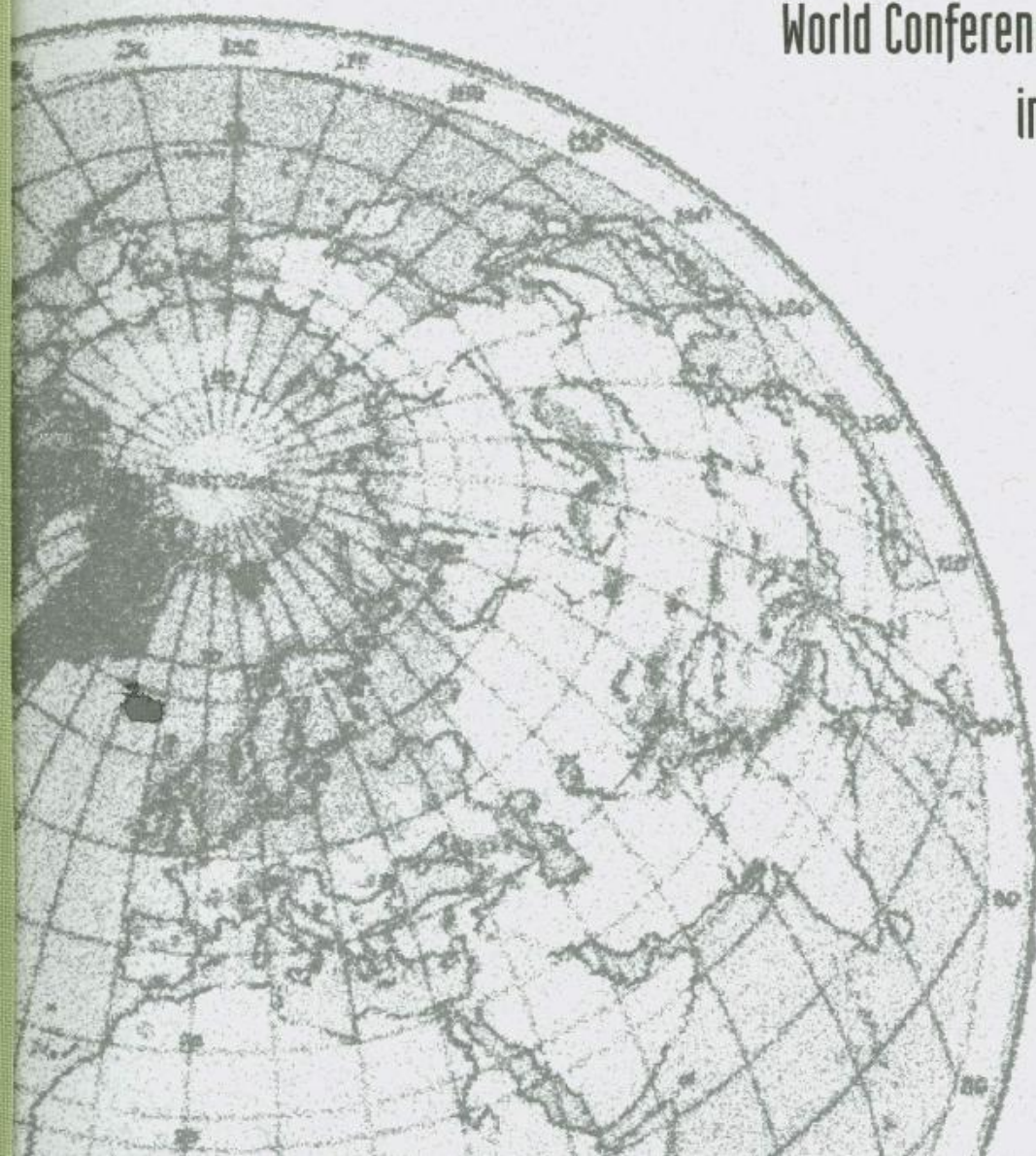


Ministry for Foreign Affairs



# Gender Equality in Iceland

National Report to the Fourth United Nations  
World Conference on Women  
in Beijing 1995



March 1995

Ministry for Foreign Affairs



# Gender Equality in Iceland

National Report to the Fourth United Nations  
World Conference on Women  
in Beijing 1995

CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



3 1924 109 887 251

March 1995



ICE  
HQ  
1236  
.5  
I2  
I15  
1995b



37549  
Gift of Rik

Printed by: G. Ben.-Edda. Printers Ltd.  
Kópavogur, Iceland



This coming autumn the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women will be held in Beijing, China. As part of the preparatory work, the following report on the rights and status of women in Iceland has been compiled.

While few would dispute the fact that women in Iceland enjoy *de jure* equality, if a closer look at their status in society reveals that *de facto* equality is still far from being a reality. It seems that tradition and obsolete ideology still determine what are considered as the right and normal roles of the sexes in society. This has put limitations on the freedom of both men and women to choose their field of work and lifestyle. Legal equality loses its meaning if it does not directly affect the lives of the people.

This report has been printed in both English and Icelandic, as its purpose is twofold: in the first place, it is my hope that it will provide a good basis for discussion in the campaign for equal rights and status of women and men in Iceland. Secondly, I hope that it will prove useful to the United Nations in their worldwide appraisal of the developments which have taken place in women's issues during the last decade.

Reykjavík, March 1995



Minister for Foreign Affairs





# Preface

In 1972, the United Nations General Assembly declared 1975 would be International Women's Year. The aim was to promote equal rights of both sexes, involve women in developmental work and enlist their efforts in working towards peace throughout the world. The watchwords of International Women's Year were „Equality, development and peace“.

To mark International Women's Year the UN held a World Conference on Women in Mexico, where the World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year was agreed upon. The United Nations General Assembly accepted this plan and designated the decade 1976 -1986 as Women's Decade. The motto for the Women's Decade became „Equality, development and peace - work, health and education“.

In 1980, the Second UN World Conference on Women was held in Copenhagen. Events of the past were reviewed and an attempt made to assess the achievements of the first half of Women's Decade. Furthermore, the *Platform for Action for the Second Half of the UN Decade* was adopted. Unfortunately, not all the participants agreed to the plan, but the UN General Assembly accepted it when presented later that same year.

The Third UN World Conference on Women was held in Nairobi at the end of the Decade, in 1985. At this Conference a plan of action to increase the rights and improve the status of women worldwide (*The Forward-Looking Strategies for the Period from 1986 to the Year 2000*) was adopted. This action plan, which has been named the Nairobi Plan, outlined detailed strategies intended to promote the rights of women and eliminate gender-based discrimination. In 1979 the UN General Assembly had adopted a Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which later became the basis of the Nairobi Plan.

The Nairobi Plan brought new hope to women all over the world and many believed it would bring them equality. This was not to be the case. The Forward-Looking Strategies demonstrated clearly how authorities could establish equality between the sexes, but it placed upon them no obligations to start this work.

In recent years, the UN have held important conferences on issues of key significance to humankind. It is worth noting that all the final resolutions of these conferences have pointed out that increasing gender equality is necessary to ensure improvement in the field in question. At the same time they emphasise the need to increase women's influence in all decision-making, both at national and international level.

The Fourth UN World Conference on Women will be held in Beijing September 4-5, 1995. Its objective is to see to it that the plan presented to the Conference will produce tangible results for women all over the world. The collection of data concerning the rights and status of women in all UN member countries is an important part of the Conference preparations. This report represents the contribution of the Icelandic government.



Chairperson of the Preparatory Committee



Representatives on the Preparatory Committee for the Fourth UN World Conference on Women included:

Sigríður Lilly Baldursdóttir, chairperson, Ministry for Foreign Affairs  
Ingunn Guðmundsdóttir, Ministry of Justice  
Helga Jónsdóttir, Ministry of Social Affairs  
Lára V Júlíusdóttir, Equal Status Council  
Hrafnhildur Stefánsdóttir, Confederation of Icelandic Employers  
Hansína Stefánsdóttir, Icelandic Federation of Labour  
Drífa Hjartardóttir, Federation of Icelandic Women's Associations  
Inga Jóna Þórðardóttir, Icelandic Women's Rights Association  
Margrét Einarsdóttir, UNIFEM

Specialists who contributed to the report:

Dögg Pálsdóttir, Ministry of Health and Social Security  
Sigríður Jónsdóttir, Ministry of Culture and Education  
Sigríður Vilhjálmisdóttir, Statistical Bureau of Iceland  
Elsa Þorkelsdóttir, Managing Director of the office of the Equal Status Council  
Stefanía Traustadóttir, office of the Equal Status Council



# Contents

Page

1. Introduction .....	13
Developments and priorities in questions of gender equality during the past decade .....	13
2. Women's rights .....	15
2.1 Women's human rights .....	15
Civil and social rights .....	15
The right to education .....	15
The right to equal pay .....	15
2.2 Constitutional rights .....	16
2.3 The Equal Status Act .....	16
2.4 Other legal rights .....	16
The Maternity Leave Act .....	17
The Abortion Act, sex education and birth control information .....	17
The Matrimonial Act .....	17
The Personal Names Act .....	18
Ratification of international conventions on women's rights .....	18
2.5 Perspectives for the future .....	18
3. Policy making and measures to promote gender equality .....	19
3.1 National and municipal institutions and activities .....	19
The Equal Status Council .....	19
The Equal Status Complaints Committee .....	20
Action programmes of the national government .....	20
Equal status committees .....	20
Equal Opportunity Programmes of ministries and public organisations .....	21
3.2 Associations and organisations working to improve the status of women .....	21
3.3 Women's studies .....	22
3.4 Statistics on gender equality .....	23
4. Women and men in positions of control .....	24
4.1 Women and men in politics .....	24
The Icelandic Presidency .....	24
Women in Parliament .....	24
Women in national government .....	25
Women and general elections .....	25





	Page
Women in municipal government .....	26
4.2 The participation of women in public administration .....	27
4.3 Women in management positions .....	28
In Ministries and elsewhere in public administration .....	28
Women in labour unions and professional associations .....	28
4.4 Women and men in the diplomatic service .....	29
4.5 Perspectives for the future .....	29
5. Education .....	30
5.1 The right to education .....	30
5.2 Teachers and school administrators .....	30
5.3 Pre-school education ..	31
5.4 Compulsory education ..	32
5.5 Upper secondary education .....	32
5.6 University education ..	34
5.7 Promoting equality in education ..	35
6. Business and industry .....	37
6.1 Economically active women .....	37
Full-time and part-time employment .....	37
Working hours at home and outside the home .....	38
Women and men in the labour market ..	38
Economically active women in rural areas ..	39
6.2 Employers - employees ..	40
6.3 Unemployment ..	40
6.4 Wages and income ..	41
6.5 Sexual harassment ..	43
6.6 Governmental measures to promote wage equality ..	44
7. Integration of work and family life ..	45
7.1 The family ..	45
Rights and obligations ..	45
Nuclear families and households in Iceland during the past decade	45
Family, work and the household ..	46
Day care for children ..	46
Flexible working hours ..	47
Parents and children's illnesses ..	47
7.2 Support for families ..	48
Social security ..	48





	Page
Social services of municipalities . . . . .	48
The elderly and the handicapped . . . . .	48
7.3 Poverty . . . . .	49
<b>8. Women and health . . . . .</b>	<b>50</b>
8.1 Health care . . . . .	50
Pre-natal, infant and young children's health care . . . . .	50
Vaccines and immunization . . . . .	50
8.2 Health indicators . . . . .	51
Life expectancy at birth . . . . .	51
Principal causes of mortality . . . . .	51
Maternal mortality . . . . .	52
Infant mortality . . . . .	52
Child mortality . . . . .	52
AIDS . . . . .	53
Family Planning . . . . .	53
Contraceptives . . . . .	53
Induced abortions . . . . .	54
Assisted Conception Techniques . . . . .	54
Fertility . . . . .	54
Anaemia . . . . .	55
Nutritional status of children under five years of age . . . . .	55
<b>9. Violence against women . . . . .</b>	<b>56</b>
9.1 Violence and injuries caused by violence . . . . .	56
Sexual violence . . . . .	56
9.2 Women in the police force and female lawyers in public administration under the Ministry of Justice . . . . .	57
9.3 Remedies available to victims of violence . . . . .	58
The Women's Shelter . . . . .	59
Stígamót . . . . .	58
Emergency reception for rape victims . . . . .	59
9.4 Perspectives for the future . . . . .	60
<b>10. Icelandic International Development Cooperation . . . . .</b>	<b>61</b>
10.1 Governmental contribution to development aid . . . . .	61
UN Geothermal Training Programme . . . . .	62
Multilateral and bilateral aid . . . . .	62
10.2 Perspectives for the future . . . . .	63



# Index of Tables

	Page
Table 4.1	Members of the Icelandic Parliament, the Althing, 1979-1991 ..... 26
Table 4.2	Cabinet Ministers 1979-1991 ..... 27
Table 4.3	Candidates in general elections to the Althing 1974 - 1991 ..... 27
Table 4.4	Municipal council representatives 1974 - 1994 ..... 28
Table 4.5	Boards, committees and councils at national government level 1971- 1990 ..... 29
Table 4.6	Percentage of women in major trade union organisations ..... 30
Table 5.1	Students by educational level ..... 32
Table 5.2	School administrators and teachers at compulsory level 1984 and 1993 ..... 33
Table 5.3	School administrators and teachers in 1993 ..... 33
Table 5.4	Students at upper secondary school level by course of study ..... 35
Table 5.5	Enrolled students and graduates of the University of Iceland ..... 36
Table 5.6	Graduates of the University of Iceland by faculty 1993 ..... 37
Table 6.1	Employment by economic sector ..... 41
Table 6.2	Employment by occupational groups 1993 ..... 41
Table 6.3	Employed persons by employment status 1993 ..... 42
Table 6.4	Registered unemployment in Iceland ..... 43
Table 7.1	Nuclear families ..... 48
Table 7.2	Single parents ..... 48
Table 7.3	Children in daycare institutions ..... 49
Table 7.4	Length of daycare ..... 49
Table 8.1	Life expectancy at birth ..... 53
Table 8.2	Infant mortality rate (0-1 year) 1980 - 1993 ..... 54
Table 8.3	Child mortality rate (1-4 years) 1980 and 1993 ..... 55
Table 8.4	Reported HIV-infected individuals 1989 - 1993 ..... 55
Table 8.5	Live births by age of mother ..... 57
Table 9.1	Location of acts of violence 1991 ..... 58
Table 9.2	Women in police force 1980, 1985, 1993 ..... 60
Table 9.3	Women lawyers in public administration under the Ministry of Justice ..... 60



# Index of graphs

	Page
Figure 4.1	Members elected to the Althing 1916 -1991 ..... 26
Figure 4.2	Municipal council representatives ..... 28
Figure 5.1	Students passing matriculation examination as a percentage of 20-year-olds ..... 35
Figure 5.2	Graduates from the University College of Education 1980-1993 ..... 37
Figure 6.1	Labour force participation by age 1993 ..... 39
Figure 6.2	Female net income from employment as a percentage of male income[male income =100] ... 44
Figure 6.3	Women's hourly wages in proportion to men's hourly wages ..... 44
Figure 6.4	Basic and total pay of full-time public employees, March 1994. Women's pay in proportion to men's pay ..... 45
Figure 7.1	Number of households receiving welfare assistance from the City of Reykjavík 1984-1993 ... 49
Figure 8.1	Infant mortality (deaths during first year per 1000 live births) 1901-1990 ..... 54
Figure 8.2	Induced abortions per 1000 live births ..... 56
Figure 8.3	Total fertility rate ..... 57
Figure 9.1	Rape and attempted rape charges lodged with the State Criminal Investigation Police 1984-1994 ..... 59
Figure 9.2	Number of women and children seeking assistance and residing at the Women's shelter ..... 61
Figure 10.1	Governmental contribution to development aid 1980-1993 as proportion of GNP ..... 61





# 1. Introduction

## Developments and priorities in questions of gender equality during the past decade

Gender equality will first become a reality when women's and men's work, experience, knowledge and attitudes are recognised as being of equal value in all areas of society. In other words, when women and men enjoy equal rights and fulfil their commitments jointly as civilians and as family members. Gender equality is not achieved by simply providing women and men with the same opportunities, their different nature calls for different conditions and measures for them to function naturally.

To achieve equal rights and equal status for women and men various measures have been taken. The authorities have for example passed laws and draughted plans of action intended to achieve gender equality.

In 1961, the first Equal Pay Act was passed and in the year 1973 an Equal Pay Commission was established by an act of parliament which led to the Equal Status Act. The Equal Status Act was passed in 1976 and the Equal Status Council was thereby established. During the period 1981-1984 the 1976 Equal Status Act was revised and in 1985 a new Act passed concerning the equal status and equal rights of women and men. Its stated objective was to achieve equal status and equal rights for women and men in all areas of society. The fact that discrimination against women existed in Icelandic society was reflected in the Act and it therefore provided for interim actions to be taken to improve their status. The Act provided, inter alia, for the adoption of action programmes for gender equality.

In 1991, the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men was amended to the effect that complaints were separated from other tasks of the Equal Status Council.

Municipalities with more than 500 inhabitants were required to establish Equal Status Committees. It also further provided for action programmes for gender equality. According to the Act, the Minister of Social Affairs, acting on proposals from individual Ministries and the Equal Status Council, submits the action programme to the *Althing* for approval in the form of a draft parliamentary resolution. Such a parliamentary resolution was adopted for the first time in 1993.

A closer look at the facts and figures on the status of women in Icelandic society reveals that, in spite of the legislation on equal status and equal rights, gender equality has not been achieved. In some areas progress has been made in the right direction but in other fields gender equality still seems to be fighting an uphill battle.

Although the number of women in Parliament and on municipal councils has increased in the last decade, women are still only 25% of the MPs and local council representatives. There has been a greater increase in the number of women in official committees and councils during the same period, their percentage has risen from 9% in 1983 to 21% in 1994. In recent years girls have been increasing their education and they formed the majority of graduates from the University of Iceland over the past decade. There has been no discernible change in the educational choices of girls and boys, which are still highly gender-based.

The percentage of economically active women has been traditionally high and increased still more during the last decade although the labour market is highly segregated according to gender. Women's labour contribution is not valued as highly as men's contribution and the pay differential between the genders has increased rather than decreased over the last decade.

Unemployment has made its presence clearly felt in Iceland in recent years, although still considerably lower than in neighbouring countries. Unemployment has been considerably higher among women than men for all of the last decade.





In recent years, organizations and associations have been established to promote specific aspects of the equal rights' movement. Most prominent among them are groups campaigning against violence towards women and children. The Government has also increasingly participated in these actions and recently a committee was appointed by the Ministry of Justice to examine the reasons, extent and consequences of violence in the home, as well as other kinds of violence against women and children. The *Althing* has also adopted a law providing for public compensation to the victims of violence.

It has become increasingly evident that gender equality will not become a reality until women have gained full access, to the same extent as men, to the entire power structure of society. If real progress is to be achieved in the battle for equal rights, these questions must be considered in all decision-making and in all areas of society. In each case we must ask how and to what extent the decision in question may influence the equal status and equal rights of women and men.

