

Monitoring socioeconomic differences in teenage abortion rates between city boroughs in Oslo, Norway

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Introduction

Rates of teenage abortions are considerably higher in Oslo (27.2 per 1000 women 15–19) than in Norway (19.2 per 1000). Regional differences, however, tend to be greater between the 25 local authorities within the city of Oslo than between the 20 counties in Norway for most health measures and strongly correlated to local deprivation measures. In this study we wanted to study the link between socio-economic factors and teenage abortion and teenage birth rates within the city of Oslo.

Methods

The data material consisted of hospital records of provoked abortions and records of births from the Medical Birth Register for the period 1993-2000 for women 15-19 years of age living in Oslo. These data and data on the number of women 15-19 years from the Central Population Register were divided by the 25 local authorities within Oslo. A deprivation index ranging from 1-25 was calculated based on local levels of four socio-economic factors: Rates of unemployment, low education, single parenthood and low income.

Results

A high degree of correlation was found between the deprivation index and the frequency of teenage abortions ($r=0.8$ $p < 0.01$) and teenage pregnancies ($r=0.9$ $p < 0.01$) for the local authorities in Oslo. A higher percentage of the pregnant teenagers in the most deprived areas choose not to terminate their pregnancies resulting in an even steeper socioeconomic gradient for teenage births (7 times higher rates) than for teenage abortions (3 times higher rates).

Conclusions

It was found that the areas with the highest deprivation index were also the areas with the highest rates of both teenage motherhood and teenage abortion rates.

Correlation between the deprivation factor and the number of teenage pregnancies and abortions

