

# Sport and Equality 2011

**Current state and changes of gender equality in Finland**

Publications of the Ministry of Education and Culture 2012:13

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## Summary

This report is a follow-up for the 2005 work group “Draw” (Tasapeli) memo and to its statistical part “Men and women in sports in numbers”. This report describes the current state of gender equality, and compares new information to the facts presented in 2005. New points of views are brought in by, for example, describing gender impact assessment. The purpose of the report is to produce general impression of gender status in sport and offer ideas for the efforts of planning, directing and leading future development.

The gender differences in physical activity begin to develop from about age of three and continue to do so until teenage. Boys are physically more active than girls are in childhood. There are differences in the amount, frequency, and intensity of physical activity. The differences begin to level off in adolescence. Women are physically more active than men in adulthood as they take more daily steps. The differences level off again when people age.

Boys participate in sports club activity more often than girls do in all age groups. On average, boys have more practices a week and one session lasts longer. Also men participate in sports club activities more than women do. Women and girls’ participation rates in organized sports club activity have risen over the last few years more than men and boys’, therefore the margin between genders has decreased. Women use sports services provided by the private sector more than men do. However, there is only a little information of the sports’ private sector. Both men and women’s physical activity levels have decreased, and participation in organized activities has increased.

There are clear differences in the participated sports. Three most popular sports for boys are football, ice hockey and floorball. The results for girls differ in different studies. Some sports are clearly gender related. Gender related stereotypes in sports should be demolished and prerequisites should be created so that both genders could participate in all sports. Football and ice hockey are examples of sports that have traditionally been men-oriented, but the number of female participants over the last years has increased.

Men form the majority in sports decision-making and leadership roles. Women are particularly scarce in elected leadership positions. Women account for 27% of the Finnish Sport Federation (SLU) community administrative board, and 24% of its executive directors and 15% of chairpersons are women. Administrative boards of National governing bodies consist of 24% women, with 25% of executive directors and 11% of chairpersons women. The number of women has increased during the last

15 years. Thirty-one percent of the leading municipal officials in sports are women. In particular, the amount of female municipal sport directors has increased over the past few decades. Sports councils consist of 48% women. The law of equality has increased the number of women in municipality decision-making. The participation of both genders in decision-making needs to be encouraged in the future, and the enhancement of women's career development needs to be continued.

It is still rare to make gender impact assessments in municipal sport councils. Gender impact assessments can give evidence to the performed operations. There are serious deficiencies in the accessibility of gender based statistical information in government, municipality, organization and research levels.

Equality thinking should be changed to begin at the grass root level, where sport's gender order is first produced. Thinking should begin from girls and boys, mothers and fathers. National sport politics and organisation programmes should include plausible effective mechanisms that would enable the described situation. This report has proved that with allocated actions and resources as well as political will-power it is possible to accomplish changes. It is the actors own decision what they want to do.



## Table of contents

<b>Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2 Equality and gender</b>	<b>8</b>
2.1 Gender equality and non-discrimination as concepts	8
2.2 Mainstreaming the gender perspective	9
2.3 The gender system in sports	10
<b>3 Physical activity</b>	<b>12</b>
3.1 Physical activity	12
3.2 Participation in organised physical activity	14
3.3 Physical activity in schools	15
3.4 The meanings and motives for physical activity	17
<b>4 Men and women's different choices of sport</b>	<b>18</b>
4.1 Gender distribution in national sports federations' licences	18
4.2 Coaches and instructors	19
4.3 Mentoring	20
<b>5 High performance sports</b>	<b>22</b>
5.1 Grants	22
5.2 National teams	22
5.3 Bringing about change in high performance sports	23
<b>6 Decision-making and leadership in sports</b>	<b>24</b>
6.1 Administration in sports organisations	25
6.2 Leadership and decision-making in sports in municipalities	27
6.3 Gender impact assessment as a decision-making tool	28
<b>7 Measures carried out to promote gender equality</b>	<b>30</b>
7.1 Public administration	30
7.2 The FSF	30
<b>8 Towards equality in sports: discussion and recommendations</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>9 Sources</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Appendix 1</b>	<b>42</b>



