



GENDER EQUALITY IN ICELAND

*Information on
Gender Equality Issues
in Iceland*

Centre for Gender Equality Iceland

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Introduction

The purpose of this overview is to provide information about Gender Equality issues in Iceland. It provides useful information about the context, the legal and practical aspects of gender equality in Iceland, as well as current activities and challenges. The document attempts to offer insight into successes, best practices and lessons learned.

About the document:

- The document contains information and links to various resources on gender equality issues in Iceland
- The chapters are designed to give a comprehensive overview of various gender issues
- Most sections include links to further information on the topic and contact information of institutions and contact persons
- Some information is repeated in various sections, in order to ensure accessibility
- The document is built on various resources but most of the information is taken from the most recent Gender Equality Conference report (Ministry of Welfare of Iceland, 2011) and Statistics Iceland
- The document will be updated annually

For further information contact the Centre for Gender Equality:

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Facts about Iceland

- The population of Iceland as of 1st of January 2011 was 318,452.
- Around 80% of the population is urban, and the urban population is mostly located in the southwest part of Iceland.
- The population ethnicity is northern European and the religion is Evangelical Lutheran for the vast majority of the population.
- The number of municipalities in the beginning of 2011 was 76.
- The literacy rate in Iceland is 99%.
- In Iceland 90% of children aged 1-5 years are in day-care. Most municipalities pay 85% of operation costs of kindergartens.
- Iceland has one of the highest fertility rates in Europe, 2.1 children per woman in 2010.

Women and Men in Iceland (2011):

<http://jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Women%20and%20Men%202011.pdf>

The Government Offices of Iceland:

<http://www.government.is/>

Iceland.is, The Gateway to Iceland:

<http://iceland.is>

Stepping Stones

1850	Equal inheritance rights for men and women
1882	Widows and single women gain local suffrage
1886	Girls can enter secondary school
1900	Married women gain the right to control their income and personal property
1907	Icelandic Women's Rights Association founded
1908	Women gain local suffrage and the right to hold local office
1908	The first women's list participates in local elections in Reykjavik
1911	Women get equal rights to grants, study and civil service
1914	First women workers' association founded
1915	Women over the age of 40 gain national suffrage and the right to hold office
1920	All women gain national suffrage and the right to hold office
1921	New marital law guarantees equality for spouses
1922	The first woman elected to the Icelandic Parliament, from a women's list
1926	The first Icelandic woman defends a doctoral thesis
1957	The first female mayor in an Icelandic municipality
1961	Equal Pay Act approved by parliament
1970	First female Cabinet Minister
1975	Women nationwide take a day off on October 24
1976	The first Gender Equality Act and the Gender Equality Council is founded
1980	The first nationally elected female president in the world
1982	The Women's Alliance runs for the first time in local elections
1983	The Women's Alliance runs in parliamentary elections for the first time
1995	Equal rights of women and men stated in the constitution
1997	Fathers get an independent right to two weeks paid parental leave
2003	Fathers get an independent right to three months of paid parental leave
2005	Women take part of October 24th off on the 30th anniversary of the original event
2009	The first female prime minister in Iceland
2009	The first government with equal number of men and women
2009	A law banning the purchase of prostitution is approved by Parliament (Althingi)
2010	A full ban on strip clubs approved by Althingi
2010	A law is passed that obligates companies to have minimum 40% women or men in their boards
2010	A single marriage act is approved
2011	The government approves a three year plan on implementing gender budgeting.
2011	A law authorizing the removal of a perpetrator from a home when domestic violence is suspected.

A Brief History of Women's Rights and Gender Equality in Iceland

Iceland experienced many social, political and economic changes during the 19th century, in addition to natural disasters and a substantial migration of the population to North America. In 1850 the population was around 60,000¹. During this period the fight for improved women's human rights started taking shape. Here are a few important developments.

1850-1899

In 1850 women gained the same inheritance rights as men; until then daughters only had the right to one third of the inheritance. In 1869 the first women's association was founded and in the following decades many more followed. Further legal developments took place, including widows and unmarried women getting a limited right to vote in 1882 and in 1886 girls got the right to education and to study at the only college in Iceland. During that period a number of developments took place that led to an increased profile and mobility of women in Icelandic society. In 1874 a women's college was founded, and in 1894 the first women's rights organisation was founded, the Icelandic Women's Association, i.e. an organisation that had the purpose of fighting for women's rights, including women's suffrage. In 1887 Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttir was the first woman to give a public presentation, on the status and the rights of women. In 1895 publication of two women's journals was started.

1900-1919

The first few decades of the 20th century saw many crucial social and political changes. In the first decade married women gained their financial competency, in 1902 women with the right to vote gained local suffrage, and the right to hold local office in 1908. The same year, four women were elected to the city council in Reykjavik. In 1909 all women in Iceland gained the right to vote and run for office in local elections. In 1904, the women's association Hringurinn was founded, an association that contributed considerably to various social and welfare issues. The same year women gained access to the main college in Iceland. In 1907 the Women's Rights Association of Iceland was founded, the first chairwoman was Bríet Bjarnhéðinsdóttir, the most ardent supporter of women's rights in Iceland and who had worked with the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA). In 1911 women gained full equal access to education, public grants and public office. In 1917 women gained the same rights as men regarding their children and in 1921 a new marriage law came close to ensuring equal rights for women and men in their marriages. Following the success of women's entry into local elections, women over the age of 40 gained the same rights in national elections in 1915, and in 1920 all women did.

¹ Statistics Iceland: <http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Population>

1920-1969

In 1922 the first woman, Ingibjörg H. Bjarnason, was elected to parliament. Women's group's contribution and influence on social issues continued to grow. In 1928 Mæðrastyrksnefnd (Mother's support committee) was founded to support widowed women and single mothers, and in 1930, after years of advocacy, the National Hospital was opened with substantial financial contributions from women's organisations. In the following years the education of nurses in Iceland improved considerably. In 1948 a male Parliamentarian, Hannibal Valdimarsson, presented a draft law on the gender equality of women and men, which was thrown out based on the assumption that it had not been fully researched if women or men were discriminated against. In 1958 women were only 1% of all council members in Iceland. In 1957 and 1959 the first woman became mayor in Kópavogur and Reykjavík. In order to address the gender pay gap, in 1961, Parliament approved a law on wage equity, with the aim to bridge the gap by 1968.

1970-1979

In 1970 the first female cabinet minister was appointed. The same year, inspired by women's rights and feminist movements all over the world, the "Red Stockings", movement was founded and was a key radical force in raising awareness on various gender equality issues. In 1974 the first woman was ordained as a priest of the National Lutheran Church, but it was during 1975, UN International Women's year, that many key events and developments took place. On October 24, 1975, more than 25 thousand women in Iceland took a day off to emphasize the importance of women's contribution to the economy, both in paid and unpaid work. Also that same year, a law on 3 months maternal leave was approved, a new law on abortion, reproductive and maternal health was passed and the Women's History Archives was founded. The following year, 1976, the first equality law was passed and the Gender Equality Council was founded. However after the parliamentary election in 1979, women were only 5% of the parliamentarians.

1980-1989

The pace of substantial changes in gender equality issues continued in the eighties. The fourth President of the Republic of Iceland, Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, was elected in 1980. Vigdís was the first woman in the world to be democratically elected Head of State. A women's list participated in the municipal elections in Reykjavík and Akureyri in 1982, and women's participation went from 6% to 13% of all council members in the country. The Women's Alliance (Kvennalistinn) was founded in 1983. Its main objective was women's liberation and the increased representation of women in politics. When the Women's Alliance began, women were only 5% of MPs, but after the first election the alliance participated in, the number rose to 15%. In 1982 the public debate and awareness on violence against women had improved and at the end of that year a women's shelter for victims of violence in close relationships was opened. In 1984 women became the majority of new students at the University of Iceland; in 1986 a woman became a member of the superior court for the first time; in 1988 a woman became the first speaker of parliament and in 1989 an education and counselling centre for survivors of sexual abuse and violence was opened.

1990-1999

During the 1990's progress continued on various fronts. Research and academic advancement on gender issues was increased with the founding of a Centre for Women's and Gender Studies (1990) and the establishment of Gender Studies (1996) at the University of Iceland. In 1991 the Minister of Social Affairs established a committee on the role of men in gender equality issues. In 1993 an emergency reception centre for rape victims opened and a women's church was also established that year. In 1995 an article was added to the Constitution articulating that women and men should be equal in all respects. In 1996 same-sex couples gained the right to registered partnerships. In 1994 women held a quarter of all council seats and in 2002 they held a third. Women occupied one fourth of all parliamentary seats in 1995, and in 1999 they were 35% of all MPs. In 1999 the movement came to an end when the members of the Women's Alliance became members of different political parties. In 1998 a group of young women founded Briet, a feminist association for young women.

2000-2010

In response to stagnating public attitudes towards gender equality issues the Feminist Association of Iceland was founded in 2003 and organised various initiatives and activities to raise awareness on various gender issues. That same year the Men's group of the association organised a campaign focused on engaging men in the fight to end rape and other forms of gender-based violence. That same year fathers gained the right to non-transferable 3 months paternal leave. During this decade many women became pioneers and leaders in their sectors: first university president, national youth association president, national sports association president, and first bank-president. On October 24, 2005, to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the women's strike or the women's day off, close to 50 thousand women rallied in Reykjavík, and in various towns around Iceland.

Important developments during this decade include: full rights for gays and lesbians, a law banning the purchase of prostitution, a law prohibiting strip-dancing clubs, and a law that will obligate public corporations to have minimum 40/60 ratio of women and men in their boards. In 2009, Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir was the first woman in Icelandic history to become prime minister and for a few months there were an equal number of women and men cabinet ministers. After the parliamentary elections in 2009, women became 40% of the ministers, men 60%, with Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir as prime minister. Following the parliamentary elections in 2009 the number of female MPs reached its highest percentage, growing from 33% in 2007 to 43%. In 2010 women also reached the 40% mark for the first time as local council members, in the 2006 elections they had 36% of local council member seats. The highest percentage of women in any local council is 45%.²

Women's History Archives:

<http://kvennasogusafn.is/index.php?page=womens-suffrage>

² This review is based on a historical overview from *Kynungabók* (2010).

Current Context

In the *World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report* for 2011, Iceland is ranked number one. The report evaluated gender equality in different countries based on the gender balance in the areas of politics, education, employment and health. Iceland's performance was very much based on its achievements in improving gender equality in the area of education, political participation and women's participation in the labour force. It was however pointed out in the report that the gender pay gap was still a concern and that women still seem to have limited representations in executive management positions.³

Since the beginning of 2008 a number of legislative changes that address gender equality issues have taken place:

- In 2008 the law on gender equality (No. 10/2008) was amended and for the first time an article on quotas was included. This article (No. 15) stipulates that when designating members for governmental or municipal committees, councils and boards, the ratio of women to men needs to be as equal as possible and where the members are more than three, the percentage cannot be below 40% of either sex.
- In 2009 the purchasing of sexual services was made illegal with changes to the 206th article of the criminal code (No. 19/1940). It is illegal to advertise and to benefit from prostitution, e.g. through pimping and other means.
- In 2010 a full ban on strip clubs was enacted with a change in the act on restaurants, accommodations and entertainment (No. 85/2007), banning the profiting from nudity.
- In 2010 an amendment to the laws on public limited companies (No. 2/1995) and private limited companies (No. 138/1994) obligated companies that have over 50 employees to have both women and men on their company boards and if the board-members are more than three, the percentage of women or men cannot be under 40%. These amendments also included changes that will make monitoring easier. These changes take effect in 2013.
- In 2011 the parliament approved a law (No. 85/2011) that improves the provisions that authorities have to protect victims of violence in close relationships. This law provides provisions authorizing the removal of the party accused for domestic violence from the household and putting in place a specific restraining order should there be a suspicion of domestic violence.

³ World Economic Forum *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-2011/>

The Economic Crisis and Gender Equality

In the wake of the economic crisis in 2008 and the political shifts in 2009, gender equality has been highlighted as an important principle in the political and economic responses to the challenges that have appeared during this period.

In the beginning of 2009 the government appointed a working group (Equal Rights Monitoring) tasked with evaluating the impact of the economic situation from a gender perspective and with the objective to ensure that gender equality principles will be reflected in the initiatives taken to restore the economy. The report of the working group highlighted this focus, and underlined the importance of ensuring that women and men are equally represented in decision-making bodies and positions. Topics covered by the report included: men and women's participation in the reconstruction of the Icelandic economy, the unemployment of women and men, gender-based violence and the impact of the crisis on health care institutions. The report underlines that all actions focused on the labour market need to consider the benefits for society as a whole and how they affect women and men. It is also important to consider implications for vulnerable social groups and other groups, e.g. men who have been unemployed for an extended period. The work of this group and its recommendations was later integrated and mainstreamed into the mandate of another working group titled the "Welfare Watch."⁴

In order to gather more information and insights the Welfare Watch Group published a report titled "Women in the time of Crisis" (Konur í Kreppu) in early 2011.⁵ The report gathered and analysed available statistics in order to assess the impact the crisis has had on the welfare of women in Iceland. The main conclusions of the report show that in the beginning of the crisis more men than women became unemployed and women's unemployment increased when the public sector initiated budget cuts. The job-development plans proposed by the government are more likely to counteract the unemployment of men because of the focus on increasing traditional male jobs. Based on this there is reason to suspect that the unemployment of women will last longer than men's. However recent information from Statistic Iceland contradicts this prediction, substantially more men are still unemployed and women's jobs have increased. The report also shows that budget cuts to the paternal leave fund has affected the use of paternal leave, concluding that the lower maximum payment has lead to fewer fathers using their leave.

The report also has a special focus on the economic status of women. The financial situation of single women and single mothers has gotten worse. In Iceland women account for 91% of single parents and 77% of single parents have difficulty making ends meet. The low-wage percentage of women has increased more than with men and the number of retired women receiving pension payments below the low wage barrier has increased. Referring to international research, the report highlights the issue of increased gender based violence in the time of economic recession and points out that since

⁴ More on the Welfare Watch: <http://yourhost.is/images/stories/welfare2011/lara%20bjornsdottir.pdf>

⁵ The report is only available in Icelandic:
http://www.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/ritogskyrslur2011/Konur_i_kreppu_22032011.pdf

the fall of 2008 an increasing number of women have sought assistance from the Women's Shelter in Reykjavik, including more first-comers and women of foreign citizenship.

In addition to the increasing body of knowledge about the gender impact of the crisis, a report was commissioned by the parliament to conduct a gender analysis of the Special Investigation Commission's report on the economic crisis. The aim of the analysis is to look into the role of gender in the collapse of the Icelandic banking system in 2008. In brief the report shows that the main players of the collapse were men and that certain gendered social and cultural discourses and stereotypes were dominant during this period. Many of the larger economic projects that led up to the crisis, including big industrial projects, tax cuts and housing projects, led in many cases to more opportunities and employment of men than women. Importantly the financial sector was run by a small homogeneous group of men, where certain masculine stereotypes and characteristics cast a shadow over prudent business planning and oversight.

The analysis also includes suggestions for governmental measures:

- The Centre for Gender Equality must be strengthened to be able to fulfil its role in monitoring in accordance to the gender equality act.
- The Government should monitor systematically key corporations in order to prevent that a small and homogeneous group consolidates too much power.
- To formulate and implement a gender responsive tax policy and gender responsive budgeting.
- To use gender mainstreaming principles when developing labour and regional policies.
- That government supports education and critical discussion on nationalism to counteract gender stereotypes of women, men and nationality.

Report of the Special Investigation Commission in English:

<http://sic.althingi.is/>

More on the gender analysis of the special report:

http://www.nikk.no/Nation-centric+masculinity+ideals+and+the+Icelandic+bank+collapse.b7C_wlf03e.ips

Statistics Iceland, Iceland in figures 2011:

<https://hagstofa.is/lisalib/getfile.aspx?ItemID=12563>

Current Government Policy on Gender Equality

In the Government Coalition Platform of the Social Democratic Alliance and Left-Green Movement the following is stated:

The coalition will promote open government, increased transparency and democratic reform. Increased emphasis will be placed on human rights education and gender equality.

This includes increased attention to gender equality issues within public administration, ensuring women's influence in the country's recovery, promoting gender equality at all levels of society, instituting specific measures to this end if necessary, gender perspectives will guide job creation efforts, take action to eliminate gender-linked wage inequality, take action to eliminate gender-based violence, implement preventive measures and a response plan for rising violence in close relationships which has correlated with the economic downturn.⁶

Also included in the platform declaration, but has since 2009 been approved:

- The banning of strip clubs
- A single marriage act passed, i.e. the Marriage Act now applies to both heterosexual and same sex -couples.
- An action programme to combat human trafficking

Government Coalition Platform of the Social Democratic Alliance and Left-Green Movement:
<http://eng.forsaetisraduneyti.is/news-and-articles/nr/3730/>

Ministerial Committee on Gender Equality

In the fall of 2009 the government approved to appoint a ministerial committee on gender equality. The formation is in accordance with the government's objective to increase the focus on gender equality issues within government and more specifically to support the objectives stated in the coalition platform. The committee is responsible for the government's action plan on gender equality; action plan on gender mainstreaming and a gender sensitive review of governmental bills, plans and policy decisions that impact gender equality. The members of the committee are the Prime Minister, the Minister of Welfare (who is also a Minister for gender equality), the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Finance. A special advisor on Gender Equality issues to the Prime Minister has been appointed to support this work.

⁶ In addition an effort will be made to improve the legal situation of transsexuals.

Plan of Action on Gender Equality

The parliament approved in 2011 a new Plan of Action on Gender Equality for the period 2011-2015. The plan is based on experience from previous action plans. Previous plans have been based on special projects for each ministry, but this one is split into thematic areas. This is done to ensure that some particular themes, like gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting, will be implemented by all ministries. Gender mainstreaming is required in all government policies and in decision making, according to the Act on Gender Equality. The objective of this approach is to ensure fuller and widespread implementation of gender mainstreaming. Other thematic areas of the action plan include: government, the labour market, gender pay gap, political representation, gender-based violence, education, engaging men in gender equality and international cooperation.

Gender Mainstreaming

The Government has highlighted gender mainstreaming as a key method within the governmental sector in accordance to the act on gender equality (No. 10/2008, art. 17). Since 2008 the Centre for Gender Equality has been working on a project called Side by Side, a gender-mainstreaming project funded by the EU Progress Programme. The aim of the project is to implement and develop gender mainstreaming in national policies and activities in Iceland. The project began with providing training in gender mainstreaming for top managers in ministries, in order to ensure their support and understanding of gender mainstreaming. Training was also provided for the middle managers of the government ministries, the division and department heads in the ministries and municipalities, as well as the top management of key public agencies and municipalities. A brochure for managers on gender mainstreaming was published and a handbook, which has been used in two Universities in courses in gender studies and public management.

