

Alcohol use disorder is the most common substance abuse disorder in Norway, and is most common among young adults between 18 and 35 years. Harmful use of alcohol is more common among men than women. Patients with substance abuse disorders usually have other mental disorders and somatic diseases as well. Persons with substance abuse disorder can have both outpatient treatment and inpatient treatment in the specialist health services.

Sample and definitions

Elderly patients of 65 years and above who in 2014-2018 had at least one outpatient contact in mental healthcare, interdisciplinary specialised addiction treatment (TSB) or private specialists under public funding contracts, with substance abuse disorder as the primary or secondary diagnosis are included. Substance abuse disorder is defined by the ICD 10-codes F10, F11, F12, F13, F14, F15, F16, F18, F19.

Outpatient contacts are defined as contacts where a patient (or next of kin) was physically present, and was admitted and discharged on the same day (includes both outpatient contacts as well as day care). Indirect outpatient contacts are not included here.

Hospital referral area	Number of contacts	Number of patients	Contacts per patient
Bergen	790	87	9.1
OUS	765	87	8.8
Lovisenberg	450	52	8.7
Møre og Romsdal	364	42	8.6
Sørlandet	471	60	7.8
Vestre Viken	710	93	7.6
St. Olavs	441	62	7.2
UNN	145	20	7.1
Vestfold	352	51	6.9
Innlandet	537	79	6.8
Ahus	617	91	6.8
Diakonhjemmet	425	63	6.7
Østfold	344	52	6.6
Nord-Trøndelag	172	30	5.7
Førde	128	24	5.3
Helgeland	32	7	4.9
Stavanger	295	61	4.8
Fonna	139	31	4.5
Telemark	193	45	4.3
Nordland	40	11	3.6
Finnmark	15	6	2.4
Norway	7,425	1,052	7.1

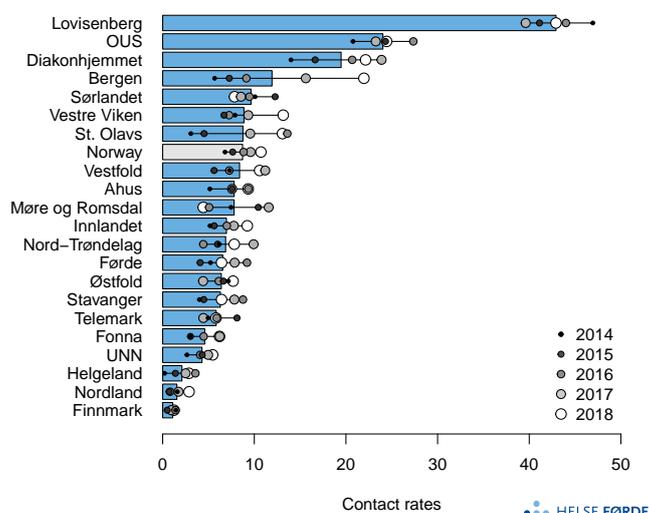
Outpatient treatment of elderly patients with substance use disorder. Includes contacts with mental healthcare and interdisciplinary specialised addiction services. Number of contacts, number of patients and contacts per patient, broken down by hospital referral area and for Norway as a whole. The figures represent average values per year for the period 2014-2018 and apply to elderly people aged 65 years and older.

Results

Each year more than 1,000 elderly patients with substance abuse disorders had one or more outpatient contacts in mental healthcare, interdisciplinary specialised addiction treatment or mental healthcare specialists – 7,500 outpatient contacts in Norway in total.

The patient rate varied across hospital referral areas from 0.4 to 4.8 elderly patients in outpatient treatment per 1,000 population a year. The contact rate varied from 1.1 to 42.9 contacts per 1,000 population a year, with an average of 8.7.

Elderly patients with substance abuse disorders had on average 7 outpatient contacts a year, varying from 2.4 to 9.1 contacts across hospital referral areas.



Source: NPR/SSB
Contact rates, elderly patients with substance use disorder receiving outpatient treatment. Number of contacts per 1,000 population, broken down by hospital referral area and for Norway as a whole. The bars show the average values per year for the period 2014-2018, and the dots represent the rates for each year. The rates have been adjusted for age and gender.

Comment

Elderly patients with substance abuse disorder is a small patient group, but the variation in use of outpatient treatment is particularly large. Elderly patients in hospital referral areas with the highest rate has 39 times as many contacts per 1,000 population as in some referral areas in Northern Norway. The patient rates are also highest in Oslo, and lowest in Northern Norway.

Such clearly large variation in outpatient treatment raises concern of underuse of services in parts of the country, and is unwarranted.