



Ministry for Foreign
Affairs of Finland

**Thirtieth anniversary of the
Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)**

**Comprehensive national-level review
Finland**

May 2024

Section One: Highlights

This country-level review covers the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in Finland in the years 2019–2023. During these five years, several legislative changes were made that advance and accelerate the realisation of gender equality. This period saw the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic that affected the lives of many women, also in Finland where the crisis highlighted society's unequal and gendered structures, such as the segregation of the labour market and the unequal distribution of caregiving responsibilities.

This review was coordinated by the Unit for Human Rights Policy of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. All Government ministries and relevant Government agencies (Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare THL, Statistics Finland, Human Rights Centre) took part in compiling the report, each providing data on actions in their respective area of responsibility. During the review process, a meeting with civil society organisations was arranged in order to give civil society representatives an opportunity to ask questions and express their views on the national Beijing+30 process. Civil society organisations also prepare a separate Beijing+30 civil society report.

During the reporting period, remarkable progress was achieved in increasing equality in working life and between parents. A demand for renewing the family leave system to promote gender equality had been growing for several years. The Family Leave Reform entered into force in 2022. An example of good practice that can be useful for other countries as well is that the new legislation takes well into account different types of families. Both parents, irrespective of gender, are given a quota of 160 parental allowance days. Parents are allowed to transfer up to 63 parental allowance days of this quota to the other parent, other custodian, their spouse or the spouse of the other parent. The reform also introduced more flexibility for part-time work.

Other examples of progress in gender equality and self-determination are changes made to the laws governing abortion, the legal recognition of gender (transgender legislation), and sexual offences. All three legislative changes were preceded by years of civil society discussion, and citizens' initiatives had also been submitted on these issues. As for abortion, before the end of the 12th week of pregnancy, abortion is now possible on the pregnant woman's own request, and pregnant women no longer need to present any grounds for their request. The reform of transgender legislation separated the legal recognition of gender from medical examinations and treatments, which are no longer required. The previous requirement of infertility was also removed. The new legislation on sexual offences changed the definition of rape so that is now based on consent. In other words, rape is sexual intercourse with a person who does not participate in it voluntarily. The absence of voluntariness is also an essential element of other sexual offences.

Despite progress on several critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, some challenges remain in Finland, including in curbing all forms of violence against women. Addressing violence against women is a

cross-government effort, and many actions have been taken or planned for example under the national Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention (2022–2025). Another remaining challenge is the gender pay gap. The average pay gap between men and women is around 16% across the labour market. The gap has been narrowing slowly, indicating the need for further action. The gender pay gap is partly due to structural problems such as the gender segregation of jobs and occupations and lower wages in female-dominated sectors. However, a part of the pay gap remains unexplained and even gender-based pay discrimination exists.

One of the good practices in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as well as the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development in Finland is the multi-stakeholder approach. For example, the Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (NAPE) includes representatives from across the Government and has appointed a civil society working group to inform the Government on the broad range of civil society action in combatting violence against women and gender-based violence. Another example of the Finnish multi-stakeholder approach is the National Commission on Sustainable Development that oversees the implementation of the Agenda 2030. The Commission includes representatives from business and industry, labour unions, non-governmental organisations as well as representatives from municipalities, regions, religious communities and the church, media and culture, academia and development.

Finland remains strongly committed to gender equality and the full implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action both nationally and in international fora. Finland's foreign policy promotes the rights of women and girls in a cross-cutting manner. Finland actively takes part in marking the upcoming 30-year milestone of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that remains the most comprehensive framework for the realisation of gender equality and women's empowerment.

[Section Two: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks](#)

1. Over the past five years, what have been the most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?

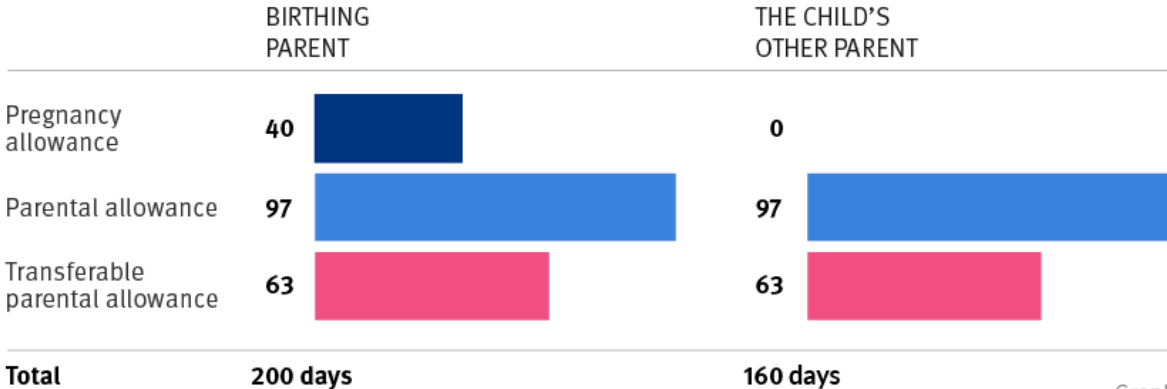
Most important achievements

The Family Leave Reform

The laws regarding the family leave reform entered into force on 1 August 2022. The objectives of the reform were to divide family leave and care responsibilities equally between both parents in a family, to strengthen non-discrimination and equality in working life, and to reduce pay differences between women and men.

The family leave reform gave both parents a quota of 160 parental allowance days. Parents are allowed to transfer up to 63 parental allowance days of this quota to the other parent, other custodian, their spouse or the spouse of the other parent. For the final stage of pregnancy, there is a pregnancy allowance period of 40 daily allowance days. Overall, allowance days for parents during family leaves amount to more than 14 months. Single parents have the right to use the quotas of both parents.

Daily allowances for parents



Graphics: Kela

Parents can use parental allowance days until the child reaches the age of two. Daily allowance days can be used in several parts. Parents in employment relationships are entitled to split the leave up to four parts. Only pregnancy allowance days will have to be used in a single continuous period and started 14–30 days before the estimated date of birth.

Parents may also take part-time parental leave. In such cases, one partial parental allowance day will take up half a day of the quota. The amount of partial parental allowance is also half the amount of full parental allowance. The aim of achieving flexibility in the use of part-time work is to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life. The changes made also aim for a more equal distribution of part-time work by gender.

All parents who have custody of their child have an equal right to daily allowance regardless of whether they are biological or adoptive, custodial or non-custodial and regardless of the gender of the parent.

Amendments to the Abortion Act

The amendments to the Abortion Act entered into force on 1 September 2023. The most significant amendment is that before the end of the 12th week of pregnancy, abortion is possible based on the pregnant woman’s own request. Pregnant women no longer need to present any grounds for their request. Previously, in order to end

the pregnancy there was a requirement in the law (originated from 1970) to have the opinion of two doctors and a separate reason had to be presented.

The amendments did not change the regulation regarding terminations after the 12th week of pregnancy. At the request of the pregnant woman, the pregnancy can also be terminated after the 12th week of pregnancy, if continuing the pregnancy or giving birth to a child would endanger the life or health of the pregnant woman. In this case, the condition for terminating the pregnancy is the positive decision of two doctors.

The Act on Legal Recognition of Gender

One of the most important projects of the previous government's Action Plan on Gender Equality was the reform of the so-called trans law. The reform of transgender legislation separated legal gender recognition from medical examinations and treatments. Legal gender recognition no longer requires a medical report or diagnosis. The previous requirement of infertility was also removed. Now, the application for legal gender recognition is based on the person's own account of their experience of gender. The person must have reached the age of majority and have Finnish citizenship or a place of residence in Finland.

The removal of the real-life test included in the medical examination and the speeding up of the application procedure are estimated to reduce the number of situations in which a person is exposed to discrimination or harassment because their social security number does not match their gender identity or external appearance. This prevents discrimination and harassment based on gender identity and gender expression. Separating medical examinations and treatments from legal confirmation of gender dismantles narrow gender concepts and promotes equality between genders. The right to fertility and reproduction of people belonging to gender minorities will be realized more equally when the requirement of reproductive incapacity is removed and the application of the Fertility Treatment Act to transgender persons is clarified.

The new legislation on sexual offences

The new legislation on sexual offences entered into force on 1 January 2023. The legislative reform strengthens everyone's right to sexual self-determination and personal integrity. The key change is that the definition of rape is now based on consent. Rape is sexual intercourse with a person who does not participate in it voluntarily. The absence of voluntariness is also an essential element of other sexual offences. As a result of the reform, punishments for sexual offences will become tougher.

In addition to rape, most other provisions on sexual offences in Chapter 20 of the Criminal Code were amended. An important change is, for example, that when the act is sufficiently severe, sexual harassment can be committed through acts other than touching. Non-consensual dissemination of a sexual image is punishable under the amended legislation. The amended legislation addresses sexual abuse online in many ways.

The definition of sexual offences against children emphasises the integrity of the child. Offences against children are classified as more severe than before. The punishments will also be more severe. The starting point is that a child cannot consent to a sexual act with an adult.

Challenges

The gender pay gap

Equal pay is one of the most important equality issues in Finnish working life. The average pay gap between men and women is around 16% across the labour market. The gap has been narrowing slowly, indicating the need for further action. Since 2006, the Finnish Government, together with central labour market organisations, has been implementing Equal Pay Programmes to reduce the gender pay gap even faster. An overall assessment of the previous tripartite Equal Pay Programme (2020–2023) identified the need to continue the programme and presented various recommendations for future programmes.

The gender pay gap is partly due to structural problems such as the gender segregation of jobs and occupations and lower wages in female-dominated jobs and sectors than in male-dominated ones. Occupational segregation is relatively high in Finland. A part of the pay gap remains unexplained and there is still gender-based pay discrimination prohibited in the equality legislation. The pay gap also varies between occupational sectors and positions. At the same time, there are new challenges affecting the pursuit of equal pay. Changes in collective bargaining in the labour market indicate the need to pay attention to the various levels at which equal pay should be addressed. Efforts are needed to encourage parties in collective agreements to participate actively in the pursuit for equal pay. Equality planning, salary surveys and pay awareness ought to be increased at workplace level accordingly.

Please see more on gender pay gap in the answer to question 2.

Violence against women

In August 2023, Statistics Finland published a report on the prevalence of gender-based violence and intimate partner violence in Finland as part of Eurostat's survey on gender-based violence. Women often encounter repeated and serious violence, men one-off violence. A total of 57% of women aged 16–74 and 46% of men aged 18–74 have experienced physical violence, threats or sexual violence at some point in their lives. Similar violence has been experienced by 34% of women and 18% of men by their current or former partner.

According to the report, the broad picture of experiencing violence is gendered: both women and men encounter violence, but violence is partly different in nature. Men encounter violence by strangers or semi-acquaintances more often than women, while women encounter intimate partner violence and sexual violence more often than

men. Men who have experienced violence report it less often than women. Women encounter repeated violence more often than men, and women also more often report that violence has caused physical injuries and psychological symptoms.

Belonging to a minority can also increase the threat of violence. The Ministry of the Interior's report from 2018 states that women with disabilities and women with a foreign background experience violence 2–3 times more than women in the general population, and that the risk of women with a foreign background becoming victims of rape is almost twice as high as women in the general population.

Despite active work against violence against women and intimate partner violence, the topic is problematic and requires more work and resources. Prime Minister Orpo's Government strongly highlights the theme in the government program for 2023–2027, which contains numerous entries to tackle violence against women and intimate partner violence.

Increasing the equal representation of both genders on the boards of listed companies

One of the goals of the previous government was to increase the equal representation of both genders on the boards of listed companies. In the boards of large and medium-sized listed companies, the goal is to have at least 40% of men and women. Despite measures towards the goal, it was not achieved. The proportion of women on the boards of listed companies has increased since 2003, but it has slowed down. In 2023, there were 35% women on the boards of medium-sized listed companies (in 2020 34%) and 32% in the boards of medium-sized companies (in 2020 30%). The proportion of women has increased by an average of about 1% during the previous government period (2019–2023).

The EU directive on balancing the gender distribution of members of the management bodies of listed companies and related measures ((EU) 2022/2381) came into force in December 2022. The directive will be implemented nationally by 28 December 2024.

Promoting equality in the use of Artificial Intelligence

The development of artificial intelligence has progressed at an unprecedented pace in recent years. Algorithms based on machine learning are considered promising for improving education, healthcare, recruitment and many other services. However, at the same time, algorithmic decision-making also creates threats to equality and non-discrimination.

The Government's research and investigation project '*Algorithmic discrimination and promotion of equality: Evaluation framework for non-discriminatory artificial intelligence*' (Ojanen, Shalgren, Björk, Mikkonen, Kimppa, Laitinen et. al., 2022) aimed to:

- Produce new information about what kind of artificial intelligence systems based on machine learning are in use in Finland, what kind of impact assessment they are based on and what discriminatory effects they might have.
- Critically evaluate the discriminatory and fundamental legal effects of algorithmic artificial intelligence systems based on the mapping, taking into account the obligations set by the Equality Act.
- Based on research, co-develop an evaluation framework to identify and avoid discriminatory features of artificial intelligence applications and to promote equality, and create policy recommendations for the development of algorithm regulation.
- The project produced a final report, which brings together the results of the project. The report presents the evaluation framework created for the evaluation of discrimination and equality in artificial intelligence systems.

According to the project, biases in AI can lead to systematic unfavourable treatment, especially due to, for example, ethnic origin, gender and disability. In particular, the risks of indirect discrimination based on these characteristics are highlighted in the material. The data also identifies the risk of negative equality effects, which may concern complex intersectional groups that can be inferred or found by machine learning methods from the educational data utilized by the algorithms.

Climate change

Climate change and biodiversity loss are testing global social sustainability. Their effects affect different genders and groups in different ways. In general, women are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than men due to their weaker social status and social roles. At the same time, women are key players in climate change mitigation, and their participation in decision-making is very important. It is likely that the climate crisis will increase migration. It is necessary to ensure the participation of all genders, and especially Indigenous Women, both in preparing for the effects of climate change and in all climate policy decision-making.

Setbacks

Anti-gender movement

Gender equality is facing pushback around the world, including in Europe. The so-called anti-gender movement actively opposes gender equality, including the rights of women and girls and sexual and gender minorities. The anti-gender movement questions and challenges already achieved progress in gender equality and the universality of human rights. Especially sexual and reproductive health and rights have been questioned worldwide in recent years.

The anti-gender movement manifests itself in many ways, such as legislative restrictions – e.g. the tightening of abortion laws – opposition to sexuality education and sensitive early childhood education, denial of support to organisations promoting sexual health services, opposition to the rights of LGBTI people, and trans-specific hatred.

Together with likeminded partners in the EU and globally, Finland consistently supports and defends gender equality in national and international contexts, and actively rejects efforts to weaken already agreed language on gender equality. Finland has also been active in advancing the understanding of key concepts among countries and actors, such as the gender transformative approach, which is needed to address the root causes of gender inequalities. The anti-gender movement is a threat not only to gender equality but also more widely to democracy and the realization of human rights, to work against climate change and to the promotion of sustainable development.

COVID-19

Please see the answer to question 14 below.

2. Over the past five years, what have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?

Right to work and rights at work (e.g. gender pay gap, occupational segregation, career progression)

Since 2006, the Finnish Government, together with central labour market organisations, has been implementing equal pay programmes to reduce the gender pay gap. In Finland, the average pay gap between women and men is around 16%. The gap has been narrowing slowly, indicating the need for further action. The Equal Pay Programme 2020–2023 included measures on pay and collective bargaining policies and payroll systems, such as conducting gender impact assessments of collective agreements and raising pay awareness. The programme also targeted company-specific equality planning processes and pay surveys, and aimed to reduce gender segregation in education and the labour market and to support the reconciliation of work and family life. The overall evaluation of the Equal Pay Programme presented various recommendations for future programmes.

The government has also worked with various partners on research and development projects to achieve equal pay and to dismantle gender segregation in the labour market.

Below is a list of the key projects commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health:

- In 2021–2023, *‘Dismantling segregation – tools for a more equal working life’* (together with the Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare THL)
 - The project aimed to reduce gender segregation by developing practices for a more equal working life. It produced a policy brief for decision-makers on the more permanent methods of reducing segregation, a toolbox for workplaces and a report on practices of dismantling segregation. The project also created a new type of regional cooperation with pilot organisations, working life actors, education providers and education authorities.
- In 2021–2022, *‘Project on work of equal value’*
 - The study examined how equal pay could be promoted in work of equal value. It reviewed legislation, collective agreements and a pilot organisation’s criteria for assessing job requirements. The project recommended clarifying legislation on the definition of work of equal value, the role of collective agreements and cooperation between labour market organisations. It also suggested the introduction of a job requirements assessment system that would cover the whole organisation at the workplace level.
- In 2022–2023, *‘Project on the gender impacts of collective agreements’*
 - The project aimed to determine whether collective agreements contain structures that differentiate between women and men’s pay. It recommended increasing pay transparency, including all pay components and financial benefits in the reviews, promoting gender equality in agreements and in the negotiating culture and investing in increasing gender competence in assessing the gender impacts of agreements and pay systems.
- In 2020, *‘Equality plans and pay surveys at workplaces’* (implemented by Statistics Finland)
 - The project concluded that equality plans are in place in most organisations, but their practical implementation varies and is often poor. Relatively few pay surveys are carried out. Overall, the results indicate that the implementation of the Equality Act needs to be more effective and the requirements and tools for equality planning should be made more precise.

Together with Statistics Finland, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has produced statistical studies on gender career progression, segregation and the pay gap. Increasingly precise statistical analysis has led to a better understanding of the background to the equality problems in different sectors.