Further information:

<http://samstiga.is/samstiga/?D10cID=NewsDouble>

Gender Responsive Budgeting

In early 2009 the Minister of Finance appointed a working group on gender responsive budgeting. The group is tasked with preparing proposals and suggesting initiatives to implement the principles of gender responsive budgeting. Based on the working group's initial suggestions, gender responsive budgeting needs careful planning and needs to be implemented in steps with expert support and training. In accordance with the working group's suggestions the Minister of Finance requested all ministries to propose pilot projects to coincide with the 2011 budget. Results of these projects will be presented in the bill for the 2012 budget. These projects are also highlighted in the government's action plan for gender equality (2011-2014), which states that this method will be implemented in phases during this period. The pilot projects will serve as a basis to formulate methods and accumulate experience to fully implement gender responsive budgeting. In order to raise the awareness of the government sector on this topic, the ministry held a training seminar and published a handbook. In addition the ministry has hired a project manager to oversee the training and development of projects. The working group has developed a detailed action plan for a three-year

period. The working group also works closely with the Centre for Gender Equality, within the context of the gender mainstreaming project Side by Side.

The Ministry of Finance:

<http://www.ministryoffinance.is/>

Action plan against Human Trafficking

In 2009 the government approved its first Action Plan against Human Trafficking. The objective of the Action Plan is to enhance the coordination of actions that are necessary in order to prevent human trafficking in Iceland, and to further study trafficking in human beings. Furthermore, it specifies actions that are aimed at prevention and education regarding this matter, as well as securing that aid and protection to victims is provided. There is also an emphasis placed on actions that aim at facilitating the prosecution of the perpetrators. To oversee the implementation of the action plan, a specialist and co-ordination team was established. The role of the team is to supervise matters regarding human trafficking in Iceland, including providing training for professionals and civil servants, organising educational campaigns, supervision of research and the registration of cases of human trafficking. The Action Plan is in effect until end of 2012, but it will undergo revision two years after its approval, following an evaluation of the results.

The Action Plan, including report:

http://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/acrobat-enskar_sidur/The_Icelandic_Action_Plan_against_Trafficking_in_Human_Beings.pdf

Also in Iceland - Report on the Nature and Scope of Trafficking in Persons 2009:

http://redcross.lausn.is/Apps/WebObjects/RedCross.woa/swdocument/1041254/lika_a_Islandi_sam_antekt_ensku.pdf?wosid=false

Plan of Action to Deal with Domestic and Sexual Violence

In 2006 the government launched an action plan containing 37 actions to fight sexual and domestic violence. The chief objective of the plan was to combat violence in close relationships and sexual violence directed towards women and children and to improve services for victims of such violence and those who are at risk. The actions include strengthening preventative measures, training of staff, ensuring appropriate assistance to victims and breaking the vicious cycle of violence by improving treatment available to perpetrators. The Ministry of Welfare presented in early 2011 a final report on the plan of action and its results. The Government has appointed a committee to write a new action plan to combat domestic and sexual violence for the period 2011 to 2015. The action plan will be based on the lessons learned from the previous action plan (2006-2010), including extensive research on violence against women in close relationships. In addition the action plan will focus on looking at the context of sexually based offenses, prosecutions and judicial processes. The committee members are representatives from line ministries, the Centre for Gender Equality, state prosecutor's office,

Reykjavik Metropolitan Police association of local authorities and NGOs that work with victims of violence in close relationships and sexual violence.

Plan of Action 2006-2010:

http://www.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/acrobat-enskar_sidur/Plan_of_Action_to_deal_with_Domestic_and_Sexual_Violence.pdf

Working group on engaging men in gender equality

In the beginning of 2011 and as part of the new action plan for gender equality the Minister of Welfare appointed a working group tasked with the objective of creating proposals on how to increase the participation of men in gender equality issues. The group will look into a number of issues, including education and vocational choices, gender stereotypes and participation in care work. In addition the group will establish partnerships for researching the status of men in Icelandic society. The work of this group is partially inspired by the experience of similar working groups established in the 90's and work done in the other Nordic countries. The working group is appointed for one year and the members of the group are all men.

Contact the Centre for Gender Equality:

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Issues in Gender Equality

Economic Participation and Opportunity

- In 2010 employed persons in Iceland were 167,300, thereof 87,100 men and 80,100 women.
- Iceland has the highest rate of women's participation in the labour market amongst OECD countries, 77.6%
- Women are 45.5% of the Icelandic labour force. On average, women work 35 hours a week and men work 44 hours (2010).
- In 2010 governmental institutions totalled on average 17,400 fulltime positions (Ministry of Finance).
- In 2010 municipalities employed 19,240 fulltime positions (The Association of Local Authorities in Iceland).
- Unemployment has for a long time been very low and was less than 2% in 2008. However, due to the economic crisis, in August 2011 unemployment was 6.7%, 6.5% amongst men and 7.0% amongst women.
- The average number of working hours per week for individuals working fulltime in 2010 was 47.0 hours for men and 41.3 hours for women.
- In 2009, 65% of individuals working for governmental institutions were women, however more women work part-time than men (Ministry of Finance).

Participation in the labour market by both men and women has always been at a high level in Iceland and the participation of women in the labour market in Iceland is one of the highest among the OECD countries. Women started entering the labour market at an increased rate in the 1970s. This development has been met with childcare for pre-school children, a legal right for parents to return to their jobs after childbirth and a generous parental leave system. More and more women have a full time job and the level of education is high. In 1993, 53% of women in the labour market had a full time job. In 2008 65% of working women had a full time job, while 90% of men worked full time. This gap reflects the different situation of women and men in working and private life, not least the fact that women are still responsible for most of the housework and caretaking. On average, the rate of participation among women has been just under 80%, while among men it is about 86%.

In the wake of the economic crisis, which marked an end to a period of immense growth in the economy and job participation, the number of employed individuals decreased. The number of men in the workforce has decreased more substantially than the number of women. In 2008 men's job participation was 87.1%, but in 2010 it had become 84.5%. In comparison, women's participation went from 77.8% in 2008, down to 77.6% in 2010. The changes following the crisis have been

apparent in increased unemployment numbers for both women and men. In 2007 the unemployment average was 1%; at the end of 2008 it had reached 4.8% and reached its peak at 9.3% in early 2010. In December 2010, unemployment amongst women was 7.3% and 8.5% amongst men. Unemployment amongst men was hence lower for men in 2010 than 2009, but higher for women in 2010 than in 2009. There are also very interesting gender dimensions when looking at people outside the labour market. According to a work market survey by Statistics Iceland for 2010, 1900 individuals categorised themselves as homemakers, thereof 1800 women and 100 men. Individuals that are on unpaid family leave (each parent can take up to thirteen weeks, until the child turns eight years old) were 1200 in 2010, all women.

Directorate of Labour:

<http://english.vinnumalastofnun.is/home/>

Women and Men in the Private Sector

- The percentage of women in the labour market in 2010 was 48%, compared to 46% in 2008.
- The percentage of women employed as managers in Icelandic companies has not improved much in the last few years; in 2009 it was 19%.
- The composition is different in the civil society sector (60%), private education sector (45%), health services (35%) and hotel and restaurants (30%).
- Women hold 13% of management positions in the economic and insurance sector.
- The ratio of women and men on corporate boards corresponds with the percentage of women and men working in management positions in those companies, i.e. around 13%.

Research has shown that substantial improvements have taken place in the gender composition of middle management within corporations. However the ratio of women in top-management and corporate boards has not changed much in the last ten years and few women have positions as managers in larger corporations (9% in companies with more than 250 employees). Labour market stakeholders continue to push for an improvement of women's representation and participation on corporate boards and in top management. In order to ensure more progress on these issues, the Ministry of Economic Affairs made legal amendments to ensure corporations take concrete actions in improving the ratio of women and men in their businesses. The legislation will take effect in 2013.

- The Acts on corporations (No. 2/1995 and No. 138/1994) were amended in 2010 (No. 13/2010) to include a provision that requires corporations with more than 50 employees to have at least 40% women or men on their boards.

The Gender Pay Gap

- Women had 67.7% of men's total employment income in 2010, according to tax returns.
- According to a study in 2008 the gendered pay gap was 16.3%.
- A recent study shows that men are 90% of CEOs, executive managers and board members of companies with 50 or more employees.

An important issue in the government's programme on gender equality is bridging the gender pay gap. Since 1961 Iceland has had an Act on Equal Pay for Equal Work. Despite the law, the gender pay gap was still 16.3% in 2008 in general and up to 38% in rural areas. The recession has led to the pay gap decreasing, since sectors where employment of men is more predominant, were initially harder hit by the crisis (Gíslason, 2011). Challenges identified for the gender pay gap include: gender segregated workforce, additional wage payments go to men, women's participation in managing corporations and institutions is low, women's work is valued differently from men's work, competition from the private sector, and women tend to value their own work less. One of the important challenges ahead is increasing the number of women on boards and as directors of corporations and institutions. Research has shown that there is a need to identify gender equality principles in wage policies of corporations and institutions and job evaluation needs to be standardised.

The Government continues to develop policies and promote initiatives that focus on decreasing the gender pay gap and its causes. This includes:

- Increased research on the gender pay gap and its causes.
- Development of Equal-pay standard, lead by the Ministry of Welfare in cooperation with various work market stakeholders and the national standards body.
- A new legislation passed by parliament requiring that companies with 50 or more employees have at least 40% women directors by 2013.

Parental Leave

- The parental leave system provides parents with 9 months paid parental leave: three months for fathers, three for mothers and also three months to share, or for one of the parents to use six months.
- The three months earmarked for the mother and father, are not transferable.

In 2000 the law regulating parental leave changed dramatically. The new system provided for the first time a 3-month paternity leave. This was designed in order to encourage fathers to be more involved in caring for their young children. Initially the leave provided parents, who had been working full time, 80% of their salary. This innovation was immediately well received by fathers and very quickly close to 90% used their paternal leave. The average number of days used by fathers in 2007 was 101

days, while women used 181 days. Research has shown that this has had the following effects: fathers are building up closer relationships with their children and women and men are on a more equal footing in the workplace. The new parental leave system has however not made the gender pay gap smaller.

The challenge during the recession is to protect the structure of the parental leave system and encourage fathers to continue using their rights. The Government has been forced to lower the payments because of severe budget cuts and that has affected parents' use of their leave. From late 2008 to early 2011, the maximum payment has been cut by over 40% and the ratio has been cut down to 75%. This has in fact led to fathers using less of their leave. Between 2008-2010 the number of leave benefits to fathers decreased by 8.9% and increased by 4.5% to women (in accordance with an increased number of births). The Parental Leave fund has stressed that these measures should only be temporary, to avoid having a permanent negative effect on the law's objective.

Further information:

Childbirth Leave Fund:

<http://www.faedingarorlof.is/umsoknir--eydublod/application-for-payments-from-the-childbirth-leave-fund/>

Further information:

http://www.leavenetwork.org/fileadmin/Leavenetwork/Country_notes/iceland_02052011.pdf

Taxation System

The Icelandic tax system makes joint filing for married couples possible, but individual taxation for income. However, personal allowance is 100% transferable between married couples. Spouse's income is transferable between the third and second tax band to decrease taxation in the third (and last) band. Capital income is taxed jointly. For unmarried couples individual or joint filing is an option, they can choose joint filing and then taxation is exactly the same as for married couples. There are no childcare deductions or reliefs, but child-care services are subsidized by municipalities. Subsidies are paid to the childcare provider but not to parents. Child benefits are granted for each child until it is 18 years old. The benefits are mean tested and paid to both parents. Child benefits are not taxable income. This applies both to individual and joint taxation, as long as the couple is registered as cohabiting.

Further information:

www.rsk.is/international/en/individuals/general

Political Representation

Parliament - Althingi

- In the 2009 elections, 85.1% of eligible voters voted, it was more than in the previous elections.
- Since 1995 voting participation amongst women has been higher than amongst men. In the 2009 elections 85.8% of women voted, as opposed to 84.5% of men.

The last Parliament elections⁷ were held in April 2009.⁸ Candidates were 58.6% men and 41.4% women and two political parties had more female candidates than male, the Social Democrat Coalition and the Left-Green Movement. The election results led to the highest number of seats for women candidates in Icelandic history, i.e. 42.9%. The two above mentioned parties formed a coalition government, with the first female Prime Minister, Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir. The ratio of women ministers has increased with this Government, and in October 2009 the number of women was equal to men in the cabinet. However despite the improved numbers of women holding seats, the minimum quota of 40% has only been reached in 5 out of 12 parliamentary committees.

Gender and Power in the Nordic Countries. NIKK, 2011:

http://www.nikk.no/filestore/Publikasjoner/NIKKPublications_GenderandpowerintheNordiccountries.pdf

Women Parliamentarians. Althingi. Accessed on December 11th, 2010:

<http://www.althingi.is/vefur/women.html>

Inter Parliamentary Union:

<http://www.ipu.org>

⁷ Iceland elects on national level a head of state - the president - and a legislature. The president is elected for a four year term by the people. The General Assembly (Alþingi) has 63 members, elected for a four year term by proportional representation. Iceland has a multi-party system.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_Iceland

⁸ The previous elections were held in May 2007, but following the economic crisis and the collapse of the government coalition, new elections were called for April 2009.

Municipal Councils

- Leading up to the 2010 municipal elections, various actions were initiated to improve the number of women in local councils.
- Candidates were overall 53.2% men and 46.8% women.

The increase of women in local councils has been slow in the last 50 years, but with increased debate and focus on the importance of women's participation in politics, the percentage of women has improved. Following the May 2010 elections, the highest percentage of women council members was achieved, almost 40%, in 2006 the percentage was 36%. The highest percentage of women was achieved in the city of Reykjavík, 47% and in one municipality no woman got elected; in 2006 five municipalities had no women as council members. Even though the overall numbers have improved and the number of women candidates has increased, there are still many challenges. Out of 185 candidate lists, 139 lists were led by men and 46 lists by women, i.e. 25%. The percentage of women in the second seat is 62%. Smaller municipalities are not necessarily turning out lower number of women in council seats. In three out of the four larger municipalities, women are still less than 40%.

Women and Men in Ministries

The percentage of women working for state institutions is over 66% and over 60% of ministerial staff is women. The percentage of women and men varies in different levels of the government structure. Positions that do not require a university degree are occupied 80% by women; for those that require a university degree the percentage is 56%. The imbalance is however more explicit when looking at more senior positions: in 2011, women are 33% of department heads, in 2011 women are 26.5% of Ambassadors, 6% of foreign service delegates, 30% managers of state institutions and 9% of police officers. However, when looking at some positions, the percentage of women has improved. The number of women serving as municipal judges has increased from 32% to 35%, but there are still a number of courts where all judges are men and all head judges are men. In the case of the Supreme Court, out of 12 judges there are two women. In early 2011 the number of women holding ministerial secretary positions became equal to men.

Ministry of Finance:

http://www.ministryoffinance.is/state_personnel/

Education

- The number of children attending kindergarten has increased immensely in the last 30 years.
- For children under the age of 2: 9% in 1981 and 44% in 2009. In 2009, 95% of children aged 3 to 5 attended pre-schools (kindergartens).
- In 2010 male students were 48.1% in secondary schools.
- In 2008-2009 women were 66% of graduated students at the University of Iceland.
- Women are 60% of graduated master degree students, but the ratio of PHD graduates is more gender balanced.
- The percentage of women studying in universities has risen to 63% in 2009, from 57% in 1993.
- Under the age of 74, 28.8% of women have finished a university degree and 21.7% of men.
- Within the age group 25-29 years, 41% of women have finished a university degree and 23% of men.

At the same time as women's education is increasing, the labour market is still highly gender segregated. Women are a large majority of those working in the public sector, mostly in care-taking, teaching and other services, while more men work in the private sector in construction, fishing and have most of the top positions in the finance sector. Many young men turn their back on university education, or even education in general.

- It is important to monitor the changes in educational choices of women and men and analyse its effects on the labour market.
- Access to day care has been stressed as a key factor in ensuring gender equality in the labour market.

Ministry of Education, Science and Culture:

<http://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/>

Health

- Life expectancy in Iceland is on average at birth 82 years, 80 for men and 83 for women.

Iceland has universal health care. The health care system is largely paid for by taxes and to some extent by service fees and is administrated by The Ministry of Welfare. Healthcare expenditures account for a considerable share of the government budget. Every citizen is entitled to some degree of medical coverage. The legal framework concerning health services guarantees everyone access to the optimal health services provided in order to safeguard mental, physical and social health. The Icelandic health service has ranked highly globally much due to favourable statistics on longevity and low rate of infant mortality. However after the financial crisis in 2008 the Government has made budget cuts in spending for health services (UPR 2011). In addition to the budget cuts, the economic crisis is also predicted to affect the health of individual women and men. Increased unemployment, economic insecurities and other stress related issues are thought to lead to various health issues. However more research needs to be done before any clear picture can emerge. The economic recession has not only had effects on the health of individuals, it also led to temporary increased birth rates (2009) and an increased number of abortions (Resource: Konur í kreppu 2011).

Reproductive Health and Rights

Since the late 1800's Iceland has experienced advances in health care issues and health care services. The women's movement was crucial in advocating for increased awareness on various health issues and played a key role in addressing infant and maternal mortality. Iceland has one of the lowest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world. With increased social engagement of women through women's rights organisations and political engagement as elected officials, women advocated for decades for the establishment of a National Hospital, through social and political lobbying and fundraising. The Hospital was opened in 1930. In 1975 an act legalising abortions was approved.

- In 2007 there were 4560 births, in 2008 there were 4835 and by 2009 there were 5027 births.
- In 2007 the infant mortality rate in Iceland was among the lowest in the world, i.e. 1.5 per 1000 live-births.
- The mortality rate for children under the age of 5 is 3 per 1000 live births.⁹
- In 2008 maternity mortality ratio per 100 000 live births was 5.¹⁰
- In 2009 there was a considerable increase of children born to parents who were in registered partnerships, highest number in the last ten years.

⁹ World Health Organisation (2009), Iceland: health profile. <http://www.who.int/gho/countries/isl.pdf>

¹⁰ WHO, *ibid.*

- The number of abortions increased in 2008-2009, in comparison to the previous four years, i.e. 5% compared to the average during the period of 2000–2008.
- In 2000 women were 67.5% of individuals that went for sterilizations, after the economic crisis i.e. in 2009 they went down to 30%.

Birth Rates

Women's birth rate in Iceland has decreased by half from its highest rate in 1960, when women in Iceland had on average 4 children during their lifetime. By 2003 the birth rate was down to 2, but after 2005 it rose to 2.1 and in 2009 it was 2.2. The average age of mothers at childbirth was 29.4 years during the period of 2001-2007 and reached 29.7 in 2009. The average age of fathers at childbirth has been 32.2 for the last decade. The average age for the birth of a first child has been 26.6 for women in the last ten years and 29.3 for men in 2009.

Abortions

In the current act on abortions (No. 25/1975), an abortion is permitted based on medical criteria and social conditions before the 12th week of pregnancy. After the sixteenth week abortions are only permitted based on medical reasons. According to the Directorate of Health, abortions have been on the increase every year since 2004 and in 2009 abortions were 971. Most abortions are performed before the 9th week of pregnancy and between 2007 and 2009 around half of abortions performed were for women aged 20-29. In most cases the reason for the abortions are social conditions. The biggest increase was amongst women aged 25-29, reaching an all time high in 2009 (Women in the time of crises).

Cancer

Cancer registration in Iceland is compulsory and the Directorate of Health is responsible for all registration. A nationwide screening programme for cervical cancer has been operating since 1964 and for breast cancer since 1987. There is an on-going debate whether Iceland should take up nationwide colorectal cancer screening in the near future. Around one in three Icelanders can expect to be diagnosed with cancer during his or her lifetime. All cancer cases as of December 31st 2009 were in total 10,934 individuals, 4,837 men and 6,097 women. During the period 2005 – 2009, the average annual number of new cancer cases was 724 men and 663 women. Over 50% of cancers are diagnosed after the age of 65 years and cancer causes 25% of all deaths in Iceland. Five year relative survival for all cancer has more than doubled since the year 1955.

