



NORWEGIAN MINISTRY
OF CHILDREN AND EQUALITY

Report No. 8 (2008–2009) to the Storting Chapter 1–9

Men, Male Roles and Gender Equality

Chapter 1–9 Main contents of a Government White Paper





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1 Introduction

This document will be known as the White Paper Document from the government to Stortinget (Parliament) on male roles and gender equality. Gender equality has long been synonymous with women and their struggle for economic independence, equal pay, and equal power. It has also been a key principle in eliminating oppression and violence.

However, gender equality is about both men and women. Men spend less time together with their own children, are more prone to accidents, are over-represented in crime statistics, and drop out more often from upper secondary education. These examples indicate that men would have much to gain from true gender equality. Men are under-represented in the teaching professions in preschools and schools, in nursing and children's social services. At the same time, men still sit in the majority of positions of power in society and they still make more money than women. It is mainly men who are the perpetrators of domestic violence.

In recent years there have been positive changes in the role of males in society. It has been almost 20 years since the Committee on Male Roles in 1991 presented its recommendations. The Committee on Male Roles pointed out the following goals: the reallocation of power between women and men, more time for fathers to care for their own children both before and after a family breakup, reduced gender differences in choice of education and training and the prevention of men's violence against women; all of these were to be central goals for the future work towards

gender equality. In several areas the development in the period has been positive. In particular, there is reason to look at the development in the home, and the increased contact between fathers and their children. In other areas, however, the development has been stagnant or negative. While women have entered previous male arenas in the workplace, there has not been any increase when it comes to men in health and care giving sectors. In the education sector men constitute a smaller group of today than 15 years ago. Consequently, there is reason to reiterate the goals stated by the committee.

There is a need to summarize the changes that actually have occurred as a result of suggestions from the committee, and to consider new challenges in light of general social developments. One consequence of the suggestions that the committee provided has been the setting up of a separate "father quota" in the system for parental leave. This has contributed to changes in male roles and the traditional beliefs about the characteristics associated with men and masculinity. The "new man" is, in fact, more equality-oriented. In particular, men today are more involved in caring for children, and changes in the role of the father have been great. Men have expanded their spheres of action.

Care giving is a kind of behaviour in men that should be stimulated. Care giving is in many ways the opposite of violence, and is also an important skill for the raising of, and being together with children, both at home as well as in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) and schools.

Box 1.1 Changes in male roles since the Committee on Male Roles

- While men in the academic year 1993/1994 comprised 47% of the number who completed their education at universities and colleges, this number shrank to 37.7% in academic year 2006/2007
- In an investigation of equality in 1988, 95% of men answered that their partner was responsible for cooking. In the investigation in 2007, only 48% of men answered the same.
- In 1990 Fathers had around 12.5 working hours more than mothers per week. In 2005, this fell to about 8 hours.
- In 1988, only 1-2% of fathers took out available parental leave. In 2007, 9 out of 10 fathers who had the right to parental leave used the weeks they were allocated.
- In 1996, men accounted for 41.3% of the employees in the education sector. In the 2. quart of 2008 men accounted for only 34.6% of the employees.
- In the 1990's, 19 of 20 board members were men. In 2008, 6 of 10 board members in public limited companies were men.
- In the 1990's, children under 18 who lived only with their fathers, or the father and a new partner, were an exception. In 2008 this is the case for about 41 500 children, and even since 2001 the number increased from around 29,000.
- In 1991 the mortality rate before 65 years was 41 per 1 000 for males and 22 per 1 000 for women. In 2007 the rate was 28 per 1 000 for men and 18 for women.
- Life expectancy at birth in 1991 was 74 years for men and for women 80. In 2007, life expectancy had increased to 78 and 83 years, respectively.
- In 1996, 9 out of 10 of those who were sentenced for crimes were men. Ten years later, the statistic was 8 of 10.

Within the field of care for the elderly, as well as in nursing in general, men can play a significant role. Both men and women fall sick and need care, and they should have a right to meet people of both genders who are caregivers.

Masculinity is commonly associated with a number of positive values and characteristics, just as femininity is. Together they form a diversity that provides the basis for social, cultural and economic growth in the community. There is however, reason to be critical of some behavioural features traditionally associated with masculinity. This applies particularly to any behaviour that in its nature may be harmful to others. Violence towards women and children or other men, including violence towards homosexuals, is an example of this. To limit the negative aspects of the impact of masculinity serves both women and men.

The government acknowledges that gender equality can only be achieved when men and women work together towards the same goals and agree that both masculinity and femininity have aspects where changes and new adjustments are required. Gender equality between the sexes is about changing attitudes in men and women as well as securing formal rights and duties at an individual and group level.

An important purpose of this report is to gather factual materials and data on men and male roles. The material shows clearly that there are great social differences between groups of men, and that there is good reason to use the term “the extreme gender” when referring to men. Men make up both the upper echelons and the lower strata of society. They are over-represented in the power forum, and yet they also top the statistics for violence, criminality and suicide. Eight out of ten pupils with serious behavioural problems in schools are boys.

In 2006, as background for this white paper, The Ministry of Children and Equality conducted a broad investigation to look at attitudes and daily life practice with regards to equality between men and women. *The results of this research are presented here in the different chapters of this white paper, and will be referred to collectively as “The Equality Research Survey”.*

The results can be found in the same Internet link that is named on the front page of this document. Specific policies of equality, such as the goal of ensuring equal access to education, regardless of gender, and childrearing without the stigma of gender stereotypes, find greater support among women and men than “equality” as a context-independent value. The investigation also shows that equality is practiced on the home front through negotiations on both a daily basis and in the long

term, and that men now participate much more positively towards taking responsibility for the physical and psychological health of the family. A total of 90% of both men and women believe that housework and breadwinning for the family should be divided equally between the sexes, and far more couples follow this principle on a daily basis.

At the same time, the investigation reveals that statistics regarding the labour market do not show any sign of being more equal; there has been little or no gender equality development by business itself, and the workplace serves more as a hindrance to equality of the sexes. When we also have a labour market that is split along gender lines, we see that the Norwegian society has major challenges in this field in the time ahead.

In August 2007, the minister for Children and gender equality established a Men's panel that was given the mandate to discuss and create debate around the theme of men, male roles and masculinity in a gender equality perspective.

This panel was also asked to provide input to the work of this white paper. Suggestions that the Men's Panel presented in the Conclusive Memorandum of the Men's Panel are mentioned in the different parts of this report. The memorandum from the panel is also presented in the same Internet link as mentioned on the front page of this document. The Ministry states that there was, almost without exception, full accord between the areas where the panel craved action and the aspects of men's situation that the white paper already was addressing.

The establishment of the Men's Panel showed in all ways the need to discuss male roles and men's situation in life. At the very least, it was interesting to see that so many viewed the composition of the panel as a provocation; some did not consider the men in the panel "real men". Such people seem to think they have an exclusive right to define the term "real man", and that it is only themselves that fall into this category. The result of the panel shows that the need to discuss male roles and the behaviour of men should absolutely be a topic of political and societal interest.

The portion of the population who has not been born in Norway has increased substantially over the last 15 years. Immigration from non-western countries has in particular increased. In the same period there has been shown far greater openness about sexual orientation, and diversity as an important value has broad support in the population. The factors mentioned show that male

roles have indeed changed over the years since the Committee on Male Roles began and also that the spectrum of male roles has expanded. This white paper discusses various aspects of male roles and characteristics tied to masculinity.

The government acknowledges that giving men and women the same formal rights and obligations cannot in itself achieve equal treatment of gender. Boys are brought up to keep back tears, while girls can acceptably cry in public; this is not illegal discrimination based on gender, but a culturally based discrimination that leads to men and women acting differently later in life. This white paper is primarily aimed towards putting the spotlight on social and cultural traditions that support the gender-based discrimination that represses boys and men and causes negative behaviour to be reproduced generation after generation. The purpose of the white paper is to determine how such discrimination and reproduction of unwanted behaviour can be eliminated.

Rights and obligations that only apply to one gender, must be considered as violations of the equal treatment principle and require special justification. Laws and rules are now mainly gender neutral, and according to these regulations, men and women have a good chance for equal opportunities in Norway. However, in some areas the government has set in motion affirmative action measures as a means to promote more equal opportunity in the future. The reason for these measures is that, in the long run, affirmative action will serve gender equality.

The government will work to ensure that financial arrangements, laws and regulations will be gender neutral and will not discriminate against one gender. In this white paper the government will examine and consider changes in rules and regulations that may be discriminatory towards boys and men. However, the historical cultural and collective attitudes that contribute to the unequal understanding and treatment of men and women are an equally great challenge for the individual boy and man. Such attitudes still set clear limits as to what girls and boys can choose, and the white paper suggests government measures in different areas of society to change these attitudes.

While the role of women changed dramatically during the seventies and eighties, the role of men has mainly seen changes during the last two decades. To now put the focus on men and gender equality does in no way downgrade the work still to be done for women and gender equality. On the

contrary, the two are closely knit. The goal is still to ensure a high professional participation of women, to get more women into the leadership positions and onto boards. But there is also a goal for fathers to be able to spend more time together with their children. At the same time as there is a clear objective to reduce the difference in salary between female-dominated and male-dominated professions, we aim to influence more men to choose the nursing profession or other occupations in which women are over-represented. To achieve a just distribution of power, responsibility and care giving is the overarching aim of gender equality.

Such a distribution will benefit both men and women, both the family and society.

1.1 Summary of the White Paper and suggestions for strategies and measures.

Chapter 2 Upbringing, educational and profession choices

In the spring of 2008, The Ministry of Education and Research has laid out its own action-plan for equality in preschools and elementary schools. The action-plan proposes a number of suggestions in order to improve the balance between genders, both in the educational choices that children and teenagers make, as well as the gender balance of employees within the sector. The objective is to change the traditional understanding concerning education and job choices, and this would be directed towards both genders whether they are pupils, students or jobseekers. In this chapter of the White Paper we discuss the need for an effort specifically directed towards boys within schools and higher education.

One characteristic of schools to be looked at is that boys from elementary and secondary schools, at all levels, generally have lower academic scores compared to girls: numbers from the *Directorate for Education (Utdanningsdirektoratet)* show that boys on average lay half a grade below girls at the completion of elementary school. This difference between sexes was also considerable twenty years ago. The government considers early intervention as its main instrument in amending learning difficulties. Statistics show that more boys than girls are in need of this intervention, although there are far fewer students (6,3 %) that actually receive special educa-

tion than those who struggle on their own with learning difficulties. Harmony between schools and parents is also essential. Fathers in particular, especially those of minority backgrounds, must be encouraged to participate far more with the everyday aspects of the child's school life. Research shows that boys and girls meet different expectations from both school and the home when it comes to adjusting to school life. These gender-based differences in expectations could well affect boys negatively at a later stage in life. Research also shows a clear connection between expectations and learning. There is a need for more research concerning the reasons why the educational outcomes are different for boys and girls. A recent research report from NOVA found neither any indication that schools amplified gender differences, nor that schools helped to reduce these differences. Achieving poor graduation marks from primary education can contribute heavily towards desertion from higher education. When boys have a higher drop-out rate from higher education it weakens their future prospects in terms of educational and career choices.

The Ministry of Education and Research therefore seeks to increase its efforts to broaden public knowledge concerning gender differences in learning outcomes.

A change in educational choices made by individuals is necessary in order to improve the gender divided labour market. The existing educational and career counselling in schools would like to see more emphasis on untraditional educational choices. The Ministry of Education and Research's Action Plan for Equality in Early Childhood Education and Primary Education (2008-2010) and White Paper no.16 (2006-2007) have aimed at such changes through the introduction of divided counselling services for primary and secondary school students.

Chapter 3 The gender divided workplace

The ministry wants to initiate an expansion of the terms of equality laws with regards to affirmative action on behalf of men, encompassing labour sectors that are working with adults, and where men are underrepresented (for example, the care giving and nursing sector). The Norwegian labour market is one of the most gender divided in Europe, and as the Gender Equality Survey of 2007 shows, the workplace is "slowing down" the progress towards equality between men and

women. Nothing much has happened during the last twenty years when it comes to achieving a more even gender distribution in different livelihoods. A number of public campaigns have been launched to change this picture. “Equality in Agriculture”, “Women in Administration” and “Women in Scientific Subjects” are a few such campaigns that have been launched. Equivalent campaigns directed towards men have been fewer in number, but this is now changing through an action-plan concerning men in preschools and schools. (Ministry of Education and Research) Of the campaigns that have been aimed at getting men involved in working with children, one can name “Men in ECEC”, (www.mibnett.no) and “Men in Schools” (www.menniskolen.no). There are also other sporadic projects under the Ministry for Health and Care Services; “The Lift of Competence” is one example. In this chapter the government suggests strengthening the efforts and means to recruit men into female dominated businesses, and all public sectors shall have strategies to hold onto employees of the underrepresented gender. Increased access to affirmative action for men, in combination with more conscious recruitment and staff policies, could help even out the differences we find in today’s labour market. The ECEC sector has had some good experience with recruitment strategies, where a moderate quota system has been combined with measures to recruit and retain men. From 2003 to 2007, the number of men employed by preschools has risen by 50 %. The preschools/day care centres that have succeeded (where at least 20% employees are men) have combined affirmative action with simple means of recruitment, for example marketing strategies where men are the target group.

Chapter 4 Fathers balancing work and family life

The government wants to arrange a support system so that fathers can take on more responsibility for their family and children. The government also wants to promote a cohabitation policy that strengthens equality in society and that gives men and women a chance to participate on equal grounds – in family life, working life and in organisations.

To combine a full time job with a family life is a challenge for both mothers and fathers, but fathers tend to have to make different adaptations compared to mothers. This may stem from collective opinions and cultural traditions in society and the workplace. Today less than 20% of fathers take

out the earmarked six weeks from work that their “father’s quota” allows, and more than 80% of children live with their biological mother after a break-up of the family. Responsible, committed parenthood should apply to both genders, and both mothers and fathers are important caregivers for their children. This chapter deals with the status of and initiatives concerning equality between men and women, focusing on coherence between family life and work. Expanding the quota for the father’s parental leave is the most efficient way to increase fathers’ usage of the parental leave of absence. In the government budget for 2009, it is proposed that the quota of time for fathers be increased to 10 weeks, and the total leave of combined absence increased by 2 weeks. The government aims to expand the quota of time for fathers with another 4 weeks to a total of 14 weeks, whereof 2 of those weeks will come as an extension of their period for aid/support. This builds a foundation for a substantial strengthening of the father’s care giving role and ensures flexibility for the family at the same time. In accordance with the target in “The Soria-Moria declaration”, which concerns itself with independent rights for fathers, the government endorses that all fathers who have earned the right to parental benefits, should also have the right to receive the quota of time for fathers. This will give all fathers with the right to parental benefits the same possibility to take out a father’s quota. Firstly, the father’s quota will encompass all cases where mothers and fathers have the right to parental financial benefits, and not only the cases where the mother has worked with at least a 50% contract in the acquired earning time. Today’s parental arrangement is complex and has general weaknesses regarding differential treatment of mothers and fathers. The department also wants to work out how the system of a two-week leave of absence for caring at birth or change in childcare could be improved.

Chapter 5 Men in relationships and family life, and cooperation between parents after a family break-up

The government wants to strengthen the position of fathers as caregivers. Changes in forms of cohabitation have resulted in many fathers spending time with their stepchildren on a daily basis, but only periodic time with their biological children. New forms of cohabitation and family life demand that men need to adapt further to the real-

ity of their situation, and the male role must change. This is discussed in this chapter. A separate governmental committee, The Committee of the Children Act (NOU 2008:9 The child in focus), has investigated changes in children's law. A proposed government bill will follow up this report. Changes in the laws support progress towards more equal participation in terms of childcare from both parents after a break-up, and these developments encompass men and their care giving role.

The leading concern of changes in the law should be the best interests of the child. Legislation should encourage children to develop and sustain a relationship with both parents, even when the parents do not live together. In most cases this is in the child's best interest. Generally speaking, custody arrangements after a parental break-up result in the child living with its mother. When the court determines whom a child should live with permanently, the father's case is given an equal hearing. The children have in most cases a right to spend time with the father, conversely, the mother. The government wants to expand the definition of "usual visiting rights", and increase the framework for establishing visiting rights with a publicly appointed guardian. The changes will lead to increased time spent with fathers after a break-up. However, co-habitation is often difficult when one parent chooses to move over great distances after a break up. Because of this, the government wants to introduce an ordinance that compels parents to inform each other ahead of time before one parent move domestically, which will give the parents the opportunity to talk the matter over properly, and possibly negotiate with the court as to where the child should stay if they can not manage to agree. This ordinance or duty should apply to both the custodial parent and the parent with visiting rights. Although there are exceptions, generally it is the parent with whom the child is living that makes it difficult for the other parent to enjoy partial custody or visiting rights. There are also other reasons that determine why these obligations are not fulfilled. The government is concerned with the fact that custodial and visiting rights should be respected and wishes to clarify how the law may be strengthened on this account. Men and women who are living together should have a collaborative agenda tied to their family life and cohabitation. A more even division of responsibilities and tasks would strengthen their relationship, and hence prevent a break-up. For couples with children, strengthening parenting skills is often in the best interests of

the children. The aim is that both genders become equal partners and caregivers. At the same time it is important for businesses and the workplace to take into consideration that fathers also have children. The department wants to help make "Dad Groups", an initiative that will encompass the whole nation. Experience shows that men are not able to create these types of networks themselves, to the degree that women do. Fathers take out such a short parental leave of absence, in comparison to mothers, that networks such as these become impossible to establish. Fathers are still a minority when it comes to escorting children to health clinic inspections during the first year of a child's life. To break this pattern the government proposes that fathers, in cases where both biological parents are living together, should receive support and encouragement to escort the child for the 8-month check-up.

Chapter 6 Gender differences in health

"Women suffer, men die" is an attempt to describe the health situation among men and women in Norwegian society. Differences in the state of health between men and women are heavily linked with differences in lifestyle. In 1999 a committee put forward the first women's health report and pointed out the necessity of a "woman's and gender perspective" in health service. The Men's Panel suggests a new committee, a committee for male health, which should illuminate the challenges men face when it comes to health and their body. The white paper describes specific initiatives to improve the gender perspective on health in this chapter. Available statistics show considerable gender differences in the way men and women evaluate their state of health and in the evaluations of health professionals. There is still close to a five-year difference in life expectancy between men and women. The main challenges when it comes to equality within the health and care sectors are: to widen public knowledge about gender differences concerning health, illness and health services, and to consider these differences when developing initiatives concerning prevention and treatment of illness. The effort focuses on two levels. One is to include the new gender perspective into all activities and research where relevant. The other is to specifically focus on health problems that either men or women exclusively suffer from, or in which one gender represents the majority of cases, or suffers more severely from the problem.

The Ministry for Health and Care Services asks regional enterprises concerning health and the Norwegian Directorate of Health to ensure that health initiatives be developed with a gender perspective in mind. This perspective should be taken in all work with the treatment and prevention of health difficulties.

Chapter 7 Groups at risk of being marginalised

An important objective for the government is to prevent exclusion from education and working life, and to give individuals every chance of a purposeful existence. This chapter concerns itself with risk groups amongst men, groups who are in danger of becoming marginalized. Statistics show that boys and men are in the majority in a number of these groups. The government does not plan for specific government measures geared towards boys and men in these groups, but more that all relevant services must have a gender perspective, and if necessary, initiate measures that reach out to boys and men in particular.

The government acknowledges that there will always be a tentative balance between an individual's right to make his or her own decisions and the need for intervention. Intervention may be necessary, first and foremost from the local community but also from the authorities. This type of intervention could concern persons or groups that are considered to be on the verge of a "life without purpose". Even though boys and men make up the majority of groups that are marginalized or at risk of becoming marginalized, one can not take for granted that the government should intervene and aim specific measures towards boys and men. In an equality context, it is important to establish whether these groups of men could be said to be suffering from direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of gender. Dropping out of higher education is a distinct risk factor when it comes to marginalization. It is a fact that more boys are deserting school compared with girls. For minority groups the rate of desertion is particularly high. "Efforts to Prevent Desertion from Higher Education 2003-2005" has been an initiative under the direction of the Department of Education that has been enacted in recent years. The numbers suggest that intervention must have a stronger degree of focus on boys than we see today, and must distinctly focus on risk groups among boys. Young men are over-represented in the statistics of recipients of disability insurance and as single recipients of welfare bene-

fits; this could be a consequence of the lack of intervention in the decision to drop out of higher education.

Chapter 8 Men as perpetrators of violence

There exists a larger group with violent attitudes among men than among women, although the group still constitutes a minority of all men. This minority of men however, represents a threat towards women and equality, and at the same time a threat and a challenge to other men. In this chapter of the white paper the Ministry also evaluates the services given to men that are victims of violence, for example domestic violence. An important objective is to prevent domestic violence. Anger and aggression management courses are initiatives of particular interest in this context. Statistics show that men constitute the majority of those targeted for these types of services. Violent tendencies and the repetition of violent behaviour need to be prevented through offering effective early help and treatment. A number of men annually contact the resource centre REFORM, and the local family protection offices, with a desire to receive help coping with anger. The department aims to strengthen REFORM and their group services for men concerning anger management. The need for easily accessible services is greater than the actual help the service organisations are able to offer at the present time. The ministry wants to intensify the establishing of open help and treatment services, particularly in the Middle, West and the North of Norway, where these services are few or non-existent. The Ministry of Justice, through ATV (Alternatives to Violence) and family protection services will initiate the establishing of these services. The family protection service and ATV will then further develop a closer cooperation in all regions. Services at crisis centres are also central for the victims of domestic violence. Their service must become better adapted to help men who are victims of such violence. Through effective programs one can prevent violence before it arises. The government's action plan "Turning Point" includes several primary prevention measures. "The Manifest against Bullying" also gives an outline of several initiatives concerning the building of attitudes in school. The Men's Panel recommends in their concluding notes that established initiatives concerning boys and men should be strengthened and developed more thoroughly. The international campaign "White Ribbon" is

one example of a grassroots organisation that promotes zero tolerance of violence, and this will be supported in Norway as well. Early prevention is the key. Even though extensive research has been completed on the connection between the use of violence and the consumption of media violence, there is no unity amongst media researchers concerning the effect of this consumption. The Ministry wants to begin to account for the connection between media violence that markets itself towards boys and men, and the bullying and violence we see in school and criminal statistics.

Chapter 9 Contemporary gender and male research – about men and masculinity

“Gender is something one does, not something one is” is a common postulate from contemporary gender research. Gender research in general, and from the 1980’s specific research on men, has highlighted the changes in men’s behaviours as a social gender. In part 2 we summarize the research concerning men and masculinity as a phenomenon. It is a fact that social gender changes over time. An example might be our attitude towards men with baby buggies – a common phenomenon today in Norway. From 2008, the Ministry has been financing their own male research professorship at the University of Oslo; they do so to support research on men as an important incentive for changes in the male role ahead.

1.2 Frames and machinery for gender equality

Although the Norwegian society has come a long way in the area of gender equality, it has not yet removed all forms of gender-based discrimination of women and men. This white paper is intended to focus on the direct and indirect discrimination of men as a group or of groups of men (for example gay men, see part 2).

The long-term political objectives of the government are in accord with the international regulations Norway is bound by in the area. The Norwegian government is committed to working towards full equality by three ILO conventions, the UN women’s and human rights conventions, the EEA Agreement and a number of documents from the European Council. Several of the documents mentioned are also applicable in Norwegian law. The authorities have used an extensive

set of economic, educational and organisational means, in addition to legal instruments, to achieve the long-term goal of real equality between women.

1.2.1 Laws on gender equality

According to the principle of gender equality, the rules and arrangements that have reserved positions, offices and arrangements for one gender (traditionally men), have gradually been removed. Today, there are very few job categories that are formally reserved for one gender. The Gender Equality Act provides for the possibility of reserving positions for one gender, but there are strict requirements. Objective reasons to do so must be given. Religious denominations have the opportunity to reserve certain positions associated with executing the faith for one gender (mainly men).

The Gender Equality Act, which was passed in 1978, is a key instrument in ensuring equality between the sexes, but is itself not gender neutral. Up to 1978, one has considered discrimination to be primarily directed against women. The Act was therefore worded in such a way that it cannot be considered to be gender neutral (see Section 1, Gender Equality Act). The act provides for affirmative action in the treatment of one gender if it will serve to promote gender equality in the long term. From the treatment of the subject (Ot.prp. No. 77 (2000-2001)) it is clear that the provisions were not gender neutral: “The right to differential treatment if it can promote equality should primarily be invoked to promote the position of women. This is a consequence of the wording ‘in accordance with the statutory purposes’.” This jurisdiction has been used in connection with the rules of equitable gender representation in public boards, councils and committees. That these means were particularly aimed at helping women, is also clear in Section 3 in the regulations pursuant to the Gender Equality Act Section 21:

“So that the goals of the law shall be achieved, the law requires § 1 a) that second level public authorities work actively and systematically for gender equality in all areas of society. Employers shall also work actively and systematically for gender equality within their workplace. Organisations within labour also have the same duty within their areas of influence and activity.”

The Committee on Discrimination law, which examines all laws on discrimination, will evaluate

the law's intent and whether or not the special emphasis on women's rights should still be fostered.

From 2002, all public authorities and other enterprises, who by law must prepare yearly reports, required to explain their actual situation with regards to gender equality, as well as put forth any planned or executed measures on this account. This requirement is known as the duty of accounting. This obligation encourages, but does not require, measures to better gender equality in the enterprise. Initiating measures would be appropriate in situations where either women or men are under-represented. The rules in this area are therefore gender neutral. Experience indicates however, that enterprises need to understand this initiative and use it to evaluate themselves when men are the underrepresented gender.

Today, Local Government Act, Public Limited Companies Act, Private Limited Companies Act (regarding the part of State owned companies) and State Corporation Act all have rules regarding equitable gender representation, which are motivated from a political will to get more women into public boards, committees and private boards. The intention is to ensure representation of both genders in important decision-making organs of society. This will help strengthen the democratic process. However, when the underlying motive is to increase representation by women, it is also necessary to evaluate how these rules may have a negative impact on men, and if the means used in these cases should also be used in areas where men are underrepresented.

1.2.2 Other measures and their implications for men

Authorities have used *economic means* to stimulate gender research, and especially research on women. Organisations that have worked with and for women, have received government support. In 1999, a constant government financial arrangement was established for crisis centres for women and children that were organised by volunteer organisations. Changes in the welfare system have been predominantly geared towards ensuring the same economic rights for women as for men. In 1992, the social security law was changed such that unpaid work in the home could give a woman right to pension points or additional rights to a pension on the level with salaried work. Before those changes, the policy was "equal

rights or formal equality will lead to a favour of women."

In certain areas, gender has been a focus, and gender has meant "women". A public committee set forth its viewpoint about "Women's Health in Norway" in 1999. As a consequence of this view, a professoriate has been established for women's health, and a women's health program has been founded under the Ministry of Health (later administrated by the State health board). A national competency centre (according to the law on specialist health services) for women's health was established in 2006. The Men's Panel states in its commentary that it would be equitable to have the same kind of focus on men and their health, and it points out the need to look at men's health from a gender perspective.

There are parallels to this in other societal areas. In 2008, the first professoriate for research on men was established at the Centre for Integrated Gender Research at the University in Oslo. The first three years the professoriate will be financed by the Ministry for Children and Equality.

Many varied *pedagogical means* have also been used in the work towards gender equality. 1975 was declared the first "Women's Year". One of the results of this was the founding of "women's universities", which have been financed by state subsidies since 1984. These centres become the regional hubs of research and knowledge about women's issues. The Resource Centre for Men (REFORM) received state funding from 2004 as the first resource centre of its kind for men and masculinity.

The authorities have enacted a number of campaigns and projects to influence the educational and career choices of girls/women and boys/men. Implicit in many of these projects is a woman's perspective.

Through the use of authority instructions, authorities have introduced *organisational means* into the work for gender equality. One example of this is the Framework Plan for Content and Tasks of ECEC, where it is stated: "Gender equality shall be reflected in early childhood pedagogy. The institutions should raise children to meet and create a gender equal society." Individual assessment and follow-up is today considered an expected practice in education, health services and social welfare services. These services are encouraged to have a gender perspective such that they can meet equally boys and men, girls and women, with the background knowledge of what gender means for the user of these services.

2 Boys – upbringing, early childhood and school years

Goals for a gender-equal childhood:

Gender equality in the raising of children implies that girls and boys meet gender-conscious parents who reflect the diversity of the community, and that boys as well as girls get support according to their individual needs and capabilities rather than according to traditional perceptions of gender roles.

2.1 Introduction

The Equality Research Report has revealed that men and women have different perceptions about childrearing. The differences in opinion among young people, is less than among older people. A large majority of both men and women agree that children should experience equal conditions and treatment during childhood regardless of gender. “Childhood shows the man, as morning shows the day.” These words of the English author John Milton illustrate that what is exhibited and experienced by a boy in childhood will influence the characteristics of the man he becomes. Both genetic factors and social learning characterise the individual, be that individual a man or woman, boy or girl. For the government, it is essential that the individual, boy or girl, is enabled throughout childhood to be able to choose and adapt to society on the basis of their individual capabilities and resources, regardless of gender, functional capabilities, ethnic origin or other background factors.

Thirty years of focus on, and work towards, equality between the sexes has changed society’s perceptions about what is “natural” to be – and do – for both girls and boys, women and men. Along with these changes in perception have come changes in the way boys and girls play and conduct themselves in daily life. But although the repertoire of acceptable activity has been broadened for both boys and girls, there are still clear gender differences among young people in attitudes and in the choices of educational and recreational activities they make.

Most boys (and girls) experience childhood in Norway as a good and harmonious time. In fact, a

greater number of young people said they enjoyed school, had positive relationships with their parents, and felt that they were accepted and valued in 2006, than in a similar survey done ten years earlier.

However, the clear differences between girls and boys, both in the results they achieve at school and the conditions they report living under, give cause for concern. The ministry is concerned about this, because these differences greatly influence what choices will be open for boys later in life. According to the research, an adolescent boy nearing the end of childhood has far weaker prerequisites for succeeding in higher education, employment and social life than a girl has. These differences are such that society must regard them as unacceptable.

Boys who act out get a lot of attention from teachers, politicians and the media. These boys are also foremost in our minds when we are forming our opinions about whom boys are today. But who is “the normal boy” today? What characterizes him? How does he form his identity as a boy? What does he need to do to be included in the hierarchy of boys, and what causes him to be excluded? It is not only girls that struggle with poor body image and sexuality. What picture do we have of the nature of male sexuality? Many boys do not recognize themselves in the images they meet of aggressive and violent masculinity. Current research on today’s boys is lacking. It is easy to forget that there are actually many types of boys. There are quiet and almost invisible boys in the classroom, the ones that the teacher may even forget the names of. The research has mainly focused on a small group of boys who have behavioural difficulties and special needs, the ones who need to be evaluated by pedagogical/psychological services. However, the group of boys who have learning difficulties is far larger than the group with behavioural difficulties. Both research on gender and education must turn their energies towards understanding and helping boys who struggle with cognitive processes and socialisation. It is necessary to make boys a priority as a focus for research on socialisation and learning.

This chapter does not contain a general discussion of preschools and schools as institutions, but tries to focus on the challenges that society still faces with regards to the desire to give boys and girls the same socialisation opportunities within these institutions.

2.1.1 Trends in development

The nature of childhood has changed significantly for both sexes since the eldest in our society were once children. Historically, childhood has in many ways been very different for boys and girls, and has been quite naturally influenced by the cultural and socio-economic norms of the time. There are indications that differences in the conditions of childhood between the genders has been reduced, and that girls and boys currently experience a greater degree of equal treatment. At the same time there is still much disparity, partly as a result of stereotypical gender perceptions. When one looks at traditional family forms in a historical perspective, one sees a community engaged in production, often a combination of several generations in a comprehensive network of relatives and neighbours. There are still many of the eldest men in society who remember a childhood and adolescence marked by strong contact with adults, both women and men, and with large flocks of siblings. Many spent a lot of time with the father doing the daily tasks in the fields, in the forests, fishing and other types of work. Most teachers at school were men. At home, the mother was likely to be the most accessible adult.

Boys who concluded their schooling early, often ended up in apprenticeships with older boys and men who became their mentors. The culture was easier to interpret, and the community set simple standards and requirements for behaviour, in the sense that each sex had its place. If you were a boy, it was expected that you would be like your father and hopefully follow in his footsteps. Your gender role was largely biologically defined; in addition there were norms dictated by your societal class for you to follow.

A simplified picture of boys who grew up in the 1950's, 60's and the early 70's is one of the child with a mother who was emotionally present and a father who was emotionally distant. Most people lived in tight quarters. There were clear expectations that the home should be neat and tidy. There was little space for indoor games and little understanding of any need for them. Children played mostly outside. The housewife had

her period of glory in the 50's and 60's, and the differences between the employment and working hours of men and women were significant. The average father took little or no part in any housework or basic childrearing.

The distribution of male and female teachers in schools was evening out, although in the middle of the 60's the majority of teachers at the middle school level were still men.

Throughout childhood, now as before, it is in the home and family that children experience the first impulses and input towards socialisation. This experience forms the psychological foundation for the child's meeting with the outside world. But input from the world comes to the child in many cultural and social forms: in literature, media and art. Children today experience a wider variety of early input from society than ever before through the influence of the media. The majority of two-year olds begin in ECEC. Then children go to school and participate in more or less organised extracurricular activities, managed by adults who are not members of the family. The Ministry of Children and Equality believes that the best foundation for socialising children towards gender equality is a type of parenting where the division of labour between home and workplace is evenly distributed between mother and father. A conscious awareness of gender issues in preschools, day-care and schools is also necessary in order to ensure equal treatment and opportunity for boys and girls, and provide the conditions for positive socialisation.

Another significant social arena for children is the peer group that the children meet outside institutions and the family, what we call the "free life of children", a life not controlled or organised by adults. Traditionally, girls have had the heaviest workload within the home. Boys have usually been exempted from such duties; consequently they often have had more time to gather in social groups outside the family. Girls have historically been more controlled by adults, while childhood for boys has often been freer. In Norway today, much of that free time is now used for media play of different types, both by individuals and groups, and media use is especially prevalent among boys.

It is only from the middle of the 1990's that ECEC became an option for the majority of Norwegian children, and today over 84% of children between the ages of 1-5 go to preschool and day-care, and of all of the children who start school, 96% have spent one or more years in preschool. That means that early childhood education and

Table 2.1 Some key figures on childhood 1970 and 2008

Up until ca. 1970:	In 2008:
86 % stay at home (mothers)	16 % stay at home (mothers)
4 % children in preschools	90 % children in preschools (estimated)
80 children in afterschool activity centres	136 000 children in SFO
7 years obligatory education	10 years obligatory education
Few children in organised activity after school (bands, scouts, sports and other activities like Sunday school)	Few children in organised activity after school (bands, scouts, sports and other activities like Sunday school)

Source: Ministry for Children and Equality

care has become an essential part of children's upbringing today. From 1997, the starting age for school became 6 years and schooling from the age of 6 to the end of middle school (around age 16-17) is compulsory. All children in Norway are in principle covered by this provision. Many of the youngest school children are in afterschool day-care programs at their schools (SFO in Norwegian). Almost all children are in some form of organised activity most of the day from the time they are 2-3 years old (many from the age of 1) to the time they leave compulsory education at 16-17. In addition, many children spend their free time in one or more organised activities. Childhood has become thereby institutionalised, a fact that is clearly presented in table 3.1, which shows the situation in 2008 compared with the time up until around 1970.

A large proportion of childhood in 2008 is structured, organised, planned and led by adults. The table also shows that the time children have to freely play games of their choice has become significantly shorter during the past 20-30 years. As a consequence of the gender roles of the 1960's and 1970's, boys had more free time than girls. So this change in society has had a greater impact on them in terms of socialisation. The institutionalisation of children's free time and the increase in adult supervision and management of childhood leads to a decrease in the differences between the play habits and manner of being together of boys and girls.

The institutionalisation of childhood means that the public has plenty of room to influence childhood through providing common norms, perceptions and goals for socialisation. Parents are dependent in a new way on the role that these institutions play in the rearing of their children, since the time spent in these institutions has dramatically increased. This only emphasizes the

importance of close cooperation between school/preschools and parents. In terms of gender socialisation, this can be a challenge, especially when there is a discrepancy between the gender equality policy goals that schools and kindergartens are working towards, and the gender experiences the children bring with them from home.

The Gender Equality Survey shows that traditional perceptions about gender roles still have a strong foothold in the population, albeit weaker than before. In particular, boys and girls in ethnic minority groups may experience the strong differences between what the schools and preschools say, and what they learn at home. The children end up in a cultural dilemma, caught between the Norwegian gender equality ideals and the traditional gender ideals of their culture.

An essential part of gender socialisation happens through media and entertainment culture. The review in this chapter shows that much of what is imparted through advertising, film and music is gender stereotyped and contributes to insecurity in both girls and boys. Gender stereotypes are prevalent in everything from toy stores to the web, in films, music, electronic games and typical gendered magazines. These images contradict and work against the goals of the gender equality project and the values society wants to convey through schools and early childhood education, and ideally through families.

Because what the media offers is so prevalent and extensive, and takes up so much of the free time of the children, the Ministry of Children and Equality sees the need for changes in the role of the media as a particular challenge in the future.

2.1.2 Boys, gender and identity

Being a man or a woman, a girl or a boy, makes up a significant part of one's identity. How we play our

role as a boy or girl is not just the result of biology, but also has cultural and societal origins. Gender roles are defined as expectations of certain behaviours and attitudes in a given society. A societal structure assigns norms for behaviours to girls and boys and the expectations are passed on from generation to generation. The modern society is characterised by a greater degree of flexibility and a wider array of choices for the individual. This influences the perception and construction of gender identity. Masculinity and femininity can be identities that each individual constructs through choice and activity in daily life. Actions, and consumer goods that are associated with actions, can be seen in the context of how they contribute to the creation of gender through habit.

Male identity has traditionally been explained with the premise that men find their identity more through work and production than consumption. Consumption has been an area more often assigned to female identity. Women have also traditionally acquired their identity from what they are, rather than what they do. While boys participate in different activities, deriving a sense of identity through those activities, girls have traditionally evaluated themselves, and been evaluated by others, on the basis of their appearance. Identity and gender are concepts that the individual is actively involved in forming, and new, hybrid forms of identity are currently emerging. A number of young men are beginning to show other sides of themselves. They are concerned with aesthetics and their appearance, as evidenced by the appearance of more and more hair and skin products for men.

There has been an increase in body image obsession among girls and boys, which has contributed to the development of poorer self-image. Certain boys become obsessed with the thought of acquiring a bigger body, while a number of girls and boys respond to commercial images by extreme dieting. Some boys respond by using inordinate amounts of time on training and bodybuilding. For certain boys, this can become an illness; the masculine counterpart to anorexia is megarexia, where the boy constantly sees himself as weak and puny and becomes obsessed with bodybuilding. Some go so far as to use anabolic steroids and other medications to build the ideal body faster. There are studies that have shown that there are boys who begin to use anabolic steroids already in their early teens.

In advertisement, the male body is portrayed in several different ways. On the one hand we see

the muscular macho man, on the other the metrosexual man who uses hair and skin products. The media stimulates consumption of products by men by using action, speed and power, which men tend to be more attracted to than women. Advertisement uses this attraction. Male roles in advertisements are varied according to the commercial interests involved.

Gender is an important key to understanding what young people are interested in. One study has explored how gender and the construction of identity even influence how much pupils in schools show interest in the sciences.

The study shows the tendency of 15-year olds to fall into gender stereotypes when choosing what topics to study within the sciences. The boys show more interest in “hard topics” such as technology and space (nuclear bombs, weightlessness in outer space, explosive chemicals, rockets and space travel). The girls tend to show more interest in topics that have more possibility for mystery, wonder and philosophy (dreams and their interpretation, mindreading and telepathy, life on other planets, health and well-being). Answers by Norwegian youth were compared with results from other countries; the results show that the gender differences are actually *greater* in modernised than in traditional societies. Norwegian students were more obviously choosing typical “girl topics” and “boy topics” than students in Malaysia, for example. In less modernised countries such as Uganda, Bangladesh and the Philippines, there was less of a difference between boys and girls with regards to their interest in topics like dreams and their interpretation. In countries like Denmark, Iceland and Norway these differences are more striking; the girls are interested, the boys are not. The researcher explains this rather surprising result by concluding that the individual in a modern society is less bound by tradition, and more likely to define and develop their identity on their own. In developing countries and traditional cultures, children are more often born into a particular role. There is no teenage culture corresponding to the youth culture of modernised countries.

2.1.3 Boys and their spheres of action

In the study “Attitudes of youth towards sexual violation and assault”, researchers asked 18-year old boys and girls what characteristics they ascribed to themselves when they thought about masculine and feminine attributes. Their replies

showed little difference between boys and girls with regard to what is traditionally seen as masculine attributes. Almost as many girls as boys described themselves as independent, having a strong personality, strong, dominating and aggressive. If any difference did exist, it was that more girls than boys described themselves as “independent” and “aggressive”. However, the difference between boys and girls with regards to their attitude towards traditionally feminine attributes was striking. Boys used characteristics like “warm”, “tender”, and “comforting” to describe themselves much less often than girls. These answers indicate that women in a modern and equality based society like Norway are able to incorporate masculine attributes into their identity to the extent that these attributes no longer have the same meaning. Boys and men have not, on the other hand, embraced attributes that they perceive to be feminine.

One conclusion that can be drawn from this survey is that boys and men still perceive that there is little opportunity to be different from the others. To do something or be something that is perceived as feminine is still regarded as unmanly. To cross over this culturally defined line is to open oneself to accusations of homosexuality. To a far greater extent, girls are allowed to be and do things that are traditionally connected to masculinity without fearing that they will be judged as unwomanly. However, girls are still subjected to accusations of being a “whore” if they cross a certain line and appear too liberal, for example in their sexual behaviour.

The commercial image of boys seems to be much more limited than the image of girls. Girls can play with “boy stuff”, but boys cannot play with “girl stuff”. There is a narrower range of identities for boys, and if a boy likes or is interested in something perceived as a bit “pink” (girly), he begins to see himself, and is also perceived by others, as a loser. Girls are allowed to be tough. To be a tomboy is now positive. To be a “girly-boy” however, is not.

2.1.4 Boys as consumers

Children in 2008 become consumers at a much earlier age than before, and they have a high consumption compared with children only a generation back. Several studies show that boys have the highest total consumption measured in dollars and cents, but also that boys and girls spend on somewhat different things. Boys have the highest

consumption in all areas except clothing and makeup, where girls top the list. There are some areas of consumption that seem particularly important for boys, for example computers and electronics. Furthermore, boys top girls in their consumption of articles related to sports and other spare time activities. Looking through the types of “wish lists” that Norwegian children have sent to “Santa”, one sees strong variations in the types of gifts desired by boys and girls. The worlds of boys and girls seem to contain quite different types of objects. The Christmas wish lists of boys were characterised by speed, action and structures. There were sporting goods, vehicles and action figures on the lists, as well as building sets and electronic items. Desires associated with appearance and aesthetics (like decorating a room) dominated the lists of girls, containing objects like Barbie dolls, other dolls, stuffed animals and pets that require care.

Since the patterns of consumption seem to be different for boys and girls, marketing strategies and persuasive tactics have been developed differently for the two groups. One sees an overarching, traditional (dominant) perception of masculinity and femininity, with tough boys and nice girls. We see this in most of the images portraying girls and boys, in advertisements, videos, newspapers and magazines. Boys are portrayed as wanting action; there must be fighting, speed and excitement. Girls are portrayed in close relationships, often inside. The dominant themes related to girls are calm and order, harmony and aesthetics. Boys remain in an alien universe where battles rage between “the good guys” and “the bad guys”, or worse, where violent actions without moral guidelines predominate, as in some games and films.

Children exhibit gendered play, and commercial images of children have also been highly gendered. It is reasonable to suppose that this gender division contributes to the establishment of identity, and links the individual to an image of what a boy or girl is supposed to be like. Variations in consumption lead to variations in daily life practice. Certain games lay down guidelines for how a game should be played, and certain clothes and accessories become important in how one is perceived by others. While boys channel their desires into sport, war and engineering, girls channel theirs into care giving and decorating themselves, children and their homes. These desires can be interpreted as a social practice contributing to the development of the adult man or

woman. This does not mean that all boys will become men who build bridges or fight wars, or that all girls will become stay at home housewives who only care for children, but that, whatever their future gender roles might be, those roles will be influenced by these earlier patterns, because the objects they have surrounded themselves with as children and adolescents carry with them patterns of social behaviour. Most of the items that are marketed for boys, and the advertising that accompanies them, are characterised by action. This action may be about sports and competition; boys are told that it is important to be the best and have the best equipment. The action may also contain violent images. This is especially true of items like action figures and electronic games that boys use.

Parents seem to support boys more than girls in their consumption habits, which to them may appear to have aspects that parents think will be useful and important, like activity, athletics and computer skills. Girls have a consumption more tied to clothes, makeup and aesthetics. Today, an increased focus on body image is drawing a higher numbers of younger and older men into the consumption of specially designed skin products. The spectrum within fashion has also been broadened for men. Girls and boys have different patterns of usage of the products they buy, even when the products are the same. This applies particularly to the use of technology. Internet and mobile telephones are used in different ways and for different purposes among boys and girls.

2.2 Boys' private and public lives

The mother is the most important caregiver for both boys and girls. The ministry bases this statement on the Gender Equality Survey of 2007 and other surveys of adults in the years since 2000. Such surveys show that the mother of the family still has or takes most of the responsibility for the childrearing in the family. It is while being with the mother that the child meets his or her first gender ideal and experiences connected with gender, and it is in those experiences that traditional gender patterns are still prevalent, although the Gender Equality Survey shows a clear trend towards the father taking more responsibility for the children. Still, in most Norwegian families, the mother takes or receives most of the responsibility for family life. The father has become increasingly participatory when the mother asks for his participation.

The parents' background and influence are very important factors in children's socialisation, educational choices and career choices. Gender socialisation begins already in a child's first meeting with adults after birth. In the first 5-6 years of life, both boys and girls are given a clear picture of what is good and bad about being a boy or girl, and what is appropriate for boys and girls to do.

Changes in family structure have a strong effect on the socialisation of boys and girls, but not always a negative one. Seven of ten children in Norway live together with both parents. Among those who do not live with both parents, most live either with just the mother, or with the mother and a new partner (or husband). A small but increasing group live together with just the father after a break-up, and others live equal amounts of time with father and mother. In larger cities there is a tendency for children not to live with both their parents. Boys and girls of ethnic minority families live with both their parents to a larger extent than ethnic Norwegian children, while the opposite is true of families made up of mixed ethnicity (where either the father or the mother is an ethnic Norwegian). The largest group of children who do not live with both parents is found in East Oslo, where only one of three children lives together with both parents.

The vast majority of boys and girls seem to have a positive and close relationship with their parents. The majority feel that they can bring up issues and problems with their parents, and that their parents respect them for who they are. Surveys of the relationships between adolescents and parents indicate that girls feel that their parents monitor them more closely, and their actions are more controlled by the parents. There is a difference on this point between what ethnic Norwegian and ethnic minority youth report. The differences are therefore not only a result of gender, but also of other social and cultural influences.

2.3 Boys in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC)

ECEC is an important arena in the child's life. More and more children have started in preschool in recent decades. Today, 96% of 5-year olds attended preschool before they started school. Boys and girls under the age of 6 are key players in each other's development.

The Framework Plan for Content and Tasks in ECEC expands upon the duties of the institutions with regards to gender equality as follows:

“Equality of sexes should be reflected in the pedagogy of the ECEC. The institutions should raise children to be able to meet and create an equal society. They shall structure themselves on the principle of equality between the sexes. Boys and girls should have equal opportunities to be seen and heard, and encouraged to participate in the community in all activities in ECEC. The personnel must reflect upon their own attitudes towards boys and girls and society’s of girls and boys. (The Framework Plan for Content and Tasks in ECEC, the Ministry of Education 2006, p. 10)”

According to this plan, all ECEC institutions should have a conscious attitude towards equality in their daily care of the children, in any pedagogical undertakings, and in the planning, documentation and evaluation of the structures and activities. However, in 2003 employees reported that gender equality was one aspect of the plan that was least attended to. In kindergartens, it is customary to talk about children, rather than boys and girls.

Gender differences between children have undergone major changes in the last 30-40 years. One researcher argues that boys have become more like girls and girls more like boys. They have more common interests and play more games across gender lines. Teasing because of gender doesn’t happen as much anymore. However, looking at the play of boys and girls, it seems that boys and girls know the cultural codes for their gender early on.

The new ECEC Act makes it clear that the institutions must take account of differences between groups of children based on gender, level of functioning, and social, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The good institution is a one works towards evening out these differences, so that children get a good start in school and later learning, and so that behavioural problems in schools can be prevented. In recent years there is more understanding of how the experiences of early childhood influence later learning and identity formation. Researchers refer to the ECEC as the foundation of the knowledge-based society. They point out that, as more children attend ECEC, those who do not will find it more and more difficult to keep pace with the development of the children in the ECEC.

Gender differences and equality have taken up little room in Norwegian research on ECEC. This lack of research may have hindered preschool teachers from getting enough information about gender issues during their training.

The Ministry of Education sees a need for research that will increase the competence of teachers in recognising how boys and girls develop a gender based identity, and what impact gender has on everyday life in the institutions. Even less research-based knowledge exists about how gender equality in the ECEC can be achieved. Most projects have been narrow in scope and possibly outdated. The Ministry of Research has given NOVA, the Norwegian Institute for Research on Childhood, Welfare and Aging the task of putting forth an overview of the research that has been done. This report presents the results from various research projects about gender and equality in the ECEC.

2.3.1 Boys and gender identity in ECEC

The collaboration between children and adults in the ECEC contributes to the formation of what it means to be a girl, and what it means to be a boy. Children constantly explore new roles and try out new behaviours. From the reactions they get from adults and children around them they form perceptions of what is appropriate behaviour for each gender. The children try out their roles and identities through play. Play is therefore important in learning about gender identity. In line with social developments in recent years, it is primarily girls who have expanded their repertoire of roles; they are quicker to break the established boundaries of gender-based behaviour. The price is higher to pay for boys who want to play “girl games”, because traditional masculinity is still connected to power and position within groups of boys. It is still common for boys and girls to choose segregated play, and when they do play together, they usually divide the roles along stereotypical lines.

A report from Vestfold University College shows that gender equality ideals are held high in ECEC, and members of the staff of kindergartens believe that they treat boys and girls alike. But in actual practice, it has become clear that staff members, even unknowingly, transfer their own gender role patterns to the children.

ECEC institutions where the staff has worked on their own attitudes towards gender can actually see smaller differences among the children. They have realised certain patterns that need to be worked on. Boys are generally less supervised in their activity than girls. This is partially due to the fact that the boys want action and use a larger area for their activities, while girls remain more

often indoors and do calmer activities. Boys get more negative attention than girls. Staff members are often surprised over such observations, for they truly believe they treat boys and girls alike. Research also shows that the expectations that staff members have of the abilities of the children to show self-control are very different for boys than for girls. Staff members are generally less aware over such differences than they believe themselves to be.

Patterns of gender roles among children have changed over time and become more diverse. Therefore it is important that the research in this field be updated. Surveys should be done to examine the consequences of these changes in patterns in order to better help teachers development and learning.

An important task for employees in early childhood education and care is to do their best to contribute to positive upbringing and development. Any success that has been achieved on this front must be attributed to voluntary adherence to the policies and pedagogical principles of the institution. The values brought to the preschool and kindergartens by the children from their homes have also played a role. However, most of the focus of this work has been on girls. We need to give the same energy and focus to both genders. There are systematic differences between boys and girls in school, in terms of learning outcomes, behavioural issues, and effort and habits connected with schoolwork. The ECEC can be a contributing factor to the prevention of such problems by becoming aware of gender differences when putting initiatives in place for those children in risk of experiencing problems of mastery in school, for example, children with little support in the home and children who speak a different language at home than at school. The ECEC can be active in developing a perspective on gender that may allow differential treatment of boys and girls at times. Boys and girls may sometimes need different types of impulses and ways of expressing themselves at this age. At times, unequal treatment can work to ensure true equality in upbringing.

The systematic differences between boys and girls in learning outcomes, school effort and behavioural problems (see Chapter 3.4) seem to indicate the need for active work on gender equality in the preschool years, with a particular emphasis on the development of boys.

2.3.2 Men in ECEC and schools

Both ECEC (90%) and elementary schools in primary education (88%) are strongly female-dominated workplaces.

How to get more men to work in early childhood education and schools has long been on the agenda for the government, including in the national action plan for 2004-2007, “The good ECEC is a gender equal ECEC.” There is no research evidence that tells us that boys need men as role models, or that girls need women. Relationships with all adult caregivers are important, and research has established that children do not necessarily need to experience a close relationship with a specific gender to develop into healthy and normal children. There is also no evidence to prove that more men working in early childhood education automatically leads to better gender equality.

However, the survey does show that most men and women desire a workplace where there is an even gender distribution. Several studies show that an even distribution of men and women in a workplace makes for a better work environment. Such a distribution therefore benefits both adults and children.

This challenge – more men in educational institutions – does not imply that someone might be doing a bad job, or that women cannot be good teachers for boys. Rather, the question of needing more men in these institutions should be seen as part of the greater issue of understanding what gender equality really means. If there is a predominance of employees of one gender (women) working in education, children throughout childhood get the impression that women are the ones in society who work with children and are responsible for them. Then, when they become adults, boys may not view the teaching profession as something “natural” for them and do not choose it. Getting more men into education can help break this vicious cycle. The feminisation of schools is not essentially a pedagogical issue, but a gender equality issue.

In any case, both the men and women working in early childhood education should reflect the complexity of the society that the child meets outside of the institutions. ECEC needs men with different types of background experience, different ages, and varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds in order to offer the children the diversity of society.

About measures to get more men into early childhood education, and how to keep them there – see Chapter 3.

2.4 Experience and achievement of boys in school

“The training girls and boys receive in primary and secondary education, according to Act 17 July 1998 No. 61 on primary and secondary learning (Education Act), should promote human equality and gender equality, intellectual freedom and tolerance, ecological understanding and international responsibility.”

(Education Act, Section 1-2)

Apart from some larger surveys on mathematics and science, there are few broad large-scale surveys of gender equality in schools. One of the exceptions is a survey from 1995. At that time the Ministry of Church, Education and Research gave the Department of Education at NTNU in Trondheim the task of conducting a quantitative evaluation survey of gender equality in primary schools. Since then no similar large-scale surveys have been carried out. It is essential for the understanding of boys in school that more research been done on this topic.

This survey from 1995 confirmed many gender differences that had been supposed since the 1970's. What was remarkable was that these differences still existed after more than 20 years of work on gender equality in schools. Very few schools had mentioned gender equality specifically as an agenda item in their annual plans. The survey documented that the work on gender equality, to the extent it happened, was largely left up to individual teachers and those who burned for the issue. The issue of gender equality has not been seen as a common issue for an entire school. The individual teacher plays therefore an important role. At the same time, it is clear that more of an effort is required to bring gender and equality onto the school agenda as a whole.

2.4.1 Learning outcomes and achievement of boys

Grades and test results from middle schools mainly reflect the cognitive skills of the pupils. Schools in Norway have also aimed to foster other types of skills, including cooperation and social behaviour in accordance with current norms. This

Table 2.2 Grade points according to gender. Percentiles

Percentile	All	Boys	Girls
90 %	54,83	53,00	56,00
75 %	51,00	48,50	52,50
50 %	44,50	42,00	47,17
25 %	37,40	35,20	40,33
10 %	31,17	29,50	34,00

Source: Directorate of Education

expertise (or lack of such expertise) may be essential for students later in life and is highly relevant in an overall assessment of the learning outcomes pupils have at each school.

Girls achieve better grades than boys. When grade points were measured in primary schools, the average difference between boys and girls was 4.4, which corresponds to 0.4 points per subject. An overview over the final written Norwegian language examinations in 2005, shows that the average rating was 3.59 for boys and 3.94 for girls. Across the board the girls make the best grades, but the differences between boys and girls are somewhat smaller among the highest achievers of both genders.

The differences can be seen in table 2.2, where the pupils (boys and girls) are divided into percentile rankings. The first line shows the average Primary School points among the top ten percentile, first all children, then boys and then girls. The bottom line shows the corresponding Primary School points among the ten per cent of the weakest results.

Girls read better than boys, and this is not a phenomenon restricted to Norway. Girls read better than boys in all the 35 countries that participated in the PIRLS-survey. In Norway, six out of ten of the poorest readers are boys, while among the best readers there is an equal distribution of boys and girls. There are also large gender differences among 15-year-olds; boys are overrepresented among the poorest readers. This has also come to light during the international PISA survey of 2003. New figures show that boys actually read more than previously thought, but that they do not report all that they read as reading, thinking that the questions about reading only pertain to fiction.

The Norwegian results for the fourth class are the poorest among OECD countries that participated in the survey in 2006. There is no change in

average scores for Norway compared with results in 2001, but the range has become somewhat narrower. This is because there are fewer weak, but also fewer good students. Norwegian girls score thus better than boys.

There is little variation among schools in the PIRLS-survey. Neither is there much difference between the different aged classes (in the PIRLS-survey the selection is based on classes / age groups).

After fourth grade, researchers have found that there seems to be less emphasis put on learning to read. Pupils in the fifth grade report that they receive little reading instruction in their schools. This confirms the suspicion that reading instruction is still seen only as practicing basic decoding skills, rather than comprehensive work with strategies for reading and comprehension of text.

The PISA and PIRLS-surveys together provide an image of Norwegian schools that is not complete in its representation of the goals of Norwegian schools, but must be taken seriously all the same. In both surveys, we find weak results and a negative trend in the period 2000-2006. PISA covers the three subjects of reading, science and mathematics. Students in the PISA 2006 scored a half-year behind students in the PISA 2000 reading. Boys had lower scores than girls. This means that the weakest boys are more than half a school year behind. Norway is furthermore one of the countries with the greatest gender gap. One positive fact that has arisen out of the comparisons is that there are fewer boys now that say they never read for fun.

The strategic plan, “Make room for reading”, which was implemented in many of the schools in 2004, has led to increased reading activity among boys, but this has not yet resulted in a measurable bettering of reading skills.

Pupils of both the fourth and fifth class were tested In PIRLS 2006. These students started school in 2001 and 2002 and have followed the curriculum called L97.

One has attempted to explain why girls achieve better grades than boys in Norwegian schools by two different models. The first looks at school as an institution and how boys and girls manage in the learning situation provided by the institution. The premise is that the girls have a way and manner of being which promotes learning to a greater extent than boys. The second model, which is adhered to by more researchers, is that there is a difference in how well the values

that boys and girls bring to school are in accordance with the values that the school represents. In other words, boys and girls have different social learning strategies already in the preschool years, and that the structure of learning in schools enhances the differences in learning outcomes between girls and boys. A possible explanation for gender differences in learning outcomes may be that schools are more suited to the way that girls learn and behave, and that boys to a greater degree distance themselves from the values and organisation of schools. This model has as its premise that there has been a feminisation of the school culture.

The “Young in Norway” survey indicates however, that the differences between how 16-year-old boys and girls view school are quite small. Both girls and boys say they have a positive attitude towards school, and they agree that it is important to have good grades, that their schooling will be useful to them later in life, and that they learn a lot of exciting things at school. Girls have a somewhat more positive attitude towards the values in schools. More girls than boys think that the teachers should be stricter towards pupils who make trouble in class. More boys than girls say they are more interested in being with their friends than achieving high marks in school, and more boys than girls express the opinion that it is fairly boring at school.

Researcher Tormod Øia points out that the differences between girls and boys are less than one might expect, and the idea that girls are more positive, obedient and adapted to the learning situation in school appears to be a myth. This conclusion is in accordance to what has been said about men in early childhood education. However, it is a fact that boys end up in conflicts with their teachers more often than girls do.

The variations in measured learning outcomes are not associated with gender alone; the level of education of parents and other social factors also play significant roles. There are also differences in achievement between linguistic minority and majority students. Differences that we find between the boys and girls within the ethnic Norwegian population are similar to the differences found among minority ethnic groups. But when we compare the immigrant population with the total population, and make allowances for the educational background of parents, there are no differences in grades. This suggests that a large part of the observed difference between linguistic majority students and linguistic minority students

cannot be attributed to immigrant background itself, but rather to the fact that students with linguistic minority background have less educated parents.