Eliminating violence against women and girls

Please see the answers to questions 15, 16 and 17 below.

Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

Please see the answers to question 1 above (Amendments to the Abortion Act; The Act on Legal Recognition of Gender) and question 12 below (Free-of-charge contraception programme).

Unpaid care and domestic work / work-family conciliation (e.g. paid maternity, paternity or parental leave, care services)

Please see the answer to question 1 above (Family Leave Reform).

3. Over the past five years, what specific actions have you taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls?

Integration of immigrant women

The *'Report of the Finnish Government on the need for a reform in integration promotion'* (VNS 6/2021 vp) paid particular attention to the position of immigrant women. In this respect, the Parliament required that the Government take immediate action to promote the employment of women with an immigrant background and that immigrant women should be designated as a special target group for integration services. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment has examined ways to reach immigrant women, especially those outside the labour force, within the scope of employment-promoting services. Special attention will also be paid to the status of immigrant women in the new Act on the promotion of immigrant integration (681/2023), which will enter into force on 1 January 2025.

The Programme of Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government also focuses on the situation of immigrant women. According to the Government Programme, an action plan will be implemented to increase the participation of groups under-represented in working life, such as persons with disabilities, Roma, different immigrant groups and immigrant women. The Government Programme reserves EUR 5 million for 2025–2028 for improving the position of immigrant mothers as part of the overall reform of integration services.

Advancing the employment of highly educated women with immigrant background

The project *'Manifold more - Leverage to the professional careers of immigrant background women'* (2019–2022) led by Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) and partnered by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH) aimed to advance the employment and expertise of highly educated women with immigrant background. The European Social Fund (ESF) funded the project.

The project consisted of three components, which aimed to create gender-sensitive and diversity-promoting human resource practices in expert organisations, to strengthen the expertise and employment of women with immigrant background and to disentangle stereotypes associated with women with immigrant background through research and expert communications. The target group of the first component was professionals

working in human resources and recruitment in expert organisations as well as upper and middle level management. The project particularly focused on public sector organisations. The second component focused on women who have migrated to Finland. The primary target groups were highly educated women who are outside the labour force or overqualified as well as entrepreneurs. The third component focused on civil servants, career counsellors, and professionals working with integration matters in the public sector and third sector, girls and women with immigrant background and the general public in Finland.

The project produced new research-based information about the challenges as well as skills and positions in working among highly educated women with immigrant background in Finland. One of the outputs of the project is the publication '*Diversity promoting recruitment: Results from the recruitment experiment of the Manifold More project*'. The publication includes five diversity-promoting recruitment methods tested in the recruitment process of the project at THL: 1) the use of a diversity clause in the job advertisement, 2) critical assessment of the Finnish language skills required for the role, 3) an anonymous sample text, 4) communicating about the job advertisement visually and through networks, and 5) investing in recruitment communication (<https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-343-636-7>, in Finnish with an abstract in English). The project also produced a Diversity Barometer 2020 by FIOH (<https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:9789522619471>, in Finnish).

The project visualized information about the state of gender equality in working life and education in Finland by producing about 15 infographics in Finnish, Swedish and English (<https://thl.fi/en/topics/migration-and-cultural-diversity/integration-and-inclusion/gender-equality/equality-infographics-on-employment>). The infographics include intersectional analyses according to gender (women/men) and origin (Finnish and foreign-born), level of education and country of origin. The infographics also include new, unpublished statistics. For example, share of workforce employed in male- and female-dominated sectors (STEM and EHW) in Finland by gender and background and share of people working in equal occupations in Finland by gender and background.

Government support for Roma organisations and Roma women

Finland's National Roma Policy (Rompo 3, 2023–2030) is based on the EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation. As an EU Member State, Finland is committed to the objectives of the strategic framework, and aims to promote the equality and inclusion of the Roma in different areas of life.

The cross-cutting objectives of the National Roma Policy are equality, inclusion and participation, as well as the elimination of discrimination by tackling antigypsyism. Gender equality is taken into account particularly in themes relating to education and training, health and wellbeing.

The Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health funds Romano Missio's (registered NGO) work on Roma women and Roma families via the Ministry's Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA). Romano Missio has a permanent form of female-specific work called *Women's corner* (Naisten kulma). Women's corner offers leisure activities and other meaningful things to do and builds up a positive sense of community. Support is provided on an individual level to build a crime-free life. Women's corner's activities are based on the needs and wishes of Roma women with a criminal background. The goal is to support building a crime-free life already during imprisonment or community punishment. Read more at www.naistenkulma.fi.

'Valuable Life' (Arvokas elämä, 2021–2024) is another project of Romano Missio funded by the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The project offers services to Roma families in five cities (Helsinki, Vantaa, Espoo, Kerava and Järvenpää) where more than half of Finnish Roma population live in Finland. The project focuses on preventive and early intervention in order to break the cycle of violence and increase the safety of Roma families. The services include individual support, peer groups for women, children and men, theme days aimed at Roma, and training and lectures for social and health professionals. As part of the project, a helpline was in operation until August 2022. Read more at www.arvokastaelamaa.fi.

National Action Plan on the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2020–2023)

Finland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016. An action plan is drawn up for each government term to support the national implementation of the Convention. The Action Plan for 2020–2023 was the second of its kind. The Action Plan defined objectives and 110 concrete measures to be taken.

According to the ministries' assessments, 80 of the measures were implemented fully and 24 implemented partly. Six measures were not implemented. In general, the rights of persons with disabilities were promoted during the past action plan period in accordance with the objectives and measures of the Action Plan. However, the measures were not implemented as planned in all respects. The implementation of some of the measures will continue during the next government term. Global crises, the coronavirus pandemic and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine strongly influenced the implementation of the Action Plan. Responding to these crises forced authorities to reallocate resources in many areas.

The work to promote the rights of persons with disabilities continues and the next, third national Action Plan is currently under preparation.

4. Over the past five years, how has the confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls?

COVID-19

Please see the answer to question 14 below.

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

On 24 February 2022, Russia launched a war of aggression against Ukraine. The ongoing war of aggression is a flagrant violation of international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine is an attack against the entire European security order and Finland has strongly condemned it from the beginning. Finland firmly supports Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Approximately 69 000 people (13.5.2024) who fled Ukraine have applied for temporary protection in Finland. A significant part of them are children with their mothers. Those fleeing the war in Ukraine are entitled to temporary protection in the EU area. Those who receive temporary protection have essentially the same rights as asylum seekers and are entitled to reception services. However, those who have fled Ukraine have the right to work and study freely in Finland immediately after applying for temporary protection.

After one year of living in Finland, persons covered by temporary protection can apply for a home municipality registration under the requirements of the Home Municipality Act. After moving to a municipality of residence, persons covered by temporary protection become recipients of municipal services and services of the wellbeing services counties.

5. Over the next five years, what are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?

Eliminating violence against women

The Government will continue implementing the National Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention (2022–2025). The Action Plan has multiple notions on violence against women and it will also likely be an important part of the Government's upcoming Action Plan on Gender Equality. The Action Plan on Gender Equality is in process and will be published in autumn 2024. For more information, see the answer to question 30.

Working towards equal pay

The Government will promote the principle of equal pay. The information produced by experiments on anonymous recruitment will be utilised and compliance with the obligations laid down in the Equality Act will be monitored more effectively in order to promote equality in working life. The tripartite Equal Pay Programme

between the Government and the labour market organisations will continue. The Government will explore measures to reduce gender segregation in professional sectors.

The Government will commission a long-term economic impact analysis to examine the effects of equal pay programmes, legislative amendments, economic cycles, structural changes in the labour market and labour market measures on changes concerning the difference in average earnings between women and men.

The Government will promote national implementation of the EU's pay transparency directive.

Right to work and rights at work

The new regulation concerning parental allowances entered into force on 1 August 2022. Reliable data on the impacts of the reform is not yet available and the effects will be thoroughly examined later on. Although the share of fathers taking parental leave has increased in previous years, recent statistics show that only about 12% of parental allowance days were used by fathers in 2022. It is estimated that the more equal share of the care responsibilities will affect attitudes as well. The message of the reform is not only for parents but also for employers that both parents can take parental leave. In this way, the reform could help to reduce discrimination against women in the working life.

Gender mainstreaming and gender responsive budgeting

Gender mainstreaming has continued to be promoted through the key processes of ministries and in their operational structures. All Finnish ministries have a gender equality working group and have assigned an individual in charge of its coordination. They have annually assessed the gender impact in relation to a little more than one in ten government proposals. Furthermore, every ministry must include a summary assessment of budget-related activities with significant gender effects in their draft budgets.

Two ESF+ funded projects, [the Coordination for Equal Inclusion](#) and [the Coordination for Children, Youth and Families' Participation \(website in Finnish\)](#), started in 2023. The Coordination projects support gender mainstreaming in ESF+ projects and provide training and support material for project specialists and relevant stakeholders such as regional agencies in charge of project funding. The Coordination projects have special emphasis on developing gender-sensitive support and services for working-age people in marginalized and vulnerable positions as well as for children, young people and families.

Changing discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes

The Family Leave Reform has entered into force. This will have a positive impact on gender stereotypes and norms, as the goal is to distribute care equally between genders. See more information in the answer to question 1.

Section Three: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern

Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

Critical areas of concern:

- A. Women and poverty
- F. Women and the economy
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

6. Over the past five years, what actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)?

Working life diversity programme

One of the objectives of the previous Government's programme was to draw up a working life diversity programme. '*Working life diversity programme – Action plan to promote diversity of working life from the perspective of immigration and integration*' was published on 15 March 2021.

The measures of the working life diversity programme were designed to respond to key problems that, based on research, prevent the realisation of equality of immigrants in the labour market. The 18 measures selected for the programme highlighted the benefits of diversity and the available tools, developed business and employer services to offer support for increasing workforce diversity in companies and workplaces, contributed to the diversity of the public sector and organisations, strengthened the knowledge base, and thereby helped to combat discrimination in recruitment and promote equality in working life as a whole.

The implementation of the working life diversity programme began immediately after it was published. The implementation was successful: all measures were by the end of 2023. Within the framework of the programme,

a large number of employees of authorities, companies and organisations were trained, and awareness of diversity and the tools available to support it was increased.

Partial reform of the Non-Discrimination Act

The Non-Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination on other basis than gender, including age, origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, political activity, trade union activity, family relationships, state of health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics. The Equality Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity and gender expression. However, Non-Discrimination Act is applied in all cases of multiple discrimination, including in such cases where gender or other characteristic protected under the Equality Act is one of the grounds for discrimination. Therefore the protection system of the Non-Discrimination Act is relevant, for instance, if a person is discriminated against on the basis of their gender and origin.

A partial reform of the Non-Discrimination Act was concluded during the previous Government period. One of the main objectives of the reform was to strengthen the access to justice of victims of discrimination. As part of the reform, the mandate of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman was widened so that the Ombudsman can investigate discrimination cases also in employment-related matters. After the reform, both the Ombudsman and occupational safety and health authorities have the mandate to supervise the Act in employment matters. The amendments to the Non-Discrimination Act entered into force on 1 June 2023. The appropriation of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman was increased in 2023 to correspond to the new tasks.

Dismantling segregation – tools for a more equal working life

The project '*Dismantling segregation – tools for a more equal working life*' (2021–2023) was carried out by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The project was part of the Equal Pay Programme of the previous Government and the central labour market organisations. The project aimed to promote gender equality and to reduce gender-based segregation in working life by developing practices and network cooperation. The project published new tools and practices for workplaces to dismantle segregation in working life.

The project's publication '*Promoting gender equality at workplaces – ways of dismantling gender segregation*' (<https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-8433-2>, in Finnish with an English abstract) is a tool for workplaces to promote gender equality. It is the first mapping in Finland that brings together scattered good practices produced over years in the gender equality development and research projects and at workplaces. The publication consists of two parts. The first part contains a summary of studies on the state of gender segregation in the labour market and its effects, along with interview extracts on the experiences of those who have made a gender-atypical career choice. The second part includes concrete measures to dismantle

segregation under eight themes, for example gender-aware communications, equal recruitment practices, tackling discrimination and harassment, equal pay, supporting career progression, reconciling work, family and other areas of private life, and gender equality planning. The project also produced a Checklist for gender equality at the workplace on the THL's Gender Equality website to promote gender equality from the perspective of the employer and workplace management (www.thl.fi/tasaarvotyopaikalla, in Finnish). The toolbox includes good practices and methods, checklists, and guidelines.

The project published a *'Policy brief: Dismantling gender segregation in the labour market – Recommendations to decision-makers'* on the more permanent methods of dismantling segregation in working life and education. For example, the brief recommended that dismantling gender segregation must be a cross-cutting and prominent measure in key policies, strategies and activities, and a long-term, wide-ranging and goal-oriented cooperation and a permanent structure are a prerequisite for dismantling gender segregation. In addition, intersectional statistical and research data must be produced on the state of gender segregation both nationally and regionally (<https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-8429-5>, in Finnish with an English abstract).

The project created new type of regional cooperation and strengthened existing regional cooperation between key working life and education actors to dismantle gender segregation. The project built regional cooperation networks in three areas in Finland and offered tools and organized trainings and two workshops to the networks and pilot organisations to support the development work to dismantle gender segregation. The project's final report brings together recommendations based on the project's activities and the development work of the project's regional networks and pilot organisations (<https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-8485-1>, in Finnish with an abstract in English).

The project has long-lasting impacts. The project raised public discussion of the problems of gender segregation and benefits of dismantling segregation as part of the solution to the labour shortage, particularly in female and male-dominated sectors. In addition, media have been interested to take part in the discussion and shared the outputs and results of the project. Many national and regional organisations have been interested in using the tools and measures of the project to promote gender equality and dismantle gender segregation in their activities. Aims and measures to dismantle segregation have been taken into account in national and regional work, for example in the strategies for Lifelong Guidance. After the project, the three regional networks have continued their work and three new regional networks have started. The regional networks meet regularly to exchange experiences and learnings. The aim is to build co-operation networks over Finland to dismantle gender segregation.

Equal Pay

Please see the answer to question 2 above.

7. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?

Improving childcare services and the situation of students with minor children

All children under school age have a subjective right to early childhood education and care (ECEC), and the parents of the child decide whether their child participates in ECEC. In 2015, the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care was changed to enable municipalities to restrict the individual entitlement to early childhood education and care to 20 hours for the children of parents who were out of work. The Act on Early Childhood Education and Care was changed again in 2020 to remove this restriction, restoring the individual entitlement to early childhood education, as the implications on gender and regional equality and the welfare of children were recognised.

Reductions in client fees were also implemented for ECEC. The first reduction came into force as of 1 August 2021. The client fees for low and middle-income families were reduced and the sibling reduction was raised from 50% to 60%. The next reduction in client fees was implemented as of 1 March 2023. The reduction was implemented by raising the income thresholds on which the fees are based by 33%. As a result of this last reform, approximately 30,000 households were estimated to receive free early childhood education and care. The municipalities were compensated for the loss of accrual of client fees. Altogether, EUR 140 million were allocated for municipalities to cover these reductions.

In addition, improvements have been made to the situation of students who are guardians of minors. The provider supplement to the study grant for guardians of a minor child has been granted from year 2018 onwards and will be increased in 2024.

Reconciliation of work and family life

The research project '*Changing forms of work, family leaves and the reconciliation of work and family life*', led by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) and conducted together with the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (Kela) during 2022–2024, examined the reconciliation of employment and family life among parents of young children, focusing particularly on the use of parental leaves in changing labour markets from the perspectives of mothers and fathers. The study analysed the associations between various background factors and the use of parental leaves and home care allowance as well as part-time work among mothers and fathers. Additionally, it examined parents' justifications for caregiving solutions and their experiences of attitudes towards parental leaves in workplaces and of reconciling work and parenthood.

The results of the project were based on the Parental Leave Survey 2022, a population survey directed at parents of 1–2-year-old children in the spring of 2022. The respondents included 1,824 mothers and 1,524 fathers, and 609 mothers living in single-parent households.

The results indicate that, in addition to gender, the use of parental leaves or part-time work are shaped by parents' socioeconomic background and family structure, labour markets and workplace practices, as well as cultural ideals of parenthood and caregiving. Parents' decisions within families are also interconnected.

The results of the project can be used in anticipating and in the future evaluation of the effects of the parental leave reform that took place in August 2022 as well as in the further development of family leave policies and workplace practices.

The Family Leave Reform

Please see the answer to question 1 above.

8. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce the gender digital divide?

In Finland, all consumers and businesses have the right to access basic communications services, or universal services, at a reasonable quality and an affordable price at their home or place of business. All consumers have the right irrespective of gender. The right is safeguarded in areas with insufficient commercial supply by designation of an operator to provide such universal services. The broadband connection provided under the universal service obligation must have a download speed of at least 5 Mbps. The speed of universal service broadband service was increased in 2021 from 2Mbps to the current 5 Mbps.

The Finnish Framework for Digital Competence

In Finland, digital competence, including digital literacy and online safety, is not taught as a separate subject in early childhood education and care, pre-primary and basic education. However, multi-literacy and various ICT skills are included in the National Core Curriculum for Early Childhood Education and Care 2022, the National Core Curriculum for Pre-primary Education 2016 and the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014 via transversal competence objectives. They are included as part of all taught subjects.

The Finnish National Agency for Education and the National Audiovisual Institute published [the Framework for Digital Competence](#) in June 2022. The Framework has been produced in 'The New Literacies' development programme (2020–2023) that is part of the wider 'Right to Learn' programme launched by the Ministry of

Education and Culture. A total of EUR 12 million were awarded during the programme by the Ministry of Education and Culture towards developing and improving digital competence throughout Finland. The Framework for Digital Competence has been prepared in cooperation with teachers, experts and digital competence networks.

