

Clear health differences between young people in Østfold

Written by Administrator

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On Tuesday the young persons survey “Østfold Health 2008” is launched at a meeting of the county health committee. It represents the responses of almost a thousand 10th year pupils in Østfold. It shows clear health differences between young people, measured according to their socioeconomic status.

– “The survey shows both positive and negative trends. It is especially positive that as many as 91% of young people consider their health to be good or very good, since this is a very well-recognised way of measuring the health of the population. Here we score better than comparable figures from other counties. We see however that 93% of young people who plan to study humanities report that they have good or very good health, compared with 86% of those who plan vocational studies,” says the chair of Østfold Health Aase Rennesund.

The survey also reveals some major issues with regard to young girls’ mental health.

– “Here too we see that mental problems are generally more widespread among young people from less well-off families. It appears that young people who are planning vocational training score more poorly on the measurements for anxiety and depression, achievement and self-wounding than those who are planning academic studies” says Rennesund.

The health services are getting to where they are needed

The young people’s survey has also assessed the use of health services for young people. Here, there are indications that these are reaching the groups it is most important to reach.

– “We see that it is young people from less well-off families who mainly use these services. They tell us the school health service and the health stations for young people are guided by young people themselves and their actual needs. We think this is positive and is a signal to these professional groups that they have succeeded in reaching risk groups,” says the chair of the health committee at Østfold county council Inger-Christin Torp.

She was perhaps most surprised - and positively so - at young people’s alcohol consumption.

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– “The pupils were asked about alcohol consumption, and with regard to both how much they drank in the course of a week and how many times in total they had been drunk, the figures from Østfold are lower than comparable figures from surveys in six other counties. On the other hand we see a clear pattern that young people planning vocational training use more drink and drugs, including hash, than other young people,” says Torp.

The survey also indicates a lower alcohol consumption than had been found previously, while violence between boys in Østfold is also lower than had been found in earlier surveys in other counties. In Østfold, 17% of boys had been subjected to violence from other young people, while the corresponding figure from other counties was 24%. Among girls, 11-12% had been subjected to violence from other young people, both in Østfold and in the other counties. Other surveys had previously shown a strong correlation between alcohol consumption and youth violence.

No social health differences in overweight at present

Torp points out that in the question of overweight, on the other hand, no social health differences can so far be found. This is despite the fact that young people from better-off families are more physically active, eat more vegetables and fish and eat breakfast more often than young people from less well-off families.

– “The differences in lifestyle give us reason to believe that we will also see differences in overweight in the longer term,” she says.