Classroom research also suggests that Norwegian pupils may be required to take on too much responsibility for their own learning, and that self-motivation and self-discipline are prerequisites for success in school. Here, gender differences may give girls the advantage. In addition, international surveys have revealed that Norwegian teachers follow up lessons and provide feedback on the work students do less than teachers in other countries.

International research shows that teachers often have preconceived notions of what girls and boys are capable of, and that this affects both achievement and the subject choices students make in higher education.

If teachers and others, consciously or unconsciously, falsely communicate that boys are less able to learn languages, or that girls are less capable of mathematics and science, the students' self confidence may suffer, and they may lose interest for such subjects. Since classroom studies seriously got started in the 1960s, more than one survey has shown that teachers communicate differently with girls and boys in the classroom, which can have an effect on to what extent and in what manner boys and girls participate in their own education, and on what kind of emotional bond they have to school. If schools are to be a factor in gender equality socialisation, then social relationships within the classroom should be given as much or more importance as the curriculum in the textbooks.

One may assume that there are differences in the way that male and female teachers communicate with the boys and girls in their classes; however, this is one of the areas of classroom research that we do not have abundant or updated information on. Norwegian classroom research is 20-30 years old, and studies of boys in schools is just about nil, one of the reasons being that classroom research has been strongly focused on girls. Therefore, it is important to note that the Centre for Interdisciplinary Gender Research at the University of Oslo has been in the process of carrying out an umbrella project from 1.1.2008 called "New gender, other requirements? Children of gender equality in the schools and in the families".

In 2007, the Ministry of Education commissioned NOVA to review the research literature on gender differences and achievement in schools

and the reasons behind those differences. NOVA concludes that there is relatively little research on this topic, particularly topics like poorer learning outcomes for boys. Gender research in schools has traditionally taken as its topic problems facing girls. Educational research has largely not concerned itself with explaining differences in performance, or it has explained the differences by citing factors that lie outside school. The studies that have been made however are still useful in clarifying some aspects of boys' school situation.

The study shows that teachers historically have given, and still give, more attention to boys than to girls. There is little to suggest that this gender difference is due to systematic and deliberate discrimination against girls by teachers. Much of the difference in attention from the teacher is in the form of negative responses triggered by what the teacher considers as disruptive or unproductive behaviour.

What might make assessment methods in schools better suited for girls than boys is also a phenomenon that has not been fully researched. One Norwegian study suggests that methods of assessment, particularly those that are based on a "text culture", may give an advantage to girls. When it comes to the unwritten norms and rules to which students are expected to adapt, it also seems that girls have an advantage. Teachers seem to have greater expectations of girls. In addition to the general disparity between girls and boys when it comes to reading skills, there are also differences to be found in general learning outcomes and grades. Can the cause be that school is more adapted to the way that girls behave, and that boys to a greater degree distance themselves from the values and organisation of schools? NOVA concludes in its report that there is no support in the research literature for the premise that the school in itself creates gender differences in scholastic achievement. Patterns of gender differences seem to be consistent over time, across nationalities and among schools within the same country. These patterns occur, in other words, despite enormous variation in school policies, in the pedagogical methods used and in the organisation of the school structure itself. This point in the direction that the schools serve only to reproduce gender differences that already exist. Both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Equality believe that research needs to look more closely at the causes of gender differences in scholastic achievement. Their goal must be to reduce the differences that

are observed over time. Here it is also important to look at how gender socialisation actually occurs in the family and preschool years.

2.4.2 The learning environment for boys

Most girls and boys enjoy school, whether they are in primary or secondary education. This conclusion has been reached both in the evaluation of School Reform L 97 and in reports made by student inspectors. Nevertheless, there is a group of students who are not enjoying or adapting well in Norwegian schools. The PISA-survey shows that classroom unrest and disruptive behaviour is a major challenge in Norwegian schools. From a gender equality perspective it is alarming that more boys than girls seem unhappy and maladjusted in Norwegian schools. Eight of ten students in schools that have serious behavioural problems are boys. This is an expression of the clear differences that exist between the sexes when it comes to the learning environment. Such differences may have serious consequences in later life.

The bulk of research in the field concludes that teachers for the most part do not give equal attention to boys and girls, that it is boys who get most of the attention, including negative attention. This may influence how much and what kind of participation boys and girls exhibit, and what relevance they find in school.

Boys' everyday experience of school is different from that of girls. A student survey (Education Directorate 2007) has been established as part of an overall national quality control system, in which the pupils in Norwegian schools have the opportunity to state their opinions about the school they go to and how they enjoy it. These student surveys have found a small gender difference when it comes to prioritization of schoolwork. This difference lays in the fact that girls reported that they consciously made schoolwork a priority. Further analysis shows a slight tendency for boys to feel more often that the teachers tell them what they should do so that they will be better in a particular subject area. There is also a tendency for girls to be willing to do homework in more subject areas than boys. Results show a further small difference between the sexes when it comes to how they experience setting their own learning goals. Boys to a greater extent than girls feel that they help to set their own learning goals in a subject. We also find that more boys than girls report that other students at school have harassed them.

Further analysis also shows that more boys than girls report that they have been involved in harassing or bullying one or more pupils at schools in recent months, and boys report more often than girls that they have been subjected to unfair treatment or discrimination at school because of nationality. Girls are slightly more prone to report that they are nice to their teachers. We also see that fewer girls than boys admit that they disturb other students when they work.

A Swedish survey that studied verbal harassment, like teasing, ridiculing, threats and negative characterisations aimed at fellow students, shows that harassment plays a role in the formation of gender identity among girls and boys. The research shows that boys use harassment as a way to prove their identity as "properly masculine". In conclusion the researchers point out that schools and teachers must be aware of the different functions that verbal harassment and other forms of bullying have when they put into effect measures to prevent such behaviour. According to the report, it is not likely that rules and bans against some words and phrases alone will have any long-term effect on behaviour. Both teachers and pupils must be made conscious about how verbal harassment plays a role in establishing power relationships, gender roles and sexual identity.

From a Norwegian status report about gender-related bullying among children and adolescents from 2007 comes the conclusion that schools need more knowledge about the phenomenon, and that teachers have few skills for how to deal with conflicts that are based on gender and sexuality. Considering the negative consequences that gender-related bullying can have for the victim, this is a challenge that schools must come to grips with. Gender-related bullying often creates serious health problems for both victim and those who are witness to the harassment. Harassment because of sexual orientation is pointed to as an explanation for the high suicide rate among young homosexuals. Boys who are labelled as "gay" show an increased risk of being exposed to hate crimes, that is crimes arising from a lack of acceptance for another's background, in their creed, colour, national or ethnic origin, or in their sexual orientation or lifestyle.

To be labelled a "whore" has been shown to increase a girl's risk for being physically or sexually abused. In a comprehensive survey of 18-year-olds in the five Baltic countries and Norway from 2007, results show that 84% of Norwegian

teenagers who have experienced unwanted sexual acts, are girls. The performers of such acts are almost always boys. A little under half of the unwanted sexual acts happen between a girl in her teens and a boy that is about five years older, but still in his teens. As many as 10 % of Norwegian girls had experienced at least one incident of sexual intercourse against their will. For 19-year olds the statistic is 17.5%. Around 8% of boys have experienced sexual intercourse against their will (10% of the 19-year-olds). These are frightening statistics that indicate that schools must work seriously with students' attitudes towards sexuality, body image and boundary setting.

The new state curriculum, Knowledge Promotion, contains competency goals for students for each grade level. That means that each school is largely free to decide how different topics should be treated. The competency goals for youth and sexuality in the 10th grade are that students will be able to discuss the relationship between love and sexuality in light of cultural norms. The curriculum gives room to bring up the subject of sexuality and relationships in several instructional arenas.

International research has revealed that gender stereotypes may have an adverse effect on school performance. The researchers explain this with the fact that exposure to a negative gender stereotype causes a student who belongs to the stereotyped group may become afraid to be judged according to these prejudices. That, in turn, can lead such students to fear any test situation. Negative stereotypes can become self-fulfilling prophecies. Continuous subjection to gender stereotyping can cause students to drop out of a particular subject or distance themselves from it.

A survey of how tenth grade students view their own capabilities, states that students' confidence in their own abilities follows a traditional gender pattern, even when one compares girls and boys who are performing at the same level. Boys are more positive in their assessments of their own facilities for mathematics than girls with similar achievement in math. Girls seem to need to perform about half a grade better than boys before they have faith in their facility for the discipline of mathematics.

When asked to evaluate their abilities in languages and compare the answers with the grades actually achieved for English, the pattern is the opposite. Girls have a greater faith in their ability in these subjects than boys who receive the same grade. It seems as if boys and girls evaluate their

abilities more according to gender stereotypes than their actual results would dictate. A more realistic and positive image of their own skills might possibly contribute to smaller gender differences in learning outcomes and the choices that boys and girls make with regards to higher education.

Individual effort is also vital if students are to achieve good results. The "Young in Norway" survey of 2002 (NOVA) shows that, on average, both girls and boys do less homework in 2002 than they did in 1992. Girls put more effort into their work and use more time on schoolwork than boys, both in middle schools and secondary schools. It may be a challenge for schools to motivate boys towards greater effort in schoolwork.

2.4.3 The importance of early intervention

The educational system is one of the most important arenas where one can promote social equality. There are great differences in the competence pupils and students have both when they enter school, and unfortunately also when they go out, and the differences are linked with the students' family background. Seen in comparison with gender and ethnic background variables, surveys show that it is social background – that is the family – which is the strongest factor. This not only affects school performance but also how well one succeeds in being a member of society and the workplace later on.

In White Paper. No. 16 from 2006 “.. and no one was left behind “Early efforts for lifelong learning” a strong focus was put on early intervention as an important factor in social equalisation. Early effort refers to both efforts early in life and early intervention when a problem occurs or is revealed in the preschool years, school years or in adult life.

Special education

Early intervention also includes special education. There are a heavy number of measures being put in place now to solve the learning problems of boys. The primary school information system (GSI) has no exact figures to report on this situation. Some research and statistics collection has been conducted, but without gender as a variable. There is a need for more research on the relationship between gender difference in special education and learning outcomes of special education instruction.

The gender perspective in early intervention is discussed in both the White Paper. No. 16 (2006-2007) (see above), and in the White Paper. No. 23 (2007-2008) “Language builds bridges”. On the basis of registered cases of special education it has been pointed out that it is important to keep a focus on boys. An important precondition for early intervention is that teachers, school leaders and employees in early childhood education get accurate information about the cognitive and skill levels of the pupils. Measures to uncover any problems early will be set in place, including the publishing of guidelines for cooperation between schools and preschools in the evaluation of skill levels of pupils.

When it comes to special education for the individual in accordance with the education Act Section 5-1, there are statistics from the SSB from the academic year 2007-2008 that show that there are more than twice as many boys as girls who receive special education, around 28 000 boys and 13 000 girls.

This is true at all stages of primary education. In all, there are about 620 000 pupils in primary schools. Of these, around 41 000 receive special education, and the majority of them receive between 76 and 270 hours of special education per year. The statistics say nothing about the problems that have triggered the decisions to set in motion intervention.

Why there are so many more boys receiving special education, we do not know. We must research more to find explanations. In general, special education is given because of problems with vision and hearing, motor coordination problems, communication problems, psychosocial problems, specific learning difficulties, ADHD and general learning difficulties.

The government is aware that good, inexpensive and available places in ECEC can contribute to equality among children. Early childhood education is the most important preventative arena outside the home for children under the age of 6. Most of the children of this age now have places in ECEC. In order to uncover problems in early childhood and facilitate early intervention, specific knowledge about conditions in the ECEC is required. There is currently relatively little systematized knowledge about the quality of Norwegian early childhood education and care, and we know little about how equally girls and boys participate in activities that stimulate language development. There is therefore every reason to look at whether boys really get the language

stimulation they need in the early years of childhood.

A survey of social competence and gender in ECEC indicates that boys tend to be offered more action, and girls tend to be offered language. The Reading Centre at the University of Stavanger points out that the observations from one of their projects, BOKTRAS, may indicate that the boys choose linguistic activities less often than girls. In White Paper 23 (2007-2008) (see above) there is an emphasis on the need for support in language development already in the preschool years, with follow-up through concrete language stimulation initiatives if the need arises. The goal is for municipalities to have a continuous chain of interventions, so that all children who are delayed in language development or need extra training in Norwegian can begin a follow-up programme as early as possible.

In connection with “Make room for reading! Strategy for the stimulation of reading motivation and skills 2003-2007”, half of the schools that participated in the strategy, worked to develop their own measures for boys. The bulk of these measures were designed to improve the reading conditions and motivation of boys. Many schools also purchased books specifically written to interest boys. Evaluation of the strategy shows that it has been successful to set boys and reading in focus; it has made school leaders and teachers more observant of the challenges that are linked to boys and reading.

2.4.4 The “Cultural School Bag”

This is a national commitment to help pupils in schools experience, be familiar with and develop an understanding of professional art and cultural expression of all types. This effort is the result of collaboration between cultural and educational services. The cultural rucksack is largely financed by gaming assets.

Regional governments have a particular responsibility to manage gaming assets for the scheme. Regional governments provide the actual art and culture, offered to schools, and distribute funding directly to counties who then can develop local offerings.

Surveys show that the patterns of how people avail themselves of culture are different among women/girls and men/boys. We know that girls read more than boys. The basis for an interest in art and culture is usually laid at a young age; the consequences, both in use of recreational time

and choice of occupation are clear. One finds that girls not only are more active in cultural areas in their free time, but that they also more often than boys choose to educate themselves in one or another cultural area.

A strength of the Cultural Rucksack programme is that it reaches all students regardless of gender, social background and other traditional lines that separate people with regards to access to and interest in various art and cultural activities. Because of this, the Cultural Rucksack scheme can contribute to the erasing of gender-based differences we see in this field.

White Paper No. 8 (2007-2008) “Cultural Rucksack for the future,” states that anyone who works with the Cultural Rucksack, be they artists, administrators or teachers, should take a critical look at how gender is represented through the production and art expressions that pupils meet.

2.5 Gender segregated organised recreational time for boys and girls

Non-profit organisations and various forms of voluntary work have long traditions in Norway. Some organisations have a history that goes back to the mid-1800s.

Today, Norway has an abundance of clubs, teams and activities. Over half (58%) of the adult population participate in voluntary work in the course of a year, and more than 113 000 yearly man-hours of work have been performed by voluntary or charitable organisations. To participate in such organisations promotes a sense of community, provides learning experiences and contributes to the development of the ability to exercise democracy. Volunteer work gives people the opportunity to use and develop themselves, to feel useful and meaningful in life.

The organisation community has undergone major changes in the last 40-50 years. In the period from the 1950s to the present, the sport, culture, nature, environment and hobby organisations have shown substantial growth. The social and humanitarian organisations, which previously were dominant, are weaker today. Increased internationalisation and changes in modern communication methods have given society, the individual and voluntary organisations changing conditions and new possibilities for action.

Results of a survey of volunteer work show that separate community organisations for women, like religious, social and humanitarian

organisations, have had a significant decline in the survey period 1957-1998. At the same time, men have made inroads into this part of organisational life and today make up around 40% of the members and volunteers.

The gender segregated organisation community, where women and men each have their organisations, is currently waning in size as a whole.

But a type of organisation that breaks with this trend is the hobby club, where men dominate more than ever. During the 1980's, more purely male clubs were founded than female clubs. Many of them are fellow clubs, like freemasons and the like. While the founding of female-dominated clubs has slowed dramatically, male-dominated clubs are a new and growing segment of the organisation community.

There is a higher participation of men in most types of organisations than women. Middle-aged men with good jobs and financial security are over-represented in the membership of clubs, especially those activity-oriented organisations.

Volunteer work and recreational activities are carried out in all populations. They also constitute an option for children and young people.

The diversity of children and youth organisations is at least as large as that of adult organisations. The activities range from Scouting and outdoor activities to role-playing games and skating, from choir, band, and folk dance to environmental and political organisations. The organisations are very important when it comes to developing and keeping up a positive child and youth culture. Positive leisure activities give children and young people the opportunity to cultivate their own interests, develop themselves in a social context containing both peers and adults, and provide a valuable platform for activity later in life.

There is a need for increased knowledge about civil society and the voluntary sector in Norway. New research may enable organisations and the authorities to adapt better to new times. In this context the government will establish a new research program with start-up in 2008. The program will initially run over three years.

2.5.1 Athletics

In ECEC, children play with other children, regardless of gender, but as children begin school, their activities and play become more segregated by gender. Football is popular with both boys and girls between the ages of 6-12, but is

most dominant among boys. From an overview of membership in the clubs belonging to The Norwegian Olympic and Paralympics Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF) one can see that 49% of boys between the ages of 6-12 are active members in The Football Association of Norway. In second place is The Skiing Association of Norway, with 14% of the active boys in this age group.

NIF is the largest organisation for children and young people in the country. Over two million members were recorded in the NIF by the end of 2006. This reflects a doubling of the number of members since 1975. Overall, there are more men than women members in sports clubs. Boys and men account for just under 1 245 000 memberships, while about 827 000 members are girls and women.

Around 37% of members in 2006 were children and adolescents aged 6-19 years of age. Around 460 000 boys, aged 6-19 years are registered members (and around 362 000 girls).

A survey from 2007 states that roughly 85% of boys and 80% of girls aged 8-19 years engage in physical activity in the form of training and exercise. Boys train generally more than girls in sports clubs. Slightly less than 52% of boys and 45% of girls in the same age group report that they train or compete in sports clubs. Children aged 8-12 years are the most likely to join sports clubs: 67% of boys and 55% of girls in sports.

Among boys aged 8-19 years, football is the mostly widely played club sport. Almost 40% play football. Although football is also the most popular activity among girls in the same age group (20%), there is no single sport that dominates girls' activity as it does for boys. Many girls participate in handball (17%) and dance (12%). Skiing (8%) is the second most popular activity among boys.

It is a known fact that a number of teenagers quit organized sports when they are between 15 and 19 years old. The Gender Equality Survey mentioned reports that almost half of those who have quit sports, say that they quit because it was not fun anymore. There are no major differences between boys and girls on this issue. But far more boys than girls quit because they become injured, while a significant higher proportion of girls than boys quit because they felt there was too much focus on competition. These differences may indicate that the coaches and adults still impart the ideals of competition and winning in a stronger manner to boys than to girls.

Very little systematized research has been done on gender differences between boys and

girls when it comes to their involvement in voluntary organisations. Gone is the strong dominance of boys when it comes to leadership positions in voluntary organisations. Among children and youth organisations, there has been a significant role change over the last 20 years, and the girls have gone from a minority to a majority among leaders. In 2000, 55% of leaders were women, against 41% in 1980.

While boys dominate in sports and sports clubs, participation is lower among boys than among girls in cultural and recreational organisations, including child and youth political organisations, environmental organisations and humanitarian work.

Voluntary organisations are an important supplement to gender equality work taken on by the state.

There is a need for updated research on gender equality in these organisations. What are the clear trends for boys and girls when it comes to participation in organisational life – how many participate, how they participate, what activities and organisations they engage in, and how often are they engaged?

White Paper No. 39 (2006-2007) “Volunteering for everyone” proposed that measures relating to the research on the voluntary sector shall contribute to increased knowledge of gender differences.

This government is committed to an inclusive society. Sport is an important arena for inclusion, and it is important that athletics are open to all groups. Norwegian athletes are working actively towards the goal of open and inclusive athletics. In the sports policy document passed by The National Congress of Sport in the spring of 2007, it is clearly established that athletics should have zero tolerance for discrimination and harassment on the basis of gender, ethnic background, sexual orientation or disability. As a step in this work the NIF in 2007 entered into a partnership with National Organisation for Lesbian and Gay Liberation and Norwegian People's Aid. NIF has allocated money to a project on preventing and counteracting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation both locally, regionally and nationally, through preventing and counteracting homophobia and harassment of homosexuals in organized sports.

2.5.2 How young people view athletics and gender

Teenagers who participated in a survey in the direction of the NTNU (National Technical and Nature Science University) in 2007, placed great

emphasis on their looks and weight when they were considering their own worth. The survey looked at the body characteristics which young people perceive as masculine and feminine, and how they assess their own body and their own physical attributes. It turns out that stereotypes rule their judgment more than expected. Young people expressed a fairly traditional view of what is masculine and feminine with regards to perceptions of the body. And it is important for them to live up to the stereotypical ideal.

To be good at sports is considered to be an important masculine trait, and boys attach enormous importance to endurance, strength and visible muscles. For girls it seems more important to look good than achieve high athletic performance. There were clear gender differences with regards to body image as well. Boys tended to have a more positive view of their own bodies than girls. Boys gave themselves higher scores than girls on ten of eleven areas of the survey, including strength, endurance, appearance and general body image. The only area of the survey where boys and girls gave themselves the same score was flexibility.

There is no purely biological reason that pre-pubescent boys and girls cannot perform equally well in many sporting activities. Gender differences must be attributed to social factors, such as different expectations and different responses from parents, coaches and friends, and not least the influence of the media. Results may suggest that stereotypes have changed little since the 1970s. Young people considered ballet, aerobics and gymnastics girl sports, while football, boxing, motor sports and hockey were considered appropriate for boys. The same conclusion was confirmed when students were asked to sort the various sports into the “masculine”, “feminine” and “neutral”. Replies were as good as 100% the same for boys and girls. This suggests that common cultural attitudes are more resilient and less flexible than the most optimistic researchers have wanted to believe. Gender stereotypes and the authority they have over our physical self-perception, can have serious negative consequences for both the individual and community. Everything suggests that this is harmful to any boys who do not feel as masculine as the stereotypes. To dance ballet is still a fairly stigmatized activity for a boy.

New trends are always evolving which may influence attitudes. Some examples are modern dance forms and cheerleading, which have seen an increase in participation among boys.

Children and teenagers in Norway, both boys and girls, have widely participated in organised athletics. Organised sports offer a large number of different sports activities for children and youth. Within some sports however, there is a clear over-representation of one or the other gender. The Norwegian Olympic Committee, Paralympics Committee and Sports Association (NIF) have focused on measures to recruit under-represented groups into sports through active funding of children and youth in the various sports organisations. This has been done to try to even out differences in recruitment by gender.

There are a number of measures also in place in some sports organisations themselves, like hockey, gymnastics and snowboarding, to try to increase recruitment of the underrepresented gender.

NTNU's survey shows that gender stereotypes still live on in sport despite these measures, and NTNU should be able to provide more input to the NIF about what can be done to reverse this.

2.6 Gender differences in unorganised leisure time

To construct one's own identity means to identify oneself as someone unique and different from others (creating a personal identity), but also to realise what one has in common with others (creating a social identity). Exploration and experimentation through trial and error are important activities necessary for these constructions. This is particularly important in the teens, when who one is, and how others view one, are key issues. Many find building material for this identity construction in the media.

2.6.1 Boys and electronic media use

Information and communication technology, and particularly the Internet, has led to major social changes in society. In this context, it is a common perception that men and boys use computer technology to a larger extent than women and girls. The survey “Young in Oslo” shows that many of the boys aged 14-17 years are using most of their free time on the computer. 25% of boys use more than three hours daily sitting in front of the computer screen. This pattern of usage is changing in a number of areas. Boys still seem to be more interested in IT technology and games than girls, while girls consider the computer to be an impor-

tant tool for communication, graphics, music and school-oriented activities.

Teenagers have been called “the seismographs of culture”. If we look at age as one parameter, some interesting trends emerge. Boys and men are using home computers significantly more often than girls and women. This difference we find in all age groups except the youngest. In the age group 9-15 years, there are more girls than boys (60% vs. 52%) who use home computers daily. This might be explained by the fact that boys are more active outside in their free time during these years, while the girls use the Internet more as a source of information for their homework.

Looking for information on the Internet is the most extensive activity PC's are used for, with small gender differences. Computer games are one of the most popular activities among boys. This is where we find the largest gender differences. A third of boys in middle schools play PC games every day, compared with only 4% of girls. Of the boys who played PC games in middle schools, 10% played games on the computer more than four hours a day.

There are also systematic differences when it comes to what types of games are preferred by boys and girls. Boys play sports games, action games and strategy games. The girls game most smaller games on the Internet, car games, platform games and The Sims. The heavy players among boys (more than four hours per day) play predominantly shooting games and strategy games. A study from Statistics Norway shows the same picture. Boys use the PC for games and entertainment, and for business purposes, while girls to a larger extent than boys use the computer at home for educational purposes and school-work. It is largely younger computer users who use home-PC for entertainment and games. 59% of boys aged 9-15 years play video or computer games daily; 33% of girls do the same. In the next age group, 16-24 years, the statistics are 32% boys and only 7% girls. In addition, boys use more time playing games than girls. According to the survey “The digital life of youth” it is not so much active *use* of the PC that entails negative consequences for youth. Results show that young people are more social when they use computers. The question is however *how* they are social, and if this way to be social is good for language competence and general competence among boys.

It is important to note that certain types of Media consumption are more extensive in specific

life stages. For example, youth have long been large consumers of recorded music, while this use appears to decrease a great deal as one gets older.

2.6.2 Boys and use of Library

The overall use of the library is detailed in a report from Statistics Norway. Contrary to what one finds in the adult population, the largest percentage of a group to have visited the library was found among boys up to 16 years; a full 71 percent have been to public libraries during the past year. 67 percent of girls in the same age group visited the public library in the same period. The percentage of children, who visit the public library within the past year, increases with age up to a certain point. But then it goes down again with increasing age. This applies to both genders. But despite these numbers, surveys such as PIRLS/PISA- surveys that have been mentioned earlier, show that boys read fewer books than girls. There are projects that seek to stimulate boys to read literature, such as “Book of choice”. This is a web search page designed for young people that opened in September 2007. The idea is to help young browsers to find books they would like to read, for instance by “constructing” the content themselves. The organisation “!Read”, has worked specifically to help boys become more interested in reading. The organisation has a major project in progress, “Sports and reading”. When it comes to reading newspapers, boys score as high as girls.

2.7 Gender-equal upbringing for boys and girls – initiatives

The difference between how much time boys spend today with adults, both men and women, need not have unilaterally negative or positive consequences for them later in life. The quantity, quality and manner of contact between adults and boys play an important role. However, the government would like to see childhood and youth as a time of diverse types of contact with adults. The variations one sees in society should be reflected in what happens in ECEC, schools and recreational activities. This is true for both boys and girls. From a gender perspective, the present unequal distribution of men and women who work with children and youth is a challenge that must be met. Lack of diversity, especially lack of male

employees, may have more negative consequences for boys than for girls. Under the present circumstances, boys do not experience that it is natural for men to work with children and teenagers.

When boys leave primary and secondary schools with significantly weaker academic results than girls, intervention is necessary. White Paper No. 16 (2006-2007) emphasises the importance of early efforts to help avoid these poor outcomes, and to prevent absenteeism and desertion from higher education.

Another important area to work on is teacher training. Gender equality is important for adults working in early childhood education and schools, not just for kids. It is the practice of adults, and the early cementing of traditional gender roles caused by children not seeing men in these activities, that are challenges. Until ECEC and schools actually have more diversity in staff, and adults are more observant of themselves as communicators and “makers” of gender, children will not learn to see and understand themselves as individuals, independent of gender.

The Ministry of Education’s Action-plan for Gender Equality in Early Childhood Education and Care, and in Basic Education (2008-2010) takes aim to do something with this. Increased emphasis on research will be necessary.

Gender stereotypes characterize upbringing through the media, sports and culture. The Ministry would invite wide discussion on possible measures to break these harmful stereotypes. The notion of an ideal body that increases the risk of unhealthy and unwanted lifestyle habits for boys (and girls), must be met with measures that make young people more conscious and able to resist these influences.

2.7.1 Upbringing within the family

Dismantling of gender stereotypes and traditional beliefs about gender roles should be done as a cooperative effort between the parents, preschool and school. Children, who experience a large discrepancy between the equality practice in the home and the expressed values in schools and nurseries, have a particular challenge to overcome. The Ministry of Children and Equality will further continue and expand its work developing a parental guidance program that emphasizes the modern equality ideal. The Ministry proposes measures to increase parents’ use of parental leave in Chapter 4. A more even distribution of

care giving tasks between women and men is a significant contribution to increasing equality between the sexes.

Through ongoing projects such as “Sustainable families – gender equality in parenting”, the government will work to ensure that coordination between the public services for children (pre-schools, health clinics) and parents will be built on the equal treatment of parents.

The more equal the parents are, the better children learn about equality in practice. The more equal the parents are, the less possibility one will find for a breakup of family. And finally – children growing up in a gender equal family will experience quite lesser violence.

(The Gender Equality Survey)

2.7.2 Boys in early childhood education and care

The government will review the activities in early childhood education to make sure boys get the same contact with adults, the same follow-up and guidance as they engage in activities, as girls. Other measures are proposed in the new action plan for gender equality in early childhood education and care and in schools.

The research about what early childhood education means for gender socialisation must be strengthened. Early childhood education can in several ways help to even out social differences and provide equal opportunities and conditions for all children. It is also important to take account of regional differences in this work. Having a difference between educational levels for boys and girls has unfortunate consequences for society. The difference is particularly significant in small coastal areas and in inner Finnmark (county, far north in Norway), where girls often leave the area for higher education, while the boys stay behind. This has far-reaching consequences for family structure, employment, innovation and culture.

2.7.3 The learning environment and learning outcomes for boys

In the autumn of 2006, the Ministry of Education set forth White Paper No. 16 “.and no one was left behind. Early intervention for lifelong learning”. This white paper took the perspective that learning is something that happens throughout life and it discussed the entire span of education for children, from early childhood to adulthood. In White Paper No. 16, the need for support in language

development already in the preschool years is emphasised, with extra follow-up through concrete stimulation when individuals need it. The government will expand research that sheds light on the reasons for the large differences in learning outcomes between girls and boys shown by results from schools over the last 20 years. Measures that will help schools to contribute to the evening out of such differences are to be put into action on the basis of new understanding about causal relationships.

Half of the schools that participated in the project: “Make Room for reading! Strategy for the stimulation of reading interest and competence 2003-2007”, worked with their own measures for boys. The bulk of these measures were designed to improve the conditions and the motivation for reading among boys. Many schools bought books specifically aimed at boys. Evaluation of the strategy shows that it has been successful to put the spotlight on boys and reading, and that this focus has served to make school leaders and teachers more observant and aware of the challenges boys face in learning to read. On the basis of further analysis of the survey on bullying among Norwegian pupils, the government will implement special measures aimed at boys, both as victims and as bullies.

Through “Strategy for the learning environment in primary education 2005-2008” and action guide for the school year 2007-2008, work has been done to improve the physical and psychosocial environment of schoolchildren. The Education Directorate, in cooperation with the Health Directorate, will evaluate the resource book *Relationships and Sexuality*, and it must do a review of the curriculum for teaching about cohabitation,

relationships and sexuality in primary education. The material must be analyzed on the basis of its relevance to the total curriculum known as “Lift of Knowledge”. In developing this resource material, special attention will be paid to the topic of harassment and mobbing on the basis of gender and sexual orientation.

Ministry of Education and the Education Directorate support The Organisational Committee of Russ (members of a graduate class of a gymnasium) in connection with a youth campaign on sexuality, gender-related bullying and boundary setting. The campaign is targeting all pupils in secondary education, but with a particular focus on senior students. The campaign provides information about sexuality, seeks to prevent sexual abuse and encourage clear boundary setting when it comes to one’s own sexuality. The project started in the fall of 2007 and will continue until the summer of 2009.

The website www.skolenettet.no has their own web pages on sexuality and relationships. The pages have information designed for pupils and teachers. It also contains information handouts and teaching material.

2.7.4 Organised leisure time

The government will initiate a collaborative effort with the National Council for Norwegian Youth Organisations to consider measures aimed at evening out gender differences in the memberships of the organisations.

The government will use the Cultural Rucksack to put special emphasis on the varying ways of cultural expression among girls and boys.

3 The gender-segregated labour market

3.1 Introduction

The workplace has served to hinder progress towards equality between women and men. This is one of the main findings of the Gender Equality Survey. According to this investigation there has been greater progress towards equality in the home than in the workplace. This is a conclusion reached by comparing the survey with a similar survey in 1988. In spite of many years' work towards gender equality in the workplace, Norway is still largely split along gender lines in this arena. The segregation extends even into individual workplaces. The majority of employees work predominantly with colleagues of their own gender. The investigation further shows that segregation by gender in the workplace has not become less over the last 20 years.

Along with the rest of Scandinavia, Norway has one of the most gender-divided labour markets among the industrialised countries in the world. At the same time, Norway and Sweden are considered to be pioneers when it comes to equality between women and men. They are also two of the countries that have the highest percentage of women in paid employment. This is often presented as a *gender equality paradox*. But is it a paradox? We can look at it another way. The gender-segregated workplace is to a high degree an actual *result* of high female participation in the labour market in the Nordic countries. It has to date been an important *precondition* for the high employment rates among women. High employment among women correlates with the fact that the unpaid work that has traditionally been performed by women in the private sphere, is now being carried out as paid work by the labour force. There are therefore important historical reasons for the paradoxical relationship between high professional participation among women and a gender divided employment picture. To the extent that we can talk about a gender equality paradox, it is that this historical correlation between women's occupational participation and gender-segregated structures in the labour market still exists today. Equality between women and

men in the labour market is an important cultural norm, and women are almost on a par with men in terms of employment statistics.

For the government, it is important to raise the problem of a gender-segregated labour market as a social challenge. A gender-divided workplace is a problem for both men and women. Segregation is a significant structural obstacle in the way of women and men achieving equal economic rights and fair choices when it comes to professional participation.

The segregated labour market is a problem for equality in several ways. Female dominated workplaces still land lowest on the list in regards to salary, involuntary part-time work, possibilities for career development and the right to decide, "how the work should be done".

When working life is segregated according to gender, traditional gender roles are reinforced. Gender equality should mean that both men and women operate with the same opportunities to choose an educational or career path, without being influenced by negative cultural prejudices or stereotypes. A labour market that is segregated by gender validates and strengthens stereotypes and prejudice. Gender stereotypes can in this way be just as effective as formal prohibitions in inhibiting girls and boys from making free and individual choices of education and occupation.

The segregated labour market tends to "genderise" the choices that both men and women make with regards to education, career and working hours. If this is to change, then structures that limit men's choices must also be made visible and then broken down. Most boys and girls follow traditional gender patterns already when choosing an educational path. There are clear signs that working hours reflect the segregation of the workplace. Men work more than women and more men than women work long hours. Of those employees who work part-time, most are women.

This government will work for an equitable gender distribution in the workplace. This view has strong support among the population. The Gender Equality Survey has found that the majority of employees would like both genders to be

well represented in their workplaces. Many have expressed the desire for a better gender balance, and most are satisfied with their job when the gender balance is good. So men must enter the female-dominated sectors like early childhood education, schools and health services. It is equally important for men to take more responsibility for family life beyond breadwinning; they must try to adapt their work life to make more room for the family when they have children. Although the home has become more influenced by the equality principle, there is still a fundamental imbalance. Mothers both *do* more and *decide* more when it comes to housework and child care. Increased equality demands that fathers do more work at home and that mothers do more work outside the home (See Chapter 5).

The Equal Pay Commission asserts in NOU 2008:6 “Gender and Pay” that the pay gap between women and men is largely correlated with the gender split in the labour market. Pay levels are systematically lower in jobs with a high percentage of female employees. The commission writes that the low salary levels of these female dominated occupations contribute to the reinforcement of a segregated labour market. It is believable that men would find an untraditional career choice less attractive when there is no economic incentive attached to it. Better salary and better work conditions in female-dominated occupations would attract more male employees, asserts the commission. The commission’s majority put forth six concrete proposals for measures designed to lessen the pay gap between women and men. None of these proposals is directly aimed at the segregated labour market itself, but towards arenas like enforcement agencies (Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud), salary scales and family policy. The commission’s report has been given a broad hearing. Many groups have given their opinions and comments. The government will continue to follow up this case.

The Men’s Panel has proposed various measures to entice more men to choose female-dominated professions, particularly the teaching professions, early childhood education and health and care services. The panel pointed towards factors like the need for male role models, marketing strategies aimed at making these jobs attractive to boys and the importance of convincing men who have educated themselves in these fields to stay in these fields. The panel also focused on the importance of improving career counselling in the schools with the goal of giving each individual a

better foundation for making informed career choices. This may motivate more people to make untraditional choices. One way to proceed is to establish more full-time permanent positions and better career prospects in female-dominated fields. Apprenticeships in various professions should be developed and employ active recruitment of girls to traditionally male jobs and boys to traditionally female jobs.

3.2 Facts about the gender-segregated labour market

The Norwegian labour market is gender divided along several dimensions. Men and women perform different types of work, work in separate branches or work in separate professions altogether. Even when men and women work in the same company or the same profession, they often have different types of assignments or tasks in their various departments and positions. Many have jobs where most of their colleagues are of the same gender as themselves. According to a report from the Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombud, SALDO 2007, only about 30 percent of the employees work in industries with a relatively equitable gender distribution, that is at least 40 percent of each gender.

Since the 1970’s, both men’s and women’s dominance in workplaces where one gender is in the majority has been relatively stable. The women are in the majority in the health and care services sector and in the teaching sector. The men are in the majority in other sectors except the retail sector, where representation is about equal.

If we look at how women and men are distributed in the different industries (Table 3.1), we see that nearly 60 percent of men are employed in industry and mining, domestic trade, the hotel and restaurant sector, business services and the building and construction sector. Employment among women is particularly focused on health and social services, domestic trade, the hotel and restaurant sector and education. The concentration of women in health and social services is particularly pronounced.

There are large differences in what types of occupations men and women choose. Figure 3.1 shows that many men work as craft and related trades workers (20 percent). Equal numbers of men and women work as technicians and associate professionals. Many men have work in sales

Table 3.1 Employment of women and men by major industry division in 2007. Percent

	Men	Women
Industry and mining	17	6
Domestic trade, hotels, restaurants	16	19
Business services, real estate	13	9
Building and construction	13	1
Transport/telecommunications	9	3
Health and social services	7	34
Public administration	6	6
Education	6	12
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	4	1
Other social and personal services	4	5
Oil and natural gas extraction	2	1
Bank/finance	2	2
Power and water supply	1	0
All industries (including those not listed)	100	100

Source: Central Board of Statistics and Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion

and service, academics or as operators and drivers. Women work primarily in sales and service and as technicians and associate professionals. In these two occupations men and women seem to have different types of jobs within the profession.

Within occupations requiring a college education (Technicians and associate professionals) we find female-dominated professions like nursing,

ECEC teaching, and school teaching, but also male-dominated professions like engineering. In the last 20 years there has been a slight increase in the number of male ECEC teachers and nurses and female engineers. Typical male-dominant jobs are custodian, industrial worker, building and construction and engineering.

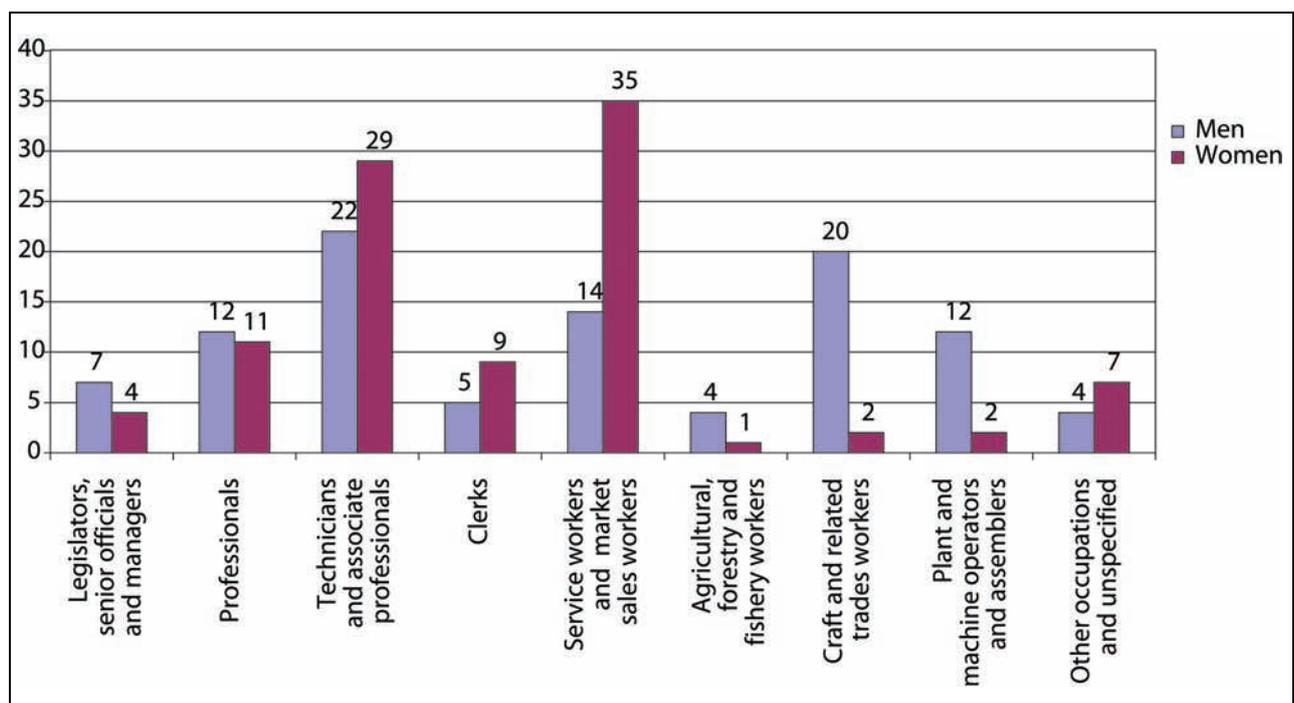


Figure 3.1 Employment of men and women by occupation, 2007

Source: Central Board of Statistics

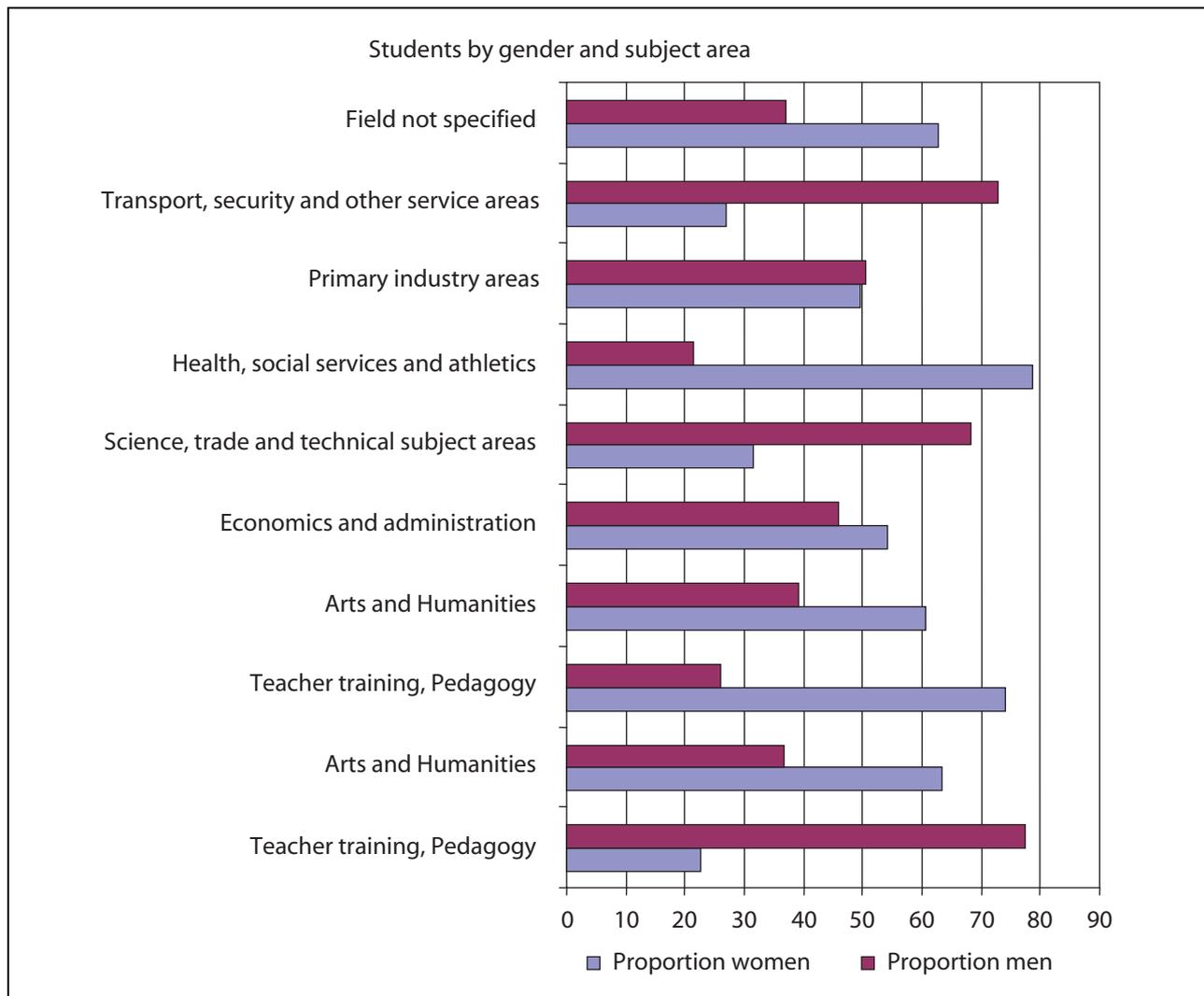


Figure 3.2 Students by gender and subject area

One study shows that about half of all men in the private sector work in occupations where 10% or fewer are women. Less than 1% of the men work in occupations where 90% or more are women. The study shows that men in the private sector have congregated in workplaces where men are the predominant gender. Women distribute themselves more evenly than men. Only around 15% of women work in occupations in which over 90% of the employees are women.

3.2.1 Gender-divided educational choices

The gender gap is relatively large already in the subject choices made in upper secondary education where the pupils can choose between vocational education programmes or programmes for general studies. Boys choose programmes for general studies to a lesser extent than girls. This

may be a result of the fact that boys on average have lower grades from primary education than girls, see Table 2.2, which affects their option of study programmes. When one compares boys and girls with similar grades from primary education, however, boys are more likely than girls to choose programmes for general studies

The distribution of boys and girls in occupational education programmes in secondary education follows a traditional gender pattern. Building and industrial technology, electrical studies, engineering and industrial production are typical “boy subjects” with over 90% boys. In programmes for nursing, social service and for design and craft there are only about 10% boys. Student applications for secondary education programmes reflect the gender-divided employment situation in Norway. Boys and girls also choose along traditional gender lines when they apply to higher education.

Table 3.2 Average salaries for men and the percent comparison to the average salary for women by occupational field in 2007. Full-time employees.

	Monthly wage x 12 per 1.9./1.10. 2007	Male salary as a percent of female salary 2007
All financial services	617 500	146
Health care (public hospitals)	487 900	129
Real estate and business services	484 000	124
All trade of goods	409 200	120
Private health and social services	384 200	120
Social and personal services	437 600	116
Private education	415 200	115
Industry	392 500	112
Hotel- and restaurant branch	316 100	112
Transport	403 100	112
Oil and gas extraction and mining	611 000	110
Power suppliers	466 700	110
Central government	410 000	110
Municipalities and county municipalities	363 300	108
Teaching staff in schools	405 700	103
Building and construction	371 800	102
Average wage (full time employees)	420 300	116

Source: Central Board of Statistics, berekningsutvalet (Employees in Energy Suppliance and staff in Schools are excepted from this statistics)

Men dominate in the fields of science and technology, women in educational sciences, healthcare and social studies.

In higher education, it is men who are most prone to choose traditional paths, while women in increasing degree gravitate towards traditionally male-dominated programmes such as medicine, finance and administration, and also natural science and engineering. There has been an even gender distribution in medicine since the mid-1990's. Within the economic and administrative fields women's participation has increased from one quarter to about half in the last 20 years. There has been a doubling of the number of women in scientific and technical fields in the same period. Law schools have now become dominated by women.

No parallel trend exists towards an increased stream of male students into the traditionally female-dominated programmes. Here the percentage is higher for women also. At the same time that more women have gone into higher education, the educational choices among men have changed little. Thus, there are perceptibly more

women in male-dominated, gender-integrated and female-dominated programs.

3.2.2 The gender-segregated labour market – the effect on salaries for men and women

If we look at the monthly salary for full-time employees we see that men earned about 116% of the salary for women in 2007. The annual wages in 2007 (monthly salary x 12) were 420 300 kroner for men and 363 600 kroner for women. Salary gender ratios are greater in private sectors than in the public sector. During recent years women and men have approached each other in salary. From 2006 to 2007 however, a slight increase in the average salary differences between men and women has been noted.

Table 3.2 shows that men make more money than women in all sectors apart from the building and construction sector and in school teaching, where men and women make about the same. The difference is greatest within financial services and healthcare. Looking at the distribution

among major occupational fields, the table shows that full-time male employees in financial services had the highest salaries, with men in oil, gas and mining operations work in second place.

Salaries increase with the length of education in all industries.

The pay spread is greater among men than among women. Over 80% of people in the group with the highest wages are men. If we correct for the fact that there are more men than women employed, this percentage will go down somewhat. In 2007 the ten percent of the population with the highest salary (tenth deciles) earned 20% of the total wages for men, while the ten percent of men with the lowest wages (the first deciles) earned only 5% of total wages for men. Women are distributed more evenly on the pay scale, but are over-represented in the group with the lowest wages.

The Equal Pay Commission delivered its recommendation in February 2008. The main conclusion is that the gender-divided labour market explains the gender pay gap, and that the pay gap corresponds to the gender split in the workplace. This means, among other things, that the equal pay issue is a question about the wage level in female-dominated professions, both for women and men. The problem of equal wages is not just a question of individual wage differences based on an individual's gender, but is rather tied to a strong gender split in the work force and the price of labour in female-dominated occupations and sectors.

The fact that men earn more helps to preserve their status as the primary breadwinner. It also keeps men in the position of being the parent that has the longest working day. See more about this in Chapter 5.

3.2.3 The gender-segregated labour market – its effect on the quality of working conditions and well-being of employees

Gender division in the workplace also has consequences for the working environment and the well-being of employees. An analysis of the answers to a number of questions in the Gender Equality Survey shows that there are systematic differences between male and female dominated occupations.

Replies show that a greater proportion of both men and women report conflict and slandering in workplaces when one gender dominates, and most of that behaviour we find in female-domi-

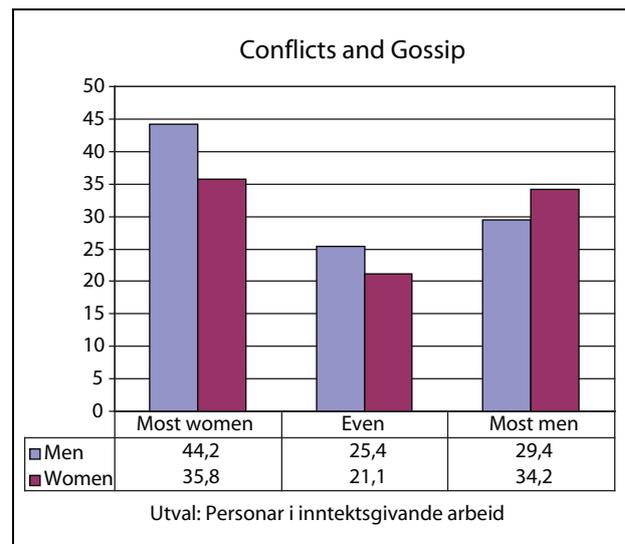


Figure 3.3 Attitudes towards more even gender distribution

Source: Gender Equality Survey

nated jobs. Both male and female employees in the female-dominated workplaces report a lower sense of well-being on the job. As women increase their participation in the labour market, fewer men say that they have good opportunities for advancement and career development. Fewer women report that they “decide how the work should be done”.

Companies where women are in the majority are characterized by poorer conditions for both female and male employees. This applies to economic benefits, involuntary part-time work and the opportunities for career development, advancement and decision-making.

Gender balance has a positive influence on the workplace – the majority want to have a better gender balance in the workplace

The Gender Equality Survey has revealed that workplaces with a good gender balance have the best working environments. For example, the lowest levels of conflict were found in the workplaces with a good balance between the sexes. A few instances of conflict and slandering in workplaces with good gender balance are found, but the level is lower. The same is true of the experience of being negatively differentially treated because of gender. Both sexes reported less negative discrimination when the gender balance was good. And most say they are satisfied with the job when the gender balance is good.

Many of those questioned expressed the desire for a better gender balance at work.

The more one-sided the workplace is when it comes to gender, the stronger the desire of the members of the dominant gender for more of the opposite sex. This desire is strongest in female-dominated workplaces.

3.3 How to achieve a less gender-segregated labour market?

3.3.1 Men into female dominated occupations – why and how?

Efforts to create equality between the sexes have borne fruit when it comes to gender equality in the home and professional participation among women. Now it is important to set the focus on the gender-divided workplace as a social problem. The *Soria Moria-declaration* states that it is a goal to contribute to an even gender distribution in different sectors of employment.

Today, gender segregation in working life is as much upheld by the educational and career choices of *men* as by the choices women make. Men choose less often professions where the opposite gender dominates. Recent systematic studies of changes in the gender-segregated patterns of the labour market seen as a whole are lacking. What exists of research suggests that gender integration is happening, mainly as a result of *women* to an increasing degree entering male-dominated arenas of employment and education. If the workplace is to become more gender balanced, there must be an emphasis on getting men and boys to expand their horizons with regards to which educational and career paths are valid to choose.

A gender split labour market reproduces traditional gender roles that society is working to break in other areas. Researchers Solheim and Teigen emphasise that the gender-segregated structures of the workplace not only express, but also contribute to the reproduction and maintenance of dogmatic cultural attitudes about what is “feminine” and what is “masculine”. Beside the family, the workplace is the most important social arena in which gender is created as a social category, where the expectations of what women and men should be, and what tasks they will perform on a daily basis, are reflected in both small and large contexts. The gender-divided workplace, in other words, is one of the most important *symbolic fields* of social life, and it has a major role in the

construction of women’s and men’s cultural identity, social worth and status.

The gender-related imbalance in the workplace, with everything that implies, contributes to the maintenance of traditional gender role patterns in which the father spends more time at work and contributes more to the household economy, while the mother has the main responsibility at home. One factor is the imbalance in the economic situation of women and men in paid employment, namely differences in hourly wages. Another factor the Gender Equality Survey has revealed, is that the lower quality of working conditions for women serves to make it less attractive for women to work more than they do. Women, who do not have a sense of well-being at work, are less interested in prioritising work after they have children. The tendency is the same for men, but stronger for women.

If more men start to choose untraditional occupations, it will serve to move the cultural boundaries for what is “masculine” and “feminine”, and what is natural for men to do. Men in such professions also help to expand the boundaries and spheres of male action, as the first men who pushed baby strollers in public were involved in setting new parameters for the role of the father.

It is stated in the Ministry of Education and Research’s Action Plan for Gender Equality in Early Childhood Education and Care, and in Basic Education (2008-2010): “The goal is not to get equal numbers of men and women in all professions, but to break the visible and invisible barriers that prevent girls and boys from making untraditional choices.”

Equality, including equality between the sexes, is based on the premise that individuals have the same right to choose education and occupation according to their own capabilities. In education and employment, equality implies that the whole population has potential regardless of occupational field, level and the like. When women are primarily recruited to female-dominated professions, this means that these sectors cannot take advantage of the potential that lies in the whole population.

A more even gender distribution may have a positive effect on the quality of the work performed. The breadth and diversity of work may be greater. This can be seen in connection to standards that have been set for institutions in society where at least 40% of employees are required to be from the under-represented gender. It is a

major challenge for society today and tomorrow to deploy all the resources it commands.

Getting men to choose female-dominated professions also has a general recruitment purpose in society. This applies particularly to the huge demand for labour in sectors such as healthcare, education and ECEC.

In spite of the fact that the ideals of gender equality are strong in society, and despite the efforts that have been made, it has proven difficult to get men to choose non-traditional occupations.

Nordberg points out that the debate about male employees found in female-dominated professions has painted these men as a pioneers, though also marginalized by the “female norms” such occupations seem to be built upon. Discussions are characterized by a cultural view that these male employees introduce a “masculine culture” into the workplace where they meet female employees who stand for a “feminine culture” that is in opposition. Such a polarized view is founded on the premise that gender categories are stable, one-dimensional and clearly divided from each other through diametrically opposed values, norms and practices.

These attitudes also influence the roles men receive in female-dominated workplaces. The opinion that men are technical, practical and rationally oriented, is expressed by female colleagues and the men themselves, which leads to the fact that men often are the ones who get the “traditionally masculine” tasks to perform. Even men, who have applied to a female-dominated profession precisely because they experience themselves as less technical and practical than other men, often end up with having to perform traditionally male tasks. In female-dominated workplaces, men are given the job of custodian, of fixing technical problems. Such a division of labour reproduces stereotypes about the technical abilities of men and women’s helpless role as bystander. When men take on such tasks, the female staff need not take care of these jobs tagged as masculine. They do not practice the skills that might allow them to do the tasks. In this way, gender stereotypes about division of labour become cemented. This is diametrically opposed to the goals of the gender equality project.

A less gender divided labour market requires a conscious effort to influence boys to choose occupations where women have traditionally been in the majority. Furthermore, female-dominated sectors must be aware of recruiting men and use

the right of affirmative action in recruitment where legislation justifies it. Finally, efforts must be made to keep men who have chosen female-dominated workplaces in the professions. A precedent has been set for implementing measures to keep women in workplaces where they are in the minority, including the military and police. Corresponding measures now need to be taken for men in female-dominated jobs.

3.3.2 The Legal Authority of the Gender Equality Act with regards to affirmative action for men

The foundation for the Gender Equality Act is that it is not allowed to treat people differently because of gender. The Gender Equality Act Section 3a however, gives the possibility for affirmative action on the basis of gender when such preferential treatment promotes gender equality in the long term. It allows for various types of measures, including a moderate quota system. Moderate quota systems involve using gender as the deciding factor when allocating education and employment places in cases where candidates of both genders are equally or approximately equally qualified, as long as this action promotes equality between the sexes in the workplace.

In practice there has been a lot of uncertainty concerning how far one can use affirmative action on behalf of men. This uncertainty is connected with the original purpose of the provisions of the Act, namely that gender equality measures take aim to improve women’s position in society. EU legislation also sets narrower limits for the right to affirmative action on behalf of men.

On the basis of this, legislation was passed in 1995 that gives further provisions about regulations for affirmative action for men. This legislation was a result of a desire to allow affirmative action in order to give men a stronger position in relation to the care of children. In White Paper No. 70 (1991-1992) it was proposed that the Gender Equality Act be changed to open the possibility for affirmative action on behalf of men. This would be an incentive for men to break the pattern of gender division in the workplace. The majority in Parliament was against the proposal of a general right to affirmative action for men. Instead it was decided that the opportunity for affirmative action would be introduced in the form of special measures to get more men into ECEC, schools and child protection services. The

goal was to increase gender equality over the long term.

Regulations on affirmative action for men in connection with education and care for children were presented by Royal Decree on July 17, 1998. In accordance with the regulation, men may receive preferential treatment when one is filling positions where the main duty is to teach or provide care for children. The precondition is that the male applicant must be considered as equally good as or equally well qualified as the female applicant. Furthermore, it is a requirement that men be under-represented in the group performing these tasks. The opportunity is also available to use a moderate quota system in the recruitment of men for education in these professions.

Affirmative action for men was reviewed again in connection with changes in the Gender Equality Act in 2001. No changes were proposed in the existing jurisdiction, either in the form of allowing the use of stronger measures (such as a radical quota system) than had been allowed, or to expand the jurisdiction to other professions than those linked to working with children.

The right to preferential treatment of men has particularly been used to get more men into the early childhood education and care sector.

The government will draft a proposal to expand the use of the legal authority of the act, and shall apply it to other sectors where men are under-represented, for example in the nursing and care sector.

A broader assessment of the right to preferential treatment of men according to the Gender Equality Law must be seen in connection with the work of the Commission to propose a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation which was established June 1, 2007. The purpose of the Commission is to ensure a compiled and thus increased protection in Norwegian legislation against discrimination. The Commission is to deliver the proposal within July 1, 2009. A potential new anti-discrimination law cannot be put forth before 2010.