Building a movement for technology and innovation for gender equality

Finland has advocated for technology and gender equality widely, including within the UN, the EU and Freedom Online Coalition (FOC). As part of the five-year (2022–2026) UN Women led Generation Equality Campaign, Finland acts as a co-leader in the Technology and Innovations for Gender Equality Action Coalition. Nationally, Finland continues to host an active Generation Equality Advisory Group that brings together experts from public and private sectors and civil society, and a Generation Equality Youth Group, run by Plan International Finland and UN Women Finland. The youth group has drafted a [manifesto](#) on the role of the technology sector in tackling technology-facilitated gender-based violence. In 2021, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland launched a communication campaign called ‘*Algorithm for Gender Equality*’ to bring on board technology and innovation sector actors to decrease gender segregation in the technology sector.

Taken measures to promote gender-responsive STEM education

Please see the answer to question 13 below.

9. In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?

The coronavirus pandemic that began in 2020 and Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine that began in 2022 have significantly weakened Finland’s macroeconomic environment. Finland’s economy recovered rapidly after summer 2020, and the positive trend continued until summer 2022. After this, the rapid rise in energy costs caused by the war halted economic growth. In 2019–2023, the average annual growth in Finland’s gross domestic product (GDP) was only 0.4%, while in the previous review period in 2014–2018 it was 1.5% on average. The weaker macro environment has affected all citizens, but especially women, children and young people.

The biggest macroeconomic impacts of the pandemic concerned Finland’s exports and households’ consumption. Certain sectors and groups were severely affected by the crisis. The accommodation and catering sector, recreational services and logistics were particularly affected. At the start of the pandemic, unemployment among women increased compared to men. During spring 2020, the number of unemployed

women grew both in absolute terms (by around 99,000) and in relative terms more than the number of unemployed men (by around 83,000). This is explained by the relative distribution of lay-offs and unemployment more in female-dominated service industries. In relative terms, the growth was higher among women, because the share of women among unemployed jobseekers was lower at the beginning of 2020 than among men.

In addition, the coronavirus pandemic has caused long-term exceptional pressure on the Finnish healthcare and social welfare system, which has burdened female-dominated personnel. The crisis is also estimated to have increased labour shortages in female-dominated sectors. In addition, the coronavirus pandemic led to exceptional teaching arrangements at different levels of study. Children and young people have experienced increasing and more difficult problems related to learning and wellbeing.

During 2020–2022, the previous Government adopted a number of fixed-term and targeted economic policy measures related to combating the health and economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic and stimulating the economy. These decisions concerned directed funds up to approximately EUR 16.4 billion to 2026. Finland's general government debt grew rapidly during the review period.

In 2022, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the strong rise in prices had a significant impact on Finland's economy. Although the direct economic impact was lower than feared, energy and raw material prices increased sharply. This had a wide impact on the economy, and consumer prices rose by 7.1% in 2022. Consumer prices rose clearly faster than income, and households' real purchasing power fell. With its economic policy, the previous Government supported the reduction of energy prices and the impacts of inflation by a total of approximately EUR 1.4 billion in 2023. Subsidies were targeted e.g. at pensions (21% more women than men are pensioners), early childhood education and care fees, electricity credits for households and housing.

The sharp rise in prices also led to tighter monetary policy, and the European Central Bank increased its interest rate at a rapid rate from summer 2022 onwards. The 12-month EURIBOR rate used as the reference rate for housing loans in Finland rose from the early part of 2022 from -0.5% to over 3% in the latter part of the year. Because men have more debts than women, the rise in financing costs is unlikely to weaken women's financial position more than men's.

Women's employment rate (aged 15 to 64) rose to 74.1% in 2023, which was 4.4 percentage points higher than in 2018. The corresponding change for men was 1.4 percentage points (73.1%). Women's unemployment rate (6.5% in 2023) was clearly lower than men's (8.1%). The average monthly earnings of female employees (EUR 3,608 in 2023) rose slightly more in percentages in 2019–2023 than those of men (EUR 4,258 in 2023), yet on average, women's monthly earnings still remained at around 85% of men's. Measured in this way, pay differentials decreased by 0.6 percentage points.

The Ministry of Finance commissioned a study on the gender impacts of economic policy during the 2019–2023 parliamentary term. The report assesses the permanent changes in social security benefits and personal taxation during the past parliamentary term using the microsimulation model. Based on the review, the changes have narrowed down both gender and internal differences slightly. In addition, the gender impacts of the key reforms of the past three parliamentary terms have been assessed. The evaluation included the family leave reform, the extension of compulsory education and the introduction of the Nordic labour market service model. They are estimated to have a positive or neutral impact on gender equality. Based on an assessment, the economic policy of the previous parliamentary term as a whole has been neutral in terms of gender impacts or promoting gender equality. At the very least, it can be said that economic policy measures have not weakened gender equality during the previous parliamentary term.

Sources:

- Government annual report 2022
- Eetu Isotalo, Tomi Kyyrä, Sakari Lähdemäki, Hanna Pesola, Terhi Ravaska, Tuomo Suhonen, Juuso Villanen: The effects of Covid-19 crisis on economic outcomes, Publications of the Government's analysis, assessment and research activities 2022:56
- Juho-Matti Paavola, Inkeri Tanhua, Sami Kotiranta, Eugen Koev: Assessment of the gender effects of economic policy in the 2019–2023 parliamentary term
- Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on well-being, service system and national economy: Expert evaluation. Spring 2022.
- Ministry of Finance: General Government Fiscal Plan for 2024–2027

Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

Critical areas of concern:

- A. Women and poverty
- B. Education and training of women
- C. Women and health
- I. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

10. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

Finland's social security system is built on a very gender-neutral premise, as the benefits paid are based on certain conditions/social security rights and benefits are individual-based. Thus, reducing or eradicating poverty among women and girls can be attributed to broader societal structures and social norms than just

social security. In the previous government term, the government did an additional index increase on some of the social security benefits and one additional child benefit instalment was paid to beneficiaries.

The current Government aims to reduce poverty by simultaneously developing benefits and services and by improving employment. The livelihood of families with children will be improved by raising the child benefit for children under three years of age, by increasing the single parent supplements for child benefits, by developing student's parent supplement and by increasing the child benefit for families with multiple children.

11. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls?

Temporary measures during the COVID-19 pandemic

Access to social security in Finland is secured for everyone through residence-based benefits. Thus, the coverage of the system is generally universal. During the COVID-19 pandemic, some temporary measures were taken to ensure easier access to certain social benefits, but these measures targeted everyone in the same way regardless of gender. The government made temporary amendments to the Unemployment Security Act, the Act on Financing Unemployment Benefits and the Act on Unemployment Funds. Temporary financial assistance benefit was introduced for parents who had taken unpaid leave in order to look after a younger child or a child with special needs. Temporary concessions were made to unemployment benefit for the self-employed. Employers' pension insurance contributions were decreased by 2.6 percentage points for a temporary period of 1.5.–31.12.2020.

Extraordinary index adjustments

Furthermore, in addition to normal index adjustments made in January each year, due to high inflation extraordinary index adjustments were made for multiple social security benefits in July 2022. The extraordinary index adjustments concerned benefits linked to national pension index, as well as unemployment benefits and benefits under the health insurance act.

Pregnancy and parental allowance

The new regulation concerning the parental allowances entered into force on 1 August 2022. Since the reform, pregnancy allowance is paid for a total of 40 working days for pregnant parent. Parental allowance is paid up to 320 working days. Parental allowance is divided equally between both parents, and one parent can transfer a maximum of 63 days of their quota for the other parent. Single parents will have the right to use the quotas

of both parents. All parents who have custody of their child will have an equal right to daily allowance regardless of whether they are biological or adoptive, custodial or non-custodial and regardless of the gender of the parent.

Reliable data on the impacts of the reform is not yet available and the effects will be thoroughly examined later on. Although the share of fathers taking parental leave has increased in previous years, recent statistics show that only about 12% of parental allowance days were used by fathers in 2022. It is estimated that the more equal share of the care responsibilities will affect attitudes as well. The message of the reform is not only for parents but also for the employers that both the mother and the father can take parental leave. In this way, the reform could help to reduce discrimination against women in the working life.

12. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?

Amendments to the Abortion Act

The amendments to the Abortion Act entered into force on 1 September 2023. The most significant amendment is that before the end of the 12th week of pregnancy, abortion is possible on the basis of the pregnant woman's own request. Pregnant women no longer need to present any grounds for their request. Previously, in order to end the pregnancy there was a requirement in the law (originated from 1970) to have the opinion of two doctors and a separate reason had to be presented.

The amendments did not change the regulation regarding terminations after the 12th week of pregnancy. At the request of the pregnant woman, the pregnancy can also be terminated after the 12th week of pregnancy, if continuing the pregnancy or giving birth to a child would endanger the life or health of the pregnant woman. In this case, the condition for terminating the pregnancy is the positive decision of two doctors.

Abortions are now made either on the basis of the pregnant person's own request, by decision of Valvira (Central supervisor agency of social and health care), by decision of two physicians if there is a health risk or by emergency interruption. Even if there is suspected foetal damage but the duration of pregnancy is $\leq 12+0$ weeks, permission to interrupt pregnancy is not applied for from Valvira, but it is based on the pregnant woman's own request. When the duration of pregnancy exceeds $12+0$ weeks, the reason for postponing the abortion is recorded in Valvira's applications.

According to the Act, not only a physician but also another licensed health care professional with sufficient competence for the task may provide advice on the significance and effects of abortion to pregnant women and on contraception. However, if the ground for abortion is foetal abnormality, the information has to be

given by a specialist specialised in foetal abnormalities. The Act includes also the right of a person requesting or considering abortion and the other parent to receive the psychosocial support they need. The provision according to which the father of a child to be expected shall be reserved an opportunity to express his or her opinion, if deemed justified, only applies to pregnancies of $\geq 12+1$ weeks.

Free-of-charge contraception programme

A nationwide experiment of the free-of-charge contraception programme was implemented as part of the future Health and Social Services Centres programme in 2022–2023. The experiment was aimed at people under 25 years of age, and it enabled the regions to develop and harmonise sexual health services intended for young people. The experiment continued until the end of 2023, but many regions have adopted the good practices as their permanent mode of operation.

The contraceptive services developed in the experiment include prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, sexual and reproductive health counselling and sexuality education. The available contraception options included all contraceptive tools for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases: pills, capsules, rings, patches, twists and condoms.

The objectives of the experiment were as follows:

- The key principles in organising contraceptive services were the uniformity, availability, accessibility, quality and patient safety of services.
- All contraceptive methods were available for everyone under the age of 25, regardless of gender, and the most suitable ones were chosen with a healthcare professional.
- The aim was to organize comprehensive contraceptive services, including prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, sexual and reproductive health counselling and sexuality education.
- The competence of professionals was ensured through adequate training of personnel.
- The accessibility of services was improved through, for example, digitalisation, remote appointments, roll-out of the service and new division of labour between personnel.

The National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) supported and coordinated the development work carried out in the regions and collected information on the results for evaluation. As a result of the experiment, the availability of contraceptives became more equal and the range widened. All short and long-term contraceptive methods such as condoms and oral sex masks were included in the range of the means of contraceptive devices.

Register for assisted reproductive treatments

Involuntary infertility is an important public health issue: about 15% of 30–35-year-olds and 40% of 35–40-year-olds have suffered from infertility at some point of their lives in Finland. Therefore, the need for assisted fertility treatments affects a large group of people in Finland. For an individual, treatments are often both a financial and an emotional burden but also often a substantial expense for the society. Equal access to fertility treatments can be seen as an important way to reduce unintentional infertility, and monitoring the treatments give information on possible health effects on women and children born after the treatments.

In 2023, THL decided to establish a nationwide cycle-based register for assisted reproductive treatments. A cycle-based register is the only way to monitor the effectiveness and quality of assisted fertility treatments. The register is needed to cover long-term information gaps and is important for the development of the treatments and the evaluation of their cost-effectiveness. With register-based data we will be able e.g. to assess cumulative treatment results, person's entire treatment history, and clinic and region-specific differences in Finland.

With the register data available, long-term monitoring of the effects of the treatments will be possible and other Finnish health registers can be utilized in this work. The register is also a basis for participating in international development and research.

13. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?

Extending the requirement for non-discrimination and equality planning to early childhood education and care

Amendments to the Equality Act and Non-discrimination Act were accepted by the Parliament in autumn 2022 and the laws took effect in June 2023. The requirement for non-discrimination planning and promotion of equality under the Non-discrimination Act was extended to early childhood education and care (ECEC) providers and service providers and the obligation to plan for gender equality was extended to ECEC. Equality and non-discrimination plans must be drawn up in early education centres in cooperation with the personnel, children and guardians. Note that the Non-discrimination Act includes other grounds of discrimination than gender. However, the two amendments were drafted simultaneously in order to highlight the significance of both gender equality as well as equity. In addition, the provisions on the prevention of discrimination based on gender identity or gender expression was extended to include ECEC. Finnish National Agency for Education has prepared extensive guide material for the personnel in ECEC in drafting the plans and advancing equality and non-discrimination. The responsibility for drafting a plan already existed in schools and higher education institutions.

Publication of materials supporting the implementation of gender equality and non-discrimination in education

The National Agency for Education has produced various materials (in Finnish and in Swedish) to support the implementation of curricula:

- The following web page that supports equality and equity planning on the grassroots level in the Finnish education system was updated in 2023: <https://www.oph.fi/fi/koulutus-ja-tutkinnot/tasa-arvo-ja-yhdenvertaisuussuunnittelu>
- As a follow-up for the equality and equity planning in the primary and lower secondary education, the following national report was published in 2020: <https://www.oph.fi/fi/tilastot-ja-julkaisut/julkaisut/tasa-arvosuunnitelmien-seuranta-2019>
- For enhancing equality and equity planning in upper secondary education, the following national guide was published in 2019: <https://www.oph.fi/fi/tilastot-ja-julkaisut/julkaisut/mukana-tasa-arvo-ja-yhdenvertaisuustyö-toisella-asteella>. In addition, a guide for equality and equity planning in early childhood education and care and pre-primary education was published: <https://www.oph.fi/fi/koulutus-ja-tutkinnot/varhaiskasvatus/varhaiskasvatuksen-tueksi/tasa-arvo-ja-yhdenvertaisuus-varhaiskasvatuksessa-ja-esiopetuksessa>

As a follow-up for the equality and equity planning in the secondary education, a study has been carried out, the results of which will be published later in 2024. Preliminary results are already available (in Finnish): <https://www.oph.fi/sites/default/files/documents/Opetushallituksen%20esitys.pdf>.

The Finnish National Agency for Education supports the Finnish schools in implementing a gender sensitive approach in education: <https://www.oph.fi/fi/koulutus-ja-tutkinnot/sukupuolitietoinen-opetus-ja-ohjaus> (in Finnish)

The content of the VET qualifications has been systematically reviewed with regard to gendered language: <https://www.oph.fi/fi/uutiset/2023/ammattillisten-tutkintojen-kielta-uudistetaan-sukupuolineutraalimmaksi> (in Finnish)

Even though the level of anxiety regarding studying mathematics is low in Finland, girls have experienced higher anxiety than boys: <https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/165295> (in Finnish). One weekly lesson will be added for mathematics at grade levels 3 to 6 (https://okm.fi/-/opetusministeri-henriksson-oppilaiden-perustaitoja-vahvistetaan-opetustunteja-lisaamalla-ja-tukitoimia-uudistamalla?languageId=en_US).

The Finnish National Agency for Education has also published a guide to promote gender equality and non-discrimination in upper secondary education (*'Mukana! Tasa-arvo- ja yhdenvertaisuustyö toisella asteella'*, 2019) and to ECEC and Pre-primary Education (2023). The guide to ECEC and to pre-primary education

encourages readers to discuss and think about values and attitudes that influence the work and the work community and to remove practices that produce inequality. The guide to upper secondary education brings up good practices and development targets in equality and non-discrimination.

The Criteria for Good Guidance were updated in 2023 and include guidance on counselling from comprehensive school to upper secondary level education. According to the guidelines, good guidance dismantles segregation in education and training choices and the labour market through gender-aware guidance and promotes gender equality. Gender-aware guidance is defined as sensitivity to recognise individuality and personality in each learner. In good guidance, the aim is to ensure that the learner is not socialised into their external gender.

The accessibility plan for higher education and higher education institutions was published in 2021 (<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-263-838-0>). It includes a review of how social, regional and linguistic equality is realised in higher education and presents objectives and policies for promoting accessibility specifically for under-represented population groups and minority groups. The review examines the following background factors: family background, regional accessibility of higher education, gender segregation, migrant background, functional limitations and disability, belonging to linguistic and cultural minorities, diverse learning, and belonging to sexual and gender minorities. In 2022, the Ministry of Education and Culture instructed higher education institutions (HEIs) to draw up their own accessibility plans based on the common guidelines contained in the accessibility plan for higher education. The achievement of the objectives of HEIs' accessibility plans will be monitored as part of the steering process between HEIs and the Ministry of Education and Culture.

The Finnish National Agency for Education grants discretionary subsidies for staff training in education and early childhood education and care by approximately EUR 15 million per year. In 2020–2023, the themes of staff training include promoting equality and non-discrimination, promoting inclusion, well-being and security in learning communities (including honour-based violence), and strengthening leadership skills and community development. For example, in 2021 a total of approximately EUR 1.8 million has been granted for staff training to promote equality and non-discrimination, including training related to increasing equality in digitalisation, and about EUR 2.4 million in 2022.

