



# Sterilisations 2020

## Number of sterilisations continued to decline

### MAIN FINDINGS

- In 2020, some 1,150 women and 2,670 men were sterilized.
- In proportion to the total number of people aged 25–54 in 2020, the sterilisation rate for men was 2.5/1000 and for women 1.1/1000.
- The number of sterilisations among women continues to decline and 30.1% of all sterilisations were performed for women in 2020.
- The mean age for women at the time of the procedure was lower than for men.

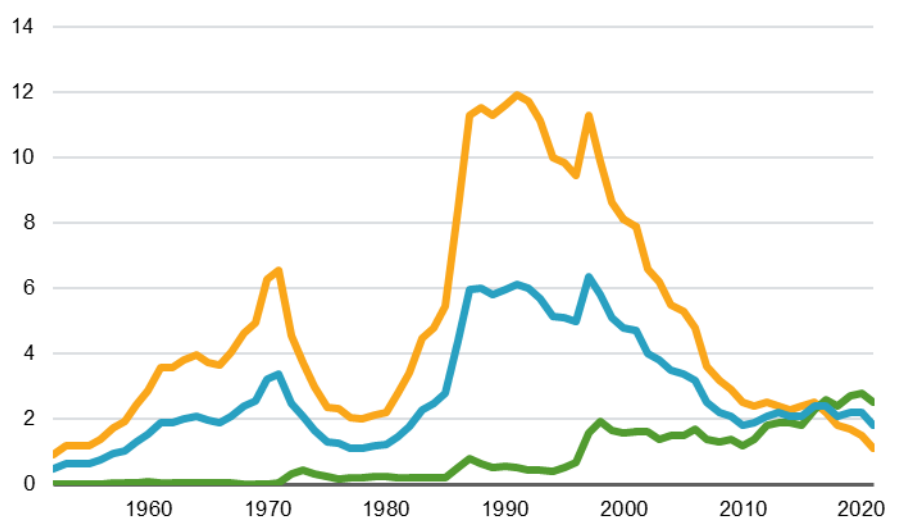
In 2020, the total number of sterilisations was approximately 3,800 which was 15 per cent less than in 2019. Sterilisations among women declined more (-22%) than sterilisations among men (-12%). It is assumed that corona epidemic has affected the number of procedures as waiting period to non-urgent case has increased.

The decrease in the number of sterilisations among women can be attributed to, for example, an expanding range of contraceptives, a shift to a later age of first childbearing parenthood and the withdrawal of the Essure sterilisation implant from Finnish market in the summer of 2017.

69.9% of sterilisations were performed for men in 2020. The proportion of men sterilized was higher than the proportion of women sterilized for the first time in 2016 and the proportion continued to increase in 2020. The number of female sterilisations has decreased substantially compared to the beginning of the 2000s: the proportion of female sterilisations was over 80 per cent in 2000.

Women sterilized are on average younger than men sterilized: in 2020, the mean age for women was 36.5 years and the mean age for men 40.5 years. Even though female sterilisations are most common in the 35–39 age group (37.1% of sterilisations), has the proportion of women aged 30–34 been rising (30.1% in 2018) and the mean age has decreased slightly. With men, sterilisations are most common in the 40–44 age group (31.2% of sterilisations). Previously 35–39-year-olds have been the biggest age groups. The mean for men has increased slightly in recent years.

Figure 1. Sterilisations per 1000 persons aged 25–54, 1951–2020



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## Act on Sterilisations

In Finland, provisions on sterilisations are found in the Act (283/1970) and Decree (427/1985) on Sterilisation. The Act specifies the grounds for performing sterilisations.

Sterilisation can be performed at the request of a person who has given birth to or who has at least three children under the age of 18, who has attained the age of thirty or whose life or health would be endangered by a pregnancy. Sterilisation can also be performed if the person has exceptionally poor opportunities for birth control, if there is reason to assume that the person's children would have a severe disease or structural anomaly, if the person's illness or other comparable reason limits his or her possibilities to care for children or if the person permanently feels that he or she belongs to the opposite sex and leads a life as a member of the opposite sex.<sup>1</sup>

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## Terms and definitions

**Sterilisation:** Sterilisation refers to an operation on the male or female genitals resulting in permanent inability to produce offspring. Operations performed on the genitals where the operation is regarded as necessary in the treatment of genitals or genital diseases are not regarded as sterilisations.

[More detailed information on the concepts and the definitions relating to reproductive health is available in Finnish](#)

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[www.thl.fi/statistics/sterilisations](http://www.thl.fi/statistics/sterilisations)

# Quality description (OSF)

## Sterilisations

### Relevance of statistical data

The statistics on sterilisations contain data on the annual number of sterilisations. Data on sterilisations are provided by gender and age group (per 1 000 persons aged 25–54) as well as by indication.

