

Ombudsman for Equality: Monitoring the Act on Gender Equality

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Finnish Federation of Graduate Women, FFGW

Today's presentation

1. Introduction
2. Basics and background
3. The Gender Equality Act
4. The Ombudsman for Equality
5. Future challenges

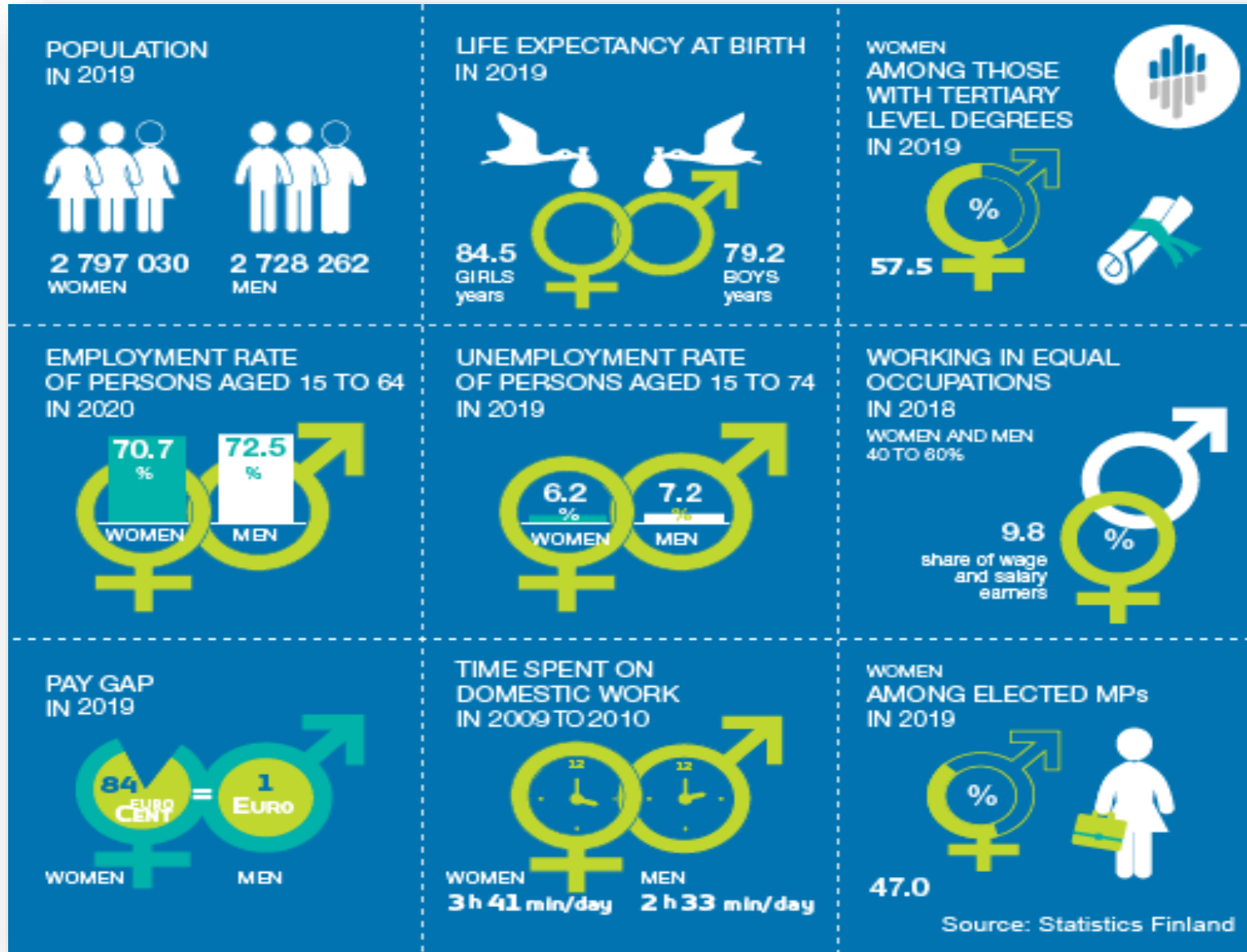


Monitoring

“to watch and check something over a period of time in order to see **how it develops**, so that **you can make any necessary changes”**

Source: [Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com)

- Supervising compliance with the Gender Equality Act (the GEA)
- Assessing the GEA
- Following gender equality issues



Source: Statistics Finland

Is Finland a success story?