The Finnish National STEM Strategy and Action Plan

Ministry of Education and Culture published the Finnish National STEM Strategy and Action Plan in May 2023. The strategy part was published online in 2021 and the following action plan was drafted during 2022 to implement the strategy. The aim of the Strategy and the Action Plan is to ensure that there is science, mathematics, engineering and technology competence and understanding in our society to promote wellbeing as well as socially, ecologically and economically sustainable growth. Measures are divided into three

categories: 1) Measures for developing teaching and education, 2) measures for monitoring, surveys and general development, and 3) measures for promoting communications and interest.

The STEM Strategy and Action Plan promote equality and equal opportunities. Inequalities in learning should be prevented and equal opportunities and sufficient capabilities for developing STEM competence should be guaranteed regardless of age, gender, social and cultural background or language throughout Finland. The aim is to promote and support learning and teaching in mathematical and scientific subjects and technical fields at all levels of education, with equal encouragement for all genders.

14. What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?

A report on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on gender equality in Finland was published as part of the Government's analysis, assessment and research activities in May 2022. The results of the report showed that, like crises in general, the COVID-19 crisis treated genders and groups of people differently. The crisis highlighted society's unequal and gendered structures, such as the segregation of the labour market and the unequal distribution of caregiving responsibilities.

Most of the negative impacts of the crisis on the different areas of gender equality were relatively short-term. Long-term impacts were identified in relation to wellbeing and mental health and equality in the workplace, especially concerning the workload in the social welfare and health care sector. According to the report, equality perspectives and objectives were not included in the decision-making concerning the restriction and support measures related to the crisis.

The report contained recommendations on how the problems could be taken into account in crisis aftercare, in gender equality policy and in preparing for future crises.

Firstly, according to the report, gender perspective must be taken into account in the aftermath of a crisis. This means measures to mitigate the gendered impacts of the crisis and supporting particularly affected groups. For example, more emphasis should be placed on working conditions and wellbeing at work in the female-dominated health and social services sector and in the education sector. Employees in these sectors were particularly burdened by the COVID-19 crisis, and employees, especially in services for older people, had already been burdened before the crisis. In addition, the long-term gender impacts and gender equality impacts of the crisis should be monitored. It is also important to monitor the slow recovery of men's employment rate in the middle age groups and the gendered effects of the structural change in working life accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis.

Secondly, the report notes that it is important to take into account the gendered effects of the COVID-19 crisis and the factors affecting them in the gender equality policy. Gender equality policy can play a role in mitigating the gendered effects of the crisis. Gender equality policy can also be used to ensure the visibility of gender perspectives in decision-making also in times of crisis. For example, greater efforts are needed to address the problems that caused gendered impacts during the COVID-19 crisis (e.g. segregation, division of care, violence). In addition, practices related to gender mainstreaming should be updated to cover decision-making in times of crisis.

Thirdly, the report notes that the gender perspective must be taken into account in preparing for and managing future crises. On the one hand, the role of welfare services and gender equality in increasing the resilience of society must be recognised. On the other hand, it must be ensured by various means that the gender and equality perspective is included in decision-making related to future crises. Promoting gender equality and non-discrimination should be seen as part of increasing and strengthening societal resilience. A strong gender equality policy helps to ensure that the gender impacts of future crises are minimised.

Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

Critical areas of concern:

- D. Violence against women
- I. Human rights of women
- J. Women and the media
- L. The girl child

15. Over the past five years, which forms of gender-based violence, and in which specific contexts or settings, has your country prioritized for action?

Intimate partner violence and domestic violence

In the current Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention (2022–2025), most of the measures can be considered to focus on intimate partner violence and domestic violence. However, the plan does take into account the existing work with regard to expanding the network of SERI Support Centres for victims of sexual violence and rape and continuing the work on preventing honour-related violence and female genital mutilation (FGM).

The new legislation on sexual offences

In the past few years, there was growing demand, in particular among the civil society and academics, to clarify the definition of rape so that it is based on consent. This demand related to studies showing that the use of physical violence is often not necessary to get someone into sexual intercourse against will. There was also

demand to ensure that in the legal definitions of sexual offences against children, less significance is given to the child's will. On this basis, in 2018 the Finnish Parliament adopted a statement requiring the Government to initiate a legislative reform of provisions on sexual offences in the Criminal Code. In 2019, the Government began such a legislative reform.

The new legislation on sexual offences entered into force on 1 January 2023. The legislative reform strengthens everyone's right to sexual self-determination and personal integrity.

The key change is that the definition of rape is now based on consent. Rape is sexual intercourse with a person who does not participate in it voluntarily. The absence of voluntariness is also an essential element of other sexual offences. As a result of the reform, punishments for sexual offences will become tougher.

In addition to rape, most other provisions on sexual offences in Chapter 20 of the Criminal Code were amended. An important change is, for example, that when the act is sufficiently severe, sexual harassment can be committed through acts other than touching. Non-consensual dissemination of a sexual image is punishable under the amended legislation. The amended legislation addresses sexual abuse online in many ways.

The definition of sexual offences against children emphasises the integrity of the child. Offences against children are classified as more severe than before. The punishments will also be more severe. The starting point is that a child cannot consent to a sexual act with an adult.

Digital violence

In the past years, more attention has been given to digital dimensions of violence against women in Finland. Latest research¹ shows for example that digital violence is the most common form of violence in young people's (dating/intimate partner) relationships. There is more understanding of the digital dimensions of violence generally partly because the media and NGOs have given more attention to it. Professionals working with clients in the social and health care sectors are offered more training and tools related to digital violence, for example a mapping tool concerning digital violence and coercive control. The tool is created especially for the shelter services, but it is available online for anyone to use².

In 2022, The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) published an online training on digital violence, which is openly available to the public. In particular, it is aimed at professionals and students in the social and

¹ Isotalo (toim.) (2023): Väkivalta nuorten seurusteluolosuhteissa. Kyselytutkimuksen tuloksia. [Violence in young people's dating relationships]. Tampereen yliopisto. <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-03-2936-5>

² Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. Digitaalisen väkivallan tunnistaminen ja siihen puuttuminen turvakodeissa. [Identifying and addressing digital violence in shelters].

<https://thl.fi/documents/8249976/8426623/Ty%C3%B6v%C3%A4line+digitaalisen+v%C3%A4kivallan+tunnistamiseksi+ja+siihen+puuttumiseksi+turvakodeissa.pdf/33c42272-5492-eff7-32ec-f6ad309b8e74?t=1663675399550>

health care sectors and education and security. Digital violence online training raises awareness of digital violence, stalking and coercive control in close relationships. The online training will help to identify the different forms of digital violence and the complexity of the phenomenon and increase the capacity of professionals to address digital violence³.

Honour-related violence, female genital mutilation and forced marriages

In recent years in Finland, honour-related violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriages have received more attention in national policies. National action programmes (⁴, ⁵) have been drawn up to tackle the phenomena more effectively.

The second national action plan for the prevention of FGM was published in 2019⁶. It contains recommendations on measures for preventing the practice and supporting women and girls who have undergone it. The short-term objective is that girls who live and reside in Finland will not be mutilated in Finland or be sent abroad to be mutilated. In addition to the number of good practices to prevent FGM that were already being implemented, stronger measures are proposed to promote the wellbeing of girls and women who have undergone FGM and to improve the quality and availability of the services offered to them. The implementation of the action plan has progressed, and an interim evaluation of the implementation is underway. There have also been several prevalence studies on FGM⁷. According to those and national estimates there can be around 10,000 women living with FGM in Finland. According to the School Health Promotion Study, there are also underage girls in Finland who have undergone FGM but no research evidence and no court cases on the actual pursuit of FGM in Finland. According to the Programme of Prime Minister Orpo's Government, FGM will be more explicitly criminalised in the Criminal Code. Taking a minor girl abroad to undergo FGM will also be criminalised. The government proposal is to be submitted to the Parliament in spring 2024.

According to the study '*Gender based violence and domestic violence in Finland 2021*' (Statistics Finland 2023, <https://www.doria.fi/handle/10024/187737>) 2% of respondents (N=6113) said they had experienced honour-related violence or the threat of it (aged 16–74). Experiences were most common in the 16–34 age group,

³ THL (2022): Digitaalinen väkivalta -verkkokoulutus. <https://thl.fi/fi/palvelut-ja-asiointi/verkkokoulutus#digitaalinen>

⁴ Ruuskanen, E. (2020): The Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women 2020–2023. Publications of the Ministry of Justice, Memorandums and statements 2020:15. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-259-835-6>

⁵ Korpilahti, U., Kettunen, H., Nuotio, E., Jokela, S., Nummi, V. M., Lillsunde, P. (2020): Non-Violent Childhoods: Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children 2020–2025. Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2020:34. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-8351-9>

⁶ Koukkula, M. & Klemetti, R. (2019): Action plan for the prevention of female genital mutilation (FGM). Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2019:7. <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-4065-9>

⁷ Koukkula et al. 2020. Improving Data Collection on Female Genital Mutilation/ Cutting (FGM/C) in Finland. In S. Johnsdotter (Eds.) Female Genital Cutting. The Global Norths and South. Malmö University. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1508633/FULLTEXT01.pdf>

where 4% of people had experienced it and 12% had experienced HRV or the threat of it or had witnessed HRV. Marriage had been persuaded, pressured or forced on 1% of both women and men. Most of the acts were persuasion or pressure: only 0.2% reported having experienced direct coercion. Of those who marry against their will, most were aged between 55–74.

According to statistics of the shelters (^{8, 9, 10}) number of customers admitted at shelters for victims of honour related violence was 211 in 2020, 162 in 2021 and 101 in 2022. Also, the Assistance system for victims of human trafficking reports of cases related to forced marriage in the system and in 2021 there were 176 clients and in 2022 there were 221 cases¹¹. Also, the NGOs working on violence have reported over 400 cases of honour-related violence in 2021¹². Honour-related violence has also begun to be recognized among the native Finnish population, for example in old conservative Christian religious communities and among ethnic minorities who have lived in Finland for a long time.

Regarding forced marriages, see also the answer to question 21 (the revision of the Marriage Act).

Role of the police in preventing and investigating gender-based violence

The police have over the last five years developed the work to prevent and investigate all forms of gender-based violence and violence against women through both own actions as well as in close cooperation with other authorities and third sector organisations. The police take part in the work of NAPE – The Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, which is responsible for the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the measures required under the Istanbul Convention in Finland. The police have also taken part in the creation of the National Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women and the Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings. Specific themes prioritized by the police:

- Intimate partner violence, including sexual violence and marital rape
- Domestic violence committed by other family or household members
- Sexual harassment and violence in public places, educational settings and workplaces
- Violence against women and girls facilitated by technology (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)

⁸ Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. 2021. Tilastoraportti 17/2021. (Statistics of Shelter Services). https://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/142646/Tilastoraportti%202020%2028.5.2021_FINAL.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

⁹ Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. 2022. Tilastoraportti 20/2022. (Statistics of Shelter Services). <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2022053039363>

¹⁰ Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. 2023. Tilastoraportti 27/2023. (Statistics of Shelter Services). <https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe2023052949105>

¹¹ The National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking (2023): 2022 Annual overview of the National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking. https://www.ihmiskauppa.fi/en/materials/statistics_and_info_about_the_assistance_system_for_victims_of_human_trafficking/annual_overview_2022_of_the_nas

¹² Karimi et al. (2022): Kunnian ja häpeän ristipaineessa. Opas ammattilaisille kunniaan liittyvän väkivallan tekijöiden kohtaamiseen. [A guide for professionals confronting perpetrators of honour related violence].

Settlementti Tampere. https://www.didar.fi/@Bin/258580/Kunniaksi_Opas_VALMIS_final.pdf

- Femicide/Feminicide/gender-related killings of women and girls
- Gender-based violence against women in politics, including women's human rights defenders
- Child, early and forced marriages
- Female genital mutilation
- Trafficking in women and girls

The National Police Board's (NPB) tasks include planning, directing, developing and supervising police operations and the related support functions. NPB has during the last years issued several directives, guidelines and working tools to combat all forms of gender-based violence:

- Directive on Police Action in Cases of Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Violence and Violence Against women
- Directive on Identification, Investigation and Recording of a Suspected Hate Crime or a Crime with Such Characteristics in Police Activities
- Directive on Addressing Trafficking in Human Beings and Similar Offences and Assisting Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings
- Directive on Referral of Victims of Crime and Mediation in Criminal Cases
- Directive on Restraining Orders
- Functional Manual on Intervening and Preventing Domestic Violence
- Handbook on Investigating Violent and Sexual Crimes Against Children
- Handbook on Honour Related Violence for First Responders
- Working Tool on Honour Related Violence for Investigators

These are just examples on documents steering the work of the police concerning gender-based violence. Furthermore, the subject is widely included in the police training by the Police University College as well as in-service training by all police departments.

16. In the past five years, what actions has your country prioritized to address gender-based violence?

Introduction of national action plans to end violence against women and girls

Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the 'Istanbul Convention', entered into force in Finland on 1 August 2015. In Finland, the Convention is also applicable to men and boys experiencing domestic violence. In response to the Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention, in 2017 Finland established a Committee for Combating Violence against Women

and Domestic Violence (NAPE), which was set up by government decree. The Committee, consisting of representatives of various ministries and government agencies, is responsible for the co-ordination, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the Convention. In the latter half of 2020, NAPE's role was further reinforced as the body was allocated additional financial resources and a permanent position of Secretary General was established for the Committee.

In addition, a working group consisting of mainly NGOs has been established in connection to the NAPE Committee to facilitate exchange of information between governmental agencies and non-governmental organisations regarding the implementation of policies and measures on gender-based violence.

NAPE is responsible for drawing up a national implementation plan for the Istanbul Convention. The first Action Plan (2018–2021), containing 48 measures, was completed by the end of 2021. The plan was evaluated by external evaluators. The evaluation report '*Solid unstructured foundation – Assessment of the Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention for 2018–2021*' was published in March 2022 (<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-8663-3> (only in Finnish, abstract available also in English)).

The second [plan](#) covering years 2022–2025 was published in March 2022 to advance and step up the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. The plan includes long-term objectives and a total of 36 measures to be implemented in 2022–2025. The objectives are largely based on the recommendations issued by GREVIO. The three main objectives of the plan aim at strengthening i.) gender perspective and intersectionality in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, ii.) reinforcing intersectoral and multiprofessional cooperation and iii.) improving both the identification of violence against women and domestic violence and intervention in them. Similar to the previous plan, the measures proposed in the plan extend to all relevant governmental agencies and involve non-governmental organisations. The plan is available also in English (<http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-00-9704-2>).

The Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women for 2020–2023

The Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women for 2020–2023 by the Ministry of Justice, was published in October 2020 with a cross-cutting theme on prevention of violence. Of specific forms of violence, the Action Plan covered so-called honour-related violence and digital violence. In addition, emphasis was placed on the work to be carried out with perpetrators of violence and on the competence development of authorities responsible for criminal investigation, criminal procedure and criminal sanctions.

The plan included altogether 32 measures under the following themes: awareness-raising on violence against women, training of professionals, official instructions, programmes for perpetrators of intimate partner

violence, structures and regional coordination, research and reports. An annual appropriation of EUR 400,000 was allocated for the implementation of the action plan.

A report on the implementation of the Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women for 2020–2023 was published by the Ministry of Justice in March 2023. An external assessment of the action plan will be published in autumn 2024.

Improving services for survivors of gender-based violence

Shelter services are state-funded special services for those who have experienced violence in close relationships or are living under threat of it. Shelters offer immediate crisis help, round-the-clock secured housing and psychosocial support, advice and counselling related to acute situations. In 2023, government funding for shelter activities was EUR 25.2 million. This includes EUR 600,000 to enhance accessibility of shelters.

In 2023, there were 29 state-funded shelters. The number of places in shelters has doubled from 2015; in the past four years, the number increased from 203 to 230. The shelter network is nationwide and includes places for the Swedish-speaking minority as well as migrant women and children. The shelters are open to both women and men as well as to children arriving with an adult. In 2022, 91% of adult clients were female. Since 2021, one of the shelters has been reserved for women only and is located in a secret address. It is possible to go to a shelter anonymously. Staying in a shelter does not cost anything for the client.

THL has published the National Quality Recommendations for the Services of Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence in 2019. In 2022, THL published the quality recommendations for the work carried out with children in shelter services¹³. The quality recommendations are a way to ensure high-quality and comprehensive shelter services nationally. The accessibility of shelters has been significantly improved over the past few years and shelter employees have been trained on special types of violence such as honour-related violence, FGM, digital violence, and violence experienced by persons with disabilities. Every shelter has at least one accessible family place, so disability or physical limitation should not prevent a client from getting help.

Nollalinja is a nationwide 24/7 and free-of-charge helpline for anyone who has experienced domestic violence, violence against women or a threat of violence in a close relationship. *Nollalinja* is also available for family members of victims of violence and for professionals and officials who require advice. In March 2021, *Nollalinja* opened a chat service on its website nollalinja.fi. In addition to Finnish, Swedish and English, *Nollalinja* provides service in eight languages.

¹³ Koivula, T., Mäkelä, J. ja Svetloff, M. (2022): Lapset turvakodissa: Turvakotipalveluissa lasten kanssa tehtävän työn laatusuosituksset. THL. [Children in Shelters for Victims of Domestic Violence] <https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-343-921-4>

In 2023, Finland completed setting up a nationwide network of 25 Seri Support Centers for victims of sexual violence. Seri Support Centers provide forensic examination, support for trauma, psychological help and therapy if needed. Seri Support Centers provide services for patients over 16 who arrive to the Centre in one month from the violation with a monitoring time for the following six months. Minimum requirements are documented in *'Guidelines on Care pathways for victims of sexual violence'* <https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/137274>.