Further information:

<http://www.krabbameinsskra.is/indexen.jsp?id=a>

Artificial Insemination

In 2008 single women in Iceland got the right to artificial insemination. This was previously only available to women in registered partnerships or common law-marriage. This change came following similar legislations in Denmark and Finland and was amongst other things a response to an increased number of single parents, growing public support for diverse family patterns and increased gender equality. This legislative change entails that single mothers that use this option can be registered as the only parent of their child.

Other Health Issues

- **Smoking:** According to a Statistic Iceland survey in 2009, 47.4% of men had never smoked and 49.6% of women. The percentage of daily smokers has gone from 18.2% of women and 20.7% of men in 2007, down to 15.2 of women and 15.7% of men in 2009.
- **Sexually Transmitted Diseases:** The number of registered cases of STDs has increased in recent years. The ratio between women and men that have chlamydia has been constant since 2003; in 2010 men were 39.5% and women 60.5, but the ratio for women and men with gonorrhoea has gone from men 75% and women 25% in 2007, to almost equal numbers.¹¹
- **HIV:** Amongst individuals with HIV the ratio of women and men is quite different and has also changed substantially in the last few years. In the period between 1996 and 2008, men were usually in the majority of HIV infected, but in 2009 of the total 13 infected, 3 were men and 10 were women.
- **Deaths:** There is a considerable difference in the number of deaths of women and men. According to Statistics Iceland, in 2009 77 men and 56 women died of myocardial causes and of deaths caused by other coronary heart diseases men were 127 and women 90. In 2009 the ratio of men dying of other causes was higher, except for the number of individuals who died of accidental causes, of which women were 14 and men 11.
- **Vaccination:**
In 2011 all girls aged 12 will receive vaccination against HPV infections and cervical cancer.
- **Prescription Drugs Consumption:** Women aged 15-74 are the majority of individuals that receive drug prescriptions. The consumption of sleep and sedative medicines has increased since 2006 and women are 64% of prescription receivers.

¹¹ Here we have to take into account that the numbers are very low, 15 men and 5 women in 2007.

Health statistics:

<http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Health,-social-affairs-and-justi/Health-services>

http://www.statice.is/?PageID=1290&src=/temp_en/Dialog/view.asp?ma=HEI11502%26ti=Health%26path=../Database/heilbrigdismal/kk75/%26lang=1%26units=number,%20percent,%20per%20100%20000%20pop.,%20per%201000%20pop

More on the Icelandic Health Care System:

<http://www.who.int/countries/isl/en/>

http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/80844/e82881.pdf

http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0015/103218/e88737.pdf

Violence against Women

- A study conducted in 2008 revealed that:
 - 42% of Icelandic women had, since the age of 16, been subjected to violence, threat or physical contact of a sexual nature that caused distress.
 - 22% of women had, since the age of 16, experienced violence in close relationships.
 - 1-2% of women aged 18-80 have been subjected to violence in close relationships in a 12-month period before the survey.
 - Only 22% approached organisations or institutions that provide services to victims of violence.
 - Only 13% reported the last incident of violence to the police.
- State prosecution office 2008:
 - 46 cases of rape were reported to the prosecution office
 - 14 were brought to trial
 - 7 cases led to convictions in district courts
 - 7 cases appealed to the Supreme court
 - 3 cases before the Supreme Court resulted in acquittal.
- Statistics show that only a small proportion of rape victims file charges, and in even fewer cases indictments or convictions are given.

Protecting women against violence. Council of Europe, 2010:

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/03themes/violence-against-women/cdeg_2010_12en.pdf

Research on Violence against Women

As part of the Action Plan against Violence against Women (2006-2011), an extensive research project was undertaken to assess the extent and nature of violence against women in close relationships. The research had 6 components that included a phone survey including 3000 women aged 18-80 (some results in bullet points above), and 5 qualitative studies researching the following sectors: municipal social services, child protection, pre- and elementary schools, health services, police and civil society organizations. The research results provide important information on this issue, services provided and gaps that need to be addressed. Plenty of challenges still exist for stakeholders and service providers that provide support or services for victims of gender based violence. These challenges include: the need for more expert knowledge, uniform registration of victims, uniform analysis of data, more training of staff, clearer organisation of roles and

communications between stakeholders, more cooperation between stakeholders and increased services.

The National Commissioner of Police and the Reykjavík Metropolitan Police issued an extensive research report on domestic violence, reviewing 993 cases from the period 2006-2007. In those cases the perpetrators were 787, 76% men and 24% women. 7% of the male victims and 15% of the female victims were reported more than once. In more than half the cases there was a previous history of violence.

Changes in legislation

In the last few years very significant changes in legislation regarding violence against women have taken place. After many years of advocacy from civil society and some parliamentarians, crucial changes have been put in effect by parliament, which helps combating violence against women. Act No. 61/2007 introduced amendments to the section of the General Penal Code (No. 19/1940, with subsequent amendments, see: <http://eng.domsmalaraduneyti.is/laws-and-regulations/nr/1145>), dealing with sexual offences. Amendments were made to Articles 194-199 of the code, covering rape and other offences against the sexual freedom of the individual (cf. Article 205) and also Articles 200-202, dealing with sexual offences against children (cf. Article 204).

In 2009 the government approved an action plan to combat human trafficking, which included several suggestions for changes in legislation. The same year the purchasing of sexual services was made illegal, with changes to the 206th article of the Penal Code. It is illegal to advertise and to benefit from prostitution, e.g. through pimping and other means. Iceland has thereby joined Sweden and Norway in defining prostitution as one form of violence against women that must be eliminated. The act is based on the Swedish model (No. 408/1998), which pioneered the notion that it is the role of the state to fight against the commodification of sex and therewith condemn the commodification of the human body. Another crucial step was taken in 2010, when a full ban on strip clubs was enacted with a change in the act on Restaurants, accommodations and entertainment (No. 85/2007), banning the profiting from nudity. This enabled authorities to close down all strip clubs, which have been linked with prostitution, human trafficking and other illegal activities.

In June of 2011, Althingi approved a law (No. 85/2011) that improves the provisions in the Penal Code that authorities have to protect victims of domestic violence. This law provides provisions authorizing the removal of the party accused for domestic violence from the household and putting in place a specific restraining order should there be a suspicion of violence. It is based on the Austrian model, where the victim of domestic/partner violence is protected and the perpetrator is removed. The chief of police rules if there is a need to enact these provisions, and the district court has to confirm the ruling within three days. In addition the police have to notify the child protection authorities (if children are involved) and the municipality social services.

Plan of Action to Deal with Violence in Close Relationships and Sexual Violence

In 2006 the government launched an action plan containing 37 actions to fight sexual and domestic violence. The chief objective of the plan was to combat domestic and sexual violence directed towards women and children and to improve services for victims of such violence and those who are at risk. The actions include strengthening preventative measures, training of staff, ensuring appropriate assistance to victims and breaking the vicious cycle of violence by improving treatment available to perpetrators. Based on the 2006 action plan, five books on violence in close relationships have been published, one textbook for university and four for civil servants working in the field.

A new action plan is now under preparation. The new plan will give emphasis to examining gender based acts of violence, their prosecution and handling in the judicial system, as few cases go all the way through the judicial system. The new action plan will be valid from 2012-2015. The action plan will be based on the lessons learned from the previous action plan (2006-2010), including extensive research on violence against women. In addition the action plan will take a look at the context of sexually based offenses, prosecutions and judicial processes. The committee members are representatives from line ministries, the Centre for Gender Equality, state-prosecutors office, capital police office, association of local authorities and NGOs that work with victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Services

For victims of gender-based violence, sexual based violence and violence in close relationships, there are various organisations and institutions that provide services and support for victims. Here are few key service providers:

- **Emergency rape wards:** In Iceland there are operated two emergency rape wards for people who have suffered a rape, an attempted rape or other sexual violence. Specialised nurses, psychologists and doctors staff the wards. In addition a team of lawyers work for the ward in providing victims with legal assistance and provide support for communicating with police authorities and judges. In 2009, 130 individuals came to the ward in Reykjavík and since it was opened in 1993, 1813 individuals have sought its services, thereof 689 (38%) aged 18-25.
- **The Women's shelter:** The Women's shelter is a shelter, for women and children when they are physically or psychologically abused in their home by a partner or other family member. The shelter also offers assistance for rape victims. It can provide shelter for 20 women. The shelter is a non-governmental organisation and was founded in 1982 and in addition to providing shelter and services for victims of violence in close relationships, the organisation advocates through education and raising awareness for an improved public and institutional understanding of the nature of violence in close relationships and improved protection for victims. In 2010, 375 women contacted the shelter for assistance, thereof 118 sought shelter and altogether 54 children.

Further information:

<http://www.kvennaathvarf.is/English/>

Stígamót - Education and Counselling Centre for Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Violence: The centre is a non-governmental organisation founded in 1990 and provides counselling and education for survivors (women and men) of rape, sexual molestation, sexual harassment, pornographic exploitation and prostitution. The main focus of the centre is a self-help and empowerment approach. In addition the centre works extensively on collecting data, providing training, education, international cooperation and raising awareness among the public and policy-makers. Since it opened, 5653 individuals have contacted the centre and in 2010, 526 individuals contacted the centre, 251 for the first time. In 2011 the centre opened a shelter for survivors of prostitution and human trafficking. In addition other organisations provide support for survivors of rape and violence in close relationships in different parts of Iceland.

Further information:

<http://stigamot.is/index.php/english>

- **Men Take Responsibility:** Men Take Responsibility is a therapy program for men who resort to violence against their partners. The program started in 1998 as a four-year trial program and was modelled after the Norwegian *Alternative to Violence* program. In 2006 it was decided to restart the program, with financing from the Ministry of Social Affairs. This is the only therapy option available in Iceland for men who commit violence against their spouses. The therapy is based on individual and group psychological therapy sessions. This program is open only for men. Since the project was revived in 2006, 108 individuals have come for interviews. The project is currently run in cooperation between the Women's Shelter, Centre for Gender Equality and Ministry of Welfare, which funds the project. There is also a special programme for perpetrators under 18 years of age, run by the Prison and Probation Administration (Fangelsismálastofnun).

Further information:

<http://www.karlartilabyrgdar.is/kti/english.aspx>

Human Trafficking

Although very few victims have been identified, there are indications that Iceland has become a destination and a transit country for human trafficking in recent years, especially for women who are subjected to forced prostitution. Iceland may also be a destination country for women and men who are subjected to forced labour in restaurants and in the construction industry. Human trafficking is a criminal offence in Iceland. Fighting human trafficking is a priority for the Government. In 2009, a National Anti-Trafficking Action Plan was launched which outlined steps to improve prevention measures and formal provisions for victim assistance. A team to coordinate interagency anti-trafficking activities was set up in November 2009 to deal with human trafficking cases and assist victims, as well as to oversee the implementation of the Action Plan. Amongst the changes that have been implemented since the plan took effect, was the ratification of the Palermo Convention (Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, 2000), this is in addition to new laws regarding prostitution and strip-clubs. Civil society organisations have been key actors in advocating for concrete measures against human trafficking and improved support for victims and survivors. In fact

services for victims are provided by such organisations, with governmental and municipal support. In 2010, STERK – Association against Human Trafficking and Prostitution, was established in order to raise awareness and provide education about the realities and consequences of trafficking in humans.

The Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings including report on Human Trafficking in Iceland. Ministry of Welfare, 2009:

http://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/acrobat-enskar_sidur/The_Icelandic_Action_Plan_against_Trafficking_in_Human_Beings.pdf

Also: Report on the Nature and Scope of Trafficking in Persons. Red Cross Iceland & RIKK, 2009:

http://redcross.lausn.is/Apps/WebObjects/RedCross.woa/swdocument/1041254/lika_a_Islandi_sam_antekt_ensku.pdf?wosid=false

STERK – Association against Human Trafficking and Prostitution:

<http://www.sterk.is>

Media

- Despite improvements in recent years, women are still a minority in the Journalist Union of Iceland (2007: 35.9%) and the Reporters Union of Iceland (2009: 39%).

As part of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) research was conducted in Iceland in 2009, analysing one day of media coverage. The results, published in 2010, show that women are in a minority in Icelandic media, i.e. 27%, when looking at the number of women working in media, what is covered and who is interviewed. The coverage involving women varies depending on news topics. Women are more prevalent in news covering social issues than economic, science and health, where men are more of a focus. Further analysis shows that in much of the news coverage traditional stereotypes are maintained.

Further information:

<http://www.whomakesthenews.org/gmmp-2010-reports.html>

Men and Gender Equality

- In September 2011 unemployment amongst men was 6.4% (6.8% amongst women).
- In 2010 the average number of working hours per week for men was 47.0 hours (41.3 hours for women).
- A recent study shows that men are 90% of CEOs, Executive managers and board members of companies with 50 or more employees.
- Fewer men graduate than women from the University of Iceland.
- In 2003 fathers got an independent non-transferrable right to three months of paid parental leave.
- The parental leave was immediately well received by fathers and very quickly close to 90% used their paternal leave.
- In 2009, 85.2% of fathers took paternity leave.
- In 1991 the Minister of Social Affairs established a committee on the role of men in gender equality issues. The committee delivered a report with recommendations in 1993.
- In 2003 the Men's group of the Feminist Association organised an annual national campaign focused on engaging men in the fight to end rape and other forms of gender-based violence.
- In 2011 the Minister of Welfare established a working group on men and equality responsible for putting forth suggestions for increasing men's involvement in issues related to gender equality.

The Engagement of men in gender equality issues in Iceland has a substantial history and has been a recurring theme in the last few decades. Icelandic men have primarily organised themselves around parenthood and violence against women.¹² The engagement of men in gender equality has included supporting women's initiatives, governmentally established men's groups and various campaigns that engage men in combating violence against women. The most significant policy change the Icelandic government has implemented in order to change social attitudes and roles, was the parental leave act of 2000. This social policy initiative was designed to engage men in care work and change attitudes towards gender equality values (Gíslason 2008). The legislation was made possible after years of advocacy by various organisations and stakeholders, including the women's movements, parliamentarians, labour market organisations and men's groups. The engagement of men in gender equality has recently been highlighted by the current Government as a key element in moving forward in achieving gender equality. However the progress towards gender equality has been slower than hoped and the changes of men's attitudes still have substantial limitations (Einarsdóttir, 2000).

A key element in addressing the challenges entailed in engaging men is increased research and data on the status and attitudes of men. The themes that have been researched are men and parental leave, life-work balance and attitudes towards the gender pay gap. In a study from 1997 (Gíslason) looking at Icelandic men's attitudes towards gender issues, the conclusion was that men in general have a positive attitude towards gender equality and they believe that women and men have the same rights and opportunities. However when looking at attitudes towards domestic responsibilities and child rearing, it was considered the responsibility of women. In research conducted as part of the EC funded FOCUS project (Fostering Caring Masculinities, 2006) some positive changes in attitudes and participation were highlighted, even though women were still to a higher degree responsible for all household work than men except for mending the house and the car. The law on maternity/paternity leave in 2000 on the whole seems to have had a positive effect, at least so far as to involve more Icelandic fathers than ever before in the caring and raising of their young children.

Statistics about the custody of children after divorce indicates that parents are increasingly cooperating in the upbringing of their children. There has been a significant increase in joint custody since it became an option in Icelandic legislation in 1992 and now almost 75% of parents take that option. Research points in the same direction (Sigrún Júlíusdóttir & Nanna K. Sigurðardóttir 2000). But on the other hand, the numbers of single fathers have not grown in Iceland, clearly showing that it is still the mother who is the child's main care provider. However some custody issues have been debated and various associations have been founded that focus on reforms on custody legislation and improved custody rights of fathers.¹³

Gíslason (2010) has pointed out that having children has a positive effect on men's salaries but a negative on women's. The younger the child, the more pronounced are the effects. Having children has an opposite effect on the working patterns of fathers and mothers. The more children a man has,

¹² Ingólfur V. Gíslason quoted in *Men on the Menu*, NIKK April 2011

http://www.nikk.no/Men+on+the+Menu.b7C_wljY0.ips

¹³ Félag um foreldrajafrétti: www.foreldrajafrretti.is

the longer his working hours are, while the reverse is true for women (Gíslason, 2006). Pétursdóttir (2010) pointed out in an interview study that many men see themselves primarily as breadwinners, reflected in their long working hours and their degree of participation in childcare and domestic labour, which is less than their spouses.

In 1991 the Ministry of Social Affairs (now the Ministry of Welfare) appointed a committee to look into the status of men in a changed social context, related to increased participation in parenting and household duties. The committee published a report in 1993. In 1994 the Gender Equality Council formed a committee, a Men's Group, focused on increasing men's participation in the discourse on gender equality. The work of this committee led to various initiatives and research studies. In the beginning of 2011 and as part of the new action plan for gender equality the Minister of Welfare appointed a working group tasked with the objective of creating proposals on how to increase the participation of men in gender equality issues. The group will look into a number of issues, including education and vocational choices, gender stereotypes and participation in care work. In addition the group will establish partnerships for researching the status of men in Icelandic society. The working group is appointed for one year and the members of the group are only men.

Youth and Gender Equality

In a recent study on Nordic Youth aged 16 to 19, a considerable percentage of Icelandic youth display conservative views on issues that relate to gender equality. When asked if women should stay at home and take care of the young children, 46.3% of the male youth and 28.5% of the female agree strongly or agree somewhat. The study showed that despite close to 90% of the Icelandic participants (male 87.8% and female 96.3%) agreeing that women and men should have equal rights, many of the answers depicted contradictory, even conservative views of both young men and women. Other studies reveal that attitudes among Icelandic adolescents towards gender equality have become more negative in recent years (Hjalmsdóttir & Bjarnason, 2008). One particular study showed that tenth graders in 2006 were found to have more traditional ideas on the division of labour than the same age group did in 1992 (Hjalmsdóttir, 2007). Negative attitudes towards gender equality and even an outspoken backlash towards feminism seem to be accepted among many youths (Hjalmsdóttir, 2009). It has been indicated in various studies and debates that popular culture and increased consumption of pornography are having a major negative impact on the attitudes and views of youth, especially young men. The Nordic study showed for example that around 75% of the young Icelandic men participating in the study, viewed pornography once or more than once a week.

The current Act on Gender Equality clearly states the importance of improving education on gender equality issues. The Centre for Gender Equality, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Welfare, various municipalities and civil society organisations have been increasing their focus on youth and gender equality issues. Several municipalities are working on projects focused on addressing the issue in youth centres and sports associations. The Ministry of Education recently added gender equality as one of the pillars of the main curriculum and in 2010 it published a textbook (Kynungabók) for youth on gender equality issues. The objective of the textbook is to provide youth (i.e. students in middle school, secondary school and even University) with a realistic picture of the status of women and

men in Icelandic society and in addition to illustrate that gender equality concerns both women and men, to get them to look critically at cultural gender constructs and most importantly raise awareness amongst young people about their rights. The textbook is considered an important step in developing increased education on gender equality issues.

