in the Norwegian specialist health service. An increasing proportion of children have contacts both for surgical and medical conditions (up from 53,000 in 2011 to 62,500 in 2014).

The usage rate is 40% higher in the hospital referral area with the highest usage rate (Sørlandet) than in the areas with the lowest usage rate (Stavanger). Outpatient and day patient treatment dominates the picture. Such treatment is resource-intensive in terms of doctors, but not in terms of other resources. Although admissions represent only approx. 7% of the total number of patient contacts, they account for a considerable proportion of the specialist health service's total resource use relating to children.

Even though the variation can be described as moderate, the high number of contacts means that there is nevertheless considerable variation in resource use between hospital referral areas, and there is reason to question whether this variation is justified.



Source: NPR/SSB
All contacts, 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.

It is important that children in need of medical treatment receive it quickly and without impediment. When more than 30% of children aged 0-16 years have at least one contact with the specialist health service each year, there is reason to ask oneself whether this use of health services reflects the actual morbidity. There is no unambiguous definition of what is the medically correct level of use of health services for children. The level presented here should nevertheless raise questions about whether there is an overuse of specialist health services for children. Overuse can result in the medicalisation of childhood and, for some children and parents, the establishment of an illness identity that does not correspond to the child's actual state of health.

It is during the first years of life that children are most frequently in contact with the specialist health service, and boys have such contact more often than girls.