# 1 Introduction

One of the key basic values of Finnish society is gender equality, and for more than two decades the promotion of gender equality has formed an integral part of Finland's national sports policy. Women's and men's position in sports has always reflected current social development at large and how it changes. The fact that men and women hold different positions within the domain of sports is a result of various developments, which have been explained through a variety of discourses ranging from biological through social to political. Equality in sports and promoting gender equality in general by means of sport are concepts that are continually redefined in the dialogue between public authorities and representatives of sports organisations. The purpose of this report is to describe conditions for this dialogue as well as contribute to it.

The means for promoting equality in sports in Finland includes various programmes and projects, mentoring and networking, seminars and training as well as knowledge creation. Alongside these targeted measures, a more wide-reaching approach of gender mainstreaming has been adopted, with the aim to ensure that the gender perspective is observed in all areas of activity and decision-making. Currently, the promotion of gender equality in sports seems to rest on a solid foundation. The Council of Europe is drafting guidelines for its member states on gender mainstreaming in sports, while the European Commission's Strategy for equality between women and men 2010–2015 encourages the promotion of gender equality in sports and prioritises the improvement of gender imbalance in decision-

making positions. The Finnish Sports Federation (FSF) will be publishing its own guidelines for sports organisations and local authorities regarding the promotion of gender equality in sports, and Finland's presidency of the International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG) 2010–2014 and the IWG World Conference on Women and Sport taking place in Helsinki at the end of this period will further highlight gender equality issues in Finnish sports. In addition to these activities, Finnish work on gender equality is founded on the Government Programme and the Government's action plans for gender equality as well as the Sports Act in force since 1980 and the policies issued by the Ministry of Education and Culture.

This report describes the current status of gender equality and makes comparisons to the prior situation. The scope of the report covers physical activity of the general population, high performance sports, decision-making and leadership and municipal sports policies. It also gives an overview of the measures taken to promote gender equality in sports. The purpose of the report is to provide several perspectives on the issue, and therefore some of the areas in the report have received a more thorough discussion than others. A new perspective on the matter is provided, for example, by describing in concrete terms the use of gender impact assessments. The report ultimately aims to provide an overall view on gender equality in sports and to offer ideas for further efforts in planning, managing and leading further development.

## 2 Equality and gender

Finland is in many ways a pioneer in gender equality. Finnish women have been actively participating in working life and political decision-making for a significant time (Government report on gender equality, 14). In the Finnish debate, women are deemed to be in an unequal position in many respects, and in practice, gender equality has not reached the level that international comparisons would indicate. The rhetoric of gender equality policy-making is sometimes far removed from the realities of the practices renewing the gender system. This is called the paradox of gender equality (e.g. Horelli & Saari 2002; Julkunen 2009; 2010).

Equality is a value-laden concept. It is loaded, controversial and always a reflection of its time. Gender equality means different things in different times and cultures (Horelli & Saari 2002, 8–12). Finland has seen an evolution in the definition of the concept of gender equality over the past 30 years. While in the 1970s, the concept was understood to mean similarity of women against a masculine model, in the 1980s the gender equality discourse began to acknowledge differences between women and men. Today, the goal in Finland or other Nordic countries is not female and male similitude (Parvikko 1990, 105–106; Holli 1995, 25; Petäjaniemi 1998, 16).

Gender equality is being advanced through a dual strategy. This includes both specific actions to remove obstacles to gender equality and mainstreaming the gender perspective in all decision-making and its preparations (Government report on gender equality, 14). Gender equality issues touch on

all areas of society. Political and economic decisions have gender equality impacts that have a concrete effect on the life situations of women and men (Government report on gender equality, 11).