Kynungabók – Information about Gender Equality for Young People (only available in Icelandic). Ministry of Education, 2010:

http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/MRN-pdf-namskrar/Kynungabok_2010.pdf

“Reality Bites” Attitudes Towards Gender Equality Among Icelandic Youth. Andrea Hjalmsdóttir, 2009. MA thesis:

https://circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/handle/2429/13141/ubc_2009_fall_hjalmsdottir_andrea.pdf?sequence=1

The Nordic Youth Research among 16 to 19 year olds in Åland Islands, Denmark, Faroe Islands, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden - October 2010

http://www.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/MRN-pdf_reports/Youth_and_welfare_Report.pdf

Youth College Students 16 to 20 years Education, culture, leisure, sports activities and future vision among college youth in Iceland

http://eng.menntamalaraduneyti.is/media/MRN-pdf_reports/Youth-in-Iceland_College-students.pdf

Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender persons

Since 1996 discrimination on the grounds of “sexual orientation” is subject to penalty under the General Penal Code. The same year, registered partnership between same-sex couples was given the same legal status as marriage except for certain limitations regarding adoptions. In 2010 this difference between marriages and registered partnerships was abolished, and the Marriage Act now applies to both heterosexual and same-sex couples. The status of a registered partnership can be changed to a marriage at the registration office, i.e. Registers Iceland. That same year an amendment was made to the Act on Artificial Fertilisation, whereby lesbian couples were given the right to in vitro fertilization. The National Organization of Lesbians and Gay Men in Iceland (now National Queer Organization) was founded in 1978, resulting in a more open discussion of homosexuality. Although prejudices were strong at that time, attitudes have shifted dramatically. The Organization has in the recent years emphasised the rights of transgender persons in Iceland. A recent opinion of the Althingi Ombudsman has highlighted the lack of legal framework and called for legislation in order to protect the rights of transgender people. Although there are no legal rules on medical treatment, a code of practice is followed, similar to that applied in other Nordic countries. Practice relating to name-change has recently been modified, following investigation by the Althingi Ombudsman. Change of name and sex in Registers Iceland is now possible upon request after one year of hormonal treatment. In March 2011 the Minister of Welfare appointed a working group on the legal status of transgender persons. (Source: Universal Periodic Review: Icelandic National Report 2011)

Samtökin '78, The National Queer Organization:

<http://www.samtokin78.is/>

Legal Framework

Constitution

The principle of equality is specifically addressed in a provision in the Constitution of the Republic of Iceland (see Article 65 of the Constitution, No. 33/1944, cf. the Constitutional Law Act, No. 97/1995), stating that men and women are to have equal rights in every respect. Iceland is a representative democracy and a parliamentary republic. The Icelandic Constitution is the highest-ranking legal instrument in the Icelandic legal order. All laws, regulations and executive actions must comply with its provisions. The Constitution not only provides the basis for the organisation of state power but also guarantees certain human rights and fundamental freedoms such as the freedom of religion, freedom from interference with privacy, home and family life and freedom of association and assembly. In 1995 fundamental amendments to the human rights provisions of the Constitution were enacted. Currently the Constitution is under review. An emphasis has been put on public participation in the review process. The Parliament appointed 25 delegates to a constitutional Council in 2011. The Council delivered its proposals for an amended Constitution to Althingi during the summer of 2011.

The Constitution:

<http://www.government.is/constitution/>

The Constitutional Council:

<http://stjornlagarad.is/english/>

Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men

Iceland has had a special statute intended to ensure equality between women and men and their equal status in all respects since 1976. The current Gender Equality Act dates from 2008. The aim of the act is to establish and maintain equal status and equal opportunities for women and men, and thus promote gender equality in all spheres of society. All individuals shall have equal opportunities to benefit from their own enterprise and to develop their skills irrespective of gender.

This aim shall be reached by:

- Gender mainstreaming in all spheres of the society
- Increasing education and awareness-raising on gender equality
- Working towards equal influence of women and men in decision-making and policy-making in the society
- Analysing statistics according to gender
- Increasing research in gender studies

- Working against wage discrimination and other forms of gender-based discrimination on the employment market
- Working against gender-based violence and harassment
- Enabling both women and men to reconcile their work and family life
- Changing traditional gender images and working against negative stereotypes regarding the roles of women and men

The law includes several improvements including:

- A minimum quota of 40% in governmental (state and municipal) committees and councils, if the body consists of more than three members.
- Gender mainstreaming institutionalised.
- Employees have the right to disclose their wages.
- Advertisements in media that are derogatory i.e. which demean, debase or disrespect women or men or counteract the equal status of women and men, are banned.
- Prevention against gender-based violence is prioritised.

The Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 10/2008:

<http://eng.felagsmalaraduneyti.is/legislation/nr/4203>

Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave

A large step in the direction of equality was taken when fathers' right to paternity leave was expanded to the same level as mothers' under the current Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave Act No. 95/2000. The paternity leave system provides parents with 9 months paid parental leave: three months for fathers, three for mothers and also three months to share. The three months earmarked for the mother and father are not transferable. The new system provided for the first time a 3-month paternity leave earmarked for men.

Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave:

<http://eng.felagsmalaraduneyti.is/legislation/nr/3697>

Childbirth Leave Fund:

<http://www.faedingarorlof.is/umsoknir--eydublod/application-for-payments-from-the-childbirth-leave-fund/>

Amendments concerning gender quotas in Corporations

Following an amendment to the laws on public limited companies (No. 2/1995) and private limited companies (No. 138/1994), companies that have over 50 employees are obligated to have both women and men on their company boards and if the board-members are more than three, the percentage of women or men cannot be under 40%. These amendments also included changes that will make monitoring easier. These changes take effect 2013.

Ministry of Economic Affairs:

<http://eng.efnahagsraduneyti.is/>

Gender Based Violence

Sexual offences

Act No. 61/2007 introduced amendments to the section of the General Penal Code (No. 19/1940, with subsequent amendments) dealing with sexual offences. Amendments were made to Articles 194-199 of the code, covering rape and other offences against the sexual freedom of the individual (cf. Article 205) and also Articles 200-202, dealing with sexual offences against children (cf. Article 204). One of the innovations introduced into the code was a broadening of the definition of rape, with the result that “rape” in Article 194 of the code now includes other forms of sexual coercion and the exploitation of the victim’s poor mental condition or inability to resist the action or to realise its significance. As a result of the amendment, offences in this category now carry far heavier punishments than before: imprisonment of 1-16 years, instead of a maximum of six years previously. Furthermore, circumstances leading to the imposition of heavier punishments for rape are defined in the law. Allowance is made for heavier punishments, firstly, if the victim is a child under the age of 18, secondly if the violence committed by the perpetrator is of major proportions and thirdly if the offence is committed in a way that inflicts particularly serious pain or injury. Authorisation was introduced by the amendment providing for consideration to be given to repeated offences within the broad category of sexual offences; thus, a previous conviction for an offence of this type may lead to a heavier punishment being imposed for a subsequent offence. Allowance is made for an increase of up to one half in the punishment imposed.

Excerpts from the General Penal Code, No. 19/1940, with subsequent amendments:

Chapter XXII - Sexual Offences and Chapter XXIII - Homicide and Bodily Harm:

<http://eng.domsmalaraduneyti.is/information/nr/119>

Prostitution

In 2010 the purchasing of prostitution was made punishable by law, through changes in the general penal code. (Article No. 206). It is illegal to advertise and to benefit from prostitution, e.g. through pimping and other means.

Strip clubs

In 2010, a full ban on strip clubs was enacted with a change in the act on restaurants, accommodations and entertainment (No. 85/2007), banning profiting from nudity. This enabled authorities to close down all strip clubs, which have been linked with prostitution, human trafficking and other illegal activities.

Violence in Close Relationships

In June of 2011 the parliament approved a law (No. 85 2011) that improves the provisions that authorities have to protect victims of domestic violence. This law provides provisions authorizing the removal of the party accused for domestic violence from the household and putting in place a specific restraining order should there be a suspicion of domestic violence.

Other Legislation

Acts in Respect of Children:

<http://eng.domsmalaraduneyti.is/laws-and-regulations/nr/916>

Inheritance Act:

<http://eng.domsmalaraduneyti.is/laws-and-regulations/nr/107>

Law in Respect of Marriage:

<http://eng.domsmalaraduneyti.is/laws-and-regulations/english/marriage-and-civil-union/nr/112>

Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons:

- Discrimination on grounds of “sexual orientation” is subject to penalty under the General Penal Code.
- The Law in Respect of Marriage now applies to both heterosexual and same-sex couples.

International Obligations and Legislation concerning Gender Equality

- The Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).
- The European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).
- All EU directives concerning gender equality.

Universal Periodic Review: Icelandic National Report 2011

<http://www.innanrikisraduneyti.is/media/frettir-2011/Mannrettindaskyrslan---lokaeintak-sent.doc>

Action Plans and Strategies

Parliamentary resolution on a four year gender equality action programme, 2011-2014

Althingi has passed five action plans on measures to implement gender equality since 1985. A new Plan of Action on Gender Equality has recently been approved for the period 2011-2014. The plan is based on experience from previous action plans. Previous plans have been based on special projects for each ministry, but this one will be split into thematic areas. This is done to ensure that all ministries will also focus on themes like gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting. Gender mainstreaming is required in all government policies and in decision making, according to the Act on Gender Equality. The objective with this approach is to ensure fuller and widespread implementation of gender mainstreaming. Other thematic areas of the action plan include: government, the labour market, gender pay gap, political representation, gender-based violence, education, engaging men in gender equality, and international cooperation.

Further information:

<http://jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Gender%20Equality%20Action%20Programme%202011-14.pdf>

Plan of Action to deal with Sexual Violence and Violence in Close Relationships

In 2006 the government launched an action plan containing 37 actions to fight sexual and domestic violence. The chief objective of the plan is to combat domestic and sexual violence directed towards women and children and to improve services for victims of such violence and those who are at risk. The actions include strengthening preventative measures, training of staff, ensuring appropriate assistance to victims and breaking the vicious cycle of violence by improving treatment available to perpetrators. The Government has appointed a committee to write a new action plan to combat domestic and sexual violence for the period 2012 to 2015. The action plan will be based on the lessons learned from the previous action plan (2006-2011), including extensive research on violence against women. In addition the action plan will focus on looking at the context of sexually based offenses, prosecutions and juridical processes. The committee members are representatives from line ministries, the Centre for Gender Equality, state-prosecutors office, capital police office, association of local authorities and NGOs that work with victims of domestic and sexual violence.

Plan of action 2006:

http://www.felagsmalaraduneyti.is/media/acrobat-enskar_sidur/Plan_of_Action_to_deal_with_Domestic_and_Sexual_Violence.pdf

Action Plan against Human Trafficking

In 2009 the government approved its first Action Plan against Human Trafficking. The objective of the Action Plan is to enhance the coordination of actions that are necessary in order to prevent human trafficking in Iceland, and to study further the trafficking in human beings in Iceland. Furthermore, it

specifies actions that are aimed at prevention and education regarding this matter, as well as securing that aid and protection to victims is provided. There is also an emphasis placed on actions that aim at facilitating the prosecution of the perpetrators. To oversee the implementation of the action plan, a specialist and co-ordination team was established. The role of the team is to supervise matters regarding human trafficking in Iceland, including providing training for professionals and civil servants, organising educational campaigns, supervision of research and the registration of cases of human trafficking. The Action Plan is in effect until end of 2012, but it will be revised two years after its approval, following an evaluation of the results.

The Action Plan, including report:

http://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/acrobat-enskar_sidur/The_Icelandic_Action_Plan_against_Trafficking_in_Human_Beings.pdf

Also in Iceland - Report on the Nature and Scope of Trafficking in Persons 2009:

http://redcross.lausn.is/Apps/WebObjects/RedCross.woa/swdocument/1041254/lika_a_Islandi_sam_antekt_ensku.pdf?wosid=false

National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325

Iceland finalised its National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UN resolution 1325 (2000) in 2008. In preparing for the NAP the Ministry for Foreign Affairs consulted civil society organisations, academic institutions and its Nordic partners, which broadened the support and ownership of the NAP. The NAP is built on the main pillars of Iceland's foreign policy; respect for human rights; increased development cooperation and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Special emphasis is put on women's access at the negotiating table. The NAP is currently being revised and will i.a. take subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security into account, (1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010)). It will be based on the newly adopted Strategy for Iceland's Development Cooperation 2011-2014 and contain specific goals, clear indicators and transparent monitoring mechanisms.

Further information:

http://www.mfa.is/media/Utgafa/women_peace_security.pdf

Institutional Mechanisms for Gender Equality

The Minister of Welfare (previously the Minister of Social Affairs and Social Security) is in charge of implementing the gender equality legislation, and the Centre for Gender Equality is responsible for its administration. The Minister also appoints a Gender equality Council and a Complaints Committee on Gender Equality. Within the Ministry of Welfare, a special department is in charge of Gender Equality. The Centre for Gender Equality, the Gender Equality Council and the Complaints Committee operate independently of each other.

Further information:

<http://eng.velferdarraduneyti.is/departments/gender-equality/>

The Centre for Gender Equality

The Centre is a national bureau and is in charge of administering the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men (No. 10/2008). The aim of the Act is to establish and maintain equal status and equal opportunities for women and men, and thus promote gender equality in all spheres of society.

The Centre provides counselling and education in the field of gender equality, for governmental and municipal authorities, institutions, companies, individuals and non-governmental organizations. The aim is to obtain a multi-dimensional continuous result. The centre also gives advice when needed, if individuals are considering sending complains to the Complaints Committee.

Strategies and methods:

- Mainstreaming
- Special actions and projects
- Awareness-raising
- Research
- Education and information
- Counselling
- Legal advice and supervision

Contact: Kristín Ástgeirsdóttir, Director:

kristin@jafnretti.is

Further information:

<http://www.jafnretti.is/jafnretti/?D10cID=News&lang=EN>

The Gender Equality Complaints Committee

The task of the Gender Equality Complaints Committee is to examine cases and to deliver a ruling in writing on whether provisions of act No. 10/2008 have been violated. The Committee's rulings may not be referred to a higher authority. In cases that may be expected to influence policy on the labour market as a whole, the Committee shall seek comments from the national federations of workers and employers before delivering its ruling. The rulings of the Complaints Committee shall be binding for the parties in question. The parties may refer the Committee's rulings to the courts.

Gender Equality Council

After each parliamentary election, the Minister of Welfare appoints a Gender Equality Council of eleven representatives. The representatives are nominated by the employees' and the employers' associations, various women's organisations, civil society organisations, academic institutions and the Association of Local Authorities in Iceland. The Gender Equality Council works in close contact with the Centre for Gender Equality and the Ministry of Welfare, with particular emphasis on promoting gender equality in the labour market and on the reconciliation of work and family life. The Gender Equality Council also contributes to the organisation of a bi-annual Gender Equality Forum in consultation with the Ministry of Welfare.

The Gender Equality Forum's purpose is to create a platform to assess and discuss gender equality issues in Iceland. The Minister of Welfare presents a report on the situation and developments in gender equality issues, including an overview and update of the projects implemented within the current gender equality action plan. The forum is open to all and the Gender Equality Council formally invites members of the Althingi (parliament), representatives of national and local government institutions, including their gender equality representatives, and representatives of social partners and non-governmental organisations that work on gender equality issues.

Gender Equality Council:

www.jafnrettisrad.jafnretti.is

Municipality Gender Equality Committees

Following local government elections, the municipality's councils appoint gender equality committees to examine equal status and equal rights of women and men within their municipality. These committees shall advise local governments on gender equality issues, monitor and take initiative on measures, including affirmative action, to ensure the equal status and equal rights of women and men within their municipality. Each committee shall supervise the creation of a four-year action plan on gender equality that focuses on gender mainstreaming in all spheres of the municipality and actions to redress the imbalance in the representation of women and men within different sectors of the municipality. Gender equality programmes and action plans shall be submitted for approval by the relevant local government no later than one year after local government elections. Each committee shall every second year submit to the Centre for Gender

Equality a report on the situation and developments in gender equality issues within the respective municipality.

Gender Equality Representatives

Each ministry shall have a gender equality representative with an expert knowledge of gender equality issues. The gender equality representative shall deal with, and monitor, gender equality work in the policy areas of the ministry in question and its institutions, i.e. the expert shall work on gender mainstreaming in the fields administered by the ministry. Each year, the gender equality representatives shall send a report on the status and developments in gender equality issues in the policy areas of their respective ministries to the Centre of Gender Equality.

University Programmes and Institutions

University of Iceland

Gender Studies

At the University of Iceland a Gender Studies programme has existed since 1996, for undergraduate, graduate and PHD students. The programme is now part of the Faculty of Political Science, but in addition many courses are available in other faculties. The programme focuses on providing students with broad and multidisciplinary perspectives. In addition the objective is to provide critical knowledge and expertise in the practical implementation of gender equality principles.

The Centre for Women's and Gender Studies (RIKK)

The Centre is a research institution that was founded at the University of Iceland in 1991. It has been instrumental in coordinating and organizing women's studies and feminist research in Iceland. The Centre supports women's studies at academic level, publishes feminist research, orchestrates a lecture series and seminars during the academic year and provides an information service. The centre co-ordinates research projects on various subjects in the fields of sociology, gender research, anthropology etc. It participates in several Nordic and European projects and is now taking part in running several national projects. The centre also oversees Edda – Center for Excellence and GEST – The Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme.

Further information:

<http://www.rikk.hi.is/en>

GEST - The Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme

GEST is a joint project between the University of Iceland and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and is part of the Icelandic government's development cooperation efforts. The objective of the GEST Programme is to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in developing countries and post-conflict societies through education and training. Its main target group is professionals working for government and civil society organisations in developing countries and post-conflict societies undergoing reconstruction. The GEST Programme also offers short courses and seminars, which are open for professionals from both developed and developing countries. The GEST Programme is run by the University of Iceland and managed by EDDA – Centre of Excellence. The GEST Programme was launched in January 2009, and in January 2010, the first fellows completed the Programme.

Further information:

<http://gest.hi.is/>

Centre for Children and Family Research (ICE-CCFR)

The ICE-CCFR is a research and educational institution within the Faculty of Social Work and is located at the Social Science Research Institute at the University of Iceland. The Centre was established in 2006 in cooperation with institutions working on family issues in Icelandic society. Reykjavik - Division of Welfare, the Ministry of Social Affairs (now the Ministry of Welfare), the Government Agency for Child Protection, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland Bishop's Office, Efling – Trade Union and Reykjanesbær municipality and later the Ombudsman for Children. ICE-CCFR aims to support research in the field of social work related to children and family affairs, policy, services and development. The institute will also take initiative in planning, developing and executing new projects in the field. By this the centre works for strengthening research in general and in social work and thereby enhancing scientifically based knowledge in the field. The objectives of ICE-CCFR are to produce high quality collaborative, inclusive research relevant to key issues in children and family affairs. The Centre was part of the violence against women research project published in 2010 and funded by the Ministry of Welfare.

Further information:

http://stofnanir.hi.is/rbf/centre_children_and_family_research_ice_ccfr

MARK – Centre for Research on Diversity and Gender

Mark operates within the Faculty of Social Sciences. The Centre was founded in the beginning of 2011 and is a forum for research and education in the studies of human rights and discrimination; and equality, gender and diversity studies in a broad sense. The objective is to enhance collaboration between domestic and foreign scholars, contribute to research and teaching in the field, provide consultations and reinforce perspectives by sharing knowledge. The Centre for Research on Diversity and Gender appertains to the Social Research Institute.