3.3.3 Experience gathered from the work to get women into male-dominated professions and education

Much has been done to get women to choose innovative and untraditional career paths. One example has been the Great Nordic BRYT project, which was a comprehensive commitment to accumulate knowledge and develop measures

to break gender segregation. The BRYT project was a collaborative project between Norway, Finland, Iceland, Sweden and Denmark based on experiments in local labour markets. The project had a female focus; it was aimed at influencing women to choose male-dominated educational programs and professions.

Very male-dominated public agencies like the police have also been working purposefully to recruit women. Women's networks and diversity committees as well as a special network for female leaders, have been established in most police districts. Activities vary between police districts. Police conduct a dialogue with groups of leaders in various districts with diversity and equality as a central theme. The Police Academy uses women in their recruitment campaigns. A plan has been drafted for work on diversity in the police and sheriff agency (2008-2013) where gender equality is included.

Today the agency has (including full and part-time employees) about 39% women, and 20% of them are police officers. 6 women and 21 men are police chiefs and district leaders.

Another example to look at is the military. Among the officers and enlisted (military personnel) in the military, there are currently about 93% men and 7% women, and there has been no noteworthy increase in the number of women over the last 15 years. A formal occupational equality between men and women in the military, including combat positions, was passed by the Parliament in 1984 and set in motion in 1985. In comparison, women were permitted to become ministers in 1956, and the police have had formal equality since 1958. The military has been in other words, the last male bastion when it comes to formal equality between the sexes.

The overarching and long-term goal is that both sexes should be equally represented at all levels of the Army. In December 2006, the Defence Minister established a committee to promote increased female participation in the military. The report from the committee was submitted in March 2007 and contains a number of proposed measures to increase the recruitment of women into the military, keep more women in the profession, and get more women into leading positions in the military. The goal is to increase the female proportion among military personnel to 15% over the period 2005-2008, cf settings. No. 234 (2003-2004). To achieve the goal of increased recruitment of women to the military, voluntary sessions for women were introduced in 2006.

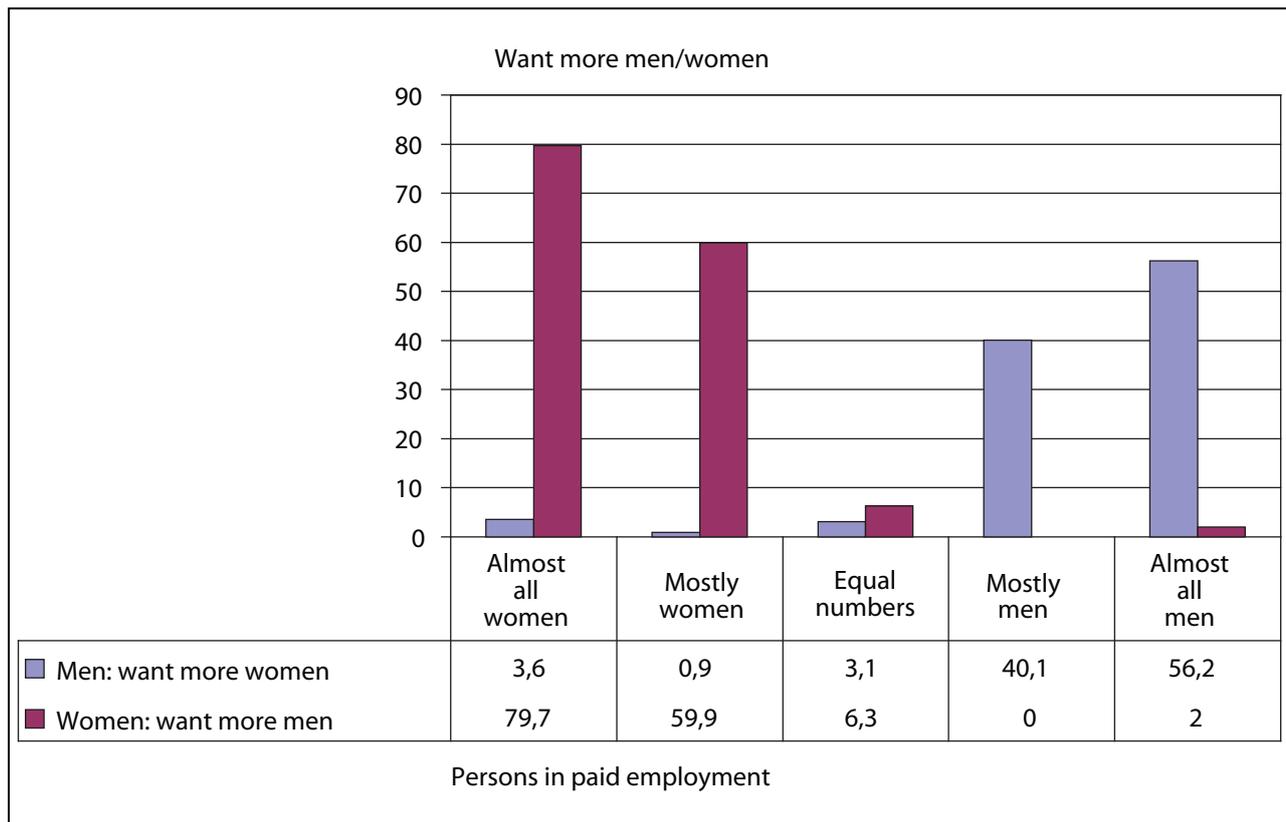


Figure 3.4 Choice of Job and Education

Source: Gender Equality Survey

White Paper No. 36 (2006-2007) proposes several measures to get more women into the Armed Forces. In the long term plan for the Armed Forces (Proposition No. 48 (2007-2008)) it is suggested that the government should introduce compulsory sessions for women. This will ensure that all women in a graduating class have had access to information about the military. It may also help to strengthen the recruitment of women and make access to education and a career in the military more equally accessible for women and men.

3.3.4 Measure to promote better gender balance in educational choices

As shown previously, boys and girls tend to think traditionally when they choose secondary education and higher education. Being able to break this pattern of educational options is important for succeeding in reforming the gender-divided labour market. Gender segregation begins already at the choice of an educational path.

One of the reasons for this may be seen in connection with the fact that women and men give dif-

ferent reasons for their choices. Women often express a desire to work with people and to help others as a basis for their choice. Men more seldom give such reasons, and are more likely to express the desire for a good salary as an important factor. What constitutes a meaningful job, and how family and work life will be balanced, are perceived differently by women and men.

The Gender Equality Survey supports this. Respondents were asked what they wanted to achieve with education and/or the job they had chosen, what values their choices served to realise.

The Gender Equality Survey shows that men answered more often than women that they wanted a good income, that they wanted to solve practical problems, and that they desired risk and excitement. Women stressed more often than men that they wanted a job where they could help others, or a job that could be combined with children and family life. It is important to note however, that a large number of men also responded that being able to combine work with children and family life is important. Similarly, there were many women who responded that high income

was an important factor in choosing education and career.

There are also differences between language-minority populations and the language-majority population in the choice of higher education. Language minorities choose to greater extent scientific/technical programmes and the humanities, and to a lesser extent programmes geared towards teaching professions. This tendency has been stable throughout the 1990's. In 2003, 22% of the first-time registered students with minority language background – both first and second-generation immigrants – selected science and technical programmes, compared with 14% in the majority population.

3.3.4.1 Increase the active use of a gender perspective in education and career counselling

The goal of gender equality will be reached when young people have truly equal opportunities in choosing a career independently of gender. Unfortunately, educational choices are made at an age when young people do not have a full comprehen-

sion of the breadth of the labour market. As it is stated in the Action-Plan for Gender Equality in Early Childhood Education and Care, and in Basic Education (2008-2010), the school has a major challenge to provide both information and counselling that will motivate students to make more untraditional and innovative choices of educational and career paths.

We know little about how teachers, counsellors and the general content in schools affect the education options that students take. We don't know how far gender-typical educational choices reflect the attitudes of the counsellors, or to what degree counselling services actively work to promote untraditional choices. But the chances are great that educational and career advice in lower and upper secondary education is communicated differently to girls and boys. The counsellors may not be aware of how they may subtly reinforce traditional gender choices. Surveys from countries such as Denmark show that when counsellors do not have a conscious awareness about gender, both the guidance they give, and the choices the students make, become more traditional. Similar research is lacking in Norway, but there is no rea-

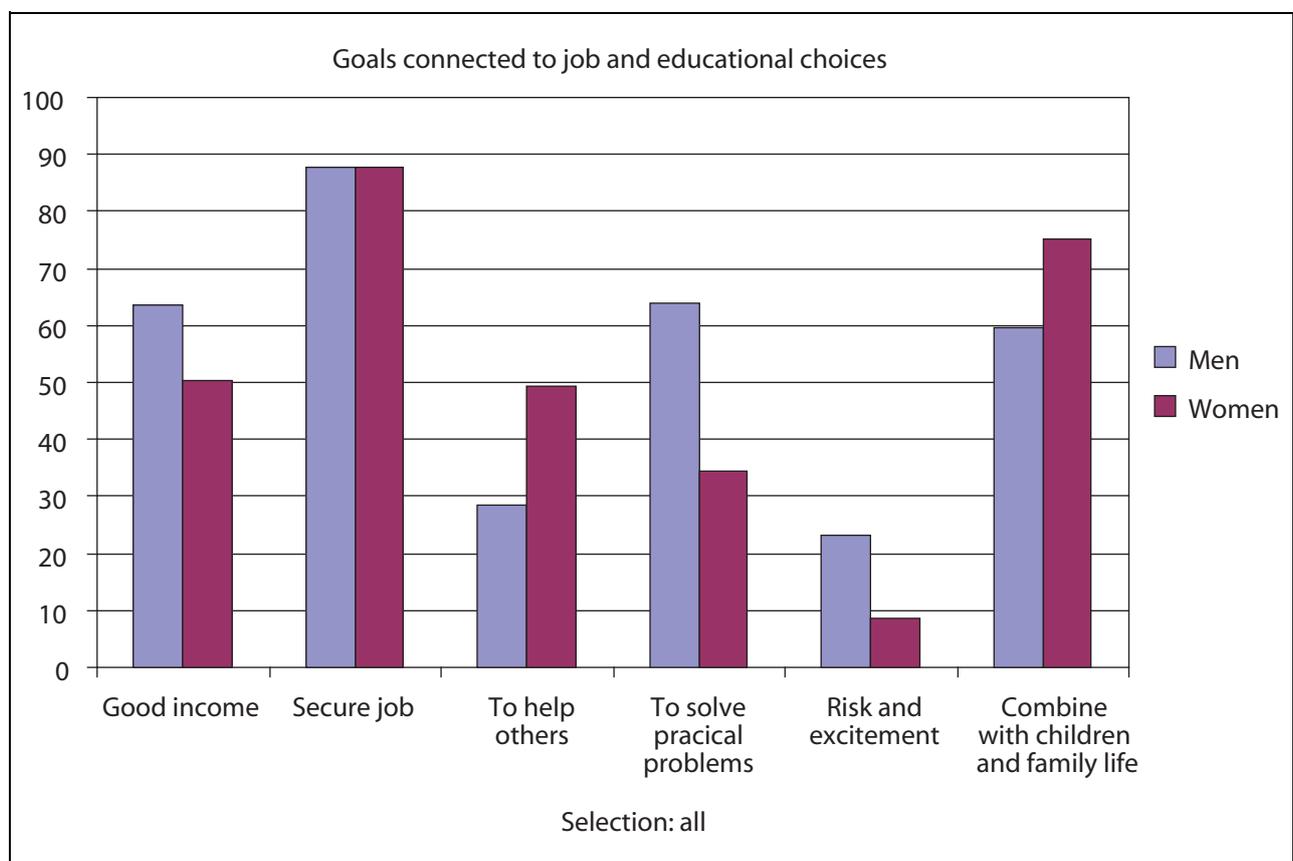


Figure 3.5 Mål med jobb- og utdanningsval

Source: Gender Equality Survey

son to believe that the relationship is different here.

The project “Awareness in educational choices (1997-2000)” was part of the strategy of the Ministry of Church, Education and Research to strengthen guidance towards vocational and educational programmes and to help youth towards more conscious educational choices in accordance with their own wishes and prerequisites, as independently as possible of traditional gender roles. Several models were developed and tested in the project. Some important lessons that were learned were that good role models, and the possibility to get practical experience with the job and subject, are the best methods to help young people to identify education and training possibilities that they might not otherwise have considered. That these measures should be different for boys and girls was another important lesson. Here are some of the most important conclusions that resulted from this project:

- Effort to make youth aware that gender influences them in their career choices, and that it is possible to choose more innovative paths, is time-consuming and a long-term process.
- The gender perspective should be incorporated as an explicit part of the educational and career counselling in schools.
- Awareness can best be achieved through direct contact with other young people who themselves have chosen untraditionally (role models), and through gaining direct experience from jobs and training centres.
- It is important to build networks and extra training for students who choose untraditionally. Measures to increase the well-being of these students need to be incorporated in the plans made by the sectors of the labour market. The effort to motivate towards untraditional educational and professional choices must be holistic. It must be structured as chains of initiatives; a campaign on one level is not enough.

Following up White Paper No. 16(2006-2007)—introduction of a divided counselling service

White Paper No.16 (2006-2007) “Early Intervention for Lifelong Learning” focused on the need to even out social differences in participation and learning outcomes in the education system.

Good educational choices require qualified counsellors. A good counselling service can reduce the risk of students changing their minds

or dropping out. Educational and professional advice is especially important for students with parents who for various reasons have little knowledge of the educational and future prospects that lie in various programmes. Social-pedagogical counselling is particularly important for those students who, because of problems at home or in the community, have a difficult time getting the full benefit of instruction.

Counselling services in primary schools and secondary education should therefore be divided in to social-pedagogical counselling and educational and career guidance. Educational and career guidance would concentrate on advising students according to their various needs, desires and abilities. In this way, poor choices may be avoided. A divided counselling service will contribute to increased focus on untraditional education choices with the aim of recruiting more men to female-dominated professions.

Action Plan for Gender Equality in Early Childhood Education and Care, and in Basic Education (2008-2010)

The Ministry of Education’s action plan has as one of their foremost goals to achieve a better gender balance in the educational and vocational choices young people make. Measures to actively incorporate a gender perspective into education and career counselling are part of that plan. Education and career counselling in school will contribute to the students being able to choose education and future career paths independently of traditional gender roles. The Education Directorate will investigate attitudes of educational and career counsellors with regard to gender roles and non-traditional educational and career choices. Furthermore, it will prepare guidance material on gender-conscious educational choices geared towards primary education institutions. It will also prepare information designed for students and parents. The plan has put a particular emphasis on measures to recruit more girls into the sciences.

3.3.5 Initiatives for the recruitment of men to early childhood education and schools

In the middle of the 1990’s, Norway was among the first countries to put the need for more men in ECEC on the political agenda. In recent years, Norway has had the greatest progress of any of the Nordic countries when it comes to recruiting

men. In the rest of the Nordic countries there has been a standstill or decline. However, the goal of at least 20% men in ECEC, which was decided in 1996, has still not been reached.

The Action Plan for Gender Equality in Early Childhood Education and Care 2004-2007

The overall goal for this gender equality strategy 2004-2007 was to have a local and regional government committed to equality and equality-consciousness, a consolidated and active network for “Men in ECEC” in the five regions, boys / girls and men / women aware of and committed to gender equality in the sector and equality embedded in the framework of training for ECEC and school teachers. The final report shows that a number of measures have been implemented at ECEC level, municipal, county, regional and national level during the given period. The Ministry of Education has developed a pamphlet on gender equality in ECEC and one on men and the recruitment of men to early childhood education and care. “Men in ECEC” networks have been established, conferences have been conducted, and more research has been initiated. The goal of 20% men in day-care continues to be relevant. It is an ambitious goal, not least because the sector is growing.

There has been a strong increase in the number of men in ECEC in this period. From the end of 2003 to the end of 2007, 2400 new men have been recruited to the sector. This is an increase of 52%. At the end of 2007 there were 7000 men in Norwegian ECEC. That makes up 9,6% of the employees.

Numbers from Statistics Norway indicate that close to 13% (829 of 6,436) of ECEC have at least 20% men in fundamental positions. These positions include administrators, pedagogical leaders and assistants.

The goal of 20% men in ECEC has still not been reached on a national level. In 2007 the percentage was 9.6% men, and the number has increased by 1.7% in the period since then. The slight increase is related to the strong growth in the establishment of ECEC during the period. The private ECEC have had a somewhat stronger increase than public ECEC.

In 2007, close to 22% of the men in ECEC were administrators and pedagogical leaders, 46% were assistants and bilingual assistants, and 32% belonged to the category “other positions”.

The private ECEC have a higher percentage of men and better growth than the public. By the end of 2003, private ECEC had 9.0% men, public ECEC 7.2%. The private ECEC had a little over 11% men at the end of 2007, while public ECEC had 7.7%. The public sector has therefore had half the growth rate of the private sector private in that period.

Numbers from the SSB show that 30% of teachers in primary education are men. In secondary education the number is over 54%.

According to the Action Plan for Gender Equality in Early Childhood Education and Care, and in Basic Education (2008-2010), men have comprised a relatively stable part of the number who have graduated from general teacher training in recent years (26% in 2006). This also indicates that teacher training for work in primary education faces challenges when it comes to recruiting and holding onto men in teacher training.

The percent of women is clearly highest among the youngest teachers, which indicates that the female dominance of the staff room will continue. We have little knowledge about why men do not gravitate to the education profession and work as teachers, particularly in primary schools.

Table 3.3 Men in early childhood education and care

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Men as a percentage of total employees	7,9	8,0	8,8	8,9	9,6
in public ECEC	7,2	6,5	7,5	7,3	7,7
in private ECEC	9,0	9,6	10,5	10,9	11,1
Total number of men	4606	4845	5715	6202	7013
Administrators and pedagogical leaders	1053	1112	1263	1350	1545
Assistants, bilingual assistants	1688	1896	2387	2780	3230
Other positions	1865	1837	2065	2072	2238

Source: Central Board of Statistics

Table 3.4 Teachers divided by full and part-time, gender and type of school 1.10.2003.1 (All numbers have been corrected 13.10.2004.)

Year and type of school	All teaching positions			Full-time			Part-time		
	Sum	Men	Women	Sum	Men	Women	Sum	Men	Women
2003	107 860	43 744	64 116	74 293	35 238	39 055	33 567	8506	25 061
Primary Schools	65 376	19 334	46 042	43 428	16 084	27 344	21 948	3250	18 698
Secondary Schools	26 618	14 491	12 127	19 234	11 816	7418	7384	2675	4709

¹ Includes only teachers from schools that reported to SST and STS

Source: Central Board of Statistics (2004)

Action plan for Gender Equality in Early Childhood Education and Care, and in Basic Education, (2008-2010)

The main aims of this action plan schools are: The environment in ECECs and primary schools shall promote equality between boys and girls; the gender balance in choice of education and career shall be improved, especially with a focus on academic and vocational training and recruitment of girls to science; and that the gender distribution among the employees of the ECEC and primary school is to become more even. Several of the measures from the Action Plan for 2004-2007 will be continued in 2008-2010, including national and regional conferences, research on gender equality in the ECEC and among those in teacher training, and guidance given ECEC and schools about recruitment of men. In addition, “demonstration ECEC”, where the goal of 20% men has been reached, will be established and recruitment teams will be established at the regional level. Funds will be allocated to local work on gender equality in ECEC.

Measures to ensure that schools include a more even gender balance as a goal in their plans will be drafted in primary education, as in the ECEC sector. The preparation of governing documents and strategies will also have this as a goal. Primary education will also make use of affirmative action on behalf of men when filling positions. In addition, efforts will be made to recruit and keep more men in education.

3.3.6 Recruitment initiatives for men and persons of minority background to training for work in child protection services

In February 2008, the Ministry of Children and Equality has initiated a review by a group of experts of the educational programmes that lead

to work in child protection services, among other things. In practice this means sociology and educational programmes that aim directly towards this field. The group of experts will look at education in light of the current knowledge about, and future demand of, child protection. Issues connected to specialized competence and measures to recruit both men and people with minority backgrounds to their studies are key areas of assessment.

The recommendations from this group will become the guidelines for colleges, universities and central government. The report is to be submitted at the end of 2008.

3.3.7 Measures to bring more men into health and care services

During the last ten years official health and care services have only been comprised of about 10% male employees. As the chart below shows, there are major differences in positions with regards to education. Among nurses the number is around 7% and among care workers and auxiliary nurses around 5%. However, approximately 18% of social educators and 16.5% of all personnel without health and social academic education are men. Experience shows that we find these men quite often in environmental work in institutions and in follow-up work with people with mental diseases, the disabled and drug addicts, and not within nursing homes and ordinary home services.

As table 3.5 shows, recruitment strategies in recent years have had no visible effect on the statistics. One reason for this may be a lack of knowledge about what conditions must be met for men to find care work attractive, meaningful and important. Another reason may be that one has been aware of some of the conditions that work against the recruitment of men, such as wages and working conditions, but that no priority has

Table 3.5 Percent of yearly work done by men in care services

	2005	2006	2007
Pers. without particular education within the field	16,2	16,5	17,3
Auxiliary nurse	4,8	4,9	5,1
Nurse	7,0	7,1	7,1
Social educators	18,4	17,9	18,2
SUM	8,9	8,7	9,0

Source: Central Board of Statistics

been given to do something with them, perhaps because of high costs.

When one puts data from education next to professional performance in nursing and care services, one sees that a significant portion of the men who educate themselves in this field, later opt out of nursing and care services after they finish their education. In leadership and positions as labour representatives, however, men are well represented. Research shows that most of the 5% men who choose to go into these care professions, find the road to “masculine islands” within the field, such as intensive units, emergency and psychiatry.

Recruitment to nursing and care services at the secondary-education level, meaning auxiliary nursing and care work however, has a more traditional profile than the recruitment to care professions that require a college education. These fields are dominated by adult women, as in the 1960’s – and 1970s. The average age has increased from 28 to 33 years, and there are more than twice as many who now work part-time as did 25 years ago. Outlying regions have the largest number of recently educated employees, while large cities have corresponding larger numbers of experienced employees.

These factors together illustrate the challenges to be faced in recruiting (young) men into the nursing and care sector, and there are no indications that the newly established health worker programme will have any effect on the current recruitment pattern.

The biggest challenge for the care sector during the next decades will be to provide enough qualified labour. The demand for personnel in the nursing and care sectors is estimated to rise to 250 000 man-hours per year in 2050; that is more than a doubling of today’s capacity.

Statistics Norway estimates that, as one moves towards the year 2025, there will be a decided lack of auxiliary nurses, care workers and health technicians, probably also nurses, doctors and physio-

therapists. Norway should be largely self-sufficient with regards to health care personnel and not need to run an active recruitment campaign towards other countries. At the same time, one cannot expect to satisfy the need by utilising the existing potential that lies in the unused work force. To increase the number of full-time positions, reduce desertion from the sector, qualify people without formal skills and better organise health services is not sufficient.

It is not justifiable to wait for some breakdown in another part of the labour force to drive workers towards the nursing and care sector. Some years ago, men in industry and construction who were out of work were re-educated as health and care services workers. This initiative did not have any noticeable effect.

All of the Nordic countries have problems with recruiting young people to health and care services, and no one has managed to get a greater percentage of men to take these programmes. In all countries, it is the recruitment of mature adults that is important, and the average age of those that have been educated has increased – paradoxically enough, in a period when education has otherwise put effort into recruiting young people. Another factor may be that auxiliary nurses and care workers as professional groups have low societal status in all Nordic countries.

In a tight labour market, it appears to be women who are recruited to typical male professions, rather than vice versa. At the same time, nursing and care service programmes compete with other educational programmes aimed at ECEC, primary education and day-care work. These studies are far more popular among young people and seem to be somewhat more successful at recruiting men.

White Paper No. 25 (2005-2006) expresses the ambition to break the lopsided gender distribution in the current recruitment pattern, and several of the measures in the competence and

recruitment plan “Lift of Competence 2015” may contribute to increase recruitment of men to the care professions.

One of these is the project “Men in the Care Professions” at Telemark University College, which has the objective to develop recruitment strategies that both can maintain and strengthen the recruitment of men to the care professions. The premise is that other male-dominated professions are just as difficult and monotonous and have just as low salary levels. In order to understand the missing interest for nursing and care work among men, it is necessary to look at other factors as well, such as the fact that the nursing and care professions often present themselves as bastions of female culture and female values.

3.4 A summary of the initiatives

To increase the male contribution in female-dominated professions demands complementary initiatives that work towards the same goal. The government has implemented different types of recruitment campaigns designed specifically to recruit men into the care professions and education. The government will continue this set of measures and facilitate a greater degree of affirmative action on behalf of men in the professions where men are under-represented.

The measures within The Action Plan for Gender Equality in Early Childhood Education and Care, and in Basic Education 2008-2010 have as a goal to achieve broader educational choices for boys and to get more men employed in ECEC and schools.

The development of strategies for recruiting men to work in female-dominated jobs must be of interest to all parties in the workplace. The government is interested in opening a broad dialogue with KS and these parties.

3.4.1 Expanded legal authority for affirmative action

The government will draft a proposal to expand the jurisdiction of Section 3 of the Gender Equality Act, with a statement about other sectors and programs in which men are under represented. Gender Equality Act Section 3a of the regulation applies today to positions with responsibility for the caring for and teaching of children, and gives the possibility of affirmative action, giving preferential treatment to men as long as they are as well or nearly as

well qualified as the best female applicant (moderate quota). The prerequisite would be that men are under represented in the question. These regulations would also apply to admissions to education in these fields. A broader interpretation of the right to affirmative action, seen together with the original provisions of the Gender Equality Act, must also be related to the work of The Commission to propose a comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. The Commission shall submit its recommendations within July 1, 2009.

3.4.2 Putting effort into recruitment – cooperation with different parties in the labour market

It is important that an opportunity for preferential treatment is used actively and is accepted as a strategy by different parties in the workplace. A change in the Gender Equality Act with regard to these regulations should therefore be followed up by a clear change in employment practice. Employers must actively use the new strategy. At the same time, a moderate quota must be combined with information campaigns and other strategic measures to increase recruitment. The ECEC sector already has had good experience with recruitment strategies that combine moderate quota with other measures, including encouraging men to seek and to design job ads with a view to attract men to the job. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Equality will consider how the experiences from these efforts to increase the percentage of men in ECEC can be spread to other fields. The development of strategies for recruiting men to work in female-dominated jobs must at the same time be fully understood and established with the different parties in the workplace. The government will discuss such follow-up with the relevant parties.

3.4.3 Putting effort into measures to recruit and keep men in female-dominated workplaces

The Action Plan for Gender Equality in Early Childhood Education and Care, and in Basic Education (2008-2010)

In seeking to recruit male employees to ECECs and primary schools, the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with relevant parties, will emphasize measures that can reduce the desertion of male students from teaching training and measures to keep men working in the ECECs and

schools. The Action Plan contains such measures. The plan includes measures to increase men's participation in ECECs to 20% in 2010 and to have perceptibly more men among teachers in primary schools and teacher training colleges. The plan also contains measures to keep men on who have been recruited. Research shows that gender minorities have a higher degree of desertion from both training and career:

- Gender balance should be included as a goal in plans, governing documents and employer strategy.
- Advice to ECEC and schools about the recruitment of men, such as the creation of sites like *mibnett.no*.
- Use state allocated funds to form “demonstration ECEC”, which will serve as a model, inform and advise other ECECs on recruiting men, etc.
- Establish recruitment teams for men in early childhood education. The goal would be to have one team in every region. The teams would further the work of the “Men in ECEC”-network.
- The recruitment of men to teacher training. A subsidy award would be given to those ECEC teacher training establishments that have the biggest increase in the number of graduated male candidates.
- A Gender Equality Prize can be given to a ECEC and a county for their work to increase the proportion of men in the ECEC.

Recruitment to educational programmes for work in child protection services

In February 2008, the Ministry of Children and Equality has initiated a review by a group of experts of the educational programmes that lead to work in child protection services, among other things. In practice this means sociology and educational programmes that aim directly towards this field. Initiatives to recruit both more men and people of minority backgrounds into this field of study will be drafted. The recommendations from this group will advise colleges, universities and central government. The report is to be submitted at the end of 2008.

Recruitment of men to the care professions

To develop good recruitment strategies, we require better and more systematic knowledge than we have today. The project “Men in Care Pro-

fessions” at Telemark University plans to develop recruitment strategies that both can maintain and strengthen the recruitment of men to the care professions. The Ministry of Health and Care Services will give the Health Directorate the task of drafting how the programme “Lift of Competence 2015” can contribute to get more men into the care professions.

3.4.4 Contribution to broader occupational choices for boys – putting emphasis on counselling services

The Ministry of Education will work to strengthen consultancy services in secondary schools and contribute to its ability to motivate people to make untraditional educational and professional choices.

Follow-up of White Paper No. 16 (2006-2007) – the introduction of a divided counselling service

Counselling services in primary schools and secondary education as a rule should be divided into a social pedagogical counselling and educational and career guidance. The educational and career guidance should advise students in such a way that this advice is based on the students' individual needs, desires and ability. In this way mistakes in choosing educational or career path may be avoided. A divided counselling service will contribute to increased focus on untraditional educational choices with the aim of recruiting more men to female-dominated professions.

Action Plan for Gender Equality in Early Childhood Education and Care, and in Basic Education (2008-2010)

Measures to increase the active use of a gender perspective in education and career counselling are included in the plan. Education and career counselling in schools will do its best to ensure that students choose education and occupation independently of traditional gender roles.

- The Education Directorate will assess the attitudes of educational and career counsellors when it comes to gender roles and untraditional educational and professional choices.
- There will be preparation of guidance materials on gender awareness in education choices adapted for primary education.

Information material designed for pupils and parents on gender-conscious educational choices will

be prepared. The Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Children and Equality will prepare a guide for use by education and career counsellors on how to motivate boys to choose educational paths which are at the moment female-dominated (secondary and higher education). Training will be organised on the basis of this guide in every region.

3.4.5 Research

It is necessary to do new research and gain macro-level knowledge about the gender-separated structure of labour. There is a need for more systematic and detailed monitoring of changes in the gender patterns of the labour market seen as a whole. The existing research indicates that gender integration predominantly happens when women enter male-dominated territories, both educational and professional. All relevant parties in the workplace must put effort into developing a project to gain more knowledge on this subject.

4 Fathers reconciling work and family life

4.1 Introduction – the goal of equal parenting

One of the major goals of Norwegian gender equality policy has been for women to be able to take part in the workplace and leadership on an equal footing with men, and for men to be able to take responsibility for care-giving tasks and other work in the home on an equal footing with women. The policies have been enacted through various changes in existing laws since the 1970's. There is a clear intention that fathers should take on part of the responsibility for the care of children. Actual parenting practice by men and women has also gone through essential changes in the last decades. In a typical family today, both parents work outside the home and they share care-giving tasks to a greater extent than before.

Care for one's own children stretches over many years. It is important to focus on the division of responsibility for this care already from the first years of life. The way in which parents organise childcare and work outside the home in the first year of a child's life lays the foundation for the division of family labour later. The Parental Benefit Scheme with the Paternal Quota (1993) has contributed to more active fathers and started a revolution in men's use of parental leave. The introduction of the father's (paternal) quota has led to a steep increase in the number of fathers who have taken leave to be with their children. Today the father's quota is a norm and most fathers take leave corresponding to the quota. An important characteristic of fathers today is that a large number of them would rather work less and spend more time with their children. However, fathers still use only about 11percent of the total parental benefits each year.

It is equally important how parents divide the responsibilities of supporting and caring for the family after the time of parental leave is over. It is in this phase that parents confront the greatest challenges in balancing job and private life. "The

Time Pinch" is a reality for many families with small children, especially families where both parents work full-time. The strategy that most parents choose is a shorter cumulative working day. It is rare to find both parents of small children in full-time work. Only one of four couples with under school-age children hold on to two full-time jobs. Usually it is the mother who reduces her working hours. Women tend to cut down on work outside the home and stay at home with young children. This means that they also tend to take a larger proportion of the housework. The gender roles become more striking in this phase. The father's breadwinner role becomes correspondingly enhanced.

In the Proposition No. 1 (2008-2009) the government has proposed to expand the paternal quota from six to ten weeks from 1 July 2009. In this chapter strategies for further development of the Parental Benefit Scheme will be presented, with a long-term goal of a paternal quota of 14 weeks. The government will also draft alternative proposals to ensure wages during the father's leave for two weeks in connection with birth.

The workplace has a key role to play when it comes to achieving more equal parenting practices. The workplace must accept that men need to make adjustments when they have children, and that they also have a duty to care for the children. Employers have a responsibility and can serve their own best interests by facilitating men in having a good balance between work and family life.

Last but not least, it is important that parents recognise each other as comparable caregivers. There is still much to be done in this area. Investigation shows that many do not view fathers as adequate caregivers. The evaluations in this section must therefore be viewed in close connection with measures taken to strengthen the role of fathers as caregivers, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5.

Table 4.1 Rights for fathers regarding care of small children – overview (2008)

	Working Environment Act	National Insurance Act	Rights granted by agreement with employer
at the birth of a child	Father has the right to two weeks leave of absence		Right to pay during the leave of absence
after the birth of a child	Parents together have the right to one year's parental leave	Parental benefits (up to 6G): The paternal quota is 6 weeks The father can take up to an additional 29/39 weeks	Right to pay over 6G
Children 1–3 years ¹	Each parent has the right to one more year's leave		
Rights during child illness	The right to time off to take children to the doctor		Right to pay during the time of doctor visit
	The right to leave of absence to care for sick children	Care allowance (up to 6G)	Right to pay over 6G
	Right to leave of absence when children need nursing care	Nursing allowance (up to 6G)	Right to pay over 6G
School start			Welfare leave to take children to the first days of ECEC, school, etc.
Reduction of working hours caused by responsibility for care of children	The right to reduced working hours and release from overtime work		
Flexibility	Right to flexible working hours	Flexible withdrawal of parental benefits	Home office, among other things

¹ In addition, cash benefits are awarded when children are between 1 and 3 years if the children do not make use of publicly subsidised ECEC. See table 4.6 for important rights according to the Working Environment Act.

4.2 The rights of fathers of small children

4.2.1 A brief description of the rules today

Already in the 1970's, fathers received a separate right to paid leave if the child is ill (1978). Each of the parents was entitled to such an allowance for ten days per year. The regulation was explained thus: "Both parents should have the same rights. This will serve to foster a more equal sharing of the responsibility for children and a better understanding in the workplace of the duties of the father at home."

Since 1977, fathers have also had the right to take out parental leave with full benefits should

the mother become sick or go back to work. Few (1-2%) made use of this privilege, and the paternal quota of four weeks was introduced in 1993 to ensure that parents began to share parental leave. The paternal quota has been a success, and today nine out of ten entitled fathers, make use of this right.

In 1995 the rules of the Working Environment Act were changed so that each parent could have the right to a one-year parental leave beyond the 12-month total leave already established. This is unpaid leave of absence to care for children between one and three years old. This system has not led to any significant decrease in the working hours of fathers. If one of the parents stays at home, it is usually the mother.

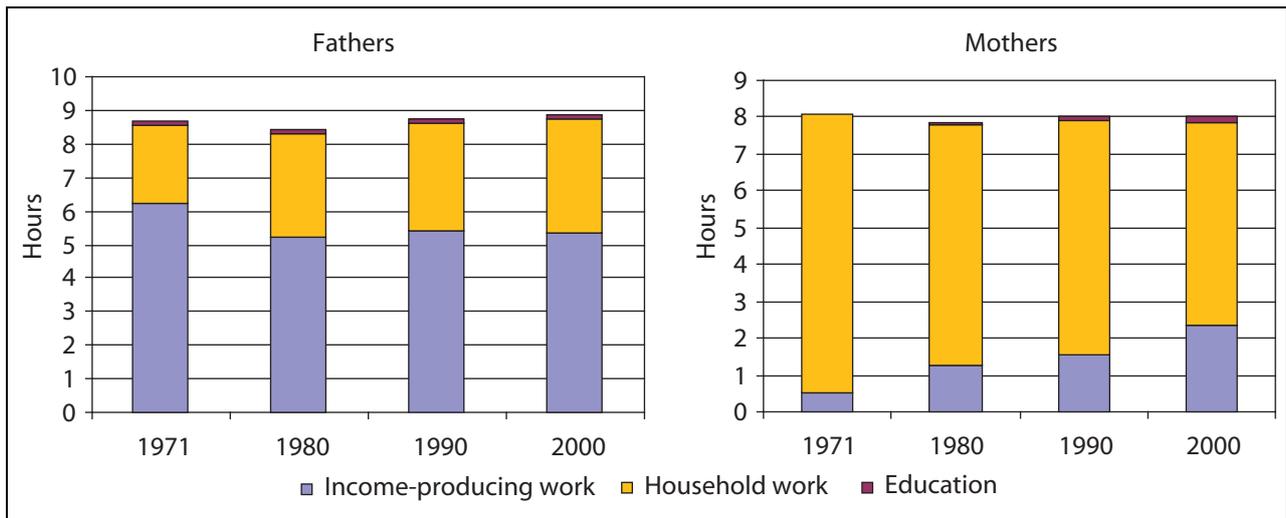


Figure 4.1 Time used for income-producing work, household work and education among married/cohabiting mothers and fathers of children between the ages of 0-6 years. 1971, 1980, 1990, 2000. Average per day in hours.

Source: Time use survey, Central Board of Statistics

Various reforms have been implemented since 2000 that strengthen the rights of fathers with regard to parental benefits:

- Father's independent entitlement to parental benefits (2000)
- Right to wage compensation during paternal quota according to one's own position percent
- Extension of father's quota to five (2005) and six weeks (2006). Budget proposal to expand the father's quota to 10 weeks (2009)
- Simplification of the time account scheme (2007)
- 100% coverage (up to 6G) for self-employed persons (2008)

Today we have a comprehensive set of regulations to ensure that parents can combine work and family. Table 4.1 provides an overview of the most important rights that apply to fathers. The system has three components: the Working Environment Act regulates the right to leave of absence, working hours, etc. The rights to benefits is laid down in National Insurance Act. Contract / wage agreements often contain complementary rights.

Arrangements where the state provides good and subsidized childcare, such as ECEC, are also crucial factors in allowing fathers to be working outside the home.

4.2.2 The amount of time fathers use for work and care

Gender differences in the use of time have been substantially reduced in recent decades. Fathers have taken on a greater proportion of household work and reduced time used for professional work. Mothers show an opposite trend; the average working hours per week have increased, while time dedicated to the household has been greatly reduced. Gender differences are still far from evened out and are still markedly traditional, especially among parents of small children.

Altogether, families spend more time in salaried work than before, largely because mothers now do a larger amount of paid work. The families who have small children (youngest child 0-6 years) work about 60 hours a week. If this time had been equally distributed among all families, and equally between mothers and fathers, it would correspond to a family where both mother and father work six hours a day. However, in reality working hours are not evenly distributed, neither among families nor between genders.

The difference in working hours between mothers and fathers varies with the age of youngest child. The largest difference is when the children are very young. We find the least differences among parents with older children. As it emerges from the figure below, fathers of small children spend on average twice as much time at work as mothers. These fathers do less housework as

Table 4.2 Employees by full and part time employment. Yearly average in 2006

	All employees	Fulltime employees	Parttime employees
Men	1 251 000	87 %	13 %
Women	1 111 000	56 %	44 %

Source: SALDO 2007, Equality and Discrimination Ombud

well. The figure shows that fathers of small children on average use 3.5 hours a day to do household tasks, or about 2.5 hours less than mothers of small children. If we divide these families with small children up into subcategories according to how old the children are, we see that the father does 58% of the household tasks of the mother when the children are between 0-2 years, and 69% of the mother's effort when the children are between 3-6 years.

If we look at work as a whole, including both work outside and inside the home, both mothers and fathers do about the same amount of work. Fathers however, come out having slightly more working hours.

4.2.2.1 Details of the working hours of fathers

Contracted working hours

In 2005, fathers with children 0-15 years had on average 39.2 contracted working hours per week, while the corresponding number in 1990 was 40.4 hours. Contracted working hours for fathers have gone down somewhat. Yet fathers in 2005 had about 8 contracted work hours more per week than mothers. In 1990, the difference in working hours between fathers and mothers was about 12.5 hours per week. The difference in working hours between mothers and fathers has become less, but the difference is still quite large.

Full-time work and long workdays are still the norm for men and fathers. Men do not tend to reduce their contracted working hours when they have children. Unlike mothers, fathers do not usually utilize part-time work as a way of adapting their work life to their family life.

The typical part-time workingman usually takes a small part-time job for a limited period, often while completing his own education or at the end of a professional career. Men who work part-time, often work quite short hours (1-19 hours a week). The typical part-time working-

woman has more than one child under 16 and works more hours (29-36 hours a week).

Actual working hours

Both fathers and mothers have lower actual working hours than contracted working hours. The average actual working hours for fathers with children 0-15 years was 34.8 hours in 2005. This is more than 11 hours more than the average actual working hours for mothers.

It appears that fathers to a certain extent customise their actual working hours when they have young children, and especially if they only have one child. According to Kitterød, the men who use the least time for work are fathers with children 0-2 years (33 hours per week) and fathers with one child of 2-5 years. However, the difference between this and the mother's working hours is also greatest for parents with children 0-2 years, with 17 hours difference per week. This corresponds with the distribution of parental leave taken in connection with the birth of the child. Fathers have relatively little leave time compared with mothers. The men who spend the most time on the job, are fathers with school-aged children (36 hours per week).

Fathers have less actual working hours than before. The average father was on the job three hours less in 2005 than in 1991. Overtime work among fathers has shown the same declining trend. Yet there are still large differences between the customisations women and men do. The gender divided labour market and overrepresentation of men in the private sector suggests that fathers often work in businesses and sectors characterized by a culture that discredits reduced working hours. Twice as many men as women work overtime per day. In 2004, 28 percent of all employed fathers worked more than 41 hours per week, compared with 8 percent of the mothers.

4.3 The background for parenting practice

Even if the home today is characterised by equality, in practice there is still a fundamental imbalance between the sexes. The mother both does more and decides more when it comes to household tasks and childcare. Fathers work more outside of the home and contribute more to the household economy. The gender-related imbalance

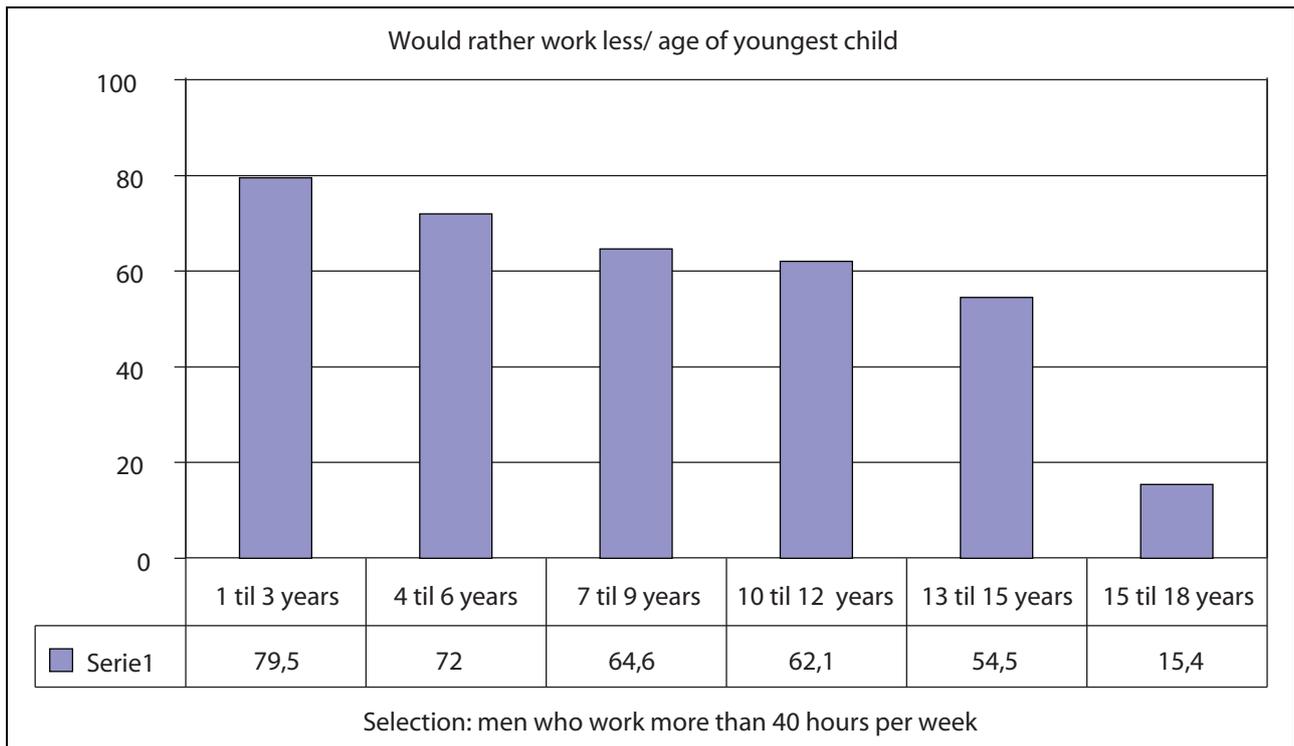


Figure 4.2 Attitudes towards reduced working hours among fathers

Source: Gender Equality Survey

ance in the labour market which has been described in Chapter 3, helps to keep these traditional gender role patterns going, including through uneven distribution of income. The gender distribution in the workplace also influences how parents take advantage of parental leave. Some of these factors that have an impact on parenting practices are described below.

4.3.1 Attitudes towards men as providers and caregivers

Male identity and status are closely related to position in the workplace. To be the main provider for the family remains as one of the key characteristics of the male identity.

Today, the image is far more complex, as work comes more into conflict with the role of being a father. Fathers have shifted their focus from work to care giving. To be an accessible father has become a dominant ideal. However, in practice, the man is the main provider in the family; in only one of six families with children does the mother earn more than the father. Income-producing work and providing still constitute an important part of the father's identity. The financial responsibility for the family is not just about earning

money, but also about managing the family income in a prudent manner. This responsibility is still tied to the men's masculinity and identity, even if the woman contributes substantially to the family income. In families where the mother is at home, or has unpaid leave, the man naturally enough becomes the greater provider. This factor influences what these men believe is the ideal of a good father. For them a good father ensures the economic security of the family.

Chapter 9.2.4 presents gender research on men with immigrant background and their attitudes towards gender equality. The research indicates that the ethnic minority groups show a diverse number of ways of being a man. However, many male immigrants express traditional attitudes to female participation in the labour market and the division of housework. A project report on fatherhood among men with ethnic minority background in Norway points to a trend among the minority population to think of parenthood as complementary rather than shared responsibility. This means that mother and father complement each other and contribute qualitatively different things. The Ministry of Children and Equality has set in motion a project which has, among other aims, the goal of acquiring more knowl-

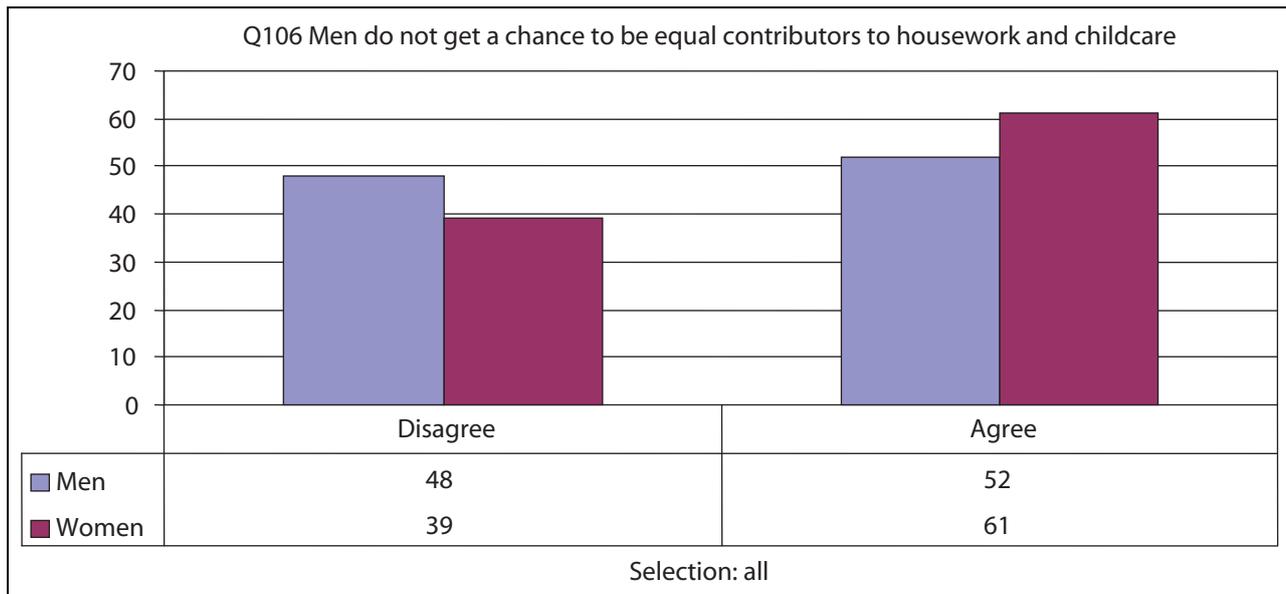


Figure 4.3 Question about whether men are allowed to contribute to household tasks and child care

Source: Gender Equality Survey

edge about the degree of equality between the sexes, and ethnic minority men's view on masculinity and gender roles. The project will be completed in 2009.

According to the investigation, fathers who see themselves as the primary provider, also tend to express traditional values about division of labour. Almost 50 percent of the men see themselves as having the main bread-winning responsibility. In situations where women actually earn more, 22 percent of the men still see themselves as the main provider. So even when men earn less than women, their view of themselves as provider remains unchanged, and they tend to prioritise work over other family duties.

The investigation illustrates the dilemma that many fathers experience. In figure 4.2 below we see that 80 percent of the men who work more than forty hours per week and have children under three years of age want to work less. The number declines as children get older.

Among parents with normal working hours (35-40 hours) the percentage that want to work less out of consideration for the children rises, both among men and women, from 23 per cent of them with the oldest children to about 65 percent of those with the youngest.

The investigation also shows that the majority of both men and women agree that men are not

allowed to be equal contributors in household tasks and the care of children.

Percentage-wise, there are still more women than men who agree on this point, and the trend is that the younger agree more than the older women. Although it is expected that the men should be accessible fathers, according to this investigation there is still far to go before fathers have the same status as caregivers as mothers.

Attitudes in the work place have a strong influence on the parenting practices of fathers. Fathers in male-dominated businesses take leave less than fathers who work in female-dominated or gender-balanced organisations. Fathers in male-dominated enterprises are also more likely to report that they feel pressure from employers about leave practices. Ethnic minority men are over-represented among those who emphasise that there is such pressure. In which sector the parents work also affects how a father takes or does not take parental leave. If the father works in the health and social services sector, his use of leave is encouraged, while a mother working in the same field is discouraged. Working in small businesses or independent commercial enterprises also has a negative influence on a father's use of leave time.

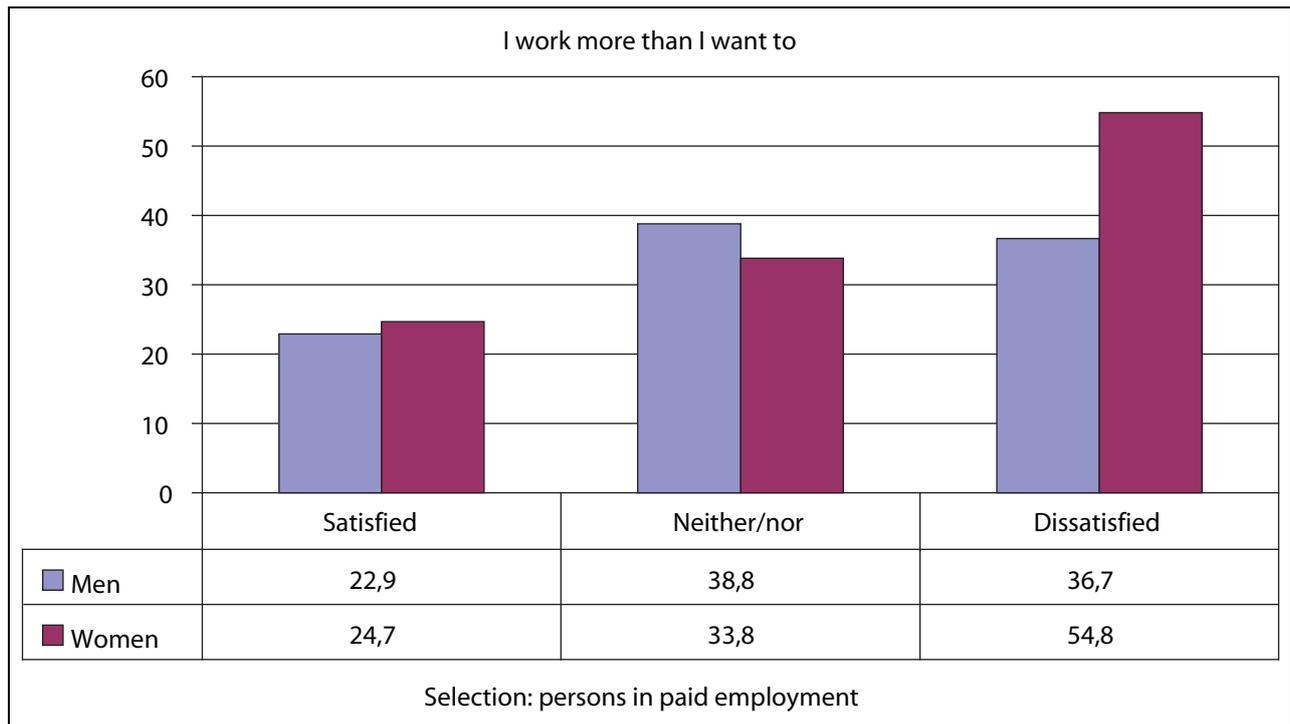


Figure 4.4 Questions about desired work load

Source: Gender Equality Survey

4.3.2 The influence of women's working conditions and attitudes towards the workplace

As it emerges from Chapter 3, the workplaces that employ mostly women are often characterized by lower wages, less flexibility and poor development and advancement prospects.

One finds that in such jobs that do not support the well-being of the employees on those issues, more employees are likely to indicate that they *work more than they wish to*, as the diagram below shows. This tendency is the same for men and women, but stronger for women.

From a gender equality perspective this is unfortunate because it is women who need to work more in order to create increased balance. Women who are not satisfied with their working conditions are less minded to prioritise work when they have children. Brandth and Kvande show that parents more often share parental leave when the mother has a job that is important to her.

An important discovery in the Gender Equality Survey is that an equitable distribution of resources between parents increases the chance of more equal parenting practice. It is especially income distribution that has this effect, though it

is not simply concrete economic assessments that are the main factors. Social, cultural and social psychological factors also play important roles.

Concrete economic considerations as a consequence of the difference in income between two parents are easily overestimated when looking at the distribution of paid leave. As a basic premise it should not make any difference which parent takes paid leave. The parent who takes the leave of absence is compensated according to his or her own income. However, salary differences between the parents have a direct effect on the level of parental benefits in two cases. For one, parental benefits do not cover income exceeding 6 G (about 420 000 kroner in 2008). There are more fathers than mothers who have income that exceeds this threshold. If the father earns more and his income is over this limit, then the family loses economically if the father takes out the paid parental leave. This is only offset if the employer makes up the difference. One must also look at which option parents choose: The paid parental leave in 2008 can be either 54 weeks with 80 percent compensation of income, or 44 weeks with 100 percent compensation. Parents usually choose the option of 80 percent compensation during parental leave. This reduction "costs more" for the parent who has the highest wages,

usually the father. It is possible to choose 100 percent compensation. However, this shortens the time of the paid leave and requires a longer period of unpaid leave if one does not get other childcare when the child is around ten months old.

Fathers are more likely to take more parental leave when the parents choose the 100 percent compensation option, when the mother has completed higher education, when the mother's salary increases, and when the parents' incomes are more equal and the mother works full-time – something that generally would not happen if she works within the health and social services sector. Among the couples that share parental leave, the usual scenario is a mother who has a high position in her full-time job, higher education and a good salary. The father also has a relatively high position at his job, higher education, but a more modest salary. The parental leave is more likely to be shared when the mother has a job that is meaningful to her, but at the same time wants to spend time with the child. A new survey shows however, that generally speaking, even couples with higher education tend to take parental leave along traditional gender lines, that is that the mother takes a long leave and the father takes a short leave.

4.3.3 Do parents want a different type of division?

Although there are indications of change, parents of small children follow a very traditional gender division of responsibilities. There is a way to go before women and men are considered to be equal partners in both providing and care giving. Instead the parents tend to keep the traditional practices going. Because the mothers often work part-time, the fathers are expected to have the main responsibility for breadwinning. Because fathers have longer workweeks, mothers lose the possibility for flexibility and are prevented from working more.

Families are often happy with such a distribution, which is in conformity with traditional gender role patterns. Equal distribution of work is not necessarily viewed by all parents as a prerequisite for an equal parenting partnership. It is often just as important that everyone views the family as a joint project. If both parties provide what they can of work and income, then both can feel free to look at the partnership as equal despite gender related disparities with regard to work outside and in the home. The feeling of community and cooperation is perhaps the most fundamental pre-

condition for the experience of gender equality, not necessarily the equal sharing of tasks. Most are probably more concerned that the overall work be equally divided between them, than that professional work and household work are each equally distributed. This way of thinking is also presented in a survey of attitudes among parents in high-status professions. It is generally seen as “natural” that women take longer leave and prioritise care-giving tasks. This is emphasized by parents themselves and is also expressed in the attitudes of the workplace.

At the same time, fathers express that they would like to work less. As we see in figure 4.2, 80 percent of fathers with children under three years and a working week of more than 40 hours would prefer to work less. Among parents of the youngest children, 70 percent of fathers would have liked a longer parental leave. This survey does not explain how much longer the fathers would like the leave to be. The majority do not want the mother to have fewer alternatives than she has today. Similar results emerged from a survey conducted by Statistics Norway (SSB) in 2002, which showed that almost half wanted a longer paternal leave, while half generally wanted the scheme to remain the same.

4.4 How can one increase the fathers' use of parental leave?

Increased use of parental leave among fathers will both strengthen the father's role and increase the overall scope of employment adjustments that men can do when they have children. Gender equality in the home and family contributes to more robust relationships. This will also benefit children. Fathers who take more early responsibility for their children work towards establishing good relationships within the family. They also work towards making the bonds between the parents and working life more equal between men and women. A more even distribution of parental leave between fathers and mothers can help reduce the loss of wages to women as a result of having children, and help employers to view parental leave as a normal occurrence.

In Proposition No. 1 (2008-2009) the government has proposed to expand the father's quota from six to ten weeks with effect for births as of 1 July 2009. The father's quota extension is accomplished by extending the total period of paid leave by two weeks. In addition, the father's quota is

Box 4.1 About the Parental Benefit Scheme (2008)

To be entitled to parental benefits, the parent has to be employed with a pension-earning income for at least six of the ten months immediately prior to the benefit period.

The parental benefit period is 44 weeks with 100 % pay or 54 weeks with 80% pay. No parental benefit is awarded for the amount of salary over 6 G per year.

The father can take a maximum leave of 35/45 weeks. This includes the six earmarked weeks of the fathers's (paternal) quota, plus 29/39 weeks of the remaining benefit period.

The father is entitled to the father's quota when both father and mother have earned the rights to parental benefits and the mother has been at least 50% employed in the earning period.

The father may also take a leave of 29/39 weeks if the mother is at the same time in paid employment, engaging in acknowledged education or some similar activity.

extended by two weeks within the current entitlement period. In this chapter, the government puts forward a long-term strategy to further develop the Parental Benefit Scheme.

4.4.1 Fathers who are not covered by the Parental Benefit Scheme

Each year 35-40 percent of fathers do not use paid parental leave. Most of these fathers do not have the right to parental benefits. The father is not entitled to parental benefits when he has not been in paid employment for at least six of the ten months previous to the benefit period. This is true for about ten percent of all fathers every year. The father is also not entitled to parental benefits if the mother has sole custody of the child and does not agree to the withdrawal. In 2006, about 11 percent of parents did not live together at the time of birth.