Progress on gender equality in Finland since 2010

“With 74.7 out of 100 points, Finland ranks 4th in the EU on the Gender Equality Index. Finland’s score is 6.8 points above the EU’s score. Since 2010, its score has increased by only 1.6 points. Most of the increase (1.3 points) has been achieved since 2017. **Finland’s ranking has remained the same since 2010.**”

Source: The Gender Equality Index 2020
by EIGE, the European Institute for Gender Equality

Problems persist

- The gender pay gap remains at 16 %. The difference between women's and men's pensions is 21 %. At the current rate, it will take 50 years to eliminate the pay gap.
- Discrimination based on pregnancy is a significant form of discrimination in Finnish working life.
- Men use approx. 10 % of all family leaves.
- Violence against women is not commonly recognized as an issue for gender equality.
- Gender segregation remains strong.

Historical background 1/2

- Pre-WWII
 - Women's cooperation across political party lines
- 1980s
 - Ratification of the CEDAW, followed by the GEA & the Ombudsman (1987)
 - UN, Nordic cooperation, corporatism, welfare state
- 1990s
 - New chapter on fundamental rights introduced to the Constitution
 - European integration, accession to the CoE (incl. ECHR) and to the EU

Historical background 2/2

- 2000s
 - New constitution, the Non-discrimination Act (NDA)
 - EU directives on discrimination, neoliberalism, individualism
- 2010s
 - Revision of the NDA, amendments to the GEA
 - National fundamental rights framework
- 2020s?

The Ombudsman for Equality (GEO)

WHAT?

- An independent supervisory authority
- Appointed by the Government for a five year period
- Office with a staff of approx. 10 people, majority lawyers

HOW?

- Monitors compliance with the Gender Equality Act (GEA)
- Gives advice and instructions (statements)
- Follows and promotes gender equality
 - Reports annually to the Government & every four years to the Parliament

The Gender Equality Act 609/1987

Material scope is general, but

1. Public authorities
2. Educational institutions
3. Employers
4. Trade unions
5. Providers of goods or service

Need to be more careful!

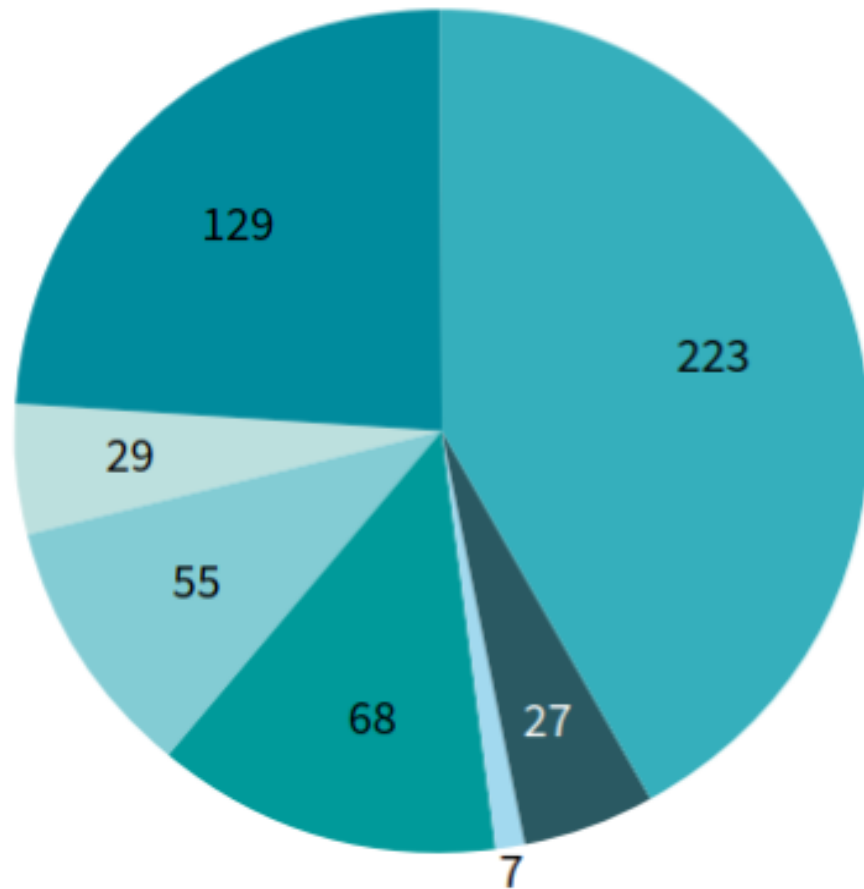
Provisions

1. Promote equality
2. Prohibit discrimination
3. Guarantees ways to intervene

Ombudsman's mandate

1. Supervises **compliance with the Equality Act**, primarily its prohibitions on discrimination
2. **Promotes** the objectives of the Equality Act with initiatives, advice and instructions
3. Offers **information** on equality legislation
4. **Monitors the situation** of gender equality in different fields of society
5. Promotes **reconciliation** between parties in discrimination issues