Further information:

http://www.hi.is/felagsvisindasvid_deildir/stjornmalafraedideild/rannsoknir/mark_midstod_margbre_ytileika_og_kynjarannsokna

RannKyn – Centre for Research on Equality, Gender and Education

The centre was founded in 2010 at the School of Education at the University of Iceland. The objective of the institute is to provide a platform for academics and researchers in the field of education for research on equality, gender and education. The institute's aim is to achieve this through new research, support to students, cooperation, events and publications.

Further information:

<http://stofnanir.hi.is/rannkyn/en/english>

The Centre for Disability Studies

The Centre for Disability Studies (Rannsóknasetur í fötlunarfræðum) was founded in 2006. The Centre is an interdisciplinary site created for research in the area of disability studies in Iceland and which operates under the auspices of the Social Science Research Institute (Félagsvísindastofnun) at the University of Iceland. The Centre thus benefits from a wide range of experiences and expertise in a number of areas connected to disability. The role of the Centre is to increase and strengthen research in the field of disability studies, and the issues surrounding disabled people, by connecting research and teaching in disability studies, attracting scholars to work in this field and providing graduate students with a facility to do research. The Centre has a wide ranging collaboration with scholars, universities and research centres in a number of countries, and works with a number of disability advocacy groups, policy makers, agencies and professionals in the field of disability.

Further information:

<http://www.fotlunarfraedi.hi.is/en/english>.

Women's History Archives

Women's History Archives are the repository of a large number of varied sources on the history of women in Iceland, including: Women's private papers, e.g. letters and diaries; plays, poems and stories by women; minutes of meetings, letters and other papers from Icelandic women's associations; newspaper clippings about the history of women, gender research, the struggle for equal rights and interviews with women. The mission of the archives is to collect, register and preserve records of the history of Icelandic women, past and present. The Archives act as a centre for the dissemination of information on the history of Icelandic women, helps find sources in this area, and encourages research on women's concerns. Women's History Archives are located in the National and University Library.

Further information:

<http://kvennasogusafn.is/index.php?page=english>

University of Akureyri

Research Centre against Violence

The Research Centre against violence was founded at the University of Akureyri in early 2011. The objective of the centre is to contribute to the combating of violence, including violence against children and violence in close relationships, through cooperation with institutions and organisations in Iceland and internationally. The centre plans to organise conferences, seminars and educational programmes in order to increase awareness on violence and its consequences. The centre will also participate in research on this issue and provide research grants.

Further information:

<http://ofbeldi.is/>

Other Mechanisms and Institutions

Emergency Rape Wards

In Iceland there are two emergency rape wards in Reykjavik and Akureyri for people who have suffered rape, an attempted rape or other sexual violence. Specialised nurses, psychologists and doctors staff the wards. In addition a team of lawyers work for the ward in providing victims with legal assistance and provide support for communicating with police authorities and judges. In 2009, 130 individuals came to the ward and since it was opened in 1993, 1813 individuals have sought its services, thereof 689 aged 18-25. About 353 individuals, of whom 98% were women, came to the Emergency Reception Centre in the period 2003–2005: 119 did so in 2003, 104 in 2004 and 130 in 2005.

The Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASI)

ASI is a confederation of trade unions of general workers, office and retail workers, seamen, construction and industrial workers, electrical workers and various other professions in the private sector and part of the public sector. These trade unions are affiliated to 5 national federations, which in turn are affiliated to ASI. In addition there are 7 national unions, which are directly affiliated to ASI. About two thirds of organised labour in Iceland are members of trade unions affiliated to ASI. The total number of members of ASI today is about 109,000; thereof 98,000 members who are active on the labour market. Men are 53% of the members, women 47% (2010) The role of ASI is to promote the interests of its constituent federations, trade unions and workers by providing leadership through co-ordination of policies in the fields of employment, social, education, environment and labour market issues. ASI represents the trade union movement at various levels of the government on issues such as labour law, employment and social policy, vocational education and training and occupational safety. The Confederation has a representative on the Gender Equality Council, has a Gender Equality Policy and a gender focal point. The policy's objective is to ensure that ASI is an active participant in the social discussion on gender equality and family issues, representing the views and focus of the labour unions.

Further information:

http://asi.is/desktopdefault.aspx/tabid-382/521_read-1115/

SA-Confederation of Icelandic Employers

The Confederation is a service organization for Icelandic businesses. Projects include negotiations of collective agreements with unions on wages and working conditions, the advocating of an internationally competitive legal and regulatory environment, and the interpretation and communication of decisions by governmental authorities that directly affect the business environment. The Confederation has a representative on the Gender Equality Council and also has various working groups, one of which is a working group on gender equality issues.

Further information:

<http://www.sa.is/english/>

Federation of State and Municipal Employees

BSRB, Federation of State and Municipal Employees, is the biggest union of employees in public service in Iceland. The members work in the fields of postal services, customs, police, fire resistance, health care, education of pre-school children to name but a few. Municipalities as well as the governmental institutions employ BSRB members. BSRB is a confederation of 27 unions. Since BSRB was founded in 1942 the membership has increased steadily and is presently approximately 21,000 members, whereof two thirds are women. The Federation highlights gender equality as one of its priorities and has a representative on the Gender Equality Council.

Further information:

<http://www.bsrb.is/>

Association of Academics (BHM)

Association of Academics is the Icelandic organisation of trade Unions of Academics. There are 25 member-unions in BHM, consisting of around 8,800 employees. To be admitted to one of the member unions, an applicant must have completed a university program of at least 3 years duration. The state, municipalities and other public entities employ most members, however in the last few years more members have been employed by the private sector. The three largest member-unions of BHM are The Icelandic Union of Natural Scientists, Frædagardur and the Association of University Teachers. Mid-wives, Psychologists and Veterinarians are among those with the longest academic education (6 years). The Association has a representative on the Gender Equality Council.

Further information:

<http://www.bhm.is/>

Civil Society/NGOs

In Iceland there exists a vast network of civil society organisations that focus on women's rights, gender equality and issues of gender-based violence.

The Icelandic Women's Rights Association (IWRA)

The Association was founded on January 27th 1907, in Reykjavik. In the beginning the main focus was on women's suffrage. In 1915, women 40 years and over received national suffrage and the right to hold office. The law was signed on June 19th and since then it has been celebrated as the Women's rights day in Iceland. IWRA's publication, named *19th of June*, was first published in 1951 and is one of the oldest magazines in Iceland. Main focus of IWRA currently is equality between men and women as elected officials in the Parliament and the municipalities, as well as gender balance in leadership positions in both public and private companies. Violence against women, prostitution, trafficking in women and the gender pay gap are also inequalities that IWRA works to eliminate.

Further information:

<http://www.krfi.is/krfi2/english/about-iwra.html>

Icelandic Women's Association (KÍ)

The Icelandic Women's Association was founded in 1930. The Association was established in order to unite all women's organisations in Iceland, especially those emphasizing the role of housewives. It now includes 200 organisations from all over Iceland. The Association supports various community actions, publishes a magazine and participates in various joint activities and projects with other organisations in Iceland, including Skottur and the annual UN 16 days of activism against gender based violence. In addition the Association has a representative on the Gender Equality Council.

Further information:

<http://www.kvenfelag.is/>

The Women's Shelter

The Women's shelter is a safe shelter, for women and children when they are physically or psychologically abused in their home by a partner or other family member. The shelter also offers assistance for rape victims. It can provide shelter for 20 women and is the only shelter in Iceland. The shelter is a non-governmental organisation and was founded in 1982 and in addition to providing shelter and services for victims of violence in close relationships, the organisation advocates through education and raising awareness for an improved public and institutional understanding of the nature of violence in close relationships and improved protection for victims. In 2010, 375 women contacted the shelter for assistance, thereof 118 who sought shelter, including altogether 54 children.

Further information:

<http://www.kvennaathvarf.is/English/>

Stígamót - Education and Counselling Centre for Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Violence

The Centre is a non-governmental organisation founded in 1990 and provides counselling and education for survivors (women and men) of rape, sexual molestation, sexual harassment, pornographic exploitation and prostitution. The main focus of the Centre is a self-help and empowerment approach. In addition the centre works extensively in collection of data, providing training, education, international cooperation and raising awareness among the public and policy-makers. Since it opened, 5653 individuals have contacted the centre and in 2010, 526 individuals contacted the centre, 251 for the first time. In 2011 the centre will open a shelter for survivors of prostitution and human trafficking.

Further information:

<http://stigamot.is/index.php/english>

The Feminist Association of Iceland

The Association was founded March 13th 2003. The Feminist Association of Iceland is a free and independent forum with the goal to foster critical and feminist discussion in all areas of Icelandic society. The mission of the Association is to work for gender equality; to work against all kinds of sexual injustice such as pornography, sexist and demeaning advertisements, violence, trafficking and prostitution; to work against gender stereotypes; to work for working women, equal pay for equal jobs and more influence of women in resource and finance management; to make society more alert to both male and female viewpoints and roles. The Association bases its work on working groups, public forums and awareness raising campaigns.

Further information:

<http://www.feministinn.is/>

UN Women National Committee Iceland

The UN Women (previously UNIFEM) National Committee has been very active in Iceland in recent years. Its activities include fundraising for UN Women, but also raising awareness, education, lobbying government and private sector stakeholders and participating in joint activities with other women's rights organisations in Iceland.

Further information:

<http://unwomen.is/>

Skottur

In 2010 a formal network of women's organisations was created, Skottur. The network serves as a cooperative platform uniting all major women's rights movements and organisations in Iceland. One of the objectives of the platform is to organize and coordinate joint equal rights campaigns. The first joint event the network organised was the 35th anniversary of the Women's Day Off in 2010.

Further information:

<http://kvennafri.is/en/about>

STERK – Association against Human Trafficking and Prostitution

STERK was established in 2010 and is a prevention centre specialising in creating and disseminating information on the sex industry with a special focus on human trafficking and prostitution. Through research, education and awareness campaigns, the aim of the Association is to reduce the demand for human trafficking, prostitution, pornography and strip dancing. The main objective of the Association's activities is to reduce the number of women, men and children that are trapped in sexual slavery.

Further information:

<http://sterk.is/>

Other Civil Society Organisations working towards Gender Equality:

Zonta Iceland:

<http://www.zonta.is/>

The Women's Counselling:

<http://www.kvennaradgjofin.is/>

Bríet – Association of Young Feminists:

<http://www.bríet.is/>

Icelandic Human Rights Centre:

<http://www.humanrights.is/>

Women Of Multicultural Ethnicity Network – W.O.M.E.N. in Iceland:

<http://en.womeniniceland.is/>

Soroptimist International of Iceland:

<http://soroptimist.is/is/forsida/>

Women's Shelter - Sólstafir á Vestfjörðum:

<http://www.solstafir.is/>

Aflið – Counselling Center for Survivors of Sexual Abuse and Violence:

<http://aflidak.is/>

DrekaSlóð:

<http://drekaslod.is/>

Blátt áfram:

<http://www.blattafram.is/Default.asp?Page=303>

International Cooperation

Foreign Policy

In its foreign policy, the Government of Iceland emphasises cooperation with the Nordic countries, the European Union, Arctic issues and the sustainable utilisation of natural resources. Furthermore, emphasis is placed on international cooperation within the framework of the United Nations. Emphasis is placed on human rights, gender equality, peace and security *inter alia* by combating poverty, social injustice, inequality and famine. Iceland's development co-operation is based on the United Nations Millennium Development Goals with a special emphasis on areas in which Iceland is considered to have a comparative advantage, such as in fisheries, the harnessing of geothermal energy and gender equality. Special focus is placed on women's empowerment in general as well in particular relating to participation in and access to decision-making in mitigation and adaptation to climate change and in peace processes. Advancing the aims of UNSCR 1325 and related resolutions on women, peace and security is a priority.

Iceland has representatives in various gender equality working groups or committees, including the EFTA Working Group on Gender Equality, Anti-Discrimination and Family Policy; the Council of Europe Steering Committee on Gender Equality; and Nordic Council committees. The Icelandic government also submits reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and attends the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) meetings. Iceland also participates in OECD DAC's Network on Gender equality, GENDERNET, which is a forum for sharing experiences and disseminating good practice for integrating gender perspectives and women's empowerment into key aspects of development cooperation.

International Development Cooperation

Experience shows that development assistance which is based on the equal rights of men and women is an effective approach in development. Assistance which is based on participation of both women and men, and takes into account the needs, perspectives and interests of both genders is more likely to deliver sustainable results. Iceland's development policy is based on this knowledge, and gender equality and women's empowerment is both a specific objective and a cross-cutting theme in Iceland's development cooperation.

Strategy for Iceland's Development Cooperation (2011-2014)

The Strategy is in accordance with Act No. 121/2008 on Iceland's International Development Cooperation. A key objective of the Act is to take a holistic approach to Iceland's development policy. Accordingly, the Strategy covers multilateral and bilateral cooperation, humanitarian assistance and peace-building efforts. The Strategy identifies international development cooperation as one of the key pillars of Iceland's foreign policy.

The strategy calls for a sharper focus and clearer prioritisation of Iceland's development cooperation. The main emphasis will be on three areas: natural resources, human capital and peace-building, as well as on two cross-cutting themes: gender equality and environment. Mirroring Iceland's emphasis on gender equality and women's empowerment, UN Women, is identified as one of four key organisations in multilateral development cooperation. Iceland's contribution to UN Women is both in terms of core funding as well as earmarked to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. Contributions have furthermore been allocated to projects in Afghanistan, Palestine and the Balkans. Icelandic experts have been seconded to UNIFEM in the Balkans, Liberia, Barbados and at the agency's headquarters. There is furthermore an effective partnership between the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the National Committee of UN Women in Iceland, sealed in 2010 with an extended 3 year partnership agreement between the two parties.

The main objectives of Iceland's work towards gender equality and women's empowerment in development cooperation 2011-2014 are: mainstreaming gender equality into all development projects; promoting the implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security; implementing Iceland's Action Plan on UN SCR 1325; implementing gender budgeting and increasing the weight of gender in policy making and projects implemented by international organisation. Specific action points are further illuminated. They include the establishment by the MFA and ICEIDA of a working group on gender equality; the preparation of a joint gender policy in development cooperation and reviewing the Action Plan on women, peace and security. The working group has been established, the Action Plan reviewed and a second Action Plan is being prepared. Work has also started on the preparation of the joint gender policy which is estimated to be ready in early 2012.

Gender Responsive Budgeting – MFA's Pilot project

The MFA's pilot project in gender responsive budgeting addressed Iceland's international development cooperation and consisted in analysing a large share of Iceland's ODA in 2009. The analysis reached the part that the MFA is responsible for, or 60% of the total ODA (bilateral ODA through ICEIDA (40%) will be included in the analysis as of 2011). Whereas the contributions differ within (core and earmarked contributions to international organisations and NGOs, experts in the field), different types of methodology were used. First, core contributions were looked into by analysing the international organisations with regards to how gender equality relates to the mandate of the organisation and whether the organisations had gender policy and/or action plans. Second, the three UNU Training Programmes in Iceland were analysed by looking into both the internal and external side of the Programme activities. Finally, earmarked contributions were analysed, using the OECD DAC's Gender Equality Policy Marker, where projects were classified by whether they are intended to advance gender equality and women's empowerment or not.

The analysis revealed that out of 16 international organisations supported, 15 of them base their work on gender policies and/or action plans. One organisation, the Nordic Development Fund does not have a specific gender policy, but funds projects of implementing organisations that base their work on their own gender policies. Regarding the UNU Training Programmes, the analysis showed that more work can be done on mainstreaming gender in the programmes, even though the UNU Land Restoration Programme has been doing so from the outset. None of the Training Programmes have a specific gender policy, but base their work on the UNU strategic plan. However, they have

plans to do so in the medium term. Finally, the classification of the earmarked contributions showed that 74% of the projects have gender equality as a principal or significant objective, leaving 26% of the projects as not targeting gender equality. As for the next steps, Iceland's ODA will continue to be analysed and results used for budget allocations for each forthcoming year.

Further information:

<http://www.mfa.is/foreign-policy/development-cooperation/>

Strategy for Iceland's Development Cooperation (2011-2014):

http://www.utanrikisraduneyti.is/media/MFA_pdf/MFA---Strategy-for-Icelands-Development-Cooperation-2011-2014.pdf

Iceland Crisis Response Unit (ICRU)

Peace-building is a fundamental component of the United Nations, which Iceland supports in a number of ways. In addition to contributions to UN international peace-keeping,¹⁴ Iceland's participation in peace-keeping projects includes secondment of civilian experts to the field in conflict-affected countries. The Iceland Crisis Response Unit (ICRU) is a division of the Directorate of International Development Cooperation within the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In line with Iceland's Strategy for International Development, emphasis is placed on peace-keeping and peace-building with focus on vulnerable groups, such as refugees and children and the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. To that effect the ICRU office oversees Iceland's participation in international peace-building missions and seconds civilian personnel to UN agencies with which it has a roster collaboration agreement. The ICRU has seconded personnel to missions in four main areas: Afghanistan, the Middle East, the Balkans, and Sub-Saharan Africa.

A civilian gender expert has been seconded to Afghanistan for several years and since 2000, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has provided funding for Icelandic experts in UNIFEM's offices in the Western-Balkans, Liberia and the Caribbean.

In 2010 and 2011 ICRU was represented in the field by an equal number of men and women on missions, all of whom get training on UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace and Security before departure.

The Iceland Crisis Response unit also collaborates closely with national and local NGO's. National NGO's that get a government grant must account for how the project promotes gender equality, and local projects that empower women and girls are major recipients of Icelandic support to local NGOs.

Further information:

<http://www.mfa.is/foreign-policy/peacekeeping/>

¹⁴ 6% of the annual contributions to UN peace-keeping is counted as development assistance according to DAC criteria.

National Action Plan for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325

Iceland finalised its National Action Plan (NAP) for the implementation of UN resolution 1325/2000 in 2008. In preparing for the NAP the Ministry for Foreign Affairs consulted civil society organisations, academic institutions and its Nordic partners, which broadened the support and ownership of the NAP. The NAP is built on the main pillars of Iceland's foreign policy; respect for human rights; increased development cooperation and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Special emphasis is put on women's access at the negotiating table. The NAP is currently being revised and will i.a. take subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security into account, (1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009) and 1960 (2010)). It will be based on the newly adopted Strategy for Iceland's Development Cooperation 2011-2014 and contain specific goals, clear indicators and a transparent monitoring mechanism.

Iceland's Plan of Action for the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2008):

http://www.mfa.is/media/Utgafa/women_peace_security.pdf

Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA)

ICEIDA is a separate agency under the auspices of the Icelandic Ministry for Foreign Affairs. In 2011, the Agency cooperates with three partner countries, all in Sub-Saharan Africa, Malawi, Mozambique and Uganda. The principal goal of the cooperation is to contribute to social and economic development and to combat global poverty. Special focus is placed on the following sectors and sub-sectors: health, literacy, water and sanitation, fisheries and renewable energy.

ICEIDA operates on the basis of a gender equality policy adopted in 2004 and a gender equality plan of 2009. A Gender Equality Officer is appointed to lead and provide guidance on the implementation of the Agency's gender equality policy.

