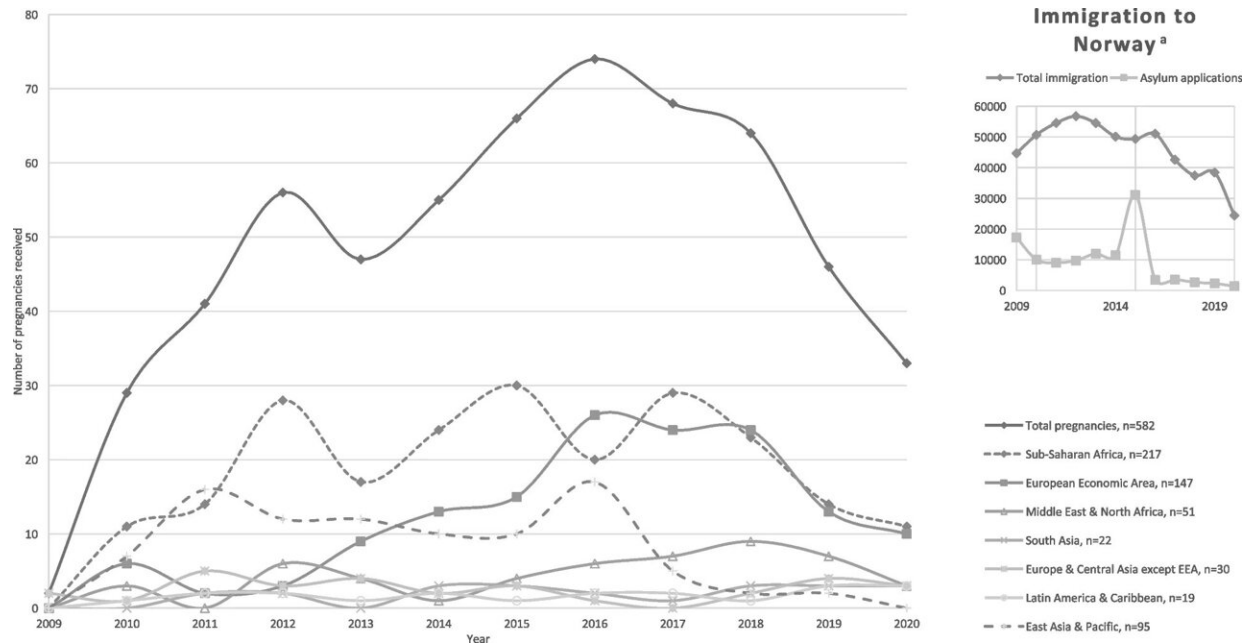


# Undocumented women in Norway do not get enough care during pregnancy, says study

November 22 2022, by Mathilde Coraline Aarvold Bakke



Number of pregnancies in undocumented women attending NGO clinics, by region of origin. Credit: *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* (2022). DOI: 10.1186/s12884-022-05112-0

Frode Eick, a Ph.D. student at the Department of Community Medicine and Global Health at the University of Oslo (UiO), and colleagues have conducted a study of prenatal care for undocumented women in Norway. "Approximately half of the pregnant women receiving care at health clinics for undocumented women came in too late to receive prenatal

care," says Eick.

The researchers followed 500 pregnant, undocumented women through 11 years and 582 pregnancies, from 2009 to 2020. The women received care at [health centers](#) for undocumented women in Bergen and Oslo. The researchers followed the women through their medical histories from health centers and hospitals.

Since 2011, pregnant undocumented women in Norway have had the right to receive prenatal care in the municipalities and to give birth at a hospital.

The researchers' study, "Use of non-governmental maternity services and pregnancy outcomes among undocumented women: a [cohort study](#) from Norway," is published in *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*.

## **Lack of prenatal care can lead to children being born too early or stillborn**

The study indicates that during pregnancy, a lack of care and supervision for undocumented women can lead to complications for both the women and their children, with possible long-term consequences.

"For the undocumented women, ten out of 1000 births resulted in stillbirths, and 10.3 percent of the children were born too early," Eick says.

Around one out of five of the undocumented women had to have an emergency Cesarean section during birth.

For Norwegian women, the numbers are around three stillbirths per 1,000 births, and 5.6 percent of the children are born too early.

## Norway should reduce disease and mortality among mothers and children

Norway has committed to reducing disease and mortality among mothers and newborns through international agreements.

"Universal health care is crucial to be able to reach the United Nations sustainability goals," Eick says.

In the study, Eick found that the health centers, run by volunteers, often referred pregnant women to the general [health services](#).

"Undocumented women have the right to prenatal care in Norway, and the health centers cannot offer the same health services as the public provide[s]. That is why they refer the women to [public health services](#). The [public sector](#) can contribute with continuity in follow-ups during pregnancy, proximity to services, and care provided by hospitals," he says.

The health centers for undocumented women are located in Bergen and Oslo, and are run by Kirkens Bymisjon and the Red Cross. The centers offer voluntary health care by unpaid [health care workers](#).

"Among the [pregnant women](#) who contacted the health centers, around three out of ten were referred elsewhere to get an abortion, at their own request," Eick says.

The study is part of Eick's Ph.D. project at UiO. The study is the first of its kind looking at pregnancies among undocumented women in Norway.

"We have not studied whether there is a cause and effect connection

between lacking [prenatal care](#) and the results we found in the study, but we have studied pregnancies among undocumented women in general," Eick explains.

**More information:** Frode Eick et al, Use of non-governmental maternity services and pregnancy outcomes among undocumented women: a cohort study from Norway, *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth* (2022). [DOI: 10.1186/s12884-022-05112-0](https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-022-05112-0)

Provided by University of Oslo

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