



Gynaecological issues among Polish adolescents - results from POLKA 18 cross-sectional youth-led study

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Background

POLKA 18 study aims to assess the knowledge, attitude and practices of Polish adolescents about their health and healthcare with a special focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

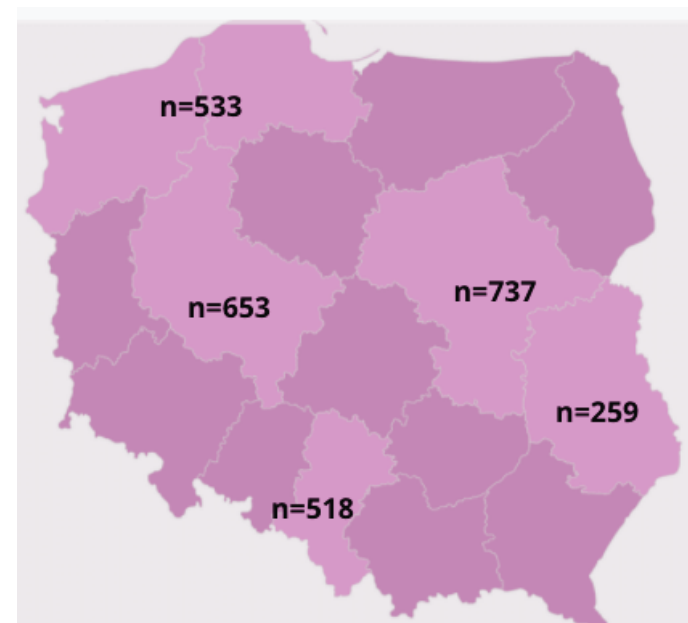
Given that many schools would not allow research directed solely on sexual and reproductive health in Poland, in December 2018 we conducted local consultations with high school students, experts and academics to create a holistic model of health priorities for Polish adolescents.

Gynecological issues are relatively rarely surveyed among Polish adolescents therefore the research team has included questions about issues related to sexually transmitted infections and most frequent gynaecological conditions in adolescents.

Methods

Data were retrieved from POLKA 18 study, which used original self-reported paper-based questionnaires distributed in schools in five Polish voivodeships. The questionnaires were distributed in April-December 2019 by local research associates, who are medical students.

2700 questionnaires were collected, out of which **1572 were filled in by females** and taken into final analysis. The obtained data has been analyzed using STATA 15.



Sample of the study

Main results

- When asked about a **diagnosis of an STI** in another section of the survey, only 0.6% answered yes, 87.6% that they had never been diagnosed with it, and the rest did not know the diagnosis of sexually transmitted infection has ever occurred. (Figure 1)
- 3.8%** of 18-year-olds reported to be diagnosed with **polycystic ovary syndrome**, and **1.2%** declare that they suffer from **endometriosis**, rest of the symptoms are presented in Figure 2

Figure 1: Proportion of youth declaring ever having an STI

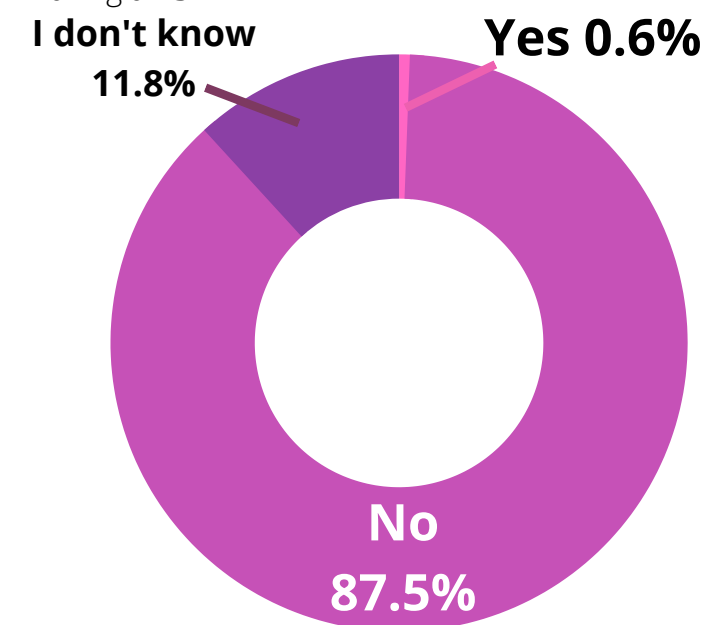
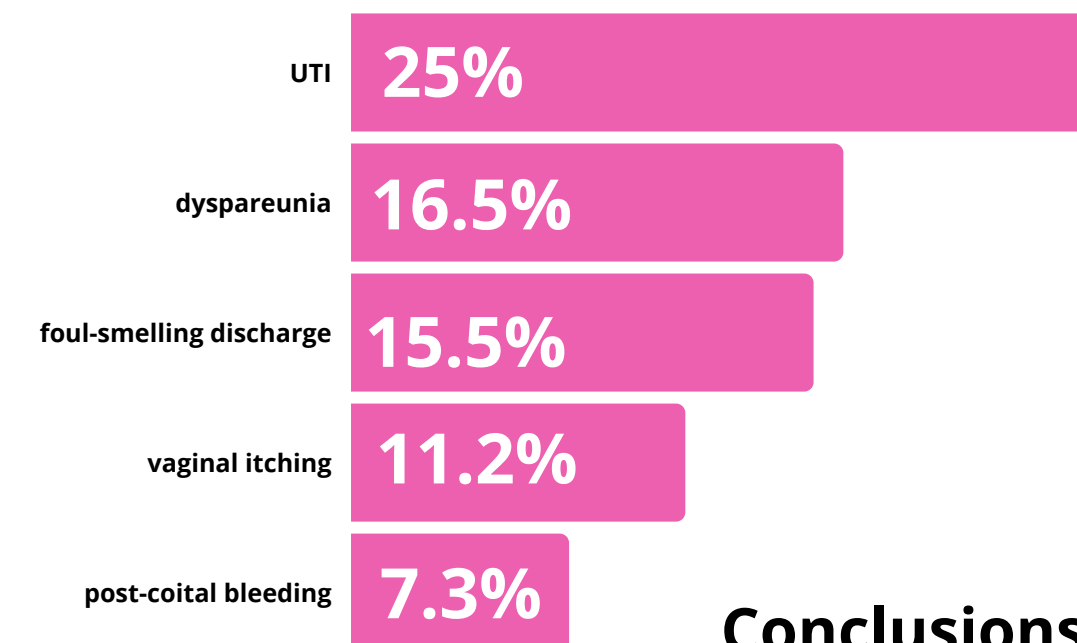


Figure 2: Percentage of young women complaining of urinary and gynaecological symptoms



Conclusions

Even though many Polish adolescent girls report having symptoms that might represent sexually transmitted infection the actual diagnosis of sexually transmitted infection is relatively rare.

The underdiagnosis of STIs among Polish adolescents might be a result from lack of proper screening programmes and lack of free access to sexual health clinics.