Amending the legislation on restraining orders

In 2022, the Finnish Parliament passed a legislative reform that aims to enhance the effectiveness and reduce violations of restraining orders and to increase the safety of victims of intimate partner violence. The amendments were also made in order to better meet the requirements of the Istanbul Convention.

Firstly, the Act on Restraining Orders was amended to increase the use of temporary restraining orders. An official with the power of arrest has to impose a temporary restraining order ex officio if the apparent need for protection of life or health of the person at risk requires that the order be issued immediately. Before the reform, it was required that the person in need of protection was unable to apply for the restraining order himself or herself due to fear or some other reason. In addition, the Act on Restraining Orders now includes a provision on forwarding the contact information of the person protected by a temporary restraining order to support services if the person so wishes. In addition, the person subject to the temporary restraining order shall be notified of the available support services. The provision on the possibility for courts to appoint a legal counsel for an applicant (or a person whom the order is intended to protect if he or she is not the applicant) of a restraining order was amended so that the financial situation of the person no longer impacts on the matter if the grounds for the application are an offence against the life, health or liberty of the applicant and it is justified in view of the seriousness of the offence, the personal circumstances of the applicant and other circumstances. In addition, provisions on court fees were amended so that all restraining order matters are now free of charge. Previously, applying for a restraining order was free of charge only if the application was approved.

Lastly, an electronically monitored restraining order was introduced as a new means of protection if it is necessary to avert a threat of an offence against life, health or liberty and if it is not unreasonable considering the seriousness of the threatening offence, the circumstances of the person subject to supervision and other circumstances that have emerged in the matter. It is for the court to decide whether the conditions for issuing an electronically monitored restraining order are met in individual cases. When passing the legislative amendments, the Finnish Parliament required that the Government monitor the effectiveness and impacts of the electronically monitored restraining order and based on experiences, assess the need and possibilities for developing electronic monitoring and expanding its scope of use. The Parliament also required that the Government closely monitor the sufficiency of resources allocated to enhancing the restraining order and take

immediate action to increase resources if they turn out to be insufficient. During this government term, the Finnish Government (Ministry of Justice) will assess the possibilities to develop electronic monitoring and expand its scope of use with a view to improve the effectiveness of restraining orders and preventing violations.

Please also see the answer regarding the new legislation on sexual offences in question 15.

17. In the past five years, what strategies has your country used to prevent gender-based violence?

The National School Health Promotion study

As a methodical tool to monitor the wellbeing of children and youth in Finland, the '*National School Health Promotion study*' is carried out every other year. The 2023 report was based on the responses of almost 250,000 children and young people in Finland, half of which were girls. The report gathers data on various factors that affect students' wellbeing, including experiences of physical threats and bullying. The first School Health Promotion Study was conducted in 1996 but only on grades 8 and 9. Nowadays, data is collected from grades 4, 5, 8 and 9 of basic education as well as from 1st and 2nd-year students in vocational institutions and general upper secondary schools.

Securing a safe learning environment for all

In order to enable timely intervention and strengthen the pupil's legal position, the Basic Education Act (628/1998) and Basic Education Decree (852/1998), Act on Vocational Education and Training (531/2017), Act on General Upper Secondary Education (714/2018) and the Act on Preparatory Education Leading to an Upper Secondary Qualification (1215/2020) have been amended. The aim is to prevent bullying, harassment and violence in schools and educational institutions and to secure a safe learning environment for all, regardless of gender. These legislative amendments took effect in August 2022.

18. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence?

Actions of the Police in tackling all forms of online violence

The police have focused significantly on tackling all forms online violence through training, capacity building, prioritizing and developing online tools. Special teams exist in every police department and the National Bureau

of Investigation. The police also uphold an online tip channels and cooperates with various organisations, especially Save the Children Organisation. Multi-professional mechanisms, such as MARAC and Barnahus have been created to tackle the problem holistically. The police also cooperate internationally with EUROPOL and INTERPOL in this field.

Raising awareness on digital violence

The Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (NAPE) has acknowledged the increasing experiences of digital violence among women and girls. NAPE considers it important to raise awareness on digital violence among policy makers, professionals and the general public and focused on the theme in the Committee's annual seminar in 2023. In the event, GREVIO's First General Recommendation on the digital dimension of violence against women was disseminated and the Finnish translation of the document was made publicly available at the Committee's website. Additionally, latest research and other national measures as well as solutions to prevent digital violence against women were also discussed.

Measures to prevent digital violence were included in the Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women coordinated by the Ministry of Justice (available in Finnish with English abstract at: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-259-835-6>).

Implementing the European Union Digital Services Act

In the European Union, the Digital Services Act (DSA) seeks to protect users from illegal content online and ensure that their fundamental rights are respected also in the online environment. The DSA entered fully into force on 17th February 2024. As an EU regulation, the Digital Services Act is directly applicable legislation in EU Member States. In Finland, certain additional national administrative and supervisory provisions were put in place with a new law on the supervision of online intermediation services to ensure effective implementation of the DSA.

19. In the past five years, what measures has your country taken to resource women's organisations working to prevent and respond to GBV?

Discretionary government grants for women's organisations

An annual appropriation of EUR 400,000 was allocated for the implementation of The Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women for 2020–2023. During the implementation period of the action plan, women's organisations were granted a total of approximately EUR 500,000 in discretionary government grants. Government grants were awarded to the following organisations: The National Council of Women of

Finland; Iraqi women's Association (INY ry); MONIKA – Multicultural Women's Association, Finland; Victim Support Finland. Grants were awarded for the following purposes: a project to encourage Finnish gaming studios to diversify gender roles and worldview in games; community work and/or individual work to combat violence against women and honour-related violence among immigrants; training provided to police officers, prosecutors, judges and legal counsels on the different forms of violence against women and the related phenomena.

STEA funding for NGOs working on prevention of violence against women

Non-profit organisations can also apply for grants from the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA) for their work that promotes health and social welfare. STEA has granted funding for NGOs working on prevention of violence against women approximately EUR 1 million per year (the amount varies to some extent each year) in the past five years.

20. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media?

Promoted the participation and leadership of women in the media

Finland participated in the working group 'Women in Digital' led by the European Commission, which followed up on the 'Women in Digital Declaration' from 2019 in EU Member States. Finland chose to advance three priorities from the Women in Digital Declaration: National strategy for girls and women in digital, Europe-wide Girls & Women in ICT Day, and Balanced composition of national and European bodies for digital matters. Furthermore, in 2021 the Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications published a blog-post series #WomenInTech that highlighted women working in the tech industry. In the series, ten Finnish women wrote about their education and career and encouraged women and girls to study and work in the technology field.

Global Monitoring Survey

Finland participated in the Global Media Monitoring Survey 2020 analysing men's and women's roles and visibility in the news. The survey has been done every fifth year from the year 1995 and Finland has participated every time. The results from Finland show that development is not necessarily positive or linear: the share of women in the news in Finland in 2005 was 32 % and year 2020 33 %. The data is, however, useful in further development of cooperation and actions to promote gender equality and women's position in the news media.

Updating the national media education policy

'*Media literacy in Finland - National media education policy*' was updated by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2019. The policy document aimed to clarify the field of media education and describe the strengths, values and principles of media education in Finland. Effective development measures presented in the policy paper take into account all groups of people from the perspective of equality and non-discrimination. Media education aims to promote human rights, equality and non-discrimination and to create preconditions for sustainable development.

21. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls?

The revision of the Marriage Act

A revision of the Marriage Act (234/1929) that enables annulment of a marriage concluded under force entered into force on 1 October 2023. The revision concerned also restriction of recognition of foreign child marriages. The purpose of these legislative amendments is to prevent marriages entered into by force and under age. The aim is also to improve the position of vulnerable persons who have entered into such marriages. The Government will monitor the effects of these amendments.

Honour-related violence in the Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women

Honour-related violence was one of the specific forms of violence covered by the Action Plan for Combating Violence against Women for 2020–2023. The action plan contained several measures that aimed at raising awareness about honour-related violence and preventing it from happening.

Honour-related violence is a phenomenon that affects migrant women but is by no means limited only to them.

Preventive police work and interaction with minority groups and religious communities

The Strategy on Preventive Police Work outlines several areas and priorities in preventing police work; enhancing the safety and security and the sense of security of different population groups is one priority area. Measures have been taken to increase interaction with minority groups and religious communities and are carried out by the community policing teams throughout the country. Many of the outlined priorities are not specifically targeted on women, but special attention is given to women. Police have issued a handbook on cooperation with the Roma minority.

Furthermore, the police have set up a national team and network to tackle Trafficking of Human Beings. Special focus has been set to uncover sexual exploitation. The police also cooperate closely with organisations working with outreach in order to come in contact with these marginalized minority groups.

The police also come in contact with these groups through an extensive network of named police officers working online on different social media platforms.

Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

Critical areas of concern:

- M. Women in power and decision-making
- N. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
- O. Human rights of women
- P. Women and the media
- G. The girl child

22. In the past five years, what actions and measures has your country taken to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?

Facts against Hate project

The objective of the '*Facts against Hate*' project was to improve the effectiveness of work against hate crime and hate speech. The project aimed to develop data collection, hate crime reporting and local cooperation practices, among other things. The project was coordinated by the Ministry of Justice, and the project partners were the Ministry of the Interior, the Police University College, Anti-Racist Forum ry, the Centre for Peace Studies (Croatia) and INAR (Ireland). The project's running time was 1.12.2019 – 30.11.2021.

The project consisted of four (4) work packages:

- 1) Development of hate crime reporting: The objective of the work package was to test a tool developed by the OSCE for reporting hate crimes in Finland, Croatia and Ireland. Another objective was to develop guidance of victims of hate crime to support services and to the police.
- 2) Development of local cooperation practices: The objective of the work package was to build capacity of different actors to prevent and tackle hate crime and hate speech at local level. The focus was on the local police work, especially on the development and testing of practices that aim to build trust in the community, not only between different population groups but also between the police and minority

population groups. The activities supported the implementation of the national strategy for preventive police work at local level. The aim was also to increase awareness of hate crimes and the existing reporting channels among local politicians, sexual and gender minorities, and persons with disabilities.

- 3) Development of hate crime monitoring: The objective of this work package was to test a comprehensive model for monitoring hate crimes in the prosecution service and courts of law. Indicators for monitoring hate crime were also to be developed. Another objective was to test new tools for targeted monitoring of online hate speech.
- 4) Transnational and EU-level cooperation: The objective of the work package was to exchange experiences between authorities at EU level and to share good examples of measures against hate speech and hate crime.

Parliamentary and municipal elections

Parliamentary elections 2023

The voting percentage in the parliamentary elections 2023 was 72.0%, which was 0.1% less than in the 2019 elections. Women voted more actively than men did in the 2023 elections. The voting percentage of women living in Finland was 72.9%, which was 2.0% higher than of men.

In the parliamentary elections, 46% of those elected were women, which decreased by 1 percentage point compared to the previous 2019 elections. The number of elected women was 3.1 percentage points higher than the proportion of women among the candidates.

Relatively, the Left Alliance has the largest number of women representatives, with 81.8% of its MPs being women. Women also make up the majority of elected representatives of the Green Alliance, the Christian Democrats and the Social Democratic Party. With the exception of the Movement Now party, from which only one MP was elected, the lowest percentages of women among those elected are the Swedish People's Party (33.3%) and the Finns Party (37.0%).

Municipal elections 2021

The total voting percentage of the Finnish municipal elections 2021 was 55.1%. The turnout decreased by 3.8% from the previous election. The voting percentage of women (56.5%) was higher than the voting percentage of men (53.6%). Looking at age groups, women voted more actively than men did in all age groups, except for those aged 65 and over. The biggest difference in voting activity between women and men was in the youngest age groups. The voting percentage of women in the 18–19 age group was almost 10% higher than that of men (women 44%, men 34.5%).

At the municipal elections, 40.2% of elected councillors were women, which is 1.2% more than in the previous elections in 2017. Among the parliamentary parties, the share of women among the councillors elected in the municipal elections is the largest in the Green Alliance, 74.1%, and the smallest in the Finns Party, 21.1%.

There were 34% elected women chairpersons in municipal councils, which is 1 percentage point less than the number of chairpersons of boards (35%). The number of female chairpersons decreased significantly (5%) from the previous vote.

Sex as an aggravating circumstance in the Criminal Code

The provisions in the Criminal Code on aggravating circumstances were amended in 2023 so that the commission of an offence for a motive based on the sex of a person is explicitly mentioned as an aggravating circumstance. Some similar amendments were also made regarding the provisions on corporate criminal liability in certain crime categories that include an element of a motive.

The aim of the amendment was to underline the blameworthiness of acts and actions which are motivated by hatred based on the sex of a person and to strengthen the means of tackling systematic harassment, threats and targeting, which are a threat to freedom of speech, research and public communication.

The amendment came into force on 1 January 2023.

See also answer to question 23 below on promoting equal gender representation in the media, politics, and leadership positions.

23. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?

Promoting equal gender representation in the media, politics, and leadership positions

The project '*Gender Matters? Promoting equal gender representation in the media, politics, and leadership positions*' (2019–2020) was carried out by the Centre for Gender Equality Information operating under the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare THL. The European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014–2020) funded the project. Partners of the project were Finnish Broadcasting Company Yle, the Union of Journalists in Finland (UJF), Women Journalists in Finland and the Institute for the Languages of Finland (Kotus).

The project aimed to promote gender equality in the public sphere, media and in the leadership positions in politics and in the corporate sector. The project explored how the gender norms and stereotypes affect how expertise and competence are portrayed in the public sphere. The project also raised awareness on how media imagery can affect gender norms and stereotypes and by that even individual career choices. In addition, the project made the gender gap in leadership positions more visible and widely known. The project used an inclusive and intersectional approach to gender equality.

The project produced a visual information kit that included 19 political party cards of the gender equality measures and objectives in the political parties. The project carried out an awareness-raising campaign '*Gender matters in the elections*' on social media under the parliamentary elections in Finland and under the European Elections 2019. The project also conducted a study '*Gender Matters in the Finnish Parliament?*' with an overview of the state of gender equality in the Finnish Parliament and recommendations for further action, as well as practical checklists and toolboxes for political parties and the Finnish Parliament. The Gender Equality Council of the Finnish Parliament distributed the toolbox and the report to all members of the Parliament.

The project produced a gender aware communication training package at the THL's website targeted to journalists and communication experts (www.thl.fi/tasaarvomediasa, in Finnish). The main themes of the training package are gender aware language and images, gender norms, stereotypes, and sexism as well as gender equality and diversity in expertise. The customer-oriented development process of the training included a base-line study to measure the level of knowledge and training needs of journalists and communication experts, webinar of gender aware communication and journalism, three pilot trainings, mutual learning sessions with the media organisations and a permanent network of gender aware communication targeted to journalists and communication experts with nearly 400 members. In addition, the project produced a website of gender aware communication (<https://thl.fi/aiheet/sukupuolten-tasa-arvo/tasa-arvon-edistaminen/sukupuolitietoinen-viestinta>, in Finnish) and support material of gender aware communication in Finnish, Swedish and English.

The project produced 18 gender equality indicators and visual infographics in Finnish, Swedish and English to address the current state of gender equality in the elections and voting as well as in political and economic decision-making (<https://thl.fi/en/research-and-development/research-and-projects/gender-matters-promoting-equal-gender-representation-in-the-media-politics-and-leadership-positions/infographics>). The infographics were used in the project's actions, for example in the pilot trainings and materials shared to the Finnish Parliament, and in presentations for national and international audiences.

The project provided information to address the main arguments that are commonly used to explain or legitimize the existence of the gap in the leadership positions. Five myths and basic arguments based on research data were published as a blog in Finnish (<https://blogi.thl.fi/sukupuolella-valia-yritysjohdossa-viisi-myyttia-johtajuudesta/>).

Over 300 journalists and communication experts participated in the project's pilot trainings and other events. The project also organized seminars and workshops for example at the annual Gender Equality Days 2019 and 2020. The project's international final conference '*Gender Matters!*' gathered more than 900 participants from over 50 countries (<https://thl.fi/en/research-and-development/research-and-projects/gender-matters-promoting-equal-gender-representation-in-the-media-politics-and-leadership-positions/final-seminar>).

Effectiveness with acts of equality

Equality in the media, organized annually in the last five years with the chief editors of the main national media, a discussion event on the realization of gender equality. The responsible parties for the project were the Central Confederation of Women's Organisations and the Advisory Board for Equality. The work was followed by a high-level forum chaired by President Tarja Halonen, whose members promoted the project and thus gender equality in Finland with their own commitment and expertise.

24. Please describe your country's current national women's machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and describe the measures that your country taken over the past five years to establish and/or strengthen it.

The Gender Equality Unit is located in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The equality unit coordinates Finland's equality policy. The unit prepares and develops the government's equality policy and monitors the gender equality situation in Finland. In addition, the equality unit prepares and develops equality legislation, and handles tasks related to the EU's equality jurisprudence and policy and international affairs.

The tasks of the equality unit also include promoting the mainstreaming of gender equality in the state administration. Mainstreaming the gender perspective means that the gender perspective and the goal of promoting equality are included in all official preparation and decision-making. Mainstreaming the gender perspective is done, among other things, by working with a cross-administrative network formed by the ministries.

