

Health of Young People in Relation to Social Factors in the German Federal State of Brandenburg

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Background

In the German Federal State of Brandenburg, reporting on health and social issues is closely linked. Brandenburg's Public Health Institute is responsible for continuously reporting to the federal government on children and young people's health.

Method

In addition to data from official statistics (demographic trends, employment and social security) and surveys conducted among young adults, the results from serial medical examinations of 10th grade pupils are presented (2002/3; N=31.311).

Results

The number of young citizens in Brandenburg aged 16-25 will rise until the middle of the decade but then fall sharply. This will apply in particular to the rural areas far from Berlin and will have profound implications for the entire infrastructure of the state. Despite the state government's efforts, unemployment among the under-25s rose from 12.6% in 1995 to approx. 20% in 2004. Sociological studies show that "work and family" are people's highest priority. However, less-educated young people are increasingly doubtful about their ability to make these two areas their priority in life.

According to medical statistics, every third young person suffers from eye and hearing disorders, and more every seventh young person suffers from allergies (especially allergic rhinitis). The same applies as regards orthopaedic data. Approx. 7% of young people are obese, pupils of special schools more frequently than grammar school pupils. In general, young people's health is often related to their education level. This is clearly underlined by the results of a sample census on health conducted in 1999.

The percentage of people "ill or injured in the last four weeks" was 6.8 % for those with a low education level and 3.3 % for those with a high education level. Similar findings apply for health-risk behaviour (e. g. smoking).

Conclusion

Adopting a setting approach can help strengthen prevention and health promotion in schools and at the workplace. Healthy schooling, healthy professional training and good opportunities on the labour market are the key pillars of health policy in Brandenburg.

Keywords: teenagers and young adults, social situation, health inequalities, public health services