In the coming years, the prime task will be to make the legal provisions providing for gender equality an actuality.



## 2. Women's rights

### 2.1 Women's human rights

#### Civil and social rights

In 1861 unmarried women acquired legal majority. In 1900 married women were granted the right to control their private income. Husbands retained full control over the property of the marital estate which they could use as security for their financial commitments. The wife's private funds could not be appropriated to meet such commitments. A law from 1923 provides for the first time for full equality of ownership between husband and wife, based on the principle that men and women control their own property and income. Current laws are based on the same principle; the independence of both husband and wife and their equality.

In 1907 women in Reykjavik and Akureyri were granted the right to vote and stand for election to municipal government, and two years later women elsewhere in the country were granted that right. In 1915 Icelandic women over the age of 40 were granted the right to both vote and stand for election to the *Althing*. Five years later the 40-year voting age was reduced to 25 years, the same age as for male voters. Today voting age for women and men is 18.

Although discrimination based on gender is prohibited by law, certain provisional affirmative actions intended to improve the status of women and increase the equality and equal status of the sexes are not regarded as contrary to law. Moreover, it is not regarded as discrimination when special consideration is paid to women due to pregnancy and maternity.

#### The right to education

Until 1911, women's right to education in Iceland, as indeed in so many other countries, was restricted. Women were not considered as requiring education outside of those areas connected with their traditional social status. At this time both the ability and capability of women to acquire an education were regarded as very limited. They were offered education in special girls' schools and domestic science schools that gave women instruction in their traditional tasks, i.e. domestic skills and the caring and nursing of others.

The country's institutions of higher education were open to women, but only with some limitations; women did not have right to scholarships and were barred from public office upon completion of their education. A new regulation on secondary education which came into effect in 1904 served to increase women's access to education. In 1911, women were granted the same rights as men to attend instruction and sit for the required examinations at all the country's educational establishments. At the same time they were granted equal access to scholarships and public office, presumably making Iceland the first country to grant such legal rights to women. As the University of Iceland was established in 1911, the doors of this institution have always been open to women.

#### The right to equal pay

Right from the time of the first settlement of Iceland, women have been active in the work force and the percentage of economically active women has steadily increased in recent years. The labour of women has never been considered as valuable as that performed by men, however. In former times it was considered natural that women should receive lower pay than men, and differing rates of pay for women and men were common in many sectors. Even though both sexes worked side by side at the same task for equally long hours the women would receive lower pay.





In 1958, Iceland was the first of the Nordic countries to ratify the ILO Convention (No. 100 of 1951) concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, thereby obliging the State to take active measures in this respect. In 1961, the Icelandic Parliament passed the Equal Pay Act, according to which full equality of pay was to be achieved by the year 1967. When this did not prove to be the case, an Equal Pay Commission was established by act of parliament in 1973, to work towards gender equality in the workforce. The first general legislation on equal rights was passed in 1976, repealing former laws and establishing the Equal Rights Council. Wage questions fall under the jurisdiction of the Equal Rights Council.

## 2.2 Constitutional rights

The Constitution of the Icelandic Republic dates back to 1874 when the country was still under Danish rule. Through the years the human rights chapter of the Constitution has not been extensively altered and provisions on gender equality had, until recently, not yet been enshrined in the Constitution. A new human rights chapter was added to the Constitution in 1995. It includes a provision on universal equality which states that all people are equal before the law and their human rights shall be respected regardless of their sex, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, race, colour, property, birth or other status. The chapter also entails a special clause on gender equality which proclaims equal rights for both women and men in all respects. The Parliament emphasised that this clause would not hinder the use of affirmative action when necessary to improve the situation of certain disadvantaged groups.

## 2.3 The Equal Status Act

The current Equal Status Act entered into force 1991 and its full title is the *Act on Equal Status and Equal Right of Men and Women*. The Act applies to the all areas of society but places special emphasis on the labour market and the status of women. It obliges government to take administrative action to equalize employment, pay and educational opportunities for men and women.

The Act authorizes certain provisional affirmative actions to improve the status of women and requires the Minister of Social Affairs to submit to the *Althing* for approval parliamentary resolutions outlining a programme of action for gender equality for a four-year period at a time. Every second year the Minister is submit to the *Althing* a report on the status and progress in gender equality.

The Minister of Social Affairs is responsible for implementing the Act and appoints a special council, the Equal Status Council, following each general election (held at least every four years). In addition to implementing the provisions of the Act, the Council is also responsible for shaping policy on equal rights issues in Iceland and initiating provisional affirmative actions to improve the status of women. The Equal Status Council functions as a advisory body to the authorities, it provides organizations and the public with necessary information and conducts research on equal right issues.

Due to the emphasis on improving the status of women in the labour market there are provisions in the Act which place various obligations on employers. It includes, for instance, provisions requiring employers to take special action to promote the equality of the sexes within their firm or organization and combat gender segregation in the workplace. In addition, there are provisions to prohibit discrimination against employees by employers based on gender which apply to pay, hiring practices, promotions, lay-offs, working conditions and duties.



## 2.4 Other legal rights

According to the Public Administration Act, which came into force 1 January 1994, the enjoyment of the rights set forth in the Act shall be secured without gender-based discrimination.

Other examples of legislation having considerable effect on the status of women and gender equality in Iceland are discussed in the following sections.

### The Maternity Leave Act

The current law on maternity leave entered into force in January 1988. It provides all parents with a right to take a leave from work due to pregnancy and maternity. In the new act the maternity leave is extended from three months to six months and parents are given the opportunity to divide the leave between them. However, the combined leaves of the parents must not exceed six months and the first month of the leave is reserved for the mother. The father can, however, take leave at the same time as the mother, both during the first month as well as during the rest of the leave. Adoptive parents and foster parents have the same right to maternity leave but their leave is one month shorter than that of other parents. According to the Act, the pregnant woman also has a right to be transferred within her place of work if her health or the health of the fetus is jeopardized. Such a transfer shall not result in lower wages. There are also provisions in the Act that protect the right of a pregnant woman against unfair dismissal on behalf of the employer. This provision applies also to a parent in maternity leave.

There are provisions in the Social Security Act on the payment of maternity allowances to employees who have not made a special agreement with their employer regarding payment in maternity leave. Maternal allowances are the same for all mothers but per diem allowances depend, however, on labour participation during the last 12 months before giving birth. Per diem allowances discontinue if parents start working during the maternity leave.

Public employees are entitled to maternity leave and payment in maternity leave in accordance with a special Regulation from the Ministry of Finance. The Regulation, however, applies only to women and entitles a full-time employee to full payment during the first three months of the maternity leave. In reality this means that they keep their basic salary throughout the leave and the first three months they also receive an average of their overtime hours during the last twelve months before the maternity leave started. Women who are full-time public employees can extend their leave up to 12 months. The total sum that is paid during a maternity leave, however, remains the same but is spread over the whole period.

### The Abortion Act, sex education and birth control information

The Abortion Act of 1975 includes provisions on sex education and birth control. According to the Act abortions are permitted on social and/or medical grounds. A woman who becomes pregnant after having been raped is also entitled to an abortion.

Wherever possible, abortions shall take place before the end of the twelfth week of pregnancy and never after the sixteenth week of pregnancy unless there are special medical reasons. Before the abortion takes place the woman shall be given all necessary information regarding the risk of the operation and what kind of social assistance she is entitled to. In addition, two medical doctors or one medical doctor and a social worker must submit a written report stating the reasons for abortions performed due to social reasons.

Furthermore, the Act provides for abortions to be performed in accordance with recognized medical standards and that the same precautions are taken as during other operations performed at a hospital.

The Abortion Act was very controversial in the beginning, especially the issue of abortions on social grounds. The law is in accordance with women's demand to have control over their own bodies.





## The Matrimonial Act

Icelandic law provides that a husband and a wife shall enjoy equal status in every respect and have equal obligations to each another and their children. Both husband and wife control their possessions individually and are likewise individually responsible for their debts. However, special provisions apply to certain possessions, such as the real estate in which the family lives. To protect the family the approval of both the husband and the wife is needed when real estate is sold or mortgaged, regardless of which of them is its registered owner. A husband and wife can make an agreement if they want to arrange their financial matters differently, for instance if property shall be considered under the ownership of one and not the other.

Each partner in a marriage is entitled to apply for divorce and the general rule is that legal separation, regarded a kind of a trial period is usually granted. Six months after this either partner can demand a legal divorce, through which the marriage is finally terminated. Regarding division of marriage property a fifty-fifty rule applies entailing that net property of either party is divided between them into equal halves, provided they have not decided to arrange their estate differently.

Parents can make an agreement that both or one of them has custody of their children. If the parties cannot reach an agreement the issue is decided in court. The couple can decide that the Ministry of Justice rules in the issue which is a simpler procedure and less time-consuming. The decision as to which one of the parents is granted custody should be based on what is considered best for the child. The most common arrangement is that the mother holds custody of children after divorce.

## The Personal Names Act

According to the Icelandic Personal Names Act a child, as a general rule, takes as a surname his/her patronymic or matronymic so that both parents are in this sense equal in the eyes of the law. Family names are rare. A patronymic or matronymic is composed of the first name of a child's father or mother, with the addition of the words „son“ or „daughter“, as appropriate. A child whose father is named Jón will carry the surname Jónsson or Jónsdóttir. A child whose mother's name is Margrét becomes Margrétardóttir or Margrétarson. Traditionally children have generally been given a patronymic but the opposite is also known.

A woman keeps her surname when she marries. If either partner has a family name a husband or wife may adopt it. Children who have parents with different family names can use either the family name of their mother or their father.

## Ratification of international conventions on women's rights

Iceland has ratified the main international conventions regarding women's rights. Among them are the ILO Convention No. 100 concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, ratified in 1958 and No. 111 concerning Discrimination in respect of Employment and Occupation, ratified in 1963.

In 1985 Iceland ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The European Human Rights Convention of 1950 was ratified in Iceland in 1953 and Iceland became a member of the European Social Charter in 1976.

## 2.5 Perspectives for the future

Legislation on assisted conception techniques and legislation on the legal status of homosexuals are under consideration by the authorities. The preparation of a bill on assisted conception techniques is in its final stages and provisions are already in force to ensure the legal status of children conceived by artificial insemination.

Proposals have been put forward to amend Icelandic legislation on maternity leave in order to equalize the rights of all women in the labour force and to grant fathers a separate right to paternity leave. The indirect discrimination inherent in some statutes has also been discussed. It will be necessary to give closer consideration to this aspect in coming years.

Icelandic authorities do not, however, place priority on extending or amending the legislation, but rather on direct measures to improve the status of women. These will be discussed in the following chapters.





# 3. Policy making and measures to promote gender equality

The legal rights of women are fairly well established in the Icelandic legal code, but gender equality is nevertheless still far from a reality. Legal rights need to be followed by a change in public attitude and altered values. The sexes do not enjoy equal powers, the social power structures are male-dominated and this must be changed. The powerlessness of women is not only to their own disadvantage, but to the disadvantage of society as a whole. Equal rights legislation alone does not solve the problem, but does acknowledge the inequality and simultaneously provides the resources to facilitate and accelerate changes towards equality.

Although all ministries deal with the issue of equal rights, the area falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Social Affairs. In order to achieve results, the issue of equality must always be kept in mind when decisions are being made and in all areas of society. The effect of the decision in question on the equal status and equal rights of women and men must always be taken into consideration. It is very important that the authorities are continually aware of and monitor progress towards gender equality, but they can never replace the efforts of special-interest groups and organisations working in various areas of society to promote equal rights issues.

Non-governmental organizations have an important role to play. It is their task, for example, to constantly remind the authorities of the issues, point out where improvement is needed and find new ways to improve the situation. In Iceland a large number of organizations make a substantial contribution to equal rights issues, as well as to social welfare in general.

The following chapter presents an overview of the solutions introduced by the authorities to promote gender equality. It also describes several organizations working on equal rights issues.

## 3.1 National and Municipal Institutions and Activities

### The Equal Status Council

As provided for by the Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men, the Minister of Social Affairs appoints a seven-member Equal Status Council following every general election. The Minister appoints the chairperson, the Icelandic Federation of Labour, the Federation of State and Municipal Employees, the Confederation of Icelandic Employers, the Federation of Icelandic Women's Associations and the Women's Rights Association of Iceland each appoint one representative.

In accordance with the Equal Status Act, the Council has its own office and employs a director and additional staff as required. The Equal Status Council is a public institution under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Social Affairs. At least twice a year the Ministry and the Council hold joint meetings to formulate policy on matters of equality and coordinate on-going projects in operation in both institutions.

The main functions of the Equal Status Council are to promote the fulfilment of the Equal Status Act and to shape policy in matters of equality in Iceland. It is supposed to initiate affirmative action for the purpose of improving the status of women and serve as an advisory body for government, institutions and organizations in matters concerning equal status and equal rights of the sexes. The Council has an obligation to undertake research within the framework of the act as well as to supply information. It shall keep abreast of social developments concerning the equality between women and men and





make proposals for amendments. The Council shall convene a Conference on Equality at least every three years. The first conference of that kind was held in 1993.

By establishing of the Equal Status Council the authorities have, in effect, acknowledged the fact that the status of women and men is unequal in all areas of society.

## The Equal Status Complaints Committee

According to the Equal Status Act from 1991, The Minister of Social Affairs appoints a three-member Complaints Committee for a period of three years at a time. All committee members shall be qualified lawyers, one of them appointed by the minister, the other two are appointed by the Supreme Court, one of whom shall be the Chairperson of the committee.

The Complaints Committee is responsible for the registration of infringements of the provisions of the Act and for investigating cases in such instances and forwarding its conclusions to the parties concerned. If the person concerned does not accept the conclusion reached by the Complaints Committee the Committee has the power to initiate legal proceedings in order to establish the recognition of the rights of the plaintiff in consultation with him or her.

## Action programmes of the national government

Under the provisions of the Equal Status Act of 1985 the Minister of Social Affairs is responsible for drawing up a four-year action programme of measures to achieve equality between women and men. The first such plan was introduced in 1986. The plan stated how the Government intended to establish a greater measure of equality within the next four years in as many areas of the administration as possible. Its goals included such areas as employment and wages, education, representative functions and positions of responsibility, as well as various social improvements.

It is always hard to discern the effectiveness of such plans but nevertheless there was a positive development in certain areas covered by the plan of action. For example the maternity leave has been extended to six months and women are more numerous in managerial positions within the public administration. Work experience in the home as well as the caring for others weighs more in the evaluation of work experience than before. In other areas, however, there has been a less marked success, e.g. in the participation of fathers in parental leave, in establishing school meals for children and the undertaking of a survey reappraising traditional women's and men's occupations.

According to the 1991 Equal Status Act a provision on the above mentioned programme was changed into a proposal for a parliamentary resolution, thereby increasing its importance.

The government's plan of action in force at present was adopted by the Althing in May 1993 and expires at end of 1996. It emphasizes the duties of ministers and the ministries to work, each in their own field, towards bringing about equality between women and men.

It is important to keep the bisection of the plan of action in mind when particular measures are implemented. The former part of the plan deals with personnel issues and is to a large extent based on the provisions of the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Men and Women and replaces the Equal Status Plans of ministries and public institutions which was in force during 1988-1992. The latter part of the plan of action applies to projects carried out by individual ministries and is based on the idea that equality has to be inherent in the operation of every public body. Each ministry is responsible for the implementation in its field.

## Equal status committees

In the women's year 1975 the first municipal equal status committees were established. During the next few years their number rapidly increased even though no legal provision had been adopted regarding their establishment. Such a provision was incorporated in the 1991 Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Men and Women. The Act lays down that municipalities with more than 500 inhab-





itants establish, whenever possible, equal status committees. At the end of 1994, 44 out of 55 municipalities with more than 500 inhabitants had communicated the appointment of an equal status committee. Such committees are now operating throughout the country, and one of the functions of the Equal Status Council is to maintain relations with these committees and support their activities.

The functions of these committees are in many ways similar to those of the Equal Status Council, i.e. to keep abreast of the position of women and progress in equal rights issues in their own communities, and to serve as advisory bodies for town councils and other local authorities. Akureyri, the largest town in the north of the country, has taken the initiative by hiring a special equality officer as well as having a very active equal status committee. Last year a special equality officer was also hired in Reykjavik, the capital of Iceland.

## Equal opportunity programmes of Ministries and public Organisations

In order to ensure more successfully the achievement of the Government's goals for equality between the sexes, the Equal Status Council felt that a definitive action was required rather than the mere setting of goals. Consequently the Minister of Social Affairs was requested to take the initiative within the Government of obliging both ministers and government authorities and enterprises employing over 20 people or more, to draw up four-year action programmes for the purpose of furthering equality between women and men.

This was carried out, and in mid 1988 the Minister communicated these intentions by letter to the head of all the workplaces concerned. So far, a few government authorities and enterprises have made such action programmes but the great majority has not.

The Equal Status Council has published a handbook to explain and encourage such efforts by employers in the private and public sectors.

## 3.2 Associations and organizations working to improve the status of women

Icelandic citizens have a statutory right of association. Both men and women may freely establish and belong to any association or organization. Icelandic women are very active participants in the activities of various NGOs.

Iceland has a long history of women's associations, which have been and are still active in many areas of society dealing with various issues both at national and international level. They have initiated many social services which are now handled by the state, or jointly by the state and the associations. Women's movements and organizations have played a major role in developing the Icelandic welfare state. They have i.e. established hospitals, day-care centres, old people's homes and initiated the building of churches, to name a few.

In this context, only two of the largest women's organisations will be dealt with, as well as the most recent women's initiatives doing their share in the struggle for equality in Iceland.

The Icelandic Women's Rights Association was founded in 1907 and its aim is to promote the equal status of men and women in all areas of society. The members of the association come from all parties and both individuals and associations can become members. The Association is a party to the International Alliance of Women - IAW, and to the Nordiske kvindesagsforeningens samorganisation - NKS (the Association of Nordic Women's Rights Associations).

The Federation of Icelandic Women's Societies was founded in 1930. Its aim was to associate all women's societies that were already existing all over the country. Now it counts a membership of over



20,000 women all over the country. The Federation consists of 22 district associations with 241 societies. The main goal of the Federation is to strengthen and support women, increase their cooperation and social consciousness as well as aiming at strengthening and protecting the families and homes in Iceland.

During the last decade, many organizations and institutions have been founded which have taken on various specific projects concerning women's fight for equality. Violence against women both in and outside the home has been the main task of these groups.

The Women's Shelter in Reykjavik was opened in December 1982. It was founded and is run by an independent organization consisting of 500-600 members, mostly women. The Shelter offers a temporary home for battered women and their children who are forced to flee their homes because of violence. It also offers advice and support both directly and through media and education. Another aim of the Women's Shelter is to collect data on the nature of violence against women and to lead the public debate on prevention of violence against women. The Shelter gets financial support from the State and from numerous communities as well as from the public. In the past twelve years, over 200 women and their 1500 children have visited or stayed in the Women's Shelter.