The father is not entitled to parental benefits if the mother is at home both before and after the birth. The mother needs to have been actively employed in at least a 50 % position for at least six of the ten months before the birth for the father to qualify for the paternal quota. If the mother does

not go out to work after birth either, the father does not have the opportunity to use parental benefits. There are no statistics that show how many fathers this applies to, but an estimate is 15-20 percent of fathers every year.

There is little concrete knowledge about fathers in these families. About mothers we know that they receive a lump sum grant and do not qualify for the parental benefits. Mothers who receive this lump sum grant are generally younger than those who have earned the right to parental benefits. 50 percent have several children under five years of age. The families often have a low total income. Over a third are non-western immigrants (36 percent, SSB 2005) fall into this category. The high percentage of immigrants is related to the fact that work outside the home among women in minority populations is lower than among women in general. 68.4 percent of women in Norway are working. The corresponding percentage among first-generation immigrants is 57.3. Under a third of the women of some nationalities are paid employees.

One completed project points out that fathers in minority groups where the mothers have a low rate of paid employment are at a higher risk of losing parental benefits than fathers in the majority population where the rate of paid employment among mothers is greater. Paradoxically it is these families that should be the target group for the kind of measures that would increase gender equality in the family.

4.4.2 The paternal quota in families where both parents work outside the home

4.4.2.1 The paternal quota

A father is entitled to the paternal quota when both parents are in paid employment and the mother has worked at least 50% before the birth of the child. Nine of ten of the fathers in this category take the earmarked weeks (father's quota).

When the father's quota is expanded, the time a father is at home with the child increases. The statistics for 2007, which show a partial effect of the paternal quota being extended to six weeks in 2006, shows that the number of fathers who made

Table 4.3 Use of the father's quota. Percent of entitled fathers

1995	1997	1999	2001	2003	2005
62	75	80	85	89	91

Source: Ministry of Children and Equality

use of 30 days increased from 385 in 2006 to 13 663 in 2007. The full effect of these changes became more obvious in 2008.

The likely explanation for so many fathers actually making use of parental leave is that the father has been granted a separate earmarked quota. Brandt and Kvande show that the paternal quota acts as a fully negotiated right for fathers that employers feel compelled to honour. The paternal quota acts therefore as a labour right, and sets a standard for what is acceptable leave of absence from work. This might be particularly important, according to Brandt and Kvande for men in so-called limitless or greedy professions. This view is supported in a new report, pointing out that fathers experience that their commitment to work may be questioned if they take out more leave than the paternal quota. This standardized, non-flexible solution seems to provide the most effective boundary setting mechanism for fathers.

The paternal quota also aimed to motivate more fathers to take more leave than the earmarked weeks. This has not happened as expected, even though the use of leave beyond the paternal quota has been increasing gradually; see below. Some argue that the designation of a certain number of weeks functions as an obstacle to parents who would very much like to share more. But conditions today greatly facilitate the sharing of the benefit period between parents.

4.4.2.2 *Parents in paid employment who share more parental leave beyond the paternal quota*

If both parents are working, they can share the benefit period between themselves as long as the mother begins to work, is in approved education, or is too sick to care for the child. From 1999 to 2005 the percentage fathers who took out more leave than the paternal quota increased from 10.1 to 17.5.

Other numbers from NAV show that 17,3 percent of fathers took more than six weeks leave in 2007 compared to 8,2 percent in 2000. The

Table 4.4 Fathers who took out more leave than the paternal quota (four weeks). Percent of fathers entitled to parental benefits

1999	2001	2003	2005
10,1	12,7	14,4	17,5

Source: The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)

increase for those who took more than 8 weeks was from 6,7 percent to 14,4 percent in the same period. This shows a moderate increasing tendency for parents to share the benefit period between them. This increase runs parallel to the increase in the paternal quota.

As mentioned in Section 4.3, the way parents share the benefit period may not be a result of actual negotiations. Important factors are both the culture of the workplace and what kind of “gender contract” the mother and father have agreed to between themselves. The latter is affected by respective incomes, preferences and the attitudes of each of the parents. The parents do not seem to compete to get the most leave time. Instead they stress that their practice is grounded in traditional, cultural practices that seem natural and convenient. A new project shows that there is a relationship between the way in which parents decide on how they will share the benefit period and the number of weeks that the father eventually takes. Of parents who did not discuss the issue of parental leave distribution, only 2 percent of fathers took out more than the paternal quota. In comparison, 21 percent took out more than the paternal quota when parents jointly worked out a resolution. When it was the mother who primarily decided, 25 percent of fathers took more leave than the paternal quota.

The most even sharing took place between couples who had higher education and where the women were in full-time employment. The more women work outside the home, earn money and prioritise this work, the more the men take on the responsibilities of home life, and the more parental leave they take. Mature parents tend to share parental leave the most.

4.4.3 **When only the father is employed**

If only the father is in paid employment, or if the mother has worked in a less than 50% position before giving birth, the father is not entitled to the paternal quota. He can still take out parental leave benefits for up to 29/39 weeks if the mother goes out to work, begins an acknowledged education or some other approved activity. This right was introduced in 2000.

If the mother stays home after giving birth, the father may not take out parental benefits. He falls outside the scheme as described in Section 4.4.1.2. If the mother, however, begins work or the like after the birth, the father may utilise the remaining portion of the benefit period.

Table 4.5 Fathers' use of independent earning rights

	2002	2004	2006
up to and including 5 weeks	144 (14 %)	136 (12 %)	195 (15 %)
5–12 weeks	174 (16 %)	187 (17 %)	273 (20 %)
12 weeks or more	737 (70 %)	810 (71 %)	868 (65 %)
Sum persons	1055	1133	1336

Source: The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)

There are relatively few fathers who utilise parental benefits according to these criteria, but the number has increased from 1048 in 2001 to 1336 in 2006. 2007 shows a decrease again to 1204 fathers. As table 4.5 shows, these fathers make use of more weeks of parental benefits than fathers in families when both parents are entitled.

4.4.4 Experiences from other Nordic countries

The use of parental benefits by fathers in Iceland and in Sweden follows a similar pattern as in Norway, namely that use of paternal leave follows the paternal quota. However, the arrangements in the individual countries are different from each other in some ways.

- Both Sweden and Iceland have systems where mothers and fathers have completely independent rights
- parents who are not in paid employment are included so as to be assured a minimum allocation
- the coverage is 80%

The paternal quota is also longer – three months in Iceland and two months in Sweden. This is reflected in the statistics. Of the total days of paid parental benefits in 2007 fathers accounted for around 33 percent in Iceland, 21 percent in Sweden and 11 percent in Norway.

Iceland and Sweden have different profiles. The three-part Icelandic model is based on extensive earmarking during the benefit period. Sweden follows a different strategy and has put more emphasis on positive incentives to get parents to choose more equal distribution of the benefit period

Iceland introduced a three-part parental benefit scheme in 2001 in connection with the expansion of the benefit period by three months. The system is based on each parent having the right to three months of the benefit period; then they can

decide on their own who takes out the remaining part of the paid parental leave. Statistics show that over 90 percent of fathers take out their three months, and that mothers in most cases take out the remaining six months. The goal of this division was to help fathers participate more in childcare and to strengthen the woman's position in the workplace. The reform has been well received. In 2005, about 17 percent of the fathers took out leave beyond the earmarked three months. It is Icelandic fathers that make most use of paid parental leave in the Nordic countries. It has been proposed that the benefit period be extended to twelve months with the same three-part division as is currently operating. If this proposal goes through, there will be given four months to each parent and four months reserved for the parents to distribute as they wish.

In *Sweden* the parents have the right to half of the benefit period of 13 months each, with a salary compensation of 80 percent. Parents also have the right to transfer any part of their benefit period to the other parent, except an earmarked period of two months. Sweden therefore uses a moderate quota system combined with mechanism to ensure active choices about the division of the benefit period. In SOU 2005:73 a three-part system was proposed, with five months given to each parent and five months the parents could divide as they wished. The proposal has not been pursued. An "equality bonus" (tax benefit) of up to SEK 3000 per month for the parent who takes the larger part of the benefit period in a given year, was introduced July 1, 2008. It was to stimulate fathers to take more parental leave and made it worthwhile to share the benefit period.

4.4.5 Main principles for further development of the Parental Benefit Scheme

In Proposition No. 1 (2008-2009) the government has proposed to expand the paternal quota from six to ten weeks, effective for children born or

adopted as of July 1, 2009. The Soria Moria-declaration contains several goals for changes in parental benefits to increase fathers' use of the system and strengthen fathers' rights. It is still a challenge to get parents to share the benefit period more equally between them and to include more fathers in the scheme. Long-term goals for further development of the Parental Benefit Scheme are described below. The government will return with specific proposals for changes in the annual budget.

4.4.5.1 *Independent rights of fathers – the right of all fathers to have a paternal quota*

The Soria Moria-declaration states that the government will give the father right to earn independent leave rights. Each of the parents will receive benefits according to their own earnings.

The right to a paternal quota today is based on both the mother and father earning the entitlement and the mother working in at least a 50% position. If the mother has not been working before birth, the father is not entitled to the paternal quota. According to The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), about 12 000 fathers every year do not have the right to paternal leave because of the mother's lack of paid employment. These fathers can still receive benefits if the mother goes out to work *after* the birth, takes a publically acknowledged full-time education, or in combination with work, or is too sick to care for the child. In 2007 1200 fathers – and mothers – took advantage of this.

The current regulations send out unfortunate gender equality signals, seen from the point of view of the goal of strengthening the care-giving role of the father. The regulations create an unfortunate distinction between different fathers with earned rights. Users of the system themselves regularly point this out as unreasonable. Minority fathers of nationalities where women traditionally do not work much outside the home are particularly disadvantaged by the current regulations. The Men's Panel has looked at this situation. The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (LDO) has sent a letter on September 17, 2008 to the Ministry of Children and Equality stating that the current rules are in violation of the prohibition against discrimination of women and men under gender equality law.

The government will work to provide fathers with more independent rights. The paternal quota should apply in all cases where the father has earned the entitlement. This will provide all fathers

that have earned the right to parental benefits, the same opportunity to take out paternal leave.

4.4.5.2 *Goals for the further expansion of the paternal quota*

The Soria Moria-declaration states that the government will expand parental benefit period by five weeks, and all these new weeks will be earmarked for the father. This means that father's quota will be ten weeks, and that the total benefit period for the birth of a child will be up to 48/58 weeks. The budget for 2009 meets the Soria Moria-declaration when it comes to the length of the paternal quota, but not when it comes to how long the benefit period should be. According to the budget, the total benefit period will be 46/56 weeks.

Expanding the paternal quota has been shown to be the most effective measure to increase fathers' use of parental leave. As it emerges from 4.4.4, fathers' use of parental leave is steadily increasing. The statistics show that there is a clear effect of the extension of the paternal quota on fathers' use of parental leave. Research tells the same story, pointing that earmarked quotas are the best means to change the traditional gender preferences. The government still sees an obvious need to extend the period that is earmarked for the father.

The Men's Panel has advocated a solution in which the benefit period is expanded to 52 weeks after birth with full salary compensation. One fourth of this period would be earmarked for the father. Within the current benefit period of 44 weeks, the Men's Panel proposes that 11 weeks be earmarked for the father. The Equal Pay Commission has suggested in NOU 2008: "Gender and Pay" that a third of the benefit period should be earmarked for each of the parents as support for the principle of equal pay. The Commission emphasises that a more equal distribution of parental leave between fathers and mothers is a measure that can contribute to reducing salary loss among women as a consequence of having children.

The government will facilitate more equal use of leave by mothers and fathers. More equal use of leave will also contribute to making such leave of absence more accepted.

The government will work for a moderate sharing of the benefit period within the target in the Soria Moria-declaration of a benefit period (from birth) of up to 48/58 weeks. Within this framework the government supports working towards the eventual goal of the paternal quota

being 14 weeks. That means four weeks added to the father's quota with two additional weeks as an extension of the total benefit period. Fathers who also receive salary during the two weeks of leave of absence to care for a child in connection with childbirth, will then have a right to paid leave for at least 16 weeks. Families that desire can choose a more even distribution of leave. In this manner, fathers will receive a significantly longer paid leave than they have today, at the same time as the family as a whole is ensured sufficient flexibility. This lays the foundation for a significant strengthening of the care-giving role of fathers and will improve gender equality in the workplace. The initiative is expected to lead to more equal use of paid leave by mothers and fathers and is in compliance with the intent of the proposal from Equal Pay Commission.

4.4.5.3 *Independent rights of fathers – drafting of a gender-equal Parental Benefit Scheme*

The Parental Benefit Scheme is complex. It has serious flaws and weaknesses when it comes to the different ways it treats mothers and fathers. LDO's statement about the possible violation of the Gender Equality Act's prohibition against discrimination applies to more than the conditions for entitlement to the paternal quota. LDO also brings up the fact that any part of a father's use of parental benefits that does not come under the paternal quota, is dependent on the mother going out to work or the named approved activities after birth. Today's rules give the mother a strong negotiating position. If she cannot or does not want to return to work or education, then the father cannot take out any more paid leave. This requirement about the mother's actions before the birth and in relation to the paternal quota creates very complicated regulations. In accordance with the goal of the Soria Moria Declaration on independent rights for fathers the government will draft a simplified and more equal system, and propose alternative mechanisms for sharing the benefit period between parents. This draft should also answer the question of to what extent the lump sum grant should be replaced by a minimum monthly payment.

4.4.5.4 *Informative measures*

It is important that fathers make use of the potential that the rules give them today. The govern-

ment will therefore, in cooperation with The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), strengthen the information flow to ensure that different groups of users know what the rules entail. The information will particularly focus on how the father can take more leave than the paternal quota, and that fathers that are not entitled to the paternal quota can still receive benefits if the mother goes out to work or the like. In addition, it is important that parents who do not live together, are made aware that the father can take his paternal quota if both parents agree.

4.5 **How to make the workplace more family friendly?**

The workplace has a key role when it comes to giving fathers the opportunity to adapt work to the needs of family life. Work conditions influence the parenting practices of fathers both when it concerns taking out parental leave or care leave, how the parents divide short-term leaves (like staying at home with a sick child or helping a child start school or preschool) and working hours when the parental leave period is over. It is essential that work places have a culture and a leadership that not only accepts but also supports the father in taking parental leave and is willing to make other adjustments, like allowing the fathers the right to exemption from overtime. This will benefit the workplace in the long run, not least because the employees will be more satisfied. A personnel policy that makes it easy to combine work and family life can be important for recruiting labour. Taking social responsibility can also influence the reputation of the business in a positive manner.

To ensure a good balance between work and family it is not enough to focus on the first years of a child's life. As Anne Lise Ellingsæther writes:

“It is when the parental leave time is *over*, that the real art of balancing work and children begins. The attempt to get fathers to take more parental leave is important. But it is only a part of a much greater challenge: to achieve a more even gender division *after* infancy. One must develop a broad *lifespan approach* to the relationship between time spent at work and with the family. And the parameters for what is perceived as relevant family policy must be expanded to include the conditions in the workplace.”

Table 4.6 Important rights according to the Working Environment Act that serve to help combine work and family life

Parental leave during the first year of the child's life	Two weeks leave of absence to care for a child at birth One year's total parental leave for the parents (paid) Then one year's parental leave for each parent (unpaid)
Regulation of working hours	Right to reduced working hours Right to exemption from overtime General regulations on working hours
Short temporary leave of absence and flexible working hours	Right to flexible working hours Right to leave when children are sick.

4.5.1 Rights according to the Working Environment Act

With its rules on the right to take leave of absence from work and the provisions on working hours and overtime the Working Environment Act is very important as a help for parents to be able to combine work and family.

One main purpose of regulations regarding working hours is to ensure that employees have a schedule that does not cause them or their families unnecessary health or social problems. Rules about overtime ensure that consideration is taken of the employee's health, well-being and safety in the workplace, as well as other, broader societal considerations.

The right to flexible or reduced working hours is applicable under the precondition that it does not cause essential disadvantage to the enterprise. An employee has the right to exemption from performing work beyond contracted working hours when that employee requests exemption because of health problems or weighty social reasons. Such social reasons may include care of children. Flexibility may be the most important means fathers have when it comes to tackle the challenges of combining work and family. Flexibility at work has been held forth as a benefit many men have in their work, and which makes adaptations to the needs of family life possible. One purpose of using this right may be to follow and retrieve children who are in ECEC, or transport them to recreational activities. According to the Gender Equality Survey 52 percent of the men said that they fetch their children as often as their partners.

There is no overview of how parents share leave in connection with children's illness. Upon reviewing the 2006 annual report from the counties, the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud found that female employees had significant

higher absence from work for this reason than male employees. Numbers from SSB show that both men and women have absence from their jobs because of sick children. Both among mothers and fathers, about 60 percent have taken a few hours or days off last year. According to the investigation, men stay at home with sick children less than women, but half of the couples divide this responsibility almost equally.

As shown in chapter 4.2.2 working fathers of young children work longer days and have relatively little leave compared with mothers. The gender-divided labour market and over-representation of men in the private sector suggests that fathers work more often in businesses and sectors characterised by a culture that discredits reduced working hours. The Gender Equality Survey has found that fathers with long working days would like to work less. Provisions for working hours should ensure this balance. In 2005 16 percent of fathers had contracted work hours that exceeded 40 hours per week.

Disputes about the right to exemption from overtime are handled by the Dispute Resolution Board. The same is true of disputes about reduced working hours, flexible working hours and leave of absence in connection with the care of children. The Dispute Resolution Board handled 15 cases in 2006, and six of the cases concerned men. Five of these cases concerned the right to reduced working hours. In 2007 decisions were made in 14 cases, of which two cases concerned male employees.

The Gender Equality Act prohibits discrimination of pregnant women and those who take leave of absence. This discrimination prohibition includes fathers who take leave for the two weeks in connection with birth and fathers who take the paternal quota, in other words, leave reserved for that gender. It is the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud (LDO), which administers these reg-

ulations. Complaints tend to be filed mainly by women.

4.5.1.1 *Control of gender-equality based activity and reporting of the state of the business in terms of gender equality*

It is a consequence of the Gender Equality Act, Section 1a third paragraph, that all employers that by law are required to prepare an annual report, must outline the actual state of the workplace as it regards gender equality. Employers should also explain any measures that are put into effect, and report on any measures planned to promote gender equality.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud's enforcement of the Gender Equality Act includes control of the activity and assessment obligation that is imposed all employers. LDO has created a guide to improve gender equality assessment in the various counties. The board recommends that statistics regarding the leave taken by men and women should also specify how much leave taken by men and women is in relation to parental leave. This will reveal any need to initiate measures to motivate men and women to share parental leave more equally. It will also be useful to look at gender distribution when it comes to the other leave types taken that may say something about how women and men share care tasks between them. There are no statistics about fathers' use of other leave time and other provisions of the Working Environment Act beyond the statistics for fathers' use of parental benefits; see part 4.4. The exact extent of leaves of absence and what types of leave are being taken are not yet known.

The Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud will implement and further develop competency and innovation initiatives geared towards workplaces, and will supervise and advise enterprises where men are clearly the majority of employees in 2009.

4.5.1.2 *Better information about workers' rights to be able to adapt work life to balance family life*

The National Insurance Act, the Working Environment Act and the Gender Equality Act contain provisions that in different ways ensure the employee's right to find a balance between work and family. It is important that the rights are actually known to employees and are used in various

sectors. The low number of cases concerning working hours and leave taken to the Dispute Resolution Board may further suggest that the Committee is of little use in these areas. The government will prepare information in cooperation with the parties in the labour market.

4.5.2 **The right to full wage compensation during father's two-weeks leave of absence in connection with the birth of a child**

Statutory rights are supplemented by negotiated agreements. The most important one is the right to wage compensation during the two-week long leave of absence fathers may take in connection with the birth of a child or in the event of overtaking care of a child, and the right to full salary (over 6 G) during the time of parental leave. Leave of absence around the time of the birth of a child is granted to make it possible for the father – or another close caregiver – to take care of the family in the time around the birth of a child. This provides security for the mother and gives the father the opportunity to take care of care-giving tasks in the family. This is very important because mother and child often stay only a few days at the hospital after birth.

The National Insurance Act provides no financial compensation for loss of wages during this leave of absence. The employer must be responsible for salary payments. The right to full salary compensation during the leave of absence at birth and parental leave has been negotiated in the public sector. Such agreements also exist in the private sector, but there is no full overview about the scope of such agreements. A group of fathers stands without the negotiated right to wages during care leave.

The lack of income compensation makes it difficult for the father to make use of his right to leave of absence and to be together with the family during these weeks. To give the father time off at the time of the birth of a child is essential for two reasons: It establishes the father in a caregiver role *and* allows him to be of essential help to the mother during this time. It is unfortunate if loss of pay during this period indicates that there is still little acceptance for fathers to take time off work when they have children. Research shows that such leaves of absence are not always accepted in the workplace. Rather, it shows that in such cases doubts are raised about the father's commitment to his work. Although the paternal

quota is not a universal system, it is clear that this type of negotiated right should be accepted both at home and at work.

It is important to consider measures to ensure that more fathers entitled to salary during this leave of absence. The government will draft how the arrangement of leave of absence in connection with childbirth can be done better. An important part of the assessment will be to get a broad overview of the industries and the sectors that currently have no agreement about the right to wage compensation for fathers, and how many fathers that every year are without the right to pay during leave connected with the birth of a child.

4.5.3 How the workplace can make adaptation simpler for fathers – experiences and examples

Attitudes in the workplace have much to say for how much fathers make use of the right to leave of absence for care purposes. For fathers it is important to use these rights knowing there will be no loss of prestige. The question is to what extent there is acceptance of the practice of taking more leave than the paternal quota, of adjusting working hours for more flexibility, reducing working hours, or refusing to do overtime. In 2008, The Work Research Institute completed a research project on discrimination of pregnant women and those who take leave in the workplace. The project has also looked at the consequences of leave-taking among men. The project shows how such discrimination is expressed and the causes of discrimination. Negative consequences for taking leave were found to be more about negative processes and lack of facilitation than any deliberate desire to discriminate. It is emphasised that it is important that the employer has a personnel policy of deliberate strategies for taking leave of absence and for employees with children.

4.5.3.1 Experiences from Denmark – the significance of the culture of the workplace

A Danish survey points out the need to make willingness to find family-friendly solutions part of modern leadership, for instance by allowing colleagues more say in their own work conditions. Parents of small children are dependent on flexibility. Other organisational factors are also mentioned, such as teamwork and other solutions that make each employee less irreplaceable. The value

of role models is also emphasised. The most effective means is for the leadership of the company to make use of the same rights as the employees. Where the workplace has many young employees of whom a number have taken leave or done something similar it is easier to see how adjustments in the balance between work and home can be made.

4.5.3.2 The project "Fostering Caring Masculinities"

The Ministry of Children and Equality partly funded a European project in 2005-2006 under the leadership of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud on how companies can help male employees to find a good balance between work and family. The project was called "Fostering Caring Masculinities" and had participants from five countries (Germany, Iceland, Norway, Slovenia and Spain). In each of the countries studies were conducted in two companies to see what measures they had taken to create a balance between professional and private spheres and what initiatives they set in place to get men to participate more in care-giving tasks at home. The study showed that differences in the rights of employees to flexible work conditions and parental leave among the countries, contributed substantially to how men adapted to taking on more responsibility at home. For families with small children this had to do with both rights to parental leave and access to early childhood education and care with opening times that corresponded to normal work hours. In addition to what society as a whole has done to facilitate the balance between work and home, differences in what individual companies do also play an important role in creating more balance. There may be differences both in the culture of the organisation and in the attitudes of the leadership that explain differences in outcomes.

Through this project and interviews with employers and employees the fact also emerged that it might be in an employer's best interest to have particular initiatives for men with the goal of achieving a better balance between work life and family life.

In a competitive labour market, employers seek to offer salaries and working conditions that give them a chance to get the most highly competent work force. A personnel policy that considers men's desire and need for effectively combining work and family life may be decisive in recruitment. Recruitment of the best labour may increase profit. Initiatives to offer attractive work-

ing conditions are means to this end. The organisation of a workplace to preserve a good balance between private and professional life contributes to increased well-being of the staff. Satisfied personnel stay in their jobs and are usually more productive.

It need not only be underlying economic motives that support a conscious attitude towards the balance between work life and private life. Some companies see the need as a part of their societal duty. By enacting measures to better the balance between professional and private spheres, a company takes a kind of responsibility that has consequences that stretch far beyond measured work hours. In most cases that were looked at in the FOCUS project, men were not meant to be a primary beneficiary of the measures initiated. However, taking social responsibility almost always has a gender dimension and an effect on gender politics.

4.5.3.3 Experiences from various enterprises

A Norwegian company that participated in the survey encouraged male employees to share the parental leave equally with the mother. The company felt that too long a leave would weaken the expertise of employees. Through a like sharing of leave between men and women the average leave time for the individual would be shorter, and the employees would easily be able to get back to business after the leave. There would be few cases where both parents worked in the same business, and this way the attitude toward men taking parental leave would also affect the world outside the company. This appeal to the male employees to take out a larger part of the parental leave would also be a signal to the female employees that they should encourage *their* men, who were mostly employed outside the company, to set up a similar system. Another example is a company that pays full salary during parental leave whether fathers are entitled to the paternal quota or not. They also encourage male employees to take a longer leave than the paternal quota.

4.5.3.4 Measures to stimulate employers in developing a gender-conscious staff policy

Increased awareness of employers about the value of making their enterprise family-friendly is essential if parents are to be able to make use of their existing rights. It is important that the employers have a personnel policy that has

explicit strategies for those taking leave and for employees with children. The employer must recognise the value of facilitating family related adaptations of the workplace. The Men's panel has pointed out that businesses should have a working environment where it is acceptable and normal for parents to be able to take care of sick children when necessary. Examples and experiences from businesses that actually have such policies in place and that can demonstrate "best practice" are useful to bring forth as catalysts for change. Employers also need to register how employees use the different types of leaves and how they make use of flexibility in the workplace. In 2004, France introduced a "certification system" for gender equality practices in the workplace. The Norwegian Women's Health Association has also established a prize: "Gullriset" that is awarded to businesses every year that exhibit a family-friendly personnel policy. The government will look more carefully at establishing such measures in cooperation with parties in the labour market.

4.6 Summary of initiatives

To achieve more equality between mothers and fathers in the balance between work and family life, the government wants to

- provide all fathers who have earned the right independently of the mother, access to the father's quota (Parental Benefit Scheme)
- expand the father's quota to 14 weeks of a total benefit period of 48/58 weeks if there is a birth or 45/55 weeks if there is an adoption (Parental Benefit Scheme)
- draft a simplified and more equal Parental Benefit Scheme.
- in cooperation with The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV), strengthen the information flow about parental benefits for fathers.
- increase the focus on the activity about and adherence to the gender equality law, with emphasis on the male perspective and on enterprises where men are clearly in the majority.
- in cooperation with parties in the labour market, strengthen information that is given about the rights and possibilities concerning balancing work and family life.
- outline how the arrangement of the two week-long leave of absence at birth can be utilised better.

- in cooperation with the parties in the labour market initiate measures to stimulate employers to have a personnel policy of deliberate strategies for persons on parental and/or leave of absence in connection with care purposes and for all employees with children.

The government will return with specific proposals for changes in the Parental Benefit Scheme in the annual budget.

5 Men in relationships and family life

Overall goals

- *Gender equality in couple relationships and family life*
- *Gender equality in the care and responsibility for children in family life*
- *Equality in parenthood after a family breakup*

5.1 Introduction

A secure upbringing and good living conditions for children and youth are some of the main family policy goals of the government. The government bases its policy on the fact that parents are the most important caregivers for children, and that stable and lasting family relations are in the best interests of both adults and children.

The family constitutes a basic social unit in society, the most important arena for belonging, companionship and care. The family as the basic framework for childrearing has existed for generations, regardless of culture or religion.

The term ‘family’ must now be linked with more than the nuclear family. The traditional nuclear family still has a dominant position, and 75 percent of all children under the age of 18 grow up with both biological parents. But the concept of family must now include married couples with and without children, couples living together with and without children, single parents who live together with children, parents with visiting rights, families with foster children and single people living alone.

After divorce and other breakups, new family constellations arise with stepchildren and common children. It can be challenging for a family to organise daily life with “my, your and our children”. Stepparents are often daily caregivers of their stepchildren, while the children’s contact with the biological parents is simultaneously maintained and nurtured. When we see so many people putting a lot of resources and time into resolving these challenges in a positive way, we see how much the family means to us as individuals.

Changes in lifestyles imply that more and more fathers have daily contact with their stepchildren and only periodic contact with their biological children. It also happens that father and mother choose to stay together, although they don’t live together physically. New lifestyles require men to adapt and require an adjustment of male roles.

Living together in a family situation is a collaborative effort on the part of both men and women. A more even distribution of responsibilities and tasks can strengthen the couple’s relationship. When a couple has children, equality in parenting is usually in the best interests of the child. The aim is for both sexes to feel that they are equal partners and caregivers in the family. By focussing on the roles and functions that men have as a member of a couple and a family, we make male awareness of these roles as a partner and father a conscious objective. Another aim is to make men aware of how important and necessary it is that he does his best to nurture good family relationships.

The Gender Quality Survey and other research shows further that more equal practice in the home and family serve to promote more robust relationships, thereby lowering the risk of a breakup. Therefore, equality in parenting and strengthening the male role and function in relationships with both partner and children are important elements of a general family policy.

This is a very important, but also difficult political issue. Gender equality in the family concerns equality in daily life and that applies to many. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that is incorporated in Norwegian law states that the child’s best interests are to be a fundamental consideration in all decisions regarding children. The topic is also difficult because there are obvious limits as to how far the state can go in regulating the internal conditions in the family as long as no violations of laws and regulations result.

Both men and women want family life to be a joint venture. But it also seems that women and men enter into relationships and start families with somewhat different opinions and expecta-

tions about how family life is going to be. These differences between men and women are laid out in more detail in part 5.2.

The Gender Equality Survey has found that there is a clear correlation between more gender equality in the home and the degree of satisfaction that both women and men feel in the relationship. This in turn deters them from wanting to break off the relationship. This is discussed in part 5.2.

Having children is a life event that brings with it great changes in the fundamentals of life, like responsibility, care giving and commitment. Part 5.3 goes into more detail about what significance becoming a father has for men.

Equality in parenthood means that mother and father are equally important in giving children a secure upbringing. Young fathers today show significantly more interest in their role as a father than men of earlier generations. This bodes well for the future of equality in parenting. Surveys show a clear increase in men's motivation to take on independent responsibility for participating in their children's lives from birth onward.

Researchers find that it is usually in the best interests of a child to have good contact with both parents. It is important to facilitate this, both within the nuclear family and also after a breakup of the family.

Challenges and factors that are important to strengthen the role of men as caregivers of children is the theme of Part 5.4

It is an important family policy challenge to facilitate stability in family life. Achieving harmonious family relationships is a societal goal both because it affects the conditions children must grow up under, and because breakups can have serious negative consequences both for society and the individual. Mental, physical, economic and social problems that individuals suffer from because of a breakup or divorce also have societal repercussions.

Most couples and families experience problems or conflicts from time to time. The Family Counselling Agencies are special services that offer advice and treatment in connection with conflicts in families and in couples. The Family Counselling Agencies constitute the core of the help that can be given to families in connection with relationship problems and family conflicts, and the service is the only part of the state help apparatus that has the family as a main area of work and couples counselling as a speciality. These agencies' efforts to strengthen relationships and

reduce the number of family breakups will come to play a significant role in the future, too. See further discussion of this in section 5.5.

Every year many children and adults experience a split in the family. For those involved, some degree of mental stress is a result. A breakup can have consequences for an individual's health, economy, way of life, quality of life and other things. Statistics show that men have a greater increase than women in sick leave after a divorce or family breakup. They also seem to suffer from more personal and social problems. Section 5.6 looks at how men experience and handle relationship conflicts and family breakups.

Men are showing an increasing desire and a willingness to participate actively in the care and responsibility for children. In light of this, it is important to consider the question of custody and care for children after a separation, divorce, or breakup. Fathers are increasingly expressing frustration over the fact that children end up in most cases living with their mothers, reducing significantly any contact with the father. Aspects of more equality in parenthood are discussed in section 5.6.

The Strandbakken Committee ("The Children's Act Committee") has submitted a report after a review of the Children's Act in April 2008. The study and input from the round of hearings will lay the foundation for eventual changes in the Children's Act. See a more detailed description of this in paragraph 5.6.5 and 5.7.4.

Section 5.7 summarises in a more holistic manner proposed measures to improve equality in relationships and family life.

5.2 Gender equality in couple relationships

Gender equality in couple relationships means that the parties have a joint responsibility to develop the relationship in line with the desires and needs of both parties, and to prevent and resolve conflicts so that both parties and any children involved get their needs met in a positive way.

5.2.1 Men in couple and family relationships

Gender research has focused much more on how women experience relationships and living together, than about how men look at it. We have little knowledge of what men think about living in a relationship and/or family. What we can sur-

mise from the knowledge we have is that men and women do have somewhat different attitudes towards living together and relationships. Increased research efforts in this area are recommended.

The Gender Equality Survey shows that men (and women) who live in what they see as equal partnerships, meaning that the couple shares housework and/or childcare approximately equally, also experience a higher quality of life than other groups in the survey. For men this is especially true with regard to childcare. When it comes to the quality of the couple relationship, those couples who saw themselves as more equal, enjoyed a better relationship, a lowered level of conflict and more stability. This was true for both men and women.

The Gender Equality Survey also found that women and men give different criteria with respect to how they choose a partner. More men than women believe that sexual attraction and appearance are important criteria for choosing a partner, while more women than men believe that one's partner should be independent, secure in themselves, and good with children. Both genders express the desire for a partner who is understanding. Career ambition and high income landed low on the list of important criteria.

In the Gender Equality Survey, 90 % of both men and women said that they expect to live with their partners their whole lives. In isolation this indicates that most people do have a long-term perspective on family life and a hope of a lasting relationship. Confidence in the longevity of the partnership influences strongly how the couple experiences the quality of the relationship. These finds support the political goal of providing good preventive measures to try and strengthen couple relationships and reduce conflict and breakups.

Still, 35% of women and 27% of the men say that they have seriously considered breaking out of their relationship. Compared with the corresponding figures from 1988 (11%) the percentage of men who have considered leaving the relationship has significantly increased the last twenty years. There are also many more men than before who seek out family counselling services (just under 30% 15-20 years ago, just under 40 % during the last few years). More equal division of labour in the home leads to fewer people considering leaving the relationship, both among men and women. Of those who express that equality at home is bad or very bad (both sexes), 61 percent considered leaving. Among those who rated

equality at home as pretty good, only 27 percent considered leaving, and among those rated equality at home as very good, only 16 percent considered breaking out of the relationship. This is a very clear and strong correlation, and it is interesting that the pattern is the same for men as for women. The discovery can be interpreted as a sign that people feel there is a connection between gender equality in practical tasks in the home and the quality of life of the couple.

The criteria for choice of partner and attitudes towards marriage and living together have changed dramatically in just a few decades. Only a couple of generations ago many people entered into marriages for economic, social and practical reasons. Today, couple relationships are established (and broken) more on the basis of the prospects for the individual's self-realisation. When traditions, obligations and solidarity no longer contribute the major guidelines for family life, love becomes a fundamental criterion for who to choose as a partner and how long to continue the relationship. Both women and men desire a relationship characterized by trust, equal worth and gender equality. They want to be seen, respected and challenged. They expect marriage and family life to be a "joint venture".

The requirements for gender equality and equal worth in couple relationships are not always fulfilled, especially when it comes to household chores. Although some women are disappointed when the division of labour in the home is not as equal as they had expected, they choose to stay in the relationship. As mentioned in Chapter 4, it is not always equal sharing of housework that is the precondition for equality in parenthood. Lack of pure gender equality is tolerated as long as the woman experiences that she and her partner, despite everything, "pull in the same direction". She must feel that the relationship and family are "joint ventures". What is really important may be how the man takes care of the children, according to the Norwegian researcher Hassel. As mentioned in Chapter 4, the feeling of companionship and cooperation seems to be the most fundamental prerequisites for the experience of equality, rather than equal division of labour in the home.

The man often experiences that it is the woman who has the power to define the relationship. The ideal image of a relationship is often characterized by traditional female values tied to intimacy and communication through "good conversation". This is reflected among other places in self-help literature, which emphasizes how one

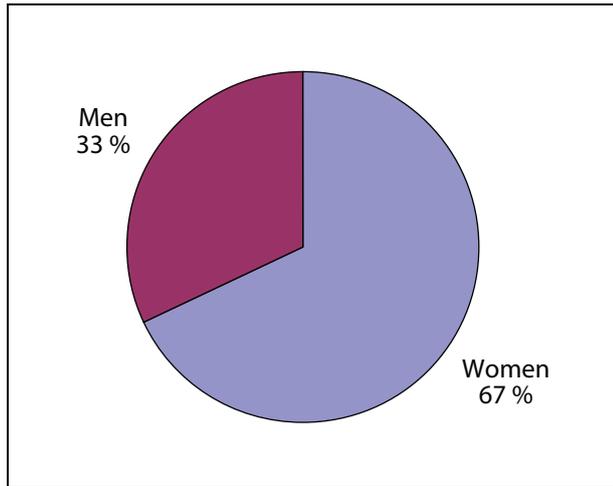


Figure 5.1 The percentage of women and men who seek help for relationship problems

Source: Central Board of Statistics

can keep love alive by learning to better communicate with each other. It seems, however, to be some gender-specific differences in what defines an expression of love. If the goal of equality in couple relationships is to be reached, it is important to learn to value the diversity of ways in which love can be shown, not just to concentrate on conversation. Men have traditionally preferred to express closeness and companionship through doing things together rather than talking together. If love is to develop and last, both members of the couple need to show understanding and respect for the many ways in which love and affection can be expressed.

Results from the Gender Equality Survey support the view that women are generally less satisfied with their relationships than men. Other research in the field has not found fundamental differences between men and women regarding how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the relationship.

If it is true that men generally experience more satisfaction in their relationships than women do, that may be one of the reasons that men, to a lesser extent than women seek help to prevent conflicts and breakups. Statistics show that men are less prone (about 1/3) than women (about 2/3) to be the party that takes contact with a Family Counselling Agency for help with their relationship problems; see figure 5.1.

To admit there might be a problem in the relationship can be very difficult for many men. They may find it embarrassing to ask for help with such problems. For the most part, men know little

about the services that are offered by the Family Counselling Services and other sources of help regarding relationship issues. Another reason that men seek help less than women may be that it is through conversation that problems are laid on the table and solutions discussed. Read more about this in the section below about how men tend to handle problems in their relationships. Surveys on the subject however, reveal no noteworthy differences in how satisfied men and women are with the help they actually receive from the service.

Women also express a greater interest in relationship workshops than men. In a Norwegian survey, 1/3 of women expressed a need for such a workshop, while only 1/6 of the men answered the same.

5.2.2 Gender equality and freedom of choice in couple relationships

The practical responsibility for home and family is more evenly divided between the sexes today than it was a generation ago; see Chapter 4. This stems partly from women using less time working at home as a result of participating more in paid employment, but also suggests that men take a larger share of the responsibility. Men definitely take more care of children now. A more even division however, is not the same as equal division. Women still bear the greatest responsibility for household tasks and they tend to reserve the right to decide about areas that they traditionally have taken care of. See more detail in paragraph 5.4.1

The Gender Equality Survey shows a significant gap between what men say about their opinions on gender equality in a general way, and their attitudes in more concrete situations. A number of men who express that they think equality has gone far enough, are actually likely to support equality in concrete situations. Specific topics like whether or not housework should be divided equally, whether both parties have equal responsibility for breadwinning, and whether care leave for fathers at the time of a birth should be extended, have the support of between 60 percent and 90 percent in this group. This is an important result of the survey both with regard to our understanding of gender equality in general and of gender equality in practice.

The Gender Equality Survey also shows that a large majority of both genders (91 percent of men and 83 percent of women) believe that the con-

cept of equal worth is more important than the concept of equal division. There are no clear age differences in the women and men regarding this question. However, social class does have an influence on these statistics; 89 percent of women from lower socio-economic backgrounds express this opinion. Socio-economic background does not seem to affect the men's answers in any significant way.

Gender equality in the family is a complicated political issue because there are clear limits to the extent in which the state can regulate internal relationships in the family. An important challenge lies in finding the thin line between the goal of full equality between the genders and respecting the freedom of choice that allows each family to choose a system that works for them. Gender equality work should take care not to become too dogmatic with regards to "right" solutions within the family.

"The question is not whether women and men are alike or different, but what each woman and man wants to be – and how they should be able to become what they wish."

5.2.2.1 *Diversity in family life in a multi-ethnic Norway*

Norway is now a multi-cultural society, where different family structures and traditions must be increasingly taken into account. Different groups of ethnic minority background have different family traditions and cultural structures for the relationship between the sexes. Many families with immigrant backgrounds have a family tradition where the upbringing of children and family conflicts are not just the business of the nuclear family. Parents, the extended family, neighbours and friends all may be involved. Going to a public agency for help in solving family and relationship conflicts may seem like an alien practice. The loss of familiar social networks is a major challenge for many immigrants who move to the west either by choice or by necessity.

There is little systematised understanding of male roles and gender equality practices in different ethnic groups, and there is a need for more research in this area.

The Ministry of Children and Equality has given an assignment to the FAFO Institute for Labour and Welfare Research to start a research project about family relationships and gender equality among immigrants. The goal of the inves-

tigation is to gather more knowledge on behaviour within the family in order to better organise the structure of public services to that meet the needs of immigrant and gain an understanding about how immigrant men view masculinity and gender roles in order to purposefully direct efforts on behalf of gender equality. The project will be finished in the spring of 2009.

The Ministry is also financing a project under the direction of REFORM – Resource Centre for Men, on the types of services offered to fathers of ethnic minority backgrounds by public child health centres. A pilot project has been initiated with the aim of making a preliminary survey of how the child health centres handle ethnic minority fathers and how both parties experience the meeting. Information will be gathered about what measures have been taken to integrate fathers with ethnic minority background and what initiatives have been begun to develop the services offered to minority parents, especially fathers. The investigation will also focus on what types of experiences these fathers have had at the public child health centres and how they view themselves in their role as fathers. The pilot project will form the basis for a larger project in the future.

5.2.2.2 *Men in homosexual relationships as fathers*

The increased political focus on the rights and opportunities of homosexuals and lesbians runs parallel to the engagement of these groups in the question of the right to have children. In the debate about modern parenthood, research shows that gay fathers have often been the most innovative with regards to the role of the father. Among gay men the motivation for having children is built on the understanding that children have independent value. A man does not become a father primarily or only because his wife becomes a mother, but more because of his own desire to be a father. A central premise of this type of parenthood is, according to the Norwegian researcher Andersen, that a structure should be built for the upbringing of the children that is relatively the same whether the child is staying with the mother or the father. This ensures that norms and rules for upbringing, mealtimes, bedtimes and the like are as equivalent as possible in the two homes. The fathers often move nearer to the mother and children if they do not already live close by. Even if the parents each have a household, they stress that the child should experience the two households as one home.

Research suggests that socio-economic class is definitive for whether gays become fathers. Anderson has found out that homosexual fathers are often resourceful. “They are secure in themselves and comfortable with their orientation. They have good jobs, high income, and a secure living situation.”

5.2.3 How men handle family and relationship conflicts

In the vast majority of couples and families, conflicts and problems arise from time to time. It is common to find that men do not perceive the difficulties as early as women, and they don’t understand the seriousness of them. The expectations of what life together should be like are different among men and women. One wonders if the way that men experience difficulties in relationships has gender-specific causes. It is mainly women who seem to take the initiative to try to put the conflict into words. Not all men appreciate this initiative. It is a common belief among women that men are reluctant to talk about their feelings and about relationships. Women have therefore had the responsibility for working on relationship issues.

The most common way to resolve relationship conflicts has been through conversation, either between the parties or through therapy. As mentioned, the communication through the “good conversation” has traditionally appeared to be easier for women than men. This can be a part of the explanation for why men do not seek professional advice as often as women for these kinds of problems.

Different ways of dealing with conflicts of living together are also described by the Norwegian researcher Lilleaas:

“When conversation stops and the couple is not able to talk together, many of the fathers put on the jogging suit and take a run. Training and jogging are the best way to solve problems, say several of the men. In that way they get rid of tension and excess energy. Women however, are unhappy about this way of resolving conflicts, “nothing happens with the relationship,” they say.”

The results from the Gender Equality Survey correspond well with the general perception that women turn to scolding and accusations as “weapons” in couples’ conflicts, while men often go silent, pull back and create distance. These reaction patterns often exacerbate the conflict

because the man experiences the constant reprimands as threatening. When he reacts by pulling away and going silent, she experiences him as rejecting her. These traditional reaction patterns in conflict situations make both parties insecure and may intensify the conflict.

5.3 Men, the couple relationship and the transition to parenthood

In recent years we have gained more understanding of what it means for men when their partner becomes pregnant. This is because men today want a clearly more active role as father, but also because researchers have become more interested in fathers and their situation. Most men feel both proud and masculine when they become fathers. Fatherhood allows for growth and maturation as a man, not just as a father. While women through pregnancy and birth have a “head start” in adjusting to their new role as a parent, the father must take time to establish his own, independent relationship to the child. The earlier he starts this process, the earlier he can experience a close relationship to the child. This may also lay the foundation for more equality in parenting right from the beginning.

Fathers are not sufficiently involved in the preparations for birth and post-natal period. Public child health centres have not reached out with services that meet men’s needs with respect to the preparation needed in becoming a parent. Surveys show that while nine of ten women are satisfied with the way check-ups are conducted during pregnancy, only half of the fathers-to-be are happy with the current system.

Men often experience becoming a father as one of the most all-encompassing of life changes, though in a different way than women do. For most, the joyous and positive aspects of having a child are the most prevalent experiences in this transitional time. However, it is also common that difficult feelings are triggered by this event and those feelings may last for shorter or longer period. Newer research shows that men have their own reactions to pregnancy and birth. The term “paternity blues” has been used to describe these reactions. The symptoms may consist of anxiety, sleeplessness, clinginess, feelings of unreality happening to them, jealousy towards the child and various physical problems.

Men can also develop post-partum depression. A survey shows that 7 percent of fathers had



Figure 5.2 Who uses the most time to organise household tasks?

Source: Gender Equality Survey

symptoms of depression after birth. In comparison, 10-14 percent of all new mothers develop such depression after birth. There can however, be differences between the symptoms men and women develop. Men tend to develop symptoms like lowered stress threshold, aggressiveness and reduced self-control. Men tend to feel irritable, restless, empty and burnt out.

Many couples experience an increased conflict level after a birth, and are less satisfied with their relationship after becoming parents. Conflicts about division of labour, responsibility, sex-life and future plans can arise. During the time after birth, parents devote most of their time and energy to caring for the child, and may lack the energy to manage conflicts in the relationship. Offering quick and accessible help if problems arise in this vulnerable period may improve the situation. The national program “Good couple relationship – relationship workshops for first-time parents” may be helpful in making this transition period easier for couples.

5.4 Men and childcare in family life

Equality in childcare means that both parents shall have equal responsibility and equal opportunity to care for the fundamental, daily needs of children.

5.4.1 Care and responsibility as gender phenomena

One consequence of expanding the male role is the need to look more closely at the term “care

giving” and what it really means. The traditional definition of the male responsibility in care giving has been to provide a secure economic foundation for the family. Women have expressed their care giving role in the form of accessibility, support and safety. The role of the father is now changing, and most fathers of small children are interested in a wider scope of care giving activity with respect to their children. We can see a trend away from the primary breadwinning role towards a role in which the father also has responsibility for the more emotional aspects of care giving.

In the same way – and to a stronger degree – it appears that women still find that they have most of the responsibility for organising family life and setting the standards for housework. In the Gender Equality Survey, 84 percent of women claimed that they spent more time than their partner organising all the practical aspects of the household and family life, while only 14 percent of men claimed the same.

This is one of the questions in the Gender Equality Survey where there is the greatest difference in responses from women and men. While caring for children may have become more evenly divided among the sexes, the general organisation of family life seems to follow a more traditional pattern. Here, it is not a matter of how much time each person *actually spends* on these activities, but how much time (and energy) one uses to organise them. The responses indicate that even if men participate more in household tasks than before, the women have the most decision-making power, because they set the standards for how systems, meals and order should be set up and maintained. The Gender Equality Survey also indicates that on certain individual tasks, like shopping, cooking and cleaning, there is progress towards more gender equality. Redistribution of responsibility and decision-making power seems to be a slower process than reallocation of individual tasks.

The Norwegian researcher Døving points out that we tend to let economics colour our understanding of who has the most influence in the family, and that may hinder us in seeing the actual dynamics of power in the home. “When women’s liberation and researchers claim that women are oppressed by men, they have forgotten women’s roles and status as “mother” and “wife,” he says. Døving looks at these roles and statuses, “mother” and “wife” and shows how women gain control over various informal spheres of the home through these roles. This kind of power has been

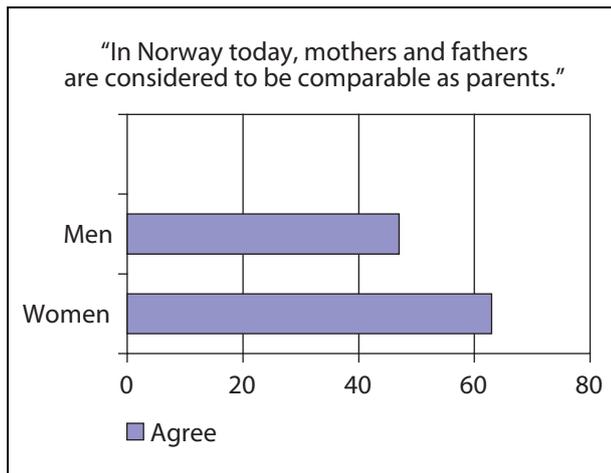


Figure 5.3 Are mothers and fathers considered comparable as parents today?

Source: Gender Equality Survey

traditionally connected to female identity and self-worth. This power also gives women an advantage if and when a breakup occurs, and a discussion ensues about custody and who is better able to care for the children.

The results of the Gender Equality Survey state that it is still important to work in a systematic way, using varying means, towards equality in parenting practice. Fewer men (47 percent) than women (63 percent) experience that mothers and fathers are considered to be comparable as parents.

5.4.2 From inaccessible to accessible fathers

Young men and fathers show significantly more interest for their role as a father. This correlates with a general rise in awareness about, and a change in attitudes towards children and family life. Most men today want a better balance between work and home, time for caring for their family, better quality of life and a more equal partnership with women. Fathers take more care of infants and toddlers now, and are more emotionally engaged in their children's lives. This expands the concept of masculinity and is a good starting point for even greater changes in attitudes of men towards their own masculinity. The paternal quota that was introduced in 1993 has made a substantial contribution to this new development.

Fathers are an important resource as caregivers. Taking a more active role in caring for children benefits men and women, the couple's rela-

tionship and the children. It gives men the possibility for expanding the scope of masculinity and the opportunity for showing that they can be good and caring parents. It benefits women because it gives them more opportunity to participate in paid employment and provides a stronger experience of partnership in parenting. This might in turn strengthen the quality of the couple's relationship. For the children it means more access to, and contact with both parents. More equal partnership in parenting also makes a better foundation for parental equality after a prospective breakup.

Sharing care-giving tasks in the family seems to have a strong influence on whether or not parents are able to cooperate and maintain a good relationship with their children after a divorce or family breakup. In cases where the parents choose to have shared custody for the children, the transition may be less problematic if both parents have been actively sharing childcare since the children were small.

Care giving tasks have traditionally been passed on from mother to daughter. As fathers participate more, it becomes more obvious that caring is a competence that both boys and men can and must acquire as well. Instead of looking at caring as something vaguely natural only for women, one must look at care giving as a practice that can be learned. New standards for parenting roles develop as a consequence of the fact that both female and male parenting roles are changing. It has become part of being a good mother to value that the father has the right to be able to care for his own children. And the concept of modern masculinity now has caring for children as a component.

At the same time, care-giving ability, like any other ability, may vary individually, according to personality or other individual prerequisites.

Studies of fathers show that the way in which the father is at home plays a large part in what he learns and how well he develops his care-giving competence. The Norwegian researchers Brandth and Kvande state that when a father is home alone for a longer period of time, while the mother goes to work, he has the opportunity to really develop his repertoire of care-giving skills. To have children and be alone with them during parental leave gives men experience that clearly expands their "emotional spectrum". Closeness to children in this way develops the empathy of fathers and allows them to really live out the role of caregiver.

The Men's Panel proposes in its conclusion that public child health clinics must offer better

services to new fathers, and that fathers must be included in care activities during pregnancy and post-natal care. This is discussed in more detail in section 5.7.2.

When men are given primary responsibility and spend a lot of time with children, they become more capable of understanding what the child needs and how needs can be met. Fathers have emphasised the importance of “slow time” in developing this understanding, where one does not run from one task to another, but where the child’s needs are central.

The Gender Quality Survey supports previous surveys showing that men who have spent time alone with children during parental leave around the birth of the child, are more engaged later in the children’s lives than men who have never had that kind of responsibility. Many of the men who spent the most time alone with their child during the parental leave time (93%) said that they felt it led to better contact with the children later, compared to men who were at home together with their partner (80%). There is no difference in the statistics for women of the two groups. When the mother is home during the father’s parental leave period, the fathers participate somewhat more in the daily life routines than when the fathers are at work. But they do not often get full responsibility, and are often not allowed to try being alone with the children. They do not develop the same close relationship to the child as fathers who were home alone with the child. Those fathers who seemed to develop their care giving capacities best were those who took a longer leave than the paternal quota of four weeks, which was the allotted time when these data were collected.

The intimacy that grows between parent and child during parental leave forms the foundation for a long-term closeness. Fathers who have been home with their child for a longer period are also concerned with maintaining this closeness and they wish to take longer parental leave with any subsequent children they may have in order to establish the same kind of intimacy with them. Even when parental leave is over, these fathers tend to try to maintain an active care-giving role towards their children. The accessible father has become an ideal.

There are also other interesting consequences that follow fathers taking their paternal quota. Families who share parental leave usually have more children and a lower divorce rate than other families:

“An increase in the use of paternal leave may serve to promote health, stabilise families and promote having children, which would have a positive influence on Swedish population growth.” (Aftonbladet, 26.6.2002)

One survey shows that the rate of divorce or family breakup is 30 percent lower for families that share the parental leave. The explanation for this may be that stronger cooperation for the good of the child during a time when there are many changes in the family’s structure and life also strengthens the couple’s relationship. See section 5.3.

The standard should not be to make fathers into mothers, but to help them to be more psychologically present and behave differently than fathers of previous generations. The “new father” appeared first as a middle-class phenomenon. Today we do not see any signs that working class men are any less involved in practical daily tasks related to children. This indicates that the trend towards more active and participatory fathers is a general societal trend. However, there is still a lack of systematic information on the effect of social class on this area, and a need for more research.

In recent years, meeting places have been established for fathers. Many child health clinics, family centres and volunteer organisations have offered “dad-groups”. Fathers can get together in groups and share their experiences about caring for infants and toddlers. Participation in these groups makes it possible for men to define their own roles as caregivers and might give them a stronger identity as caregivers. Fathers who have longer experience can give new fathers tips and advice to help them along.

5.4.3 Obstacles

In spite of the fact that younger fathers are noticeably more engaged in caring for their children, there is still much to be done to make parenting practice equal in Norway. Women still take most of the responsibility for children and the household. Fathers of young children are still the group of fathers that works the most, see Chapter 4.

There are a number of reasons why men are not spending more time with their children than they do. Some possible reasons that can be suggested are:

The workplace (employer) is not set up with consideration for men’s care-giving responsibilities at home, but expects overtime and the like.

Men themselves do not take sufficient responsibility for tasks involved with childcare, but leave them up to women, consciously or unconsciously.

The public welfare services lack a gender perspective towards contact with parents and neglect to bring both parents into cooperation with child health clinics, preschools, childcare centres and schools.

In a Nordic survey on men and gender equality, only 13 percent of women said they were interested in giving over more responsibility for "Family Inc." to the man. This indicates that many women seem to want gender equality and balance in the workplace, but want to keep a traditional pattern of gender roles in the home.

5.4.4 Men and care giving in the different phases of life

The focus of the sections above has been mostly on men's care-giving role towards very young children. But the expansion of the male role in this area has served to strengthen the male care-giving role in a general way, not only when children are infants and toddlers. Here is a brief description of care giving for children in different phases of life.

5.4.4.1 Care for older children

Traditionally, fathers have taken more part in their children's upbringing as the children grow older. Most fathers have been engaged in the recreational activities of their children and have volunteered for positions and tasks in the organised free time.

5.4.4.2 Care for children with chronic illnesses

Fathers with chronically ill children are often actively engaged in following up the care of their child. But fathers are often neglected in studies of families with chronically ill children. Recent Norwegian and international research shows that one of four fathers suffers from posttraumatic stress symptoms after a child has been diagnosed with a serious chronic condition.

5.4.4.3 Men's self-care

There is a general assumption that men are not sufficiently interested in self-care. This may be partly related to traditional stereotypes about

masculinity as discussed in Chapter 9. The ideal image of the tough, enduring and strong man does not give room for caring about personal needs. Consequences include a poor ability to evaluate one's own health, see Chapter 6. As the Men's Panel points out in its conclusion, there is a great need for initiatives towards the improvement of men's health and quality of life.

5.4.4.4 Care after a family breakup

We see a strong trend towards men wanting to maintain close contact with their children after a family breakup. This is a result of their expanding role in childcare. See a more detailed discussion of this in part 5.6.

5.4.4.5 Care for their own parents

Seven of ten men and women aged 45 to 65 years, whose parents are still alive, provide practical help and/or care for parents while they are working. A cross-sectional survey on living conditions in 2000 (SSB/Statistics Norway) showed that approximately 1/3 of the population over 16 years gave regular unpaid help to parents or others. The most aid (five hours per week) was given by men over 67 years and women in the age group 45-66 years. It is worth noting that in the oldest age groups there are more men than women who give such aid, and that men in all different age groups provide at least as much help as women. It appears that women to a greater extent care for their own children, while men take greater care of their parents.

5.4.4.6 Men's care needs when they get older

One survey shows that, in more than half of cases, children are the primary caregivers for the elderly. More than 80% of the caregivers of the elderly are from the immediate family and are either the spouse, children, daughters or sons-in-law, grandchildren or siblings. Elderly men without close family relationships tend to isolate themselves and receive less attention and care from their own children than elderly women. One analysis of divorced men and women carried out by NOVA (Norwegian Social Research) shows that divorced men receive less help from their children than married men, while there was no difference in help given to divorced and married women. See description in part 5.6.4.

5.5 Prevention of family conflict and family breakups

An overall family policy goal is to maintain stable and lasting family relationships for the benefit of both adults and children. In a time of many separations and breakups, it is a great challenge to help facilitate more families to be able to maintain a stable family life.

Preventive measures should be foremost in the work for positive and robust family relationships. Family counselling and preventive work with couples are founded on the ideology that stability and quality in couple and family relationships serves the society as a whole. Work towards positive family conditions is a societal issue on several levels. When a couple has a good relationship, the parties tend to take fewer sick leaves, which is a boon to the health of the general community. Stable couple relationships are also seen to be the best for both children and adults. Thus, it is important to develop a solid and easily accessible service that will help people strengthen the quality of family life and prevent family conflicts and breaks. Family counselling and other measures to promote family stability are important ways in which to reduce problems and prevent breakups. Family conflicts and breakups cause many serious and long-lasting problems for children and adults. From an economic- societal perspective it is important to put effort into preventative measures.

The Family Counselling Agencies are low-threshold primary help services, free of charge. The offices have interdisciplinary services and are manned by a specialist staff. The agencies provide a unique service because they give quick, easily accessible and reliable help to people with daily-life problems in their family relationships. One's income should not play a role in whether or not one should receive help with family issues.

In 1996 a Norwegian opinion research institute conducted a survey of what information people had about the Family Counselling Services. The main discovery in the survey was that large groups of the population knew little about the nature of this family service and the assistance granted there. Men had less knowledge about the service than women, and the difference between the sexes was greatest among those under 30 years. There was little knowledge about all the services a Family Counselling Agency can offer. Many believed that the agency was purely a "divorce office", which one had to visit if one

wanted to file for separation. Around 90% of those asked believed that there was a need for more information about the service. Later surveys have yielded corresponding findings. The Child, Youth and Family Directorate has developed an information plan for the Family Counselling Agencies in order to increase knowledge about the service and lower the threshold to apply for assistance.