Finland is committed to advancing gender equality through both legislation and gender equality policy. The European Union, international conventions and international gender equality policy also oblige the Finnish government to actively pursue gender equality. Over the past 15 years, Government Programmes have included explicit gender equality goals. These have included, for example, increasing the proportion of women among decision-makers, narrowing the gender pay gap, more equal distribution of family leaves and combating violence against women. In addition in the Government Action Plan for Gender Equality, a need for a more long-term gender equality policy has been identified. The first Government report on gender equality was completed in 2010, outlining the future gender equality policy in Finland until the year 2020. In addition to this, the report also discusses the gender equality objectives and actions of the previous governments and their impact (Government report on gender equality).

### 2.1 Gender equality and non-discrimination as concepts

This report refers to the term ‘equality’ as equality between men and women. All other dimensions of equality are regarded as being covered by the concept ‘non-discrimination’ as per established equality

policy discourse. Finnish legislation also follows these definitions. There are two separate acts, the Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986) and the Non-Discrimination Act (21/2004). The objectives of the former are to prevent discrimination based on gender, to promote equality between women and men, and thus to improve the status of women, particularly in working life (Act on Equality between Women and Men 609/1986). The law comprises three elements: prohibition of discrimination, the obligation to promote equality, and sanction and supervision mechanisms. Discrimination based on gender is prohibited in nearly all areas of life and social activity. The law prohibits the discrimination against both women and men. The promotion of gender equality is at the core of the Act. However, legislation that formally prescribes equality may not always guarantee factual equality. For this reason, positive discrimination has been included in the law. Compliance to the Act is supervised by the Ombudsman for Equality and the Equality Board (Government report on gender equality, 62).

Non-discrimination refers to equality regardless of age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics. The purpose of the Non-Discrimination Act (21/2004) is to foster and safeguard equality and enhance the protection provided by law to those who have been discriminated against in cases of discrimination that fall under the scope of this Act (Ministry of the Interior 2011).

The division between the concepts of equality and non-discrimination is not clear-cut in Finland. There is confusion about them both in everyday and official discourse. The concept of equality is often associated with issues that in law fall under the domain of non-discrimination. In the field of sports, there are a number of different discourses used on the topic of equality. This report will maintain a clear distinction between the concepts of equality and non-discrimination, without forgetting, however, the connection that these two concepts will necessarily have. Currently, a topic on the agenda in particular is multiple discrimination, which refers to

a situation when a person is discriminated against, for example, on the basis of gender and ethnic origin simultaneously. In the field of sports, the concept of multiple discrimination is relevant when discussing, for example, gender equality from the perspective of immigrants and minority groups (European Commission 2007; Government report on gender equality).

Equality is a fundamental value in public sports policy and has therefore been included in the Sports Act (1054/1998). The objective of the Sports Act is not only to promote equality in sports but also promote equality and tolerance through sports. The concept of equality as adopted in the Sports Act is wider than in the Equality Act. In the Sports Act, equality refers to gender, generational, regional, linguistic and social equality.

## **2.2 Mainstreaming the gender perspective**

Mainstreaming the gender perspective has become a key concept in Finnish equality policy in the past decade. Mainstreaming is a strategy by which the gender perspective and the objective of promoting equality is included in all levels of planning and actions (Horelli & Saari 2002, 2; Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2009, 13). In decision-making, mainstreaming the gender perspective means that all decisions and actions are evaluated with regard to their impact on both genders (Ministry of Education 2009a, 1). In the field of sport and physical activity, mainstreaming has been understood to mean integrating practices that are gender sensitive and that actively acknowledge the meanings of gender differences into the normal operations of various actors (Korpi 2010, 4).