The Ombudsman for Equality is an independent authority whose main duty is to supervise compliance with the Equality Act. The Ombudsman has powers on matters related to gender and gender minorities. The powers of the Ombudsman consist of both combating discrimination and promoting equality. The Ombudsman carries out his tasks primarily by providing guidance and advice. The Ombudsman for Equality is located under the administrative branch of the Ministry of Justice.

The Non-Discrimination Ombudsman is an autonomous and independent authority, whose task is to promote equality and to prevent discrimination. A new role of Rapporteur on Violence against Women was placed in the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman's office in 2022. This role includes some of the tasks included in Article 10 of the Istanbul Convention. The establishment of the Rapporteur of Violence against Women will further enhance the national institutional set-up aimed at focusing on co-ordinated co-operation and concerted efforts to prevent and combat violence against women.

The Council for Gender Equality (TANE) works to promote gender equality in society. TANE drafts proposals and provides statements to develop legislation and other measures that affect gender equality. The Council also promotes research on gender equality and supports utilization and implementation of relevant findings.

TANE is a parliamentary council and the Government of Finland appoints it for the same term of office as the Finnish Parliament. Parliamentary parties nominate the members for the Council for Gender Equality. In addition, advisory members represent the following organisations: The Central Association for Men's Organisations in Finland, The National Council of Women of Finland, The Coalition of Finnish Women's Associations – NYTKIS, and Seta – LGBTI Rights in Finland. TANE operates within the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

Centre for Gender Equality Information, operating under the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), is a national information service that offers updated, research-based information on gender equality. The centre compiles and distributes information related to gender equality and gender studies, acts as an expert on gender equality information, responds to information requests concerning equality and gender, cooperates with domestic and international gender equality actors.

The centre provides the Gender Equality website that offers updated, research-based information on gender and gender equality in Finland. The principal themes on the website are violence, working life, family, education, health and wellbeing and decision-making. These themes are explored from the perspectives of gender equality policy, research and practical work towards gender equality. The website contains information on gender, the promotion of gender equality and discrimination, gender-oriented information on variety of topics, studies, reports, statistics, guides, instructions and legislation, monitoring of gender equality news, an events calendar and a list of published doctoral dissertations.

Other channels of the Centre are a Gender Equality newsletter, Facebook and a mailing list. Centre organizes the Annual Gender Equality Days in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the network of gender equality actors. National Gender Equality Days are the main event of the year in the field of gender equality in Finland. The Gender Equality Days brings together actors in the field of equality to discuss the objectives of promoting gender equality and to develop coordination and policies on gender equality. The days are targeted at all those working on and interested in gender equality issues, including civil servants and

elected officials in government, welfare regions and municipalities, social partners, NGOs, private sector actors, projects, researchers, and students.

25. In the past five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors?

Gender aware budgeting

During the previous government term 2019–2023, child-oriented budgeting and gender-aware budgeting were developed, the goals of which are also in line with sustainable development. Gender-aware budgeting was promoted in three ways: the budget preparation order was specified, the equality texts included in the main category justifications of the budget proposal were improved, and the gender effects of the economic policy of the election period were clarified.

In the spring of 2020, the Ministry of Finance updated and clarified section 7.10.4 of the budget preparation order, emphasizing social impact goals. The drafting order now states: *"In the examination of gender effects, attention should be paid to the social effectiveness goals of gender equality in the administrative sector and to those expenditures in the administrative sector that may have an impact on the realization of equality"*. In addition, the Ministry of Finance specified that the summaries hope to present e.g. concrete administrative measures related to equality goals, legislative projects and appropriations, changes in appropriations, as well as statistics and indicators. The summary text should be made into a separate chapter with the title Gender Equality.

The Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare has already had a report on the equality summaries of the government's budget proposals in several years (2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023). The results of the survey are used in development work in ministries and parliamentary committee hearings.

Online training on gender equality and equity for public servants

The training *'Promoting equality and equity – why and how?'* was published in the joint online learning environment of the Government in 2020. The training provides basic knowledge and skills on promoting gender equality and equity as part of the authority's work. The training was initially published for state authorities, and since 2020 it has been open to all public servants. The training has been added as a preliminary task to the training program of new public servants. All public servants in all ministries have been encouraged to complete the training. By the beginning of 2024, the training has been completed a total of more than six thousand times. In the ministerial level, the training has been completed around thousand times. The training

is supported by trainings for the Ministries' management groups organized by the Centre for Gender Equality Information.

The network of operational gender equality working groups

Every ministry in Finland has a plan for operational gender equality and non-discrimination. Moreover, every ministry has a working group on gender equality and non-discrimination. The working group measures the implementation of the plan for operational gender equality and non-discrimination.

These working groups have an informal shared platform called '*The network*'. The goal of the network is to jointly develop mode of operations for improving gender equality and to promote non-discrimination. Moreover, the idea is to share good practices, consult experts and disseminate information about gender equality and non-discrimination. The network started its operation in 2010. Meetings are open to all ministerial officials interested in gender equality and/or non-discrimination. The network meets approximately once every two months.

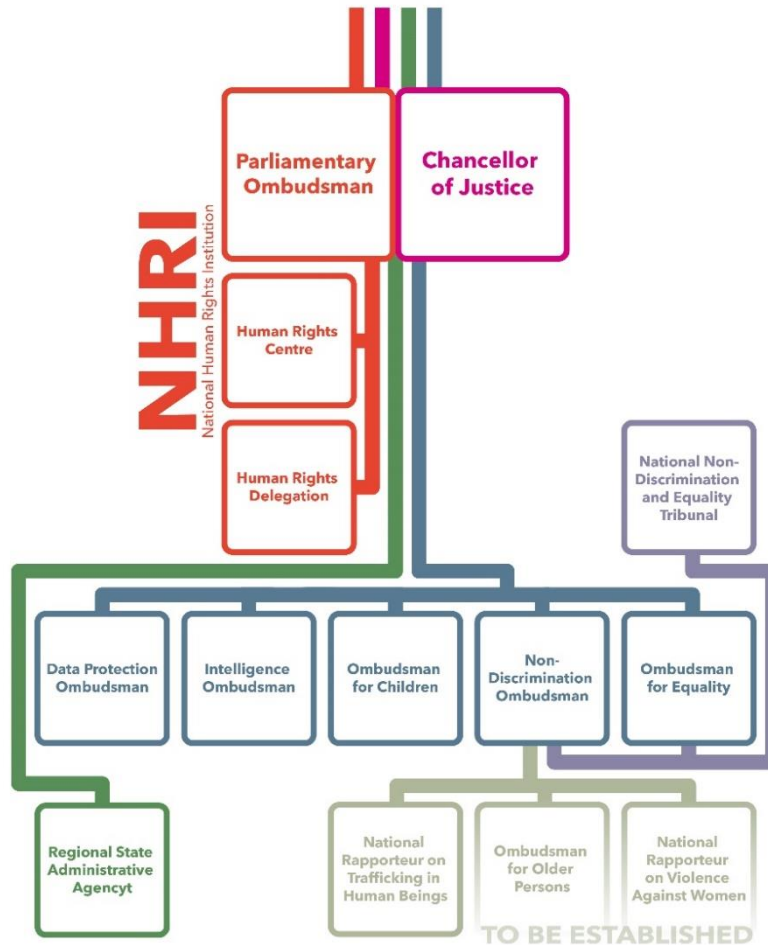
26. If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?

In Finland, the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI), which consists of the Human Rights Centre, its Human Rights delegation and the Parliamentary Ombudsman does not have a specific mandate on women's rights or gender equality. This mandate belongs to the independent Ombudsman for Equality who monitors the Equality Act and provides guidance and information on discrimination due to gender, gender identity and gender expression, and promotion of equality.

However, among many other tasks, the Human Rights Centre participates in the monitoring of the implementation of relevant UN and CoE human rights conventions, such as CEDAW and Istanbul Convention, and others, by giving observations in the monitoring rounds, participating in committee hearings etc. The Human Rights Centre is also an independent expert member in the Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (NAPE), which is responsible for the coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the measures required under the Istanbul Convention in Finland. Additionally, the Human Rights Centre aims at mainstreaming gender equality in all its work.



Fundamental and Human Rights Actors in Finland



HUMAN RIGHTS CENTRE
2021

1 *Fundamental and Human Rights Actors in Finland, including the National Human Rights Institution. NB: The Ombudsman for Older Persons and National Rapporteur on Violence Against Women have since been established.*

Peaceful and inclusive societies

Critical areas of concern:

- E. Women and armed conflict
- F. Human rights of women
- L. The girl child

27. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?

Implementation of the National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security

During the reporting period, Finland implemented its third National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (2018–2021) and prepared the fourth one (2023–2027). The implementation and drafting of the Action Plans have been characterised by strong cross-sectoral multi-stakeholder cooperation, which includes ministries, representatives of civil society organisations and research institutions. A multi-stakeholder follow-up group reviewing the realization of the plan meets regularly and implementation reports are submitted to the Parliament at annual basis.

The Women, Peace and Security agenda has been implemented as part of Finland’s Government Programme through crisis management, development cooperation, humanitarian aid, expert assistance, training, and diplomacy. Alongside traditional peace processes and the security sector, there has been a strong view of broad human security that takes into account the effects of conflicts also in the social, economic, and environmental sectors. The connection between the Women, Peace and Security agenda and climate change has been further emphasized in the fourth National Action Plan.

During the reporting period, Finland maintained a high international profile, raising 1325 topics in different forums and advancing 1325 by different means. Together with Spain, Finland launched the Commitment 2025 initiative on women’s inclusion in peace processes and has actively worked towards that end. In 2021, Finland became a catalytic member of the Compact on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action.

As part of the five-year (2022–2026) **UN Women led Generation Equality Campaign**, Finland acts as a co-leader in the Technology and Innovations for Gender Equality Action Coalition. Finland’s commitments in the campaign include, among other things, taking concrete measures to ensure that national legislation, policies, strategies and action plans on the prevention and elimination of gender-based-violence include online gender-based violence. The intersections of technology and innovations with gender equality have relevance also to

questions of security through, for example, the various digital possibilities for harassment, stalking, and incitement to violence or hatred.

Finland has continued cooperation with its partner countries in the preparation of National Action Plans on 1325. Channelled through support to UN Women, the development of national action programs has been supported in Kenya, Nepal, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq and Tunisia, as well as in Afghanistan until August 2021.

Promotion of the rights of women and girls, including in fragile contexts is a cross-cutting objective in Finland's development cooperation policy. Finland supported the establishment of UN Women, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, and as a top core funder continues to provide both financial and political support. In 2021–2022 Finland was the largest and in 2023 the second largest core funder of UN Women.

In 2021, Finland published the first **National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security** (YPS NAP). The action plan includes several cross-cutting elements relevant also to the WPS agenda, such as intersectionality, climate and new technologies. The implementation of the YPS NAP benefits the implementation of the WPS agenda at various levels, including reinforcing policies concerning girls and girls in a vulnerable position, sharing best practices in reporting and synergies in promotion of cross-cutting themes.

Finland has made substantial inputs to the implementation of Resolution 1325 in **crisis management**. Finland is one of the world's leading countries in promoting women's participation in civilian crisis management. In 2019–2023, women accounted for an average of 41% of the experts seconded by Finland to civilian crisis management tasks. During the first half of 2023, around 50% of the experts were female. Finland has also actively promoted female experts to leadership positions. In election monitoring operations, Finland has achieved parity between women and men, 49% of the election observers sent out in 2022 having been women. Amendment to the Act on the Participation of Civilians in Crisis Management (1287/2004) came into force in 2019. It included school and day-care compensations for experts with families, which had been identified as an important factor in particular for women experts. To ensure the continuity of women's participation and to support women's access to leadership positions, a research on equal career progression and recruitment is being carried out. Finland systematically mainstreams a gender perspective in civilian crisis management trainings, while assuring gender parity among training participants and continuously assess the competence of trainers from the WPS perspective. Through a variety of activities, partly targeted at youth, Finland has raised awareness on career opportunities for women experts in civilian crisis management.

Finland has contributed to improving the gender perspective in civilian crisis management within the European Union. Together with Spain, Finland led an EU working group that promoted women's participation in civilian crisis management. As a co-chair of this group, Finland was particularly active in promoting the integration

of a more ambitious and comprehensive gender approach into the new European Union Civilian Crisis management compact that was adopted in 2023.

Providing international organisations and civilian crisis management missions with 1325 experts and gender advisers has been the traditional way for Finland to support institutional capacity for better inclusion of women. In 2019-2023, Finland provided advisers to 22 tasks with a focus on advancing gender equality or the WPS agenda in civilian crisis management.

In **military crisis management** operations, the proportion of women was 7.8% at the end of 2019 and 5.3% at the end of 2022. In 2022, the Finnish gender officer served in the UN's UNIFIL and UNTSO operations (Lebanon), NATO's KFOR (Kosovo) and the coalition OIR and NATO's NMI operations (Iraq).

Gender training has been continued and developed in military crisis management, e.g. by creating an online gender course for key personnel sent to operations. Finland sends participants to all the Nordic Center for Gender in Military Operations (NCGM)'s gender advisor courses, gender officer courses and trainer courses. At the international level, Finland has supported women's participation in crisis management through, for example, the UNDP-managed Elsie fund and UN Women's Female Military Officers courses.

Conference on understanding feminist foreign policy

In November 2022, Finland convened an international conference to discuss promotion of gender equality through foreign policy and feminist foreign policy. The conference aimed to share best practices on the content and means of foreign policy that promotes gender equality. Another aim was to encourage more discussion about feminist foreign policy in Finland. The conference discussed women as foreign policy makers and peacebuilders, prevention and elimination of sexual and gender-based violence, promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and feminist foreign policy as a tool in a changing security environment.

An independent review of the realisation of gender equality in Finland's foreign policy '[Gender Equality in Finnish Foreign Affairs from 2019 to 2022](#)' (Vastapuu & Lyytikäinen 2022) was published at the conference. The study reviews the ways in which Finland has promoted gender equality in its foreign affairs from January 2019 to October 2022. According to the study, gender equality is considered a self-evident value and goal, part of Finland's story and DNA. The government programs have had a very strong commitment to promoting equality. For example, 85 per cent of new development cooperation projects must include goals promoting gender equality. In addition, Finland is an important funder of UN Women and UNFPA and a member of the UN Human Rights Council in the term 2022–2024. There are also challenges. Firstly, taking gender equality goals as granted can lead to a lack of discussion and strategic thinking. Secondly, there are also challenges in implementing the commitment to gender equality in matters of so-called hard security. For example, gender equality was not mentioned in the official preparation of Finland's NATO membership.

Taken steps to reduce excessive military expenditures and/or control the availability of armaments

Finland has traditionally drawn attention to promoting a gender perspective in arms control and preventing illicit arms traffic. Specific emphasis is placed on the inclusion of gender considerations in EU, NATO, OSCE and UN disarmament and small arms projects funded by Finland. Further, Finland continues to reaffirm and stress the importance of the inclusion of gender concerns in its statements in UN General Assembly First Committee meetings on Disarmament and International Security.

28. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?

Promotion and support to women's meaningful participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements at all levels

Peace processes and peace mediation play a key role in Finland's Women, Peace and Security (WPS) work. Finland contributes to enhancing women's leadership, meaningful participation and diversity as well as gender mainstreaming in peace processes and peace mediation. Having published its first *National Action Plan on Youth, Peace and Security (2021–2024)*, Finland pays additional attention to the specific needs and role of young women.

During the reporting period, also WPS work was globally affected by the drastically changing security policy environment. Anti-gender activities as well as broader attempts to undermine democracy and retrench human rights and the space of civil society affected politically active women and girls, especially those in vulnerable situation. The COVID-19 pandemic also posed several challenges to women working in peace mediation and women's role and participation in peace processes.

Finland continued its efforts to support women's participation and capacity building activities in several countries. This work was carried out both by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Finnish and international civil society actors with the Ministry's support. Finland worked to increase the participation of women in consultations related to peace processes, and implemented training and capacity building on women's participation in several countries.

In Myanmar, country-specific support is channelled to improving women's participation in dialogues aiming at political solutions. Targeted support for negotiations, coordination fora and stakeholders, including women

leaders and women's rights organisations, aims to promote more inclusive and effective consultations and to contribute to the possibilities of creating a comprehensive basis for a peace process.

On Syria, Finland continued supporting the *Syrian Women's Advisory Board (WAB)*, which advises the *Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Syria* as he mediates a political solution to the Syrian conflict, in line with United Nations Security Council resolution 2254. Finland facilitated WAB visits to various countries. In autumn 2021, WAB members visited Finland where they discussed the role of women in conflict resolution and issues related to education in Syria.

In October 2020, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs established the *Centre for Peace Mediation* which has a specific role of planning, developing, implementing and coordinating Finland's peace mediation activities. One of the Centre's thematic focus areas is women's participation in peace processes. Strengthening women mediators' networks is an important part of this.

The *Nordic Women Mediators (NWM)* network, established by the Nordic Foreign Ministers in 2015, was the first government-supported regional women mediators' network. It brings together Nordic women who have experience of peace processes and mediation. The Finnish branch (NWM Finland) was extended in 2023. It now comprises 31 members with expertise from various fields relevant to peace processes such as mediation, civilian crisis management, human rights, international law, and diplomacy. NWM Finland is coordinated by the Centre for Peace Mediation, and the network's operational partner is *CMI – Martti Ahtisaari Peace Foundation*.

Finland has a longstanding cooperation with the African Union supporting its capacity in conflict prevention and mediation support, including FemWise. In the Middle East, Finland has supported a regional project of the UN Women enhancing, *inter alia*, the participation of women in local conflict resolution in Lebanon, and the creation of a network of women peace mediators.