5.6 Men and childcare after a family breakup

5.6.1 How men handle family breakups

12 000 marriages have been dissolved every year in recent years. Although 75 percent of all children grow up with both parents, official statistics show that 13 700 children experienced their parents' filing for separation in 2006. There are no reliable statistics on how many cohabitant couples have broken up, but it is estimated that the risk for a breakup of partners in cohabitant relationships is 2 ½ -3 times more than for married couples.

Separation and divorce have become more widespread during the last decades. Earlier, reasons given for divorce were usually the presence of "too much of something": like violence, infidelity or drunkenness. Now many seem to be separating because they say there is "too little of something": like emotions, respect and room for self-realisation. According to this way of thinking, much less has to happen for the imbalance to cause the relationship to fall apart. The family is therefore more vulnerable now than in the 1980's. The Gender Equality Survey does not give definitive answers about whether this is an accurate interpretation of the information, but the results imply it.

The research shows that it is the woman who usually experiences and identifies the problems preceding a breakup. In 75 percent of cases it is the woman who decides to leave the relationship. Many women experience resistance from men when they try to broach the subject of relationship problems through talking. This often intensifies the feeling of emotional distance and lack of companionship.

Some men experience it as a giant paradox to be separated without even having any idea what the problem was all about. The Norwegian psychologist Kjær points out that leaving a relationship is something that might violate fundamental factors belonging to the idea of masculinity:

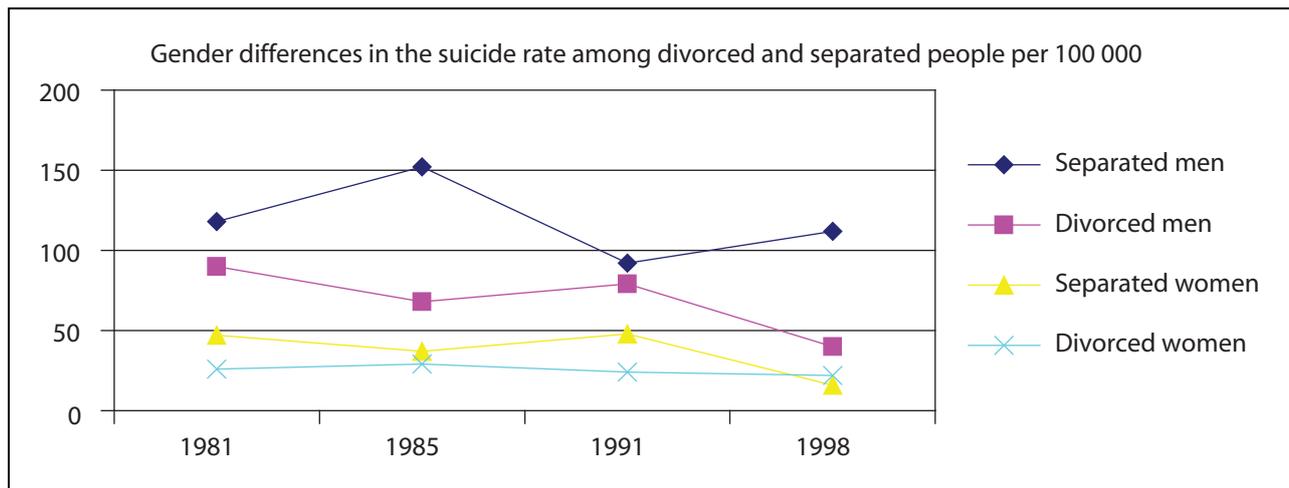


Figure 5.4 The rate of suicide among separated and divorced people

Source: Gjertsen 2003

endurance and mastery. If men trivialize difficulties, it may be because to take them more seriously would generate the insecurity of not being successful, of not mastering the problem. To leave the relationship is a defeat and a result of not managing the challenges of family life. The Norwegian researcher Oftung also describes divorce as a downfall, a defeat, something that might give the individual a strong feeling of failure and loss of control. For many men, loss of control over their surroundings may be interpreted as unmanly.

Some relationships end undramatically and the breakup may lead to generally positive changes for both parties. For couples who live in deadlocked and long-term conflict, or in emotionless relationships, a breakup may be the best solution and open up new horizons for those involved. However, there is solid evidence to back up the assertion that breakups may also have some very negative health-related, psychological and social consequences both for adults and children. A Norwegian survey has concluded that one out of three divorced people suffer from psychological problems for a long time after the breakup. A divorce can be a serious life crisis for those involved. Other surveys show for example, that divorced and separated people have a significantly higher number of illness symptoms than one expects to find in the general population, and they are more often admitted to psychiatric hospitals. In the Infacts Family Survey 2007, 30 % of those who have experienced divorce respond that they regret the breakup, and 21 percent of the men and 32 percent of the women believe that the divorce was the greatest crisis of their lives.

The suicide rate for divorced and separated people is many times higher than for married people. In the period 1978 to 1992, separated and divorced men between the ages of 30 and 79 had a suicide rate six times higher than married men. The same pattern is true for women, but suicide frequency is much higher for men. For example, the suicide rate for separated men in 1998 was over seven times higher than for separated women (112 to 15,5 per 100,000).

How one reacts to a family breakup is dependent on many factors, not the least of which is what kind of attitude one has to the breakup. Those who are abandoned have greater problems in adapting than those who take the initiative for the breakup. The most common emotional reactions are sorrow and loss, a feeling of paralysis or passivity, followed often by anger and ambivalence.

As a group, men seem to handle breakups worse than women. Men show statistically higher illness, larger alcohol consumption, more absenteeism from work and more personal and social problems than women. The Gender Equality Survey shows a similar picture. To what degree men experience these negative consequences depends mostly on the degree of conflict between the parties –the greater the conflict; the more negative consequences are reported. The hardest hit groups are those that are abandoned, those who have little contact with their children after the breakup, those who have not begun a new relationship, and those who still have a high level of conflict with their ex-partner. To lose contact with children seems to be the most important factor in the lowering of the quality of life that people expe-

rience. This is especially true of men. One of three divorced men has psychological problems two years after a breakup. According to the Gender Equality Survey, the educational level of the person seems to play a role. Separated and divorced men with a high educational level seem to manage breakups better than those without higher education. This corresponds to similar data from international research. There is reason to believe that it is not the education itself that causes the difference, but that higher education is an indicator of "social capital". Higher social capital in general is an asset when dealing with different life challenges.

Men who have experienced the divorce of their own parents are especially vulnerable to psychological problems, especially depressive reactions. For women the connection is not as clear. Furthermore, if one or the other of the parties in a marriage is a child of divorce, that marriage is twice as likely to fail. If both parties are children of divorced parents the marriage is 3 times as likely to fail.

At the same time as men report having more negative reactions to a breakup, they experience less of a need for professional help than women. This may be explained by the fact that men seem to have a higher threshold with regards to seeking outside help for any emotional problems.

5.6.2 Equality in parenthood after a family breakup

Equality in parental responsibility for childcare after a family breakup means that both parents must take joint responsibility and have equal opportunity to meet the fundamental daily needs of the children.

Equality in parenthood after a breakup also means that the children must have the opportunity for positive contact with both parents. Furthermore it means that parents have a joint responsibility to contribute to a living situation that takes the child's needs into consideration as much as possible. The legal framework for the choices that must be made about custody are stated in the Children's Act. However a legal, equal parenting practice does not necessarily mean that the child must live an equal amount of time with each parent.

It is understandable that different families choose different living and care situations after a breakup. Families are varied and have different needs. It is not a public responsibility to regulate internal family affairs. The government empha-

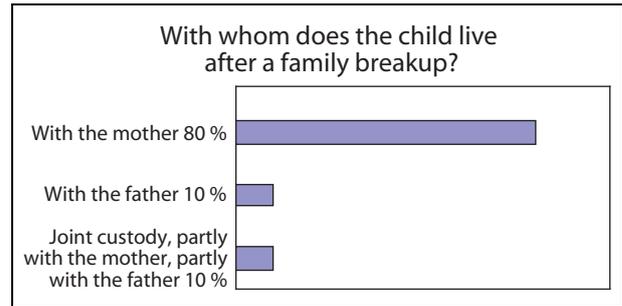


Figure 5.5 With whom does the child live after a family breakup?

Source: Skjærten et al. 2007

sises that parents of small children are free to choose what form of care they want for their children, both before and after a breakup. What is best for the child is the central issue, and the parents must evaluate what arrangement works best for their case. Parents must take most of the responsibility for their own lives, their own children and their own choices. The overarching political challenge is to prepare the groundwork so that there are equitable rights to free choice of how family life and relationships are to be conducted.

Today, 80% of children live with their mother after a breakup; see figure 5.5. Many fathers are frustrated over this unfair distribution and feel inhibited in their rights as fathers since they get much less contact with and responsibility for their children. In many cases this frustration leads to serious and long-term conflict between the parents, something we know is harmful to the children.

The most common cause of this unequal distribution is that the parents themselves agree that the permanent residence for the child will be with the mother, and the father will have visiting rights or partial custody. In some cases this arrangement is made because this is the arrangement that is most like the division of childcare the parents had while they were still together. Other times the father gives way under pressure from the mother and/or the father agrees to such an arrangement because he thinks his case would not stand up as well in court. It is worth noting that of the custody cases that have come up for the Court of Appeal, custody has been distributed about equally between mother and father.

It is an important political task to facilitate equality in parenting also after a breakup, taking into consideration the basic needs of the child, the

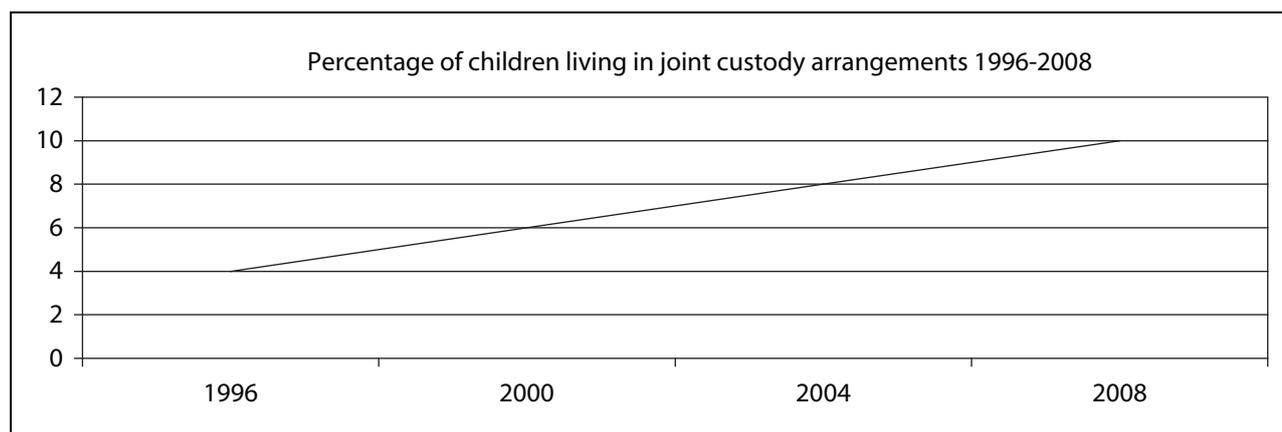


Figure 5.6 Percentage of children living in joint custody arrangements 1996-2008

Source: Skjærten et al. 2007

child's age and developmental level. The goal of equality in parenting can best be reached by helping parents to agree on solutions and learn to cooperate better when it comes to their children. Children need positive and safe relationships to both parents, especially after a breakup. The Children's Act ensures that both parents automatically have shared responsibility for their children unless something else has been agreed upon, whether they are married or living together. According to the Children's Act it is the parents themselves who must make agreements about where the children will live permanently and about contact and partial custody.

On certain conditions, joint custody may be a successful arrangement for both adults and children after a breakup. There are three variables that stand out in respect to how well children adapt to a breakup: The level of conflict between the parents, communication between them, and how the parents adapt psychologically to the breakup. Parents need to cooperate, and children must have a sense of well-being in both homes. The two homes should be geographically close to one another, and parents should keep more or less the same types of routines. A large disparity in daily life routines and rules can increase the conflict level, making the shared custody system difficult. Both parents must experience that all parties, not least the children, are satisfied with the arrangement. It is important that the parents listen to and consider the children, and the parents must be prepared to change the arrangement and show some flexibility should the child show signs of a failure to thrive. Even though these shared custody arrangements may contribute to

ensure stable and greater contact between the child and both parents, they may also create practical and emotional stress on the children.

It is the opinion of a large number of professionals who work with divorce conflicts and custody arrangements within the Family Counselling Services that it is generally wise to make a custody arrangement that is based on the pattern of roles and responsibilities that the parents already established when they were together. Therefore, if fathers take more responsibility for childcare in family life, they pave the way for more equality in custody arrangements after an eventual breakup.

Most parents have a lot of contact with children even if they do not live permanently with them. Men on the whole say they are reasonably happy with custody and contact arrangements.

5.6.3 Parental cooperation after a family breakup

One consequence of the new and more active father role is that fathers desire more often than before close contact with their children after a family breakup. This is a deliberate development that is generally positive. In most cases, it is in the child's best interests to have close contact with both parents. Such contact should be fostered both before and after any breakup.

Most parents are able to come to an amicable arrangement regarding the children by themselves. In some cases, however, there is a huge difference in how the mother and father perceive the best solution for care of the child. In these cases a power struggle often ensues where the parents tend to put their own interests and needs

in the foreground instead of looking for a solution based on the child's needs.

“Consideration of the best interests of the child should first and foremost serve to put the child's perspective at the base of any discussions or solutions so that the child's perspective is paramount to any desires or individual rights of the parents.” (The Children's Act Commission)

The consequences of any lasting conflict between the parents on such issues can be serious for the children. Long, drawn out parental conflict is a major cause of most of the serious problems children suffer from after a family breakup, say professionals. Unresolved conflicts between the parents also have a negative influence on any further parental cooperation.

The road must be paved so that parents as far as possible can give preference to the child's perspective after a breakup. The Gender Equality Survey shows that many divorced parents are able to avoid child-related conflicts. About 60 percent of those who have been divorced and who have children have not experienced serious conflicts about the children. The results indicate a large and possibly growing “peace tendency” in this area, with more balanced arrangements being sought, especially by younger parents. It is also the case that there is a general tendency for the level of conflict between parents to decrease over time.

Conflicts concerning contact arrangements with children can become rigid and long-term. In some cases the cause of this is that the father doesn't want contact with the child; in others it is the mother who does not want the father to have contact with the child. In both cases unresolved conflicts between the adults as previous partners may be the underlying cause of the problems they have cooperating about the children. Research shows that as many as 20 percent of parents report having big conflicts with their ex-partner two years after the separation. When we know that enduring conflict between parents is one of the most important reasons for children developing emotional, behavioural and psychosocial difficulties after a family breakup, then we must look at measures for preventing parents from holding grudges over a long period of time as a major political objective. If parents had been better able to separate their roles as parents from their roles as ex-partners, they might be better able to prevent problems arising in their arrangements for the children.

5.6.4 The lack of gender equality may contribute to fathers receiving poorer care as they get older

Many fathers have greatly reduced contact with their children after a family breakup, and this can have long-term consequences. The reduced contact seems to continue over time, such that men, as they get older, do not receive the same amount of attention and care from their children that women receive; see part 5.4.4.6. This is a societal consequence of gender inequality that is rarely discussed.

5.6.5 The Children's Act Commission

The Children's Act Commission was established by the Cabinet in January 2007. The committee met to consider changes in the Children's Act in respect to parental responsibility, permanent residence of the child and contact arrangements. According to the mandate given, the main goal of the examination was to evaluate possible changes in the Children's Act from the perspective that both parents be seen as equally important for the child and where one should seek to support a general societal development where parents will be on equal footing regarding time, responsibility, care and decision-making with regards to major aspects of a child's life. The commission should let their conclusions be guided by the fact that the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is fully incorporated in Norwegian law and that the best interests of the child shall be normative for all decisions concerning children. The commission would further look in more detail at whether or not the best interests of the child might be better considered by making rights and responsibilities more equal between mothers and fathers. The commission was to consider if a more gender equal starting point could serve to ameliorate conflicts between the parents. As a step in this investigation the commission was to discuss and propose legislation on questions like common parental responsibility whether parents have lived together or not, joint custody for children and norms regarding contact arrangements.

The report was submitted in April 2008. Here are the conclusions that are most relevant for this white paper.

- *Moving:* The committee has been asked to look more closely at the rights of the resident parent to move away with the child without the consent of the parent with visiting rights. A

majority of the commission supports the idea that both parents who have parental responsibility must agree whether the resident parent may move away with the child. One minority believes that the resident parent should be able to take this decision unilaterally, but that there should be an obligation to notify the other parent. Another minority supports keeping the legislation as it is on this point.

- *Visiting Rights*: A majority of the commission thinks that the rule about "normal visiting rights" should be kept, but that contact should be expanded to include up to five overnight stays per 14 days and 3 weeks of summer holidays. The number of holidays should also be expanded to include autumn and winter breaks. A minority believes that the rule about normal visiting rights should be taken out of the act.
- *Enforced fulfilment of visiting rights agreements*: According to the current law, the only means of enforcing visiting rights agreements is an obligatory fine. The majority of the commission believes that actual physical pick-up should also be allowed. The minority believes that the legislation should not be changed on this point.

For further discussion, see paragraph 5.7.4.

5.7 Proposed initiatives to strengthen men's role and responsibility in family life

The government believes that a prerequisite in the efforts towards real gender equality is the preparation of suitable conditions in which men can better realise their roles and functions in family life and childcare. Equality in parenting is also an important factor in reducing family conflict and in the prevention of family breakups.

In weighing the advantages of different measures towards a gender equal family life it is important to be clear about what the public authorities can and should do, and what needs to be relegated to civil society. It is the task of the public authorities to create a framework in which the individual can make positive choices for his or her life. It is a government duty to pass legislation that removes obstacles to gender equality and promotes equal treatment and equal opportunities. But the state cannot guarantee equality on the level of the individual.

5.7.1 Men in couples and family life

- More and focussed information about couple relationships and family life may help make family conflicts more manageable and lower the threshold for seeking help. The Family Counselling Agencies can play a central role in this. The population must be informed about the services that exist. People must know about the agency and use it. The Family Counselling Agencies should advertise itself as the natural place to look for help with family conflicts. The Family Counselling Agencies should establish goal-oriented measures for making its services better known to men and inform the population about things they can do to prevent undesired family breakups.
- The government stresses that it is important to increase the research done on men and men's roles in couple relationships and family life. There is a need to systematise the knowledge that can be gained from both national and international sources. The newly established professorship in masculinity and gender equality research at the Centre for Gender Competence, University of Oslo, will have a natural part to play in this endeavour.

5.7.2 Men and childcare in family life

- The majority of parents who come to the public health centres for infant checkups are mothers. This is tied to the fact that it is mothers who usually take parental leave during this intensive period when the infant's health is closely monitored. The Men's Panel suggests that new fathers need better access to the public child health centres. The government stresses the important role that the man also has during pregnancy and in preparation for birth. There is wide agreement that fathers should take up equal parenting responsibilities early on; in this way a good foundation is laid. By participating more in the pregnancy and the period of infancy the father can create for himself a better basis for being a support to the child later on. The health centres for children can play an important role by expecting and encouraging fathers' participation, by setting standards for the father's role in parenting and following up. The Ministry for Health and Care Services aims to set forth a white paper on pregnancy,

- birth and post-natal care in primary and specialist health care services, including follow-up services. The white paper will be submitted before the end of 2008. Measures will be promoted that can ensure the highest professional quality of birth care and accessible and secure services to pregnant women and women giving birth over the whole country. The father's role as a caregiver will also be looked at. The goal is for pregnant women and their families to meet a holistic and comprehensive pregnancy, birth and post-natal care service. That the father can receive wages during this leave of absence to care for a child in connection with childbirth is an important factor in this respect. See Chapter 4, paragraph 4.5.2
- The government will further propose that fathers, when living together with the biological mother of their children, shall be called in to the health centre for the child's check-up when the child is 8 months old. Although this summons will be directed to the father, the parents may decide which parent will accompany the child to the check-up. This is a signal to fathers that the public authorities see him as a central caregiver. On this visit it will be natural to focus on things that have to do with the father's role. The public child health centres need to have current information about local "dad-groups" and inform fathers about the possibilities during the check-up.
 - The government will use measures to influence the attitudes of men towards taking their part of the responsibility of childcare. The programme *"Good couple relationship – relationship workshops for first-time parents"*, is a natural forum for taking up these issues.
 - The department wants to help make dad-groups an initiative that will encompass the whole nation. Experience shows that men are not able to create these types of networks themselves, to the degree that women do. Dad-groups will be organised as study groups linked to a study organisation. The study groups should co-operate with the local Family Counselling Agency, the child health centre and other municipal entities.
 - The Ministry of Children and Equality will finance the development of a course curriculum for these study groups. Such a course curriculum can be developed through an organisation like REFORM. Then, relevant student organisations can apply for funding for the study groups through subsidies from adult education resources administered by VOX.
 - Mothers still make up the majority in parent meetings in preschools and schools. The staff of preschools usually call the mother first when the child is sick. In order to increase awareness about the role of the father in childcare, the government proposes that the communication routines between preschool and parents be adjusted. Fathers need to be brought more actively into parent meetings and conferences in preschools and schools. Both parents should be invited to parent conferences and personnel should alternate between calling mother and father when a child is sick.
 - The government will pave the way for a further commitment to strengthening the role of the father as caregiver. This work can build upon the experience from projects that are underway or have already been completed. Some of the most important are:
 - "Adam – Where are you?" is a recently concluded project started by the Family Counselling office in Egersund. It has focussed on the man's role in family life and childcare from a gender equality perspective. The project has reached out with services to a wide community. Among other things it has worked to make bosses and employees of businesses more aware of how important it is to adapt the workplace to make it easier for men to take more responsibility at home. The project has also included participation in family life education in the secondary schools, and group sessions have been started for men and children's sessions for children who have experienced a family breakup. Putting the focus on men and family life has contributed to making family conflicts an everyday topic, made men aware of their role as a husband and father, helped to emphasise how important it is that men do their part to maintain stable and positive family relationships and made the Family Counselling Agencies more visible by informing more people of its services, lowering the threshold for seeking help.
 - "Sustainable Families – Gender Equality throughout Life" is a project started by the Work Research Institute in cooperation with the Nordic Institute for Knowledge about Gender. The project's overarching

goal is to help men participate more in family life and childcare. The municipalities of Asker and Odde work together to run the project, helping businesses and enterprises create a better balance between working life and family life for men. Models will be developed for creating suitable conditions in the workplace that show consideration for the fact that men have a role as caregiver, and men will be offered help to establish networks that have the role of the father as their focus. Couples will also be offered relationship enrichment workshops and courses in communication with a gender equality focus.

5.7.3 Prevention of family conflict and family breakups

Relationship enrichment workshops are a preventative, low threshold opportunity for couples and can strengthen the quality of family life and prevent conflict. International studies show that various types of relationship workshops have a positive documented effect. One important function of a relationship workshop is that it seems to make people more aware of the value of putting effort into the couple relationship. This seems to be more important than learning specific communication techniques and the like. To reach out to men regarding this opportunity it is necessary to develop an information campaign directed towards men and strengthen the gender perspective of the Family Counselling Agencies; this will require increased resources. The service must be relevant for men in nuclear families, extended families and men in alternative family structures.

- The government will initiate information and motivation initiatives to make relationship workshops and other relationship building measures more known and attractive to men.
- The ministry has already begun work on a thorough and holistic review of the Family Counselling Services, looking among other things at whether the services are well enough adapted to today's needs, both with respect to resources and competence. Finding out whether the services are well enough adapted to the needs of men will also be part of this review.

5.7.4 Review of the Children's Act Commission's recommendations for measures to strengthen the role of the father after a family breakup

5.7.4.1 Parental responsibility when parents neither are married nor cohabitating at the time of birth

*Suggestions from the commission and the opinions
of the consultancy round*

Today parents usually have shared parental responsibilities for children they have together and these responsibilities continue even after a family breakup as long as nothing else is agreed upon. If parents are neither married nor living together when the child is born, the sole responsibility falls to the mother at the outset. Parents can also agree to share the responsibility or give the responsibility completely over to the father.

The Children's Act Commission has discussed whether there should be a general rule about shared parental responsibility regardless of what the connection is between the parents at the time of birth. The majority of the Commission think that the current regulation should continue. A minority think that the regulation should be amended to say that there is a common responsibility regardless of whether the parents have lived together or not.

In addition, the minority presents a subsidiary proposal that unmarried parents who are not living together should have shared responsibility if the father wishes it, as long as the mother has not protested within three months of being informed of the father's desire for shared parental responsibility.

38 different bodies entitled to comment have expressed their views on this proposal. Of these, 21 support the majority view, 16 support the minority view, and 4 support the subsidiary proposal of the minority.

The consultancy bodies who are of the opinion that the current rules should be continued are *Advokatforeningen (Lawyer Association)*, *Aleneforeldreforeningen (Association of Single Parents)*, *Alternativ til Vold (Alternatives to Violence)*, *Borgarting lagmannsrett (Borgarting Court of Appeal)*, *Den norske Dommerforening (The Norwegian Association of Judges)*, *Fellesorganisasjonen (The Norwegian Union of Social Educators and Social Workers)*, *Fylkesmennene i (The County Governors of Finnmark, Nordland, Oslo/Akershus, Rogaland, Vest-Agder, and Vestfold)*, *Juridisk rådgivning for kvinner (Legal Advice for Women)*,

Justisdepartementet (The Ministry of Justice), Kirkens Bymisjon (The Church City Mission), Kirkens Familievern (The Association of Christian Family Guidance Agencies), MiRA-senteret (MiRA Resource Centre), Norsk Krisesenterforbund (Norwegian Crisis Centre Association), Norsk kvinnesaksforening (Norwegian Association for Women's Rights), Oslo tingrett (Oslo District Court) and Stine Sofies Stiftelse (Stine Sofie's Foundation).

Most of these bodies emphasise that they are not against shared parental responsibility for parents who don't live together on principle, but they think that such a rule may end up being a burden for the mother and possibly not in the best interests of the child. Many of the bodies pointed out that it would be the mother would bear the burden of a lawsuit in the event of abuse or harassment. They also point out that it would be difficult to make rules for all the exceptions which might cover all the situations where shared responsibility might not be a good idea. They also pointed out that it is relatively easy for fathers to have the opportunity to share in parental responsibility at the present.

The following bodies believe that the basic rule should be common parental responsibility for all, regardless of whether the parents have lived together or not: *Aksjonsgruppen barns rett til samvær med foreldre og besteforeldre (Action Group The Child's Right to Contact with Parents and Grandparents), Barnerettsadvokater (The Child Rights' Lawyers), Barne-, ungdoms- og familiedirektoratet (Child, Youth and Family Directorate), Drammen tingrett (Drammen District Court), Familiestiftelsen (The Family Foundation), Foreningen 2 Foreldre (Association 2 Parents), Forum for Menn og Omsorg (Forum for Men and Care Giving), Juss-Buss (Legal Bus Service), Jusshjelpe i Nord-Norge (Legal Aid in Northern Norway), (Kvinneuniversitet Nord (Women's University North), Landsgruppen av helsesøstre NSF (National Association of Public Health Nurses), Likestillings- og diskrimineringsombodet (Equality and Anti-Discrimination Board), Redd Barna (Save the Children), REFORM (Resource Centre for Men), Trondheim tingrett (Trondheim District Court) and Senter for tverrfaglig kjønnsforskning (Centre for Multidisciplinary Gender Research).*

These bodies base their opinion on the fact that both parents are equally important for the child and should have equal opportunities. They point out that it is unreasonable to treat children differently because of their parents' choice of lifestyle. Since it is common that both parents are quite capable of taking parental responsibility,

then parents who live apart should not be evaluated differently from parents who live together. Several bodies also mentioned that exceptions could be made in the rules for the cases where shared parental responsibility would not be in the best interests of the child.

Only a few consultancy bodies have responded to the subsidiary proposal from the minority, but these agencies say that they support it: *Barneombodet (The Ombudsman for Children), Barne-, ungdoms- og familiedirektoratet (Child, Youth and Family Directorate), Drammen tingrett (Drammen District Court) and Landsgruppen av helsesøstre NSF (National Association of Public Health Nurses).* *The Ombudsman for Children* says among other things:

“The Ombudsman for Children is basically positive to the proposal that all fathers shall share the responsibility for parenting, even those who are not married to, nor living with the child's mother at the time of the child's birth. This gives a signal that the child has the right to equal participation from both parents, regardless of the civil status of the parents. Common parental responsibility in these cases however, must be connected to active participation from the father. The Ombudsman supports therefore the minority subsidiary proposal. It involves letting the father participate in parental responsibility when he actively expresses the desire to do so, unless the child's mother comes with concrete reasons to deny him that responsibility that clearly show that it would not be in the child's best interests to let the father share parental rights and responsibilities, within a reasonable deadline. The Ombudsman has been in doubt about who should bear the burden of a lawsuit if the mother protests the sharing of parental responsibility. To go to court is a heavy charge on both parties. One must show consideration for the kind of stress that childbirth and childcare involves for the mother. Therefore the burden of legal action should be put on the father.”

The government's evaluation and conclusion

The government refers to the fact that parents who do not live together when the child is born are a diverse and complex group of people. It is difficult to design a regulation about parental responsibility that will apply to all and that takes account of the best interests of the child. It would also be difficult to make exceptions to the rule that would cover all the possible situations where

shared responsibility would not be a positive thing. The government also sees that an unforeseen effect of such a rule about automatic shared parental responsibility for those who do not live together is that the mother may decide not to reveal the identity of the father.

Among parents who never have lived together, only 19% have shared parental responsibility. This was true both in 2002 and 2004. (SSB/Statistics Norway report nr 22 – 2005)

There are very few cases brought to court that only involve parental responsibility. A review of cases in the Oslo District Court in the period January 1, 1998 to March 1, 1999, shows that of 74 cases that were reviewed, only 2 cases involved parental responsibility alone, while 32 cases involved both parental responsibility, contact arrangements and residency of the child. In half of the cases the plaintiff was seeking to have sole responsibility for the child.

In most of the cases the court sustains the father's claim to shared parental responsibility.

The government supports the majority view of the commission and consultancy bodies, and does not support automatic shared responsibility regardless of the parents' connection to each other at the time of birth. The government will consider whether parents who did not live together when the child was born will be required to meet for mediation in order to make an agreement about custody and contact. Such mediation should be done within a specified period of time after the baby is born.

5.7.4.2 Moving within the country

Proposal from the commission and the viewpoint of the bodies entitled to comment:

According to existing regulations, the custodial parent (the one the child lives with full time) may move within the country without the consent of the other parent.

The majority of the commission proposes that the limits around moving be placed under the jurisdiction of child custody that both parents must consent to a move within the country. In the proposal is a regulation that consent must be obtained if the move makes contact between the child and the parent who is not moving, difficult. Shorter domestic moves would not entail the need for consent. The proposal also makes an exception for moves that are found to be in the best interests of the child. It is also suggested that the

issue must be tried in court if the parents cannot reach agreement on the move.

The minority proposes that the decision to move remain with the custodial parent, but that the custodial parent is required to inform the other parent of a move. This allows the other parent to take up the issue in mediation or if necessary in court, before the move is made.

One member of the commission did not want any change in the existing regulations with regards to the issue of moving away with a child.

There are 24 consultancy bodies whose opinion is against the proposal from the majority, including *Barne-, ungdoms- og familiedirektoratet (Child, Youth and Family Directorate)*, *domstolane (courts)*, *Den norske Advokatforening (The Norwegian Bar Association)*, *Barneombodet (The Ombudsman for Children)*, *Redd Barna (Save the Children)*, *Likesstillings- og diskrimineringsombodet (Equality and Anti-Discrimination Board)*, *Alternativ til Vold (Alternatives to Violence)*, *Aleneforeldreforeningen (Association of Single Parents)* og *Fellesorganisasjonen (The Norwegian Union of Social Educators and Social Workers)*. Of these, most (18) expressed that they support the proposal from the first minority that will allow the decision to rest with the custodial parent but require that the custodial parent inform the other parent before the move happens.

The consultancy bodies that are against the proposal from the majority point out that the proposal may lead to an increased conflict level and more lawsuits. It is also stressed that there may be many good reasons to move, including education, work and working hours, economy, family and social networks; moving may also well be in the child's best interests. It is claimed that it is unreasonable to restrict the possibility of the custodial parent to move without similar restrictions being placed on the contact parent, and that the proposal will not promote more contact as long as the parent with visiting rights is free to move. Several point out that the parent with visiting rights would receive an inordinate amount of power over the ex-partner under such a rule, a power that could easily be misused. Experience shows that parents often exploit the rights and opportunities regulations give them to intensify the level of conflict with the other parent rather than to protect the interests of the child. It is also claimed that such a rule would have a stronger negative impact on women than men. Those living in the districts would be hardest hit as they might have the hardest time finding a job, taking education or retraining in their areas. There is also a disadvantage in the proposal in that

the parent with visiting rights can neglect to consent to a move without there being any subsequent requirement that the parent with visiting rights take over more parental responsibility. Moving is sometimes used as a way of protecting the child and nearest caregiver against violence or harassment from the other parent and that this method of protecting the custodial parent may be seriously compromised by the proposal.

The consultancy bodies that support the proposal from the first minority point out that it is important that the other parent get an opportunity to take up the issue of moving in mediation or if necessary in court before the move is made. Several believe that the duty to inform should also apply to the parent with visiting rights.

There are 14 consultancy bodies which advocate the proposal from the commission majority, including *Kirkens familievern (The Association of Christian Family Guidance Agencies)*, *Senter for tverrfaglig kjønnsforskning ved Universitetet i Oslo (Centre for Multidisciplinary Gender Research, Oslo University)*, *Norsk krisesenterforbund (Norwegian Association of Crisis Centres)*, *Foreningen 2 Foreldre (Association 2 Parents)*, *REFORM – ressursenter for menn (Resource Centre for Men)*, *Forum for menn og omsorg (Forum for Men and Care-giving)*, *Landsgruppen av helsesøstre NSF (National Association of Public Health Nurses NSF)* and *Kirkens Bymisjon (The Church City Mission)*. They point out that the move represents a big life change for the child, and that it is therefore necessary that both parents have the authority to evaluate the pros and cons of the issue and the consequences a move might bring with it. It is stressed that an unchecked right to move can lead to the parents putting the interests of the child aside, and the benefit of a child maintaining contact with both parents should carry more weight than the custodial parent's desire to move. The opinion is that this proposal may actually reduce conflict in relation to the long-term conflicts that often follow as a consequence of moving with children. It may also be easier to reach an agreement through dialogue or mediation. It is claimed that moving knocks the ground out from under the right to contact, and that many experience that the custodial parent actually sabotages the other parent's visitation rights by changing their place of living.

The government's evaluation and conclusion

It can in many cases be a burden for the child to move, both because the child loses close contact

with the other parent, and because the child is separated from friends, school and the local community. A decision about moving can in many cases also increase the conflict level between the parents. This may be more difficult in connection with a divorce / family breakup, when the child is particularly vulnerable. At the same time, there may in certain cases be good reasons to move, among others reasons linked to education, employment and working hours, economics, and family and social networks.

Although it can be a burden for the child to move, it could in some cases be in the best interests of the child, because the situation for the family overall might be better, something that can have a positive effect on the individual life of the child. On the other hand, in some cases it can be better for the child to be in the local community and have a permanent home with the other parent, rather than to move. The government believes that a regulating of this issue should include a consideration of where it might be best for the child to have permanent residency, and not whether one parent should have to get consent from the other to move.

The government believes that a move may involve big changes and be a problem for the child. It is therefore important that parents have time and any help they need to discuss where the child should have permanent residence and how any contact arrangements should be if one parent desires to move. The government would like to look more carefully at the possibility of a rule obligating the custodial parent to inform the parent with visiting rights in a way that allows for enough time for both parents to think thoroughly through the plan. It should also give enough time for the parents to go to mediation or to court if necessary. Such a duty to inform must also apply to the parent with visiting rights.

5.7.4.3 Visiting Rights

In 2004, 43% of parents with visiting rights had more than the precatory definition of "normal visiting rights", i.e. 8 days per month. 26% had 8-12 days and 17% had 13 or more days per month.

Proposal from the Commission and the viewpoint of the bodies entitled to comment:

Parents can choose themselves what type of visiting rights are appropriate based on what they feel is in the best interests of the child. In the Children's Act is found a definition that lays the foundation for the agreement if the agreement is to be

so-called” normal visiting rights”. If ”normal visiting rights” are agreed upon, these give the non-custodial parent the right to contact with the child one afternoon per week, every other weekend, 14 days during the summer holidays and either Christmas or Easter.

The majority in the Commission seeks to retain the rule on normal visiting rights, but amend it such that the contact is expanded to include five overnights in total per 14 days and three weeks of summer holiday time. Autumn and Winter holidays should also be included. The minority view is that the rule about normal visiting rights should be taken out of the Act. Current supervised visiting rights with a publicly approved guardian may in special cases be allowed for up to 16 hours per year. The entire commission is in favour of increasing the limit to 32 hours.

22 consultancy bodies agreed with the majority view. Among these were: *Aleneforeldreforeningen (Association of Single Parents)*, *Foreningen 2 Foreldre (Association 2 Parents)*, *Barne-, ungdoms- og familiedirektoratet (Child Youth and Family Directorate)*, *Justisdepartementet (The Ministry of Justice)*, *Den norske Advokatforening (The Norwegian Bar Association)*, *Den norske Dommerforening (The Norwegian Association of Judges)*, *Borgarting lagmannsrett (Borgarting Court of Appeal)*, *Trondheim tingrett (Trondheim District Court)*, *Fylkesmannen i (The County Governor of) Oslo og Akershus and Vest-Agder)*, *Juridisk rådgivning for kvinner (Legal Advice for Women)*, *Juss-Buss (Legal Bus Service)*, *Jusshjelpa i Nord-Norge (Legal Aid in Northern Norway)*, *Fellesorganisasjonen (The Norwegian Union of Social Educators and Social Workers)*, *Norsk krisesenterforbund (Norwegian Association of Crisis Centres)*, *Norsk Kvinnesaksforening (Norwegian Association for Women’s Rights)* and *Senter for tverrfaglig kjønnsforskning (Centre for Multidisciplinary Gender Research)*.

Six consultancy bodies agree with the minority viewpoint. In this group we find *Barneombodet (The Ombudsman for Children)*, *Oslo tingrett (Oslo District Court)*, *Fylkesmannen i (The County Governor of) Nordland and Vestfold)*.

Many of the consultancy bodies wanting to keep a definition of ”normal visiting rights” in the Children’s Act, believe that such a definition will serve to increase the contact the child has with the parent he or she does not live with. The bodies emphasise that the definition of ”normal visiting rights” is often perceived by parents as a mini-

mum standard and in that way helps the parties decide on contact that meets this standard or exceeds it. Several point out that such a definition can in fact ensure that the child has more contact with the parent who has visiting rights.

Many also believe that there is a good reason to keep the definition of ”normal visiting rights” in the law because a definition can serve to ameliorate conflict. Parents may themselves have difficulties in agreeing upon the amount of visitation and when it should happen. When they have a definition to start from it may be easier to reach a reasonable agreement.

The bodies that wish to remove the definition of ”normal visiting rights” in the Children’s Act have justified their opinion in several different ways. Some believe that parents would have an easier time focussing on creating an agreement that would be tailored to the particular child and situation if they were not focussing on the definition. A definition in the law may then become problematic for an otherwise civil and reasonable dialogue between parents as they find a good arrangement for the child.

One body believes that a ”norm” for visiting rights may be very unfortunate if it is followed as a minimum standard without really taking the child’s best interests into consideration. Another body has the opposite view: A definition may be limiting and to remove it would stimulate the parents to a free and independent evaluation of what type of visiting rights would be best for the child.

The Commission receives broad support from the bodies entitled to comment for their proposal to expand the definition of ”normal visiting rights”. In the consultancy round there was also strong support for the proposal to expand the limits for setting an amount of visitation supervised by a publicly appointed guardian.

The government’s evaluation and conclusion

As the government sees it, there are weighty arguments both for and against retaining a definition of ”normal visiting rights” in the Children’s Act. It is usually a good thing for a child to maintain positive contact with both parents even when they don’t live together. Both the Commission and many of the consultancy bodies think that the definition of ”normal visiting rights” serves to ensure a minimum level of contact for parents who have little contact with their children. But the Commission also points out that the definition may be too limiting for parents trying to reach an amicable

agreement and may therefore be a hindrance to even greater contact between parents and children.

Perhaps will the legal definition helps some groups to achieve more contact while it will hinder others. One cannot exclude the possibility that some families would have found a more comprehensive arrangement if they had not had the definition as a framework. The government thinks however, that it is more important that those who have little contact with their children be ensured a minimum of contact. If the parents are initially interested in there being greater visitation rights, they are perfectly free to agree to them and such parents usually are able to come to an agreement that is more than the definition.

The government concludes that keeping a definition of "normal visiting rights" in the Children's Act has the most advantages. The government highlights the fact that such a definition may also serve to reduce conflict.

The government is in agreement with the Commission that the definition should be amended and expanded and sees this as a natural extension of the general societal development in which fathers desire more and closer contact with their children, also after family breakups.

The government also wishes to expand the framework for how many hours the public authorities can be held responsible for supplying an approved guardian for supervised visitation. This can serve to make possible contact in cases where it otherwise would be unacceptable, as in cases where there is danger of assault.

5.7.4.4 Enforced fulfilment of visiting rights agreements

Proposal from the Commission and the viewpoint of the bodies entitled to comment:

According to current law, if a custodial parent neglects to honour the parent's rights to visitation agreed upon either by a verdict or settlement, the court can impose a fine on the custodial parent. This practice stands in opposition to enforcement of decisions regarding parental responsibility and residence, where the law is open for the possibility of physically picking up the child as a means to an end. If the custodial parent, or the one the child lives with permanently, hinders the other parent in fulfilling visitation rights, the parent with visitation rights can file a lawsuit and demand a new decision on the question of custody. The court may find that, in consideration of the child's need

to have contact with both parents, the child's residency may need to be changed to the other parent.

The majority of the Commission proposes that physical picking up of the child should be also allowed as a means of enforcing visiting rights. It is stressed that such drastic enforcement through actual physical fetching may have an important preventative effect.

The minority view is that physical picking up should not be allowed to be used as an means of enforcement in these cases because it would be a dramatic intervention by the public authority which may be traumatic both for children and parents. It is further maintained that there isn't a sufficient need for a change in the Act.

About half of the consultancy bodies who commented gave their support to the majority, among others *some of the County Governors Den norske Advokatforening (The Norwegian Bar Association), Politidirektoratet (The Police Directorate), Kirkens Familievern (The Association of Christian Family Guidance Agencies), Juridisk rådgivning for kvinner (Legal Advice for Women), Universitetet i Oslo / Senter for kvinne- og kjønnsforskning (Oslo University, Centre for Women's and Gender Studies), Foreningen 2 Foreldre (Association 2 Parents) and Aleneforeldreforeningen (Association of Single Parents).*

Most of the consultancy bodies emphasise that physical fetching of a child will have a preventative effect, but that such a means, out of consideration for the child, should only be used in extreme cases or as the last resort. Many of the consultancy bodies expressed that clear conditions must be included in the law to cover the use of such a measure, and that the actual picking up of the child needs to be done in a considerate manner. Some bodies mention that childcare professionals need to be present when picking up a child in this manner.

The Ombudsman for Children and The Association of Norwegian Crisis Centres are ambivalent about supporting such a measure. The Ombudsman for Children stresses, as do several other bodies, that one needs better documentation of the state of affairs in this area.

About half of the consultancy bodies who have commented are against the proposal from the majority, among others *some of the County Governors, Justisdepartementet (The Ministry of Justice), Barne-, ungdoms- og familiedirektoratet (The Child, Youth and Family Directorate), Den norske Dommerforening (The Norwegian Association of*

Judges), *Landsgruppen av helsesøstre NSF* (The National Association of Public Health Nurses NSF), *Redd Barna* (Save the Children), *Alternativ til Vold* (Alternatives to Violence) and *barnerettsgruppa ved det juridiske fakultetet i Tromsø* (The Children's Rights Group at the Legal Faculty of the University of Tromsø). As a reason for their position they say that physically picking up the child would be experienced as very dramatic for the child, leading to possible psychological difficulties, and /or that the rule will increase the level of conflict between the parents. Many express that such an enforcement rule expresses a parent perspective not a child perspective, and that it is a paradox that the parent with visiting rights is under no similar pressure to show up. Several of the consultancy bodies stress that fines and the opportunity to retry the question of custody should the custodial parent deny the other parent visitation rights are enough of a deterrent. Many also express that mediation should be available and help services need to be active interventionists in such cases.

The government's evaluation and conclusion

One may question whether the current regulations are preventative enough and/or help decrease the number of cases where a custodial parent denies visiting rights. As several of the consultancy bodies pointed out, we lack a solid understanding of the actual situation today, and we lack an understanding of the effects the current methods achieve, an understanding of why contracted visitation rights are not fulfilled and the scope of the problem.

Issues where there is a problem fulfilling the agreed-upon conditions for visitation may be very diverse and complex. There may be reasons related to the situation of the child, the custodial parent or the parent with visiting rights, and often a combination of these. The problem may stem from a high conflict level between the parents, who may have different forms of communication and cooperation difficulties. The child may also resist spending time with the parent with visiting rights.

A current research project carried out by Statistics Norway/Agder Research, commissioned by BLD, concerning children who have little contact with one of his or her parents, will analyse which factors contribute to a higher risk for little contact between parents with visiting rights and their children, and the researchers will try to dis-

cern how much the level of conflict between the two parents plays a role. The first part of the investigation will be finished by the end of December 2008, while the qualitative part of the project will be finished by the summer of 2009.

Results from this and other investigations should throw more light on the problems regarding enforcement of the right of visitation. More information may give a better foundation for purposeful measures. A section of the Psychological Institute at the University of Oslo is also planning to look carefully at the process of picking up children who are to be placed outside the home under the care of the Child Protection Services.

The government would like however to map out some possible alternatives.

There seems to be a need for a broader repertoire of means of intervention in these cases, including measures that can serve to lower the level of conflict between parents and help them to cooperate on behalf of the child. Long-term, deadlocked conflicts between parents are harmful to children and can also reduce the care-giving capacity of the parents. Mediation and access to holistic aid from the whole of the help services (Family Counselling Agencies, Psychological Health Services, NAV (The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration) may be well able to reduce the level of conflict between parents and strengthen the possibility of following through on visitation rights. There is help to be found for cooperation between parents under the auspices of the Family Counselling Agencies and other institutions. This kind of help can make it possible for parents to distinguish between their roles as parents and ex-partners. It is also possible to arrange for supervised visitation at this stage; custodial parents and/or children will then feel safer in case there is an actual problem with regards to visitation.

At the same time, it is important to ensure that the handling of such cases in court is careful and defensible, which will make it possible to separate out the cases for which mediation would not be appropriate or in which the visitation rights should not be enforced because of "impossibility", as when to do so would lead to serious psychological problems for the child. Such cases where there are exceptional reasons to try the case again, should be channelled into a new hearing in court.

Physical picking up of the child as a possible coercive means when the terms of the visitation are not being met may possibly have a preventa-

tive effect and lead to more agreements being fulfilled. That would be positive. However, such a measure needs to be weighed against other considerations. There is the danger that the opportunity to pick the child up, or the actual following through of the enforcement measure could have a negative effect on the child's psyche or be an unacceptable psychological burden on the custodial parent in a situation that already may be desperate. This may have a serious negative effect on the overall care-giving situation surrounding the child. Physical picking up of the child may also increase the conflict level and have a negative effect on any future cooperative efforts of the parents. Such an intervention can make it difficult for the child and/or the custodial parent to feel secure. The intervention can also be problematic with respect to the fact that visitations are recurring events and that the nature of visitation changes over time.

On the basis of this the government would like, in addition to the existing interventions, alternatives to the proposal from the Commission that might be better suited to promote the fulfilment of visitation rights in cases where the visitation is not able to be carried out as agreed. The government would also like to point out that the work to ensure that settlements and verdicts are solid and good is important in preventing difficult cases from developing.

5.7.5 Other proposed initiatives

The government sees securing a satisfactory life situation for children after a family breakup as an important goal. Negative relations and poor cooperation between parents has a negative influence on both adults and children; it is important to strengthen the services and opportunities for help in this area.

Such measures may be initiated at many levels. There are legal and economic measures, conflict reduction measures between parents, or offers of help and support both before and after a breakup. In order to facilitate positive and close contact between a child and both its parents after a breakup, interventions must be implemented that can reduce the level of conflict in situations where parents cannot put the past behind them.

- In its concluding notes, The Men's Panel advises that the Children's Act be amended to be based more on equality in parenting. The government will review which amendments might best ensure such equality in parenting

with the best interests of the child at the centre. This evaluation will also take into consideration the Children's Act Commission's review of the Act (NOU 2008:9) with its subsequent round of hearings and the recommendations of the Men's Panel.

- Measures must be implemented to help parents make more use of the established services for conflict resolution and parental cooperation, such as the mediation system. Married parents who have children under 16 years of age, must attend mandatory mediation sessions before they are allowed to file for separation. Cohabiting parents with children under the age of 16 years of age must also attend mediation before they leave the relationship. Parents who want questions about the children decided in court must first attend mediation before the lawsuit can be filed. The intention of mediation is for the parents to come to an agreement about parental responsibility, the residence of the child, and what kinds of visiting rights should be set up. The Men's panel suggests that the mediation system as it exists today, should be re-evaluated. Today's arrangement with one obligatory hour of mediation plus up to six voluntary hours should be sufficient to work through the central problems regarding the arrangements for the children. The main challenge today lies in getting parents to use the mediation system better. The system of mediation was last changed in January 2007. At that time obligatory mediation was brought in for cohabiting parents of children under 16 years of age, and the number of hours available was changed. The system must be evaluated in order to see if it works as planned.
- The Ministry of Children and Equality works with problems related to how the conflict level within the family can be reduced after a breakup, such as how one can reduce the number of lawsuits that find their way into court.
- Measures must be implemented to lower the level of conflict between parents in connection with a family breakup and during the ensuing collaboration regarding the responsibility for the children. Parent mediation and other conflict resolution techniques can help parents to separate issues: conflicts regarding parental responsibility and cooperation for the good of the children on the one hand, and conflicts that are purely between the adults on the other. Offers of help to improve conflict resolution

and improve parental cooperation after a breakup can be an important contribution to a situation where fewer children have to grow up under the stress of long-term and harmful con-

flicts between the parents. The Family Counselling Agencies need to be a central figure in this work.

6 Men, lifestyle and health

6.1 Introduction

Women suffer – men die is a new book about public health from a gender perspective. The title is a good summary of the health differences between men and women. Boys / men have a higher risk of death than girls / women right from the first year of life. However, absenteeism from work because of illness and the use of preventative and other health services is lower among boys/men than girls/women. Although the difference in life expectancy between men and women has lessened in the last decades, statistics from 2007 still show that women have a five-year higher life expectancy than men. There are also gender differences in cause of death that cannot be contributed solely to biological factors, but are connected to social situations and lifestyle where also cultural expectations of men and boys play a role.

Men have a more positive evaluation of their own health than women do. There are factual reasons for this discrepancy, but illness is also perceived and/or accepted in different ways by men and women. The attitude that admitting illness or weak health is contrary to the stereotypical male ideal is still prevalent. In the Gender Equality Survey, more men than women express that they are satisfied with their body, and fewer men report having such ailments as headache, backache, pain in the shoulders etc. At the same time, more men than women report that they experience a reduction in their quality of life or low quality of life because of illness.

Much of the Norwegian research done on men and how they handle illness is of a qualitative nature. The results of this research indicate that there is a typical male way of handling illness that is unfortunate for the man himself. This shows up in three major arenas: in social contact, in work, and in the use of health services. Looking at the statistics according to gender, however, can be misleading. Many of the differences that often are explained by gender may have other causes such as age, socio-economic status and marital status. There is a fundamental principle in society that all people, regardless of gender, residence or any

other factor shall have equal access to health and care services. However, there are specific challenges with respect to male and female health issues, and these must be met with both knowledge and resources. Gender-specific information on health, illness and the use of health service is important in order to be able to offer appropriate preventative measures, treatment, care and rehabilitation services for men and women.

The health and care services must also have a gender perspective. Many men suffering from cancer feel that male doctors are too quick and too brusque. These men prefer to go to female doctors. A diagnosis of cancer can be very difficult to deal with if the communication with the health professionals is not good and leads to a lack of proper information. Men do not know what they can expect, what is normal, and how they should react.

The Men's Panel has also pointed out in its conclusion that there are many gender differences that show up in the area of health. They have proposed that research in this area be strengthened, and that measures to reduce these differences be outlined. The Panel also asks for a clearer gender perspective in the field. The government is of the opinion that it is necessary to obtain information on the causes of gender differences in health. A gender perspective in the health and care services would give all the users of the services better information about health and lifestyle that would make both genders more aware of how gender affects health.

Health is a concept that can be interpreted in several ways. The Central Statistics Board (SSB) has attempted to find out what "most people" understand about the concept health through depth interviews. People of different genders gave the concept different meanings. It was revealed through these interviews that people in Norway understand the concept of health primarily as physical and mental health, but also a healthy lifestyle and being in shape. Usually one sees health as a characteristic of an individual, but one can also see health as an expression of the relationship between the individual and the indi-

vidual's environment. Understood in this way, health is not an objective concept, but is also dependent on what kind of expectations the individual has of his or her own body, the health services and the environment in general.

The state of the health in the general population and differences between people in various socio-demographic groups is evaluated according to a number of indices. Self-evaluation is one; life-situation evaluation and professional evaluation from medical professionals are others.

According to statistics, men have a higher risk of death than women—at certain ages, double the risk or more. More men than women die because of accidents, and many more men than women take their own life. However, this gender difference is shrinking, primarily because men are now less prone to die of heart disease and related illnesses. Life expectancy in 2005 was 78,1 years for newborn boys and 82,5 for newborn girls, an increase of almost five and a half years for men and three and a half years for women since the period 1976-1980. This is also a result of gender equality and the shrinking of lifestyle differences between men and women. As time goes on there are fewer typically male and female phenomena. Heart problems have for years been considered as a typical male phenomenon, but in 2000 women comprised all of 46% of the people who died of heart attacks, according to numbers from the Central Statistics Board.

Women live longer, but often suffer more years of ailments than men. More women than men report that they have chronic or recurring pain in their bodies, that they have headaches/migraines, that they are fatigued, that they have problems sleeping and suffer from a series of other psychological and physical symptoms. Women have more absenteeism from work because of illness than men, and they tend to have more long-term, chronic illnesses.

How can these gender differences be explained? To a certain degree, gender differences in health can be explained by biological factors. But they are also connected to different types of behaviour among men and women. In the research, a hypothesis has been proposed that girl children cry more than boy children because they experience pain differently. Tears also express a desire for comfort from the environment. A possible biological explanation for gender differences leads therefore to gender differences in behaviour. Without a doubt, variations in the types of diseases women and men get can be

explained by social factors as well. Men are equally genetically disposed to uncontrollable overeating as women, but women suffer from this illness twice as often as men. Almost one out of ten women is a chronic overeater. This must be explained by social factors.

To the extent that behavioural changes may give men a more objective view of their own health, it is important to support such desired changes. Stereotypical gender roles and traditional assumptions about masculinity may hinder such changes being made. Men should for example, be more careful about protecting themselves from the sun. But despite warnings from health authorities, many boys and men think it is "girlish" to put on protective sun lotion. Wherever there are obstacles to desired change, possibly in the form of inherited perceptions, an effort must be made to remove those obstacles. One must evaluate this according to observed gender differences.

Gender differences in life expectancy, reported illness and quality of life and use of health services may be due to biological factors, but they are most certainly also influenced heavily by social factors.

6.1.1 Life expectancy

During recent years men have had a greater increase in life expectancy than women, and the distance between the genders is shrinking. The difference between life expectancy for men and women has been reduced by a third during the past 20 years. In 2006, the average woman could expect to live 4.5 years longer than a man. A higher life expectancy does not however mean the same as more "healthy" years to live. For some it actually means several more years with declining health or functional problems. One's state of health declines with age and the instances of injury or illness multiply.

Estimations of life expectancy, with good health or without reduced functioning, shows that men may live shorter lives, but tend to have more healthy years of life than women. "Healthy Life Years" (HLY) is an indicator that measures how many years a person of a particular age can reckon on living without any functional problems. These calculations show that life expectancy including good health is on average 66.3 years for men and 64.2 years for women in 2003. When these figures are put next to the ones for general life expectancy one can see that on average 11 of

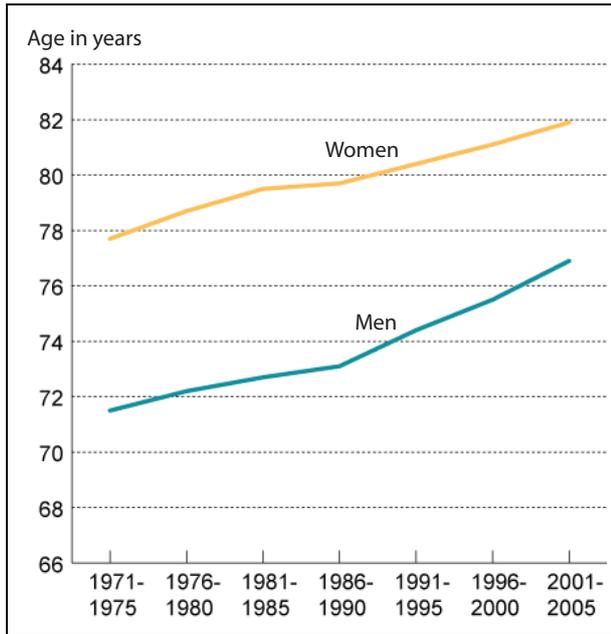


Figure 6.1 Life expectancy from birth 1971 – 2005. Men and women

Source: Central Board of Statistics

the last years of life for men and just under 18 years of women’s lives will be years when health problems set limits for the quality of life. (<http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu>).

Why differences in life expectancy between women and men have declined in recent decades

may be due to a number of medical and social reasons. The risk of infant deaths has been substantially reduced since 1990, and in parallel with this positive development has come reduced differences between the genders. The trend in the risk of death for infant boys and girls is shown in Figure 6.2.

6.1.2 Self-evaluation of health and quality of life by men

More men than women consider their own health as good or very good. This applies to men and women in different age groups, but differences are greatest among those over 67 years.