The report aims to provide up-to-date information on sterilisations to health care professionals, administrators, planning officials and researchers working in the area of reproductive health.

The report text describes the concepts and definitions used in the statistics.

The collection of data is based on the Act on the National Institute for Health and Welfare (668/2008), the Act on the Statistical Service of the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (409/2001), the Act (556/1989) and the Decree (774/1989) on National Personal Data Registers Kept under the Health Care, as well as the Act (283/1970 and the Decree (427/1985) on Sterilisations.

### Description of methods

Data on sterilisations are collected from all health care units in Finland that perform sterilisations. The statistical population consists of all persons who have undergone sterilisation. According to current legislation, the health care unit performing the procedure is required to report the case to the National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) within one month using a specific data collection form approved by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Doctors who are self-employed practitioners are responsible for reporting the sterilisations they have performed. The statistical data are based on notifications submitted to THL by 1<sup>st</sup> Sep 2021.

Year 2020 most data were collected to THL by electronic means. The electronic data collection begun in 2015. Units performing procedures complete an electronic form and save it in a secure format for THLs use or information transfers to THL as a database acquisition. In 2020, only a few register notifications arrived in paper form.

Data check-ups are made regularly, and any unclear cases and diagnoses are checked and ascertained by contacting the hospitals that have performed the procedure concerned.

### Correctness and accuracy of data

Correctness of data depends on the quality of the data submitted by the data suppliers. In unclear cases, the data in the register of sterilisations are compared with those in other registers (Medical Birth Register, Care Register). If necessary, the health care unit that has performed the procedure is contacted in order to ascertain the data.

In 2006, the coverage of the register of sterilisations was studied with the help of the Care Register<sup>2</sup>. The study found that 95.5 per cent of all sterilisations carried out in Finland have been reported to the register of sterilisations. Data submitted to the register indicates that the total number of sterilisations in Finland have been falling since the mid-1990s. This trend is due in part to smaller age groups and improved contraceptives, but the study also found gaps in the reporting of sterilisations. The validation study with 2011 data showed that the coverage of the Register on Sterilisations is still good but declined to 90 per cent<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Hanna Eronen, Mika Gissler & Annukka Ritvanen (2006): [Steriloimisten rekisteröiminen Suomessa. Steriloimisrekisterin ja hoitoilmoitusrekisterin steriloimistietojen vertailu ja aineiston laadun analysointi vuosilta 2000–2003](#) [Registering sterilisations in Finland. A comparison of sterilisation data recorded in the register of sterilisations and the care register for health care and an analysis of data quality in 2000–2003]. Discussion Papers 12/2006. Helsinki; Stakes.

<sup>3</sup> Heino A, Niinimäki M, Mentula M, Gissler M. [How reliable are health registers? Registration of induced abortions and sterilizations in Finland](#). Inform Health Soc Care. 2017 Apr 7:1-10.

In recent years, increasing numbers of male sterilisations have been performed in private health care, and statistical coverage cannot be guaranteed.

### **Timeliness and promptness of published data**

The sterilisation statistics are published yearly with the final data for the previous year.

Due to Helsinki and Uusimaa Hospital District's problems providing the data to THL after transferring to Apotti patient data system, statistics for 2019 were not published in 2020. Statistics for 2020 were published approximately 6 months later than normal. According to plan, 2021 statistics are to be released in May or June 2022.

### **Availability and transparency / clarity of data**

The reports are published on the [THL website](#). The appendix tables to the statistical report are published as database tables which enable the reader to choose the data displayed.

[Findata](#) is authorised to disclose data in the Register of Sterilisations to researchers for scientific research purposes.

### **Comparability of statistical data**

Since 1987, data on sterilisations have been kept in an electronic THL database. Official statistical publications by the National Board of Health (one of THL's predecessors) have been used as a source of information for earlier years.

Data for earlier years have been checked, for instance, by removing data that had been entered twice and by adding missing cases, so some data may deviate from previously published statistics.

With regard to age-specific data, it should be noted that from 1994 onwards such data in the register refer to the age of the patient on the day of the procedure, whereas the data for the years 1987–1993 refer to the age at the end of the year.

The concepts and definitions related to sterilisation have remained unchanged throughout this time.

In the data collection form for the register, for some of the variables (e.g. contraceptive method, method of sterilisation, indication) it is possible to select more than one alternative. This should be taken into account when examining the tables.

### **Clarity and consistency**

The data on sterilisations in the statistical report are nationwide.

Previous years' data are corrected, where necessary, retrospectively, but the changes have been fairly small. At the time of this report's publication, the 2018 data, for example, were corrected, and the total number of sterilisations increased by 10 cases.