The emphasis on gender equality in ICEIDA's development cooperation is based on two principal factors. Firstly, the understanding that gender equality is a human rights issue and secondly, the affirmation that gender equality is a prerequisite for effective development. Gender equality is regarded as a pressing social issue and an important factor in the effort to promote human rights and democracy. In general, ICEIDA is working to promote gender equality and towards the target of mainstreaming gender perspectives into all its activities. To this end ICEIDA cooperates with gender equality institutions and organizations and advocates gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting and gender segregated data collection. Some of the projects and programmes ICEIDA provides support to are designed specifically to increase gender parity and empowerment of women, while others tackle gender as a cross-cutting issue.

Further information:

<http://www.iceida.is/english>

ICEIDA's Gender Equality Policy:

http://www.iceida.is/media/pdf/gender_equality_policy.pdf

GEST - The Gender Equality Studies and Training Programme

GEST is a joint project between the University of Iceland and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and is part of the Icelandic government's development cooperation efforts. The programme builds on the experience of the UNU training programmes in Iceland and follows a similar structure. The overall objective of the GEST Programme is to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in developing countries and post-conflict societies through education and training. Its main target group is professionals working for government and civil society organisations in developing countries and post-conflict societies undergoing reconstruction. The GEST Programme also offers short courses and seminars, which are open for professionals from both developed and developing countries. The GEST Programme is run by the University of Iceland and managed by EDDA – Centre of Excellence. The GEST Programme was launched in January 2009, and in January 2010, the first fellows completed the Programme.

Further information:

<http://gest.hi.is/>

Nordic Cooperation

Iceland participates in a number of Nordic gender equality projects. Most of these are carried out in connection with the Nordic Council of Ministers, under which a special ministerial committee, MR-JÄM, and a special officials' committee, ÄK-JÄM, deal with gender equality issues. Iceland held the Presidency of the Council in 2009. There was a strong focus on gender issues during the Presidency, which included Gender Equality in Education, Parental Leave, Gender and Power and Gender Responsive Budgeting.

Further information:

<http://formennska2009.jafnretti.is/fm2009/?D10clD=news>

<http://www.norden.org/en/about-nordic-co-operation/areas-of-co-operation/gender-equality>

Nordic Projects

Gender and Power in the Nordic Countries – politics and business (2008- 2009)

The project "Gender and Power in the Nordic Countries" (2008-2009) was carried out on behalf of the Nordic Ministers for Gender Equality and co-financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Gender Institute (NIKK). In the research project "Gender and Power in the Nordic Countries", an interdisciplinary Nordic research team mapped out and analysed the representation of women and men in politics and business in the Nordic countries during the last 15 years. The report is a source of information for political decision makers, researchers, students, and others who have an interest in Nordic equality policy. A final conference was held in Iceland in 2009.

Research Report:

http://www.nikk.no/filestore/Publikasjoner/NIKKPublications_GenderandpowerintheNordiccountries.pdf

Parental Leave, Care Policies & Gender Equalities in the Nordic Countries (2010)

The research project looked at how parental leave is used in the Nordic countries, how it affects the relationship between parents and children, and the status of men and women in the labour market. During the Icelandic presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the conference “Parental Leave, Care Policies & Gender Equalities in the Nordic Countries” took place in Reykjavik in October 2009. The conference gave insights into the different policies adopted within the Nordic countries.

Conference report:

http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Skýrsla_foreldraorlof.pdf

Other Nordic Projects:

Gender Equality in Schools (2010):

http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Sk%C3%BDrsla_Jafnr%C3%A9tti%20%C3%AD%20sk%C3%B3lum.pdf

Prostitution in the Nordic Countries (2008):

http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publications/2009-756/at_download/publicationfile

Gender Budgeting - Integration of a gender perspective in the budgetary process (2006):

http://www.lige.dk/files/mainstreaming/gender_budget_countryreport.pdf

Now it's about the money: Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective into Nordic national budgets (2006):

http://www.lige.dk/files/mainstreaming/gender_budget_finalreport.pdf

Youth, gender and pornography in Nordic countries (2006):

<http://www.nikk.no/English/b7ySFRnY2S.ips>

Gender and Climate Change:

<http://www.norden.org/is/utgafa/utgefid-efni/2009-765>

European Cooperation

Iceland has participated in the gender equality programmes of the European Union on grounds of the Agreement on the European Economic Area. The Centre for Gender Equality has both participated in and led projects under the EU's gender equality programme dealing with issues as diverse as parental and paternity leave, gender mainstreaming, media stereotypes and measuring equality. Some of these projects are cooperative involving several European countries, in which the Government of Iceland has been one of the participants. Furthermore, under the Agreement on the European Economic Area, the Icelandic Government has had representatives on committees active in gender equality matters.

European Projects:¹⁵

Culture, Custom and Caring – men’s and women’s possibilities to parental leave. (2003-2004):

<http://caring.jafnretti.is>

Sports, Media and Stereotypes (2004-2005):

http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/sms_report_lokaloka.pdf

Modern Men in Enlarged Europe I and II (2004-2006):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Fathers%20Parental%20Leave.pdf>

FOCUS: Fostering Caring Masculinities (2005-2007):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/FOCUS%20-%20European%20Report.pdf>

Tea for Two – Illustrating Equality (2006-2007):

<http://www.tft.gender.is/>

Side by Side – gender mainstreaming I-III (2008-2012):

<http://samstiga.is/samstiga/?D10clD=NewsDouble>

Break gender stereotypes, give talent a chance (2009):

<http://www.businessandgender.eu/is/til-baka>

¹⁵ Further information about these projects in Annex 2: *Centre for Gender Equality Profile*.

Various Projects on Gender Equality

Gender Responsive Budgeting in Iceland - Pilot Projects

In early 2009 the Minister of Finance appointed a working group on gender responsive budgeting, and based on the working group's suggestions the Minister of Finance requested all ministries to propose pilot projects to coincide with the 2011 budget. Results of these projects are presented in the bill for the 2012 budget.

- **Prime Ministry**
 - Analysing errands sent to the Ombudsman for Children in Iceland
- **Ministry of Education, Science and Culture**
 - Analysing applications and allocations of artists' salaries
- **Ministry for Foreign Affairs**
 - Analysing the Ministry's contributions to development cooperation (excluding state-to-state bilateral aid (ICEIDA))
- **Ministry of Fisheries and Agriculture**
 - The AVS Research Fund
- **Ministry of the Interior**
 - Transportation repair/road construction and regional development policy: The social, cultural and financial impact of making a road tunnel in the north of the country on the lives of the inhabitants (research project).
 - Composition of the staff of the ministry's institutions
 - Looking at the increase of women in the police force and the influence of the Police Academy
- **Ministry of Welfare**
 - Resources for the unemployed
 - Unemployment benefits
 - Treatment facilities for young people
 - Waiting lists for cardiac catheterization
 - Waiting lists for hip/knee replacement surgery
 - Grants from the Ministry

- Grants from the Prevention Fund
- **Ministry of Finance**
 - The transferability of personal tax discount between couples
- **Ministry of Industry, Energy and Tourism**
 - The Ministry's funds
- **Ministry of Economic Affairs**
 - Funds of the Ministry and distribution
 - Research on the debt status of the Icelandic household
- **Ministry for the Environment**
 - Allocations from the Hunting Fund
 - REACH: European Community Regulation on chemicals and their safe use

Further information:

http://www.fjarmalaraduneyti.is/verkefni/kynjud_fjarlagagerd/

Equality in Schools

From 2008-2010, the Centre for Gender Equality led a project called Equality Education in Playschools and Elementary schools, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security (now Ministry of Welfare) and 5 municipalities. In each municipality two schools participated in the project, designing and implementing activities focused on gender equality, for staff or students. The teachers in the project received trainings in gender studies and a project manager provided support. During the project a webpage was set up in order to provide support and inspiration to educators developing activities on gender issues for their students. The Centre for Gender Equality has since the end of the project organised seminars where teachers share their experiences of the project. In addition and as part of the Icelandic presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers the Centre for Gender Equality organised a Nordic conference on Gender Equality in Schools in September 2009.

Contact the Centre for Gender Equality:

jafnretti@jafnretti.is

Conference report in Scandinavian languages:

http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/_Files/Sk%C3%BDrsla_Jafnr%C3%A9tti%20%C3%AD%20sk%C3%B3lum.pdf

Equal Pay Standard

An Interim provision to the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 10/2008, states that the Minister of Welfare shall ensure that a special certification system is developed with appropriate stakeholders to certify the implementation of the policy of wage equality and gender equality. In following this provision, work is under way to develop an equal pay standard (ISO standard), in cooperation with Icelandic Standards (IST), the national standards body of Iceland. This project is led by the Ministry of Welfare in cooperation with the Icelandic Confederation of Labour (ASÍ) and Confederation of Icelandic Employers (SA). The project is on-going.

Men Take Responsibility

Men Take Responsibility is a therapy program for men who resort to domestic violence against women. The program started in 1998 as a four-year trial program and was modelled after the Norwegian *Alternative to Violence* program. In 2006 it was decided to restart the program, with financing from the Ministry of Social Affairs. This is the only therapy option available in Iceland for men who commit violence against their spouses. The therapy is based on individual and group psychological therapy sessions. This program is open only for men. Since the project was revived in 2006, 108 individuals have come for interviews (2006-2010). The project is currently run in cooperation between the Women's Shelter, Centre for Gender Equality and Ministry of Welfare, which funds the project. The Prison Authority of Iceland runs a special programme for perpetrators under 18 years of age.

Contact the Centre for Gender Equality:

jafnretti@jafnretti.is

Further information:

<http://www.karlartilabyrgdar.is/kti/english.aspx>

Your Rights – Pamphlet for Foreign Women in Iceland (2011)

The Centre for Gender Equality published a pamphlet for foreign women in Iceland and others who are interested in learning about gender equality in Iceland, rights and obligations. The pamphlet is sponsored by the Progress programme of the European Union and the text is prepared by Stígamót in co-operation with the Centre for Gender Equality, the Ministry of Welfare, the Directorate of Immigration, Women of Multicultural Ethnicity Network, the Police Department in the capital area, the Women's Shelter and the Multicultural and information Centre. The pamphlet is printed in 7 languages: Icelandic, Polish, English, Spanish, Thai, Russian and Arabic and has useful information regarding the Icelandic justice system and the Icelandic community. The information includes sections on equal rights and status of the genders, residence permits, divorces, child custody, issues regarding right of access, finance, violence in close relationships and personal threats. It also contains references to further information, including addresses, telephone numbers and websites of several institutions and organizations.

Contact the Centre for Gender Equality:

jafnretti@jafnretti.is

The pamphlet in English:

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/ISL-Enska.pdf>

Research

Publications available in English:

Gender and Power in the Nordic Countries (2011):

http://www.nikk.no/filestore/Publikasjoner/NIKKPublications_GenderandpowerintheNordiccountries.pdf

Also in Iceland- Report on the Nature and Scope of Trafficking in Persons 2009:

http://redcross.lausn.is/Apps/WebObjects/RedCross.woa/swdocument/1041254/lika_a_Islandi_sam_antekt_ensku.pdf?wosid=false

Evaluating Equal Pay in the Nordic Countries - Mælistikur á launajafnrétti á Norðurlöndum (2006):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Likelon-lokaeintak.pdf>

Sports, Media and Stereotypes: Woman and Men in Sports and Media (2006):

http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/sms_report_lokaloka.pdf

Parental Leave and Family Policies:

Parental leave, Care Policies and Gender Equalities in the Nordic Countries (2009):

http://jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Skýrsla_foreldraorlof.pdf

Parental Leave in Iceland; Bringing the Fathers in. Developments in the Wake of New Legislation in 2000 (2007):

<http://jafnretti.is/D10/Files/parentalleave.pdf>

Between Paid and Unpaid Work: Family Friendly Policies and Gender Equality in Europe (2006):

<http://jafnretti.is/D10/Files/BetweenPaidandUnpaidWork.pdf>

Between Paid and Unpaid Work: On Reconciliation of Gender Equality and Daily Routines in Iceland (2006):

http://jafnretti.is/D10/Files/island_gislihafn_en.pdf

FOCUS: Fostering Caring Masculinities (2006):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Fathers%20Parental%20Leave.pdf>

Nordic experiences with parental leave and its impact on equality between women and men (2006):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Nordic%20experiences%20with%20parental%20leave.pdf>

Fathers on Paternal Leave: Modern Men in Enlarged Europe (2005):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Fathers%20Parental%20Leave.pdf>

Men do it! Stories of Fathers on Parental Leave (2005):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Men%20Do%20It.pdf>

Culture, Custom and Caring: Men's and Women's Possibilities to Parental Leave (2004):

http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/CCC_FinalReport.pdf

Challenges and Next Steps

In the last few decades Iceland has seen many advances regarding gender equality issues, but full equality is still ahead of us. Many challenges are still to be addressed, especially in the wake of the economic crisis. It is crucial to ensure that women and men are equally represented in the actions tackling the recession. Here are a few things to bear in mind:

- To ensure women and men are equally represented in governmental committees, councils and boards.
- To monitor the effects of the economic crisis on women and men, e.g. looking at unemployment and the effects of cuts in social and health services.
- To analyse the repercussions of budget cuts within the paternal/maternal leave system and paternity/maternity leave benefits.
- To review the actions designed to counteract the economic downturn, including when the recessions comes to an end.
- To increase the awareness of environment issues from a gender equality perspective.
- To ensure that all governmental data is accessible and gender-segregated.

In order to continue the work on gender issues and to counteract current challenges, the government has approved a new Plan of Action on Gender Equality for the period 2011-2015. It is based on 8 themes, with over 40 projects. Some of the themes, like gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting, require participation of all the ministries, others some of them or just one. The themes are:

- Governance
- The Labour Market
- Gender and Power
- Combating Gender Based Violence
- Education and Gender Equality
- Men and Gender Equality
- International Cooperation
- Monitoring and Evaluating

These themes will work towards: addressing the role of the government and governance in creating a gender balance in society, bridging the gender pay gap, improving the work-life balance, enhancing

and supporting women in entrepreneurship, advocating non tolerance towards gender based violence, establishing gender education in schools from preschool to universities, changing stereotypes and attitudes, addressing pornography in popular culture and increasing the role of men in gender equality.

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http://www.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/ritogskyrslur2011/18022011_Jafnretti_i_tolum.pdf

Iceland in figures 2011. Statistics Iceland, 2011:

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http://www.iwraw-ap.org/resources/pdf/41_official_documents/icelandICE6.pdf

Women's History Archives. Accessed December 5th, 2010:

<http://kvennasogusafn.is/index.php?page=english>

World Economic Forum *Global Gender Gap Report 2011*:

<http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-2011/>

Women in the time of Crisis, (Konur í Kreppu? - only available in Icelandic.) Authors: Eva Bjarnadóttir and Eygló Árnadóttir. Ministry of Welfare, 2011:

http://www.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/ritogskyrslur2011/Konur_i_kreppu_22032011.pdf

Your rights – Pamphlet for Foreign Women in Iceland. Centre for Gender Equality, 2011:

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/ISL-Enska.pdf>

Labour Market, Parental Leave and Family Policies

Parental Leave, Care Policies & Gender Equalities in the Nordic Countries (2010)

Conference report:

http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Skýrsla_foreldraorlof.pdf

Homo economicus meets Homo holismus: Men and women discuss their salaries within different frames of reference. Author: Gyða Margrét Pétursdóttir, University of Iceland, 2010:

http://skemman.is/is/stream/get/1946/6730/18372/1/22-29_GydaMargretPetursdottir_STJbok.pdf

Equal Rights to Earn and Care - Parental Leave in Iceland. Editors. Eydal, G.B. & Gíslason, I.V. Reykjavík: Social Science Research Institute, 2008 (not available online).

Ingólfur V. Gíslason (2007): *Parental leave in Iceland. Bringing the fathers in. Developments in the Wake of the New Legislation in 2000*. Jafnréttisstofa. Félagsmálaráðuneytið:

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Fríða Rós Valdimarsdóttir (2006): *Nordic experiences with parental leave and its impact on equality between women and men*. TemaNord 2006: 531:

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Between Paid and Unpaid Work: On Reconciliation of Gender Equality and Daily Routines in Iceland (2006):

http://jafnretti.is/D10/Files/island_gislihafn_en.pdf

FOCUS: Fostering Caring Masculinities (2006). Final report:

<http://jafnretti.is/D10/Files/FOCUS%20-%20Icelandic%20National%20Report.pdf>

Violence Against Women

The Minister of Welfare report on activities implemented under the plan of action to deal with Domestic and Sexual Violence (2006-2010). The report includes results from an extensive research project with 6 components:

- A phone survey including 3000 women aged 18-80
- 5 qualitative studies researching the following sectors:
 - Municipal social services
 - Child protection
 - Pre- and elementary schools
 - Health services
 - Police
 - Civil society organizations.

The complete report in Icelandic:

<http://www.althingi.is/altext/139/s/pdf/1214.pdf>

Plan of Action to deal with Domestic and Sexual Violence 2006-2010. Ministry of Welfare:

http://www.velferdarraduneyti.is/media/acrobat-enskar_sidur/Plan_of_Action_to_deal_with_Domestic_and_Sexual_Violence.pdf

Protecting women against violence. Council of Europe, 2010:

http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/03themes/violence-against-women/cdeg_2010_12en.pdf

Human Trafficking and Prostitution

The Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings including report on Human Trafficking in Iceland. Ministry of Welfare, 2009:

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Women Parliamentarians. Althingi. Accessed on December 11th, 2010:

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Iceland: health profile. World Health Organisation, 2009:

<http://www.who.int/gho/countries/isl.pdf>

Health statistics. Statistics Iceland:

<http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Health,-social-affairs-and-justi/Health-services>

Appendix - 1: Selected Links

Quick facts about Iceland:

<http://www.iceland.is/the-big-picture/quick-facts/>

Statistics Iceland:

<http://www.statice.is/>

Universal Periodic Review: Icelandic National Report 2011:

<http://www.innanrikisraduneyti.is/media/frettir-2011/Mannrettindaskyrslan---lokaeintak-sent.doc>

CEDAW REPORTS:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/docs/CEDAW.C.ICE.CO.6.pdf>

The Centre for Gender Equality:

<http://www.gender.is>

Ministry of Welfare:

<http://eng.felagsmalaraduneyti.is>

Nordic Cooperation:

<http://www.norden.org/en>

RIKK, The Centre for Women's and Gender Studies at the University of Iceland:

<http://www.rikk.hi.is>

NIKK, Nordic Institute for Women's Studies and Gender Research:

<http://www.nikk.uio.no>

Appendix - 2: Centre for Gender Equality Profile

The Centre for Gender Equality is a national bureau and is in charge of administering the Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 96/2000. The aim of the Act is to establish and maintain equal status and equal opportunities for women and men, and thus promote gender equality in all spheres of society.

The Centre provides counselling and education in the field of gender equality, for governmental and municipal authorities, institutions, companies, individuals and non-governmental organizations. The aim is to obtain a multi-dimensional continuous result.