In cooperation with other Nordic countries, Finland played an active role in the process of establishing the *Global Alliance of Regional Women Mediator Networks*, launched in 2019. Finland also took the leading role in enabling and organising the first annual meeting of the Global Alliance, which took place in virtual format in October 2020, in the midst of the pandemic.

Finland has actively shared experiences and good practices on how to enhance the meaningful participation of women in the different phases of peace processes. A Finnish flagship initiative in this regard has been a series of conferences (2014, 2015, 2017, 2019, 2022) on *National Dialogues and Informal Dialogue Processes (National Dialogues Conference, NDC)*, organised by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in cooperation with a consortium of Finnish organisations active in peace mediation: CMI, *Finn Church Aid (FCA)* and *Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission (Felm)*.

Around 200 people from more than 30 countries attended the fifth NDC in June 2022. Of the speakers and moderators 65% were women. As a follow-up to one of the commitments – promoting rights and meaningful inclusion of persons with disabilities in every stage of peace processes and peacebuilding – that Finland had made at the *Global Disability Summit* earlier in 2022, the fifth NDC also discussed the barriers and challenges that persons with disabilities face, and shared best practices on how to address these challenges.

Finland continued supporting the UN *High-level Seminar on Gender and Inclusive Mediation Strategies* (GIM), organised by the UN *Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs* (DPPA) in cooperation with the CMI in Finland and *Peace Research Institute in Oslo* (PRIO) in Norway. GIM aims to advance the policy and praxis of inclusive and gender sensitive mediation. Held alternately in Finland and Norway, GIM was organised in Finland in November 2019 and in May 2023, providing an opportunity for UN and other international mediators to exchange information and learn about inclusive mediation.

Finland enhanced women's participation in water diplomacy by supporting a networking and peer-learning event in Stockholm in 2022 during the *World Water Week*. Women actors attended the event from different regions (e.g. Nile, Central Asia, Afghanistan). The main organiser of the event was the *Women in Water Diplomacy Network in the Nile* of the *Stockholm International Water Institute* (SIWI), together with the *Central Asian Women in Water Diplomacy Network*.

Adopting gender-responsive approaches to humanitarian action and crisis response

Finland has aimed at strengthening women's role in humanitarian action and contributed to this through supporting UN Women's work in Afghanistan. The work of the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (co-led by UNW) has resulted in the inclusion of dedicated gender indicators in the Humanitarian Response Plan (2023). In addition, Women Advisory Group to the Humanitarian Country Team towards the provision of gender-responsive humanitarian assistance was established with the support of UNW.

Support for civil society and human rights defenders

Supporting human rights defenders is a strong priority and an integral part of Finland's foreign and security policy. Finland places particular attention on women, environmental and indigenous human rights defenders as well as sexual and gender minorities and persons with disabilities.

Finland's national Guidelines for supporting human rights defenders (*Supporting Human Rights Defenders Together -Guidelines of the Finnish Foreign Service*) on the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders were updated and published in 2022. These Guidelines help our Embassies to increase dialogue with and support to human rights defenders. Updated guidelines have further focus on topical themes such as environmental human rights defenders, business and human rights and digitalization.

For 2022–2024 Finland granted almost EUR 18 million to 11 international non-governmental human rights organisations. A significant part (35%) of the support was channelled to organisations supporting and protecting human rights defenders. For example, we support Front Line Defenders, which provides a fast, flexible and effective 24-hour emergency service that responds to the protection needs of human rights defenders at immediate risk, also in conflict-countries. Another partner, Access Now, provides a digital security helpline to support human rights defenders who are at risk, or under an online attack.

As a member of the UN Human Rights Council, Finland emphasizes the work of human rights defenders and the participation of women and girls at all levels of society.

Finland engages actively in supporting human rights defenders in multilateral fora, including in the UN, EU and international nongovernmental organisations. Among other things, Finland calls attention to the status of human rights defenders in statements, by joining declarations, by participating in meetings, and negotiating for resolutions. Finland supports and promotes civil society's participation and right to speak in international arenas, including at meetings of international nongovernmental organisations.

As an EU Member State, Finland supports the Union's Protect Defenders mechanism. Finland also supports the work of human rights defenders through the Global Equality and Lifeline funds. Finnish non-governmental organisations, such as KIOS, also support the work of human rights defenders as part of their state-funded projects.

Some Finnish diplomatic missions support human rights defenders by providing Local Cooperation Funds (LCF) to human rights organisations.

The increasing number of reprisals against human rights defenders on a global scale is alarming, both offline and online. Finland strongly condemns all violence and threats against human rights defenders, including online gender-based violence (OGBV).

29. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?

Taken measures to combat illicit arms trafficking

As a contributor to the Arms Trade Treaty's Voluntary Trust Fund (VTF), Finland has placed an emphasis on the inclusion of gender aspects in the selection of projects receiving VTF funding. Finland has promoted the

integration of the gender perspective into the implementation of the Ottawa Convention on Anti-Personnel Mines and supports the clearing of anti-personnel mines through humanitarian project funding. Women's opportunities to participate in mine clearing, community outreach and training activities have been improved by recruiting women to mine clearance and other humanitarian mine action tasks.

Strengthened institutional capacities, including of the justice system and transitional justice mechanisms as applicable, during conflict and crisis response

Gender-based violence, including sexual violence, remains widely prevalent in armed conflicts. Finland works actively towards preventing sexual and gender-based violence in armed conflict, and stresses the necessity of delivering justice for victims and survivors, and holding perpetrators accountable. Finland is a strong supporter of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in its work in the fight against impunity for crimes under its jurisdiction. In 2019–2023 Finland supported the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC with voluntary funding of EUR 300,000 for leveraging new technologies in criminal investigations, as well as provided seven seconded national experts to work at the Office. Finland stresses the importance of restorative justice and is a long-standing supporter to the ICC Trust Fund for Victims. In 2019–2023 Finland provided the Trust Fund with EUR 1.2 million voluntary funding, dedicated for providing assistance to victims of SGBV crimes in Africa.

Finland supports the Justice Rapid Response Mechanism, which provides rapidly deployable experts to investigate international crimes and serious human rights violations and to enable a holistic, gender-sensitive, and inclusive approach to justice. In 2019–2023 Finland's total contribution to JRR amounts to EUR 2.25 million.

Finland also supports the UN Team of Experts on Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, which assists national authorities in strengthening the rule of law with the aim of ensuring criminal accountability for perpetrators of conflict-related sexual violence. In 2019–2023 Finland's total contribution to the Team of Experts' work amounts to EUR 400,000.

In Myanmar, Finland's support to UNFPA contributed to strengthening institutional capacities, including of the justice system, during conflict and crisis response. It also increased access of conflict-affected, displaced women to violence prevention and protection services.

Through support for UN Women, Finland has contributed to the implementation of the WPS Plan of Action II of Nepal in order to provide a safe environment and dignified life for the conflict survivors, in particular women.

Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings – *'Finland fights human trafficking'* (2021–2023)

The previous Government agreed on the preparation of an action plan against trafficking in human beings. The action plan, *'Finland fights human trafficking'*, was adopted as a government resolution on 6 May 2021, with an implementation period running until the end 2023. It was based on five strategic objectives and 55 actions.

The action plan aimed to promote the detection of trafficking in human beings, improve the position of victims and intensify the enforcement of criminal liability. It also sought to mainstream anti-trafficking work and make it a more integral part of the Government's activities and to enhance cooperation with civil society. The action plan established a strong link between the development of anti-trafficking work and the Government's analysis, assessment and research activities. In addition, it addressed international recommendations given to Finland concerning efforts to step up anti-trafficking action and improve the position of victims.

Almost all the action plan's measures were implemented as planned by the end of 2023. However, the implementation of a few measures will continue in 2024 and 2025 due to delayed funding. Ministries and agencies and bodies within their administrative branch were committed to implementing the action plan, resulting in efficient and effective anti-trafficking action.

In the end, the funding allocated to the implementation of the action plan totalled approximately EUR 1.7 million. In addition, the police, the occupational safety and health authorities and the assistance system for victims of human trafficking were allocated additional human resources during the implementation period to intensify the fight against human trafficking and labour exploitation and to improve victims' access to assistance. The Ministry of Justice was assigned the responsibility and the necessary human resources for coordinating anti-trafficking work within the Government. A national team investigating human trafficking crimes was created under the Helsinki Police Department and the National Bureau of Investigation, and situation awareness of trafficking in human beings was systematically developed. A network of prosecutors specialised in human trafficking cases was established during the implementation period.

Many authorities and professionals received training, and the awareness and competence of key authorities and other entities were strengthened as part of the action plan. The considerable amount of training measures and networking opportunities promoted anti-trafficking collaboration and engaged new entities. Work against trafficking in human beings was incorporated into efforts to tackle the grey economy and economic crime, to prevent violence against women and children and to promote gender equality. In addition, health and social service providers' capabilities to identify victims of human trafficking were improved in collaboration with the third sector, and companies' and public procurers' awareness of trafficking in human beings was raised.

Trafficking in human beings was also tackled through legislative amendments, such as the Act to amend the Criminal Investigation Act, which expanded the possibilities of using prerecorded interviews in court proceedings. In addition, analysis, assessment and research was carried out during the implementation period. These activities reinforced the knowledge base of anti-trafficking measures and promoted practical anti-trafficking work. Finland intensified international cooperation to prevent and combat trafficking in human beings and actively promoted the establishment of a coordination group and a police network under the Nordic Council of Ministers.

30. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?

Equality and gender equality programme for the education system

According to the Government Statement to the Parliament on promoting equality, gender equality and non-discrimination in Finnish society (2023), the Government has committed on promoting non-discrimination and on taking action to reduce racism. As part of a cross-administrative action plan for gender equality, the Government will launch an equality and gender equality programme covering the entire education system in 2024–2025. The programme will support educational institutions in the practical implementation of their current equality and gender equality plans in the day-to-day activities of early childhood education and care and educational institutions.

The Finnish National STEM Strategy and Action Plan

Please see the answer to question 13 above.

The revision of the Marriage Act

Please see the answer to question 21 above.

Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

Critical areas of concern:

- I. Human rights of women
- K. Women and the environment
- L. The girl child

31. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?

Integrating a gender perspective in national climate policy

The Ministry of the Environment has a working group on equality and gender mainstreaming. The working group supports the Ministry's experts in matters related to gender mainstreaming in environmental legislation and policies. The Ministry updated its assessment of the state of play in 2021 as regards gender perspectives and challenges in the areas of work of the Ministry and identified several areas of relevance to be monitored. These include the action program for prevention of homelessness, the Government's Midterm Climate Policy Plan, as well as a general need to increase and deepen equality impact assessments in law-drafting and other projects.

The Government of Finland approved its Midterm Climate Policy Plan with a view to the year 2035 (hereinafter the 2035 Plan) on 2 June 2022. The preparation of the 2035 Plan was coordinated with the preparation of the latest climate and energy strategy. Possible gender perspectives and concerns were actively identified during the preparatory process. A gender equality assessment was commissioned for the climate and energy strategy, which also served the preparation of the 2035 Plan. Two workshops on equality and gender impacts of Finland's climate policy, with broad participation of stakeholders, were organised in 2020 and 2021, where discussions were had regarding the proposed actions in the 2035 Plan.

A new Climate Act (423/2022) was adopted and is in force as of 1 July 2022. The impact of the Act on guiding policies and actions is based on the climate policy planning system. Ensuring that measures taken are fair and just is one of the objectives of the new Act, and the impacts and adequacy of climate actions, including from a gender perspective, must be evaluated as part of preparing climate plans and monitoring their implementation.

According to national legislation, gender perspective is integrated also in national climate change adaptation policy. Women and men have equal rights of representation and of ownership of land and natural resources such as water and forests. Women are well represented in the preparation of national adaptation policy and hold various leading positions in national preparatory bodies and monitoring groups related to climate change adaptation policy. Gender is also routinely included in climate change vulnerability assessments along with other factors influencing vulnerability and adaptive capacity.

32. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience?

Please see the answer to question 31 above.

Section Four: National institutions and processes

33. Please describe your country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5.

Governments have typically drawn up a Government action plan for gender equality for their own term of office. The Government action plan for gender equality brings together the Government's goals and measures to promote gender equality. The plan is based on the government program and supports its implementation. The plan is implemented in all ministries. Implementation of the plan is coordinated by the Gender Equality Unit, which operates under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

The Government action plan for gender equality of the previous government was aimed at the years 2020-2023, and included 55 measures concerning working life, economic equality, family life, education, violence against women and intimate partner violence, improving the status of people belonging to gender minorities, mainstreaming the gender perspective and gender equality. The plan also includes measures related to promotion in the European Union and internationally.

The equality program of the current Prime Minister Orpo's government is being prepared. The program will be published by autumn 2024.

The equality program has also traditionally included the gender mainstreaming perspective. Gender mainstreaming can be seen as continuous development work in the fields of equality and non-discrimination. If successful, mainstreaming will significantly increase egalitarian social decision-making and prevent the emergence of discriminatory decisions.

34. Please describe your country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.

Gender-aware budgeting has been implemented in the Finnish state administration in all ministries in certain areas. The Ministry of Finance's budget preparation regulations state that the main category justifications must include a summary review of activities related to the budget proposal that have a significant gender impact. In addition, it is stated that in the review of gender effects, attention should be paid to the social effectiveness goals of gender equality in the administrative sector and to those expenditures in the administrative sector that may have an impact on the realization of equality. The Finnish Institute of Health and Welfare has published a report on the equality summaries of the government's budget proposals in several years (2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023). In 2024, all ministries will have some kind of gender perspective in the main category justifications of the budget proposal.

One of the main objectives of Finland's development policy is to strengthen the rights of women and girls and their social standing. This is reflected, for example, in the funding and country strategies of Finland's UN and non-governmental organisations. Development cooperation projects whose main or partial objective is to strengthen the status and rights of women and girls are supported by an estimated EUR 376 million from development cooperation appropriations.

In order to strengthen the gender perspective in development cooperation, Finland aims in stages, in line with the EU's policy, to ensure that 85% of new projects include objectives that promote gender equality and mainstreaming gender equality in all development cooperation. Approximately 50% of the new projects funded from development cooperation appropriations in 2023 include objectives that promote gender equality.

35. What formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

Finland participates actively in the annual meeting of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) that is the main international forum for countries to follow up on the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Ahead of the annual CSW, the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health arranges an expert seminar for the CSW delegation and other interested politicians and civil society organisations. The

Finnish CSW delegation usually includes representatives from Civil Society Organisations (often women's organisations) and from the Parliament of Finland.

Women's organisations in Finland also actively and independently take part in monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Every five years, coinciding with the national Beijing+ review reports, The National Council of Women of Finland coordinates the preparation of a civil society report that assesses the status of the rights of women and girls and gender equality in Finland.

Gender Mainstreaming happens within the equality unit. Mainstreaming the gender perspective means that the gender perspective and the goal of promoting equality are included in all official preparation and decision-making. Mainstreaming the gender perspective is done, among other things, by working with a cross-administrative network formed by ministries.

In Finland, gender mainstreaming is realised by developing legislation, by special measures targeting certain issues, and by striving for change in a penetrating way in different policy areas. In the last one, an effort has been made to bring the gender perspective and the assessment of gender effects into all decision-making and its preparation - in practice, into law preparation in ministries and administrative branches, budget preparation, results management, reform projects and programs, and data collection.

The gender perspective is pushed forward, especially with the help of a cross-administrative network. The network has representatives from all ministries. The network meets alternately in each ministry, approximately every 2-3 months. Equality and equality training has been published (2020) for all civil servants, the training can be completed online. The training lasts about one hour. It has been performed almost 500 times.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The key mechanism to advance sustainable development in Finland's national policies is the multi-stakeholder National Commission on Sustainable Development. It has operated continuously for over 30 years under eleven different Prime Ministers. The National Commission includes representatives from business and industry, labour unions, non-governmental organisations (including women, children, environment, youth, LGBTQI, education, consumers, disabled peoples associations and many others) as well as representatives from municipalities, regions, religious communities and the church, media and culture, academia and development. In addition, all Government Ministries and political parties, as well as the Sámi Parliament and the Government of the autonomous Åland Islands, are represented in the Commission at a high level. One of the five cross-cutting principles of the Commission's strategy for 2022–2030 is ensuring fairness, equity and gender equality, the other four being facilitating the inclusion and participation of society at large; paying special attention to the most vulnerable (leaving no one behind); ensuring long-term commitment and policy

coherence; and taking global responsibility. The current Commission, appointed for the term 2024–2027, is working on an implementation plan for the strategy.

Another important multi-stakeholder body to inform the Government in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is the Development Policy Committee. Its main task is to monitor and assess the implementation of Finland's international development policy commitments. It also supports decision-making in various policy sectors that have an impact on developing countries.

Gender is an integral part of the work of these participatory committees, that is to say that gender balance has been considered already when nominating the representatives. There is a Gender Equality Act in Finland that sets a requirement of a minimum 40 % of representation of both sexes in public committees.

36. Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report.

The preparation of the present national report was coordinated by the Unit for Human Rights Policy at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, in close cooperation with the Gender Equality Unit of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. All Government ministries contributed to the content of the report according to their areas of responsibility. In addition, Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) contributed to several questions on areas where THL is active. Also Statistics Finland answered some questions. Human Rights Centre answered to the question directed at the National Human-Rights Institution (NHRI).

The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland hosted a hearing for civil society organisations. At the event, organisations had the opportunity to ask questions about the report and bring up issues they considered important regarding the reporting period.

