

Violence against women in Finland

Violence against women is a human rights violation and a major gender equality problem. Its occurrence is considerably common in Finland compared with many other European countries. Violence against women causes both human suffering and high economic costs to society.

Violence against women includes, for example, intimate partner violence, sexual violence and gender-based harassment. Violence can be physical, mental, economic or sexual. Forms of violence against women also include:

- trafficking in women;
- exploitative use in prostitution;
- female genital mutilation; and
- “honour” related assaults and killings.

Special characteristics of violence against women

Women encounter violence particularly in intimate relationships, families and workplaces. Often the perpetrator is someone she knows. Women experience violence by a current or previous partner more often than men do. Sexual violence is regarded as a particularly injurious form of violence. It is most often inflicted on women and girls. Sexual violence is a severe violation of the right of self-determination and its consequences may be long-lasting.

INFORMATION ABOUT GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The Centre for Gender Equality Information (National Institute for Health and Welfare) is a national information service providing up-to-date and research-based information about gender equality. www.thl.fi/en/web/gender-equality/gender-equality-in-finland/wellbeing/gender-based-violence

Violence against women is a manifestation of the power relations between the genders in society. It maintains gender inequality and constitutes discrimination against women.

Not only gender but also other person-related matters and the situation of vulnerable persons in particular should be taken into account when addressing violence. For example, violence experienced by women with disabilities is considerably more common than other violence against women.

Preventing violence against women

Preventing violence against women has been an objective of Finland's gender equality policies since the late 1990s. The aim has mainly been to combat intimate partner violence and to support victims. Attention has also been paid to the sexual abuse of women, violence at work and human trafficking and prostitution. The most recent Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women covered the 2010–2015 period and was implemented in cooperation between four ministries and administrative branches. The Action Plan contained more than 60 concrete measures aiming to prevent violence, protect and support victims and bring perpetrators to justice.

Istanbul Convention

The Council of Europe convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) entered into force in Finland in 2015. The Convention contains provisions on comprehensive and coordinated policies. In Finland, the Convention is also applied to boys and men experiencing intimate partner violence. The implementation of the Convention is monitored by a group of experts on action against violence against women and domestic violence.

The purposes of the Istanbul Convention include:

- preventing and eliminating violence against women and domestic violence;
- protecting victims of violence and providing them with support services (such as shelters and the telephone helpline);
- prosecuting perpetrators of violence;
- promoting gender equality;
- promoting cooperation between authorities and non-governmental organisations with a view to eliminating violence.

NOLLALINJA 080 005 005

is a phone helpline for anyone experiencing intimate partner violence or violence against women:

www.nollalinja.fi/in-english

ISTANBUL CONVENTION

More information about the Convention and its monitoring:
www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/home

Text of the Convention:
www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention

