

Gastrointestinal diseases

Gastrointestinal symptoms are very common and account for a considerable proportion of consultations at specialist outpatient clinics for children. Most of these symptoms are transient or harmless and require no treatment. Sometimes, such symptoms are signs of relatively rare gastrointestinal diseases that will significantly affect the child's health and quality of life. Examples include chronic inflammatory bowel disease and coeliac disease.

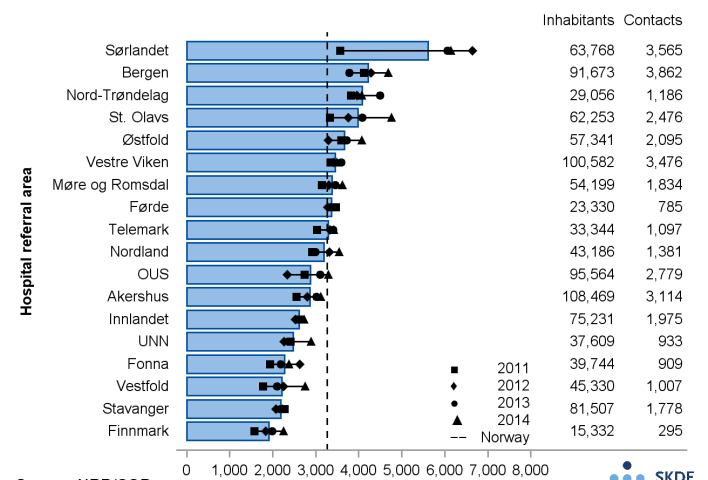
Sample

The sample consists of consultations (outpatient/day patient services) for gastrointestinal diseases for children in the somatic specialist health service, including specialists in private practice under public funding contracts. Gastrointestinal diseases are defined by a primary or secondary diagnosis (ICD-10) of K90.0, K21.0, K21.9 or in code blocks I50-51, K59 or R10.

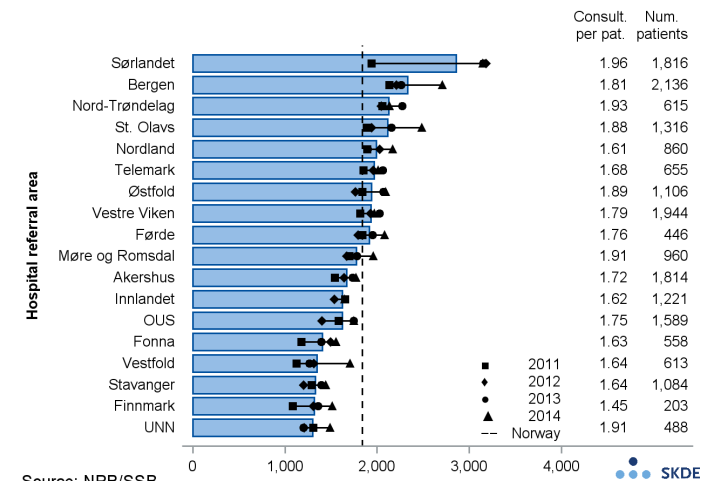
Comments

Each year, 19,000 children with these diagnoses have a total of approx. 35,000 consultations. This accounts for just over 6% of all medical outpatient consultations and nearly 9% of all medical patients that receive outpatient treatment. Sørlandet hospital referral area has a 2.9 times higher usage rate than Finnmark and a 2.2 times higher patient rate than UNN hospital referral area.

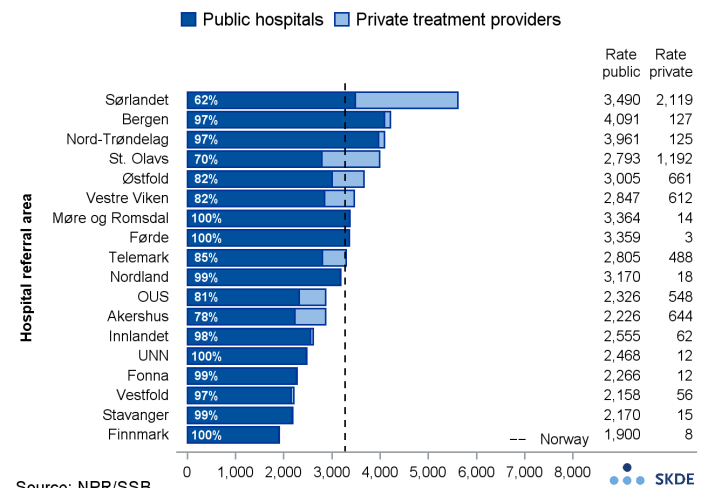
The contact frequency varies from 1.45 in Finnmark hospital referral area to 1.96 in the Sørlandet area. This corresponds to a difference of 510 consultations per 1,000 patients treated.



Source: NPR/SSB
Gastrointestinal diseases, outpatient services, 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
Gastrointestinal diseases, outpatient services, 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.



Source: NPR/SSB
Gastrointestinal diseases, outpatient services, broken down by public or private treatment providers, age-adjusted usage rates per 100,000 children 0-16 year, per hospital referral area and as an average for the period 2011-2014.

Sørlandet has the highest usage rate and also has a higher proportion of private practice consultations than any other hospital referral area. Nevertheless, there does not appear to be any consistent link between overall usage rates and the number of specialists in private practice in different hospital referral areas. There are no indications of differences in morbidity between hospital referral areas, and this gives reason to ask whether there is an unwarranted variation in the use of outpatient consultations for gastrointestinal diseases.