

International Workshop
**Impact of Poverty and Social Exclusion on Children's Lives
and their Well-being**

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Abstract

The health of children in Norwegian low-income families

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Scandinavian welfare states have succeeded in maintaining low rates of childhood poverty. Nevertheless, presently around 5-6 per cent of Norwegian children grow up in families with relatively persistent low income (i.e., three consecutive years with family post-tax household-adjusted income below 60 per cent of the national median).

This paper asks whether children in Norwegian low-income families have less good health than children from families with more average family incomes. Economic problems and processes of social exclusion could contribute to more disadvantaged health among low-income children; on the other hand could the overall high material level of living and the welfare institutions (e.g., health care, compulsory school until age 16, etc.) in Norway act as buffers against the emergence of social inequalities in the health of children.

Data come from a longitudinal study aiming at analysing consequences of economic deprivation among Norwegian children. Utilising the official taxation registry of 2000, one larger low-income sample and one smaller control sample with a nationally representative income distribution were drawn. Interviews with children and (one of their) parents took place in 2003 and 2006. This paper reports and discusses results from the 2006 wave, when a set of health-related indicators were collected among ca.1050 low-income children and ca. 250 'normal'-income children. Preliminary results suggest that Norwegian low-income children, in comparison with children from families with more 'normal' incomes, did not have a higher prevalence of medically defined diagnoses. However, low-income children had on average somewhat shorter stature and a slightly higher proportion were overweight. Also, there were indications of more negative tendencies among low-income children, especially those with a Norwegian ethnic background, as regards psychosomatic complaints, overall well-being, school adjustment, and health-related behaviours. More details of the findings, with a discussion of possible processes, mechanisms, and implications, will be presented at the workshop.

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