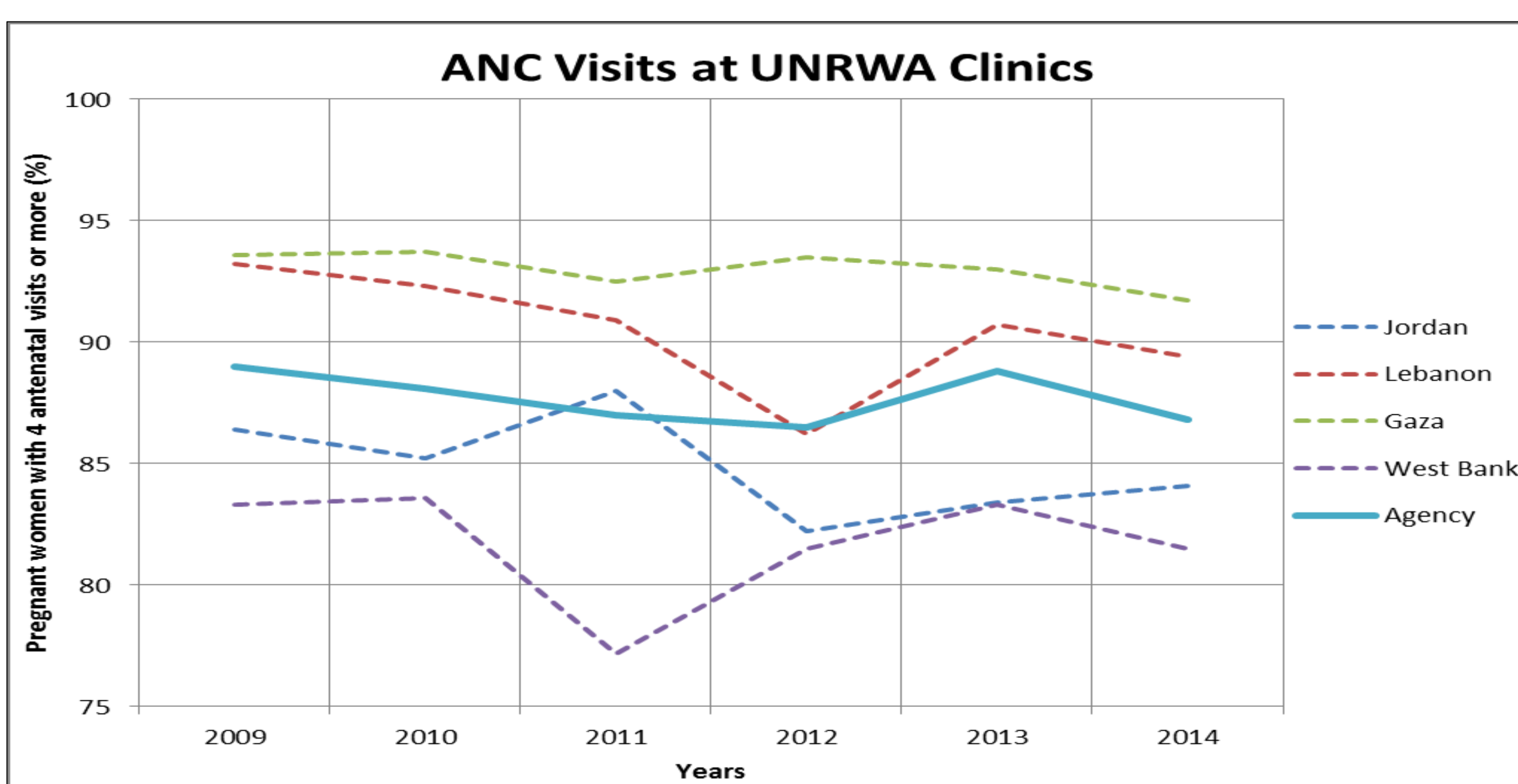


Background

The United Nations for Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East is unique among UN agencies in delivering services directly to beneficiaries. Antenatal care is essential for a healthy and safe pregnancy. UNRWA encourages pregnant women to have at least four antenatal care visits throughout their pregnancy following the WHO recommendation. The department of health annual reports of the past years show a decrease in the number of registered pregnant women attending four visits or more at UNRWA clinics.



Objectives

The aim of this research was to improve UNRWA antenatal care services for Palestine refugee women by assessing the reasons for their failure to complete four antenatal care visits at an UNRWA Health Centre.

