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Predictors of Spatial Differentiation of Adolescent Fertility: The Case of Lithuania

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Adolescent fertility is a phenomenon that is associated with a number of negative medical and social consequences for both the mother and infant. Girls, who have their first child before the age of 20, often drop out of the education system, seldom acquire a secondary or higher education and in result are often faced with poor economic situation and poverty. Therefore, the analysis of risk factors for adolescent fertility is important from the viewpoint of public health and social wellbeing. The aim of this paper – to investigate spatial differentiation of adolescent fertility and identify regional and individual factors associated with it in Lithuania. We use a mixed methods approach. Firstly, we apply mathematical-statistical geo-analysis on fertility data (vital statistics) and look for relationships while analysing the links between AFR and regional socio-economic environment. Secondly, we analyse semi-structured interviews that we have conducted in districts with high AFR: 20 interviews with girls who had their child(ren) in adolescence and 24 interviews with social workers, schools' representatives. Our analysis revealed that differences within Lithuania are as high as 6 times. The biggest contrast is between major cities and peripheral rural regions. Both the individual and regional characteristics have a strong effect on adolescent fertility. The presentation is based on the results of the research project Spatial differentiation of adolescent fertility in Lithuania: socioeconomic environment, the role of sexual education and individual experiences (financed by the Lithuanian Research Council, contract No. S-MIP-17-115).

[Back to List \(/AAG Annual Meeting 2019/abstracts-gallery\)](/AAG Annual Meeting 2019/abstracts-gallery)

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