Finland is committed to mainstreaming both on the national and international level (Horelli & Saari 2002, 2–4). The principle of gender mainstreaming was strengthened in the reformed act in 2005 (Government report 2010, 26). In the Government Programme of Matti Vanhanen's second cabinet (2008–2011) mainstreaming the gender perspective was a major tool for promoting gender equality (Holli & Rantala 2009, 40). According to the

Government Programme of Jyrki Katainen's cabinet (2011), mainstreaming of the gender perspective in legislative drafting, budget preparation and other activities with major implications for gender equality will continue (Programme of Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen's Government, 67).

There are significant objectives set regarding mainstreaming the gender perspective. It is to penetrate all levels of organisations and change their processes and the ways in which they operate. Mainstreaming is a multidimensional process that demands a great deal of know-how (Horelli & Saari 2002, 10–11). In fact, it has sometimes been criticised for being too demanding. Gender equality activists and researchers have also voiced a concern that the demand to mainstream all operations will lead to the gender perspective being in effect overlooked (Horelli & Saari 2002, 11; Julkunen 2010). Mainstreaming is considered to be complex and opaque as a term. Furthermore, mainstreaming can be too theoretical a concept, and only a few practical examples of its application exist (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2009, 24). For this reason, mainstreaming has been deemed difficult to understand in the daily activities of sports organisations.

Launching mainstreaming practices would require gender-specific statistics, an analysis of which would allow for a more profound and genuine understanding than currently is the case. Finnish public administration, in particular, is gender neutral, which is why differences between genders are not easily recognised. Statistics will often bring surprises even in such organisations in which the gender balance has been perceived to be relatively equal (Horelli & Saari 2002, 14).

In practice, mainstreaming concerns participatory planning and slowly progressing development work. According to one definition, mainstreaming encompasses three main methods. The first is equality training, which aims to instil new ways of thinking within an organisation. The second method is equality planning, which refers to development work carried out within the framework of an organisation's own practices (Horelli & Saari 2002, 15, 24 and 31). The third method is the gender

impact assessment (GIA). GIA is an investigation of the impact of an action or proposal from the separate perspectives of women, men and gender equality (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2009, 22). GIA can be applied, for example, to analysing policy proposals and their anticipated impact on women's and men's status, resources and interests (Horelli & Saari 2005, 58). GIA is employed mainly in planning and preparation work, so it is primarily a form of quality assurance carried out prior to any action taking place. However, GIA can also be employed during and after a process (Vaikuttaako sukupuoli 2000, 1, 7).

### 2.3 The gender system in sports

A gender system describes the distinction and hierarchy prevailing between genders. A gender system is a system of economic, social and political structures that maintain and produce male and female gender roles. Gender systems are not fixed or static; rather they are dynamic and multifaceted: they will simultaneously affect the structural make-up of society, symbolisms, social networks and individuals as well as value, norm and role systems. A gender system is produced by individual women and men themselves as well on the level of social structures (Rantalaiho 1994; Sipilä 1998; Julkunen 2010). A gender system is maintained by, at the least, biologies, anatomies, socialisation, roles, representations, gendered habitus, routines, institutions, discourses, power and hierarchy (Julkunen 2010, 281), and thereby a gender system is constantly being reshaped.

The gender system can be seen as operating according to two different logics, segregation and hierarchy (Hirdman 1990). Segregation involves the idea of gendered division of labour. In sports this could mean, for example, the division between "women's sports" and "men's sports". Hierarchy, in turn, is manifested through the higher value placed on men, masculinity being the norm of an athlete, gendered use of language and power being in the hands of men. Hierarchical power relations are apparent in, for example, the fact that the leader and decision-making positions are held mainly by men.

Sports is considered a major bastion of hierarchical gender differences (Tiihonen 2002; Julkunen 2010, 228). High performance sports and coaching in particular as well as sports research, communications and leadership are areas dominated by men. This is equally true in Finland as elsewhere (e.g. Morgan 1992; Hargreaves 1994; Tiihonen 2002; Pirinen 2006). In high performance sports, gender order is constructed through, for example, the polarisation of men and women. The performance practices of men represent the benchmark against which women's performance may be compared. Many fields of sports have gender ingrained in them, based on certain perceptions of acceptable use of the male and female body (Pirinen 2006, 14). Women are excluded from some sports, women have been posed restrictions when performing in others, or they have been given exemptions through more lenient rules. Restrictions in women's sports have been justified by, for example, the notion that women do not have the skills required in a particular sport, that a woman's body is too weak, or that the sport could damage a woman either mentally or physically (Pirinen 1993, 28; Laine 2004; Sarje 2011).