Self-evaluation of health is a stable assessment that, according to several studies, may be able to predict the risk of death. There have been small changes in how women and men evaluate their own health in the past decade. Although there are percentage-wise fewer elderly people who say that their health is good, it is in this group that we see the most positive development. Among older men, and to a certain extent among older women, the last decade has seen a bettering. (*Health and Life conditions survey, SSB*)

The state of the nation’s health was also measured when men and women were asked in the *living conditions survey* whether they experience illness or ailments in everyday life that influence them in some or a major way. The responses cor-

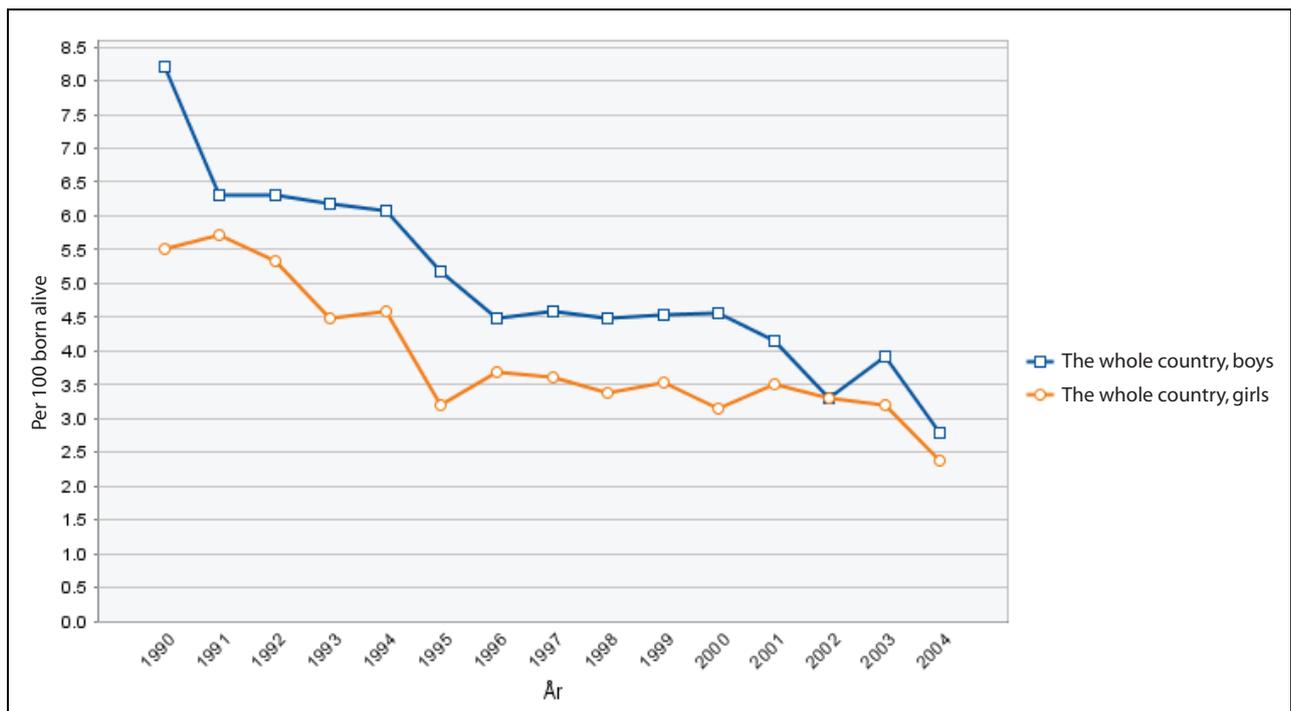


Figure 6.2 Risk of Death for infants 1990-2004

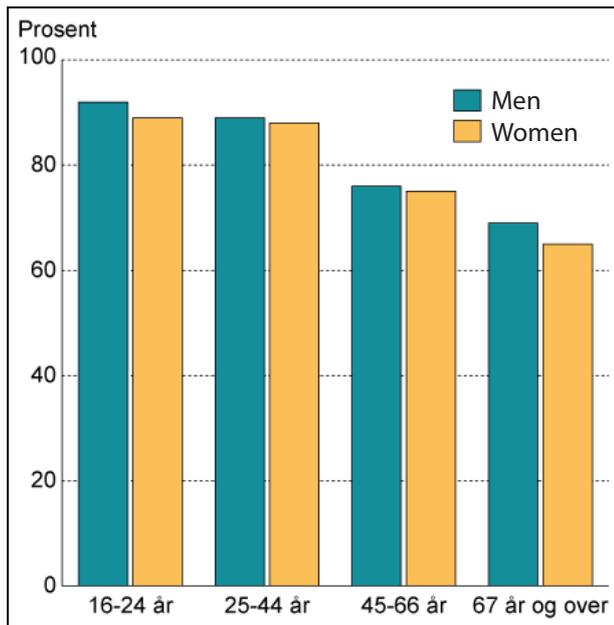


Figure 6.3 Men and women with good or very good health in different age groups. Percent. 2005

Source: Central Board of Statistics

relate with the self-evaluations. Fewer men than women report ailments that influence them negatively.

The Gender Equality Survey shows the same basic picture as the *living conditions survey*. Men consistently report better quality of life and health

than women. The survey also shows, not surprisingly, that there is a positive connection between regular physical activity and general personal health. Another discovery is a positive correlation between the quality of life a man experiences and the level of gender equality in the couple relationship. Compared to the national average, men who live in equal partnerships report better health and quality of life.

6.1.3 Gender differences in occurrence of illness and illness diagnosis

Gender is both biology and culture, and even if the biological similarities between men and women are greater than the differences, men and women distinguish themselves from each other on a number of points. One obvious difference is in the area of reproduction. Women get pregnant, give birth and breastfeed babies. Some of the differences in health problems between men and women may be caused by biology and genetics, but in many cases biology is only one causal factor to be considered when looking at gender differences in health. How notions of femininity and masculinity are socially and culturally formed also plays a role in understanding and explaining why men and women have health failure in different ways, and why risk of death is different for men and women. “There is probably no characteristic

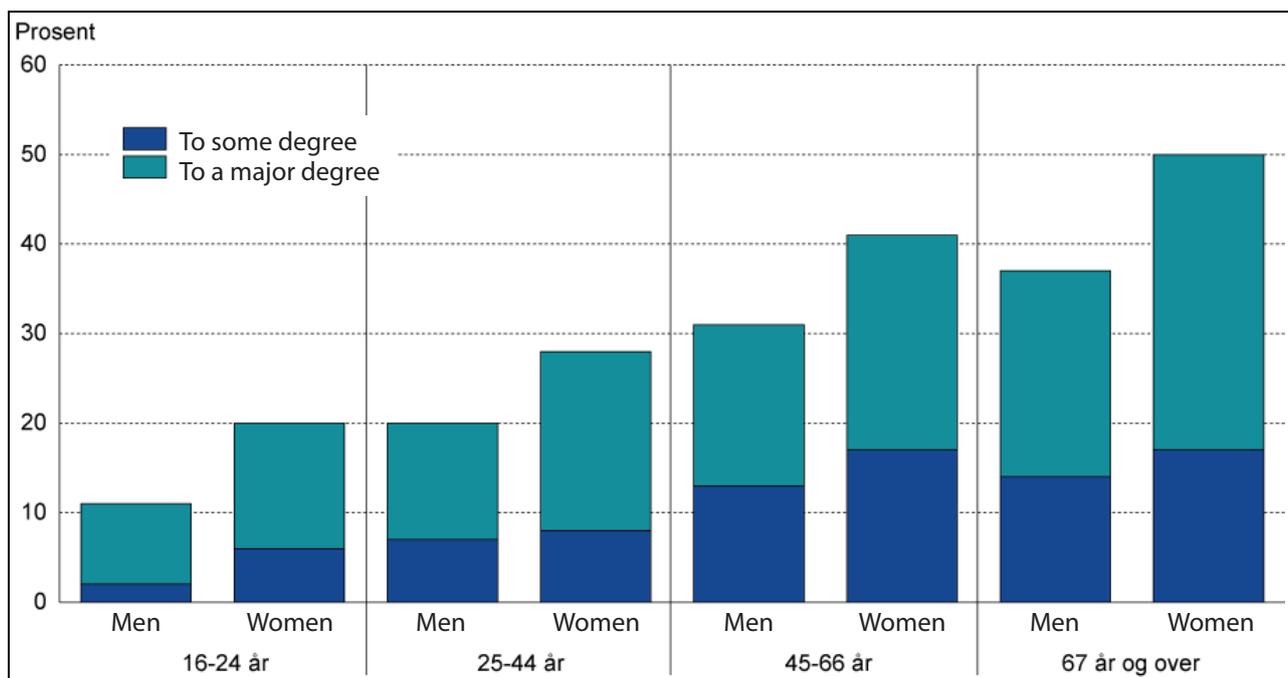


Figure 6.4 Percentage with illness that influences everyday life in some or to a major degree. Men and women, in different age categories. 2005

Source: Central Board of Statistics

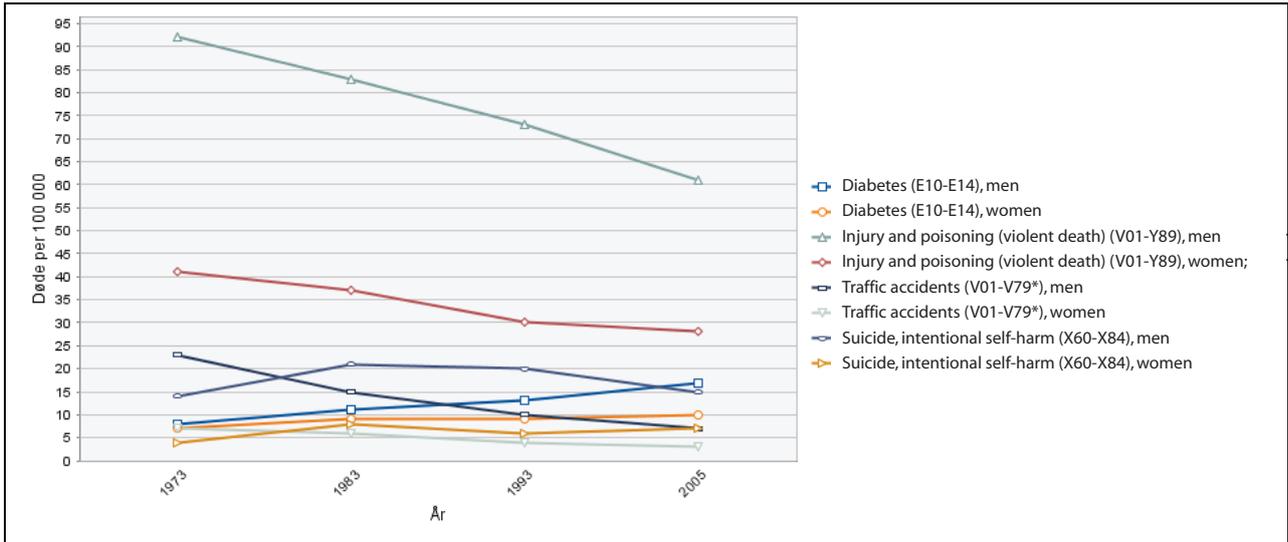


Figure 6.5 Changes in cause of death 1973 – 2005, selection of causes of death.

Source: Norwegian Institute of Public Health

that has more and more important implications for health problems and resources throughout life as gender,” write researchers Mæland and Haugland. Men die earlier than women; women suffer longer. This may perhaps have a connection with the fact that women suffer from more illnesses that are not fatal. Women also experience more suffering from the same illnesses that also attack men. From the first year of life, the risk of death is greater for boys. Higher risk of death among younger and middle-aged men may also stem from the fact that men tend to underestimate and

under-communicate their suffering. This may mean that they don’t get the treatment they need in time and die early. Men also have a lifestyle that increases the risk of accidents and death.

Although differences have declined over the last 30 years, there are still large gender differences when it comes to cause of death. Men are over-represented in the group that die as a result of accidents, injuries or suicide (violent death). Figure 6.5 shows the developments in recent decades. One special feature is the increase in the number of men who die as a result of diabetes. A special chal-

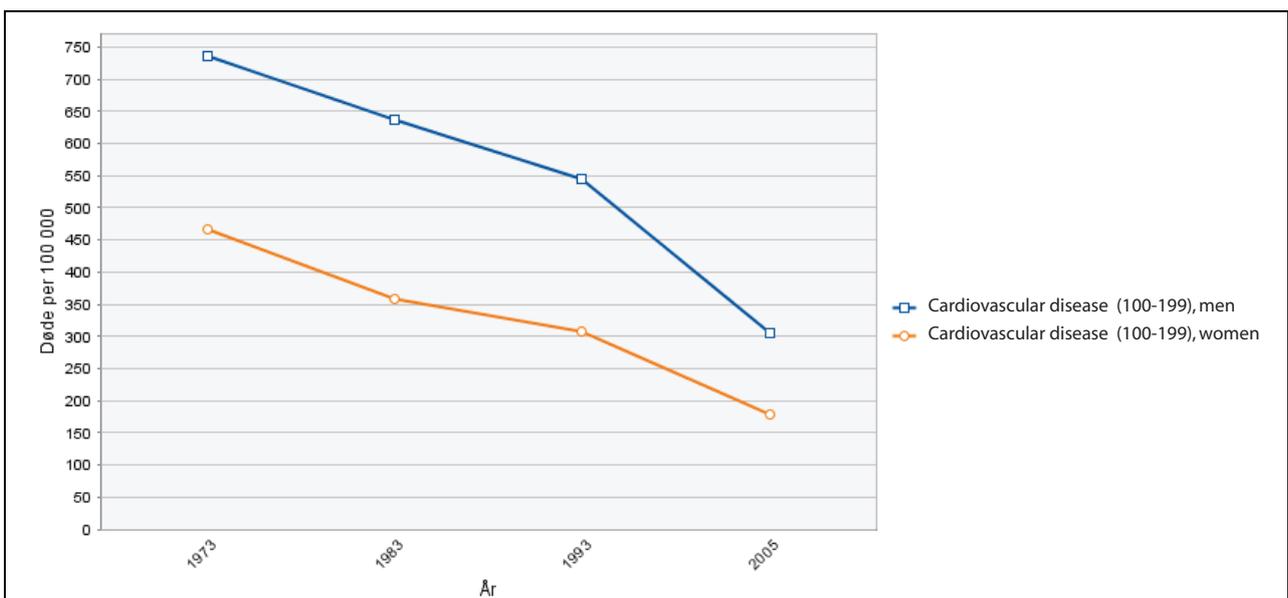


Figure 6.6 Death as a consequence of cardiovascular disease 1973—2005, men and women.

Source: Norwegian Institute of Public Health

Table 6.1 Percentage who have suffered from various symptoms over a 3 month period. Women and men 16-24 years.2005

Have in the last three months been experiencing	Men	Women
pain in the body	10	17
headache or migraine	16	30
itching or burning	3	8
nausea or digestive trouble	5	12
dizziness or poor balance	3	9
anxiety or phobias	2	6
a feeling of being “down” or depressed	5	13
irritability or aggression	7	12
concentration problems	10	12
sleep problems	7	14
tiredness or lack of energy	12	29

Source: Central Board of Statistics

lenge here is trying to understand and deal with the increase of diabetes among younger men.

Cardiovascular disease can be tied to men and masculinity. In 2005 such diseases are still more prevalent as a cause of death for men than for women. Better medicinal treatment and campaigns to improve public health have reduced the risk of death as a consequence of cardiovascular disease the last 30 years, but the gender differences are still substantial.

Population surveys show that men experience illness symptoms to a far lesser degree than women. This applies particularly in the youngest age groups, and the results closely match the results from the Gender Equality Survey in 2007 and data from general practitioner surveys. When the population is older, these gender differences decline somewhat, and among persons over 45 years of age, men report a larger number of symptoms than women.

During the interviews in the *Survey on Health and Living Conditions 2005*, more men than women in the age range 45-66 say that they have diabetes. There are also more men than women who go to the doctor for diabetes (SEDA). This is for both types of diabetes. Regular GP's write out more prescriptions for men over 40 years with diabetes, than for women of the same age (prescription registry, FHI). Among younger people there is little difference between men and women. Diabetes increases the risk of heart attack, and men often have heart attacks earlier than women. The incidence increases dramatically with age. In the age group

45-66 years there are four times as many men as women who say that they have had a heart attack. Registration records from regular GP's show that twice as many men as women of all ages go to the doctor with heart attack symptoms. (SEDA)

6.1.4 Absenteeism due to illness

If we correct for gender differences in work participation we see that men are less likely to take

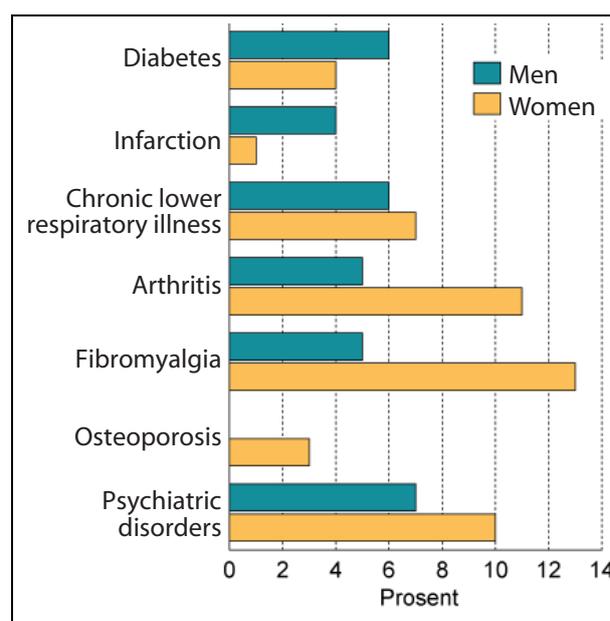


Figure 6.7 Incidence of specific illnesses. Men and women 45-66 years. Percent. 2005

Source: Central Board of Statistics

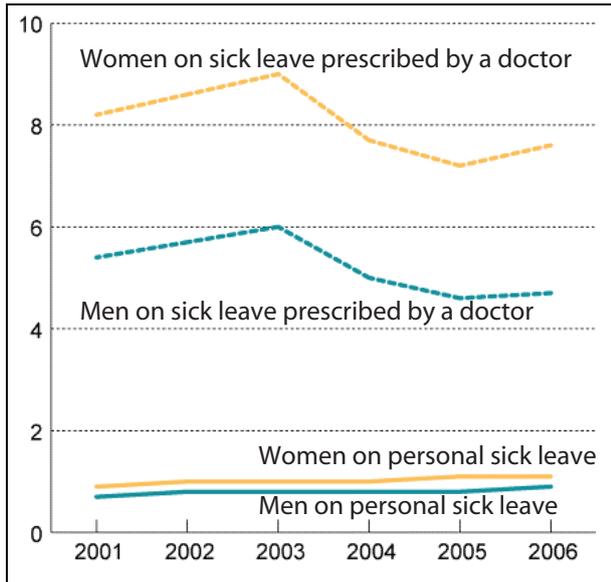


Figure 6.8 Lost work days because of personal and doctor-prescribed sick-days for employees aged 16-69 years, in percent of daily work hours. Quarterly figures. Women and men 200-2006.

Source: Central Board of Statistics

time off from work because of illness. When we look at the total number of sick-days (both personal and doctor-prescribed) the numbers also show that men have less absenteeism from work due to illness.

The gender differences in the use of leave of absence due to illness (sick-leave practice) also show up in SSB's statistics over absenteeism due to illness, which show that 7,6 % of female employees and 4,3 of male employees had doctor-prescribed absenteeism from work in 2006. The use of personal sick days is about 1 % of both genders, though somewhat lower for men than for women.

The Gender Equality Survey confirmed most of the discoveries that have earlier been made in patient and population surveys. These finds can be summarised in the following way:

- A larger portion of those with higher education exercise and keep fit, women somewhat more than men
- Men generally feel somewhat better about their bodies than women
- Somewhat more women than men say that they suffer from various psychological and physical problems like depression, anxiety, stress, backache and lowered libido.
- Women seem to suffer more problems and discomfort from being overweight.

In the Gender Equality Survey, people over 65 years of age seem to be more comfortable and satisfied with their own body than younger age groups (over 18 years). The survey further confirms a tendency, that has been indicated in other survey, that men (and women) with higher education exercise more often and complain of fewer physical and mental problems than groups with other educational backgrounds.

6.2 Use of health services

Health services should give equal service to the whole population without regard to gender. At the same time, the way in which men and women seem to use the health services is different. The differences may be due to differences in the incidence of certain symptoms, but they may also be due to differences in the way men and women interpret the signals from their bodies.

6.2.1 Use of primary health services

The general practitioner/ regular GP often represent the first meeting a user has with the health services. During childhood and the teenage years, the school health services or public health centres are also important services. Both services are central to illness prevention and wellness work and offer, among other things, individual counselling. A survey of the system of general practitioners shows that men go to the doctor's office less than women. About 65% of the men and 75% of the women seek out their GP in the course of one year. When we look at specific groups, we see that the differences are even greater. For single people between the ages of 25- 44 the difference between men and women is twenty percentage points. In the age group 45-66, there are 105 more women who have been to the general practitioner. In the group of people over 67, there are about equal numbers of men and women who have been to the doctor in the past year. However, among single people over the age of 67, there is a percentage difference of ten points between men and women. Single men seem to face particular challenges in being able to interpret their own body signals, evaluate their state of health and seek out their regular GP.

When we look at how often people have contact with their GP, the gender differences are very clear. Percentagewise there are twice as many women as men who have gone to the general

Table 6.2 Percentage that have been to a general practitioner the past year, and the percentage that has been to the general practitioner five or more times the past year. Men and women and family phase. 2005

		Visited the general practitioner	More than five visits to the general practitioner
All	Men	65	11
	Women	75	18
Single 16–24 years living with parents	Men	60	6
	Women	70	10
Single 16–24 years, living on own	Men	55	5
	Women	77	14
Single 25–44 years	Men	60	7
	Women	79	21
Couples 16–44 years without children	Men	58	7
	Women	73	17
Single parents	Men	64	8
	Women	74	24
Couples with children who are 0–6 years	Men	60	7
	Women	67	16
Couples with children who are 7–19 years	Men	60	11
	Women	68	15
Couples 45–66 years without children	Men	71	14
	Women	83	19
Couples 67 years and older without children	Men	81	19
	Women	74	16
Single 45–66 years	Men	69	18
	Women	79	24
Single 67 years and older	Men	74	21
	Women	81	19

Source: Survey on Health and Living Conditions, Central Statistics Bureau

practitioner more than five times the previous year. A report from NAV shows that women between the ages of 20–40 have almost twice as many consultations with their doctor than men in the same age group. This may be explained by the fact that women in their productive years go to the doctor more often in connection with contraception, pregnancy, problems with the reproductive system etc. The survey also shows that men and women over the age of 40 seem to visit the outpatient clinic to the same degree.

After the age of 45 we see a declining difference in the way men and women use the health services. Men over 45 who live in a couple relationships seem to go to the doctor more often than men who live alone, but not more often than women in the same phase of life. After retirement there are more men than women who have been to the doctor five or more times the past year.

6.2.2 The use of specialist health services

One out of four women and one out of five men have gone to a specialist at a hospital the past year (Survey on Health and Living conditions 2005). Percentagewise there are more women in their reproductive years than men of the same age who have been to a specialist, including specialists at the hospital and in private practice. Leaving out visits in connection with pregnancy and birth brings the female percentage down. Even so, there are more women than men who are referred to a specialist by their doctor (SEDA). The differences between men and women get smaller with age. Among children in the age range 2–14 there are relatively more boys than girls who are referred to specialist health services.

Patient statistics show that men and women have different uses of hospital services, although

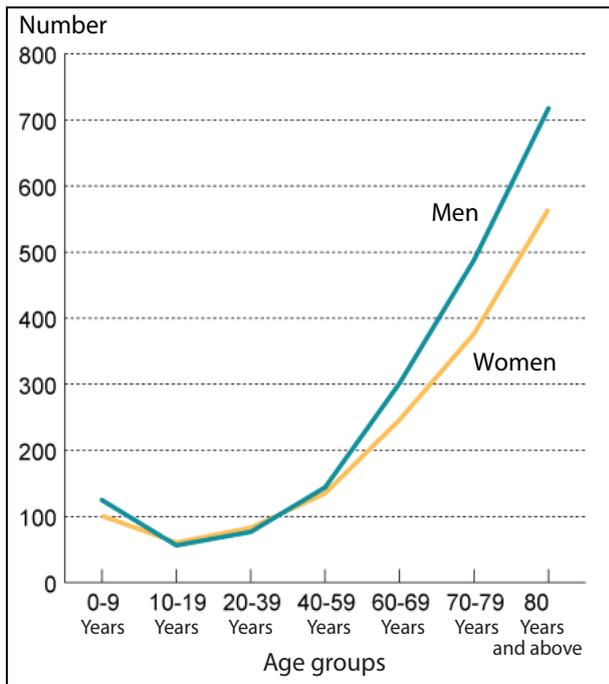


Figure 6.9 Full days stays at somatic hospitals per 1000 people by gender and age. Stays related to pregnancy are not included. 2006

Source: Central Board of Statistics

different use is not the same as being treated differently. Men and women do not always have similar health problems; what the hospital can offer different groups of patients cannot be indiscriminately interpreted as a lack of gender equality. However, data that shows these differences in usage can be a starting point for further studies of gender equality in the hospital sector.

In 2006 there were slightly over 820 000 resident days at somatic hospitals for persons living in Norway. Women stood for 54.3 % of the time spent. The average time per stay however, is about the same for both genders and has remained constant over many years. In 2006 the average stay was 5 days for men and 5.1 days for women. But since women also have more stays it means that men have fewer resident days in hospital per year.

Cardiovascular disease is the most common cause of staying overnight for men and comprises 18% of their hospital stays. Ischemic heart disease like cardiac infarction and angina pectoris (heart cramp) are the most common diagnoses. Men have almost twice as many hospital stays as women for heart disease. Diseases of the brain, like stroke, are almost just as frequent as a cause of admittance for both genders.

6.3 Reporting of illness by men

Traditional masculinity has focused on strength, self-control, self-mastery, endurance, the ability to act assertively and contempt for physical pain. This has consequences for male health. Men seek out health services less frequently than women, something researchers interpret as an attempt to trivialise or deny the problem. To be sick and weak threatens masculine ideals and often leads men to retreat and suffer in silence when they get health problems. Boys and men have long been socialised to hide their weaknesses and learn to control and suppress emotions, vulnerability and tears. Big boys don't cry, as the saying goes.

The Gender Equality Survey shows that young boys rarely use traditional information channels when they need help or knowledge about something. Boys feel they need to solve the problem on their own and find it not masculine to talk about it. This also applies to sex and relationships. The existing help services are judged by boys to be very girl-oriented and not relevant to their problems. Only 5-10% of the users of the available help and information services for teenagers are boys. But boys make up about 50% of those who use health related Internet and telephone services for youth. Boys obviously need just as much help and information as girls.

Researcher Lilleaas has interviewed men who have had heart attacks and puts forth the premise that a deeply ingrained male *provider logic* lies at the base of how men look at their body, their health and illness. Those interviewed showed through what they said about their job, career and family provider responsibility that they always have seen themselves as the main provider of the family, even though most of them had wives who worked full-time. Many of the men had worked a great deal. The picture they describe of their bodies before the heart attack is of a "strong, enduring and always working body", writes Lilleaas. The men report proudly that they had never missed a day of work because of illness until the heart attack. This side of traditional masculinity becomes a real problem when it leads men to overlook illness symptoms. However, these same characteristics can influence the course of treatment and rehabilitation in a positive way. One study has shown that these very masculine men show a greater degree of recovery from the time they were admitted to the hospital to one year after being released. The ability to tolerate adversity and show the will to overcome obstacles is

also part of the foundation of the image of masculinity.

When men interpret illness as a sign of weakness, something that threatens a man's identity as a proper workingman and hurts his pride as one who never falls ill, they often keep their health problems to themselves. In the "Fatigue Project", where male engineers and leaders were interviewed on how they handled being tired and worn out, researchers Lilleaas and Widerberg found that the way many of the men initially spoke in the interviews gave the impression that they never had had any health problems. It was only towards the end of the interview that they revealed that they had experienced a number of signals that their bodies were being overtaxed. Many suffered from typical stress symptoms which they had not shared with anyone, not even their closest family members. In Chapters 4 and 5 it is pointed out that younger men are the group that works the most overtime. Younger men are also the ones who suffer most from symptoms of chronic fatigue. There was a strong connection made between this fatigue and night shifts, overtime and the like, where men are over-represented. Being chronically tired can lead to an increased risk of accidents.

A study of men who have had heart attacks shows that one common characteristic of all the men was that they didn't talk to other people about how they were feeling. Men resist talking about their own health and consequently under-report illness. Many don't admit that they have any pain or ailments. They go less often to the doctor and don't receive treatment. This means that many men live with problems that could have been treated. For example, prostate infections (prostates) are male health problem that also affect younger men. The illness arises from a bacterial infection and causes various degrees of pain in the lower abdomen. Studies show that young men hesitate to seek help for such vague problems. But by avoiding seeking help they bring much bigger problems upon themselves. Even more serious is when men avoid going to the doctor with symptoms that later turn out to be signs of fatal illness.

More men than women get cancer, and more men than women die of cancer. Men die more often even from types of cancer that normally strike women. Malignant moles are more prevalent among women, but more men die from this form of cancer. The cancer has usually spread by the time the men discover the problem. Accord-

ing to the Cancer Society, the most important reason why more men die is that they wait too long before they go to the doctor. Men either don't feel the symptoms or they don't take them seriously. Many men even overlook symptoms of cardiovascular disease. Many of the men interviewed by researcher Lilleaas had symptoms like pain in the arm or neck and actually felt really unwell. But many of the men trivialised the symptoms or overlooked them because they had too much to do at work. It becomes a gender equality policy challenge when such collective attitudes lead men to avoid health services. Such attitudes must be changed so that men will seek out health services when their body tells them to do so.

6.3.1 Psychiatric health

The healthier a life the men had, the fewer psychological problems they experienced that required intervention. Patient surveys show that women are the ones who experience the most common psychological problems more often, although the problems seem to be expressed in different ways by the two genders. Researcher Dahl describes it in the following manner: "Women and men represent two distinct images of suffering. Women's psychological illnesses are dominated by emotional disturbance and individual misery, while men's psychological problems are more characterised by behavioural difficulties which have big consequences for those closest to them." Studies also show that the two genders have different ideas about what they experience as psychological stress. Women put the most emphasis on problems with relationships and loss, while men report that economic problems, loss of work or problems at work as contributing most to psychological stress.

The reluctance to talk about problems can have the same types of consequences for psychological health as for somatic illness. Many who suffer from anxiety do not go to the doctor. This applies especially to men, who do not talk about such problems because they clash with the idea that to be manly is to be unafraid. Differences between men and women in the case of depression may be explained by looking at the differing abilities of men and women to talk about their emotions. The greatest difference we see between men and women with regards to psychological illnesses is in looking at minor depression. Many more women than men suffer from minor depression. Serious depression is more evenly distrib-

uted between the genders, as is bipolar disease (manic-depressiveness). Men tend to want to take care of minor depression themselves and do not seek out health services for help. Unfortunately the problem then gets treated too little or too late, and others do not become aware of the problem until the man attempts suicide or succeeds in taking his own life.

6.3.2 Suicide

Women attempt suicide 10-20 times more often than men. But many more men than women succeed in taking their own lives. We especially see young men with psychiatric disturbances, addicts, alcoholics and older, lonely and depressed men among these statistics. There were 359 men and 170 women who chose suicide in 2004; there are virtually twice as many men as women. This difference has been previously even greater, but from 2003 to 2004 the number of female suicides increased, while the number of male suicides decreased slightly. The explanation of the large difference between suicide attempts and suicides lays in the methods that men and women tend to choose. Women more often take overdoses and survive. Men use more dramatic methods like shooting, hanging or drowning. Newer research indicates that this pattern may be changing, with more men taking overdoses and more women using violent methods like hanging.

6.4 The male lifestyle

The traditional image of masculinity works its way into men's habits in a way that influences their health and risk of death. This image affects nutrition, physical activity, tobacco use, sexual health, mind-altering substances and accident proneness.

Lifestyle habits contribute to gender and social health differences. If we want to decrease these differences we must take measures to make it simpler for everyone to acquire healthy habits. Structural initiatives mean more for public health on a large scale than initiatives primarily geared towards the individual. Normative means such as laws, regulations, guidelines and recommendations are essential, and the effect is greatest if measures targeting several arenas are combined and used simultaneously. Schools, workplaces, local neighbourhoods and health service institutions are large societal arenas where it is important to facilitate healthy lifestyle habits. These are

arenas where a large portion of the population spends time every day and can be reached.

6.4.1 Nutrition

When we compare food intake among different groups in the National Nutrition Survey, we see that men tend to eat more of most things than women. This is natural; the men had a 40% higher energy intake than women. This difference can be explained partly by the differing needs of the bodies of women and men. Still, it was the women who stood for a higher intake of vegetables, fruits and berries, skimmed milk, tea and wine.

A common practice among men is to go a long time without food, then eat a large meal. Many men think that fruit, vegetables and other healthy foods are not satisfying enough or do not give the energy they need. When a study of men and dieting was done by researcher Lien it was found that many of the men who participated in the study felt that healthy food was "ladies food". The idea that concern for nutrition is a female domain has been prevalent in our society, but this may be changing.

With increasing age, we tend to eat less of most kinds of food. This is especially true for types of food like sodas, sweets and snacks, where the consumption was four, five and six times greater among men in the age range 16-29 years than among men in the age range 60-79 years. Intake of foods like potatoes, vegetables and fish was on the other hand lower among the younger men. In 1997, *Norkost* showed that those with higher education and socio-economic status tended to have a healthier diet than those with less education and lower socio-economic status. Non-smokers and those who exercised regularly also had a healthier diet than smokers and people with sedentary lifestyles.

Men and women with at least 13 years of education had a higher intake of vegetables, fruit, fish, skimmed milk, tea, beer, wine and spirits and a lower intake of potatoes and low-fat milk than those with less than 13 years education. Men with a long period of education had a lower consumption of meat, whole milk, saturated fat, sugar, honey, sweets, snacks and sodas than men with a short education behind them. Both men and women with much education took vitamin and mineral supplements more often than those with less education.

Initiatives on the nutrition front are justified in the *Action Plan for Better Nutrition in Norway (2007- 2011)*

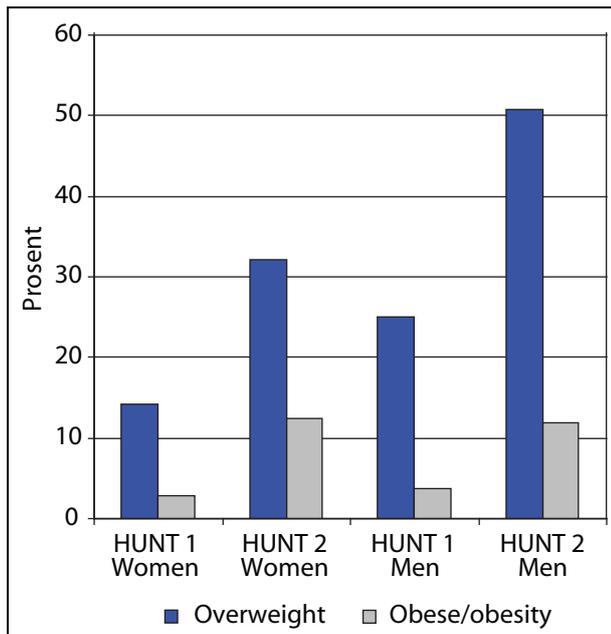


Figure 6.10 The development in the percent women and men in the age range 20-29 years that are overweight (KMI 25,0 – 29,9 kg/m²) or obese (KMI 30kg/m²) between HUNT 1 (1984-1986) and HUNT 2 (1995-1997)

As Figure 6.10 shows, half of men between 20 and 29 years of age are overweight. This is substantially more than among women. Among all those over 20 years of age the HUNT 2 shows that 53% of men and 40% of women can be characterized as being overweight. From the documentation from Nord-Trøndelag, we understand that there are differences in body weight between the sexes.

6.4.2 Physical Activity

In their so-called "Fatigue Project", Lilleaas and Widerberg discovered that many men saw their body as a machine that did not need maintenance, as something one used until it broke. This same attitude has been found among top athletes in a later survey.

In the Gender Equality Survey 2007 men and women are asked about their attitude towards their own body. Results show that men are more likely to be satisfied with their body than women are.

While 64% of men say they are completely or relatively in agreement with the statement "I feel good about my body", only 48% of women feel the same. Only 4.6% of men say they completely disagree with the statement (they did not feel good

about their bodies). The numbers may be an expression of substantial gender differences. But they may also indicate that men and women have different satisfaction thresholds for their opinions about their bodies. These numbers also seem to contradict the statistics about other factors that normally are seen to be negative, like obesity/overweight and the like.

When we look at physical activity we see that several Norwegian studies show that men exercise more often than women. The percentage of men between 40-42, who do hard physical labour however, has been halved to 15% during the period 1974-1994. The numbers for women are pretty stable at 3-4%. This may indicate that men have generally become less physically active at work. MMI studies in Norway shows that men tend not to train for reasons relating to gaining more energy, wellness, preventing illness, maintaining a correct weight or body shaping. The reasons men give for training are more often excitement and the possibility of comparing one's strength with others'. Both men and women with higher education exercise more than those with less education. This strong social factor is present in both genders.

The recommendation for adults is to have at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity daily. In order to get more adult males to do this, it is important to work deliberately to establish activities that have a low threshold for men. The preliminary results from "Green Prescription" scheme show that 76% of the participants are women. The popular, low threshold activities in the scheme, like training to music, staff walking and walking groups have not appealed to men. Men must be involved in developing and organising low threshold activities. The initiatives on this front are described in the Action Plan for Physical Activity 2005-2009.

6.4.3 Tobacco

Statistics show that smoking was the cause of death in over 6 700 cases in 2003. That corresponds to 16% of all deaths, 19% of male deaths and 14% of female deaths. The number of male deaths that can be attributed to smoking was 3700, and the number of female deaths was 3000. The number of deaths caused by smoking is increasing among women, while the number of men who smoke is going down.

In 1973 over half of the male population smoked, and about 30% of the female population

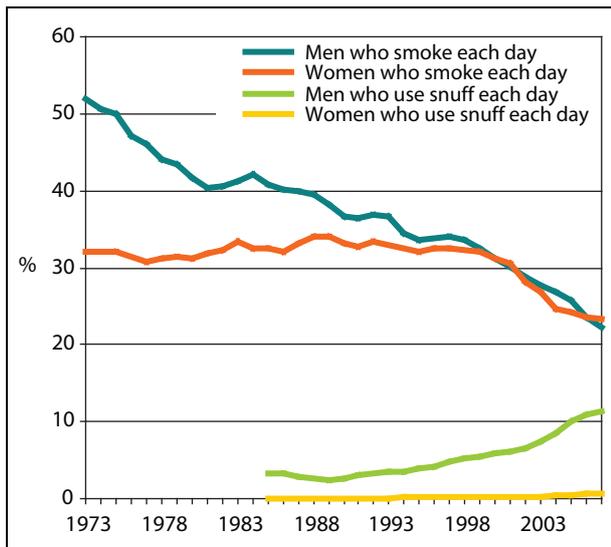


Figure 6.11 The development of the percentage of women and men in the age range 16-74 who smoke or use snuff daily, 1973 -2007

Source: Central Board of Statistics

did the same. This difference has contributed to the differences in the smoking related illnesses and deaths between women and men. In 2007 the number of men and women who smoked daily was about the same, about 22% of each gender. No differences among the younger generation were found.

Smoking is the behavioural factor that can most easily be correlated with one's state of health. It is the best documented and is also clearly marked by differences in social class. Smoking is much more prevalent in groups with lower education, lower income and manual labour as a profession. In recent years however, all socio-economic groups have seen a decline in the numbers of smokers. Among men the decline has generally been large and even. Among women there has been more variation.

With regard to the use of snuff, there are great differences between men and women. The daily use of snuff has increased among men from 3% in 1985 to 11%, while the percentage of women using snuff has never been more than 1%. This increase has been explosive among younger men. In the age group 16-34, the percentage of men using snuff has increased from 3% in 1985 to nearly 20% in 2007. Use of snuff in this age group has become almost as common as smoking. It is also in this group that there has been the greatest decline in those who smoke. These two statistics may easily be linked. Among women, the percentage of

smokers has gone down without any corresponding increase in the use of snuff.

The National Strategy for the Prevention of the Use of Tobacco in Norway 2006-2010 has a multifaceted perspective, looking at social inequality, gender and cultural background as it pertains to smoking habits. All of these perspectives are taken into account when the measures in the plan are conceived and implemented. Supervision of the plan, surveys and evaluations will also take these perspectives into account.

6.4.4 Boys and men – sexuality and sexual habits

Sexual habits are connected to gender and gender-based differences in the understanding and experience of sexuality. Cultural gender-based differences have historically influenced the sexual habits of both women and men. In the Gender Equality Survey both men and women were asked if they viewed their sex life as good or not. About half of both women and men rated their sex life as good or very good. There were more women than men who thought of their sex life as good, but there were also more women than men who were very dissatisfied with their sex life. Younger women and men were somewhat more satisfied than older people.

The sexual habits of men and women have grown more alike since the 1960's. Surveys indicate that it is generally women who have changed their behavioural pattern. Some factors that have been put forth to explain this phenomenon is: the work towards gender equality; an evening out of earlier differences in education, and easier access to contraceptives. It is important to have enough understanding of the sexual habits of a population in order to understand, predict and prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/Aids, Chlamydia, and herpes. Having a firm knowledge base may also help prevent unwanted pregnancies. Institute of Health has therefore examined the sexual habits of the Norwegian population with five years in between each survey, the first one being in 1987.

The great majority among women and men over 18 years of age report that they have sexual experience. Only 5% of women and 8% of men over 18 years said in 2002 that they had not had any sexual experience. In 2002 the average age of sexual debut for boys was 17.5 for boys, 17.1 for girls. The age of sexual debut for girls has not changed much since 1987 (the first year of the investiga-

tion) but has become 0.7 years lower for boys. One of five boys has had their sexual debut before the legal age of sexual consent (16 years). One of four girls has had their sexual debut at less than 16 years of age.

A good sex life is looked at by many as one of several very important criteria for quality of life, according to the Gender Equality Survey. Studies also show that many people are sexually active until quite late in life, although the percentage of people who are sexually active declines with age. In the oldest groups we find large gender differences. While 40% of men between 75 and 85 years of age reported being sexually active, the number was just 17% for women of that age. At the same time, just as many men as women reported that pain or other bodily problems hindered them from being sexually active.

More men than women report having had many sexual partners (more than ten). Among men however there seems to be a change towards having fewer sexual partners. In 2002 more men than women reported having many partners, but these gender differences are still markedly reduced from what they were in 1987.

There are changes that have happened with respect to sexual experience with a member of the same gender. In 1987, around 4% of men answered that they had such an experience, while around 11% of men in 2002 responded that they had had a sexual experience with another man. The average age for first sexual contact with another man was 15, both in 1992 and 2002. It is primarily in the younger age groups that this change regarding homosexual experience has happened. In the age group 18-24 years, the percentage of men who reported a homosexual experience was as follows: 5.8% in 1987, 14.1% in 2002. If we look at men in the age group 45-59, 2.8% responded that they had had a homosexual experience in 1987 and 4.5 % in 2002.

The Sexual Habits Surveys from 1987 – 2002 underscore that having sexual experience with a person of the same gender is by no means synonymous with being homosexual, lesbian or of bisexual orientation. A clear majority of those who reported having a homosexual experience also reported to having a heterosexual orientation (61%).

In 2002, 13% of Norwegian men reported that they at one or another time in their life had paid for sex. That represents an increase from 2% of those who responded in 1992. The percentage of women who say they have paid for sex is low at all survey times.

Table 6.3 Percentage men and women who have had sexual intercourse with a partner of the same gender

	Menn	Kvinner
1987	3,6	3,3
1992	4,8	3,7
1997	5,1	6,4
2002	10,7	11,7

6.4.5 Sexually transmitted diseases

There are clear gender differences regarding the statistics about sexually transmitted diseases. From the time that cases of HIV and AIDS began to be officially registered in the early 1990's, we see that 2 of 3 persons registered with the disease have been boys or men. In the group of boys/men, persons with homosexual experience are over-represented. In figure 6.12 the number of cases is distributed by gender for the period 1993–2007.

We see the same gender pattern for the occurrence of gonorrhoea as for HIV, and the scope is about the same. Hepatitis C can also be transmitted through sexual contact, but there are more variations in the way in which Hepatitis C is transmitted. Regardless, Hepatitis C is more rampant among boys and men than among women. In 2007 there were 69 registered cases among women and 127 among men.

Genital Chlamydia is the sexually transmitted infection that has the widest spreading now, with 23 000 registered cases in 2007. Women are over-represented both among those that go to take the tests and those that actually have the infection. There may be some hidden statistics in this case and it is doubtful that the available statistics give a full picture of the situation.

There is little doubt that gender differences in sexual habits and practice influence the frequency and occurrence of infection.

6.4.6 Alcohol and Narcotics

Men drink substantially more alcohol than women. They drink more each time they drink and they often drink to get drunk, although in the past 10-15 years the habits of girls and women begin to be more similar to those of boys and men. Still, the estimated yearly alcohol consumption of men is 2.5 times higher than women. Researches have estimated that there are proba-

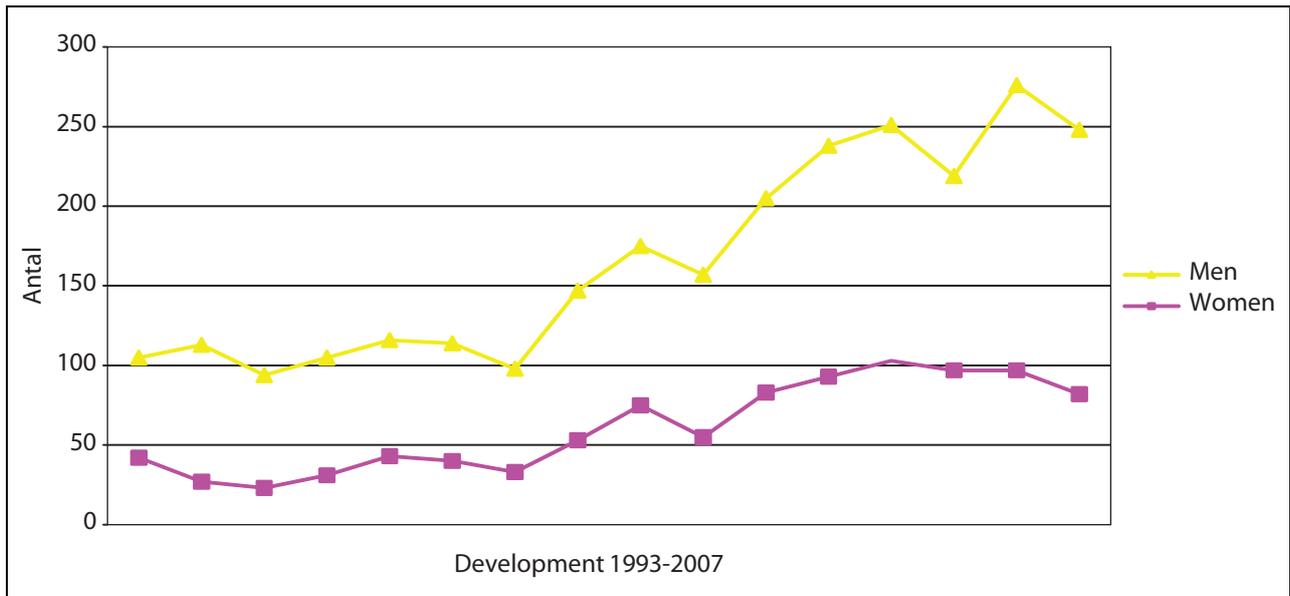


Figure 6.12 Yearly cases of HIV among women and men

bly six times more men than women who abuse alcohol. However, there are only twice as many men as women in alcohol rehabilitation centres. It seems that men also in this area resist asking for help for their problems. It is claimed that men to a greater extent than women mask both sorrow and depression with intoxication and that many men self-medicate themselves with alcohol when they have psychological difficulties.

Regarding narcotics use, 13% of the 15-20-year olds in the Surveys of Youth say that they have used hashish. Boys make up a large portion of these. However, there are no essential differences between boys and girls when it comes to experimenting with mind-altering substances in the teenage years. When it comes to serious and long-term abuse the gender differences are more obvious. Studies of addicts at rehab centres and needle exchanges show that there are more than twice as many men as women among these serious addicts. Most of those who try narcotics in their teenage years try them out in a limited way and for a short period of time, then quit and move on. But some develop a stronger addiction and the risk of becoming an addict seems to be higher for men than for women.

Use and abuse of drugs can lead to health problems and social problems directly related to the drugs, both acute and chronic problems that are consequences of long-term and heavy use. High alcohol consumption over a long period of time increases the risk of developing alcoholic liver disease, for example fatty liver, hepatitis and

liver failure. 10-30% of those who have a high and long-term abuse of alcohol develop liver disease related to alcoholism. The extent of hospital admissions and deaths, related to alcoholic liver disease, is twice as high for men as for women. This is actually surprisingly low, given the fact that the average alcohol consumption for men is to three times higher than for women. The statistical anomaly may be explained by the fact that those women who do drink a lot have a much higher propensity to develop alcoholic liver disease than men with a corresponding consumption.

Each year there are about 200-300 deaths by overdose as a result of too high a consumption of opiates such as heroin. The number of overdose deaths varies from year to year, and it has gone down the last few years. In Oslo there are about 1400-1500 ambulance calls in connection with overdoses. Women comprise about 20% of these cases, both with regards to deaths by overdose and ambulance calls. Men comprise therefore 80% of the cases. Death by overdose occurs most often among relatively young adults and makes up a large part of the deaths in the age group 20-50 years. On the national level, overdoses make for 12% of deaths in this age group and in Oslo the percentage is around 25%.

6.4.7 Accidents

Accident statistics reflect the consequences of traditional masculinity, including the expectation

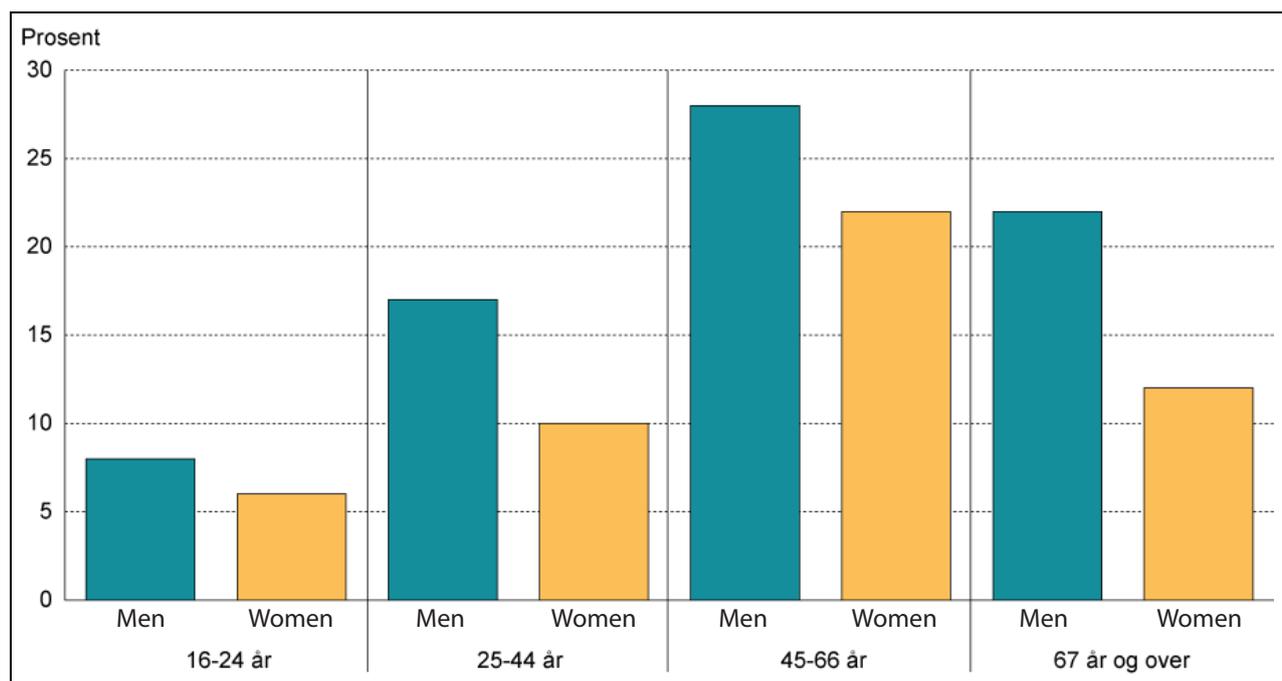


Figure 6.13 Drink a lot of alcohol two or more times per week. Men and women in different age groups. Percent. 2005

Source: Central Board of Statistics

that boys and men are more active, aggressive, brave and daring than girls and women. Even from the earliest years of childhood, boys are much more prone to accidents and injury. Accidents make up a large portion of the risk of death for children. In the age group 0-17, 42% of all deaths had external causes, while 58% are caused by illness. Boys dominate the accident statistics. Boys are also more injury prone than girls. In 2003 for example, the number of broken bone injuries in the age group 0-17 was 464 per 100 000 for boys and only 240 for girls.

Such differences between the sexes last the whole life span. More men than women die of accidents. In 2004 1165 men died from accidents, compared to 815 women, and more men than women die in accidents in all age groups and all types of accidents except one: More women than men in the age group over 80 die as a result of a fall (358 women and 225 men).

Road accidents make up a large part of all accidents. There are about 12 000 traffic accidents yearly in Norway that cause injury, and around 200 people die in traffic accidents every year. More men than women are injured and killed in traffic; in 2005, 220 people were killed;

of these, 154 were men and 66 were women. The same year, 6553 men and 4661 women were injured in traffic. The numbers are especially high for young adults. With respect to car crashes, it is noteworthy that there are more injured drivers that are men, while among injured passengers we find more women. Young men are the most prone to be injured and killed in traffic. This may be because they tend to drive aggressively and fast.

Researcher Rossow separates out the traffic accidents that can be classified as drug-related injuries. Narcotics and alcohol use is one of the most prevalent risk factors for traffic accidents. Between 20-40% of drivers, in accidents resulting in death in Norway, have been under the influence of alcohol. In traffic accidents where the driver is under the influence, we also find that injuries tend to be more serious than in accidents where alcohol has not been involved. The police in Norway register about 5000 cases of driving under the influence of alcohol yearly and 4000 cases of driving under the influence of narcotics or sedatives. It is usually men who get behind the wheel when they are intoxicated and men make up 85% of the intoxicated drivers caught by the police.

6.5 Strategies to reduce gender differences in health -- the use of preventive health services among boys and men

Gender differences are clear when we look at both the reporting of illness and the use of health services. There is about a five-year difference in life expectancy between women and men and the causes of death vary somewhat along gender lines. A long-term goal would be to reduce and even out the gender differences, but since the actual causes of the differences are so complex, it may not be possible to set binding goals for the future based on the knowledge of today. These gender differences are not only biological. Lifestyle, cultural attitudes, attitudes towards one's own body, and variations in accessing health and care services are all factors that influence the differences we see. Social differences also lead to health consequences for men and women.

It is not known how much weight to give these and the many other factors that may play a role in gender inequality with regards to health. The life expectancy in Norway for both genders is on the rise and the differences between the life expectancy of men and women on the decline. The reduced risk of infant death has surely contributed to the lengthening of life expectancy. Better public health and preventive measures against illness play a large role in extending life, while the development of pharmaceutical medicine plays a smaller role.

Awareness of gender differences in health and use of health services can help better the general public health and improve the quality of the health and care services. Central elements in this work are:

- reaching out with health information to both genders
- making the school health service and public health centres for teenagers more attractive as an alternative for boys
- an integrated gender perspective in the health and care services and in research on health
- an increase in knowledge about gender differences in the use of health services
- goal-oriented measures to reduce the occurrence of sexually transmitted disease

6.5.1 Dissemination of health information

The authorities today use extensive resources towards the dissemination of health information

to the population. Public authorities take direct responsibility for the spreading of information and other institutions also do their part, institutions like research foundations, volunteer groups and consumer groups. The information gets spread in the form of publications, via Internet and in other ways. Communication is used today as a common initiative on par with legislation, financial arrangements and structural conditions.

Information is important both in order to prevent illness in the population and as an aid to anyone who has identifiable or unidentified ailments. To inform the population on both risk factors and preventive factors with regard to illness promotes better public health and fewer deaths. Changes in lifestyle have led to an increase in the quality of life and life expectancy for women and men. When information needs to go out it is important that gender issues do not hinder an unbiased communication flow.

The government believes that is important to ensure that health information reaches both women and men. The information should target men and women in different ways, in the same way as other background variables are taken into consideration when communication is being developed. Health professionals must learn how to best communicate with both genders and with people from different backgrounds. In certain cases it is obvious which gender is the target of the message, for which gender the information is most relevant (for example regular scrotum examination for men and warnings against narcotics use during pregnancy for women). Information must adapt itself to different social groups as well. Income and education draw important lines between people as often as gender does. Social background is a stronger factor than gender with respect to predicting life expectancy even though gender also contributes to the perceived differences.

The sex life of an individual plays a role in general health and quality of life. Section 6.4.4 has data from the Sexual Habits Surveys. In the Gender Equality Survey, a majority of both men and women said they were satisfied with their sex life. But at the same time, sex is a sensitive topic for many. The work towards gender equality, for example working towards counteracting negative stereotypes, necessitates that more information about sexuality and perceptions about sexuality is spread.

In public health campaigns we need to evaluate gender as a variable to be considered when

communication strategies are developed. How this best can be done will vary from initiative to initiative. In some cases, health information that is specifically adapted to a particular gender is what is needed.

The preventive work in the area of lifestyles is rooted in the Action Plan for a better National Diet (2007-2011), the Action Plan for Physical Activity (2005- 2009), The National Strategy for the Prevention of Tobacco-related Damage (2006- 2007) and the escalation of plans to prevent drug abuse.

The gender influence is central in the preventive work within the fields of nutrition, physical activity, and use of tobacco, drugs and alcohol. All of the current strategies and plans contain mention of gender differences and emphasise a gender perspective when developing interventions. There has not been found large gender differences regarding the onset of smoking, quitting smoking, motives and motivation for quitting smoking or how much knowledge women and men have about smoking. However, men and women can still to a certain degree have varying motives for smoking and different ways of communicating which should have an influence on how stop smoking programs are developed. Men are less likely to seek help, for example to go to a course. But despite these differences 2007 saw for the first time more men than women (51% to 49%) take contact with the Smoke hot line, which is a free advice service where one can get help to stop smoking and/or using snuff.

Several mass media campaigns about smoking have been conducted in recent years. Campaigns can be adapted to target different audiences in the way they are designed, which channels are used, which actors are used and the way the message is conveyed. In Norway the most common way of doing a campaign is to choose something gender-neutral in order to reach out equally to women and men. The results from the evaluation of the Stop Smoking campaigns in 2003 and 2006 did not show any systematic gender differences. However, since it is mainly men who use snuff, the information material on snuff has had a more "masculine" design. Unfortunately, self-help brochures usually don't have much effect. If one is to reach young men with information about snuff, it may be more important to actively use arenas such as secondary schools and the military.

Several research reports show that women generally have better results from treatment interventions than men when it comes to drug and alcohol problems. The documentation is clear that

gender-sensitive treatment gives better results than gender-neutral treatment. It is also probable that the gender dimension has an impact when it comes to communicating about preventing drug and alcohol abuse. Alcohol consumption does not mean the same thing for girls and boys, and girls and boys experience risk and safeguards in different ways. The problem of alcohol and drug abuse seems to have different types of consequences for girls and boys. So when it comes to working preventively, a gender perspective is essential.

The Bergen Clinics (Stiftelsen Bergensklinikkene), one of the seven regional competency centres in Norway for questions about drug and alcohol abuse, has the theme of gender and intoxication as its specialty area. The competency centre holds courses in the region and nationally that shed some light on the problems that exist in dealing with boys and drug abuse from a prevention and risk perspective. The *Bergen Clinics* published a collection of articles in 2007 called "Gender Beauty and the beast" (Kjønnheten og Udyret) where prevention of drug abuse, early intervention and treatment with a gender perspective are themes. National Competency Centres offer separate courses on men and drug and alcohol abuse and women and drug and alcohol abuse. They are also helping municipalities to develop action plans to combat drug and alcohol abuse. In order to do this it is important to map out the general status of the drug and alcohol consumption use in each area. In doing this, gender patterns may be revealed and specific preventive measures can be initiated.

In the three-year project to be carried out in cooperation between the Workplace Committee against Alcoholism and Drug Abuse (AKAN) and *Bergen Clinics*, one of the goals is to increase understanding about the need for gender-specific preventive strategies in the workplace. On the basis of this information, an evaluation will be made whether gender-specific methods will be developed for the preventive work in the workplace. Other individual projects receiving subsidies from the Norwegian Directorate of Health are targeting arenas where the problems of boys are prevalent, for example traffic and alcohol. The same is true for work being done to improve the health of homosexuals which combines the areas of HIV, drugs and psychological health in a broad health perspective.

Norwegian Directorate of Health is working now on guidelines for early identification and intervention among those who work with at-risk

children and youth. The guidelines will take up differences in behavioural patterns that can be seen in girls and boys as early warning signs of a problem with alcohol or drugs.

6.5.2 Conscious efforts on behalf of boys in the school health service in order to make it more attractive for boys to use the service

Public health centres and school health service

Public health centres and school health service from 0-20 years is a regulated municipal service that is meant to be accessible for the users. In many municipalities the service includes a public health centre specifically for juveniles. The service works to prevent psychological and physical problems and conditions in children, youth and pregnant women through guidelines, counselling, networking and health check-ups. Recent numbers from SINTEF Health show that boys use this service much less than girls.