In recent years an effort has been made in the field of sports to increase women's interest in sports, to encourage sportswomen and promote them within the movement. This effort has paid off in various ways. Women's sports events are better covered by the press than before and women are better represented in committees and councils within the Icelandic Sports Federation.

In 1993 a women's church was founded to be the platform for feminist theology, teaching and services. The women's church organises seminars and once a month a special service in order to meet the hopes of women. Women are addressed in their own sex, their daily lives discussed, bible texts read in a comprehensible language and god is referred to as a mother and a friend. The women's church is part of the established church and the women's services are held in its churches.

On 8 March 1990, the International Women's Day, Stígamót was opened, a centre which offers advice and information to women and children who have been victims of sexual abuse. Its operation has expanded continually and today few have doubts about its necessity. Stígamót is an informal women's grassroots organization, which is reflected in its mode of operation.

On the fiftieth anniversary of the Republic of Iceland on 17 June 1994 the Icelandic Human Rights Office was established. Its tasks are for example to collect data on human rights issues, promote it and enhance instruction and research in the field of human rights. As women's rights are increasingly regarded as human rights, women's rights will be a substantial part of the work carried out by the Icelandic Human Rights Office.

In Iceland a women's political alliance, Kvinnalístinn (The Women's Alliance), has been running for Althing and in municipal elections since 1982. The Women's Alliance was founded for the purpose of increasing the political influence of women and to create a new political forum based on feminine grounds. It was emphasized that women would pursue their common cultural heritage and experience as women.

The other political parties have their own political women's associations, which have amongst other things aimed at strengthening the role of women in the executive committees of their own parties and to gain acceptance for aims concerning the role of women in their parties' platforms besides supporting the increased political participation of women in general.

### 3.3. Women's studies

Women's studies have existed in Iceland since the early 1970s. In the beginning research was primarily concerned with the status of women, based on the ideals of equal opportunity. Books and articles were published on the various aspects of the subject, especially in the fields of history and





literature. However, women's studies and feminist research first appeared as a defined research policy with the new feminist movements in the late seventies and early eighties and as novel feminist theories were introduced from abroad. At the same time different departments at the University of Iceland started to offer feminist courses, especially in literature and the social sciences. These courses were not, however, a part of the regular curriculum.

Three different establishments and organizations have been instrumental in promoting women's studies. The first of these was Kvennasögusafn Íslands (Iceland's Library for Women's History) founded in 1975 by three women. Until recently the library was located in the home of one of them, but has become a special section in the Icelandic National Library, since it was opened in December 1994.

Another organization is Áhugahópur um íslenskar kvennarannsóknir (the Network for Icelandic Women's Studies), formed by a group of interested women following the first interdisciplinary women's studies conference, which was held in Iceland in 1985.

The third organization is Rannsóknastofa í kvennafræðum við Háskóla Íslands (the Centre for Women's Studies at the University of Iceland), which was established at the initiative of the network, approved by the University Council in January 1990 and recognized by the Minister for Cultural Affairs in March of the same year.

At present a data base of Icelandic women's studies, providing an overview of the corpus of women's studies, is in the process of being created. The aim of these projects is to stimulate research in women's studies, introduce them to students and to the general public, and to create a basis for interdisciplinary discussions in the field. Furthermore, the centre is calling for the construction of an interdisciplinary programme in women's studies at the University.

Research on women's issues in Iceland deals almost exclusively with Icelandic society, history, and literature. Critical analysis of feminism and gender studies have become more theoretical in the past decade but they always include a strong historical aspect. Nordic cooperation in the field of women's studies has been a great support to Icelandic feminists and will continue to be important in the future.

### 3.4 Statistics on gender equality

Gender statistics is a relatively new subject. It requires data from a great number of resources and covers, in fact, all statistics concerning individuals. It is published for example to inform people about the status of the sexes, to provide objective information, to promote ideas for changes and to evaluate the impact of decisions.

In Iceland it is public policy that equality and the equal status of men and women is reached. It is therefore necessary to have information on the situation in society and how it has developed. In the government's action programme for the years 1993-1997, concerning measures to reach the equality of the sexes, it is laid down that regular statistical recording must, as far as possible, and where appropriate, be processed and published separately for men and women.

Last year, the Icelandic Statistical Bureau issued a booklet called *Women and Men 1994* together with tables and graphs on the status of the sexes in Iceland. It contains statistics on the population, everyday life and health, education, employment, income and salary, child care and influential positions in society. The booklet was issued both in Icelandic and English. Furthermore, the Icelandic Statistical Bureau has for over a decade co-operated in this field with other statistical bureaus in the Nordic countries. This co-operation has, for instance, led to the publication of the works *Konur og karlar á Norðurlöndunum. Staðreyndir um stöðu kynja 1988* (*Women and Men in the Nordic Countries. Facts on Equal Opportunities 1988*) and *Konur og karlar á Norðurlöndum 1994* (*Women and Men in the Nordic Countries, Facts and Figures 1994*), both of which were published by the Nordic Council of Ministers.



## 4. Women and men in positions of control

At the time of this report women serve as President of the Republic and President of the *Althing*, and the Mayor of the capital, the City of Reykjavík, is also a woman. From this it is evident that women in Iceland are in fact able to reach high offices, even though there is still a considerable difference in the ratio between women and men holding important governmental positions or management posts within public administration.

The legislative power in Iceland is jointly vested in the *Althing* and the President of the Republic according to the Constitution. Members of the *Althing* are 63 in number elected by secret ballot for a term of four years, representing the country's eight electoral areas.

The Ministers are the heads of the executive authority, each in his/her own field. The Ministries number 14, but the number of Ministers has been lower, generally around ten, and thus the Ministers control more than one Ministry. Certain matters are committed to the Prime Minister by law, but in other respect his role is leading the Government.

In the history of the Republic no single party has obtained majority in the *Althing*, and consequently coalition governments usually have been in power. Minority governments have only been in power for brief periods of time.

### The Icelandic Presidency

Iceland gained its independence and became a Republic in 1944. The President of Iceland is directly elected by the people. In 1980 Ms. Vigdís Finnbogadóttir was the first woman, head of state, to be democratically elected in the world. She was re-elected in 1984, 1988 and 1992, and at present still holds this high office.

The role of the President is over and above politics, thus the holder of the Presidency wields little direct political power. A bill which has been passed by Parliament shall be submitted to the President for confirmation in order to be given the force of law. The President could reject a bill according to the constitution which would then be submitted to a vote by secret ballot for approval or rejection. This has so far never happened in the Republic's 50 years history.

There is no doubt that the President has contributed more to the image of Iceland in the eyes of the world than any other living Icelander. In a rapidly changing environment and global situation she has given sense of direction for the future of Icelandic culture and made an effort to introduce that culture abroad. She has put emphasis on the protection of the environment. Last but not least, the election of a woman to the office of president has been a great encouragement to Icelandic women and made a strong impact on the presidency in the minds of the nation's children.

### Women in Parliament

Women in Iceland have been eligible for parliament and have had the right to vote since 1915, and in 1922 a woman was elected to the *Althing* for the first time. She represented a special women's party. Five lists of candidates were presented in the general election and the women's list came third in number of votes.

Until the year 1970, there were one, two or at times no female Members of the *Althing*. Three women held seats in the Parliament in the years 1971-1983. During the UN Women's Decade Icelandic women were very active, and after the 1983 general election there was a considerable increase in the number of women in the *Althing*. A new women's party (the Women's Alliance) entered the





political scene and elected three women members. From among the candidates of another newly-founded political party - the Social Democratic Alliance - four people, including two women, were elected. Among the candidates of the four „older parties“ there were four women elected. The new parties thus effected the increase of women at the *Althing*. Following this general election the number of women at the *Althing* had risen to nine altogether, or 15% of MPs. See Figure 4.1.

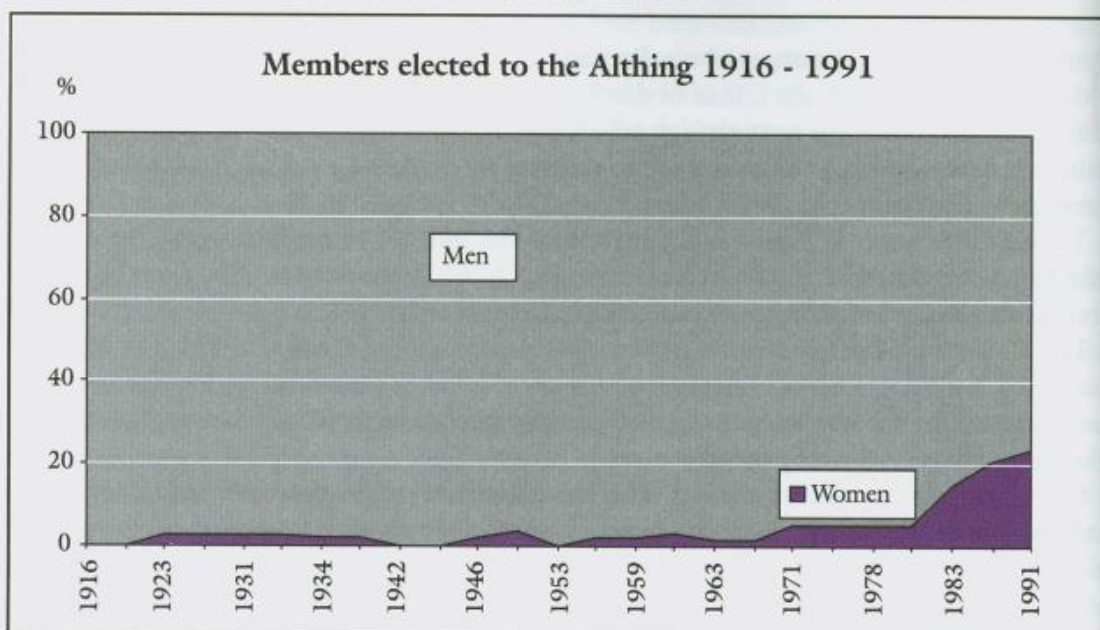


Figure 4.1

The number of women in parliament has been slowly increasing in recent years and at present sixteen women hold seats in the 63-member *Althing*. Their share is therefore 25,4%, the lowest percentage in the Nordic Countries. The next general election will be in April 1995.

Year	Total	Women	%
1979	60	3	5
1983	60	9	15
1987	63	13	21
1991	63	16	25

Table 4.1

## Women in national government

In the fifty year history of the Republic a minimal number of women have been cabinet members. It was not until the year 1970 that a woman became a Member of the Cabinet in Iceland. Until mid-summer 1971, a woman held the post of Minister of Justice and Ecclesiastical Affairs. From that time until the year 1983 no government counted a woman amongst its cabinet members.

Following the 1983 general election a woman was appointed Minister of Health and Social Security and later in the same government she served as Minister of Culture and Education. Following a cabinet shuffle in 1987, a woman was appointed Minister of Social Affairs. She continued to serve in that office after the general election in 1991 until mid-summer 1994, when some changes were made within the Cabinet. No woman served as member of the Cabinet until, later that year, when once more a woman was appointed Minister of Social Affairs.

### Cabinet Ministers 1979-1991

Year	Total	Women	%
1979	6	0	0
1983	10	1	10
1987	11	1	9
1991	10	1	10

Table 4.2

To sum up, 97 men have served as Cabinet Ministers in Iceland compared to only four women.

## Women and general elections

Even though women are not numerous at the *Althing*, they are certainly active in politics. This can be concluded from, amongst other things, the number of women standing for parliament.

Over the last two decades, women's share in party candidacy has grown considerably. As shown in Table 4.3, the number of women standing as party candidates increased considerably in 1983, not least due to the efforts of the Women's Alliance. It appears that over the last two decades the number of people standing for parliament has risen continually. Perhaps the explanation lies in the fact that the political parties are becoming more numerous. The increase of women as party candidates is considerably larger than the increase of men, as the proportional figures in Table 4.3 demonstrate. In the last two general elections the number of women and men, who stood as party candidates, was almost equal. However, there is still a long way to go before equality of the sexes is reached within parliament.

Women only are allowed to stand as candidates for the Women's Alliance. Looking at women's share in the candidacy of other parties, it becomes clear that the proportional figures are much lower. In 1983 women's share in this regard was 29%, which meant that there was hardly any increase from the 1979 elections. In 1987 women's share on party lists, apart from that of the Women's Alliance, was 37%, and in the last elections it was 38%. As yet, women are thus much less noticeable than men with regard to actual involvement in politics within the traditional parties.

### Candidates in general elections to the *Althing* 1974 -1991

Year	Total	Women	%
1974	556	97	17
1979	474	129	27
1983	556	195	35
1987	958	437	46
1991	1 029	469	46

Table 4.3

The participation of Icelandic women in general elections has always been on a large scale. In 1991, for example, 87,3% of Icelandic women used their voting rights.

## Women in municipal government

Icelandic women have had the right to vote and have been eligible for local government councils at national level since 1909. Two years earlier, women in Reykjavík and in Akureyri were granted the





right to vote in local government elections. In the beginning, in spite of eligibility for local government councils, women's share as councillors was for a long time rather insignificant, as can be seen from the following figure.

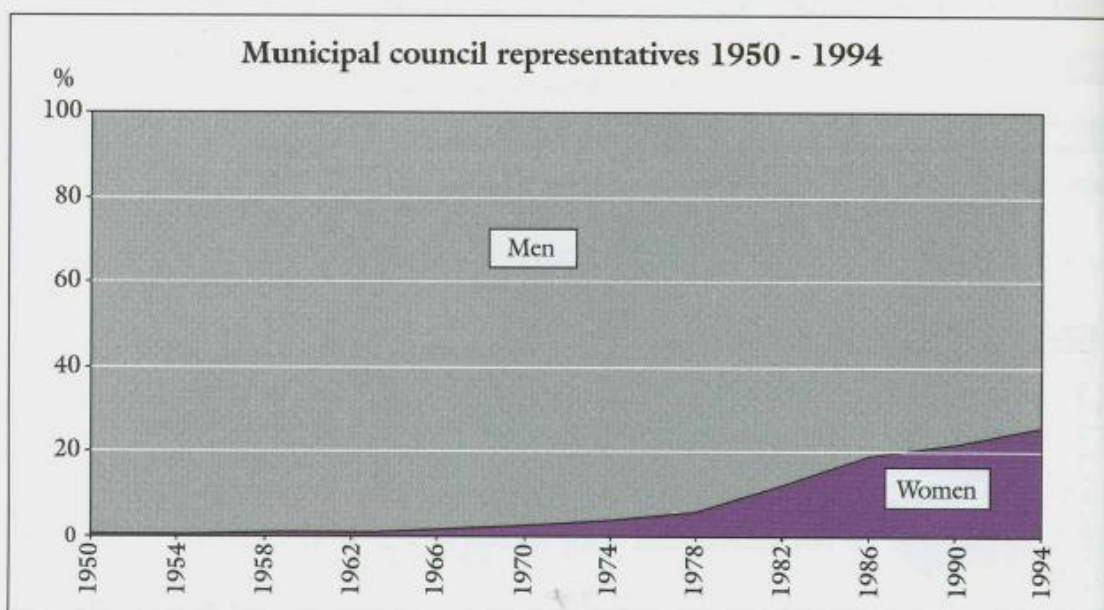


Figure 4.2

After the local government elections in 1982, the percentage of women representatives on local government councils was 12%, and since then their share has increased between elections, as can be seen in the Table below. After the elections in the spring of 1990, a summary was made of the number of women on the city (Reykjavík) council and town councils. It was found, that the proportion of women on these councils had grown from 29% after the 1986 elections to 31.5%, which is 10% higher than the proportion in general on local government councils.

Year	Women	Men	Total	Women %	Men %
1974	42	1 095	1 162*	4	94
1978	71	1 076	1 172*	6	92
1982	148	1 044	1 192	12	88
1986	226	954	1 180	19	81
1990	243	873	1 116	22	78
1994	243	738	981	25	75

\* No information is available on the sex of some representatives.

Table 4.4

Following the local government elections last spring (1994) the percentage of women representatives on local government councils is 25%. The proportion of women is thus larger, even though their number is the same as during the last election period. Structural changes within local governments resulted, on the whole, in fewer representatives on local government councils. On the city council in Reykjavík women are for the first time in majority, thus eight out of 15 elected representatives are women and the mayor is a woman. Of total 29 „town managers“ there is no woman, but 21 women serve as chairmen of the total 140 chairmen of local councils.

A total of 32 local government councils out of 171 still do not count women amongst their representatives. During the last election period they numbered 58, and during the next election period before the number was 81. Progress is thus being made in the right direction. However, it is a matter of concern and of consideration, that fewer women than men were re-elected in the local government elections last spring. The same happened in the elections in 1990. No satisfactory explanation has been provided, but assuming there is a genuine interest in the participation of women in politics, the causes of this turn of events should be analysed.

## 4.2 The participation of women in public administration

Women have always been under-represented on official councils and committees (Table 4.5). In order to correct this a revision of the 1976 Equal Status Act in 1985 contained a provision on the participation of women and men in governmental committees. Its aim is, where possible, to strive at an equal number of the sexes on committees and councils and governing bodies, both at national and local level and in non-governmental organizations.

The Icelandic Equal Status Act has been revised and a new law was adopted in the spring of 1991. These provisions were made somewhat more stringent and it is now required that a reminder is made of the provision concerned whenever an appointment is required for governing bodies, committees and councils.

Boards, committees and councils at national government level 1971-1990					
Year	Women	Men	Total	Women %	Men %
1971	70	2 009	2 079	3	97
1980	187	2 577	2 764	7	93
1983	268	2 663	2 931	9	91
1987	261	2 121	2 382	11	89
1990 <sup>1)</sup>	501	2 524	3 025	17	83
1994	592	2 250	2 842	21	79

<sup>1)</sup> Figures are not comparable to those of previous years

Table 4.5

In the government's four year action programme on reaching equality of the sexes from the year 1993, the government has been assigned the task of increasing the participation of women to at least 30% at the end of the programme period, i.e. in the year 1997. In order to ensure that this objective is reached, public bodies are obliged to ask for the name of the woman or man in question each time an appointment is required for a governmental committee.

In 1994, the proportion of women committee members on governmental committees and councils was 20.8%. Thus some progress has been made, but clearly the government must put in some hard work before the goal is reached.

There has been some increase of women on committees and councils at local government level in the larger communities. In 1982, the percentage of women in that capacity was 26.6%, and around the middle of the decade, or in the year 1986, women's participation had increased a little and risen to 27.4%. Figures from the year 1990 again show some increase in the number of women on committees and councils in the larger communities. At that time their participation had reached 30.0%.

It appears that most of the women on committees and councils at local government level work on committees on child rearing and education; child minding, nursery schools and elementary schools, or matters of health and culture. At local government level women are rarely found doing a different kind of committee work.





## 4.3 Women in management positions in Ministries and elsewhere in public administration

In the year of 1987, the percentage of women holding management positions within the ministries was 32%. In a comparable study in 1985 the proportion was 24%, so there has been some increase during this period. It should be mentioned in this connection that few women held positions in high office. On the other hand, they were considerably more numerous in other management positions.