The grounds for restrictions for women in sports have remained almost unchanged from one decade to the next. The reasons are nearly always to do with the sport being dangerous either to women or their maternal nature. Women's opportunities to participate in sports culture have been restricted in a given time by the prevailing ideas of what is suitable for women, the female character and female body. It has been easier for women to enter sports in which the body aesthetic or expressiveness are emphasised, such as gymnastics or figure skating. Tough endurance sports and those in which heavy equipment is used or physical contact is emphasised have been perceived as traditional men's sports (Hargreaves 1994, 213–220; Laine 2004; Pirinen 2006, 14).

Women's position in sports has been integrally linked with the social status of women in general and changes taking place in society. The opening up of sports culture to women has not been a steady, gradual process; rather the changes have come in waves (Pirinen 1993, 27). Even if women have

been allowed to enter nearly all high performance sports, their performance may still be valued on a different scale to that of men (Pirinen 2006, 14–15). This becomes apparent, for example, in the media. The media is a very potent vehicle for conveying the values held in sports; mass media is a forum in which the gender system in sports is constantly displayed and renewed. According to studies, media sports is usually gender-blind and women's sports are marginalised. One way of trivialising women's sport is to emphasise physical appearance. On the other hand, women themselves contribute to gender perceptions and emphasise their own femininity, as it is easier for them to gain publicity through their looks rather than their performance (Hargreaves 1994; Pfister 2003; Pirinen 2006).



## 3 Physical activity

“Physical activity” largely speaking covers all physical activity that raises energy consumption from the rest level. Physical activity encompasses such activities as everyday physical activity and chores, games, play and outdoor activities, as well as more goal-oriented activity. Participating in organised physical activity refers to participation in physical activity organised by sports organisations, public authorities or private enterprises. This report will draw a distinction between physical activity and participation in organised physical activity, because they are governed by different factors and therefore different measures will be needed in their promotion.

### 3.1 Physical activity

Several studies have shown that Finnish boys engage in physical activity more than Finnish girls (e.g. Fogelholm, Paronen & Miettinen 2007, National Physical Activity Survey 2009–2010, Laakso, Nupponen, Rimpelä & Telama 2006a; Laakso, Nupponen, Koivusilta, Rimpelä & Telama 2006b; Laine et al. 2011; Nupponen, Halme, Parkkisenniemi, Pehkonen & Tammelin 2010, Vuori et al. 2007). Differences between genders are apparent in the intensity of physical activity, the number of sessions, the length of one session and the choice of sport. The differences start developing from the age of three and continue to do so until early adulthood. Although the gender division in sports has decreased in recent years, boys continue to favour more intensive physical activity and spend more time taking physical activity than girls (Laakso

et al. 2006b; Laine et al. 2011; Nupponen et al. 2005; 2010).

According to recommendations, all 7- to 18-year-olds should be physically active for at least one to two hours daily, in a variety of ways suitable for each age group (Tammelin & Karvinen 2008). Boys meet this recommendation in all age groups more often than girls (Figure 1). Both questionnaires (Currie et al. 2004; Fogelholm et al. 2007; Currie et al. 2008; Laine et al. 2011, 23) and objective study (Laine et al. 2011, 29) have yielded a similar result. In grades 7 to 9, the amount of physical activity that students do plummets both for girls and boys (Currie et al. 2008, 106–107; Laine et al. 2011).