During the ages 0-5 years the children come to the public health centres accompanied by their parents. When they start school, they can begin to seek out the service on their own. Surveys show that more girls seek out the services than boys. In order to ensure equal access to service it is important to consider all users and their needs. User participation is central. The employees in the service need to be updated on what boys are concerned about and how problems can be discussed according to their premises. Establishing separate girl and boy groups may be an effective means to create a secure environment and give information adapted to the target group.

If boys are to get their needs met, the service needs to be visible and accessible in the school environment. Several information channels may be used to make the service more easily accessible. Putting more information on the Internet may help boys to use the service more actively. The website "Klara Klok" (Klara the Wise) is an example. Text messages may be another possible information channel. School nurses that use mobile phones and text messages to send information have reported that they have had better luck getting boys to use the service. Information in the classes themselves, boys groups, newsletters, and information material directed particularly at boys may also be effective.

A public health centre service directed particularly at boys has been established in Asker municipality. The service is open 2 hours a week.

Although boys have access to the regular service under the public health centre's program for youth, 50 % of boys choose to meet up at the time set off just for boys. This indicates that the boys may need a service that is tailored especially to their needs. The public health centre for boys in Asker holds a "boy conference" every year for boys in the 10th class. The theme for the conference in 2008 was "Identity and Psychological Health". In addition, the health centre arranges special theme nights for boys and for fathers. The health centre has a goal to make their target group more health conscious, better the psychosocial environment and motivate teenagers to develop a healthy style. Some of the questions that are taken up are:

- the body
- sexuality/contraception
- intoxicants
- anabolic steroids
- testing for sexually transmitted diseases
- girlfriend/boyfriend family, school, job
- first-time use of the service

The Ministry encourages all municipalities to develop the school health service in such a way as to be equally attractive to boys and girls.

6.5.3 An integrated gender perspective in the health and care services, and in health research

The Women's Health Commission (NOU 1999:13) says in its recommendation about a gender perspective on health and illness that "gender is biology, and as biology it is obviously relevant in understanding illness and health". But gender is also identity (how we experience ourselves as a man or women), cultural symbols (how we attach certain characteristics and expression to concepts of femininity and masculinity). The Commission also says, "a characteristic that is found again and again in many of the report's subtopics is how the foundation of knowledge, the regulations and the practice often builds upon an unspoken masculine norm (man as a biological gender)".

The general practitioner survey that the Cancer Society did in 2007 shows that gender influences the treatment situation. Men have a higher threshold for the expression of worry, and this in turn is partly dependent on whether the doctor is a man or woman.

Men and women have different experiences with health and illness. Therefore, a gender per-

spective on health and quality of life is important. A male perspective on health and quality of life will benefit gender equality and facilitate men and boys in achieving comparable living conditions and health to women.

Both research results and experiences with health care personnel suggest that men and women have a different psycho-social approach to the body. They clearly handle health and illness differently.

The number of male-specific illnesses (especially prostate and testicle cancer) is on the increase, and men have an especially high death risk as a consequence of accidents. Men are over-represented in the suicide statistics and psychological problems of men seem to be under treated. Recent research indicates that one of four parents who go through a divorce or family breakup takes a leave of absence because of illness following the breakup. This applies to many men.

The Ministry of Health and Care Service's research strategy for 2006-2011 underlines the need for more understanding of gender differences in the area of health. The programmes under the direction of *Norway's Research Council* which receives funds from the Ministry of Health and Care Service, also reflects this. In the programmes the council will encourage gender and gender differences in health and illness be taken up and discussed in all relevant projects. In the assignment documents sent to regional health services for 2007 and 2008 it was emphasised that the gender perspective should be integrated in a positive way.

The Committee of Ministers in the European Council passed a recommendation on January 30, 2008 that a gender perspective and work to reduce gender differences in the area of health should be integrated into national health policy. The recommendation challenges all member states to integrate a clear gender perspective in health services and to develop tailored strategies to prevent illness and treat problems especially tied to men or women. The members are encouraged to gather gender-specific health data on a regular basis and develop a clear gender perspective in health research.

The main challenges in the field of gender equality within the health and care sector are to increase the general knowledge of gender difference in health, illness and health services, and to consider these gender differences when forming initiatives for prevention and treatment. The goals of the Ministry of Health and Care Services lie along two axes. The one is to include a gender

perspective in all enterprises where that perspective is relevant. The other is to focus specially on health problems that either men or women exclusively have, or health problems that cause one of the genders specific difficulties.

The Ministry of Health and Care Services has asked the regional health enterprises and the Health Directorate to put effort into helping their health services develop a gender perspective. Generally speaking can this perspective be maintained in the ordinary work that is done to prevent and treat illness. An exception would be separate services for men and women. Special challenges connected to women's and men's health must be met with sufficient knowledge and resources in the ordinary service apparatus. The Ministry of Health and Care Services has informed all regional health enterprises in its yearly assignment document that the gender perspective must be ensured in clinical research (gender differences in illness and treatment). This can be done by carrying out analyses of all research results with an eye to gender if that is relevant.

White paper nr. 20 "A National Strategy to Even Out Social Differences (2006-2007)" shows that the relationship between social differences in health and gender is complex. If one uses life expectancy as a starting point one sees that social differences are less for women than for men. For other health aims, such as psychological health, the social differences are greater for women. Some studies show that access to health services is unequal along gender lines. The white paper underlines that all strategies and measures taken to influence health behaviour must be evaluated as to the consequences they may have for gender.

The theme of a gender perspective is followed up in documents from the Ministry of Health and Care Services:

- Ministry of Health and Care Services research strategy 2006-2011
- White Paper no.16 (2002–2003) "Prescription for a Healthier Norway"
- White Paper nr. 25 (2005-2006) "Mastery, Possibilities and Meaning, the Challenges for Care in the Future"
- Strategy Plan for Women's Health 2003–2013
- National Strategy for Cancer 2006–2009
- National Strategy for Diabetes 2006–2010
- National Strategy for the Prevention of the Use of Tobacco 2006–2010
- National Strategy for KOLS 2006–2011
- Nasjonal Strategy for Children's Environment and Health 2007–2016 The Children's Future

- Action Plan to Prevent Unwanted Pregnancy and Abortion 2004–2008
- Action Plan for Physical Activity 2005–2009
- Escalation Plan for the Area of Narcotics 2007–2010
- Action Plan for a Better Diet 2007–2011
- Responsibility and Consideration, Prevention of hiv and other Sexually Transmitted Infections (2002)

6.5.4 Systematic measures for reducing the occurrence of sexually transmitted disease

The Strategy Plan for prevention of HIV and sexually transmitted disease contains its a separate objective about evaluating gender questions in all plans, prioritisation and initiatives. Organisations that work with prevention of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases and that receive public subsidies, shall maintain a gender perspective in applications and project descriptions. An increase in awareness of the importance of gender must be realised through information and professional advice from central health authorities and relevant professional milieus. Special measures shall be implemented that are directed specifically towards men and others towards women. In addition, the emphasis on the importance of gender must be maintained in connection with all other objectives in the plan.

Strategies and measures in the area of sexual health are rooted in the Action Plan for Prevention of Unwanted Pregnancy and Abortion (2004–2008) and the Strategy plan for Prevention of HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections. New plans will be set forth in both these areas in 2009.

The work being done to prevent the spread of sexually transmitted diseases and the work to better sexual health among young boys and men in general, extends to counselling, guiding and testing for sexually transmitted infections. It is an extensive task to get young boys and men to take care of their own sexual health. This includes condom use as well as sexual health in general. The

measures have as a goal to help increase competency in connection with sexual choices, actions and identity. They also should increase competence and autonomy in sexual relationships. Men who have sex with men are an important target group because they are prone to sexually transmitted infections. Examples of measures to reach this target group are strengthening of low threshold testing services, guidance and counselling, identity building measures directed towards sexual identity and competence raising initiatives and guidelines for health personnel with a focus on homosexuality and sexual minority status.

Gender differences have a strong influence in working with youth and sexuality. Boys have other experiences, use other arenas for health information and benefit from other initiatives than girls. Health information in this area must therefore use a language and a form that matches with the metaphors in boy culture and be directed to the needs of boys. Surveys show that boys have generally less knowledge than girls about issues of the body and sexual health. The surveys also show that boys want more knowledge and they would like to communicate with someone who knows what boy problems are all about. There is a great lack of adult men as role models, counselors and conversation partners in the spheres of young boys. This may be a reason why boys don't use the regular service of the health centres and school health services to the same degree as girls. Youth health centres are still a female dominant arena, both with regards to health workers and users.

Use of information, and teaching material that makes use of boy culture and techno-culture (such as problem solving computer games and short SMS messages), has shown to be successful in reaching out to boys. Health Centre on line ([www. Klara-klok.no](http://www.Klara-klok.no)) and SUSS telephone are examples of this. Group programmes with information from boys to boys under the direction of *Medical Personnel's Information about Sex* and Active Choice—Red Cross Youth also has been shown to be a good information channel,

7 Marginalisation and risk groups

7.1 Introduction

Men can be called the extreme gender – we find men both at the top and bottom of society. In Chapter 9 the ministry has referred to numbers from Central Statistics Bureau and the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud which show that men constitute a clear majority of the leaders in the public and private sector. More than eight out of ten top leaders are men. Men constitute the majority in Parliament as well as in most county and company boards. The ministry has showed in Chapter 3 that men have a higher hourly and annual income compared to women. The ministry has simultaneously pointed out that the range of incomes among men is greater than that of women. That means that within the group with the lowest income in Norway, the majority are men. In this Chapter, the Ministry brings up questions linked to areas in which boys and men constitute the majority of groups at risk of marginalisation, and further examines the situation of marginalised groups.

For a long time the redistribution of care and power between men and women has been the main goal in the work with equality. The historical foundation for this is that men have possessed the key positions of power, while women have dealt with tasks within the family and home. Even a certain equalisation of seats at the county elections does not prevent men from holding three out of four mayor positions. Men are completely dominant among officers, in the church and as leaders in academic institutions. For that reason, the levelling out of genders among leaders and decision-makers is still a central task in achieving gender equality. But a discussion of structural power, with “men” and “women” as the starting point, contributes to make the major differences within the groups invisible. The truth is that boys and men in Norway constitute a most heterogonous group. The differences are greater than for women, and the differences within the group has risen rather than decreased during the last few decades. Many men hold key positions in society and this may never change. The situation on the opposite side of

the scale is this: The typical homeless person is a single man in his early thirties of Norwegian ethnicity, without any completed further education and no steady job, thus making him dependent on economical social welfare. In addition, he is often dependent on drugs or alcohol and/or struggles with a psychiatric disorder. To simplify the situation one can say that men top every statistic.

7.2 Risk groups

Only a few of those who are considered as a member of a risk group end up being permanently marginalised. To look at people without a job or education is a starting point to limit the group. But there are many within this group that are activated in some way and therefore not considered marginalised. In the group, “none activated”, that is to say people outside the job market and education system, we see that young men constitute an increasing part. Here we find men who cannot handle societal expectations or who refuse to accept the basic ethics of society. Among men we find marginalised groups too, and these groups are growing in numbers.

To be marginalised means to be left without education, paid work, domestic or family related work or without any other activity that can be considered as making everyday life meaningful. There is no single reason why men become marginalised.

The complex causality is linked to different risk factors. One of these risk factors is desertion from further education, which in today's society increases the risk of ending up without permanent work later in life. Another risk factor is impaired ability to function or mental suffering, likewise is the abuse of intoxicants. Those same factors can also be the reason for unemployment, which then can lead to marginalisation if the situation continues. The person's livelihood must then be based on social welfare, something that in itself can be experienced as stigmatising, and contributes to poorer living conditions. There are no research results at hand that show to what extent the evolution of gender roles together with changing evaluations of tra-

ditional masculine (or feminine) characteristics affect the risk of marginalisation.

Many in marginalised groups experience their own situation as degrading. Many experience an inability to use their capacities and resources, which is a loss for both themselves and society alike. Preventive work is important, and to make sure that as many men as possible can utilize their capacities and resources in a meaningful manner. SSB finds striking differences between youth in general, and marginalised youth. Marginalised youth have generally speaking poorer health and relatively more individuals carry long-term illnesses. They report to struggling with mental illness two or three times more than youth in general. There are more than three times as many youths struggling with bad habits in different areas among marginalised youth, areas such as alcohol consumption, exercise, smoking and obesity. In addition they come up short on other indicators concerning social contact. They, among other things, lack friends, make little effort to make contact and participate in things with others. They lack intimacy with other people and they find it difficult to get help when they need it.

7.3 Desertion from education

Today's labour market often demands formal qualifications, and education is the key. In the 1960's and 1970's, it was easier for young men to go straight out to work after compulsory school education. Previously, companies would take young unskilled people and train them up on the job; now, schools have to a large degree taken over this responsibility. It is therefore difficult for young people without higher education to find their way in the labour market. Those who lack work experience and education may be only offered jobs with poor wages, insecure employment conditions and few chances for advancement. We are concerned to see more and more young people drop out of secondary education. Boys drop out of secondary education more often than girls, and women go on to higher education more often than men. Social factors, including non-western immigrant background also influence the dropout rate from secondary education.

7.3.1 The educational level of boys and men

As of October 1, 2005, 91% of 16-18 year olds were enrolled in secondary education. Minority youth

choose secondary education less often, especially first generation immigrants, where 71% of 16-18 year olds were in secondary education.

Analyses from the SSB show that there were generally fewer who finished secondary school in the 2000 class than in the 1999 class. More girls completed their schooling than boys. In the 2000 class 74% of girls and 62% of boys completed their education after 5 years. Of those who dropped out we find that most came from backgrounds where their parents only had primary education. Minority students also dropped out of secondary education more often than others.

From a gender equality perspective it is unfortunate that students who choose untraditional options in secondary school are more likely to drop out completely or choose another direction of study. This includes both girls who have begun in traditional "boy subjects" and boys who have begun in traditional "girl subjects" It may be more difficult for a student to follow through on an educational path where he or she is a gender minority. The way the teaching of the subject is done, the literature choice etc. may also not be well tailored for both genders.

Language-minority groups seem to be more polarised than the language majority in the choice of education. Compared to students from the language majority, language-minority students tend to drop out more often from secondary education. We do see however, that those from this group who manage to finish secondary education seem to be more likely to continue with and finish higher education more often than language majority students.

7.3.2 Measures to hinder desertion from secondary school

While 15% of students in further education quit before they were finished, another 20% finished but without passing. This is among the alarming results from a recent survey in Eastern Norway. The girls in the survey had higher academic achievement than boys. More boys than girls quit, and more boys than girls finished without passing. The survey also shows

- that academic achievement is higher among students whose parents have higher education
- that ethnic majority youth have higher achievement than ethnic minority students
- that youth who live together with both parents have higher achievement than those who do not

- that youth who are following the educational option that was their first choice have higher achievement
- that those who drop out are those with lowest grade point average
- that variation in achievement is highly influenced by the academic marks achieved during primary education

In Chapter 2 of this white paper, the ministry has indicated the systematic differences in learning outcomes for boys and girls measured by looking at the final marks they achieved in primary schools.

“Efforts against desertion” was a set of measures implemented in the period from 2003 to 2006 as a part of the governments action plan against poverty. The effort had as its aim to hinder desertion from secondary education and to gather up those who did drop out and give them guidance to try to help them back into work or education.

There are many and complex reasons why students drop out of secondary education. Efforts against desertion have also been characterised by large regional differences and have encompassed diverse strategies. In all counties the effort has brought many different people together, both inside schools and outside schools, in order to work against desertion from education. Some of the measures have seemed to be successful, including strengthening vocational and educational guidance for students, increasing parent participation, competency development for counsellors, contact teachers and NAV employees and a better information exchange and cooperation between middle schools and secondary schools about at-risk students.

No single initiative has been found to be revolutionary in hindering the drop out rate. The government believes that only a long-term, goal oriented effort on simultaneous fronts will be able to achieve good results. This work needs to focus primarily on boys, especially boys with weak academic marks from primary schools, since they are the highest risk group with regards to desertion from secondary education and since dropping out gives them also a weaker position in the labour market later in life.

7.4 Desertion from the labour market

A stable commitment to education and the labour market is important for an individual to achieve

and assure good living conditions for themselves. Participation in work life gives the individual an income and promotes a more even distribution of the economic resources in society. A weak commitment to the labour market is often a main cause of poverty problems for the individual.

7.4.1 Men who are outside working life

Compared to other countries, Norway has a large portion of its adult population in employment.

In 2006 76% of men and 68% of women in the age group 16-74 years were in active employment. In the age group 25-54 years 91% of men and 83% of women were actively employed.

Since the beginning of 1970's, total employment participation has increased from around 61% in 1972 to 72% in 2006. This increase can be explained partly by a growing population segment of adults of working age, and particularly by the increased employment participation among women.

The changes in employment participation have been influenced by several factors. In primary industry the employment has been reduced to a little over a third since 1970. For men this has caused a greater reduction in employment than for women. The aging of the general population, the increase in immigration and the increase in disability pensioning have all contributed to reduce the average employment participation. For men, participation has gone down in all age categories since early in the 1970's. Men over 55 felt acutely the decline in employment activity up until the middle of the 1990's, but employment has increased again during the last few years.

Occupational participation also varies with the economic situation. This is true for both men and women. Since men to a greater degree work in enterprises that are vulnerable to the swings of the market (such as industry and building/construction) and women to a greater degree work in sheltered sectors (such as health and the county sector), unemployment among men tends to vary more over time. We have been in a period of economic growth and unemployment has been lower for men than for women.

In Norway, people who have been unemployed for at least six months are defined as long-term unemployed. According to the SSB's labour survey (AKU) there are now (first quarter 2008) about 7000 long-term unemployed men and 6000 long-term unemployed women. Out of all unemployed people, the long-term unemployed com-

prise about 21%, both men and women. Norway is one of the countries in the world that has the fewest long-term unemployed.

7.4.2 Young people outside working life

Young people often lack necessary education and work experience, and employers may be insecure about how stable and productive they are. Young people are therefore more vulnerable in the workforce and are to a greater degree dependent on the demand for labour. A tight labour market means that very few are unemployed, even in the youngest age groups. The low levels of unemployment mean that even those who do not complete secondary education may still get jobs. But that is not true of everyone and gender differences exist. In March 2008 two out of three unemployed in the age group 20-24 years were men. The labour market is not able to even out the gender differences from the desertion from secondary school. More men than women from this age group are therefore inactive.

In the report "The Living Conditions of Youth", SSB has outlined employment marginalisation among youth in the period 2001-2003. In

the analysis SSB distinguishes between *partially marginalised* youth, who are away from studies or work for a year, and *marginalised* youth, who are away from studies or the workplace for three years in a row.

The report shows a clear increase in the number of *partly* marginalised, but in spite of this increase, only 2% were neither in education or a job during the three years of the analysis period. It is this 2% who are the marginalised group. In 2001 there were no gender differences; both boys and girls stand for 6%. The percentage of those who fall outside the labour market is increasing more for boys than for girls after 2001. The percentage of boys who fall outside the labour market the following years is first 21% and then 26%. For girls the numbers are 17% and 19%. Even though more boys than girls fall outside the labour market when one looks at a single year, making them *partially* marginalised, there are no gender differences among those who were outside the labour market for the following three years, therefore being defined as marginalised. 2% of both boys and girls were marginalised in the period 2001 – 2003.

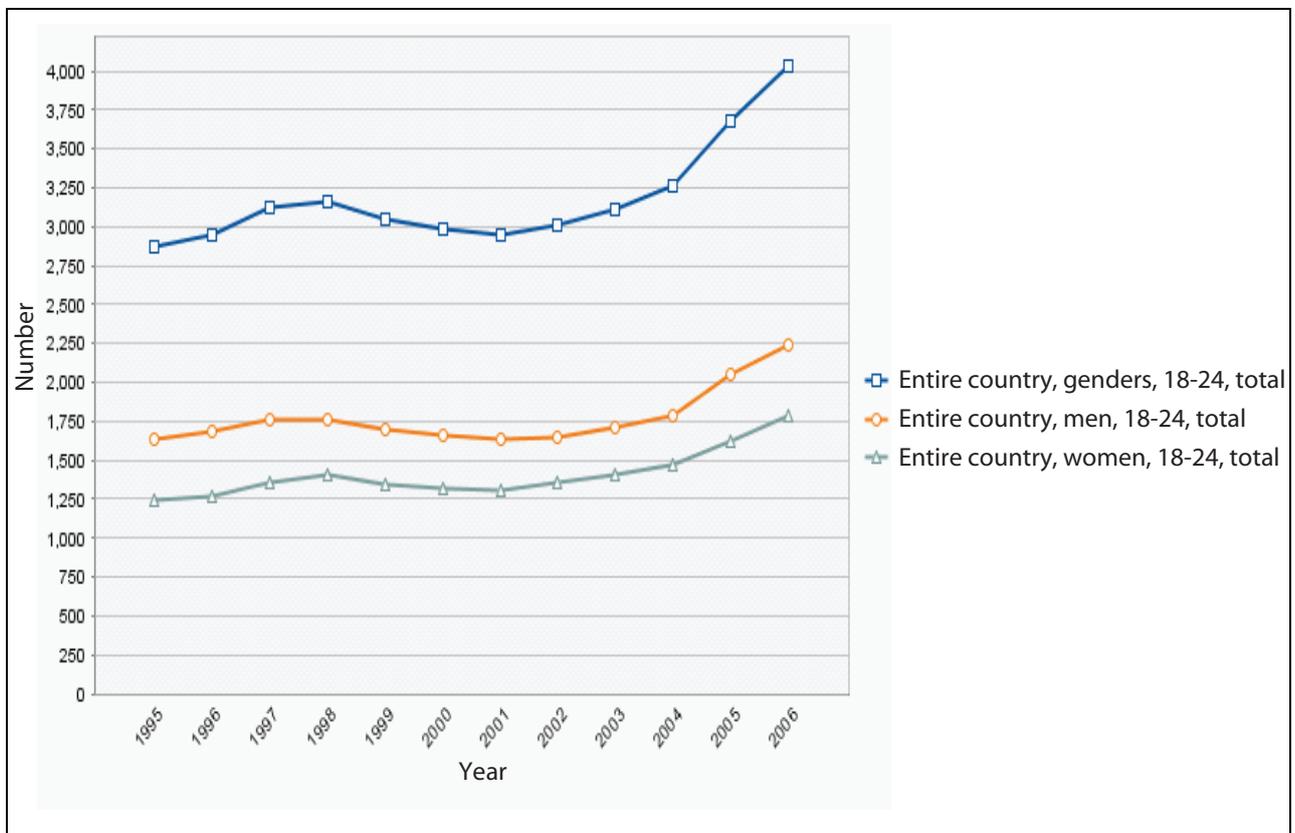


Figure 7.1 The development in the numbers of young people receiving disability benefits in 1995- 2006

7.4.3 Recipients of disability benefits

Statistics from NAV (The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration) show that more and more young men are receiving disability benefits. Psychological problems are the most frequent cause of men under 40 receiving such benefits. In 2006 more than six of ten men in this age group who received disability pension or time limited disability benefits were awarded this because of psychological disability. That applies to about 10 000 men in the age range 18 to 40 years.

For the age group 18- 24 the development looks like this:

In total there are actually fewer men than women who are on disability. At the end of 2006 11 % of the population in the age range 18-67 received some form of disability benefits (disability pension or time limited disability benefit) including 12.9% women and 9.2% men. In 2006 the average age for this was 53.8 years. There are a higher percentage of first generation immigrant men who receive disability than the total percentage of men over 50 years of age.

Of all the new women receiving disability in 2006, almost half received time limited disability benefits only. For men this proportion is one of three. In other words, men receive disability benefits less often than women, but when they first receive them they are often long-term.

7.5 Social welfare

There are more men than women among young recipients of social welfare, and the gender differences among young recipients are about the same as among all recipients.

In all age groups, over 50% of recipients are men. Between 3% and 4% of the population receive economic welfare help in 2005, and the percentage of the population who receive economic welfare help has been relatively stable for several years. As in previous years, young people are strongly over-represented among recipients in 2005. Of young adults in the age range 16-30 years, 5,7% received economic aid, while only 2,8% of all adults over 30 years of age received economic aid.

We know that there are percentagewise more people with a lower educational level among recipients of social welfare than in the rest of the population. The numbers in the mentioned analysis apply to the year 2004, and the age ranges are a bit different than what are used here. But the

result shows that 25% of all male recipients in the age range 18-24 had primary schooling as the highest achieved educational level. In the population as a whole only 8% of the total number of men in this age range had only primary school. For women the numbers were 21% and 5% respectively.

7.6 The homeless

As a part of its efforts against poverty, the government wishes to ensure measures for the homeless. Many have an image of a homeless person as an older alcoholic man. The image has some truth in it. Men comprise about 76% of the approximately 5500 homeless people, according to an analysis from 2005.

Measures for the homeless are generally not a relevant theme in a white paper on men and gender equality, even though a large proportion of homeless people are men. But it is relevant to look more carefully at whether or not there are certain aspects of male roles that make men susceptible to marginalisation and whether measures for the homeless have sufficient grounding in a male and gender perspective.

The survey of the homeless showed that the greatest numbers of homeless are in the age group 20-45 years. The age distribution varies little between women and men. In the group of homeless there are many more who have not completed secondary education and who have primary education as their highest educational level. Only one of every 35 homeless people has any source of wage income. Most homeless people have little or no experience of working life and are dependent on economic social welfare, because they have few social security rights. Addicts and people with psychological disorders or a combination of diagnoses are over-represented among the homeless. The same is true for non-western immigrants. For this group the risk of getting into the situation of not having a place to live is twice as high as for the general population.

The characteristics of homeless people confirm that desertion from secondary school, lack of access to working life and similar factors increase the risk of marginalisation. Boys/men are over-represented in these risk groups. This underlines the necessity for the counselling services in secondary schools and in NAV to have a gender perspective, so that initiatives and interventions can have the same effect for boys and girls.

7.7 Criminality

Criminality is one of the most male-dominated areas of our society. Criminals and inmates in prisons are mainly men or young boys. Women have comprised about 10% of the registered criminals and 5% of prison inmates for the last several decades, although these numbers have risen slightly recently. In 1990 women made up 12% of those charged in criminal cases. In 2000 the number had risen to 16% and was the same in 2005. Last numbers shows us another rise, for 2008 it is 19%.

A number of studies show that there is a connection between living conditions and criminality, although the exact causality is not always clear. The report "Career criminals and living conditions" gives an overview of to what degree people born in 1977 were indicted for crimes in the period 1992–2001. The analysis applied to people born in Norway in 1977 who were resident in Norway in 1992. These people were 15 years old in 1992 and 24 years old in 2001. The survey sample was all the people in this group.

Most of the people in this group were not indicted for any crimes at all. Among those who were, most were only charged once. But some were active criminals over a longer period of time. The criminal careers varied, and some were more typical than others. *The more serious criminal career one has, the lower one scores on important social indices.* Many people with a long-term criminal pattern have not completed secondary schooling; many are long-term recipients of social welfare and have very little connection to working life. Although most of the members of this group have parents with secondary or higher education, a disproportionate number of the persons who had the most serious criminal careers had very little education.

Furthermore, risk of death is an indicator of health and lifestyle, and this risk gets higher as the criminal career gets more serious. The study concludes that career criminality must be seen as significantly connected to the general life situation of the individual and marginalisation processes in society.

7.7.1 Juvenile criminality

Juvenile criminality is a gender-neutral concept for a highly gendered field. It is mostly *boys* who are registered for criminal activity in their youth. Teenagers, and especially young men, have always been over-represented in criminal statis-

tics. Boys represent 75% of all the people aged 15–17 and 85% of all the people 18–20 who are charged with crimes.

An increase of focus on child and youth criminality from the end of the 1990's led to an increase in the indictment and punishment of youth, but in the last few years this has changed. Of the under-aged group, 20% fewer were indicted for crimes in 2005 than 2001. Older youths, and to larger degree adults, have had a different development. Compared to 1980 there are 150% more people from the ages of 18–29 charged with offenses, and over 500% more adults, aged 30 or over. The age distribution among the indicted has changed dramatically the last 25 years. Youth under the age of 18 have gone from 35% to 15% and those aged 30 or over have gone from 18% to 41% of the number of indicted lawbreakers. The number of those actually punished for the crimes in the youngest group has also been reduced from 30% to 8%.

The image of juvenile criminality as a relatively "normal" part of the teenage years seems to be changing. Researcher Balvig points out that a polarisation has occurred in that very few of those charged with crimes are to be found in the large grey mass where most youth are to be found. The picture has become more black and white. More are law-abiding, and many of those who are not are responsible for many of the crimes and the most serious criminality.

Although fewer young people engage in criminality, studies show that those who do do it more often. We see therefore this increased polarity in the youth population. Most people in the youth population do not engage in criminal activity at all, but a small group sticks out that does. In this group the large majority are boys.

Criminal boys have always appeared tough, and their peers have seen them as tough. Adults have said instead that these boys are boys that *wish* to be tough. Criminality can be seen as a way of expressing masculinity among boys and men who do not have other resources to make something of them. Young, marginalised men can for example use violence and fighting to try to achieve status, reputation and self-respect. Criminality for personal gain can also be a source of masculine pride for this group. The gains from such criminal activity, having a lot of money in your hands, can give a person a feeling of being somebody. Engaging in risky illegal activity allows these boys to show themselves off as brave, technically capable and smart.

The type of masculinity that many boys indulge in by criminal activity has been called *cow-boy masculinity*. It seems to be a type of “masculine identity project”. Expressing masculinity in this way requires a boy to be tough, show individuality and courage, and to be in opposition.

7.7.2 Gang criminality and boys with immigrant backgrounds

Gang criminality has been a problem in Norwegian society since the 1950's. It is during this period that the teenager as a particular social category made its debut. Teenagers are a concept and an ideal connected to a “teenage market”, as young people gain more purchasing power as a result of economic growth. The blossoming of the teenage market creates both supply and demand for special consumer items for youth. These objects serve as lifestyle markers for the age group and distinguish this group as its own category between childhood and adulthood. Parallel to this development is the rise of groups of children and teenagers who engage in what we call *gang criminality*. Gangs and bands were a topic that was often in the press in the 1950's. Newspaper articles from archives tell that the police at that time had their hands full trying to uncover and round up boy gangs and car gangs that specialised in everything from theft of electrical appliances, shavers, and film cameras to dynamite, weapons and certain brands of cars.

During the last two decades the word “gang” has largely become synonymous with the kind of gangs and criminality we find among boys with immigrant backgrounds. These boys often emphasise their ethnic culture in order to explain why they are so concerned with honour and respect. Some researchers have also emphasised their cultural background. For example, one researcher writes: “Immigrants take a code of honour with them from feudal structures in developing countries and into western society.” Other researchers believe this is a simplistic explanation and believe the issue is more complex. They believe these boys are functioning with a particular perspective on masculinity. The researchers assert that it is not these boys' grandparents' code of honour that the boys try to live up to when they talk about honour and respect. Honour, fellowship and a physically tough style are images of a particular masculine ideal. The symbols used for this vary, but the content is usually the same, at least as an ideal. It is therefore not only about the cul-

ture of origin of the boys, but also of central cultural masculine ideals in our own western culture.

We often have simplified notions of which ethnic minorities are. Such stereotypes can easily lead the young people in these groups to want to live up to the picture other people have of them. If the media paints a picture of youth from immigrant backgrounds as dangerous, groups can easily arise that try to confirm just that. It is nothing new to see groups of people play on stereotypes in order to gain respect. But it is more serious when boys with minority background begin to play on skin colour as an identity marker rather than clothing or other identity markers that can be exchanged. This kind of activity serves to stigmatise a much larger group, namely all boys of ethnic minority background.

A survey of career criminality among those from 15 to 25 years old shows that 10% of non-immigrants and 17% of non-western immigrants are charged for one or more offense. Non-western immigrants also make up 5% of all people who are indicted for crime, and a somewhat larger percent of all those charged. Individual criminal acts by people of immigrant background are often interpreted as signs of a poor integration and immigration policy. One forgets that the conditions that give rise to criminality among immigrant teenagers are the same ones that give rise to criminality among ethnic Norwegian youth.

Non-western immigrants are more exposed to factors that we know to be correlated with criminality. There are more young people, they live to a greater degree in Oslo, have less education and higher unemployment and are in a more difficult economic situation than most Norwegians. Gender, the educational level of the parents, their own economic situation and level of integration in school and the workplace are more important factors than immigrant background in explaining criminality.

All of these social factors have more to say than immigrant background when it comes to getting caught for crimes during the teenage years. But non-western immigrants are still over-represented in the statistics compared to the rest of the population. One must also remember that a large proportion of immigrant youth do not engage in criminal activity in spite of poor living conditions. There is therefore no automatic causal link between poor living conditions and criminality.

The survey “Young in Norway” shows a polarisation among non-western immigrant youth: Most of them are law-abiding, but a small group is at the

other end, engaging in serious criminal activity. This group is responsible for many crimes, even more than comparable juvenile criminals without immigrant background. This group poses a significant problem. Luckily, for most that have done something criminal, the crime is a one-time occurrence. A small group of highly active criminals of immigrant background should not cause the assumption that all of them are alike.

People with non-western immigrant background have their criminal debut later than those with ethnic Norwegian background. Compared with Norwegian youth, the level of criminality takes a jump around the age of 19. The lack of apprenticeships and exclusion from the workplace because of weak academic marks or failure to finish school is also something that happens at that age.

7.8 Child Welfare Services (Child Protection Service)

Of the approximately 40 000 children and young people who received help from Child Welfare Services in 2006, about 54% were boys. The Child Welfare Service should reach out to all families, children and youth and give effective help that is adapted to the needs of the children. Children of ethnic minority background are much more often recipients of help from Child Welfare Services than children without ethnic minority background. The Ministry of Children and Equality is in the process of strengthening the multicultural competence of the Child Welfare Service. On instruction from the ministry, four selected University Colleges are developing educational programmes to increase multicultural competence in the Child Welfare Services. The goal is to give the students basic information about what a culturally sensitive child welfare service would be and to hone their skills in working with children, youth and families with ethnic minority backgrounds. This educational option will start up in the autumn of 2008.

In the autumn 2008, the Ministry of Children and Gender Equality will also start up the mentoring programme "Nightingale" in eight University Colleges. The goal of the programme is to strengthen the multicultural experience in the Child Welfare Service by helping students studying child welfare and social education get increased knowledge about children, youth and families with ethnic minority backgrounds. Beyond this is a goal

to help more children and youths finish their secondary education and seek higher education. The project will particularly try to reach boys, who are in the most danger of dropping out.

7.8.1 Children in the Child Welfare Service system often live a difficult life

A longitudinal study of children of the Child Welfare system in the period 1990 to 2005 shows that life does not seem to go well for many of these children. The main conclusion from the analyses presented in the report is that persons who have been clients of the Child Welfare system often have poorer living conditions later than those who have not been part of the system. It seems to go relatively well with about a third of the children, but two thirds end up with poorer living conditions than those who have not been in the system. Large differences have been documented with respect to education, income, use of social welfare and unemployment. The results also indicate that previous clients have greater health problems than the general population. Health is indirectly measured by looking at help benefits and disability benefits. Earlier studies have also shown that the differences between children of the Child Welfare system and other children are large when it comes to charges of criminal activity. The knowledge we have about how problems pile up for risk groups implies that there are other differences between children within the system and those outside that must be examined.

Some unequal distribution across gender lines is also reported and it seems that it goes worse for the boys in Child Welfare hands than for girls. Figure 7.2 indicates that gender differences are large for all the types of reasons for referral to Child Welfare Services as regards the percent of children who later took higher education.

7.8.2 A male perspective in the Child Welfare Services

The state Child Welfare Service is working to implement and further develop methods and models directed towards young people with serious behavioural problems, including young criminals. The initiatives and methods are directed towards both boys and girls, but lack an explicit and integrated masculine perspective.

Norwegian research has not looked closely at boys in the Child Welfare Service, criminality among boys or the meeting between the service

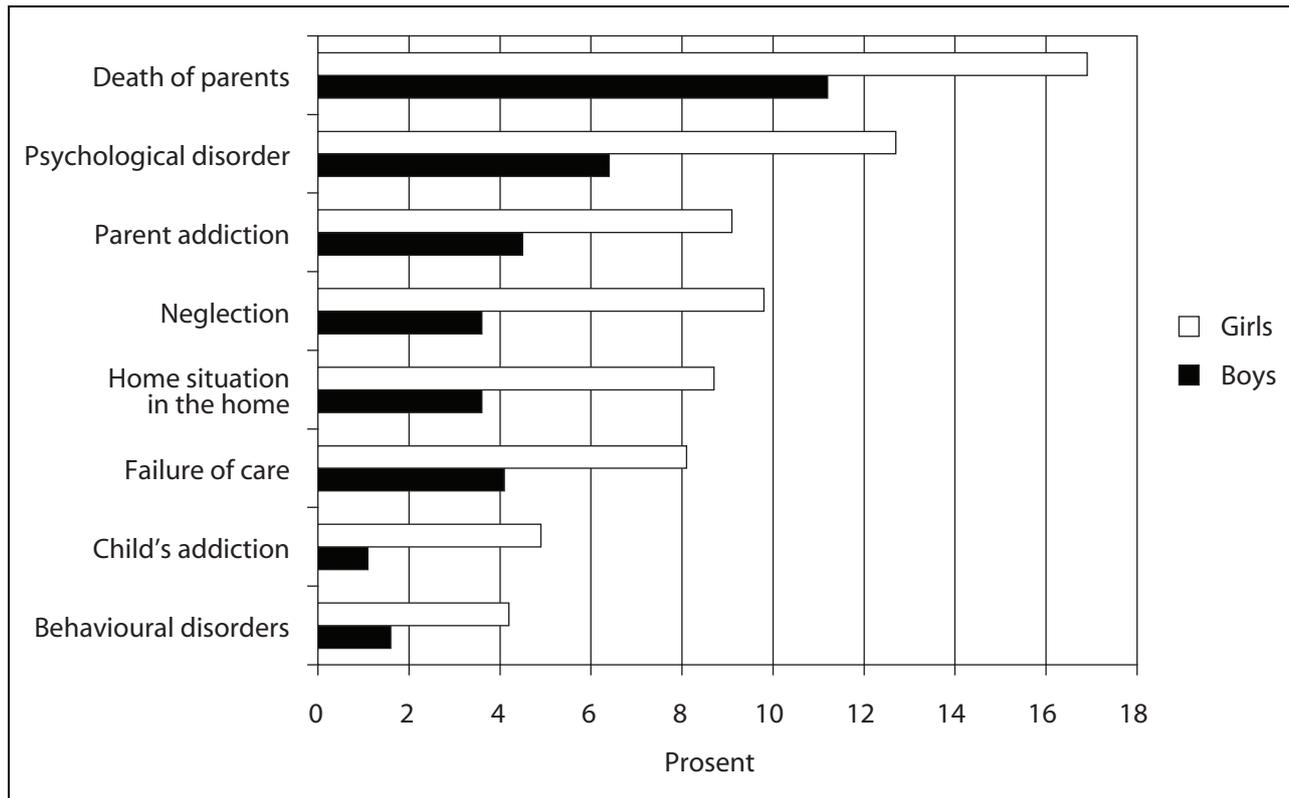


Figure 7.2 Number of Child Welfare Service children with higher education according to gender and the original basis for referral. Percent

and these boys from a gender perspective. In this area, as in others, the focus has usually been on girls. The few research contributions that have a masculine perspective as a foundation show that such a perspective does in fact make it easier to understand why young boys become criminals and how gender plays a role in the contact between the environment workers and the boys and in the daily life of the institution.

In a historical study of Foldin Protective School for boys with behavioural problems (earlier Bastøy School Home) in the period 1953–1970 the "institutional eye" of the work of the institution is analysed from a masculinity perspective. This analysis of the archive material from 1950's and 60's reveals the dilemmas in working with the boys with the greatest challenges, something that is still relevant today.

In the doctoral thesis "Normal and abnormal, environment work at home with 14-18 year olds." a study is presented of some measures that the Child Welfare Services has implemented in home

environments. The study showed that the same cultural understanding of masculinity that characterised the functionaries at Foldin in the 50's and 60's was present in the measures that Child Welfare had implemented for boys with serious challenges today. "Boys will be boys" is the attitude – also for Child Welfare Service today – and it appears that a gender perspective is not a theme in today's Child Welfare Service. To the degree that a gender perspective is present, it usually does not reach further than trying to get male role models for boys with serious behavioural issues. The children in the Child Welfare system today would greatly benefit if the service would integrate newer gender research, especially new masculinity research into its work with respect to working with boys. Increased understanding of gender as practice, relationships and process could reduce the risk of Child Welfare workers sabotaging their own work, as the employees at Foldin did to a great extent.

8 Masculinity and violence

8.1 Introduction

Researcher Johan Galtung points out that men represent 95% of all violence committed in the world today. Hence, violence appears to be gender specific, and tied to masculinity and the male role.

At the same time it must be emphasised that this does not mean that all men are violent. Most men neither exercise violence, nor are subjected to violence themselves. Violence is not a part of most men's behavioural repertoire.

Men exercising violence towards their closest ones is a serious obstacle on the path to equality, and prevents women and/or children from feeling safe in their own homes.

The gender specificity of violence does not mean that women are never violent, but only that men exercise it to a greater degree.

In addition to putting violent assault on the public agenda and arresting and trying violent assaulters, society at large must take on the responsibility of helping men change violent patterns. There also needs to be an attitude of zero tolerance throughout society concerning all violence, including violence not encompassed by law. Prevention of violence must be put on the agenda.

"Turning Point" is a new action-plan by the government aimed at tackling violence in close relations, amongst other actions focusing on services available throughout the country for treatment alternatives for the perpetrators themselves. This chapter discusses the work that needs to be done in order to establish these nation-wide services.

8.2 About men's violence

In all police-reported violence, men constitute the largest category, both of victims and culprits. Men constitute 88% of all people that are identified as being guilty of crimes involving a threat to life and health, including assault and battery. When it comes to manslaughter cases, 90% of offenders are male. In 2006, 33 cases of manslaughter were reported. There were fewer male victims com-

pared with previous years – however, the number of female victims was above average. 2006 stood out in that 60% of the victims were women. Typically, offenders are Norwegian men in their 30's or 40's who have a close relationship with the victim. Often intoxicants are involved, and in more than half of the cases the victim is a Norwegian woman. There have annually been registered 38 manslaughters on average in the years of the 21st century. In the 1990's the average was just under 40 cases.

Men constitute the majority of the victims that report to the police, and in 2006 the number of male victims increased. Compared with the previous year the number of victims subjected to violent crime increased by 3%, mainly due to a 5% rise in male victims. This increase is connected with the fact that more people were victims of violence, while fewer had been subjected to threats.

Not all experienced violence is being reported to the police. The last Survey of Living Conditions indicates that only 15% of all cases of violence and threats are reported to the police. There are two main factors that determine whether a case will be reported or not: the severity of the episode, and the relationship between offender and victim. The more serious the crime, the more likely it is to be reported to the police. Violence between strangers is also more often reported than violence within families or between people who know each other.

The Survey of Living Conditions from 2004 shows that gender differences are being erased when actual violence and threats are being reported. Approximately 5% of men and women have reported being the victims of violence during the last 12 months. This investigation shows that the facts concerning the victims of violence have a connection with age. There are far more victims, both men and women, of violence against younger people compared to older people. Physical injuries for victims are also more common when young offenders are involved, and this trend is also the case for both men and women. There are approximately as many men as women who report being victims of violence or violent

threats, and the spread of ages between the genders is relatively even. At the same time, there are clear differences between the genders in terms of describing what they have been subjected to. Women experience a greater extent of violence from close relations and in their local environment. Men on the other hand have a greater risk of being subjected to violence by strangers in public after nightfall and during weekends.

Violence can often be an ambiguous category. What is regarded as violence shifts between cultures, societies and time: The definition of violence in one era may well be regarded as a non-violent act in another and vice versa. This becomes clearer if one goes back to the 1950's and 60's. Back then smacking children was more common. Corporal punishment in schools was banned in 1936, but smacking your child remained lawful throughout the 1950's and 60's. The authority to physically punish children was contained in the law about limiting physical punishment from 20th of June 1891, nr 1. It was not until 1972 that this legislation was lifted and physical punishment became forbidden. However, fights between boys were common, and this was not regarded as violence. A fight was a fight, "boys will be boys" and fights were expected at times. In the previously mentioned study by Foldin Protective School for boys with behaviour problems from the 1950's and 60's, it is clear that boys who hesitated in exercising violence, who did not fight when asked and who tried to elevate their role in the hierarchy by "sucking-up" to bigger boys were branded as soft, pathetic and cowardly by school staff. The phenomenon of abuse of both men and women was considered differently in the 1950's and 60's than today. Child molestation and abuse of women are conceptions that grew from the female struggle of the 1970's. The 1950's and 60's were filled with what we today define and understand as violence, but the term was rarely used. The actions had different names and connotations during those days.

As mentioned in the introduction, most men are not violent. In our times violence is considered an unacceptable solution: to smack a child as a part of his or her upbringing is totally unacceptable. The same goes for all types of violence in close relationships, including between couples. Fights in the schoolyard are no longer the expected behaviour between boys, as it is now defined as violence. Boys now are no longer encouraged to "hit back" and turn to violence as a

strategy for solving conflicts. However, being weak and cowardly (both physically and morally) are still the main signifiers of being recognized as "unmanly", and this still characterizes society's expectations of boys today. One is somehow not supposed to be "too tough", but at the same time not "unmanly" either. Anyone associated with showing cowardice, weakness or lack of self-control is still considered unpopular.

Many people draw attention to the ambivalent societal attitude towards violence in Norway. Violence is negative and must be opposed. At the same time one can find vast examples of violence as entertainment in various media. At the same time, violence is both abandoned and well accepted in mass media. When the hero explodes in violent behaviour, most people applaud and like what they see. The violence is applauded as an ideal and associated with heroism and courage.

Even with modest under-reporting, the results from surveys (including the Gender Equality Survey) suggest that violence is not a dominant feature in the everyday life of the average Norwegian couple. Other surveys show that women are reported as being the victims of violence in close relationships more often than men. When it comes to violence outside the home, men are, according to the survey, more involved both as victims and as offenders. Accordingly, the results show (as with many other Norwegian studies) that age plays an important part. Higher numbers of young men are involved in violent crime. After 50 years of age, men are dramatically less involved in violence, and the gap between the genders narrows.

One needs to make a distinction between gender and power in order to get men involved in opposing violence. If all men are branded potentially violent, they will not be encouraged to share their experiences. Many suggest that "silent resistance" from men prevents more efficient, preventive work. This has surfaced through work in voluntary organizations such as the White Ribbon campaign, among others. This resistance involves ignoring the problem of violence, not taking part in discussions, and consequently feeling attacked as a man. These men often critically oppose the notion that violence is gender-specific. An inability to deal with their own personal problems and violent episodes in their own life can make them afraid of being classified as perpetrators of violence. Hence, they rarely share their experiences and consequently the subject becomes taboo.

Below we debate the different aspects of violence in order to approach the challenges we face concerning equality. It is necessary to recognize and understand violence as a part of masculinity in order to instigate change.

8.3 Different types of violence

What is perceived as violence is, as mentioned, changing over time and in step with changes in society. But even in a specified given era, violence is not a clear-cut category.

Violence can be defined as “every action aimed towards another person, which through this action harms, hurts, scares or violates the person, or makes this person do something against their will or stops them in doing what they want.” At the same time, violence that falls under the criminal law of chapter 22 concerning life, body and health, encompasses very differing social phenomena, even though they all have in common the fact that violence has been exercised. Violence that is being exercised on the street between strangers is different compared with violence in close relations, and these different phenomena must be understood from different perspectives. The connection between masculinity and violence also changes between the different types of phenomena.

8.3.1 Violence in public

As shown above, the majority of victims that report violence to the police are men. How big this percentage is depends on the type of crime. In terms of the major crimes there are greater gender differences in the occurrence of bodily harm (84% men) compared with less grave violations of the body (63% men) and threats (55% men). On the other hand, women are severely over-represented among victims of sexual crime (88% women) and abuse within family relationships. This is a topic we examine more closely in a later section. In this section we are focusing on violence in public.

Men are more often being subjected to violence from complete or partial strangers in public places, in the evening and during weekends. The Survey of Living Conditions shows that 57% of all cases concerning violence aimed towards men occurred in public. Some incidents happen in connection with nightlife, and here the youngest victims, especially young men, are severely over-rep-

resented. At these times and in these arenas one can expect people to be under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants, and as previous research indicates, the main offender is frequently under the influence. The Survey of Living Conditions shows that 62% of all offenders that exercised violence towards men were under the influence of alcohol.

The risk of being subjected to or threatened with violence is connected with the victim being under the influence of alcohol as well. Research into the risk of Oslo citizens being subjected to violence found that those who are frequently intoxicated are more likely to be violently threatened. They also found connections between how often people frequent places that serve alcohol and acts of violence, especially by men.

Much of the reported violence is either exercised by men, or experienced by men, at night and at weekends around areas with a busy nightlife. At these times and in these areas, both abusers and victims are often under the influence of alcohol. In 2007 the chiefs of police in Oslo, Bergen and Trondheim pointed out that huge resource are being spent in preventing drunkenness and fighting during late hours.

It was mentioned above that young boys sometimes use violence as a means to “gain masculinity”. This is part of a greater masculinity image concerning boys, also known as “cowboy masculinity”, where crime and violence are part of a larger identity the boy is trying to create. Also for boys that do not have any such ambitions, violence can be a masculine resource, at least when they feel threatened as a man.

The violence can accordingly be understood as an expression for a “masculinity project”, the creation of a certain kind of masculine identity. Researcher Isdal writes that one can distinguish between violence considered as taboo and other types of violence. The violence considered as taboo is violence that is condemned by society as objectionable: violence towards women or children or towards someone that is clearly inferior to the exerciser in size and strength. Violence that is not considered taboo is not problematic for the perpetrator in the sense that the perpetrator does not necessarily see that he committed any wrongdoing. On some occasions the perpetrator can even feel proud, brave and strong and believe that he has “won”.

Violence among men supports the image of the male identity as aggressive and unafraid. When men speak about this violence, it is often

Table 8.1 Experiences concerning threats and different uses of force exercised by a partner during the last year

The Partner has:	Women	Men	Women	Men
	Last year	Last year	Previous	Previous
Threatened with violence	1,6	0,7	11,5	2,8
Prevented you from moving freely	2,9	1,7	17,5	5,6
Beat you with a flat hand	1,9	3,0	11,8	13,1
Thrown a hard object at you	1,3	1,8	6,3	8,8
Beat you with a clenched fist or object, kicked	0,9	1,7	8,3	5,3
Performed a chokehold, tried to strangle you	0,5	0,3	5,6	0,8
Used a knife on you	0,1	0,2	2,3	1,5
Banged your head against the floor, object	0,6	0,2	4,8	0,4
Forced sex upon you	1,0	0,5	9,0	1,0
Behaved in another violent way	2,5	1,6	15,6	6,7
At least one of these types	5,7	5,6	27,1	21,8

portrayed in detail. Violence between men can in certain contexts gain approval and respect, no matter who wins the fight. To respond with violence when provoked, and to not back down, can for many men (especially young men), demonstrate that they are not only unafraid, but also capable of enduring and daring to both give and receive a violent assault.

A gathering of drunk, tired young men out and about late at night increases the chances of body language and comments being misinterpreted, and the demonstration of an unafraid male identity becomes more likely.

8.3.2 Violence in close relationships.

In surveys concerning how heavily Oslo citizens are subjected to threats, violence and sexual assaults, the same amount of men and women say that they have been subjected to partner violence during the last year. However, few (2-3%) have been subjected to grave or frequent violence. In terms of a whole lifespan, the research shows that far more women (12%) than men (3%) say they have been subjected to grave forms of physical violence from a current or previous partner.

In May 2005 the Norwegian Institute for City and Regional Research (NIBR) presented the report "Violence in couples – different perspectives". It is the first investigation to survey the extent of violence between couples throughout Norway. The two main parts deal with the use of force and violence between spouses and partners, and violence towards women and health prob-

lems. One of the findings in the research is that the use of physical force and violence between couples has a greater importance if one looks at couples over a long period of time. After 15 years in a relationship, more than a quarter of women and a fifth of men have experienced that their spouse or partner, on at least one occasion, exercised physical force or threatened them with violence. When it comes to actions with serious potential for bodily injury (the partner has taken a chokehold, used a weapon, banged the head against floor or other objects), there are big differences between men and women. Far more women than men have experienced this. Just fewer than 10% of the women, and 2% of the men, have experienced this type of serious violence from a partner at some stage in their life.

Just over 5% of both men and women have been subjected to physical force or violence at least once during the last calendar year. Experiences' involving threats and different types of physical force exercised by a partner divides itself in the following way:

Between 0.1% and 0.3% of the informants claim they have been subjected to one of the different types of force from current or past partners during the last year. The use of a knife or another type of weapon occurs the most seldom, which 0.1% of the women and 0.2% of the men have been subjected to. For men, beating with a flat hand is the most common use of physical force used against them, while the act of being prevented to move freely is reported the most often among women. 1 out of 10 women and 1 out of 40 men

have been victims over the last year of the three categories with the greatest potential of injury (partner has taken a chokehold, used a weapon or banged the victim's head against the floor or object). If one looks at previously reported uses of force, the numbers concerning violence committed by men towards women are by far the greatest. The exception is beating with a flat hand and the throwing of hard objects.

Domestic violence is a serious societal problem and in the report from Committee against Domestic Violence the term *men's violence towards women and children in close relationships* has been put forward to illustrate that it is primarily men who are the perpetrators of violence, and women and children the victims. The term violence in close relationships is, in this way, closely linked with what in the 1970s and 1980's was referred to as *abuse of women*.

Newer research stresses that partner violence is not a clear-cut, one-sided phenomenon, but deals with several distinctly different forms of violence. Partner violence is the denominator for many different types of violence. There is a major distinction between what can be referred to as *patriarchal terrorism*, which we from now on will call *patriarchal assaults*, and what is referred to as *episodic partner violence*. The former type of violence is closely linked with what is referred to as abuse of women, and concerns itself with physical brutalities, psychic terror, systematic oppression, degradation and abuse of power. Mainly it is women who suffer from this. Episodic partner violence, on the other hand, has no clear gender profile, nor is it an ingredient in more serious suppression regimes. The episodes of violence are usually not grave and occur relatively rarely. This type of violence seems to be triggered by failures in communication and lack of conflict management skills.

The most widespread violence in close relationships is episodic violence, which can occur because of conflicts and arguments, and both partners may end up assaulting each other. This is most frequent in younger couples. In the age group 20-24, three times as many women have been subjected to physical force compared with women between 50-54 years. Among men, five times as many men are affected in the two youngest age groups than the eldest age group.

Even though this type of violence is less serious compared to systematic abuse, it is not to be trifled with. The research behind the Norwegian survey underlines that these issues are a huge

problem for the people affected. The experience can be both insulting and painful.

In comparison to systematic abuse, there is limited research concerning episodic violence, and it is little discussed in the professional literature. The reasons behind episodic violence in couples are therefore less well known. The link between gender, power and violence is far less apparent when the violence is sporadic compared with serious repetitive violence.

In both studies about partner violence in Norway that are available it emerges that episodic violence is more widespread than patriarchal abuse. It is important that these findings concerning the increase in partner violence are not understood as an increase in the abuse of women. The research behind both surveys emphasised in a joint feature article that this kind of violence is a serious enough problem as it is, without the issue being exaggerated. Here the authors point out that abuse against women, or patriarchal assaults, occurs in all countries, as well as in Norway, where approximately 2000 women per year spend a night in crisis centres. But despite the assertions sometimes made, there is little to suggest that a large part of the female population lives in an abusive relationship, nor is there any indication that the rate of this type of violence is increasing. On the contrary, it seems that the occurrence of this violence has been stable for a long time. The number of nights spent in crisis centres has varied very little over the last 20 years.

Results from a nationwide survey, conducted by NIBR, conclude that violence towards women in close relationships is a severe problem for public health. Women that reported violence from their partner experienced suicidal thoughts, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress syndromes much more often than other women. The results from this survey show that violence towards women in close relationships can lead to severe health damage, but that many still don't contact health services, even after physical injury.

Another important issue is children witnessing both episodic and systematic violence. The knowledge that has been gained about the problems these children experience was emphasised in the action plan against violence in close relations. The seriousness is reflected in several measures, including increasing the competence of Child Welfare teams and the three-year nationwide project called "Children that Live with Violence in the Family." To further emphasise that children who witness violence are thereby also

subjected to violence, the Act of Compensation for Victims of Violence has been changed so that children witnessing violence now have the right to receive victim of violence compensation.

This change came into effect 1.1.2008

8.3.2.1 *Who is affected by the abuse of women?*

In research on violence with a gender-based perspective, violence exercised by men can be understood in connection with a patriarchal power structure in society where men are superior to women (patriarchal structure). This societal arrangement leads some men to establish and maintain a dominating position towards the woman they are living with by using forms of power and control. Male dominance or power is then expressed through violence, harassment, and sexual assault. This male dominance over women is also exercised through controlling behaviour. A gender-based perspective on violence concerns itself therefore with the connection between gender, power, control and sexuality.

Abusive relations are not equal. They are the remains within our society of feudal times, when the man owned the family and had a moral and legal right to do what he pleased with them. When laws against rape were brought into Norwegian law, the female victim's point of view was overlooked. Today human rights are also for women and children, and everyone has the right to be safe, both in public and private domains.

Another key point in both surveys is that violence does not, from a social point of view, seem to be completely random. No segment of the population is excused, but the problem is far more widespread among people living in poorer conditions. The Oslo-survey shows that violence is far more widespread among people in difficult circumstances, such as the unemployed, recipients of social welfare, disability insurance or others with difficult economic conditions. Corresponding findings are surfacing in the nationwide Equality Survey: use of force between couples is more widespread among partners that have problems with their living conditions. Among men and women that received social welfare last year, or who say they have a much lower income than most, twice as many women were being subjected to violence from their male partner, compared with the rest of the sample. There were also substantially more women being subjected to the use of force among welfare benefit recipients, or peo-

ple that had been unemployed over a three-year period.

If we look at the numbers of people contacting the crisis centres, we see they are relatively stable, but the particular groups of women who are contacting the centres are changing. Numbers taken from 2006 show that there is a clear rise in the number of women with a minority background contacting the crisis centres, and of these 90% are coming from a non-western background. Almost a third of the women are married to Norwegian men without an immigrant background.

In the societal debate concerning minorities there is a tendency to use culture as an explanation for violence, and NOU 2003:32 "The Right to a Life without Violence" are issuing a warning concerning this. In a conference arranged by the Committee against Domestic Violence in co-operation with minority representatives from the Committee for Contact between Authorities and Immigrants (KIM), there were expressions of concern over the tendency to "ethnify" violence. It was pointed out that this approach could make violence seem to fall into race categories, which could ultimately lead to a neglect of the many similarities that violence against women has across social, cultural and religious boundaries. This type of focus, concerning specific groups of people, can lead to the avoidance of seeing unpleasant sides of one's own culture, while at the same time further the marginalisation of minorities. All must work together if one is to finally get rid of all forms of violence towards women and children in close relationships, regardless of culture. This must also be accomplished without stigmatisation.

These are important warnings, but they need to be understood alongside the reasons why men are exercising violence towards their partner, as was previously referred to by researcher Arnlaug Leira. At the same time, there might be reasons to look closer at whether certain groups of men in Norwegian society are more influenced by the feudal gender code of masculine dominance and female suppression. This will not only encompass sub-groupings of minority men, but equally Norwegian men who marry women of a non-western origin, and Norwegian men who marry women of Norwegian origin.

8.3.2.2 *Why is violence being perpetrated?*

Behind most systematic abuse we find men. In this context the connection between gender,

Box 8.1 Action Plan against Violence in Close Relationships (2008-2011) “Turning Point”

In November 2007 “Turning Point” was launched, an action-plan against violence in close relationships. The plan contained fifty concrete measures under the following main divisions:

- Victims of violence in close relationships shall be guaranteed essential help and protection.
- The spiral of violence must be broken by strengthening services geared towards treating perpetrators of violence
- Victims of violence in close relations shall be given the opportunity of aided conversations with the perpetrator of violence. (Restorative justice)
- The cooperative competence and the knowledge base within the helping apparatus shall be strengthened and coordinated

- Work concerning research and development shall be initiated and continued.
- Violence in close relationships shall be made more visible.
- Violence in close relationships shall be prevented through changing attitudes and misconceptions.