Methodology

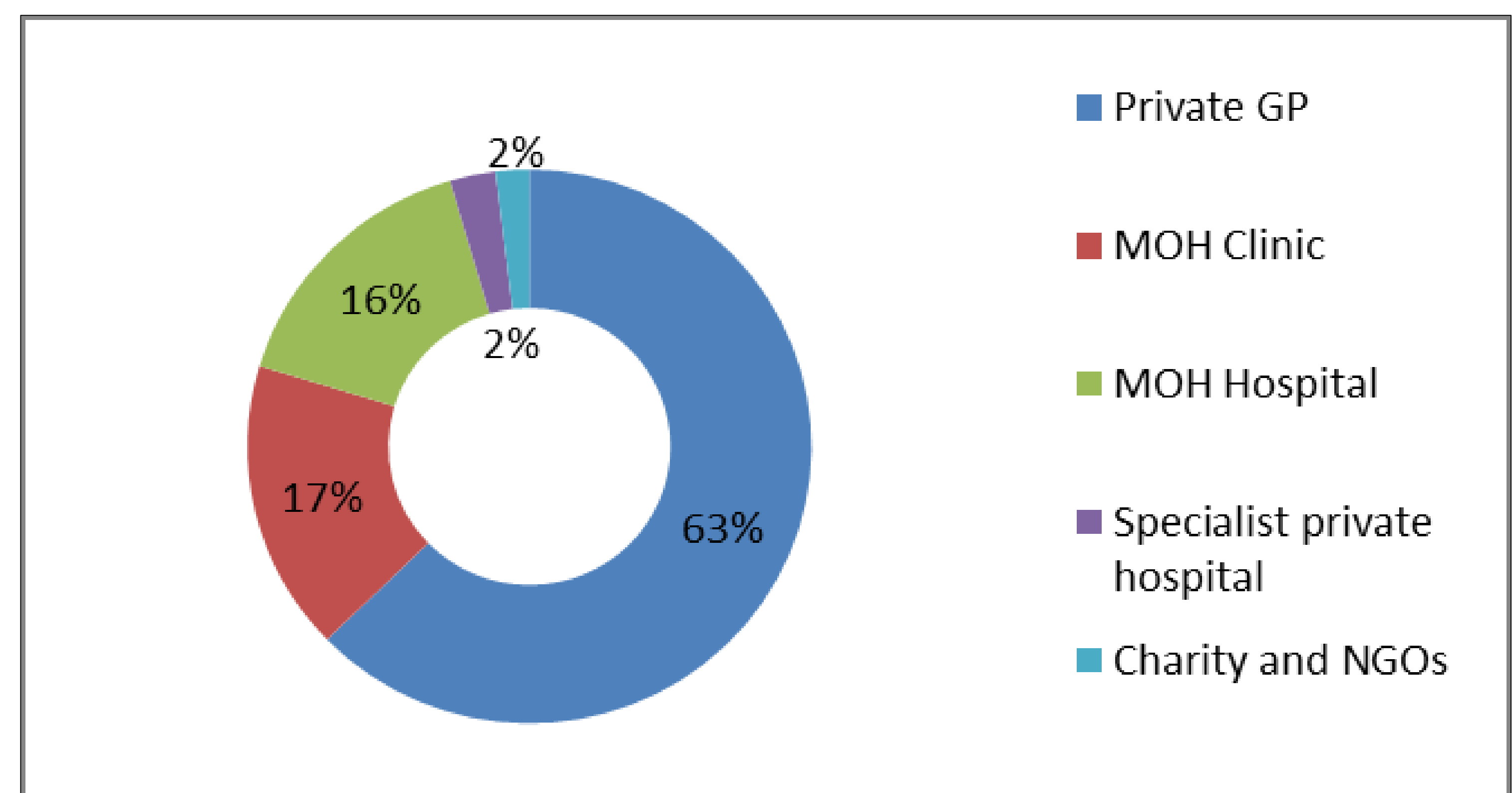
This cross-sectional retrospective study was conducted on women who delivered between October 1st, 2014 and September 30th, 2015. 15.9% of the 26,634 pregnant mothers registered in UNRWA's facilities did not attend four ANC visits. A systematic random selection was used to select a sample of 396 women (confidence 90% and precision 3%) to explore reasons for failure. Three Jordanian nurses were recruited and trained to conduct the telephone interviews. Women were asked about the reasons why they did to attend four antenatal care visits, their socio-economic background, their utilization of pre-conception care and family planning services at UNRWA clinics and their perception of UNRWA Health facilities. Data analysis was conducted in the Health Department at UNRWA Headquarters, Amman with epi-info program.

Findings

The main reasons for failure to attend ANC were: seeking non-UNRWA services (38.1%), not being aware of the recommendation (17%), being sick (12.6%), having transportation problems (8.2%) and registration too late their pregnancy (7.7%). Of the total, 88.9% of the former group went outside UNRWA for ultrasounds (58.5%) and for less waiting time (14.0%). Additionally, only 18.1% are using UNRWA preconception services, mostly because mothers are not aware their existence (51.9%).

Utilization of antenatal care services outside UNRWA

Reasons	Percentage
Access to ultrasounds	58.5%
Less waiting time	14.0%
Referred by UNRWA	12.7%
More friendly staff	10.3%
Services closer to their house	9.4%
Better quality of services	7.4%
Female doctors	6.0%
Specialists	5.3%



Conclusions

The identification of the mother's main reasons for not following the recommendation offers key actions to the Health Department to take in order to maximize their services. Introduction of ultrasound screening could reduce the defaulters. Additionally, SMS strategies could raise awareness of mothers as suggested from unpublished UNRWA evidence. Compelling evidence suggests that technology and social media can also reach out those mothers more easily.