As children become older, the gender gap in the amount of physical activity narrows and according to some meters even completely disappears. For example, there is no essential difference between the independent physical activity engaged in by girls and boys of the age of 12 to 18. According to some studies, 18-year-old girls in fact engage in physical activity even more often than boys (Laakso et al. 2006a, 10). Once they have reached adulthood, women are more physically active than men.

According to two studies carried out by the National Institute for Welfare and Health (THL), the National FINRISK Study and the postal survey Health Behaviour and Health among the Finnish Adult Population (AVTK), the amount of physical activity that 15–64-year-old men and women are engaging in has increased in the 2000s (Helakorpi, Laitalainen & Uutela 2010, 19; Peltonen et al. 2008a, 14) (Figure 2).

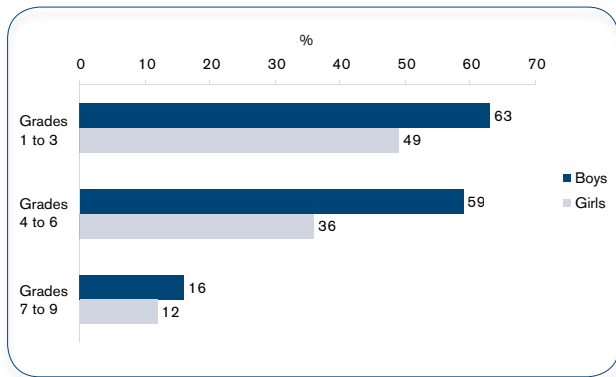


Figure 1. The proportion of girls and boys who are physically active at least one hour per day, by grade. The amount of physical activity has been objectively determined using an activity monitoring device (Laine et al. 2011, 29).

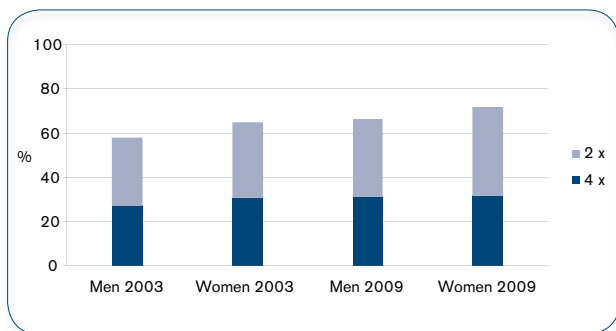


Figure 2. The proportion (%) of 15–64-year-old men and women who engage in physical activity at least twice a week and at least four times a week for 30 minutes or longer at one time (Helakorpi et al. 2003, 10; Helakorpi et al. 2010, 19).

Results obtained through such surveys that show an increase in the amount of physical activity taken by members of the public must, however, be considered with certain reservations. In recent years, the concept of physical activity has expanded to include all kinds of health-promoting activity and all physical activity, so for example housework and various chores that have not previously been understood as being physical activity may now be regarded as such. People also know that taking plenty of physical activity is recommended, which may influence their responses (Katzmarzyk & Tremblay 2007; Prince et al. 2008).

The amount of physical activity engaged in by adults has been objectively studied in the Cardiovascular Risk in Young Finns Study in 2007–2008. Physical activity was measured over 7 days with a pedometer (Omron Walking Style One, HJ-152R-E). A total of 1,874 men and women between

the ages of 30 and 45 participated in the measuring. Women took more steps per day than men: 7,824 compared to men's 7,089. The proportion of men and women moving about quite little during the day, taking fewer than 5,000 steps, was 26% and 16% respectively. The recommendation of 10,000 steps per day (Hatano 1993) was met by 20% of women and 15% of men (Hirvensalo et al. 2010; 2011).

The most popular form of physical activity for adults is walking. It has kept its top position for 15 years, even though the number of active walkers has decreased in recent years. The gender differences in the chosen types of physical activity remain similar to those in people's childhood and youth. Men favour team ball games more than women. Women, on the other hand, favour dance in particular (National Physical Activity Survey 2009–2010a, 15–19).

