

# Sterilisations 2023

## Number of sterilisations stayed stable

### MAIN FINDINGS

- In 2023, some 700 women and 2200 men were sterilised.
- In proportion to the total number of people aged 25–54 in 2023, the sterilisation rate for men was 2.0/1000 and for women 0.7/1000.
- The number of sterilisations stayed stable in 2023. In 2022, the number declined by 29.1%.
- The mean age for women at the time of the procedure was lower than for men.

In 2023, the total number of sterilisations was approximately 2900 which was approximately as much as in 2022. However, especially the number of female sterilisations has declined significantly during the 2000's and declined also in 2023 (-18.2%). As for male sterilisations, the number increased slightly in 2023 (+6.4%).

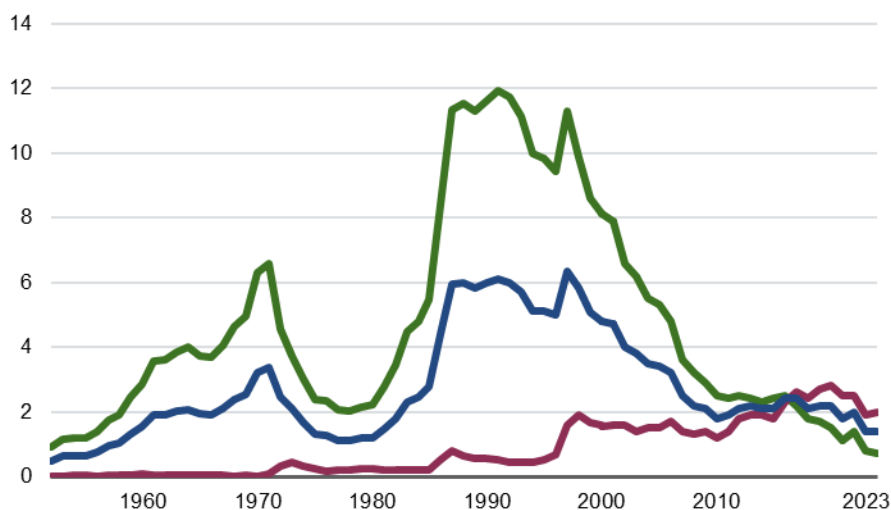
The proportion of male sterilisations has increased considerably during the 2000s. In 2000, only 17 per cent of all sterilisations were performed to men while in 2023 the share was 75.7 per cent.

The decrease in the number of sterilisations after mid-1990's can be attributed to, for example, an expanding range of contraceptives and postponing parenthood. The increase in the number of sterilisations after year 1985 is explained by the updated, more liberal legislation.

Women sterilised are on average younger than men sterilised: in 2023, the mean age for women was 36.7 years and the mean age for men 40.7 years.

For the 2022 data there are some known data quality issues for some hospitals, but the total number of procedures is in line with the data in the Hospital Care Register. However, the register coverage should be treated with caution.

**Figure 1. Sterilisations per 1000 persons aged 25–54, 1951–2023**



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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>

The Sterilization Act was amended in 2023. The amendment came into effect on April 3, 2023, and after this, sterility is no longer a requirement for gender confirmation.

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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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## thl.fi/statistics/sterilisations

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<sup>1</sup> [Act on Sterilisation 283/1970](#), in Finnish only

# 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 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024.

Year 2023 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 2023, 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, Hospital Care Register). If necessary, the health care unit that has performed the procedure is contacted in order to ascertain the data.

For the 2023 data there are some known data quality issues for some hospitals, but the total number of procedures is in line with the data in the Hospital Care Register. However, the register coverage should be treated with caution.

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

<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.

that the coverage of the Register on Sterilisations is still good but declined to 90 per cent<sup>3</sup>. 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.

#### **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 data.

The Sterilization Act was amended in 2023. The amendment came into effect on April 3, 2023, and after this, sterility is no longer a requirement for gender confirmation. An updated registration notification form (ST2) came into effect September 1<sup>st</sup> 2023. More information on data collection form on [THL web pages](#) (in Finnish).

#### **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 2022 data, for example, were corrected, and the total number of sterilisations increased by 13 cases.

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<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.