The Justice and Police Department has the responsibility of coordinating the completion of the plan. The completion is made possible through the co-operation of The Ministry of Children and Equality, The Ministry of Health and Care Services, The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Education. A summary of the status of the action-plan work can be found at the website of the Ministry of Justice and the Police.

power and violence becomes apparent. Violence is woven into a masculine regime of control that suppresses the female and puts her in a subordinate position. The male regime relies on the man being physically superior. When a female uses violence against a violent and controlling male partner, it is reasonable to see it as self-defence, and this type of violence usually has far less serious consequences.

Previously in this document, men’s violence towards other men has been referred to as a part of an “identity project”, with men striving to establish themselves as tough and unafraid. Men’s violence towards women on the other hand, is not a type of action that is considered positive for the masculine identity. To “beat someone who is smaller than you” is considered as rather cowardly and unmanly. Men as exercisers of systematic violence towards their female partner seem to be creating a different male identity, “the dominant man”.

A male identity project that justifies violence towards women establishes women as inferior to men in the family. Men talk about violence towards women in a different way than violence towards other men. In stories concerning the abuse of women the actual action of violence is usually toned down, and a serious action of abuse could, for example, be explained with a simple “he lost it”. Male violence towards women is a type of

action that projects a negative male identity. These violent men seek to have “their way” and in so doing they reaffirm their position as superior to the woman they live with.

Researcher Holter points out that men who express dominance through violence towards women are found in all levels of society. But the connections between gender, power and violence are not simple. It is not necessarily the “patriarchs”, men with power, or the “tough” men, that are assaulters. The violence is an *expression* of a societal condition that men are superior and women inferior, but often it is the relatively powerless men that resort to such violence. It is well known through studies of the systems of power, that power shows its worst face, not through those with power, but through those without it.

In isolation violence is often connected with the concept of *honour*. It is likely that this must be interpreted as a conception some men have about being superior and having the right to dominate, and not as a culturally acceptable foundation for the use of violence.

8.3.2.3 *Work towards improving men’s violence against women in close relationships.*

The government has worked in several different ways to prevent this sort of violence – see the boxes.

Box 8.2 The Report from the Committee for Obstruction of Rape

Sexual assault is one of the most traumatizing crimes a person can be subjected to, and represents a particular challenge for the legal and health services alike. It is alarming that so few cases are filed and taken to conviction. Moreover, it is worrying that health care services for rape victims vary in terms of quality, content and organization. According to numbers given by the police there were 9,6% more rapes reported in 2007 compared to 2006, and 28,6% more in 2007 compared with 2003. In 2007 there were 1014 rapes and rape attempts reported. (STRA-SAK 2007)

In September 2006 The Department of Justice laid down a committee to account for the situation rape victims find themselves in. The Soria-Moria declaration was the starting point of this work, where the government targeted an improvement in rape victims' situations. The committee has, among other things, considered preventative measures, and programs concerning the reception and co-ordination of how public institutions welcome victims. The committee delivered their proposal on the 24th of January and has suggested the following measures:

- Establish a central, nationwide special unit in the police force with the responsibility of targeting sexual violence (SEPOL). The committee suggests that the unit shall be operative on a 24-hour basis and in close cooperation with the district police. In addition to ensuring quality time and effort spent on individual cases, SEPOL aims to secure the routines concerning procedures, analysis and exchanging of information.

- Expand the advisory offices for crime victims (RKK) to a nationwide support function for the victims of rape. The offices should also expand to encompass the attention of rape victims with special needs.
- Establish SO-teams in every police district with at least one tactical and one technical investigator as well as a lawyer qualified to deal with cases of sexual assault.
- Raise the level of competence in the legal apparatus, in the assault clinics, and in social and health education, among others.
- Introduce free health care at the assault clinics.
- Introduce free follow-up care with a psychologist or psychiatrist, in addition to acute help for the first year from when treatment starts, independent of whether aid is being given by a specialist with or without an agreement with the public authorities.
- Give the opportunity for the case documents to be translated, and traveling and accommodation expenses covered if a rape occurs abroad.
- Introduce compulsory recordings of interrogations in cases of rape and questioning of victims.
- Initiate research to map out the extent of rape and research on young offenders and on people convicted for indecency in general.
- Open an Internet portal for information on rape and how to contact the police and the help apparatus.
- The Commission is open to the idea of a pilot project exploring aided communication between victim and perpetrator (Restorative Justice).

8.4 Men as victims of violence and sexual assaults.

Boys and men as victims of violence in close relationships and sexual assaults are discussed in public debate to a lesser degree than as perpetrators. Women are discussed publicly to a far greater degree, as they constitute the majority of assaulted victims.

The serious and repetitive violence in close relationships referred to above has been called *patriarchal assault*, and is mainly characterised by

the fact that women are the victims, and men the perpetrators. This violence expresses itself through physical brutality, psychological terror, systematic oppression, degradation and abuse of power. Sexual assaults also affect more women than men, and here again most perpetrators of sexual assault are men.

Even though more women than men are being subjected to serious and repeated violence in close relationships, and to sexual assaults and rape, many men also suffer from these assaults. They are also victims of violence in public places,

Box 8.3

The National Centre of Knowledge about Violence and Traumatic Stress (NKVTS) was established 1st of January 2004. Five ministries: The Ministry of Children and Equality, The Ministry of Health and Care Services, The Ministry of Justice, The Ministry of Labour and Social Inclusion and the Ministry of Defence are behind the establishing of the centre. The aim is to collect and strengthen the level of competence concerning violence, family violence and sexual assault, health care of immigrants and forced migrants, stress management and collective trauma situations. The tasks of the centre will include work in development, education, guidance and counselling. The National Centre of

Knowledge concerning violence and traumatic stress has a key role in the completion of measures in the government's action plan towards improving violence in close relationships. (2008–2011). It has also established five regional resource centres in the violence and trauma field. These centres shall support the service apparatus with information, guidance and the development of competence, as well as establish a network between all co-operating regions. Interventions to help sexually assaulted children, social and psychological work with refugees and suicide-prevention work are included in the centres.

as shown above. Unfortunately these victim experiences are not given much attention.

8.4.1 The problematic victim concept

To perceive one's self as, and to be perceived as a victim are two contrasting sides of the same matter. To be perceived as a victim exempts guilt. This was an important element in the female movement when illustrating domestic violence in the 1970's. Then, the female movement fought for women's *right to be perceived as victims*, and not infamous and provocative bitches, or flirty girls who drove men to violence and abuse. Instead of looking at the violence as an interaction between two partners, the female movement managed to highlight that this was about abuse, and that the issue concerned a relation between violator and victim.

The role of the victim is a heavy load to carry. A *victim* is perceived as passive, helpless and pitiable, and negative associations such as *un-free, ruined, loser and unsafe* are inherent in the word. The status as victim can also be useful, but the right to be a victim is not unproblematic. It has been said that there are few rights without obligations, and the right to be a victim implies a duty to be pitiable, weak, and a passive object.

To be perceived as a passive object is considered highly problematic, thus making the whole victim concept problematic from a feminist perspective. Victimhood has been under severe criticism. A study of advisors at the Crisis Centre Sec-

retariat shows that the advisors are critical of calling women subjected to violence "victims".

Many women therefore oppose the idea that they are "victims". This is just as problematic for men who are victims. The idea of victimhood is associated with femininity, and there are many negative associations with it that are in contrast to the image of a "real man". It has emerged in a survey concerning raped men that they felt guilt and shame after the assault, and that they kept it hidden from the outside world.

It is problematic for men to be assaulted by other men, and this situation does not improve if the offender is a woman. To become a victim of a woman in this context stands as too big a contrast to what is expected from masculine men. To become victimized leads to degradation and loss of dignity. For men this situation also implies loss of manhood.

8.4.2 Victims of violence in close relationships

Reports from crisis centres in 2007, show that four men stayed overnight at crisis centres that year. That so few spend the night is consistent with the fact that the centres have primarily been a service for abused women. Most centres stick with the policy of children and women as their main target, and do not accommodate men.

At the crisis centres the users can meet up for conversations and come for advice and guidance. Of the daily users of the centres, 5% were men, and of these 95 men in all, 45 were having daily

visits at 24 of the total 51 crisis centres that take day clients.

As mentioned above, (see 8.3.2) surveys of the extent of the problem of violence show that when one looks at partner violence as a whole, roughly as many men as women say they have been subjected to this type of violence during the past year. The nationwide survey shows that just over 5% of both men and women have experienced physical force and violence from their partner during the calendar year. If we look at the categories with severe injury potential (strangulation, use of a weapon, head banged against floor or object) 8.4% of women (1 out of 10) and 2.2% of men (1 out of 40) have been subjected to this. In a report from REFORM (Resource Centre for Men) – “Men subjected to violence in close relationships” – it is established that as many as 300 men yearly have a potential need for help or aid after being subjected to violence in close relationships. REFORM is being contacted both day and night, among other things via the “Hotline for men in crisis”. And on the basis of this contact we know a few things about those men.

From the report it emerges that:

- the social and psychological situation has striking similarities with the situation that is being depicted by women subjected to partner violence
- that many are seeking a place where they can receive help
- that many continue living with the perpetrator of violence due to the lack of offered accommodation for men subjected to violence in close relationships
- that victims show a palpable fear of not being believed
- that the threshold to seek help is so high that relatives are usually the ones who contact the help services first

REFORM asserts that if boys and men are to be given the opportunity to seek help concerning the situation they find themselves in, a specific service for this group must be established and made known. At the same time, work towards the removal of taboos tied being a victim of this violence must be continued. The report states that:

“Men and boys subjected to violence in close relationships seem to have a palpable fear of not being believed and a high threshold concerning seeking help. The group seem to have a need for a greater acknowledgement of their problem in society, and taboos to be opposed.

In this way the threshold for seeking help can become lower. There is need for the development of both a societal understanding and a development of the existing language to encompass men’s problems, so that it is understood that serious violence between couples or family relations can also affect boys and men, and that they may need help also.”

8.4.3 Victims of sexual assault

Boys and men are subjected to sexual assault and rape too. In a survey among students in graduating classes at secondary schools, 22% of the girls and 8% of the boys reported having been subjected to minor sexual assaults. Minor abuse included incidents such as unwanted caressing and masturbation. More grave abuse included all other forms of unwanted sex, including rape and attempted rape. 15% of the girls and 7% of the boys reported this type of grave abuse. Of these girls 9% reported experiences of rape or attempted rape. Less than 1% of the boys reported such incidents.

The survey shows that experiences of sexual assault increases the risk of self-destructive behaviour such as attempted suicide, self harm, eating disorders, aggressive outward behaviour, problems tied to sexuality due to premature sexual activity, seeking paid sex, having intercourse with multiple partners and forcing intercourse upon others (this only concerned grave assaults). In addition it also increases the risk for mental problems such as low self-esteem (again, only concerned the grave sexual assaults), anxiety, depression and disassociation.

A surprising find in this survey is that a number of boys reported to have been subjected to assaults by women. This concerned half the boys who answered that they had been subjected to an unwanted sexual act.

Numbers from the Centre for Sexually Assaulted Men show that of the men that visit the centre, more than a quarter of them report that the perpetrator was a woman. In 2006, this amounted to 26.5% of the men.

No previous nationwide or known international surveys have shown such a high percentage of boys and men that report a female perpetrator. The difference could come from inequalities in the given samples and the way the survey was planned. But the difference could also mirror the changes over time concerning the image of offender and victim. The difference could be an

expression of the fact that more women are actually assaulting men than in previous times. Another possible explanation is that men now have a lower threshold when it comes to reporting these circumstances, and therefore are experiencing and reporting these incidents to a greater degree.

That more boys are reporting unwanted acts of sex could also be an expression for an increasing consciousness among boys concerning the control over one's sexual practices and reluctances.

The risk of sexual assault towards boys and men is a phenomenon that we today have insufficient knowledge of, and efforts in researching the area must be increased.

8.4.4 Victims of violence in public places

The violence most men are victims of is violence in public places, committed by totally or partially unknown perpetrators, at night and on the weekends, as mentioned in paragraph 8.3.1. Considering the extent of this violence, the victims do not receive much attention and little research is done on the matter. A new survey makes up for this scarcity. The purpose of the survey is to gain more insight into the psychological reactions to so-called random violence, where the perpetrator in most cases is unknown. The survey shows that as much as 33% of the sample suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder after the incident. 44% show symptoms of anxiety and depression immediately after the attack. Furthermore, sleeping disorders, nightmares, tension, irritability and isolation are also common reactions.

The study also revealed that victims of random violence have difficulties coming forward because of the black and white picture painted of the victim as a young, intoxicated man who practically "asked for it". Such an attitude makes it difficult for many of the victims to tell their families and colleagues about the assault, out of fear of being judged as irresponsible.

Many of the victims in this survey experienced inadequate follow-up care from the health service. They said they felt neglected, overlooked and badly taken care of, despite struggling with major problems. This study shows that there is a need for a service for anyone who has been exposed to violence, irrespective of gender or whether the perpetrator is a family member or not. There is a need for a service that makes it possible to follow up those who struggle after a

violent attack and for the victims to work through their reactions.

8.5 Strategies and initiatives to reduce violent attitudes and actions, particularly among boys and men.

One significant reason for not being able to accomplish full equality between the sexes is men's violence against women and children.

The professionals within the field often talk about men's violence against women as if it were an unambiguous type of violence, performed by a clear-cut group of men. Men are different, and the violence they use is different both in terms of severity, extent and methods. Today, men's violence against women is not only about men committing violence against their wives or girlfriends. There is also the matter of prostitution and trafficking. Moreover, violence in close relationships is also about men's self image. Boys and girls have different limits of tolerance to aggression and brutality. This affects the understanding of what is acceptable entertainment. The male clients of «Alternative to Violence» often struggle to see other alternatives than violence, because they feel that the alternatives are a threat to their male self image.

Most boys and men have no problems with violence and do not exercise violence, neither inside nor outside relationships. It is the offender who is responsible for the act of violence, not the gender. But all men have a collective responsibility to take a stand against violence at their workplaces and within their own social network.

Violence is not only about the suppression of women as an expression of the lack of equality between the sexes. Violence is also about violence being present, the tolerance of violence and to what extent the violence is felt as normal in a man's life. The violence could be determined by the situation or linked to the person's own violent traumas.

The highest priority for this government is the effort against violence, including violence in close relations. Through the action plan "Turning Point" the government put forward a number of initiatives to prevent violence. The plan of action includes help and treatment initiatives for victims of violence, but also a service for assailants. From a gender equality perspective, and with special awareness of boys and men, these strategies are critical for further work on the subject:

- Clarify the relationship between commercial violence and violent acts and attitudes, especially among boys and men.
- Develop help and treatment centres for boys and men with violent attitudes and actions, across the country.
- Make changing the attitudes among men and in male dominated environments a priority.
- Preventive work in primary and secondary schools.

8.5.1 Clarify the connection between commercial violence and violent attitudes and actions, particularly among boys and men.

The way commercial violence is specifically directed towards boys and men could be of great significance. A survey made for the ministry asks, among other things, if the respondents like to watch violence in films, on television or the Internet. The study of media consumption by the Ministry of Church and Culture shows that boys use games or the Internet in such a manner that violence plays an important part, to a much greater extent than girls. The National Institute for Consumer Research concludes that toys directed towards boys often focus on violence, while this more or less does not occur when directed towards girls. Studies of boy's media consumption (internet, games etc.) show that the element of violence is of great significance.

Prevention from an early age is important. The government also sees it as important to look at the relationship between the commercial violence that is especially directed towards boys and the experience of bullying and violence as it is shown in school and criminal statistics. The government will therefore work on clarifying the effects of commercial violence, together with other possible causal factors, and the use of violence among groups of young boys and men.

8.5.2 Develop a help and treatment service across the country, for boys and men with violent attitudes.

The Soria Moria declaration states that help and treatment services offered to assailants need to be developed further, and made into a nationwide service, and that «Alternative to Violence», will play an important role in establishing these services.

As a first step towards developing a nationwide service, The National Centre of Knowledge

about Violence and Traumatic Stress (NKVTS) has, on commission from several ministries, mapped out the already existing services. This survey showed that most of the help-and treatment services for adult assailants are carried out by the Correctional Services Department and that few of the services are available for people who are not already taken care of by Correctional Services, psychiatric health services and services for people with addictions. Geographically these services are centred in the south and east of Norway. In the three northern counties, there are only two open services.

The survey from NKVTS is followed up in the action plan directed at domestic violence, «Turning Point 2008-2011», where it is stated that more and better services should be established for people who perpetrate violence. A follow-up plan will be developed in order to establish a nationwide service for assailants, according to their situation and their needs. More services shall be available and existing help and treatment services within The Family Guidance Agencies, Psychiatric healthcare and the other already established services that have treatment of assailants as their main field need to be strengthened. Help and treatment services for men must have multiple cultures in focus, and they must offer both group therapy and more specialized services according to the assailant's needs. The service needs to take both youngsters and adults into consideration, those who seek help to prevent and avoid violence, and those who are already convicted of violence and assault. In addition, it is also important that the service is inclusive and adapted to men from different ethnic backgrounds.

As part of providing a nation-wide service, three new treatment centres have been established in 2008, run by "Alternative to Violence": in cities Stavanger, Kristiansand and Arendal. These services come in addition to the already existing establishments in Oslo, Drammen, Asker and Bærum, Vestfold and Langesund. The national spread of services offering help in anger management based on the model from St. Olavs Hospital, Brøset branch has been accomplished according to initiative 18 in the action plan against domestic violence (2008-2011) "Turning Point".

In 2009 four more treatment services will be established by Alternative to Violence, in counties Hordaland, Nordland, Troms and Hedmark/Oppland. In addition, the Family Guidance Agencies received NOK 2 million to extend their services for assailants in the northern districts, in coopera-

tion with Alternative to Violence. In addition, REFORM, and their group therapy on anger management, will be given priority.

With this, the help and treatment service for assailants will be strengthened and close to being spread nationwide.

8.5.3 Attitude reforming work among men and in male-dominated environments

The Men's Panel concludes that established services for boys and men should be strengthened and developed. The international campaign "White Ribbons" is an example of a grass-roots movement for men that promotes zero tolerance for violence, and the campaign should be strengthened and developed in Norway.

8.5.4 Preventive efforts in primary and secondary education

Student surveys frequently measure the occurrence of both physical and psychological bullying in schools. Despite the initiatives developed as a part of "Manifesto against Bullying", recent numbers presented show that more than 6% of pupils are being bullied on a regular basis. Again, boys state that they bully the most, and are most likely to be bullied, with the exception of sexual harassment – which girls state as a bigger problem for them. Bullying in schools is also pointed out as a challenge for the schools in the White Paper nr. 16 (2006-2007) "...and no one was left behind", where it is also stated that bullying has a gender-

related aspect. Nevertheless, initiatives geared directly towards boys are lacking.

The government wants to make an effort developing a clearer perspective on gender in the preventive work against violence, through the follow up of the Manifesto against Bullying.

As a part of "Turning Point", a pilot project will be developed for secondary schools with a focus on family relationships, communication and conflict management. The project will be collaborated between the Family Guidance Agencies and schools, and will be offered at schools in some regions through selected Family Guidance Agencies.

8.5.5 Initiatives for boys and men who have been victims of violence

With support from the Ministry of Children and Equality, and the Church Resource Centre against Violence and Sexual Assault, one will arrange an international conference in January 2009 concerning sexual assaults against boys and men. The conference is directed towards people who either work with, or seek knowledge on, the problems connected with assaults, looking from a gender perspective.

As an initiative in "Turning Point", National Knowledge Centre about Violence and Traumatic Stress (NKVTS) will carry out a survey on violence and assaults on men in close relationships, and their specific need for help. The outcome of this survey will form the foundation for the development of further methods and initiatives.

9 Recent research on gender and on men and masculinity

The purpose of this chapter is to give a brief overview over general topics that have relevance for men from a gender perspective and make more visible the knowledge that we already have on men and masculinities. The chapter shows the state of research with regards to particular aspects of being a man in Norway today, and becomes an important foundation and essential background for the discussions and proposals in the different chapters of the White Paper. The chapter contains a number of research terms and frameworks that may not correspond exactly to the terms in common use. The references here are purely descriptive and introductory, and are not meant to be political evaluations.

The research on men that has appeared in the last two decades has been able to shed some light on male roles and masculinity – over the changes that have happened in this area and the causes for those changes. Research on men, as a part of gender research, can reveal how political decisions can influence the roles of men, but also that political decisions can be made as a result of the descriptions of male roles that research provides. Gender research arose together with and as a part of the women's movement of the 1960's and 1970's. The movement had a purely female focus and worked for equal rights for women. Gender research was basically synonymous with research on women in the first phase of the women's movement. The social project of researching women was essentially a project about visibility; the focus was on bringing forth knowledge about women as historical actors and taking their experiences seriously in a time when the world seemed gender neutral only because the man was the norm and the "normal subject". The idea of a gender perspective still makes many people think immediately of a women's perspective.

We "haven't seen the man for all the men" is an apt and acute statement from recent gender research. Even though the man has historically been the norm, even in research, there has been little actual conscious reflection on man as gender. Men's studies emerged in the 1980's, but during the 1990's it seemed as if this research was

just an extension of feminist research. Men's studies is not all research done on men and their actions, but rather research that is consciously aware of the fact that men have gender, that men stand in a gender relationship with other men and with women. A minor rewriting of an important and well known quote by Simone de Beauvoir expresses what many have pointed out about the proper starting point for true research on males: "One isn't born to be a man, one becomes one".

There are cultural expectations and perceptions of what it is to be a man in Norwegian society today. There are traditional and historically based norms that run parallel to the political focus on gender and the work for equality between women and men. This work towards gender equality has led to changes in the traditional attitudes. 30 years of gender and equality on the political agenda has without a doubt had a great significance for men too.

In Norwegian society today we find many different ways in which to be a man. The ministry will therefore focus on *masculinities*, plural. Ideas and ideals of masculinity vary with context. Variables like age, class and ethnic background play their part in the forming of varied expectations and judgments of what is masculine and what is not.

9.1 Changing conceptions of masculinity

The terms masculine and feminine are often used, in daily speech, in media and in research. But the way in which these concepts are understood is in constant flux. If we look at what typified the norms for women and men in the 1950's and 1960's, and compare that to today's norms, it is easy to see how much some things have changed. Traditional femininity tied women to the caregiver role and the private sphere. Traditional masculinity tied men to the provider role and the public sphere. The women's rights movement and women's studies of the 1970's led to a change in the understanding of what

a woman is and can be. As a consequence, girls and women now have a wider range of options than the rigid norms about gender of the 1950's and 1960's would have allowed. Girls today have a large territory and range of acceptable choices of activity; they can choose anything from traditional feminine activities like playing with dolls and concerning themselves with “pink things”, to activities requiring them to be physically active, aggressive and tough. It is expected that young women will be caring, but it is also natural for them to educate themselves, have a career, and share the provider role in the family.

The male role and norms for what is acceptable for a man to be and do have also changed in the last three decades. The “new man” is oriented towards equality. The Gender Equality Survey shows that especially younger men have adapted to a more gender-equal home life and participate more in activities like food preparation and other household chores. In particular, men have become more active in caring for their children. The changes in the role of the father have been sizeable. In the 1950's it would have been considered *unnatural* for a man to be pushing a baby carriage; today it is considered a matter of course for men to participate in childcare, though men

themselves would like to do even more. Even though all fathers today may not share the tasks of the home equally with their partners in practice, the ideals of what a good father should be have undergone fundamental changes since the 1950's and 60's. It is now completely legitimate for a father to prioritise spending time with his children. In fact, fathers who state openly that they don't prioritise their children's birthday may set themselves up for public ridicule.

We also see the changes in male roles in other spheres of society. Young men in Norway today have more and closer friendships both with other men and women than might have been seen in previous generations. The limits to how acceptable it is for men to be concerned with their appearance, their clothes, fashion and interior design have clearly been expanded. The Gender Equality Survey also shows that younger men are more tolerant of differences in the ways in which masculinity and male identity may be expressed than the men of previous generations.

The Gender Equality Survey shows that equality between the sexes has come a long way in Norway, and the situation has been significantly improved in the last 20 years. 90% of both men and women say that they think that housework and

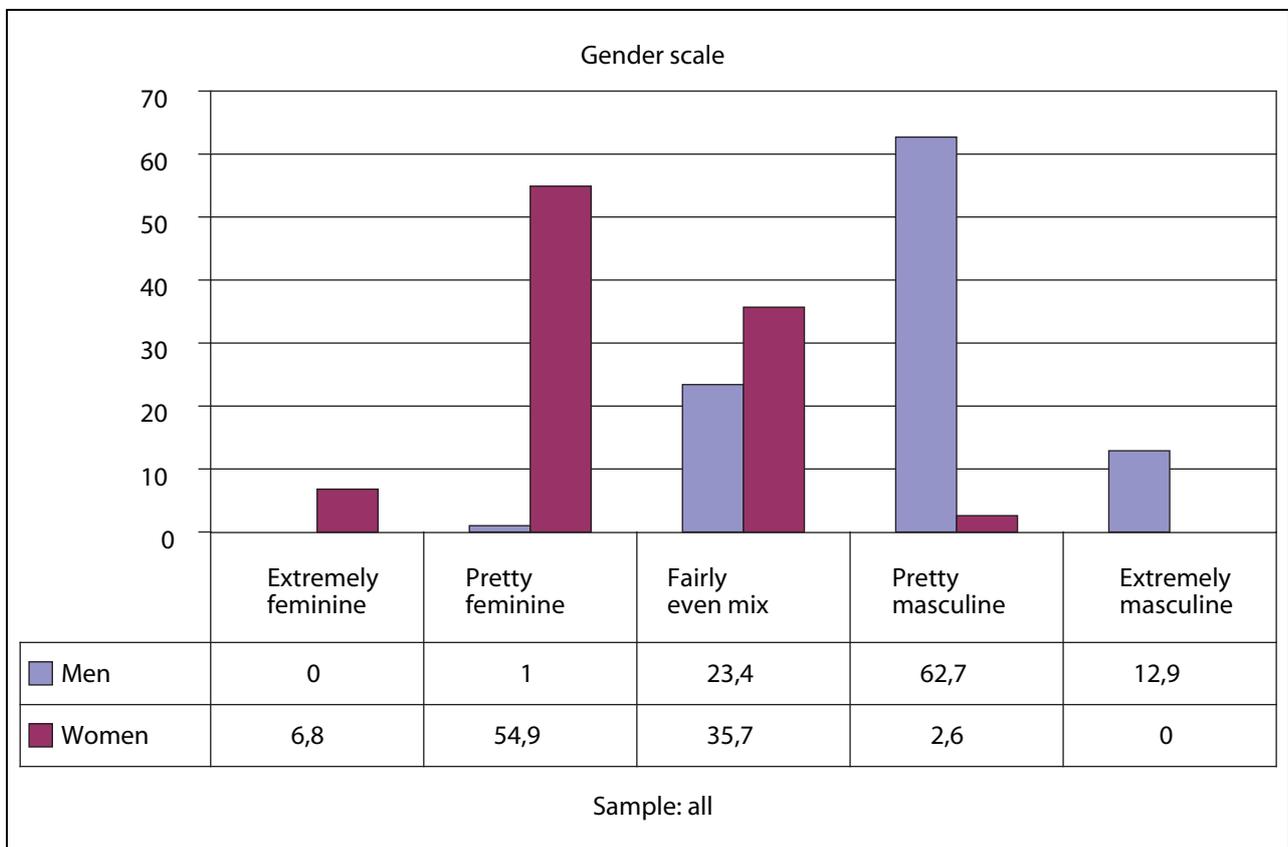


Figure 9.1 Gender Scale

breadwinning should be divided equally between men and women. More and more couples turn that opinion into practice. In 1988, 95% of men asked said that their wives did all or most of the food preparation. Now, 35% of men say that they share this task equally with their wives, and around 15% say that they do most of the cooking. Men participate more in other household tasks and childcare, partly because they have increased their use of the opportunities for parental leave of absence. Most believe that their children should be brought up to respect the equality of the sexes, and that rape is the man's responsibility. A large majority of both men and women (70% of the men and 80% of the women) would like the paternal quota to be expanded.

In The Gender Equality Survey, the respondents were asked to place themselves on a "gender scale", going from extremely feminine to extremely masculine. The diagram below shows the results:

More women than men respond that they think that they are a fairly even blend of masculine and feminine traits. More women than men, though very few of both genders, respond that they have "quite a lot" of the traits of the opposite gender. The numbers suggest that women place themselves somewhat more evenly on the gender scale than men.

"The gender scale" from the survey indicates that the outward structure of gender equality has changed in Norwegian society more than gender identity. There is more acceptance of a gender-equal division of labour and family responsibility, but a broader scope of gender identity is more difficult for people to accept. The researchers of the Gender Quality Survey have written the following in their report:

"It is tempting to think about *social stigmatisation and taboo formation* when one looks at this part of the survey. Is being "extremely" like the opposite gender still a real taboo in today's Norway? How else can we explain why no one, not one man or woman, chose that option on the questionnaire? Even taking into consideration that the question could be misinterpreted, it still seems that someone would have chosen "extremely" if some social stigma had not been involved. The distribution of answers suggests a type of *normative discipline within the area of gender* that is quite unlike the variations seen in many other areas of gender equality. In this question there seems to be no room for trends, modifications or variation. Here it seems important to march to the same beat."

9.1.1 Attitudes towards gender equality

Data from the Gender Equality Survey suggests that the content of our concept of equality is under *negotiation*. When men and women are asked to take a stand on various assertions concerning equality, the answers are partly cohesive and partly gender-specific.

Both men and women rally round the "recognisable" political statements of equality such as "men and women should both share the same responsibility in providing for the family financially" and "domestic chores should be equally shared between men and women". Furthermore, the majority of both men and women believe that more men should go into more typically female-dominated occupations, and that women should enter more male-dominated occupations. Moreover, the majority of both men and women agree that men get the most financially lucrative jobs in our society, and that women still have the home and family as their main responsibility. More or less the whole sample of men and women agrees that an important goal in the upbringing of children is that the children themselves shall live in an equal society and believe in the gender equality ideals when they grow up.

At the same time, more men than women in the sample (64% to 41%) believe that gender equality has come far enough, and that equality, generally speaking, has basically already been achieved (67% of the men against 46% of the women). The majority of the men are against quota systems that might even out the gender division in occupations and education where the balance is uneven. They are more positive towards other initiatives, particularly campaigns involved with distribution of information and building of more positive attitudes.

The Gender Equality Survey shows that the Norwegian equality project has "better hit the target" in the middle-class compared to the working-class, where improvements because of increased gender equality are not being as clearly experienced. A full 70% of those asked agreed with the statement that equality is more beneficial for successful people in society. The number rises to a total of 84% among those with low income. Here there are only a few differences in opinion between men and women.

Considering that equality between men and women is not known for giving equally clear advantages to those with a low income, the scepticism in this group towards the public authorities'

efforts on behalf of equality is also very high. Among the people of low income the use of other means, for example the “Cash Benefit Act” (Cash benefit scheme for parents with young children) has greater support.

The less a person earns, the more positive he or she is likely to be towards the cash benefit scheme. Since it is mainly women who take receive the cash benefit, the arrangement serves to maintain the uneven division with respect to domestic chores. Of the people asked who have children less than seven years old, only 15% of the men said they received cash benefit, compared with a total of 72% of the women.

The results that emerge in the survey concerning attitudes towards equality have no clear-cut support in other studies. One other study, which measures the attitudes towards equality through four representative selections of the population in the period between 1985 and 2001, shows a tendency towards an increasing polarisation between men and women with regards to the endorsement of gender equality. Here there are two changing tendencies that particularly stick out when it comes to how men see equality: there is a substantial decrease in the number of young men endorsing initiatives for equality, and this decrease is particularly great among men with higher education.

The Gender Equality Survey does not confirm such a gender polarization in the attitudes concerning equality. Many opinions are fairly equally divided between the genders. 66% of women believe that today’s efforts towards equality mostly benefit the successful people of society. The report shows relatively strong correlations between negative attitudes toward quota systems and endorsing the statements “we have enough immigrants and asylum seekers in this country” and “the officials are interfering too much in people’s private lives”. So, as much as being an expression of gender-based biases, these negative attitudes towards quota systems can also be interpreted as expressions of ideological positions.

9.1.2 Some concepts

The concepts *male role* and *gender role* are to a certain degree, incorporated into Norwegian colloquial language. In this report the concepts refer to the cultural expectations and conceptions that are connected with being a man.

In more recent gender research it is understood that gender is not something one *has* or *is*.

Rather what is emphasized is gender as practice, something we *do* (“doing gender”). Gender is not just the result of something inherent in a person, but something that is being created and practised in certain given contexts. This implies that gender must be seen as a continuous process, not something fixed and static.

Gender research emphasizes that norms are things that are continuously being affirmed, challenged or renegotiated through practice. When an individual interacts with others, the norm for what is accepted as male or female shapes the individual; simultaneously, the interactions in turn shape the norms. What is understood as feminine and masculine is a social construction. From this perspective one is concerned with personal and social identities as things that are being created and recreated through interactions between people. Identity is not a finished end product, but a phenomenon in the process of metamorphosis.

The concept of *masculinity* refers to those expectations, norms and rules that society directs towards men. On the basis of biological gender, individuals are socialized into a gender role. In recent times the concept of *gender roles* has been criticized for being too static and fixed, that it assumes too much that socialisation occurs in only one direction, and that gender roles are something society inflicts upon the individuals who blindly assume them. The concept refers to the cultural conceptions and norms that are associated with being a man. Masculinity and femininity are here understood as analytical concepts that embrace more than biological gender. Masculinity and femininity are partly cultural conceptions, and partly analytical concepts of gender.

A masculine perspective in research involves studying males and male behaviour with the emphasis on the man as a gendered individual. That means that one examines what the prevailing conceptions of the male and masculinity mean for men’s actual practice. To operate with gender as a variable and to look for the distribution of men and women in different statistics does not necessarily involve a *gender perspective*.

9.1.3 Who defines masculinity?

The modern media plays a definitive role in imparting models of gender roles to boys and men. Boys in particular, to an increasing extent, are finding this out from our television-orientated culture. Male heroes are among the most accessi-

ble, most copied and publicly most accepted models for male socialisation.

The general view within media research is that the common cultural understanding of what is perceived as “manly” and “feminine” is being formed and made visible through different expressions in media.

The media acts in many ways as an index of the different gender roles and expressions that boys and girls have to choose from when building their own identity. In a society where traditional sources of identity and world-view such as religion, social class, and family are becoming less important, and where different media are more omnipresent, the media will eventually have a greater impact on the formation of public opinion.

The way media has influenced the understanding of gender and gender identity has been one of the prioritised areas in Norwegian and international media research. As in many other fields of research, the concept of *gender* in media science has, to a large degree, been connected with women and the “female”. Research on men, masculinity and media did not really get off the ground until the early 1990s. The lack of a male perspective in media science has contributed to the broad misconception that it is only women and the understanding of “the female” that are formed and communicated through the media. But many factors suggest that the understanding of the male role and masculinity has been cemented through such cultural expressions to just as great a degree. Women have, through feminism, research, deliberation and the like, been supplied with greater “identity capital”, while men still draw their understanding of their identity from the masculine “props” that are available in the culture.

9.1.4 Masculine stereotypes

In many ways one can say that the media has taken over as our common storyteller, and therefore also the creator and distributor of modern mythologies. Modern media mythologies tell us which values to agree on, which we can trust, what battles need to be fought and what needs to be sacrificed in order to attain our goals. The mythologies act as cultural cornerstones, and are often presented as indisputable and “given”; they are things that one cannot question. This myth creation influences our view on gender and gender identity as well.

One can find among the stereotypical conceptions of men: aggression, ambition, domination, strength, endurance, independence, and being driven by competition. In contrast to women, who whisper and gossip, men are unafraid, have integrity and are not afraid of conflicts. Men are furthermore portrayed as technically gifted, task and result orientated, in contrast with women who are typically seen as caring, emotional and relationship orientated.

9.1.5 Understanding the male

Gender research has shown that there are many ways in which one can be a man, and that there are broad variations in what is understood as masculine. Men have in the last decades gained an expanded scope of action that includes child-care, openness, and close relations. But this scope of action is still narrow, and research shows that there are still clear limits to what a man and a boy are allowed to do.

Homophobia

“Bitch” and “gay” are today insults among young people that are in active use. On the website www.ung.no, there is an interview with a boy who says: “To call someone ‘gay’ does not necessarily have anything to do with sexuality. ‘Gay’ is a general insult. It is connected with behaviour. If a boy dresses a little different or behaves in a feminine way, he is quickly labelled ‘gay’. The study “Observations in classrooms” shows that to openly express negative attitudes towards homosexuals is generally perceived as marginal and outdated behaviour by fellow peers. The study shows that the boys expressing such attitudes as such were already “outsiders” in the classroom, and being ‘out’ only served to confirm the position of the one with the negative attitude.

Researcher Røthing refers to international research which points out that boys from minority backgrounds express these attitudes to a greater extent than the boys from the ethnic majority. These attitudes are often seen as a sign of rebellion against or to signify a distance from the acceptance of gays that is seen in the majority of the population, and as an attempt to mark their own heterosexual masculinity as a compensation for their ethnic or class-defined marginalised position. The report finds differing attitudes concerning homosexuals in men and women. While four out of ten men say they would find it difficult to

have a gay child, only two of ten women have a similar attitude. Scepticism increases with age, and in contrast with other findings, the report shows that the scepticism also increases with higher education and annual income.

A new science report from NOVA shows that to understand oneself as lesbian or gay in the early teens is associated with a considerable increase in the risk of being bullied or assaulted. A key finding in the report is that young lesbian and gay teens, particularly in Oslo, are more subjected to bullying, systematic threats, and violence. Two out of ten lesbians/bisexuals, and four out of ten homo/bisexuals, report to have been subjected to violence that demanded medical attention during the last year. This group is therefore four times as likely to be subjected to violence as heterosexuals.

Hate crime against homosexuals and lesbians is easily portrayed as “random violence”, often as an assault on an open street with an unknown perpetrator. Through the NOVA report, however, it is made evident that bisexuals, lesbians and homosexuals usually are subjected to violence by someone they know or a family member. One of the most striking differences, compared with heterosexual teens, is how many young lesbian/homo/bisexual teens report to have been subjected to violence by their own parents. Among heterosexual teens there is very few that report of domestic violence; 3% of the girls and 2% of the boys say they have experienced this during the last year. Among lesbian/homo/bisexual teens, the numbers are much higher: 12% of the girls and 16% of the boys.

Boys and men judge themselves and others of the same gender to a great degree on external standards. When evaluating each other’s masculinity, strength and muscles are the dominating criteria. The competition to reign at the top of the physical hierarchy, to be the strongest guy in class, is thus a part of the masculine identity project. Disciplining oneself to the demands of masculinity involves disciplining the emotions. By being silent about physical and emotional pain, boys avoid the shame that comes with being vulnerable, and thus feminine. Other men’s masculinity standards seem to direct conversations and what topics one can allow oneself to talk about. Therefore it is important to reveal and make visible how existing male ideals can suppress men’s emotional life and perhaps threaten their health on an individual level. The narrowness of the masculine norms can make boys avoid speaking about things they find troublesome.

9.1.6 The masculine fellowship and friendship between men

As an extension of traditional masculinity as we know it today, there is a high focus on self-control. Boys and men have only to a limited degree developed a language for intimacy and emotions. This also affects friendships between men. To be able to show intimacy, trust, care and emotional attachment are essential elements in friendship relations. These qualities have for a long time been associated with femininity. Marianne Berg shows us in the book *In the Paradise of friendship* how the male ideal and the norms concerning male friendships were considerably different in the early 19th century. At the end of the 19th century big changes were occurring concerning the norms in male friendships, so in our time friendships between men are characterised as instrumental and competition orientated. Close and intimate friendly relationships are seen as something feminine. Under the headline “boys in hordes and girls in pairs”, the two researchers Nielsen and Rudberg summarise findings from the 1970s and 1980s that show the differences in friendship alliances between boys and girls. Girls have intimate, confidential friendships that include physical closeness and are strongly characterised by “dyads” (they play in pairs). Relations between boys on the other hand are characterised by the lack of close and confidential friendships. Boys play in bigger groups that are characterised by *doing something* together. Friendship between boys is driven more by collective activities that involve competition rather than confidential talk.

So, masculine fellowship is more governed by activities than by conversation. Compared with the confidential and intimate conversational friendships between girls, friendships between boys are silent. But this “silent fellowship” is important for boys’ experience of the joy of life and identity formation. Fishing and hunting trips are examples of fellowships with other men that are essential for the quality of life of many men. A study shows that hunters who make hunting into a lifestyle, will, through hunting, identify themselves with what they see as an ancient local culture, consisting of a masculine cultural practice and a deeply rooted masculine identity. By continuing the customs and values of their fathers and grandfathers, they are themselves bearers of a local workingman’s culture. Through the activity they express an awareness of themselves as bearers of a culture with deep roots in the local tradi-

tion. Researchers believe that the fellowship and friendships that arise between men, together with the sense of local attachment, are most likely the necessary social foundations of the hunter identity that men act out.

Another important masculine fellowship arises through football. Even though women have made their entry both on the field as well as in the football stands, the greater part of football enthusiasts are still boys and men. The interest in football embraces and unites men across nationality, class, age, education, skin-colour, occupation and a multitude of different individual experiences. In the football stands men are allowed to act in ways they would never do otherwise – here they can shout, cry, dance, sing, gesticulate and embrace unknown men. They can also allow themselves to utter protests that in other contexts would be inappropriate.

For the supporters, football is not first and foremost entertainment and relaxation; quite the contrary, it represents an attachment and involvement. Football is a field that offers common experiences, common pleasures and common sorrows. For the supporters, football offers friendships, fellowship and a sense of belonging.

Masculine fellowships are essential for men, even when they are “silent fellowships” compared with the confidential, dialog-driven friendships of women. However, it is important not to rely only on “silent fellowships” for a good quality of life, but also to have close relationships where one can be intimate and talk about feelings, especially when life is difficult. In this area we may be seeing some changes among men. This change is particularly noticeable with young men and boys. In step with changing male roles, traditional macho-masculinity is becoming archaic, and boys and young men are changing their ways of expressing friendship.

There are more men now (compared with 15–20 years ago) that report to have contact with close friends and the increase in this type of friendship has been fairly equal for both boys and girls. If one looks at the percentage of boys between 16–24 years old that say they are without close friends, one sees that it has gone down from 20% in 1980 to approximately 10% in 1998. There has also been a substantial decrease concerning the same matter for the age group 25–44 years. In 1980, 30% of this group reported to be without close friends compared with roughly 18% in 1998.

The report also shows that there are far fewer young men compared with older men that report to be without close and confidential friends. Com-

pared with older men, younger men report having close friends – and of both genders as well. It seems that friendships are beginning to strengthen its position as an important relationship, particularly with younger men. If we compare older and younger men, the Gender Equality Survey verifies what SSB had earlier concluded, that young men today have more close friends compared with earlier years. Among men over 35 years old, those without close friends constitute roughly 20%, while among the youngest (17–24 years old) the number drops to 7%.

The content within the friendships among the young seem to have changed as well. Newer research shows that in “new friendships” between men, it is too simple to state that men create “doing” friendships – to an increasing degree men are now also creating “talking” friendships.

On the website *www.ung.no* two men are interviewed about their friendship. One boy states that two friends should talk about everything. What he feels that he cannot tell his friend, he cannot tell anyone. They have been friends for 5–6 years and their friendship has developed. If there’s anything that bothers him he will tell his friend. Furthermore, he explains that they are not afraid to display emotions in front of each other. If he is going through an unhappy love affair or for some other reason is feeling down, he can let his friend know, knowing that the friend won’t make fun or talk behind his back about it. These statements stand in harsh contrast with the manner in which friendships between boys were portrayed by researchers in the 1970s and 1980s.

9.2 Different masculine ideals

9.2.1 Introduction

The concept of masculinity covers those conceptions, norms and ideals that are associated with what it is to be a man at any moment in any given society. These ideals and conceptions can change depending on the cultural context. But also in a given society and in a definite era, conceptions and ideals can change. Age, class and ethnicity are variables that influence how expectations and judgements about masculinity can vary. These expectations can also vary according to what type of particular role the focus is on, for example whether the man is a son, father, husband or colleague.

An important purpose of today’s gender research is to investigate and emphasize how gen-

der affects and interacts with other social categories such as sexuality, age, class and ethnicity. Then we understand how different relationships mutually affect one another, how they strengthen or weaken each other, or whether they are completing or competing with each other in a dynamic interplay.

In men's studies and research the focus of research has shifted to masculinities in plural, and it is emphasized that categories such as gender, ethnicity, class, nationality and position are closely linked together and cannot be seen in an isolated manner. Since the very early beginning of men's research it has been important for the research to emphasise that a man isn't always *one man*, but can be many different things.

9.2.2 Age and social class

What is emphasized as being manly ideal changes in different phases of life. There is a stronger emphasis on the stereotypical hero figure as an ideal in the teenage and young adult years. Young people to large degree see masculinity as linked to being cool, physically strong and able to achieve. Furthermore, it has been pointed out that becoming an adult in modern times tends to be about self-realisation, a focusing on individuality and developing one's own skills. Values, lifestyle and one's outlook on life are not so much inherited, but to a larger degree something one must construct. In such a situation, where there are many options and uncertainties, gender stands out as the only constant element, which therefore can form the basis of socialisation and self-realisation. This makes gender an important factor in identity construction for young people; symbols of masculinity and femininity are, especially in the early teens, emphasized and even exaggerated as a feature of their identity.

Freedom, self-orientation and freedom from responsibilities are features of youth culture as well. For the more mature man, *responsibility* is a key word. In the study "Factory Workers,

Father and Provider", the factory workers that worked at the coal factory in Mo i Rana in the 1950s, 1960s and the 1970s were interviewed. The study show how permanent work was imbued with cultural meaning for the interviewed men, and how the concept of *permanent work* came to be used as a characterisation of the adult and responsible man. In the stories told by the men, the permanent job stood out as a decisive factor in what turned a boy into a man, and from an individ-

ualist to a responsible provider with duties to the community. "The permanent"; permanent job, permanent pay, permanent working hours, permanent partner and a permanent place of residence were the traits of the responsible, mature male. It was a masculinity that was characterized by orderly conditions and duties towards oneself and others – in the workplace the responsibility was your own and other people's safety, and at home it was as to be the sole financial provider. This financial responsibility was just as much concerned with a responsible and conscientious management of the money, as it was to be the sole income source.

In a study of craftsmen, those interviewed emphasise what an important role age has played in their practise and understanding of themselves as men. With age they say they have gained a "masculine security" together with a "masculine generosity" that was absent in their youth. With age comes experience; they've matured, and the security in their own manhood makes them less anxious about seeming unmanly compared to the time when they were teenagers and young men. As younger men they say that they were very scared of ending up in the category of "hen-pecked men".

We know little about what masculinity involves and means for men as they grow old. There has been little research from a gender perspective on older men either in Norway or the Nordic countries. It has been pointed out that age can be a source of power, position and status for men, but on the other hand it can also marginalise them as men. If physical strength is an important source of masculine identity, then bodily change and loss of strength dries out this source. One of the few examples of Nordic research concerning old men is a study of old and unmarried Swedish men. The men themselves express a longing for a family. Many use the need to care for their own parents or younger siblings as an explanation for their bachelor status, or that they have prioritized hard labour on their parent's farm or in industry to provide for relatives. Analysis of these men's male identity shows that for these men, the body and having a strong physique has had great significance for them. But this fact makes them more vulnerable when age leads to illness and a weakening of the physique.

For men that do not have a strong body as their source of masculine identity, age does not seem as threatening. For these men the source of a masculine identity may be life experience, fam-

ily ties and status in the workplace. This shows that there are no simple connections between age and masculinity, but that other variables, like social class, play a role.

When it comes to masculinity, class position in society also means a lot for which ideals and practises that govern identity. The concept of *masculinity through hegemony* is linked with the conception of the middle-class man, where academic learning, high education and career are central. For the traditional working-class masculinity, other ideals govern. In a working-class culture, keywords such as solidarity and fellowship have been important for the relationship between the individual and the group. In the novel *Blind*, the father of the novel's main character says the following about how he views fellowship and community:

“You shall not show off. You shall not put yourself above others. Don't be conspicuous. Be normal. Be grey. Don't think you're anything special. The only thing special about you is that you are together with others; that you and your friends are all in the same boat. That is the special element of being human. To be a part of a workingman's fellowship. To do one's job. To take whatever comes without whimpering. That is what it means to be human. That is what it means to be a man. That is to be a real worker at the Odda Furnace.”

In the sociology classic *The Worker's Collective*, the attitude towards the collective is discussed as a defence mechanism, whereby the collective represents a solution to the problematic situation of the subordinated and oppressed. At the same time, the “tall poppy syndrome” aspect of the workers' collective is pointed out as a negative feature: “Don't assume that you are special.” To be able to develop as a human being one has to, more than anything believes that you are special. To make a career, one has to distinguish oneself and make oneself a force to be reckoned with.

Researcher Skilbrei points out that boys from the middle class see education as the road to success. Boys from the working class are different, he claims. As far as the working class' understanding of masculinity is concerned, to have a non-manual job is no ideal, rather quite the opposite. Hard labour is what counts in the working class. It is not the negative traits that exclude them from office work, but rather the *positive* abilities that make them able to achieve something that other people might not accomplish. It is nec-

essary to point out that this understanding of masculinity may become outdated as jobs relying on physical labour become scarcer and less in demand.

In the classic *Learning to Labour*, Paul Willis stresses that when boys from the working class choose manual jobs in industry and transport, occupations characterised by heavy lifting and physical exhaustion, it is precisely because they *choose* to. He shows how boys from the working class are being bred for working class jobs, and he emphasizes that these boys are no failures, and that they don't have to content themselves with jobs that the boys from the middleclass don't want. On the contrary, these boys are being socialised into completely different life paths. Boys from the working class not only distance themselves from the good students, but they are in their own mind superior to the good students. They are concerned with the fact that they've made money and enjoyed life while the good students have been sweating over their books.

9.2.3 Men in different positions

For the male identity and the male life, work has been a central and indisputable part. Researchers Holter and Aarseth mention work and public life as the core of a man's “first-ness” – he *is* first and foremost what he *does* in working life. Many researchers stress how central work is for the construction of a masculine identity. To be the *family provider* has traditionally been a dominant criterion for the creation of a male identity. To be the main provider is still seen as one of the main characteristics of the masculine.

The modern man is supposed to be equality orientated, take part in domestic chores and prioritise spending time with his children. The Gender Equality Survey confirms that both these expectations exist, and that many men in Norway are also living up to these. At the same time, the expectations concerning the contribution to the work place are still going strong: A man should work full-time, be loyal, achieve measurable results, be available for overtime when needed, seek challenges and aim towards positions that come with high income and status.

Men as a group have higher participation in the labour market, higher income and far more positions of power than women. But even if men as a group have this secure anchor in the workplace, this is not true of all men. Also here, we can talk about the extreme gender.

According to the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud's report "SaLDO" for 2007, equality between men and women in Norway in the work place concerning leadership positions is far from realised. The ombudsman establishes unequivocally: "If one looks at the possibilities of attaining positions of leadership, men are still first in line. Women are positioned way behind. Behind them again we find people with disabilities and further back people of a non-western background."

9.2.3.1 *More men than women are leaders*

Two out of three leaders are men. Among the top leaders, men sit in eight out of ten of the positions. But from 2001 till 2007, the male percentage concerning top or medium leading positions has gone slightly down (seven percent). The equality balance shows that men are overrepresented in leading positions both in state, municipal and privately run enterprises. In the State, 63% of the leaders are men. This number has hardly changed during the last years. The elite in Defence, the Church, the justice sector, central management and cultural institutions are all men. Of the municipality's town officials, 84% are men. Women constitute half the population. Still, there are a clear majority of men among the politicians in the Norwegian parliament, among mayors and on municipal boards. The Parliament of the Sami is an exception with 51% women in the current period. The county councils also have more women percentagewise than either the Parliament or municipal councils.

Although men sit in most of the leadership positions, this is still a small fraction of the total number of men. Only 8% of all employed men are leaders.

9.2.4 **Men of a non-western immigrant background**

Paying attention to the interaction between gender, ethnicity and class can lead to new but not so meaningful simplifications. The conception of diversity in male roles in Norway seems to only apply to the Norwegian ethnic population. "The immigrant male", "the Muslim male" or "the Pakistani male" are, in many contexts used as a clear cut category, where all men of an immigrant background, whether they are Muslims or claim to belong to the Pakistani ethnic group, are ascribed certain characteristics. The depiction of the "immigrant male" in the social debate and in

media is at times completely lacking in nuance. Researchers point out that also the ethnic minority groups show a diverse number of ways of being a man, and that the divide between the multitude of males in the majority of the population and the more monolithic "immigrant male" are, at best, a simplification of the image of men of immigrant backgrounds. The term men of "ethnic minority background" is often applied to men who have resided here during the last ten years, but there have been men from ethnic minority background who have lived in Norway for far longer. Male research has not distinctively studied these groups to any degree.

9.2.4.1 *Different groups, different integration*

The Central Statistics Bureau has determined that the "immigrant population" in Norway is a wide and diverse category that is so complex that there is rarely any point in treating all immigrants as a single group. Today, the immigrant population in Norway consists of 415 000 individuals. This group constitutes 8.9 % of the population. Approximately 54 000 people come from other Nordic countries, 51 000 from the rest of Western Europe and North-America, 80 000 from Eastern-Europe and 230 000 from Turkey and countries in Asia, Africa and South-America.

9.2.4.2 *Differences between men also within the groups*

When dividing the immigrant population into groups by their country of origin, the multitude between the groups becomes evident. At the same time, making such a division entails a generalisation. There may be great differences in behaviour, attitudes and values among people within a group, for example those from Pakistan, and one may find men from Pakistan living in Norway that have more in common with Norwegians than other Pakistanis.

Gender research in Norway has until now garnered little knowledge about men with immigrant backgrounds and their understanding of masculinity. The Ministry of Children and Equality has therefore initiated a project concerning family relations and gender equality among immigrants. The aim of the project is to increase knowledge about family behaviour and gender equality, in order to develop a public service that better meets the needs of families with immigrant backgrounds, and to increase knowledge about the

way in which men with immigrant backgrounds think about masculinity and gender roles. From this the politics of gender can be determined. The project will map out family structures, size, practices and attitudes regarding questions about family and gender equality through registries and surveys. Men's perceptions of masculinity will be outlined by asking questions about the ways in which men understand and experience their role and tasks within the family. They will be asked to what degree they feel Norwegian conditions make it possible for them to carry out their understanding of masculinity within the family and in their relationships with their children, and how they understand and experience the Norwegian ideal of equality. What strategies men and women use to meet new expectations will be a significant subject. The survey will be carried out by FAFO, and according to the plan, will end in May 2009.

Some existing qualitative surveys have interviewed men from ethnic minorities about their experiences of gender equality in Norway, how they express their own understanding of masculinity and how their male practice takes form in this context. These surveys indicate a great diversity, and suggest that men of ethnic minorities understand and fill their male role in widely varying ways. Many express more traditional gender role attitudes; though more say that new understandings of gender are not necessarily looked upon negatively. Their understanding of masculinity is both challenged and strengthened when met with other gender practices.

Some respondents say that their understanding of themselves and issues such as homosexuality has changed since their arrival in Norway. Their understanding of fatherhood has also changed. A number of men describe their homeland in such a way that it brings back memories from Norway in the fifties: to push a pram and change nappies was not a part of the male repertoire in their countries, and seeing Norwegian men pushing prams down the street was unfamiliar. After spending time in Norway their attitudes have changed, and it becomes a natural thing to participate in practical tasks involving small children. The modern father should participate in his children's lives, be caring, present and support them not only financially but also emotionally. A number of men with immigrant backgrounds talk about their own fathers as unapproachable, strict and distant. In a survey of Muslim men, the young men wanted to be "friends with their children" to a greater extent than their own fathers were.

At the same time, the qualitative surveys show that a more traditional, patriarchal understanding of the male role than what is common in Norway today influences a number of men with non-western backgrounds. A patriarchal family is characterised by a hierarchical structure in which men have more power than women, and the elder members of the family more power than the younger. Some of those interviewed believe that God has created the differences between the sexes, and that this explains why women and men are suited for different chores and activities. Many male immigrants express traditional attitudes to female participation in the labour market and the division of housework. Many women with immigrant backgrounds share this view and want to stay at home with their children. It has been pointed out that measuring the integration level of non-western immigrant women only by the number in paid employment is too narrow a set of criteria. Many ethnic Norwegian families share these views about a more traditional division of labour, while a lot of parents with immigrant backgrounds encourage their daughters to prioritise education and cultivate their own working lives.

The attitudes of more traditional non-western immigrants do not only encompass women's place and position. What appears central when it comes to these men's conceptions of masculinity is *the ideal of the provider and provider dilemma*. Danish research also indicates the same. Responsibility thinking is a central term in understanding the way male immigrants understand masculinity. An important part of being a man is to have a high income. The family economy, the children's education and future are the man's sole responsibility. Being a good provider is associated with the pride and pleasure of being able to be generous. But the actual opportunities an immigrant man has in the Norwegian labour market make it hard to be the only provider of the family. Men experience losing their pride and identity when they are unable to live up to their own expectations of what a man is supposed to be. They feel as if they have failed and that the system makes it impossible for them to make up for this loss. This is connected to the fact that men are both responsible for the income, and also responsible for seeking help if they do not succeed on their own. When consulting public services, where many of the employees are women, one of the problems men experience is a lack of understanding towards their responsibility to provide an income for the family. The men say that they are often met with prejudice because

their wives are not permitted to work, while this might have been a decision the couple has made together.

Men who live in patriarchal families, and have also failed as providers, experience marginalisation two-fold. Both their own social environment and the Norwegian public will look at them as unsuccessful. From a traditional point of view, men who are unable to provide for their families have failed. Men from ethnic minorities are already marginalised in the Norwegian public eye and often viewed as oppressors of women.

9.2.5 Men with disabilities

Research on disabilities has only been concerned with gender to a small extent, while gender research has focused little on people with disabilities.

Research collaboration (Gender and Disability) between the Nordic countries has resulted in two publications. A review of these publications shows that a gender perspective in research on disabilities has led to increased knowledge of the point of intersection between gender and disabilities. Drawing from different disciplines, this knowledge casts new light on both gendered relations within groups of disabled and on formal and informal work in the care sector. Without a gender perspective and/or a feminist perspective, the knowledge about identity formation, gender differences between men and women with different disabilities, formal and informal care and support, violence, control and suppression, would remain hidden.

This research gives a voice to these groups, and at the same time, the increased knowledge builds a foundation for a better understanding of one's own and other disabled people's situation. Knowledge about gendered relations in society gives the decision-makers a better foundation to arrange for inclusion and equal opportunities for disabled women and men. The ones working in the field can use this knowledge to develop adequate services for the disabled.

As mentioned above, recent gender research emphasises that gender is not something we are or possess, but rather something that is produced

daily, both individually and collectively through participation in different social groups. The experience of one's own scope of action arises at an individual level. Every man and woman develops their opinions about which ambitions and aspirations are achievable. Scopes of action are produced on an individual level, but influenced by the significance gender is given on a structural and symbolic level.

In the same way, disabilities can be understood in different ways. While disabilities were previously considered as characteristic of an individual, they are now looked upon as something that is produced within the relationships of the person and his or her environment. Disabled people come across barriers and experience differing degrees of disability in different situations because of social conditions.

On a structural level it is about disabled people being under-represented in the fields of work, in organisations, spare time activities and political fields, and about how physical structures limit their social participation. On a symbolic level, it is about what is considered appropriate for women and men who are disabled, and what is expected of them. For instance, when we talk about participation in the work force, how is a disabled person met? What language and terms do we use?

Are disabled people represented as active individuals, or as victims who need assistance to enter the workplace? How we think and talk about social groups affects each person's ability to see and experience their scope of action.

A number of chapters in Nordic anthologies discuss problems related to identity and identity development, both as a woman and as a person with a disability. Under the first topic, we find a chapter on how women who have become disabled as adults experience the process of redefining and maintaining their identities as women. Another author is concerned with the social representations related to women with disabilities. A third author focuses on the construction of identity by those who are overweight. Two others look at the way in which sexuality takes part in the identity development of disabled girls.

Equivalent studies of identity development among men do not exist, but should be initiated.



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