Strategies and Methods of the Centre

- Gender mainstreaming
- Special actions and projects
- Awareness-raising
- Research
- Education and information
- Counselling
- Legal advice and supervision

For more on the Centre for Gender Equality:

<http://www.jafnretti.is/jafnretti/?D10cID=News>

Tasks of the Centre for Gender Equality

As stated in Article 4 of the current Act on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Women and Men No. 10/2008, the tasks covered by the Centre for Gender Equality:

- a. Monitoring the application of the Act
- b. Supervising educational and informative activities
- c. Advising government authorities, institutions, companies, non-governmental organisations and individuals on gender equality issues
- d. Making suggestions and proposals to the Minister, the Gender Equality Council and other government authorities on measures to achieve gender equality
- e. Making proposals on affirmative actions

- f. Increasing the level of activity in gender equality issues, i.e. by greater involvement of men in gender equality work
- g. Monitoring gender equality developments in society, i.g.. by gathering information and initiating research
- h. Providing assistance to gender equality committees, gender equality counsellors and gender equality representatives of local authorities, institutions and companies
- i. Working at preventive measures against gender-based violence in collaboration with other government authorities and organisations specifically involved in such preventive measures
- j. Working against gender based wage discrimination and other forms of gender discrimination in the labour market
- k. Mediating cases of dispute referred to the Centre for Gender Equality on the basis of this Act
- l. Changing traditional gender images and working against negative stereotyping regarding the roles of women and men
- m. Carrying out other tasks in accordance with the aims of this Act in accordance with further decisions by the Minister

For more on the role of the Centre for Gender Equality:

<http://eng.felagsmalaraduneyti.is/legislation/nr/4203>

<http://www.jafnretti.is/jafnretti/?D10cID=News>

Projects

Equality in Schools

In 2008-10 the Gender Centre led a project called Equality Education in Preschools and Elementary school, in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security (now Ministry of Welfare) and 5 municipalities. In each municipality two schools participated in the project, designing and implementing activities focused on gender equality, for staff or students. The teachers in the project received trainings in gender studies and a project manager provided support. During the project a webpage was setup in order to provide support and inspiration to educators developing activities on gender issues for their students. The Gender Centre has followed up on the project with seminars where the participating teachers share their experiences. In addition and as part of the Icelandic presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers the Centre for Gender Equality organised a Nordic conference on Gender Equality in Schools in September 2009.

Contact the Centre for Gender Equality:

jafnretti@jafnretti.is

Conference report in Scandinavian languages:

http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Sk%C3%BDrsla_Jafnr%C3%A9tti%20%C3%AD%20sk%C3%B3lum.pdf

Men Take Responsibility

Men take responsibility is a therapy program for men who resort to domestic violence against women. The program started in 1998 as a four-year trial program and was modelled after the Norwegian *Alternative to Violence* program. In 2006 a decision was made to restart the program, with financing from the Ministry of Social Affairs. This is the only therapy option available in Iceland for men who commit violence against their spouses. The therapy is based on individual and group psychological therapy sessions. This program is open only for men. Since the project was revived in 2006, 108 individuals have come for interviews. The project is currently run in cooperation between the Women's Shelter, Centre for Gender Equality and Ministry of Welfare, which funds the project. There is also a special programme for perpetrators under 18 years of age.

Further information:

<http://www.karlartilabyrgdar.is/kti/english.aspx>

Your Rights – Pamphlet for Foreign Women in Iceland (2011)

The Centre for Gender Equality published a pamphlet for foreign women in Iceland and others who are interested in learning about gender equality in Iceland, rights and obligations. The pamphlet is sponsored by the Progress programme of the European Union and the text is prepared by Stígamót in co-operation with the Centre for Gender Equality, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security, the Directorate of Immigration, Women of Multicultural Ethnicity Network, the police department in

the capital area, the Women's Shelter and the Multicultural and information Centre. The pamphlet is printed in 7 languages: Icelandic, Polish, English, Spanish, Thai, Russian and Arabic and has useful information regarding the Icelandic Justice system and the Icelandic community. The information includes sections on equal rights and status of the genders, residence permits, divorces, custody issues, issues regarding right of access, finance, violence in close relationships and personal threats. It also contains references to further information, including addresses, telephone numbers and websites of several institutions and organizations.

The pamphlet in English:

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/ISL-Enska.pdf>

Contact the Centre for Gender Equality:

jafnretti@jafnretti.is

Nordic Projects

Iceland participates in a number of Nordic gender equality projects. Most of these are carried out in connection with the Nordic Council of Ministers, under which a special ministerial committee, MR-JÄM, and a special officials' committee, ÄK-JÄM, deal with gender equality issues. Iceland held the Presidency of the Council in 2009. There was a strong focus on gender issues during the Presidency, which included Gender Equality in Education, Parental Leave, Gender and Power and Gender Responsive Budgeting.

Gender and Power in the Nordic Countries – politics and business (2008- 2009)

The project “Gender and Power in the Nordic Countries” (2008-2009) was carried out on behalf of the Nordic Ministers for Gender Equality and co-financed by the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Nordic Gender Institute (NIKK). In the research project “Gender and Power in the Nordic Countries”, an interdisciplinary Nordic research team mapped out and analysed the representation of women and men in politics and business in the Nordic countries during the last 15 years. The report is a source of information for political decision makers, researchers, students, and others who have an interest in Nordic equality policy. A final conference was held in Iceland in 2009.

Further information:

<http://formennska2009.jafnretti.is/fm2009/?D10cID=news&id=13>

Research report:

http://www.nikk.no/filestore/Publikasjoner/NIKKPublications_GenderandpowerintheNordiccountries.pdf

Parental Leave, Care Policies & Gender Equalities in the Nordic Countries (2010)

The research project looks at how parental leave is used in the Nordic countries, how it affects the relationship between parents and children, and the status of men and women in the labour market. During the Icelandic presidency of the Nordic Council of Ministers, the conference “Parental Leave, Care Policies & Gender Equalities in the Nordic Countries” took place in Reykjavik in October 2009. The conference gave insights into the different policies adopted within the Nordic countries.

Conference report:

http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Skýrsla_foreldraorlof.pdf

Research report:

<http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publikationer/2011-562>

Other Nordic Projects:

Gender Equality in Schools (2010):

http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Sk%C3%BDrsla_Jafnr%C3%A9tti%20%C3%AD%20sk%C3%B3lum.pdf

Prostitution in the Nordic Countries (2008):

http://www.norden.org/en/publications/publications/2009-756/at_download/publicationfile

Gender Budgeting - Integration of a gender perspective in the budgetary process (2006):

http://www.lige.dk/files/mainstreaming/gender_budget_countryreport.pdf

Now it's about the money: Mainstreaming a gender equality perspective into Nordic national budgets (2006):

http://www.lige.dk/files/mainstreaming/gender_budget_finalreport.pdf

Youth, gender and pornography in Nordic countries (2006):

<http://www.nikk.no/English/b7ySFRnY2S.ips>

European Union Projects

Culture, Custom and Caring – (2003-2004)

In 2003 the Gender Centre led a project focused on men's and women's possibilities to parental leave. The project partners were institutions in Norway, Germany and Spain. Two research centres in Iceland were responsible for coordinating the research part of the project, which was based on interviews in all participating countries. The aim of this project was to examine the interplay of gender roles, culture, customs and law and how these factors support or hinder parents in bringing up their children. In addition to reports published for each country, a documentary film was created depicting parents' situations and possibilities.

Further information:

<http://caring.jafnretti.is>

Sports, Media and Stereotypes (2004-2005)

The aim of the project was to contribute to the knowledge of representation of women and men in sports media in Europe, with the aim to promote change in the stereotypes presented of both genders in the field. The partners in this project were from Norway, Austria, Lithuania and Italy. The main objectives were to explore similarities and variations in representations of women and men in sports and developing training material aimed to educate sport correspondents as well as athletic instructors and coaches on the representation and women and men in sports and thus to give them practical tools for analysing their daily work.

Further information:

http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/sms_report_lokaloka.pdf

Modern men in Enlarged Europe I and II (2004-2006)

Iceland participated in this project along with partners from Denmark, Malta and Lithuania, which led the project. The aim of the first phase of the project was to encourage men to take on new and modern gender roles. The second phase was titled Family Friendly – Policies and its aim was to identify which social changes could affect chances in and improve men's balancing of family and working life responsibilities. Both project phases were based on interviews with parents, fathers and directors of companies, as well as research questionnaires. The project published a guide on how companies can encourage equal sharing of care responsibilities.

Further information:

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Fathers%20Parental%20Leave.pdf>

FOCUS: Fostering Caring Masculinities (2005-2007)

The project was led by Norway in cooperation with Iceland, Slovenia, Spain and Germany. The aim of this project was to examine and improve men's opportunities to balance work and family life in order to encourage the preparedness of men to take over caring tasks. To reach this goal the project focused on companies' framework conditions to perceive and include men as actors and target groups in equality policies.

Further information:

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/FOCUS%20-%20European%20Report.pdf>

Tea for Two – Illustrating Equality (2006-2007)

The aim of this project was to promote equal participation of women and men in local governments by analysing the situation of gender equality and raise awareness of the issue. The project included partners from five European countries; Iceland (lead country), Norway, Finland, Bulgaria and Greece. The project collected information on women's and men's participation in local governments and developed a tool for such data collection and measurement. The information gathered under the

project was made available to the general public, governments and local authorities, in visual and accessible form, to promote awareness of the importance of gender equality in local government.

Further information:

<http://www.tft.gender.is/>

Side by Side – Gender Mainstreaming I-III (2008-2012)

The project focuses on gender mainstreaming and is funded by the EU Progress Programme, currently in its third phase. The aim of the project is to implement and develop gender mainstreaming tools in national policies and activities in Iceland. The project's target groups are the equality representatives in the government's ministries, as well as other public policy stakeholders. The project activities include training on gender mainstreaming, publishing handbooks and tools on gender mainstreaming and seminars. The third phase has a focus on increasing knowledge and expertise on gender budgeting.

Further information:

<http://samstiga.is/samstiga/?D10cID=NewsDouble>

Break Gender Stereotypes - Give Talent a Chance (2009)

The project objective was to support small to medium sized companies in breaking up gender stereotypes and therewith making the most of their human resources. EU Member States + 2 EFTA countries (Iceland and Norway) participated in this project. The Centre for Gender Equality held seminars and published material for companies to learn from.

Further information:

<http://www.businessandgender.eu/is/til-baka>

Research Reports

The Centre for Gender Equality has published research reports on a variety of topics related to its mandate. In 2009 it published a report on gender-based violence in Iceland and the Nordic countries. In 2008 the final report of the Tea-for-Two project, *Tea for Two; Illustrating Equality* was published. In 2006 the reports *Nordic Experiences with Parental Leave and its Impact on Equality between Women and Men* and *Sports, Media and Stereotypes: Women and Men in Sports and Media* were published. In 2005 *Fathers on Parental Leave: Modern Men in Enlarged Europe* was published and in 2004 *Culture, Custom and Caring: Men's and Women's Possibilities of Parental Leave* was published. In 2003, the Centre conducted the Nordic research projects *Women Leave, the Men Stay* and *Welfare, Masculinity and Social Innovation*. Governmental bodies and administration look to these reports in their policy making, as well as the Parliament. NGOs occasionally refer to them in their lobbyism efforts. The Centre takes part in various researches and has also published a number of reports in collaboration with other public institutions and ministries.

Gender and Power in the Nordic Countries (2011):

http://www.nikk.no/filestore/Publikasjoner/NIKKPublications_GenderandpowerintheNordiccountries.pdf

Evaluating Equal Pay in the Nordic Countries - Mælistikur á launajafnrétti á Norðurlöndum - På sporet av likelön (2006):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Likelon-lokaeintak.pdf>

Sports, Media and Stereotypes: Woman and Men in Sports and Media (2006):

http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/sms_report_lokaloka.pdf

Parental leave, Care Policies and Gender Equalities in the Nordic Countries (2009)

http://jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Skýrsla_foreldraorlof.pdf

Parental Leave in Iceland. Bringing the Fathers in. Developments in the Wake of New Legislation in 2000 (2007):

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Between Paid and Unpaid Work: Family Friendly Policies and Gender Equality in Europe (2006):

<http://jafnretti.is/D10/Files/BetweenPaidandUnpaidWork.pdf>

Between Paid and Unpaid Work: On Reconciliation of Gender Equality and Daily Routines in Iceland (2006):

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FOCUS: Fostering Caring Masculinities (2006):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Fathers%20Parental%20Leave.pdf>

<http://jafnretti.is/D10/Files/FOCUS%20-%20Icelandic%20National%20Report.pdf>

Nordic experiences with parental leave and its impact on equality between women and men (2006):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Nordic%20experiences%20with%20parental%20leave.pdf>

Fathers on Paternal Leave: Modern Men in Enlarged Europe (2005):
http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/_Files/Fathers%20Parental%20Leave.pdf

Men do it! Stories of Fathers on Parental Leave (2005):
http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/_Files/Men%20Do%20It.pdf

Culture, Custom and Caring: Men's and Women's Possibilities to Parental Leave (2004):
http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/_Files/CCC_FinalReport.pdf

Publications

Women and Men in Iceland (2011):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Women%20and%20Men%202011.pdf>

Your Rights (2011):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/ISL-Enska.pdf>

Gender Equality in Iceland (2009):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Stepping%20stones.PDF>

Centre for Gender Equality (2007):

<http://www.jafnretti.is/D10/Files/Bæklingur%20enska.pdf>

Awareness Raising

The Centre for Gender Equality is according to Article 4 of the Gender Equality Act mandated to raise awareness on gender issues. In accordance to this the Centre has implemented the following actions:

- Brochure on the role and tasks of the Centre distributed to every home in the country.
- Brochure with accessible information on the Gender Equality Act and the Centre.
- Handbook on the methods of Gender mainstreaming and how it has been used by various organizations and government in Iceland
- Brochure to promote the participation of women in local government and to encourage them to stand for elections.
- Regional seminars to promote the Act on Gender Equality. The Centre holds several seminars around the country to promote awareness of the legislation and its role and tasks.
- Television advertisements to raise awareness of gender based violence and encourage victims to seek assistance.
- Television advertisements to raise awareness of the gender gap in politics and encourage voters to elect both women and men in municipal elections.
- Numerous conferences on parental leave, gender based violence, gender stereotypes, gender equality in education and many more topics.
- Annual lecture series on gender equality issues, in cooperation with the University of Akureyri.
- 16-Day Campaign to Combat Violence against Women: Every year the Centre organises public events and activities in relation to the campaign.

- Every year the Centre publishes a calendar with special emphasis on the legal obligations of the Icelandic government concerning gender equality. Also posters on gender based violence. All posters have been distributed to all public institutions.
- Press releases: The Centre raises awareness of gender equality issues by means of issuing press releases on different topics, which are sent to all media outlets.

Appendix - 3: Gender Equality in Iceland – In Numbers

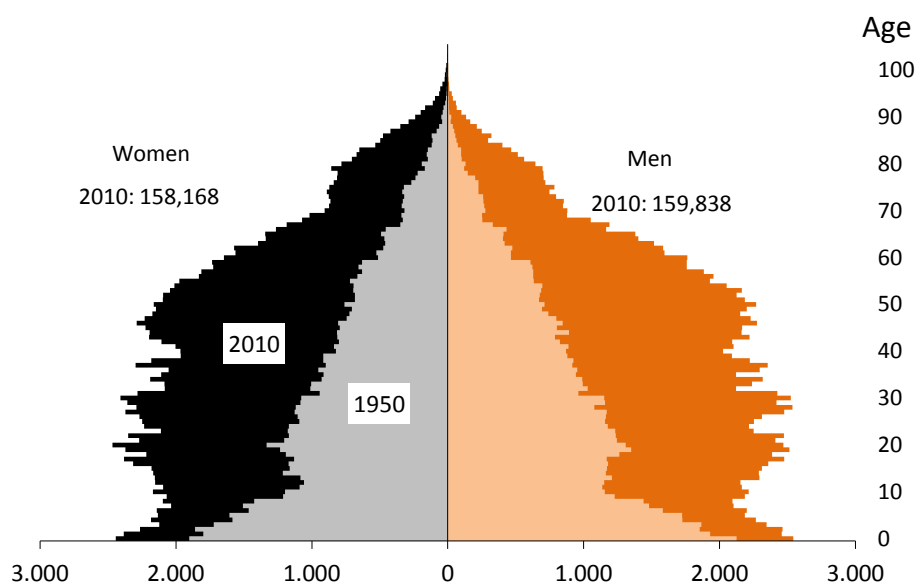


Figure 1: Population by gender and age 1950 and 2010

	Women	Men
Mid-year population	157,7	161,55
0–14 years, %	21	21
15–64 years, %	66	68
65 and older, %	13	11
Immigrants as percent of total population ¹	8.3	9.1
Life births	2,465	2,561
Total fertility rate	2.2	.
Mean age of mothers/fathers, first child	26.6	29.3
Mean age of spouses, first marriage	31.8	34.5
Deaths total	969	1,033
Deaths per 1,000 pop.	6.1	6.4
Infant mortality	1.6	2.0
Average life expectancy at birth, years	83.3	79.7

Table 1: Population in Iceland in the year 2009

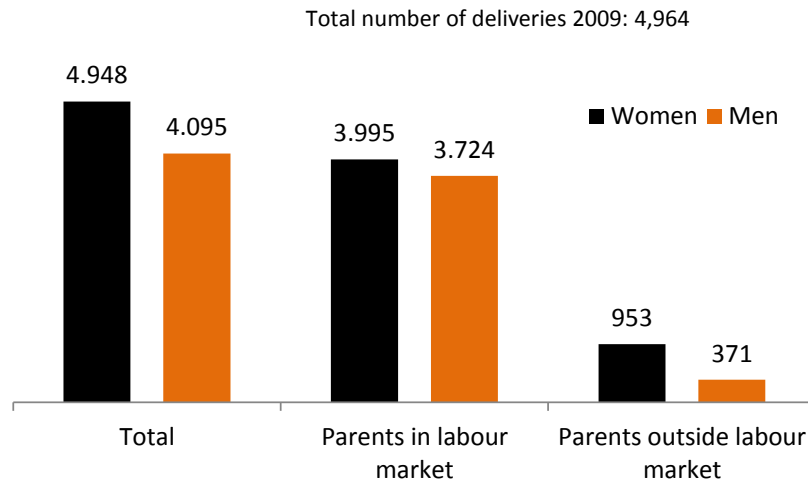


Figure 2: Parents receiving payments in maternity/paternity leave 2009

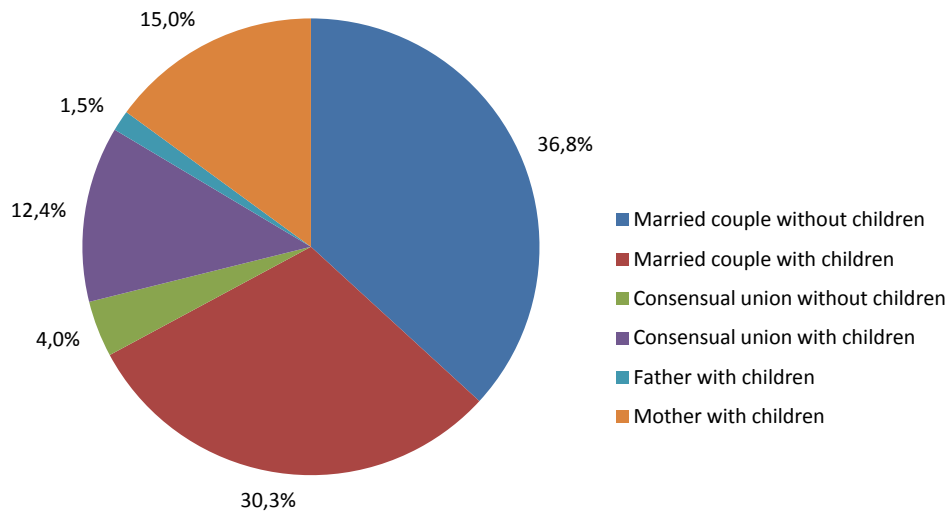


Figure 3: Icelandic families in 2011

	Overall violence	Intimate partner violence
Experiencing any violence	42%	22%
Physical violence	30%	20%
Sexual violence	24%	6%
Violence during the last 12 months (autumn 2007-2008)	4%	1-2%

Table 2: Women aged 18-80 who have experienced violence by males

Note: Based on a telephone survey of 3,000 women aged 18-80 years carried out in 2008. Net response rate was 73%. Source: Centre for Children and Family Research (ICE-CCFR) for the Ministry of Social Affairs and Social Security. Survey on violence against women.

