**Is the introduction of anonymous delivery associated with a reduction of high neonaticide rates in Austria? A retrospective study**

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* PMID: 23210536
* PMCID: [PMC3621136](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/pmc3621136/)
* DOI: [10.1111/1471-0528.12099](https://doi.org/10.1111/1471-0528.12099)

**Abstract**

**Objective:**To assess rates of neonaticide after the implementation of a preventative 'anonymous delivery' law in mid-2001 in Austria. Women are allowed to access antenatal care and give birth in a hospital anonymously, without showing any ID and free of charge.

**Design:**Retrospective study.

**Setting:**A complete census of police-reported neonaticides was obtained from the police statistics of Austria, Sweden and Finland.

**Population:**All neonaticides reported to the police, 1991-2009.

**Main outcome measures:**Neonaticide rates before (1991-2001) and after (2002-2009) the introduction of anonymous delivery legislation per 100 000 births.

**Methods:**The Mann-Whitney U-test for two independent samples was used to compare neonaticide rates in the period before the new law was introduced with the rates observed after the implementation of the new law for each country.

**Results:**On average the rate of police-reported neonaticides was 7.2 per 100 000 births (SD 3.5, median 7.1) in Austria prior to the new law being passed, and 3.1 per 100 000 births (SD 2.1, median 2.6) after the law was passed. A significant decrease in neonaticide was observed in Austria after the implementation of anonymous delivery (Mann-Whitney U-test P = 0.017). Whereas the Finnish and Swedish rates were lower than the Austrian rates before and after the implementation of the Austrian law, they remained unchanged over the study period.

**Conclusions:**Our data demonstrate a significant decrease in the number of police-reported neonaticides in Austria after the implementation of anonymous delivery. Even though underlying factors associated with neonaticide are complex, the findings could indicate an effect of anonymous delivery in the prevention of this crime.

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