The proportion of women amongst Heads of Department and other university-educated specialists was 39% in the year 1985; in 1987, however, the proportion had risen to 45%. No woman held the office of Deputy Secretary General, or Permanent Secretary, and at the time only one woman held the position of Head of Section. The number of men in the position of Head of Section was, at that time, 26. Nevertheless, it looks like some changes have taken place; a woman was appointed Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Social Affairs in September 1988 and in consequence became the first woman in Iceland to hold an office in that capacity. In 1993, a woman was appointed Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Consequently, there are now two women among the thirteen Deputy Secretary Generals.

An informal summary from the year 1994 indicates that the development within ministry offices has been quite favourable for women over the last years. Forty individuals hold the position of Head of Section or similar positions in ministries, of whom eight are women.

The development seems to be the same within those government bodies that have come under examination in relation to the equality of the sexes. In the middle of the year 1987, the proportion of management positions held by women was 26%, compared to 13% in a survey carried out by the same firm in the year 1985.

### Women in labour unions and professional organisations

In Iceland there are labour union federations, the two largest being the Icelandic Federation of Labour and The Federation of State and Municipal Employees. These federations include numerous unions, some of which contain mixed numbers of women and men, whereas others have as their members either mostly women or mostly men.

Percentage of women in major trade union organisations								
	ASÍ		BSRB		BHM	BHMR	SÍB	
	1984	1992	1983/4	1991/2	1984	1992/3	1984	1993/4
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Members	46	48	61	66	22	46	70	76
Congress repres.		38		51		46		55
Boards	33	30	36	53	20	48	46	29
<b>Total membership</b>	<b>61 874</b>	<b>65 100</b>	<b>17 590</b>	<b>16 100</b>	<b>5 996</b>	<b>3 300</b>	<b>3 114</b>	<b>3 900</b>

Note: ASÍ: Icelandic Federation of Labour  
SÍB: Federation of Icelandic Bank Employees.  
BHM: Federation of Graduate Employees

BSRB: Federation of State and Municipal Employees  
BHMR: Federation of Graduate Public Employees

Table 4.6

Over the past years and decades there has been an increase of women on the governing bodies of these organizations. Women within the ranks of The Federation of State and Municipal Employees have, during the last years, been spokesmen and been on governing bodies in reasonable proportion to their number in the organization. On the governing body of The Icelandic Federation of Labour (ASÍ) there has not been a proportional increase in women governors over the past decade, and so far



no woman has been chairman of this particular union. The proportion of women in managerial positions within the Federation of Graduate Public Employees (BHM and BHMR) is fully consistent with the number of women belonging to that organization. Women in administration within the Union of Icelandic Bank Employees (SÍB) have become proportionally fewer over the past decade. At the beginning of the decade the weight of the proportional number between women in the organization and women on the governing body was 0.66; whereas it is now 0.38. However, at this present time, a woman is head of the organization.

## 4.4 Women and men in the diplomatic service

In Iceland relatively few people serve under the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. At the present time the Ministry has 120 employees, seventy of whom work in its embassies and missions abroad. Twelve of its sixty-two specialists women, three of whom are attachés, three hold a position as Embassy Secretary and two are Embassy Counsellors, both appointed in 1991. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs is represented by nineteen ambassadors at home and abroad. At present there is one woman, appointed in 1991.

No woman has been Permanent Secretary or Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry. The first woman was employed in the diplomatic service in 1944, but it was not until the late seventies that a woman was employed as a specialist in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. No formal restrictions explain why women's advancement within the diplomatic service is more difficult than that of men. The explanation for the scarcity of women lies elsewhere.

## 4.5 Perspectives for the future

Since in the seventies women's participation, both in parliament and on local government councils, has been on the increase but it has been an extremely slow progress. In spite of the gender quota of some political parties, and the candidacy of the Women's Alliance, there is still a long way to go before one-half of the nation's elected representatives are women. In order to reach that objective at least two things are needed, firstly, the political parties should be more supportive of women within their ranks and, secondly, there is a call for a change of attitude with the nation towards the political participation of women.

Women no longer accept being presented as „an example of the female species“ in parliament and on local government councils. Women and women's opinions should be a normal and natural factor in all aspects of politics.

Looking back on the previous ten years it is apparent that over the past few years an increasing number of women has been promoted to management positions at the governmental level. Therefore, it is fair to conclude that this development has been instigated by the fact that women have become better educated. Perhaps time will be on women's side, as there is no shortage of well-educated women in government administration. If trends in administration go hand in hand with the emphasis public authorities are putting on equal rights of women and men, the next ten years should see women reaching high offices. It is important to pay close attention to this progress.





# 5. Education

## 5.1 The right to education

Up to 1911, women's right to education in Iceland had been severely restricted. The education provided consisted of special girls' schools and domestic science schools that gave women instructions in their traditional tasks, i.e. domestic skills and the caring and nursing of others. In 1911, women were granted the same rights as men to have an education and sit the required examinations in all the country's educational establishments. At the same time they were granted equal access to scholarships and public office, presumably making Iceland the first country to grant such legal right to women.

In 1985, a new legislation was adopted where the equal opportunities and rights of men and women were confirmed. In Chapter 3, Article 10 on education it says: „Schools and other educational institutions shall instruct pupils in matters related to equal rights of men and women. Textbooks and study aids shall not give any priority to either of the sexes.“

A fundamental principle of Icelandic education today is that everyone should have equal opportunities to receive an education, irrespective of sex, economic status, geographic location, and cultural or social background.

The educational levels are four, pre-school level up to six years of age, compulsory level (primary and lower secondary) from 6-16, upper secondary from 16-20 and universities and adult education after the age of 20 years.

Students by educational level								
	1980		1985		1990		1992	
	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %
Secondary school level	46	54	46	54	47	53	48	52
University level in Iceland	44	56	52	48	57	43	58	42
Studying abroad	37	63	40	60	43	57	43	57

Table 5.1

Elementary school is compulsory for all children and the enrolment rate is therefore 100%. Table 5.1 reveals that an increasing number of women enter universities and study abroad. Today they are the majority of university students.

## 5.2 Teachers and school administrators

A vast majority of teachers at the compulsory level are women and that has remained unchanged during the last decade. It is interesting to see that 79% of teachers are women whereas 73% of school principals are men. There is an equal division between the sexes when it comes to assistant principals, which is the greatest change in this field during the last decade. See Table 5.2.



### School administrators and teachers at compulsory level 1984 and 1993

	1984		1993	
	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %
School administrators & teachers, total	...	...	73	27
Headmasters / -mistresses	15	85	28	72
Assistant headmasters / -mistresses	25	75	50	50
Teachers	...	...	79	21

Table 5.2

The higher the level of education the fewer teachers and headmasters are women and no woman has ever been rector in Iceland.

### School administrators and teachers in 1993

Secondary school level			University level		
School administrators & teachers, total	Female %	Male %	School administrators & teachers, total	Female %	Male %
Principal	10	90	President	0	100
Assistant principal	17	83	Professor	6	94
Assistant manager	43	57	Associate professor	19	81
Director of studies	17	83	Lecturer	37	63
Teacher	41	59	Part-time instructor	48	52
			Adjunct lecturer	15	85

Table 5.3

## 5.3 Pre-school education

The basic principle at the pre-school level is that teaching and education are carried out with clear goals in mind under the guidance of specially trained personnel. The Ministry of Education and Culture establishes the curriculum for pre-school education and sets out its educational and developmental role and the general policy regarding the methods used.

Children are not required to attend pre-school, but the aim is to provide all children with the opportunity to attend pre-school if their parents so wish. Approximately 75% of children aged three to six years attend pre-school, and approximately 15% of children two years of age or younger.

In pre-schools 36% of the staff are qualified pre-school teachers while 7% of the staff have various other types of teacher's training and 57% are untrained personnel. Only 1,2% of the pre-school personnel are males.

Pre-school teachers are required to complete a three-year course of studies at the Icelandic College for Pre-school Teachers. Since 1948 only 11 male students out of 1513 students have graduated from the school, the first one in 1983.



## 5.4 Compulsory education

The main purpose of compulsory schooling is to prepare pupils for life and work in a continuously developing, democratic society. The organization of the school as well as its work shall, therefore, be guided by tolerance, Christian values and democratic co-operation. The law governing primary and lower secondary education makes attendance at school compulsory for all children 6-16 years of age (ten school years). There is no division between primary and lower secondary education, they form part of the same school level and take place in the same school, „grunnskóli“.

The law defines the main objectives of „grunnskóli“ and on the basis of this law, the Ministry of Education and Culture issues regulations and the National Curriculum Guide. When the law was reviewed in 1991 a new and important clause was added concerning the role of the primary school which was to „prepare both sexes equally for active participation in society, family life and general employment.“ In the National curriculum from 1989 there is a special chapter on equality which involves a new perspective and emphasis in all education. The curriculum states that schools must give room for a discussion on equality, as a special subject but also in relation to other subjects. Young people must furthermore be made aware of the fact that in a democratic society it is in the interest of all that women should equally to men hold leading posts in public life and men given the opportunity to nurture their children.

## 5.5 Upper secondary education

At the upper secondary level, which normally covers the 16-20 years age group, all pupils who have completed their compulsory education should be able to find a programme of study that suits them. The primary aims are to prepare pupils for life and work in a democratic society by offering them suitable opportunities to learn and develop individually, and prepare them for employment through specialized studies leading to professional qualifications or further study. Upper secondary education is governed by an Act from 1988. The law provides a framework for education at this level by defining the main objectives and the various responsibilities of the state, local authorities, individual institutions and their staff.

Approximately 85% of the pupils who complete primary and lower secondary education enter upper secondary school directly thereafter; the dropout rate, however, is considerable. Many students enter employment after completing their compulsory schooling or enroll in general academic programmes before commencing vocational studies at upper-secondary level. The main types of upper secondary schools are:

- \* Grammar schools with four years of academic studies leading to matriculation.
- \* Industrial-vocational schools providing vocational courses for skilled trades.
- \* Comprehensive schools with both academic courses and vocational training.
- \* Specialized vocational schools which offer training for specific vocations.

Since 1977 girls have been more numerous than boys in general secondary education but when vocational and technical programmes are included boys are still more numerous than girls.

Generally there is a great gender-based difference in the line of study chosen. In 1992 girls were much more numerous in academic studies i.e. in languages, fine arts, social sciences and so on, whereas boys were much more numerous in vocational courses for skilled trades.



A closer look at the subjects selected by girls at the general secondary school level reveals a definite gender-based difference. Girls are more numerous in the language lines, while boys constitute the majority in the science and physics education lines.

In the school year 1985-1986, enlisted students in vocational and technical schools were 3427, 86% of whom were boys and 14% girls. At this level the technical education of women is restricted to mechanical drawing, design or technical assistance. The choices made by boys revealed a greater variety, including general technology as well as construction technology and electrical technology.

	1980		1985		1992	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
	%	%	%	%	%	%
<b>Total number of students</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>52</b>
General programmes	46	54	45	55	49	51
Languages	77	23	74	26	76	24
Fine & applied arts	60	40	67	33	70	30
Pedagogical & physical education programmes, teacher-training	78	22	77	23	72	28
Social science programmes	54	46	58	42	67	33
Commerce & economics	54	46	53	47	49	51
Natural science programmes	38	62	38	62	45	55
Crafts & technical trades	5	95	8	92	9	91
Agricultural, food & service trades	48	52	41	59	47	53
Health-related programmes	97	3	96	4	96	4

Table 5.4

In recent years the division into general schools and vocational schools has become blurred as general schools have taken up vocational and technical programmes and vice versa. Therefore the Statistical Bureau of Iceland has altered its method of data collection and now classifies secondary education by three different categories; general programmes, non-technical vocational programmes and technical programmes including non-service trades and crafts. In the first two programmes, girls formed the majority in 1990, 55% and 60% respectively, while boys were a large majority in technical programmes or 90%.

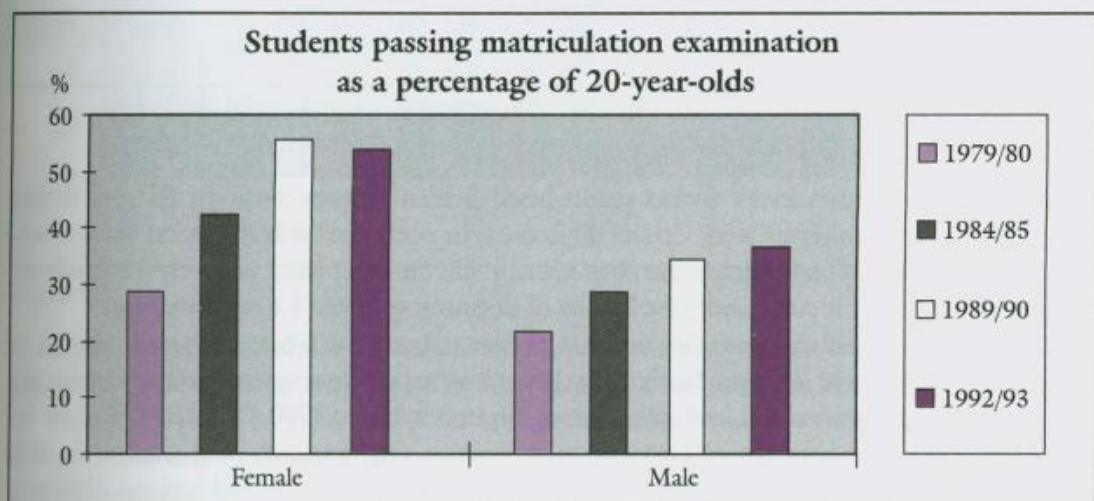


Figure 5.1





A comparison of two three-year periods, i.e. 1976-1979 and 1986-1988, reveals an increase in the number of female graduates from general secondary schools, while the total increase in the number of graduates during this period is 66%. This is a remarkable development, in view of the fact that at the beginning of this century it was considered an exception if a girl sat the grammar school examination and in 1944 girls were only 27% of grammar school graduates. Girls have been the majority of graduates during the last fifteen years. Since 1989 more than one-half of the girls of each annual group of twenty-year-olds has completed the grammar school examination and thereby acquired the right to attend university.

## 5.6 University education

Universities are charged with the task of carrying out research and offering higher education programmes in different subjects, as stipulated by the legislation governing each institution. The universities, however, are autonomous as regards the research they carry out.

The proportion of women obtaining university education has increased considerably, much more so than for men. During the period 1980-1990 the number of students at the higher education level in Iceland increased by 30%, a 10% increase of male students and a 52% increase of female students. Enrolment at the University of Iceland over the past few years reveals a larger number of registered women than men since the middle of the eighties. They have also become the majority of graduates from the University. In former times women students at the University of Iceland frequently gave up their studies before graduation but that has changed considerably over the last few years. For instance, women were only 20% of those who graduated in 1975, while 10 years later this proportion was 44% and 58% during the years 1990-1992. See Table 5.5.

Enrolled students and graduates of the University of Iceland			
	Annual mean Number	Female %	Male %
	<b>Enrolled students</b>		<b>Enrolled students</b>
1980/81-1984/85	3 892	45	55
1985/86-1989/90	4 497	53	47
1990/91-1993/94	5 244	57	43
	<b>Graduates</b>		<b>Graduates</b>
1980/81-1984/85	404	42	58
1985/86-1989/90	550	49	51
1990/91-1992/93	779	58	42

Table 5.5

Just as at the secondary level a distinct gender-based division between certain faculties and subjects is to be found at the university level. Certain subjects can be considered as being typical women's subjects, such as nursing, library science and physiotherapy. On the other hand, relatively few female students study subjects that come under the Faculty of Engineering (Table 5.6 opposite page).

Although educational choices at the university level are still very much based on gender, women are obviously gaining ground in certain faculties that have hitherto been reserved by tradition for men, e.g. law, business administration and medicine. During the academic year 1990-1991 one-half of the law and medical students one-third of those studying business administration were women. In 1993 women comprised almost one-half of those graduating with a degree in law and business administration.



### Graduates of the University of Iceland by faculty 1993<sup>1)</sup>

Faculty of	Total Number	Female %	Male %
Theology	7	14	86
Medicine <sup>2)</sup>	160	82	18
Law	55	49	51
Economics & Business Administration	105	46	54
Arts	168	63	38
Dentistry	7	71	29
Engineering	59	5	95
Sciences	82	41	59
Social sciences	180	74	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>41</b>

1) Graduates in February, June and October 1993 2) Medicine, pharmacology, nursing and physiotherapy

Table 5.6

At the Icelandic College of Technology there are only a handful of women in the Department of Mechanical Engineering Technology, Department of Electrical/Electronics Engineering Technology and Department of Civil Engineering Technology, which remain a strong male bastion. In the Department of Industrial Management the group is mixed, men are on the other hand rare in the Department for Medical Laboratory Technology and Department of Radiologic Technology.

Women make up the vast majority of students attending the University College of Education. In 1980 73,8% of its graduates were women, in 1985 they were 77,5% of the graduates and in 1993 90,1% of the graduates from the University College of Education. See Figure 5.2

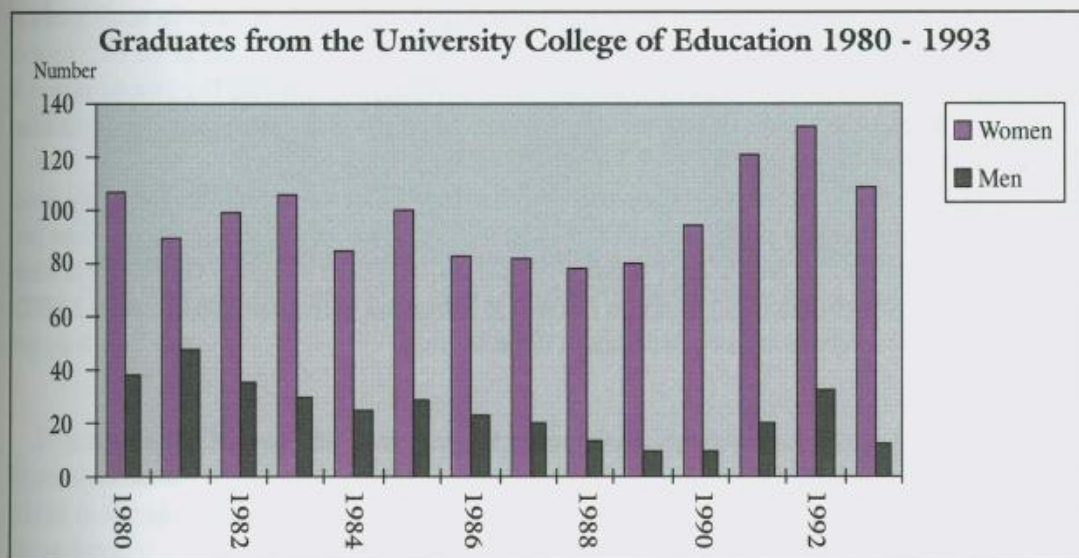


Figure 5.2

In spite of significant increase in women's education in the past decades they are still undervalued when they enter the labour market. It is however clear that the increase in the education of women has not turned out to be the crucial point as regards equality between women and men. The jobs women choose to train for are usually appraised lower in terms of wages than occupations dominated by men. In spite of certain signs of change, women as a whole still opt for traditional occupations and so far the authorities have only taken minor steps to influence women's educational choices.





