

# Gonorrhoea cases continue to rise in Norway

April 29 2016

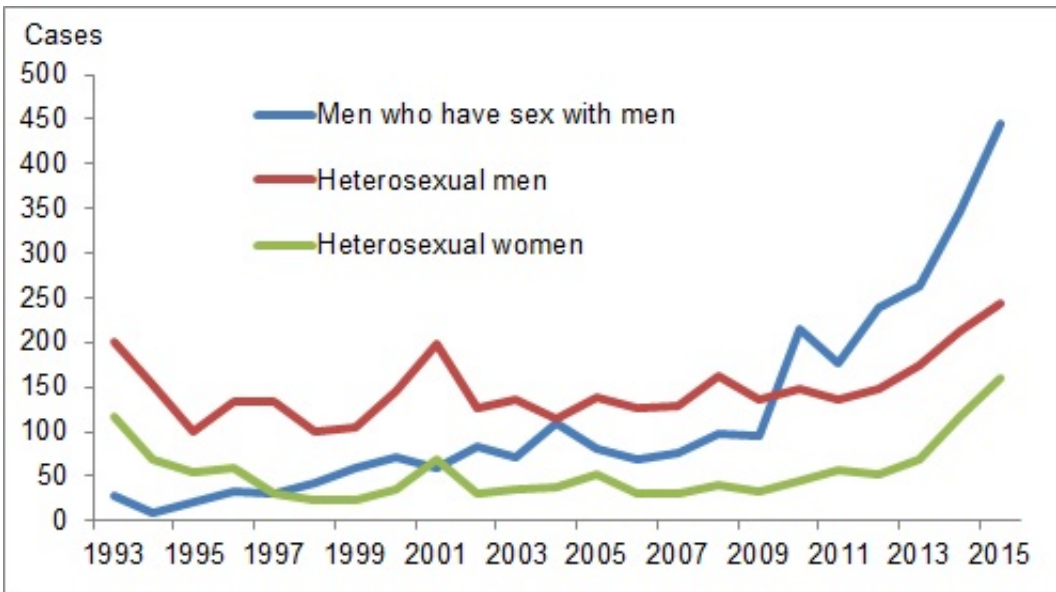


Figure 1. Cases of gonorrhoea in Norway notified to MSIS 1993-2015 by year of diagnosis, transmission route and gender.

In Norway, the number of notified gonorrhoea cases are now the highest for 25 years. Reported cases of syphilis declined slightly but are still high compared to a few years ago, according to 2015 figures released by the Norwegian Institute of Public Health.

851 [gonorrhoea](#) cases were reported in 2015, compared to 682 cases in 2014. The significant increase of gonorrhoea among men who have sex with men (MSM) began in 2010 and continued in 2015. Gonorrhoea among heterosexual men and women also continued to increase.

Among the 851 cases, there were 690 men and 161 women. Of the men, 444 were infected homosexually, 243 were infected heterosexually and the sexual orientation of three men were unknown. All the women were infected heterosexually.

"The increase in gonorrhoea has been particularly strong among women, with a tripling of reported cases in a few years," says Øivind Nilsen, senior adviser at the Norwegian Institute of Public Health.

The increase of gonorrhoea is seen especially in Oslo, but counties such as Buskerud, Hordaland, Nordland, Vest-Agder and Vestfold have all seen a doubling or more of the number of gonorrhoea cases in 2015 compared with 2014. In Rogaland and Hordaland, which experienced a sharp increase in the number of cases in 2014, the number of cases remains high even though the reported cases fell slightly in Rogaland in 2015.

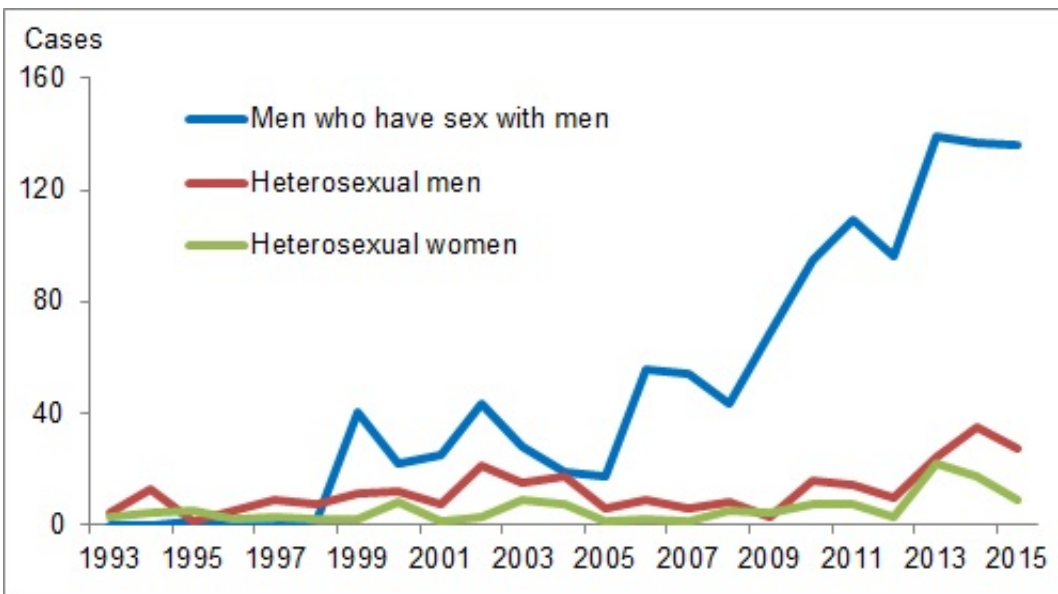


Figure 2. Syphilis cases (primary, secondary and early latent syphilis) in Norway reported to MSIS 1993-2015 by year of diagnosis, transmission route and

gender.

"The increase in reported gonorrhoea cases seen in Norway in recent years may be due to a combination of more efficient diagnosis by increased use of PCR testing, plus a real increase in incidence" continues Nilsen.

## **Syphilis incidence remains high**

Syphilis cases among MSM remained high in 2015 but the number of cases decreased slightly among heterosexually- infected men and women. In 2015, the Norwegian Surveillance System for Communicable Diseases (MSIS) was notified about 172 cases of syphilis compared to 189 cases in 2014. Of the 2015 cases, 79 per cent (136 cases) were infected homosexually and 21 per cent (36 cases) were infected heterosexually.

"Even though the reported cases of syphilis fell slightly in 2015, the incidence is still significantly higher than what was common a few years ago," says Nilsen.

The 172 cases reported in 2015 were distributed among 162 [men](#) and 10 women. One of the [women](#) reported being infected by another woman. Of the cases reported in 2015, 58 per cent were from Oslo. The number of cases in Hordaland among MSM increased sharply in 2014. In 2015, the number of cases returned to the average of recent years. Of the 172 cases of syphilis in 2015, 64 per cent were born in Norway.

## **Early diagnosis, contact tracing and increased condom use**

The [number](#) of confirmed HIV cases among MSM declined in 2015. Nevertheless, the steadily increasing incidence of gonorrhoea in this group gives reason to believe that there still is a lot of unsafe sex practices. Sexually active MSM should be offered regular check-ups and treatment if necessary. In addition, the health service must be made aware that gonorrhoea and [syphilis](#) are now occurring more frequently among heterosexuals.

"The Norwegian Institute of Public Health is concerned about the trend. Early diagnosis, prompt treatment, counselling and contact tracing must be prioritised if we are to reverse this negative trend. Condom use must also increase to prevent the spread of infection," concludes Nilsen.

Provided by Norwegian Institute of Public Health

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