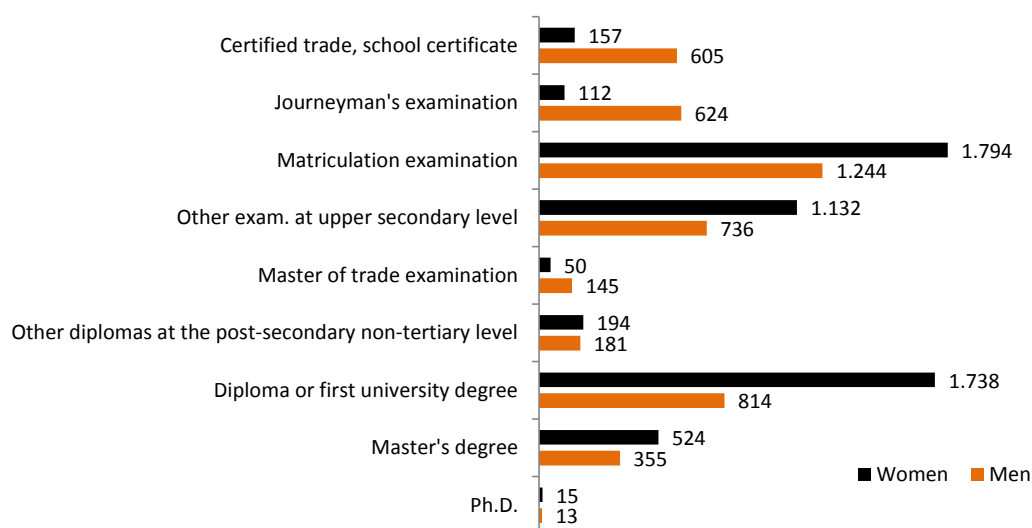


Figure 4: Graduations by diploma and sex 2008–2009

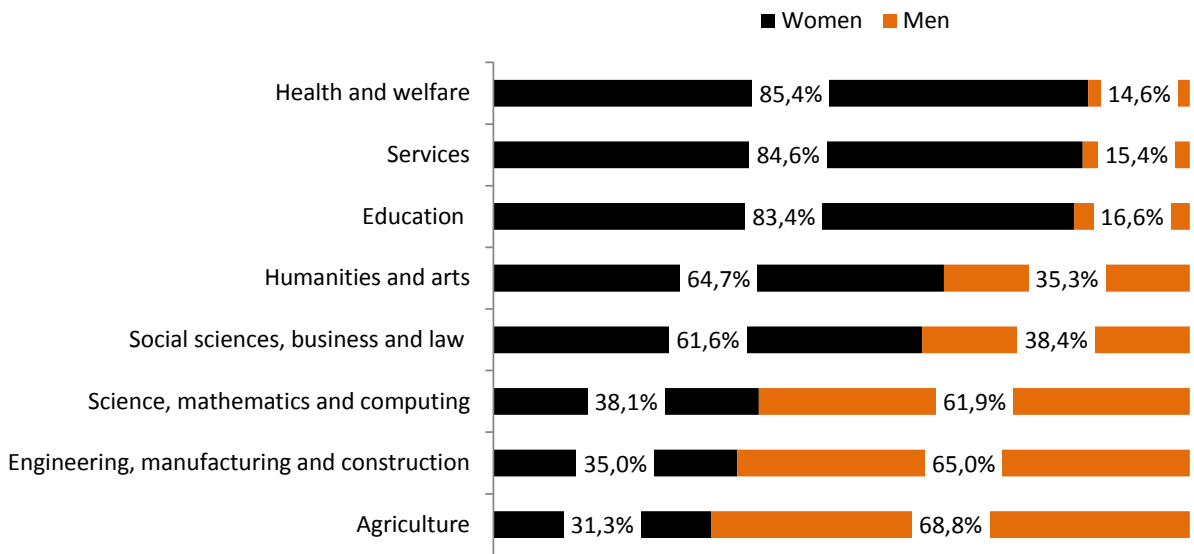


Figure 5: Graduations at tertiary level 2008/2009

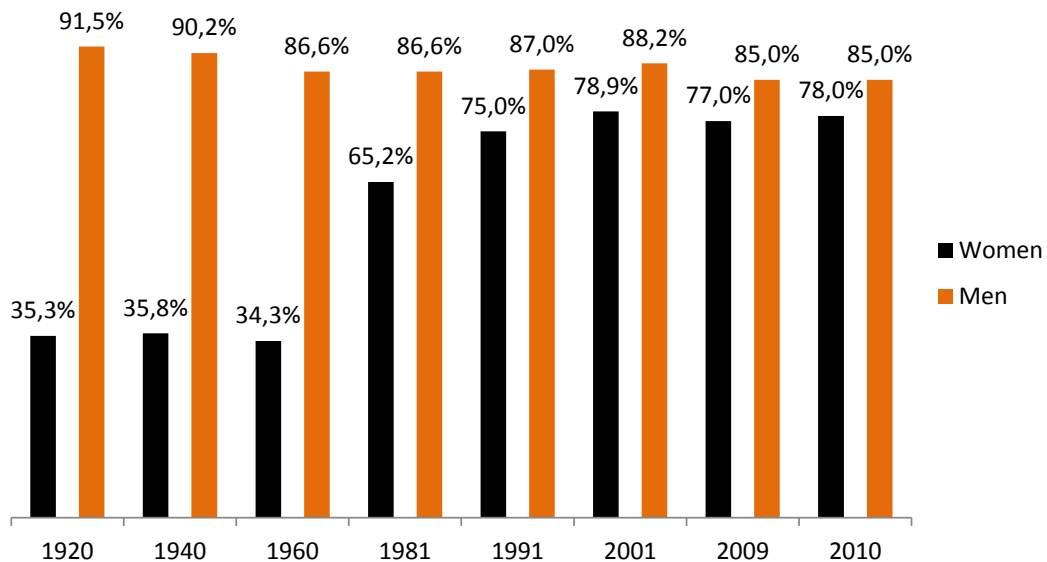


Figure 6: Labour force participation rates 1920–2010

	Women	Men
Labour force, number	85,900	95,000
Percent division of labour force	47	53
Economic activity rate 16-74 years, %	78	85
Percent of employed, 16-74 years, %	72	77
Percent of employed full-time (35+ hours per week), %	62	86
Percent of employed part-time (<35 hours per week), %	38	14
Average working hours per week	35	44
Average working hours per week, full-time	41	47
Rate of unemployment, %	6.7	8.3

Table 3: Icelandic labour market in 2010

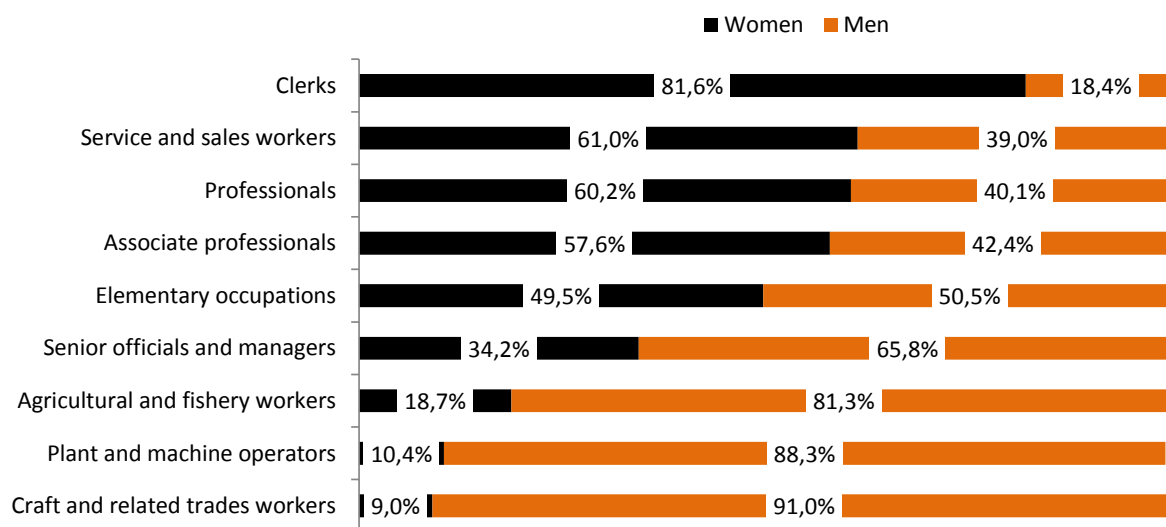


Figure 7: Gender division of occupations in Iceland, in 2010

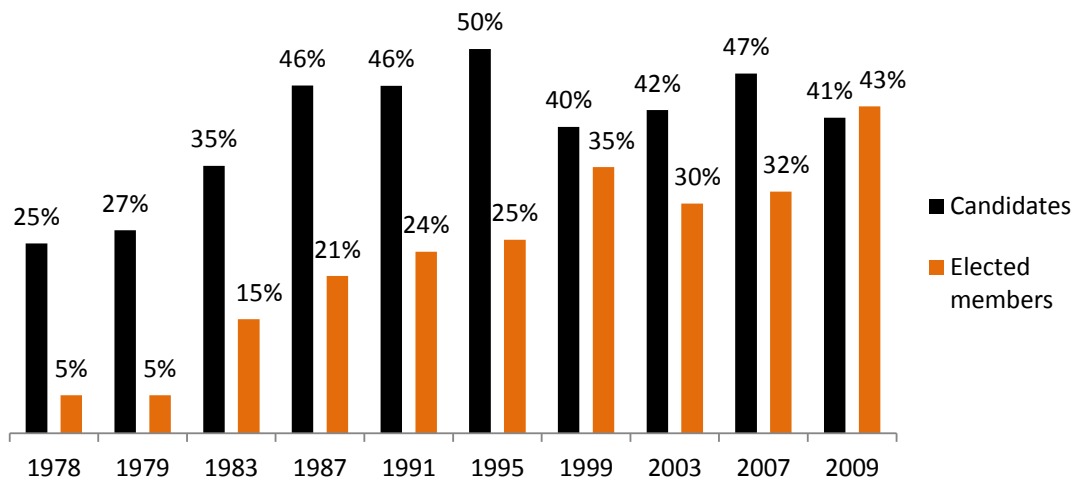


Figure 8: Women as percentage of candidates and elected members in parliamentary elections 1978–2009

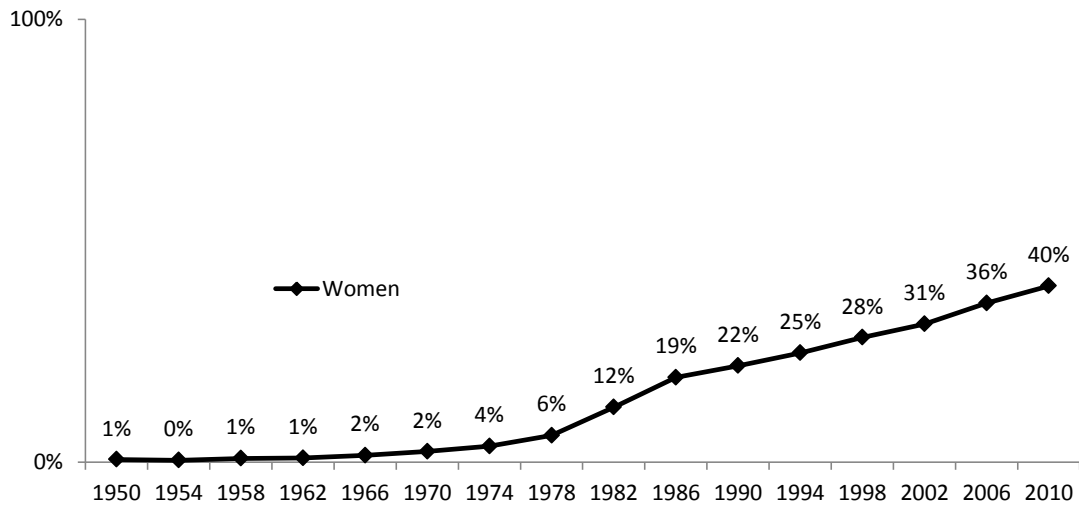


Figure 9: Elected representatives on local government councils 1950–2010

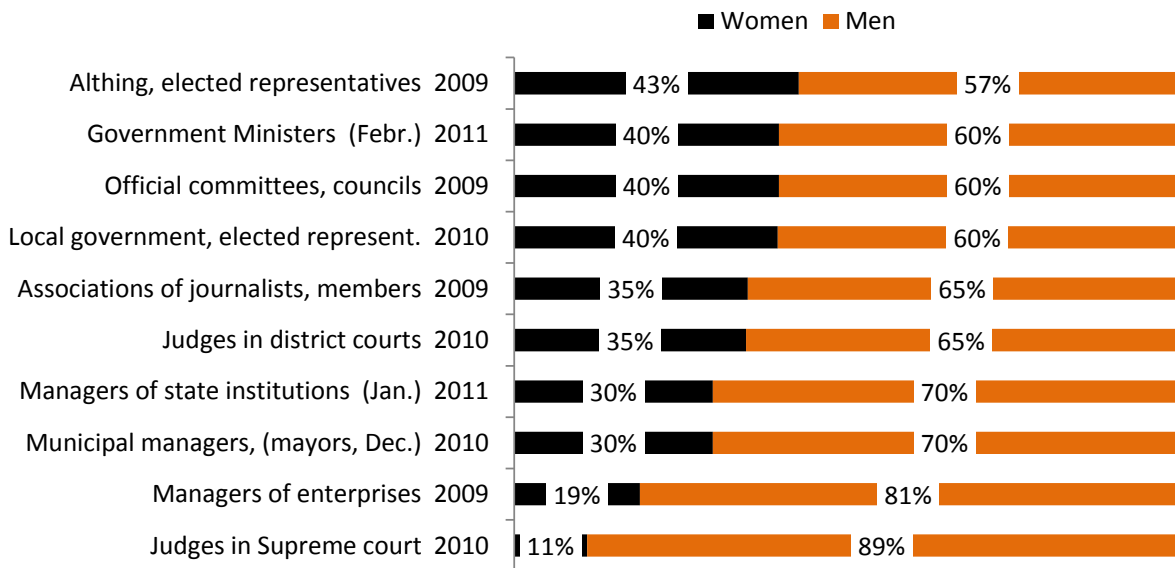


Figure 10: Positions of influence

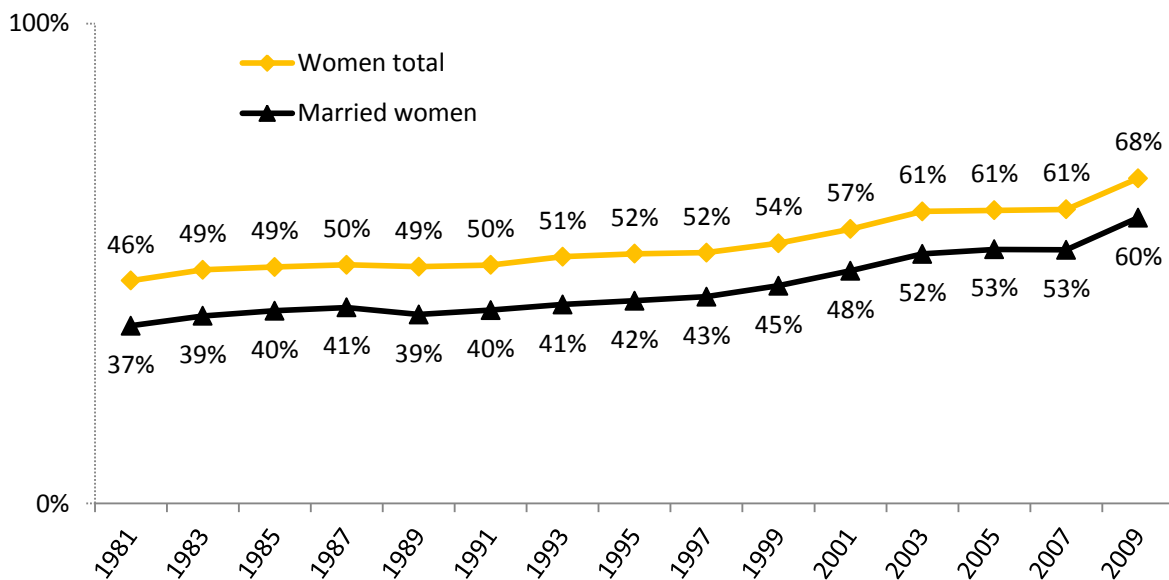


Figure 11: Women’s income from employment as percentage of men's income 1980–2009

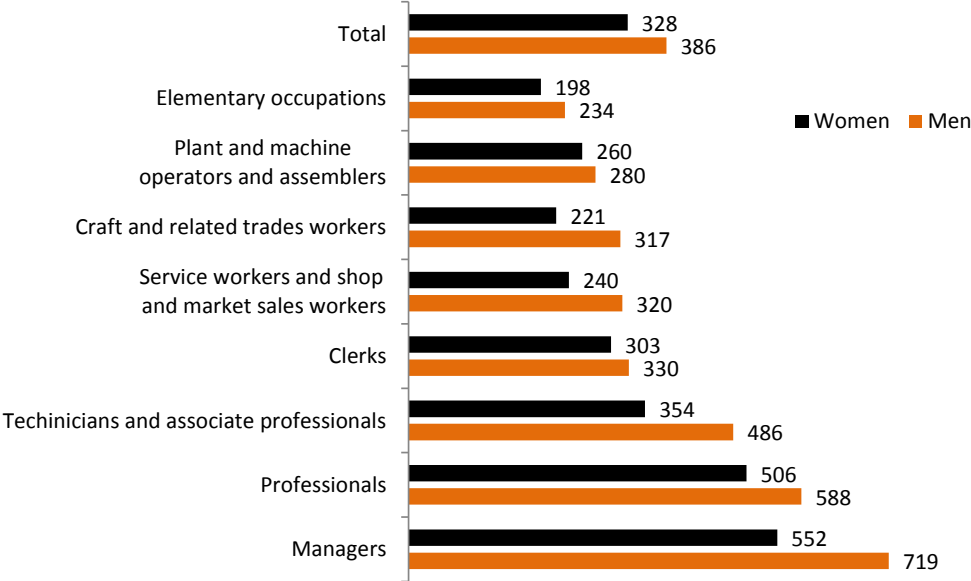


Figure 12: Regular monthly salaries of full-time employees in the private sector 2009