## 5.7 Promoting equality in education

In 1987, a committee was formed by the Ministry of Education and Culture for the purpose of ensuring that schools were being run in accordance with the Law of equal opportunities and rights of women and men concerning education. A report written by the committee was published in 1990 under the title: „Equal Status of the Sexes in Schools, Policy - Aims - Means.“ The following main objectives are specified in the report:

„All school work should encourage independence and self respect of both boys and girls and prepare them equally for active participation in family life, general employment and in the shaping of society as a whole.“

Secondary objectives are:

1. All individuals, regardless of sex, shall receive a general education and encouragement to pursue further studies in accordance with their interests and maturity.
2. All schools shall pay attention to the differences between the sexes and the different position of the sexes within the school system.
3. Women, their experience and culture shall be made more visible than before.

Another committee for equality of the sexes within the school system was formed by the Ministry in 1990 to ensure that the proposals would be carried out. During the last few years, both these committees have organized courses and seminars in schools and with various groups of educators. Conferences, supported by grants from the Ministry or the teachers' organizations, have been held on innovative projects to promote equality between the sexes.

Iceland has participated in a Nordic project, NORD-LILIA, on gender equality in teacher education since 1992. The project is aimed at influencing the content and choices made in the education of teachers in order to render them more capable of teaching equality in schools. The Nordic project is also aimed at developing Nordic co-operation by establishing liaison and the exchange of information between those who educate teachers, both locally and across national borders.

NORD-LILIA exhibits a diversity of approaches, reflecting various ways of understanding the issues of gender equality and equal opportunities. The focus is on all levels of the school system, from pre-school to higher education, on the basic training of teachers, as well as in-service courses for teachers and other key school personnel, and finally on research. A liaison has been established between NORD-LILIA and broader international organizations in the same field.



# 6. Business and industry

## 6.1 Economically active women

In 1993 the number of women on the labour market was 67,000, which is the equivalent of 46% of the labour force of the nation. Since 1960 the percentage of economically active women has increased steadily. In 1981 this percentage had reached 65% and in 1994, 77% of women between the age of 16-74 were on the labour market.

Figures show that the percentage of married women in the labour force has increased more than the percentage of unmarried women. At present approximately 80% of married women work outside the home whereas in 1981 64% of them were on the labour market. In the age group 25-64 the percentage of married economically active women was 83% in 1993.

It is more common for women in densely populated areas to work outside the home than it is for rural women whose work is more inside the home, although the division between work inside and outside the home is somewhat blurred. However, nothing indicates that the working day of women in rural areas is shorter than that of women in urban areas.

The percentage of working women increases until they become middle-aged and decreases from then on. In the age group between 16-24, the percentage of the sexes is virtually the same. After the age of 24 it is different, as shown in Figure 6.1.

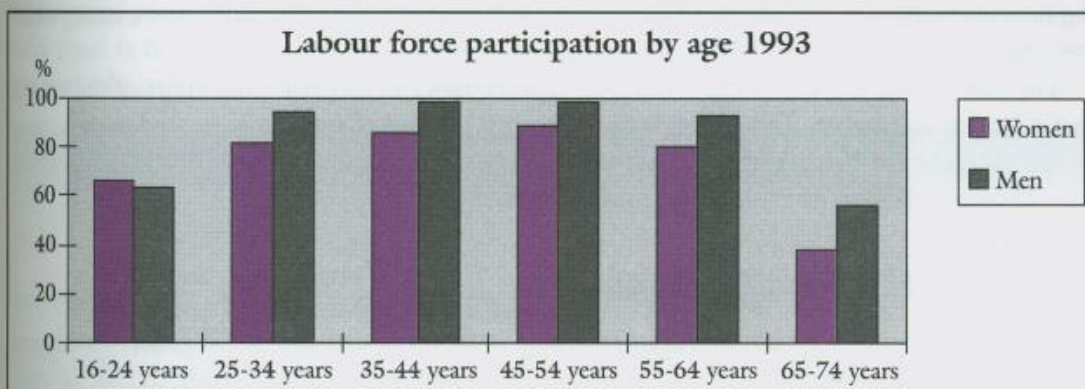


Figure 6.1

In homes with children, the percentage of economically active women drops from 92% to 82%. Women's economic activity also decreases as the number of children in the home increases, and is also related to the ages of the children. Mothers of children under seven years of age are less active in the labour force.

In labour market surveys individuals who are not economically active are classified as homemakers, students and others. Surveys for 1993 reveal that in the age group 16-74 years, 9 out of every 100 women are homemakers, whereas hardly any men have homemaking as their main occupation. However, the percentage of female students is the same as the percentage of male students (10%). If the age group is narrowed down to 25-64, work outside the home increases for both sexes and the ratio of students drops considerably (2-3%), as is to be expected. The percentage of homemakers increases slightly or up to 11%. This ratio is highest among women between 25-34 and 65-74, i.e. women during their reproductive years and women at the end of their working life.



## Full-time and part-time employment

There is a considerable difference in the proportion of full-time-jobs between women and men of full-time jobs. In 1990 about 35-40% of women on the labour market were in full-time jobs whereas in 1993, 53% of them held full-time jobs. This proportion is 90% for men.

Education seems to be a significant factor in respect of the number of women who hold full-time jobs. A considerably larger number of women with university education hold full-time jobs than women with other kinds of education. In 1993, about 70% of employed women with university education held full-time jobs outside the home. At the same time, about 50% of less educated employed women held full-time jobs.

Housework and bringing up children is in general the responsibility of women rather than men. It is therefore hardly surprising that women rather than men tend to be in part-time jobs on the labour market. The supply of day-care places for the youngest children has been insufficient and most of the time children's school hours have not been continuous. Similarly, the school day has been short and until quite recently no daycare was offered before and after school. In the last few years some changes have been made, although demand has not been met, especially as regards longer day-care.

## Working hours at home and outside the home

In 1993 the average working hours of women on the labour market were 34 hours per week, whereas men worked on average 50 hours a week during the same year. If only those who work full time are taken into consideration women work on average 44 hours and men 53 hours.

A survey on the standard of living carried out in 1988 showed that the total working hours in the home and outside were 58 hours per week for women and 62 for men. The average number of working hours in the home were, for those women who participated in the survey, 19 hours a week, while men spent on average 6 hours a week doing domestic work.

The work carried out within the home is perhaps the factor in the total work effort of the nation that is hardest to estimate. This applies both to the total number of working hours and contribution to national income. Obviously, the methods used are crucial in estimating the contribution of women, both as regards national production and national income.

## Women and men in the labour market

Division of labour on the labour market in Iceland is still very conventional and gender-based, and in recent years this has changed only very slightly. Admittedly women have gradually entered occupations traditionally associated with men, whereas men more rarely choose to work in fields generally associated with women.

The division of the sexes by sectors of the economy in 1993 shows that the primary sectors, agriculture and fishing employ only 3% of the female work force, but 14% of the male work force. In fact, most of these women work in agriculture. Women employed in fishing are very few. In the fishing industry, on the other hand, women are in great majority. Out of all employed women 7% work in that sector. Women rarely work in the utilities and civil engineering works, i.e. only 1% as opposed to 14% of men. (See Table 6.1 opposite page).

Most women work in the public health and social services sector which employs one-quarter of all working women. Teaching and other types of instruction is also to a large extent carried out by women. One out of every 10 women hold a job of that type. It is therefore for a good reason that these sectors of the labour market have been considered to be traditional women sectors. Only 8% of men work in these sectors. It is, however, interesting to see that most of them hold managerial positions. The ratio between the sexes is practically equal in sectors such as industry, commerce and trade and in public administration.





### Employment by economic sector

	Female %	Male %	Women within economic sector %
Agriculture & fishing	3	14	23
Manufacturing	14	19	44
Thereof, fish processing	8	6	59
Electricity, water supply & construction	1	14	5
Wholesale, retail trade & repairs, hotels & restaurants	19	17	45
Transport & communications	5	8	33
Financial intermediation, real estate & renting	11	8	49
Social security	5	5	40
Education	9	4	66
Health & social work	25	4	84
Other community services & cultural services	7	5	56
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>46</b>

Economic activities are classified according to NACE. Rev. 1.

Table 6.1

The division between the sexes by economic sector gives some indication of the difference between the jobs held by women and men although it is not conclusive in this sense. The gender-based segregation is even more evident when it comes to men's and women's occupations.. Women work mostly in services, commerce and offices, whereas men carry out more specialized jobs in industry or work as plant or machine operators. Likewise, the percentage of men as managers and officials, farmers and fishermen is considerably higher than the percentage of women. The ratio between the sexes is practically equal in the jobs of professionals, but the ratio of women is higher in jobs requiring special training and jobs requiring no training. See Table 6.2.

### Employment by occupational groups 1993

	Female %	Male %
Senior officials & managers	5	13
Professionals	13	11
Associate professionals	16	9
Clerks	17	3
Service workers & shop workers	25	11
Skilled agricultural & fishery workers	3	12
Craft & related trades workers	9	24
Plant & machinery operators	2	13
Elementary occupations	10	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 6.2

## Economically active women in rural areas

In 1989 a study on the employment of women in rural areas was conducted. It included proposals for improvements, for instance, that women who have been unemployed for some time should be supported by offering them courses, by establishing women's groups and by supporting already active women's groups. Furthermore, it was proposed that women should be supported to establish small manufacturing and service enterprises.

This led to the establishment of a public fund specially designed to support activities aimed at increasing work opportunities in the country. Various projects all over the country have been sup-





ported financially, e.g. the establishment of businesses, hiring of women's counsellors, courses and conferences on the employment of women. Contributions from the fund are no longer restricted to the rural areas.

Laws concerning on-the-job training were adopted by the *Althing* in 1991. Such legislation is considered especially useful to women because of the large proportion of women in the labour force lacking any vocational training.

## 6.2 Employers - employees

Women make up one-half the number of employees and one-quarter of those self-employed (own-account workers and employers). The percentage of self-employed men is almost three times higher than that of women or 22% as opposed to 8% in 1993. The ratio of the self-employed is highest in sparsely populated areas outside the capital area, which goes for both women and men since farmers are a large portion thereof.

A survey from 1992 shows that almost one-quarter of employers in Iceland are women and that most of their companies had two or fewer persons in their employment. Approximately one-half of women's companies were established less than seven years ago. It is therefore evident that women have gained ground as employers in the last few years and that a great majority of them lives in the capital area.

Employed persons by employment status 1993		
	Female	Male
	%	%
Employees	89	76
Self employed	8	22
Unpaid family workers	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 6.3

The government's plan of action from 1986 contains a provision on the co-operation of some ministries and other bodies concerning special courses for women who are interested in establishing companies. Since then, quite a few courses have been held throughout the country. The objective of the courses was to enable women to acquire knowledge on important issues regarding the establishment and the running of companies, and at the same time emphasize the special position of women who run their own businesses and endeavour to promote their experience. An evaluation of the results revealed that 48% of the women attending the courses were in business after the courses as compared with 38% before.

A new course named „Women as Entrepreneurs“ was started in the autumn of 1992, a course that, for instance, has been held in rural areas for the purpose of encouraging rural women to establish their own companies.

## 6.3 Unemployment

For a long period of time registered unemployment in Iceland had been about 1% or less, but it started to increase towards the end of the eighties and had reached 4.7% in 1994. Unemployment has generally been higher among women than men. In 1994, 6.1% of women on the labour market were registered as unemployed, whereas 3.7% of men were registered as unemployed. Unemployment proved highest among the age group between 16-24 for both sexes. It is interesting to see that unemployment of women in rural areas is considerably higher than among women in the capital area.

Registered unemployment in Iceland					
	1981	1985	1990	1993	1994
	%	%	%	%	%
Women/men total	0.3	0.9	1.8	4.4	4.7
Women total	0.5	1.3	2.3	5.4	6.1
Capital city regions	0.3	0.6	1.4	5.1	5.8
Other regions	0.7	2.4	3.6	5.9	6.6
Men total	0.3	0.6	1.4	3.6	3.7
Capital city regions	0.2	0.4	1.1	3.6	3.7
Other regions	0.4	0.9	1.8	3.6	3.7

Table 6.4

A survey, carried out in 1993, on the conditions of the unemployed and the effect unemployment has on people showed that unemployment seemed to have a more negative effect on the self-confidence of women than on the self-confidence of men. This is noteworthy, particularly when bearing in mind what a short time has passed since most women were financially dependent on their husbands and their financial contribution was considered as a „supplement“ and not essential to the running of a home. This information indicates that employment has become an essential part of the self-image of women.

Unemployment figures do not reveal the whole situation on the labour market because a number of people consider themselves underemployed. This applies particularly to people who work part time but would prefer full-time jobs. In 1993, the ratio of people who were underemployed was four times higher among women than men.

## 6.4 Wages and income

Men have always had higher incomes than women. In 1980 the income from employment of women, according to tax returns, was 47% of the income of men. Since then, the ratio has increased gradually and had reached 51% in 1992. The situation is even worse amongst married people. In 1980 married women earned 38% of the earned income of men and 41% in 1992. Men's incomes are higher than women's in all age groups. The fact that a large proportion of women work part time, whereas most men work full-time, and the fact that men generally work longer hours than women, could partially explain this huge difference. A further explanation could be that in many instances women hold lower income jobs than men and lower status jobs within their occupation than men do.





In view of the wage trends on the labour market in the period between 1980-1993 it is evident that things are going downhill for women. Hourly wages paid to women as a percentage of hourly wages paid to men have decreased from 88.1% in 1980 to 87.2% in 1985 and 83.1% in 1993. This development can be explained partially with wage changes in the groups covered by the statistics, that is manual labourers (women and men), skilled workers (only men), shop assistants and office workers. In the middle of this period hourly wages paid to skilled workers (women and men) increased more than hourly wages paid to other groups, but there were no women in that reference group.

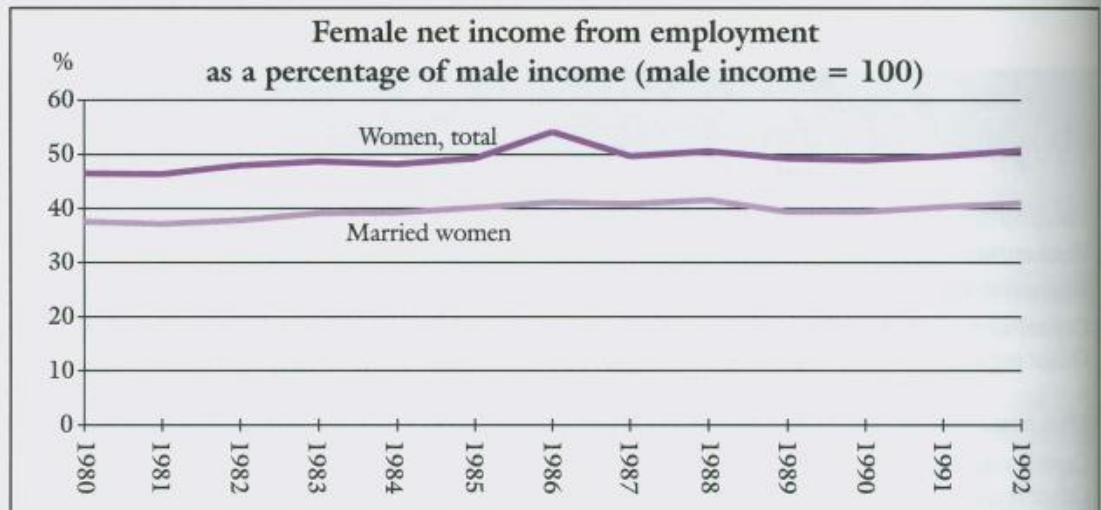


Figure 6.2

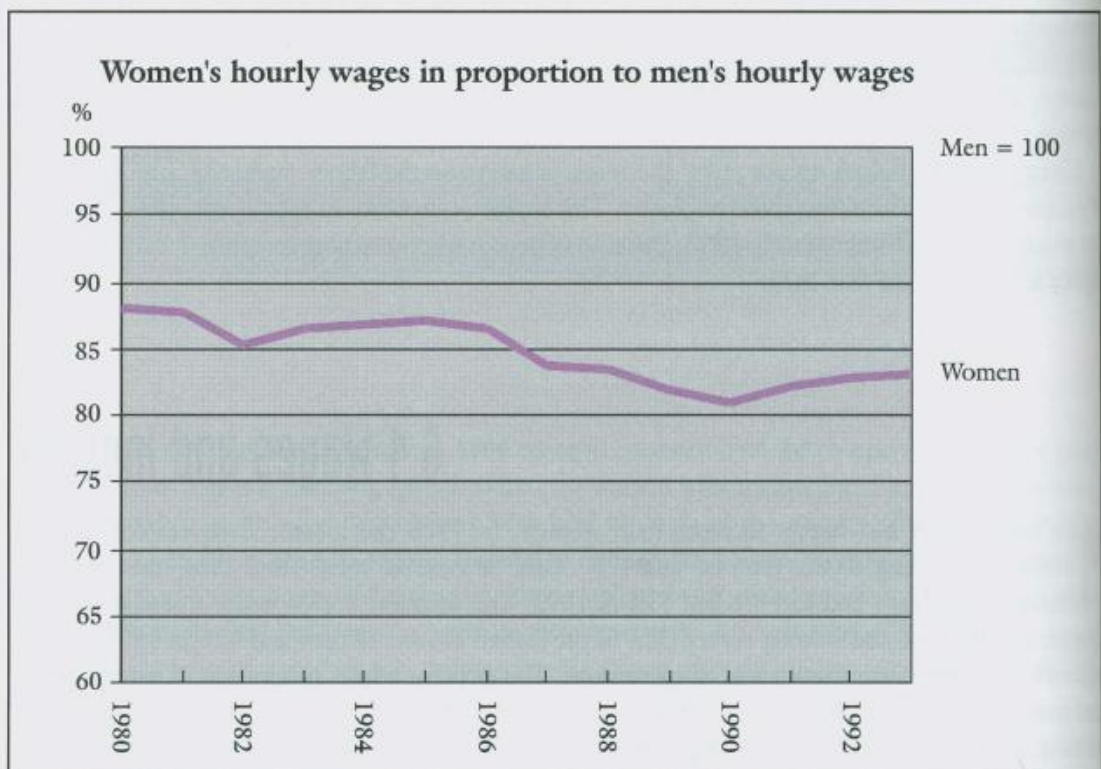


Figure 6.3

No comparable figures exist for the wage trends in the civil service. In March 1994 the wages of women in the civil service (State and the Municipality of Reykjavík) were 65% of the total pay of men, but 75% of their basic pay. When only those who hold full-time jobs are taken into consideration (those holding more than a full-time job were left out) women received 75% of the total wages of men but 87% when only basic pay were taken into account. Women receive lower basic pay and total pay than men in practically all age groups, as Figure 6.4 shows.