The National Council of Women of Finland is an umbrella organisation and co-operation forum for Finnish women's organisations that promote gender equality. It coordinates the preparation of a separate Beijing+30 civil society report. A joint high-level publication event of the national report and the civil society report is being planned for the end of 2024.

37. Please describe your country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other

United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.

The eighth report of Finland to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Committee) was reviewed in October 2022.

The CEDAW Committee welcomed Finland's progress in the promotion of gender equality and non-discrimination in various fields and a number of legislative reforms, as well as tackling those remaining issues that have been considered as a possible obstacle in achieving even more comprehensive non-discrimination in accordance with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Five of the CEDAW Committee's recommendations to Finland on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women are to be monitored in an expedited procedure. These recommendations concern gender-related hate speech; sterilization issue; the use of mediation in cases of intimate partner violence and domestic violence; the representation of women on the electoral lists of political parties; and the representation of women in decision-making positions in the Finnish Defence Forces. The reporting on the implementation of these five recommendations is due in October 2024.

Each Ministry, including its subordinate agencies and other bodies, is responsible within its own administrative branch for the implementation of the recommendations adopted by the UN Treaty Bodies, including the CEDAW Committee. In Finland, the government's periodic reporting on the implementation of the UN and the Council of Europe's human rights treaties is centralised in the Legal Service of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Periodic reporting is done in close cooperation with all key authorities, also hearing the views of independent supervisors of legality and specialized ombudspersons, the National Human Rights Institution and non-governmental organisations. Finland has always considered it important to respect the impartiality and independence of the UN Treaty Bodies and continuous dialogue with them. Finland's goal is to include women's rights and gender perspective in all its periodic reports.

As regards Finland's fourth Universal Periodic Review, in November 2022, other UN Member States gave several recommendations concerning the elimination of violence against women. Finland will submit a voluntary interim report on the implementation of the recommendations to the UN Human Rights Council during 2024. This reporting offers a good opportunity to have a national, wide-ranging dialogue on the realization of human rights in Finland.

At the end of 2024, Finland will receive new recommendations on the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as the Istanbul Convention. These recommendations will be considered together with the recommendations given by the CEDAW Committee to get a broad overall picture of the realization of women's rights in Finland.

Section Five: Data and statistics

38. What are the most important areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?

The work of Statistics Finland's gender statistics has been supported by an expert group already for decades. The expert group on gender statistics was set for a new term in 2022 to 2024. In this term, non-discrimination and intersecting aspects were included in the agenda of the group for the first time. The expert group has representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Justice, the Ombudsman for Equality, the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman, Centre for Gender Equality Information /the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, research organisations, women's and men's organisations and labour organisations. The task of the group is to promote statistics on gender equality and non-discrimination and the use of Statistics Finland's data, and to strengthen cooperation between data users and producers.

The thematic webpage on gender equality at Statistics Finland has been updated continuously (also in English). A new thematic website for Gender-based violence and intimate partner violence was launched in 2023. It compiles Statistics Finland's statistics and publications on the theme. The content of the page is completed continuously.

The co-operation on gender data between Statistics Finland and stakeholders is wide and there has been several co-operation projects. Two recent cooperation projects are The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on gender equality in Finland and The Costs of domestic violence in Finland (LAKU). These projects were part of the implementation of the Government Plan for Analysis, Assessment and Research and led by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare. In addition to the final reports, policy briefs, discussion papers, and research articles have also been written¹⁴.

Statistics Finland is represented in various national groups on gender equality, for example Subcommittee on Gender, Economy, and Power by the Council for Gender Equality, and the Committee for Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (NAPE). Co-operation with the Centre for Gender Equality Information at the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare and responsible agencies of gender equality and equality and non-discrimination is solid. Statistics Finland participates in the network for promoting gender equal leadership, co-ordinated by the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Internationally, Statistics Finland participates in the newly formed Eurostat Task Force on Equality and Non-

¹⁴ <https://thl.fi/en/research-and-development/research-and-projects/costs-of-domestic-violence-in-finland-laku-https://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/164292/24-2022-Domestic%20violence%20increases%20the%20use%20and%20costs%20of%20services.pdf?sequence=6&isAllowed=y>
https://www.julkari.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/143669/TYO2022_002_korj.pdf?sequence=4
<https://fjsr.journal.fi/article/view/125105>
<https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/stockholm/19723.pdf>

discrimination statistics working towards harmonized data collection on the topic. Statistics Finland has actively participated also in the following groups: UN Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Gender Statistics ([IAEG-GS](#)), EU She Figures, UNECE Gender statistics steering group, Praia Group Task Team on Non-discrimination and equality, and the Gender Equality in Arctic [GEAIV](#) project.

One of the achievements concerning the gender statistics in Finland has been **mainstreaming the gender aspect** into new statistical areas, including statistics on foreign trade, environment, and traffic. The promising results of the experimental statistics on women's participation in profitable foreign trade have been presented widely also in forms of articles. Examples of the fruitful ways of co-operation between gender and traffic statistics are a collaboration article and a live broadcast on the analysis of the topic.

The content of the regularly published Gender Equality in Finland publication was revised, further developed, and made accessible. New topics of Environment and the Effects of the COVID-19 crisis were included in the latest publication in 2021, as well as gender relevant SDG indicators. In addition, more data intersecting with sex of a person was included, for example on disability, perceived sex, and foreign background.

Over the past five years, there has been many achievements in **survey** data collection. As part of the larger project coordinated by Eurostat, Statistics Finland conducted *The Gender-based violence survey* (GBV) in 2021 to 2022 to investigate the prevalence and effects of intimate partner violence experienced by women. The survey was conducted also to meet the international recommendations, Istanbul convention and national information needs and funded by Eurostat (grant), Statistics Finland, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of the Interior. Nationally, the survey gathered information also on violence against men (aged 18–74) and young women (aged 16–17), and included questions on COVID-19, honour related violence, feelings of fear, use of shelters, forced marriages, attitudes towards genital mutilation, and social and health services. The results were disseminated widely in reports, articles, social media, seminars, webinars, live broadcasts, and interviews. The research data will be available for researchers via Statistics Finland's [research services](#). The GBV survey data has been utilized in two previous mentioned projects: *the Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the state of gender equality in Finland* and *the Costs of domestic violence in Finland* (LAKU).

According to the [results](#) of Statistic Finland's [time use survey](#) in 2020 to 2021, women's and men's total working time used on domestic and gainful work reached the same level for the first time during the good 40-year long measuring history of the survey.

[Statistics on living conditions](#), collected annually by Statistics Finland with the Survey on Income and Living Conditions (delivered to Eurostat's EU-SILC statistics) gave information on activity limitations in 2022.

Statistics Finland's 2020 survey on Use of information and communications technology by individuals (ICT) included information on experiences of harassment on the internet and information whether a person was subjected to inappropriate contacting on the internet (by age).

Quality of Work Life Survey 2018 conducted by Statistics Finland included a large amount of gender relevant questions (for example on gender equality, discrimination, harassment, hate speech and belonging to a minority). The survey has been conducted in 1977, 1984, 1990, 1997, 2003, 2008, 2013 and 2018 and it describes the change in working conditions of wage and salary earners. Labour force survey has continuously produced gender relevant data. For example, in 2019, information was published on mothers' return to the labour market after family leaves.

In addition to Statistics Finland, the gender relevant information is produced and disseminated by other data producers¹⁵. The Centre for Gender Equality Information at the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare gathers gender relevant information and disseminates it on their website.

The following surveys of The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare offer a lot of gender relevant information with intersecting aspects. All of these surveys also contribute to measuring discrimination in the Finnish society and have the possibility to provide data on gender minorities.

- The Healthy Finland Survey (2022–2023), provided up-to-date information on the health, well-being and service use of adults (aged 20+) living in Finland, as well as on changes and future developments in these areas. The study also examined the long-term effects of the coronavirus epidemic on the health and well-being of the Finnish population and formed a situation picture for the wellbeing services counties.
- The Moni Suomi 2022 (2022–2023) survey gave information that helps promoting equality for foreign-born population (aged 20–74) in Finland. The survey included information on well-being, health, functional and work capacity, service use, experiences of discrimination, employment status, problems relating to finding employment, inclusion, language skills and education.
- Annual School Health Promotion Study (1996–) monitors the well-being, health and schoolwork of Finnish children and adolescents (aged 10–11, 14–20). The aim of the study is to strengthen the planning and evaluation of health promotion activities at school, municipal and national levels. The results are also utilised in research and in different welfare programs, strategies, and policies. The topics of the questionnaire are living conditions, schoolwork, health, health-related behaviour, and school health services. All of these surveys contribute also to measuring discrimination in the Finnish society and have the possibility to provide data of gender minorities as well.

¹⁵ https://tilastokeskus.fi/org/tilastotoimi/index_en.html

39.Over the next five years, what are your country's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?

Statistics Finland is revising its thematic web pages including the gender equality thematic page. The aim is to obtain as much automatically updated gender data as possible freely available online. However, interpretation and scaling down are also needed, otherwise the large amount of data in the databases may stay hidden and not be utilized. Essential information must be easily and quickly accessible and correctly interpreted. In this sense, promoting data literacy needs to be on the agenda too.

The publication Gender Equality in Finland in 2024 will be published in early 2025 in PDF format. The content will be revised from previous volume to include more intersectional data, but also relevant information for example on environment, gender-based violence and discrimination. In the coming years, the publication format will also be considered (renewing and modernizing). In addition to this publication, gender statistics will be disseminated widely online, in articles, reports, social media, research papers etc. The information will be available in English when possible. Gender relevant indicators (the SDG's, Minimum set of gender indicators and the national gender indicators) will be considered in the work of Statistics Finland's gender statistics.

Statistics Finland will go on co-operating closely with stakeholders in different groups and projects on gender equality both nationally and internationally. The expert group on gender statistics will be appointed again to a new three-year season in 2025. Mainstreaming gender perspective into all statistical areas will be further advanced, as well as raising the awareness of gender issues among data producers and users. In the coming years, attention will be paid also to equality and non-discrimination statistics, including the gender aspect. Statistics Finland will participate in the Eurostat Task Force on Equality and Non-discrimination.

In 2024, Statistics Finland carries out the [Pregnancy discrimination survey](#) on assignment of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The survey provides information on discrimination experienced in working life and fear of becoming discriminated against because of pregnancy or family leave.

The Gender-based violence in Finland 2021 survey data will be further analysed and reported.

The Gender Equality Barometer 2024, commissioned by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, will be conducted by Statistics Finland in 2024 to 2025.

The results of [the Quality of Work Life](#) 2023 survey will be published in 2024.

The [Value of household production](#) 2022 will be published in November 2024.

40. What gender-specific indicators has your country prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

The commission for sustainable development for the period 2020–2023 finalised the national strategy for sustainable development in Spring 2022. This strategy is structured according to the recommendations of the global sustainable development report (GSDR2019, GSDR2023) around areas of transformation. The six areas of transformation of the strategy to enhance sustainable development in a systems-based manner include: Sustainable energy system; Forest, water and land use promoting biodiversity and carbon neutrality; Food system promoting wellbeing; Support for the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda; Wellbeing, health and social inclusion; Education, competence and sustainable lifestyles; Economy and work promoting wellbeing and sustainable consumption; and Support for the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The strategy includes also six cross-cutting principles which guide the implementation and monitoring the progress for the areas of transformation. The cross-cutting principles are: promoting fairness, equity and gender equality, facilitating the inclusion and participation of society at large, taking into account the most vulnerable (leaving no one behind), ensuring long-term commitment and policy coherence and bearing global responsibility.

The progress of the strategy is monitored every second year. As the strategy is system-based, also the monitoring is system-based and is not indicator-oriented. However, as one of the cross-cutting principles is promotion of fairness, equity and gender equality, these issues are taken into consideration when monitoring each of the areas of transformation.

41. Which data disaggregations are routinely provided by major surveys in your country?

The laws governing the production of statistics in Finland are presented under [Statistical legislation](#) and the compilation of statistics is regulated by the [Statistics Act](#). At general level, collecting equality data for statistical purposes is regulated under the ESS framework and the GDPR. Collecting health and social data from administrative and health care registers for statistical purposes is regulated under the law on the secondary use of health and social data.

In Finland, the population census has been fully register-based since 1990. Thanks to the good coverage of register-based data in Finland, a large amount of background variables for the population is available. For example, regional data, age, education, juridical sex, marital status, family status, religion, income, immigrant background (1st and 2nd generation), country of birth, nationality, mother tongue (so far, only 1 language possibility in registers) are available with some restrictions, such as limited information on immigrants'

education. Information on disability allowances etc. is also available. The data can also be combined within the scope of data protection and legislation. No information on race/ethnicity is available in Finnish registers. In addition to the data based on registers, surveys provide a wealth of gender data, and the availability of survey data has improved remarkably during the past five years. Survey information is needed to fulfil register-based information, but also to give information from different angles, like experiences. Whereas registers offer only information on juridical sex, surveys can give information on sex and gender, based on respondents' own experience. However, according to the [Statistics Act](#), data collected in other contexts must be primarily exploited for statistics. Only such data that cannot be obtained from elsewhere are collected from data suppliers. Unfortunately, this gives a limited information compared to asking for it in the survey that allows more options than registers, for example the third sex or the option 'other'. The vast majority of data are drawn from diverse registers. Background variables for surveys are typically gathered from registers also to avoid response burden.

Statistics Finland's statistical data <https://stat.fi/en/statistical-data>

StatFin database <https://stat.fi/en/database-tables> includes a wide range of background variables.

The following surveys conducted by the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare include a wide range of questions and background variables:

- The [Healthy Finland](#) and The [MoniSuomi 2022](#) surveys include questions about gender (male, female, other) and belonging to gender minority group. (See also question 38.)
- [School Health Promotion study](#) gives an opportunity to monitor trends and assess differences between genders and areas.
- [Sotkanet](#) statistics and indicator bank

In addition, there are also numerous other one-off studies.

[Section Six: Conclusion and next steps](#)

Whole-of-government effort

The Beijing+30 national review process revealed the broad range of actors that take part in the advancement of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). Implementation is a whole-of-government effort. One of the key actions to accelerate the implementation of the BPfA and the 2030 Agenda is to fully implement relevant existing national action plans: National Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention (2022–2025); Women, Peace and Security: Finland's National Action Plan (2023–2027); and the Finnish National STEM Strategy and Action Plan, to name a few. Further action plans are currently in the making, for example The action plan on promoting

equality, gender equality and non-discrimination in Finnish society, which is based on the equality statement submitted by Prime Minister Petteri Orpo's Government to Parliament on 31 August 2023.

Gender equality

One of the key actions for advancing gender equality in Finland is the Government's Action Plan for Gender Equality that each Government adopts for its term in office.

The measures of the previous Government Action Plan for Gender Equality (2020–2023) focused on combating harassment, including sexual harassment and online shaming, and safeguarding integrity and the right to self-determination by reforming the legislation on sexual offences. The measures also strengthened the effectiveness of restraining orders and the inclusion of gender-related motives in the grounds for reducing punishment. Housing services of victims of human trafficking were improved. A study was launched to chart the prostitution situation.

The Government Action Plan for Gender Equality for 2024–2027, which is currently under preparation, focuses on the prevention of and addressing violence against women (strategic objective D of the BPfA) as well as on guaranteeing the legal protection of women who have experienced violence. The objectives include identifying and combating honour-related violence, giving up conciliation in intimate partner violence and criminalising female genital mutilation. The measures are in line with objective 118 of the BPfA. In addition, the Government aims to improve the ability to identify and intervene in violence against boys and men.

As required by the BPfA (strategic objective G/187), gender mainstreaming is part of the gender equality work of the Finnish Government. All ministries have an operational equality and non-discrimination plan and a working group that monitors its implementation. The future Action Plan for Gender Equality will also strengthen mainstreaming of the gender perspective, for example by increasing resources and by providing more in-depth training to executive and political leaders on equality and non-discrimination.

Following reductions in government funding and internal change negotiations in spring 2024, the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) announced the closure of the Centre for Gender Equality Information. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is looking into possibilities of continuing to carry out the functions of the centre.

Going forward, Finland has to work hard to promote equal pay and bridge the gender pay gap at different levels. For example, dismantling gender segregation alone is not enough, as the latest research data shows that the pay gap in sectors dominated by women, for example, will remain even if the number of men increases. A lot of research has been carried out in recent years, and knowledge of pay differences and other gender equality

problems in working life has become more accurate, but the challenge in the future is how to make this research data visible, utilized and effective. Equal pay is also affected by changes in the labour market.

Looking ahead, another thing to observe is the so-called anti-gender movement and its influence globally, including in Europe. There is growing resistance to already achieved progress in gender equality. Gender equality should not be taken for granted in any society. On the contrary, it is important to ensure adequate resources for gender equality work and to continue to push forward for gender equality and women's rights both domestically and internationally together with partners.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The National Commission on Sustainable Development is currently working on an implementation plan for its strategy '*A prosperous and globally responsible Finland that protects the carrying capacity of nature*'. In addition, Finland will submit the next voluntary national report on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in summer 2025.

The [national sustainable development strategy](#) (2022–2030) has seven follow-up articles – one for each systemic area of change – that will be key to implementing the 2030 Agenda in Finland:

- Support for the global implementation of the 2030 Agenda
- Sustainable energy system
- Forest, water and land use promoting biodiversity and carbon neutrality
- Food system promoting wellbeing
- Education, competence and sustainable lifestyles
- Economy and work promoting wellbeing, sustainable consumption
- Wellbeing, health and social inclusion

More information: <https://kestavakehitys.fi/en>

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