Our work in practise

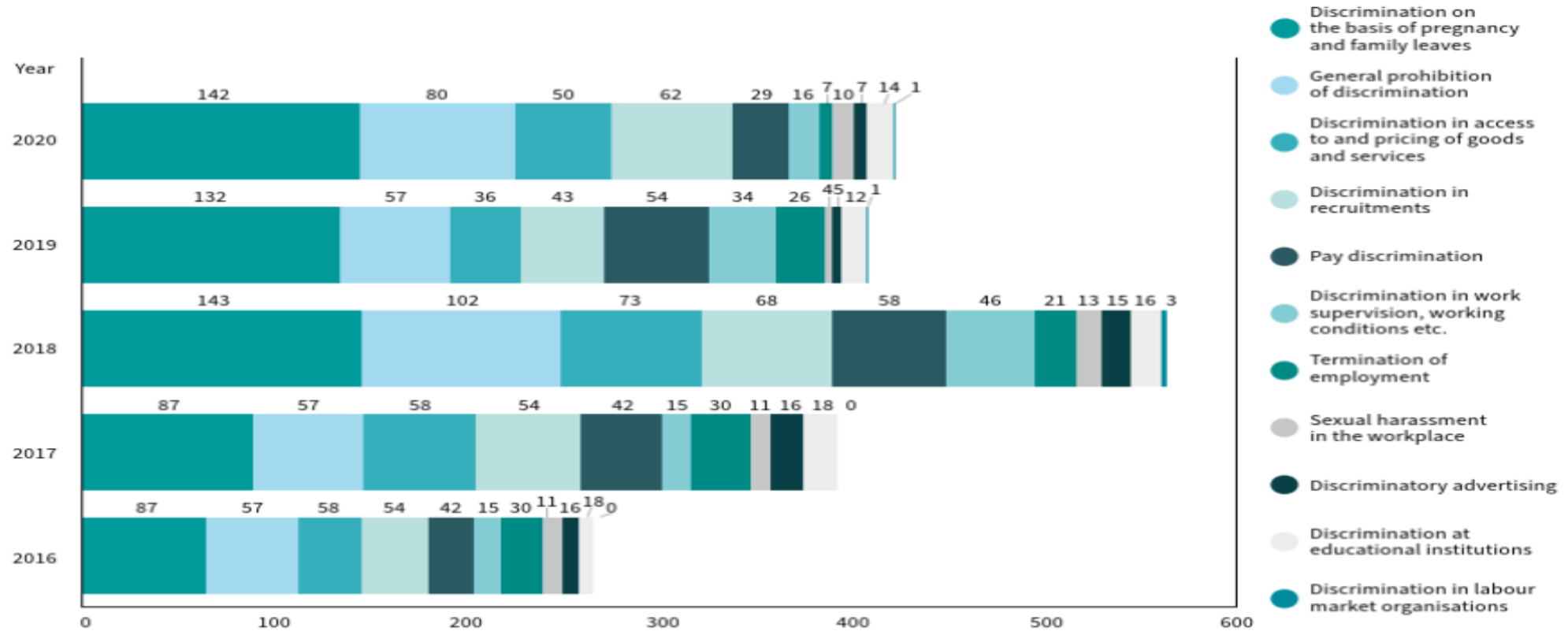


CASES HANDLED IN WRITING 2020 (538 in total)

- Discrimination 223 cases
- Supervision and promotion of gender equality plans 27 cases
- Quotas 7 cases
- Statements issued to other authorities 68 cases
- Requests for information and enquiries concerning Equality Act 55 cases
- Administration, communications and other matters 29 cases
- Not within the Ombudsman's authority 129 cases

Our client cases

CLIENT CONTACTS RELATED TO DISCRIMINATION MADE IN WRITING AND ON TELEPHONE IN 2016-2020



A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a horizontal metal bar. The person is wearing a white quilted jacket over a dark blue patterned shirt and a brown leather belt. The background is blurred, showing a green vertical element and a white fabric.

Statements on discrimination

- A. Pregnancy discrimination in temporary agency work in the construction sector (TAS/158/2019)
- B. Pregnancy discrimination in recruitment (TAS/338/2019)
- C. Family leave related discrimination in recruitment of a permanent position (TAS/11/2020)

Challenges?

- Segregation
- Access to justice
 - Lack of effective remedies
- Making women visible without strengthening stereotypes
 - Intersectionality and diversity
 - Categories of "gender", "female", and "male"
 - Misogyny and transfobia

Thank you!



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