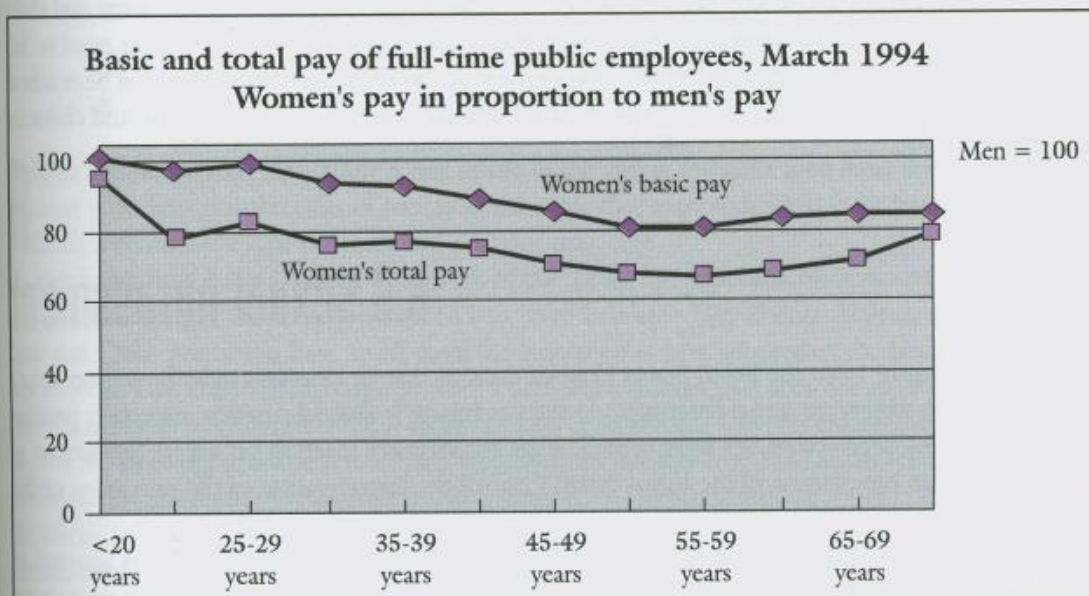


Figure 6.4

Although studies provide important information as to the nature of the wage difference of the sexes and cover factors such as working hours, age, seniority, occupation, employment status and education, it is evident that a large part of the difference in wages has not been satisfactorily accounted for. The wage structure and gender-based wage difference on the labour market is evidently a complicated interaction of many factors which have proved difficult to detect.

In February 1995 the results of a survey sponsored by the Equal Status Council on the wage structure and gender-based wage difference were published. The survey was aimed at detecting the factors likely to influence wages and promotion. The survey covered four public institutions and four private companies. It was based on questionnaires for the staff to fill in and staff interviews as well as interviews with the administrators of these companies and institutions.

Taking account of the percentage of a full-time job, the results reveal a considerable difference in the wages of women and men at these workplaces, whether it is a question of basic pay only, basic pay and extra payments, or an average wage rate. For both sexes more education resulted in higher wages, however, it aroused interest that increased education also resulted in increased wage difference, to the disadvantage of women. Women with university education seek promotion to the same extent as men. Nevertheless, education has not been a key factor in achieving equal status on the labour market, as was expected.

It is much more common for women to be paid strictly according to union rates whereas men have more opportunities to negotiate their wages on a private basis. Professions where individual contracts are most common, have the largest wage difference. Seniority in the workplace has little effect on the wages of men but greater effect on the wages of women, which means that pay rises for women are more dependent on their competence at work.

The survey revealed a gender-based attitude towards the job. Women seem to value their jobs less than men do. This attitude was manifested in more than one way in most professions.





The attitudes of administrators and their staff towards men and women were very different. Men still seem to be regarded as the breadwinner of the family, which means that their promotion and pay rise generally receive more support. Similarly, women are still considered to be more responsible for the home and the children. Men appear to benefit from having young children; for women, however, it seems to have a negative effect on the possibilities of employment and promotion. They are regarded to be more likely to leave their jobs because of motherhood and to take care of the family. Young people seem to be of the opinion that men want to be able to take more care of their home and children than they can or do at present, and that their rights and opportunity in this respect need to be increased. Furthermore, equality and equal status of the sexes on the labour market will not be reached until it is just as natural for men to be responsible for and take care of both their home and children as it is for women.

## 6.5 Sexual harassment

In the beginning of 1992 the Equal Status Council decided that an emphasis must be put on opening a debate in society on sexual harassment in the workplace. Industrial partners, especially personnel managers of large companies were invited to an introductory meeting on sexual harassment in the workplace. In the opinion of the Equal Status Council the interpretation of the provisions of the Equal Status Act from 1991 should include sexual harassment in the workplace.

In the government's plan of action to achieve the equal status of the sexes, which was adopted in the Althing in the spring of 1993, the Ministry of Social Affairs was made responsible for sponsoring a survey on sexual harassment in the workplace for the purpose of assessing the extent of the problem. The aim is to process the survey in 1995 and produce the results in 1996. The plan also states that provisions on sexual harassment will be enacted in the appropriate statute.

## 6.6 Governmental measures to promote wage equality

Women are active participants in the economy and not a reserve work force, nor do they regard themselves as such. They are well educated and in general ambitious in their work. In spite of this, the gender-based wage differential in the men's favour is still considerable and increases with the length of an individual's education.

The resolution of the International Labour Organization on equal pay for men and women for work of equal value which was ratified in Iceland in 1958, obligated the State to take measures to eliminate the wage differences between the sexes. According to the law from 1961 on wage equality of the sexes, men and women were to receive the same wages as of 1967.

In 1973 an Equal Pay Commission was established in order to promote the equality of men and women on the labour market. The Equal Status Council took over its role in 1976.

# 7. Integration of work and family life

## 7.1 The family

**R**ights and obligations The family is one of the oldest and at the same time most important institutions of society, it is the basis of society in the sense that every individual is, or has been, part of a family although the type of family and relations may vary.

Family law establishes the legal framework of the family, the rights and obligations of married couples and the rights of children. It is divided into three legislative instruments: Matrimonial Law, Child Law and Child Protection Law. In all cases the legislation is new, adopted in the last two years. The Matrimonial Law concerns marriage between a man and a woman, but does not apply to cohabitation that has not been solemnized. No law applies to such cohabitation, however cohabiting individuals can acquire the same rights as married couples, regarding, for instance, the Tax Law and the Social Security Code, on certain conditions. Similarly, single parents enjoy various additional rights in accordance with the Social Security Code. No special legal rights apply to other forms of cohabitation. Thus homosexuals can for example neither marry nor be listed as cohabiting. Their rights are very limited compared to the rights of heterosexuals.

The Child Law includes a detailed provision on the rights of children and the obligations of parents, e.g. concerning the fatherhood of a child, the right to maintenance, custodianship and visitation privileges of the parent that does not have custody over the child. The aim of Icelandic authorities is to give all children a chance to live in a secure and stimulating environment.

The Child Protection Law deals with the aims and management of child protection issues. The law provides solutions when the child's right to a safe and stimulating environment is impeded or its mental or physical well-being is threatened. It grants child protection authorities fairly extensive powers to interfere with the lives of families as they deem necessary. In principle, interference should be in the form of family support so that the parents can take care of their children in a satisfactory manner.

Iceland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992, a convention that contains a large number of items on the rights of children.

### Nuclear families and households in Iceland during the past decade

The average size of all families where two or more people live in the same home has diminished during the last decade from 3.67 in 1981 to 3.30 in 1993. If singles are included, the average for 1981 becomes 3.27 and 2.80 for 1993. Compared with population statistics for these same years it emerges that the number of homes has risen from over 70,000 in 1981 to about 94,600 in 1993.

Nuclear families are families composed of a couple with or without children or a single parent and children under the age of 16.

From the beginning of the eighties the number of nuclear families has increased about 20%. At the same time the proportion of singles has increased more. The population has grown 15% in that time. The number of childless marriages has increased as well as the number of consensual marriages with or without children.





Nuclear families			
	1980	1985	1993
<b>Nuclear families, total</b>	<b>53 766</b>	<b>57 420</b>	<b>64 441</b>
Married couple without children	16 829	19 204	22 462
Married couple with children	27 483	25 919	23 241
Consensual union without children	867	938	2 577
Consensual union with children	2 843	4 632	8 589
Father with children	332	453	508
Mother with children	5 412	6 274	7 064

Table 7.1

The proportion of single parents has increased in proportion to nuclear families during the last decade. The proportion of single parent families has been 11 and 12% during the period. It is worth noting that the great majority of single parents are mothers. Seven out of every hundred women, aged 16 years and older, live alone with their children as compared to one of every hundred men.

Single parents					
Year	Mothers		Fathers		Total Number
	Number	%	Number	%	
1980	5 412	94	332	6	5 744
1985	6 274	93	453	7	6 727
1990	7 064	93	508	7	7 572

Table 7.2

## Family, work and the household

The history of the cohabitation of work and family as we know it today is young in Iceland. Until the turn of the century, a large majority of the population depended on subsistence farming where the home was the basic manufacturing unit. Today people very rarely do paid work in their homes. Perhaps it could thus be deduced that ever since the work moved out of the homes the needs of the labour market have been the ruling element in the development of society.

Extensive participation in the labour market and long working hours have been one of the characteristics of the Icelandic labour market for a long time, that is until recently with growing unemployment and shorter working hours. These new circumstances have created new conditions and new problems for the family, especially in connection with unemployment. Nevertheless, participation in the labour market is extensive and parents often work long hours away from home.

## Day care for children

In recent years the number of places for children in day-care centres has increased although safe day care is far from being a reality for all children of working parents. Table 7.3 demonstrates that in 1993, 28% of children aged 0-10 were in day care, but in 1980 the ratio was 17%, not including the school hours of children in primary school. What matters most is the increase of places in day care for children aged 3-5. The government aims to provide all children of this age with the possibility to go to playschool, if their parents so wish.



Children in daycare institutions			
Percentage of age group	1981	1985	1993
	%	%	%
0-10 years	17	21	28
0-2 years	9	12	16
3-5 years	52	60	75
0-5 years	29	37	46
6-10 years	1	2	3

Table 7.3

A large majority of parents work full-time outside the home and it is therefore remarkable to see how small is the proportion of places in day care are offered for 7-8 hours. As Table 7.4 demonstrates hours in day care for children aged 0-5 have not increased during the last decade. Therefore, parents still have to solve their day-care problems some other way. However, day-care possibilities for older children have become better. The increase in this area has been over 60% in the last decade.

Length of daycare			
Percentage of age group	1981	1985	1993
	%	%	%
In kindergartens 4-6 hours			
0-2 years	4	6	11
3-5 years	41	48	58
In kindergartens 7-8 hours			
0-2 years	5	6	5
3-5 years	11	12	18

Table 7.4

## Flexible working hours

The government's plan of action concerning equality contains a provision on the possibilities of flexible working hours for civil servants and it states in particular that the purpose is to make it easier for employees to combine family responsibilities with participation in the labour market. No information is available on the implementation of this provision.

Parents and children's illnesses The law does not guarantee leave from work for parents of sick children, however, public bodies and the workers' union have made an agreement to the effect that a parent of a sick child under the age of thirteen shall have the right to a seven day leave from work per year, fully paid and without impairing the working rights of the person concerned.

It has become clear that fewer men than women feel that they can avail themselves of this right, or about 70% as opposed to 90% of women. Similarly, it has become clear that it is much more common for mothers avail themselves of this right than it is for men. In more than one-half of the cases, mothers are the ones to take the „leave“. About one-quarter shares the leave, others do not make use of it but are helped by relatives and friends.

The difference is remarkable since wages are not lost due to absence from the work, therefore the difference in the wages of the sexes cannot be the explanation.





## 7.2 Support for families

### Social security

The basic idea behind social security is the provision of maintenance benefits. The prevailing ideology being that each individual should provide for himself and his dependents. The community does, however, acknowledge that under certain circumstances income can be reduced, e.g. due to old age, invalidity, illness or the birth of a child. This is reflected in the benefits system of social security, e.g. old age benefits, invalidity benefits, sickness benefits and maternity leave.

Social security covers many types of benefits aimed at supporting the livelihood of families in various circumstances. The most common examples of such support is in the form of pension insurance, i.e. child support, child pension, pension for education, mothers' allowance and fathers' allowance, sick children, spouse benefits, pension for widows/widowers and benefits for widows/widowers.

Other examples could be related where the type of family may affect the amount in certain categories of benefits. This does in fact apply to basic pension and income related allowance which is reduced for couples, supplementary home allowance for singles only, as well as accident and sickness benefits where in some cases the amount is supplemented on account of children.

### Social services of the municipalities

The Municipalities Social Services Act replaced provisions which had existed for centuries concerning the right to municipal support on grounds of residence. Rather than providing for charity the noble aim of the new law, which entered into force in 1991, was to help people to help themselves. The municipalities make their own rules concerning the implementation of financial support, and financial need is always estimated on the basis of family size and income. The social services deal with many aspects of family services, these being the most important: social counselling, child related issues, assistance to teenagers, home help service, issues relating to the disabled and the elderly, unemployment registration and employment agencies, housing and alcoholics support.

### The elderly and the handicapped

Even if the social services of the municipalities are extended to serve the elderly and the disabled, that type of service is nonetheless covered by a special law. The explanation is that the State is responsible for most of the service. Law on issues related to the disabled provide for the right of the disabled beyond the right they are granted by general law. A special chapter covers the services provided for the disabled and their families, and besides the chief aim of the law is to ensure the disabled supportive services enabling them to run their own homes. As a general rule, the State is responsible for health care for senior citizens while the municipality is responsible for their social services.

Until recently, the elderly have comprised only a small proportion of the Icelandic population, but due to various concurrent factors, e.g. better diet and improved public health care, the population has aged, so to speak; the number of elderly people has grown more rapidly than the number of people in other age groups. Since 1960, the increase in the number of elderly citizens is 70%. At the same time the increase of people in younger age groups has been 30%. This change in the age distribution is now the same in Iceland as in many other countries. It also appears that elderly women in Iceland are more numerous than elderly men. Of Icelanders 65 years or older there are now 81 men to every 100 women. Older records show that the difference has become less during the last few decades, in 1930, for example, the ratio was 69 men to every 100 women.

Recent surveys on the conditions of the elderly show that women are able to take care of themselves and live at home longer than men. There could be two reasons for this: women are more able than men to manage on their own and they have to wait longer for places in homes for the elderly than men of the same age. Financial prosperity is not the explanation since it is much more common that women have to live solely off social benefits, while men normally get additionally payments for pension funds.

## 7.3 Poverty

It is very difficult to determine where poverty begins and up to now there has been no official definition of the term at hand. Icelanders are guaranteed official support in the form of benefits and pension. During the last decade unemployment in Iceland has been on the increase and at the same time working hours have become shorter. In the last decade, both these factors have led to new kinds of problems for families. During the first years there was a great need for solutions for parents with children, such as day-care, play-schools and a continuous school day. However, financial problems of families have increased in the past few years. Consequently, the number of families seeking support from the Reykjavík Municipal Department of Social Affairs has grown considerably. Figure 7.1 demonstrates the development at the Reykjavík Municipal Department of Social Affairs. Such development must indicate less prosperity, if not poverty.

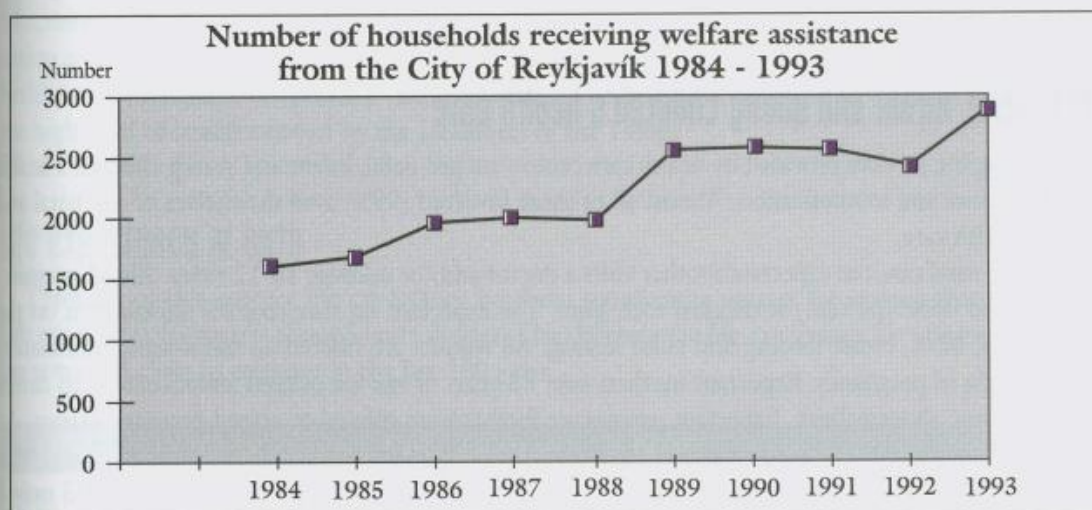


Figure 7.1

The Icelandic Red Cross conducted a survey last year concerning which groups in society were most vulnerable and therefore in most need of support. In Iceland a report was put forward in the autumn of 1994. There it is presented that young unemployed and poorly educated mothers were most needy. The number of illegitimate children has always been quite high in Iceland compared to other countries in the West. Families of young mothers have usually helped in the bringing up and caring for the child. In recent years the economy's demand for education has become stronger and families have at the same time become looser. All this contributes to the fact that young single mothers often find it difficult to take care of themselves and their child.

Unemployment had for decades been virtually unknown in Iceland until it became a harsh reality in the latter part of the twentieth century. The government has therefore had to adopt the system of social benefits and social benefits of the municipalities to changed circumstances.





# 8. Women and health

## 8.1 Health care

### The Health Services

**A**ct declares that the people of Iceland shall have access to the best available services to protect and preserve their mental, physical and social health and well-being.

The cornerstone of the Icelandic health care services is the primary health care provided by the health care centres. Primary health care, as defined by the Health Services Act, includes preventive measures as well as every type of medical care performed for the benefit of both the healthy and the sick outside of hospitals. However, specialized services and hospital services shall be provided when necessary. Hospitals are defined as institutions to which sick people are admitted.

Iceland is divided into eight health areas and these again into twenty-seven health districts. During the 1970s and the 1980s the main emphasis was on establishing centres in rural and sparsely populated areas. More recently health care centres have been established in Reykjavík, the capital. The districts outside Reykjavík contain seventy-five health care centres. Reykjavík will have about thirteen when the plan is complete.

### Pre-natal, infant and young children's health care

Among the services provided by health care centres are pre-natal, infant and young children's health care, vaccines and immunization. Almost all of those involved (99%) avail themselves of pre-natal and infant health care.

In pre-natal care the expectant mother visits a doctor and/or midwife 10-12 times. Blood-pressure, weight and urine (protein) is checked each time. The expectant mother receives information on the pregnancy, birth, breast feeding and child rearing. All women are offered an ultrasound examination at 18 weeks of pregnancy. Expectant mothers over 35 years of age are offered amniocentesis to detect chromosome abnormalities. Expectant parents are furthermore offered to attend pre-natal classes.

The majority of women give birth in institutions, mainly maternity wards at hospitals. Since 1974 births at home have decreased steadily. They were 88 in 1972 and 105 in 1974, but in 1993 only 8 women gave birth at home.

Infant and young children's health care begins with home visits by a nurse for the first 6 weeks following birth. When the infant is six weeks old a prescribed programme of organized visits to the nearest primary health care centre begins. These visits are scheduled when the child is 6 weeks, 3, 4, 6, 7, 10, 14, 18 months, 2 1/2 and 4 years of age. At each visit the child is examined by a doctor and a nurse. During these visits emphasis is placed on information and education on matters concerning child-rearing. Information on contraceptives is also offered.

Health care centres are furthermore responsible for health care in primary schools in their area. Routine check-ups are performed for measuring height, weight, vision and hearing. The children also receive routine vaccinations in these check-ups. The children receive basic health education. They are furthermore given advice, individually or in classes, on various subjects, such as healthy nutrition, smoking, drug abuse, dental health, sex and accident prevention. Health care centres co-operate with school teachers on these health educational matters. School nurses make an effort to detect students with social, emotional or other kinds of problems and offer them help and support.

## Vaccines and immunization

The older generation in Iceland has experienced a tremendous change in the general health situation. In the first decades of this century infectious diseases caused high mortality. Immunization is now available to all through primary health care centres.

When compared with neighbouring countries a much greater percentage of the Icelandic population (90-99%) takes advantage of the available routine vaccinations. All routine vaccinations for children are free of charge. Vaccinations against diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus and polio have been obtainable for decades, and the so-called MRP vaccines (for measles, rubella and parotitis) have now been available for a number of years. Vaccinations against type B haemophilus influenza (HIB) started in 1989. Children are routinely vaccinated at the ages of 3, 4, 6 and 14 months. The results appear to be promising since no case of HIB has been detected since 1990.

All Icelanders over 60 years of age are offered immunization against pneumococcal pneumonia, a common lung inflammation. Influenza vaccinations are also available to the elderly and about 40% of the adult population are vaccinated against influenza.

## 8.2 Health indicators

Health standards and health services in Iceland are comparable to those of other Western countries. High level of health depend on many factors, of which the health services represent only one. The economy, social organization, education, welfare system, housing and major occupations of the nation are all important factors. General achievements in all these fields, coupled with a well-organized health service ranging from primary care to specialized hospital treatment and technology, have led to the high level of health enjoyed by the Icelanders of the 1990s.

### Life expectancy at birth

Throughout this century life expectancy has been significantly greater for women than for men. Life expectancy for men is about 5 years shorter. This difference in life expectancy for women and men has remained close to constant in the last 100 years.

Life expectancy at birth		
	Women	Men
1979/1980	79.7	73.7
1992/1993	80.7	76.9

Table 8.1

### Principal causes of mortality

The primary cause of mortality for both sexes is cardiovascular diseases which explains 43% of all deaths of women and 46% of men in 1991-1992. Cancer is the second most general death cause, causing 26% of the death of men and 23% of women that same year.

During the last thirty years or so, the most common types of cancer in women have been breast cancer, lung cancer, ovarian cancer and cancer of the uterus. There has been a perceptible increase in new incidences per every 1000 per year as regards breast cancer, less so with other types of cancer. From 1964 all women in the age group 20-69 have been offered a uterus cancer check every two years





and from 1988 women over 35 have been offered regular mammographies. These precautions seem to have had positive effects as uterus cancer cases have diminished and despite the fact that breast cancer incidents are increasing the number of deaths has stagnated.

Over the same period of time the most common types of cancer in men were cancer of the prostate, lung cancer, stomach cancer, cancer of the bladder and cancer of the colon. There has been a perceptible decrease in new incidences per every 1000 per year as regards stomach cancer in men and a slight decrease in lung cancer. New incidences of cancer of the prostate have, on the other hand, increased considerably.

## Maternal mortality

Mortality during pregnancy, birth and the post-natal period is close to non-existent in Iceland. During the period 1980 to 1993 two women died in connection with pregnancy or birth. The total number of births each year during this same period ranges from about 3800 to 4700.

Infant mortality During this century infant mortality (mortality during the first year after birth) has decreased dramatically. In the first decade of the century deaths during first year of life per 1000 live births were 121 for boys and 105 for girls. For the period 1981-1990 the same numbers were six for both sexes.

Infant mortality rate (0-1 year) 1980 and 1993				
	Girls		Boys	
	Number	Per 1000 live births	Number	Per 1000 live births
1980	9	4.1	26	11.2
1993	7	3.1	15	6.4

Table 8.2

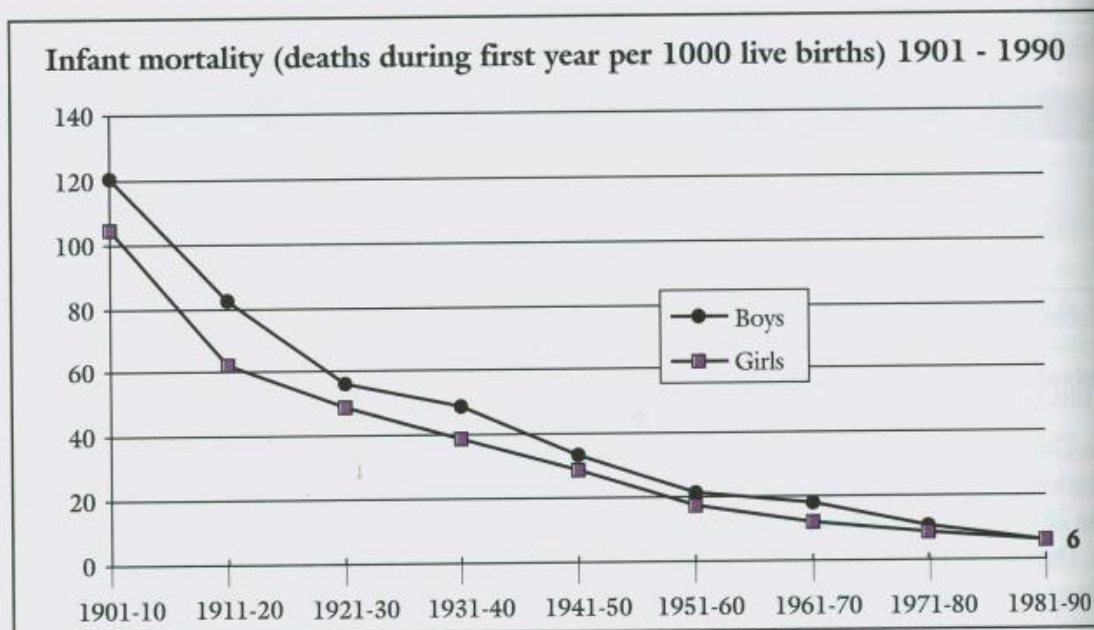


Figure 8.1

The low infant mortality can to a large extent be attributed to the extensive pre-natal and child health care programmes operated by the health care centres.

## Child mortality

Child mortality has declined steadily in the last 20-30 years, reflecting the decline in the rate of infectious diseases. The number of accidental deaths among children has also fallen, partly as a result of preventive measures. Accidental deaths are, however, still more common in Iceland than in the neighbouring countries.

Child mortality rate (1-4 years) 1980 and 1993				
Year	Number		Of every 1000	
	Girls	Boys	girls	boys
1980	3	6	0.4	0.7
1993	1	3	0.1	0.3

Table 8.3

## AIDS

At the end of 1993, 83 individuals had been diagnosed with AIDS. Thereof 71 were men and 12 women. New incidences of infected individuals listed during the period 1985-1993 ranged from 18 in 1985 to as few as 3 in 1993.

Reported HIV-infected individuals 1989 - 1993						
Year	Number			Per 100.000 population each year		
	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
1989	1	5	6	0.8	3.9	2.4
1990	-	5	5	-	3.9	2.0
1991	2	8	10	1.6	6.2	3.9
1992	1	10	11	0.8	7.6	4.2
1993	1	2	3	0.8	1.5	1.1

Table 8.4

At the end of 1993 the total number of those listed with AIDS was 31, thereof 20 then deceased.

Of infected individuals the ratio between the sexes was approximately one woman per every five men. Of those listed as HIV-positive most were in their twenties; however, most of those infected with AIDS were in their thirties. During the last few years the number of heterosexuals has increased so that in 1994 their proportion had risen to 16%. In 1993 they were 13% and 11% in 1992.

## Family planning Contraceptives

No statistics have been collected on the use of contraceptives in Iceland. Information from the Iceland Cancer Society indicates, however, that approximately 50% of women between 20-45 years of age have used the pill or the IUD (intrauterine device). Equivalent information from 1993 indicates that the use of contraceptives has decreased from 50% to 37%.





An increasing number of women between 25 and 45 underwent sterilization in the period 1981-1992. The increase took place over a period of very few years. The ratio increased from 10.8 per every 1000 women in 1981 to 15.3 per every 1000 women in 1983. In 1992 11.2 of every 1000 women between 25 and 45 underwent sterilization. In the period 1981-1992 the sterilization of men was only 5% of the total number of such operations.

## Induced abortions

In 1975 the Althing adopted an Abortion Act which practically removes all restrictions on induced abortions up until the twelfth week of pregnancy. The number of induced abortions increased considerably after the Act came into force. In 1960s induced abortions numbered about 80 each year or 2 per 1000 women between 15-44 years of age. From 1981 to 1985 there were an average of 674 abortions annually and in 1992 there were 743 abortions performed, or 12.4 per 1000 women between 15-44 years of age.

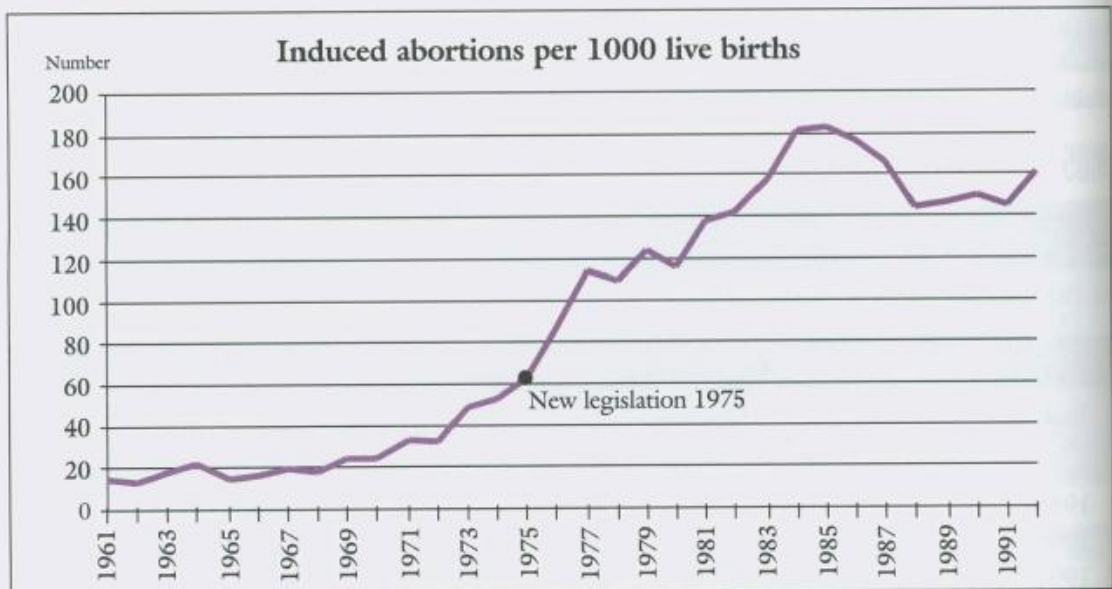


Figure 8.2

## Assisted conception techniques

Artificial insemination has been carried out in the National Hospital since the beginning of the eighties. In late 1991 a new department for assisted conception was opened at the hospital. Up to now assisted conception has only been allowed with the sperm and the ova of the couple.

A bill on assisted conception techniques is currently before the Althing, where, among other things, the legalization of the right to donate ova is being debated.

## Fertility

In Iceland, as elsewhere in the West, there have been considerable fluctuations in the birth rate in recent decades. The birth rate began to increase around the middle of the century and reached a maximum during the years 1956-1960 when the fertility rate exceeded four children per woman and was in fact 4.9 in 1960. By 1970 it had dropped to 3 children per woman and in 1985 and 1986 to 1.9 per woman, which is the lowest figure ever recorded in Iceland. Since 1987 the fertility rate has risen slightly and has been 2.1-2.3 children per woman since then. In 1993 the fertility rate was 2.2 children per woman.

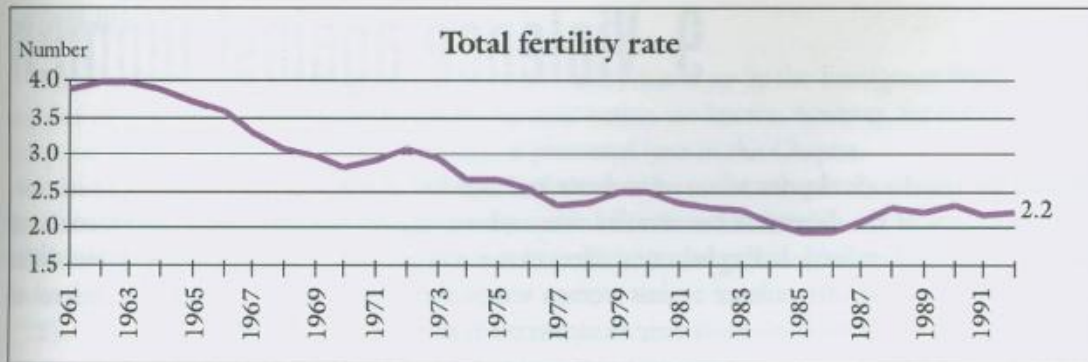


Figure 8.3

The number of live births per woman has changed to some extent over the last three decades. The average age of mothers was 27.2 years during 1961-1965, dropped to 25.7 during 1971-1975 but has since then risen to 28 years during 1991-1993. In the years 1991-1993, the most common age for women to give birth was 28, which is an increase of eight years since the period 1961-1965. The age of first-time mothers has also risen steadily during the last thirty years, from 21.7 years in 1961-1965 to 24.6 years 1991-1993. Most first-time mothers were 18 years old during the former period and 23 years old during the second.

Live births by age of mother						
	Total births			First births		
	Mean age	Median age	Modal age	Mean age	Median age	Modal age
1961-1965	27.2	26.2	20	21.7	20.6	18
1971-1975	25.7	24.7	23	21.6	20.8	20
1981-1985	26.5	25.9	23	22.6	21.0	21
1991-1993	28.0	27.2	28	24.6	23.1	23

Table 8.5

## Anaemia

Although comprehensive statistics on anaemia are lacking, there is no indication that anaemia is a problem among women in Iceland. During the first months of pregnancy expectant mothers are tested for anaemia. The test is repeated several times during pregnancy. All women were formerly given iron tablets during pregnancy, but this practice has been discontinued.

## Nutritional status of children under five years of age

In 1989 a parliamentary resolution on the Icelandic Public Health Plan was adopted in the Althing. It emphasized the increased instruction in domestic sciences and nutrition in the primary and secondary schools. One of the aims of the resolution is to offer nutritious food to all students during school hours.

No surveys have been conducted on the nutritional status of children under five years of age, however there is no indication of gender difference in this respect. The nutritional status of children under 6 months of age is generally good, largely due to breastfeeding.

In the school year 1992-1993 a survey was carried out regarding the diet of school children between 10-15 years of age. The results of the survey established that those who had breakfast generally practiced good eating habits. The children who had breakfast 0-2 times a week ate less nutritious food and received less of the necessary nutritive elements than children who had breakfast 6-7 times a week.





# 9. Violence against women

During the last decade the discussion on violence and rape has changed in this country. The increasing openness of the discussion has revealed that violence against women is much more common than people had realized. It also became evident that it was not only a few so-called troublemakers who beat women, and that violence against women was neither confined to a certain class or level of society. Actions by the women's movement made people realize the nature of the situation.

## 9.1 Violence and injuries caused by violence

No comprehensive studies have been made to find out how widespread or extensive violence against women and children are in Iceland. However, recorded statistical data give the impression that there is no less violence here than in neighbouring countries and more and more people seek assistance because of it.

The incidence of violence has not yet been systematically registered in this country. Various parties have nevertheless made reports on the prevalence and nature of violent crimes committed and with which they have had to deal. The State Criminal Investigation Police, for instance, keeps a record of the charges laid. In addition to that an epidemiological examination on injuries, caused by violence, was carried out at the Emergency Ward at the Reykjavík Municipal Hospital during the years 1974-1991. The frequency of acts of violence, with respect to the sex and the age of the victim, was studied. It revealed that the frequency of acts of violence against men was within the range 14 to 20 per 1000 inhabitants each year but the frequency of violent act against women turned out to be within the range 6 to 9 per 1000 inhabitants each year. For the year 1991, it was particularly noted where the violent act took place.

Location of acts of violence 1991		
Location	Women %	Men %
Home	40.5	13.6
School	9.6	5.6
Entertainment establishments	13.0	24.7
Other indoor establishments	12.5	9.4
Outdoors	15.0	36.0
Other	9.4	10.7

Table 9.1

As Table 9.1 shows there is a great difference in where men and women receive injuries due to violence. 40% of the women who sought help at the emergency ward this year had been victims of violence at home. The men on the other hand seemed more likely to receive injuries due to violence at places of entertainment. These results should not come as a surprise bearing in mind the number of women who seek assistance in the Women's Shelter and the Emergency Reception for Rape Victims.

## Sexual violence

Sexual abuse was not classified separately in the report drawn up by the Emergency Ward but the number of visits to the emergency reception for rape victims are known, however, for the period the reception service has been operated. This data is presented later in this Chapter.

It is not likely that figures on committed sexual abuse will ever be completely reliable, e.g. due to the fact that it is estimated that only a limited number of such assaults receive any treatment at all. A still lower percentage of rape and rape assaults results in a charge brought to the State Criminal Investigation Police.

The charges are only the visible tip of the iceberg. During the years 1989-1994 the number of charges averaged around 20 or less in a year, as shown in Figure 9.1.

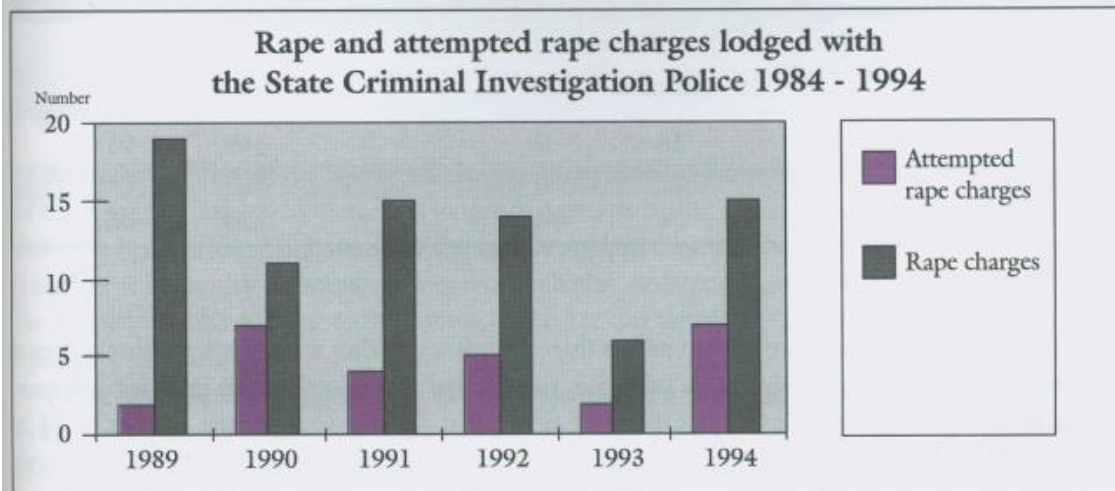


Figure 9.1

The penal code for rape assaults is quite flexible in this country. Thus a man can be sentenced to 16 years of imprisonment for a rape assault. However, the experience shows that punishment is more lenient than the penal code indicates. Recently the most common punishment for rape has been imprisonment for 18-24 months which is a shorter term than is practiced in our neighbouring countries. Indemnities and personal compensations to the victims of rape have also been lower in this country than in neighbouring countries.

## 9.2 Women in the police force and female lawyers in public administration under the Ministry of Justice

Investigations and judgement in cases of sexual abuse are by nature a delicate and difficult matter. The vast majority of victims in these cases are women and experience has shown that it is of vital importance for further investigations in cases of sexual abuse that confidence is inspired between the parties concerned. Women are more likely to find it easier to express their feelings regarding the abuse to other women. Therefore it is very important that female policemen are available when sexual assaults are being investigated. In recent years the number of women in the police force has increased, nevertheless their number is still proportionally very low, as shown in Table 9.2. According to information from the State Criminal Investigation Police only one woman is employed in the department that deals with sexual abuse and other crimes of violence.



Women in police force 1980, 1985, 1993				
Year	Women		Men	
	Number	%	Number	%
1980	12	2.4	488	97.6
1985	21	3.8	531	96.2
1993	22	3.6	588	96.4

Table 9.2

Women lawyers in public administration under the Ministry of Justice				
Year	Women		Men	
	Number	%	Number	%
1980	16	9	159	91
1985	32	16	163	84
1993	74	34	220	66

Table 9.3

At present there are also more women judges than ever, although they are still greatly outnumbered by men in that profession. As shown in Table 9.3, the number of women lawyers in public administration under the Ministry of Justice has increased from 16 at the beginning of the eighties to 74 in the year 1993, which will presumably lead to an increase of women in the judicial profession later on.

## 9.3 Remedies available to victims of violence

During the last decade, women's movements and women's organizations have made a formidable effort in helping women who have been the victims of violence. In recent years official bodies, the State and the municipal authorities have increasingly supported them in this effort.

### The Women's Shelter

In December 1982 the Women's Shelter in Reykjavík was opened. It serves the country as a whole. The Women's Shelter is an emergency shelter that is open day and night around the year. It is not a treatment centre but a home that is based on the idea of helping the habitants to manage on their own and complete anonymity is respected. The aim is to help women who seek shelter there to tackle, with the help of each other or in cooperation with the staff, the violence in their lives and break free of it.

The Women's Shelter is run by the Women's Shelter Alliance which is an independent organization with 10-12 women hired on a full time basis. Right from the start a claim has been made to the State and the municipalities for a subsidy for the running of the home, as violence against women and children is a social problem. In January 1995, a contract to the effect that 60% of the running costs be paid by the State Treasury the next two years, was signed between the State and the Women's Shelter Alliance. Hopefully a comparable contract covering 40% of the costs, will be concluded with the municipalities. Purchases of real properties and furniture are financed by donations from individuals, organizations and companies.

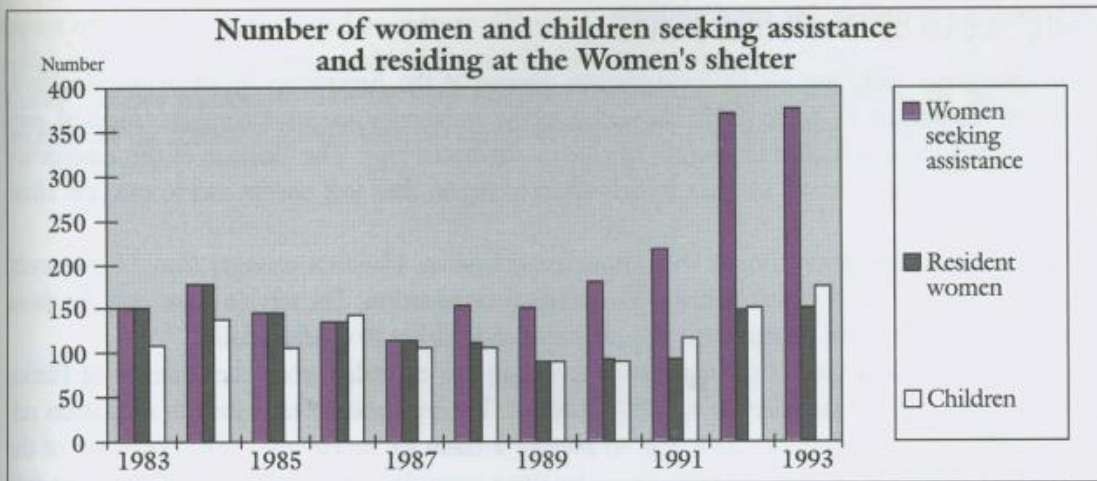


Figure 9.2

From the opening of the Shelter till the end of last year 2173 women had sought help there, 1410 of these women had stayed there for a longer or a shorter period of time and brought with them 1328 children. It is not clear, judging from the figures published by the Shelter (Figure 9.2), whether violence in the homes has increased. It seems obvious that an increasing number of women is coming to the Shelter, whether it is due to that reason or the fact that the Shelter is now well established and recognized in the society.

Right from the beginning the majority of residents in the Shelter have been children. School classes are held there for children who are not able to attend their own school. From the year 1989 the State Treasury has paid the salary of the teacher as this smallest school in the country.

The average time of stay of women in the Shelter has been getting longer every year. In the beginning it was 10 days but last year it was 17.9 days. The average time of stay of children is a bit longer which indicates that women with more than one child stay longer in the Shelter than other women.

## Stígamót

After a well attended meeting on 8 March 1989, the International Women's Day, an Organization of Women Against Sexual Violence was established. This organization was named Stígamót.

The aim of the operation of Stígamót is twofold: On the one hand it is supposed to provide support and consultation, free of charge, for women and children who have been sexually abused, regardless of where they live in Iceland. On the other hand Stígamót is an education and information centre open to the public and various working groups likely to assist victims of sexual violence in their work.

Stígamót has been active for five years. In that period of time almost 1700 victims of sexual abuse from all over the country have sought help at the centre. Most of these victims have been abused under the age of 16 and 2/3 of them are victims of incest. About 1/3 of those who have sought help have been raped. About 80% of the victims have been women and girls. Help has also been sought because of abused boys and a few men have contacted the centre to seek assistance because they were abused in their childhood. In 99% of the cases the abusers are male.

Stígamót offers individual as well as group consultations and therapy. The women who work at the centre are either victims of sexual abuse themselves or have a long experience in dealing with cases of sexual abuse. Both management and policy making is in the hands of those who make use of the service the centre offers and its aim is to try to meet the individual needs of those who seek assistance.

From the experience gained by Stígamót it is clear that sexual abuse is no rarer in Iceland than in the neighbouring countries, although no systematic research on the matter has been carried out to prove this.



## Emergency reception for rape victims

An emergency reception for rape victims was opened at the Emergency Ward of the Reykjavik Municipal Hospital on 8 March 1993. The service of the emergency reception combines medical, psychological and social assistance for victims of rape or attempted rape. The function of this emergency service is to assist rape victims in order to help them to regain their self-esteem and to ease the after-effects.

The emergency reception is open to both men and women. Children younger than 14, however, are advised to go to the National Hospital for a medical examination. The service is not only for those who intend to lay criminal charges, it is free of charge and subject to confidentiality.

Last summer, the service of the emergency reception was extended when the Ministry of Justice provided funds to cover the salary of a legal spokesman. The legal spokesman assists in all matters relevant to the legal procedure of a case, e.g. to prepare a claim for indemnities. The operation of the emergency reception is on an experimental basis for three years. This period will be used to collect data and evaluate the need for this kind of assistance. It is not yet known what the need will be but based on experience unfortunately it seems to be much, even more than was expected.

During the first 18 months from the opening of the Ward most of the victims that sought help there belonged to the age group 14 to 20 or 29, 19 of which belonged to the age group 14 to 16.

The emergency reception has, despite its short period of operation, demonstrated its value. The whole operation was also carefully prepared: Seminars were organized for all those who would in some way be involved in the operation of the emergency reception and the operation has been regularly evaluated and improved when necessary. In this context the emergency reception recommended the collection of information regarding how an investigation on rape and other sexual crimes against children and adults should be conducted. This information is now available in a manual for policemen at the State Criminal Investigation Police.

## 9.3. Perspectives for the future

The frequency of acts of violence and sexual crimes does not give cause for optimism about the future as more and more women seek shelter and assistance because they have been victims of violence. Unfortunately the available data is somewhat sketchy and of little use when the overall progress of these issues is considered.

Violence against women has not been the subject of a systematic examination but it is expected that the situation will be examined shortly. Recently the Ministry of Justice appointed a committee to prepare and supervise an examination on the reasons, consequences and magnitude of violence inside the home as well as other kinds of violation against women and children.

Sentences for sexual crimes seem to have become heavier during the last few years, even though they are still considerably more lenient than the maximum provided for by law. On the other hand, it has often been difficult for the victims of violence to collect the compensation awarded to them. Law on compensatory payment from the State Treasury to victims of violence was passed recently. The victims will henceforth not have to collect compensation from the violator themselves. The State will pay the compensation and collect it from the violator.

At the 1993 autumn session of the UN General Assembly, Iceland voted in favour of a Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women. The Declaration emphasized the role of governmental authorities in reducing violence against women. It pointed out the importance of governmental support for parties campaigning for improvements in these matters and it also stressed the importance of women's movements. Governments are also urged to support research and data collection which can shed some light on the causes, nature and consequences of violence against women and on the

impact of measures implemented in order to prevent such violence. In addition, it is stressed that the police and other officials responsible for preventing, investigating and punishing violation against women, receive training to increase their understanding of the needs of women. By signing this Declaration the Icelandic government has expressed its support for these viewpoints.





# 10. Icelandic International Development cooperation

Iceland started participating in international development projects in the 1970s. During the first years Iceland's participation consisted almost solely of financial contributions to international organisations and Nordic cooperation projects but the foundation of the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) in 1981 marked the beginning of the independent participation of Iceland in international development cooperation. Before that time, however, the Icelanders had often demonstrated their will to help the needy. Normally, collections in the name of institutions such as the Red Cross and the Icelandic Church Aid gave, and still give, considerable returns. The following summary, however, is not an account of sums collected by various organisations but rather an indication of the measures taken by the authorities in this field.

## 10.1 Governmental contribution to development aid

Icelandic authorities are still far from meeting the criteria adopted by the UN that 0.7% of the gross national product be allocated to development aid. The annual contribution of Iceland in the last years has been just over 0.1% of the gross national product which ranks Iceland among the developed countries making the lowest contributions.

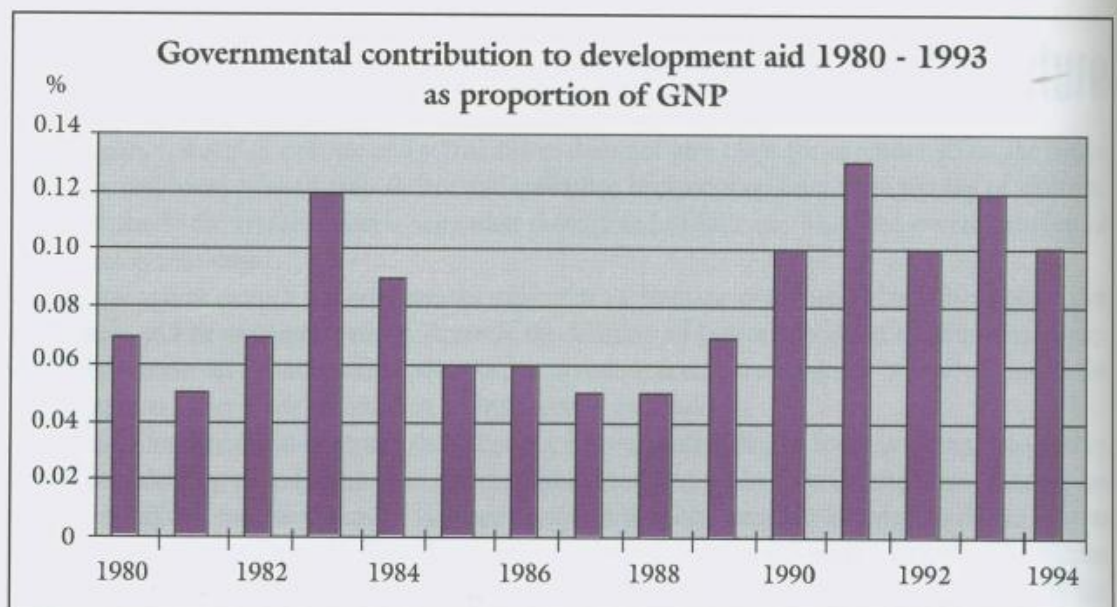


Figure 10.1

The contribution has not been increased to any extent despite repeated expressions of willingness to do so by all political parties and considerable public discussion. However, the last years have seen a slight increase in public interest in this sector. The present government has also provided a modest increase in the development budget while cutting back almost all other areas of government spending.

The basic goal of Iceland's development assistance is to support developing countries in their efforts to improve their economy and participate in strengthening social progress and political independence in accordance with the Charter and basic tenets of the UN. Emphasis is placed on assistance to the least developed countries in a manner intended to benefit the most underprivileged groups.

One-third of the State contribution to development aid goes to projects sponsored by the Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA). The International Development Association (IDA) receives one-third of the amount and what remains is divided between the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank, IBRD), the UN Geothermal Training Programme in Iceland, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the UN Development Program (UNDP), the Nordic Development Fund (NDF), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). In recent years circa. 10% of the total governmental contribution has gone to special projects concerning emergency relief.

Thus a considerable part of Iceland's development aid consists of contributions to institutions. Iceland has almost certainly limited opportunities to have a say in the allocation of these contributions, possibly with the exception of the Nordic Development Fund (NDF).

## UN Geothermal Training Programme

The operation of the UN Geothermal Training Programme in Iceland started in 1979. During the first years the Icelandic government paid 50% of the operating cost of the Training Programme but now it pays circa 80%. So far almost one hundred students have finished a six months course in the Training Programme.

Surveys have shown that the Training Programme has been effective. A large majority of its students now work on geothermal projects in their own countries and many of them are leading experts in this field in the developing countries.

## Multilateral and bilateral aid

In recent years the amount appropriated for development aid has been divided so that well over 50% goes to multilateral aid and just under 40% to bilateral aid. Emergency relief is circa. 10% of total aid and is partly directed to non-governmental organizations that also raise funds from the Icelandic public.

Iceland's participation in the activities of various international organizations that grant so-called multilateral aid is carried out by various bodies in the Icelandic public administration, which makes it more difficult to survey and possibly less organized than is feasible.

ICEIDA handles bilateral aid granted by the Icelandic government. It comes in the form of grant aid and is focused on project cooperation.

ICEIDA has adopted the following missions and priorities as the basis for its work:

- \* The development cooperation shall help people to be self-sufficient, in particular by transfer of knowledge and professional skills. The cooperation shall promote sustainable development, protection of the environment and natural resources, progress of the productive sectors, equality of individuals, democracy and human rights.
- \* It is important to improve the living conditions of the poorest; the circumstances of women and children are often neglected in the granting of development aid. ICEIDA shall endeavour to make sure that its development assistance will be beneficial to as many as possible and does not adversely affect the living conditions of the recipient people.





- ★ Emphasis shall be placed on cooperation with the least developed countries as evaluated by competent institutions.
- ★ Development assistance shall be given primarily in areas in which Icelanders have special knowledge and experience which can be transferred by teaching and training.

Owing to limited funds ICEIDA must concentrate its activity on a limited number of countries and sectors. This makes it possible to determine budget allocations on a long term basis and ensure the optimal use of financial resources. At the same time it facilitates knowledge and understanding of the countries and areas to which ICEIDA directs its efforts.

ICEIDA's selection of cooperation countries is based on the UN definitions of least developed countries. In all the countries ICEIDA cooperates with it focuses its activities on the development of fishing and fish-processing. Fish is an important protein supplement in the diet of the poorest part of the population and the fisheries sector is also the field in which the Icelanders consider themselves to have expertise.

Recently ICEIDA has also directed its attention to health care and adult education. These projects aim at improving the living conditions of the most underprivileged groups in the developing countries, which are mostly composed of women and children. Up to now special projects for women, sponsored by ICEIDA, have been both few and limited. The amount appropriated to them has been circa 1% of the total budget of ICEIDA. Last year saw an interesting change in this respect when ICEIDA started allocating money to Iceland's UNIFEM project in the Andes Mountains, thus doubling the contribution to projects for women.

Poverty and unemployment are the most serious social problems in the world; the conditions are worst in the poorest countries. It has been shown that the most fruitful way to increase employment opportunities is to support small companies. It is important that the operators of those companies have access to capital, training, technical expertise and service, as those elements are all important factors in the survival and success of the companies. ICEIDA places an increasing emphasis on supporting this kind of activities.

## 10.2 Perspectives for the future

**D**emands for quality development aid are increasing steadily. In recent years emphasis has been placed on careful preparation in order to prevent misuse of funds and to ensure that the aid reaches its destination. The importance of coordinating all governmental development aid and placing it under a single administration has also been pointed out. For the time being, however, issues relating to development aid, development cooperation and relief work are in the hands of numerous bodies in the Icelandic public administration.

It is the aim of the Icelandic government to make Iceland's participation in the activities of international organisations granting multilateral aid as intensive and effective as possible. To be able to influence the allocation of our own contributions is a goal worth striving for, which is why the authorities consider it feasible to limit our contribution to multilateral aid to 50% of the total development budget.

During the last years political interest in this area has been growing and the present government has also made a modest increase to the development budget, although cutting back almost all other areas of government spending. Plans have also been made to increase the aid progressively over the next few years.