Everyday physical activity, such as that taken in while commuting or running errands, is more common among women than men. According to the material for the 2009 AVTK survey, 30% of men and 39% of women said they walked or cycled to work for at least 15 minutes a day. Exercise while commuting has steadily decreased over the past 30 years, particularly for women (Helakorpi et al. 2010, 19–20).

The new Finnish guidelines for health-promoting physical activity (Current Care Guidelines 2010, 2) emphasise the importance of engaging in muscle-strengthening activity in addition to aerobic physical activity. Healthy adults are recommended to take at least 2.5 hours of moderate aerobic physical activity a week or 1.25 hours of vigorous physical activity a week. In addition to this, muscle-strengthening training should be taken twice a week. In 2009, only 12% of men and 11% of women fulfilled the new physical activity guidelines. The proportion of men and women taking a sufficient amount of aerobic physical activity was 47% and 50% respectively (Helakorpi et al. 2010, 18).

People tend to engage in less physical activity as they age. The physical activity of the elderly has been regularly studied in the National Physical Activity Survey and the Health Behaviour and Health among the Finnish Elderly (EVTk) survey carried out every two years. According to the most recent EVTK

survey, the physical activity of 65–79-year-old people has not increased in the past few years (Laitalainen, Helakorpi & Uutela 2010, 20, 96–97). The elderly engage mainly in independent physical activity on their own or in groups. The most popular form of physical activity among the elderly is walking, followed by Nordic walking and cycling. Women go swimming and Nordic walking and attend hydrobics classes and the gym more often than men. Men in turn favour skiing, running, fishing and hunting more than women do.

Estimates about the proportion of the elderly who take a sufficient amount of physical activity vary from one study to another, owing to different methods and criteria. It was estimated in the 2007–2008 senior citizens' physical activity survey that, from the perspective of health, 34% of men and women took sufficient physical activity. According to a similar estimate in the 2009–2010 National Physical Activity Survey, 40% of women and 36% of men were sufficiently physically active. The definition of what was deemed a sufficient amount of physical activity from the health perspective was moderate physical activity four times a week or vigorous physical activity for 30 minutes every day. In other words, a larger number of women report taking a sufficient amount of physical activity, while men report engaging more in vigorous forms of physical activity (Senior citizens' physical activity survey 2007–2008; National Physical Activity Survey 2009–2010a, 62). According to the 2009 EVTK survey, 5% of men and 4% of women met the guidelines for the amount of physical activity, including both aerobic and muscle strengthening training. Nearly every third (29%) elderly man and every fourth (26%) elderly woman engaged in aerobic physical activity to at least the recommended amount. The recommended amount of muscle strengthening training was achieved by 11% and 8% of elderly men and women respectively (Laitalainen et al. 2010, 19).

From the health-promotion perspective, it is also essential to measure the time spent in activity other than physical activity. For example, prolonged periods of sitting have been shown to be a mortality risk regardless of the amount of physical activity

taken (Owen et al. 2010). Boys and men of all ages sit more than girls and women. The difference is explained mainly by the time spent sitting in vehicles and at the computer (Peltonen et al. 2008b, 339; Nupponen et al. 2010; Laine et al. 2011).

However, prolonged periods of sitting do not necessarily mean that the person is not physically active. People who actively engage in physical activity often also spend much time in front of the television or at the computer. The correlation between physical activity and time spent in front of a screen is relatively weak. However, very high levels of TV or computer time are linked with low levels of physical activity. TV and computer time and physical activity are, however, to be understood as different factors, and they should not be taken to represent two polar opposites on a scale of physical activity (Tammelin, Ekelund, Remes & Näyhä 2007).

When studying obstacles to women and men engaging in physical activity, it has been revealed that family life decreases women's physical activity particularly in the age group 26–35 years. For men, on the other hand, work seems to occupy the time that would otherwise be spent taking physical activity (Ponto, Pehkonen, Penttinen & Nupponen 2010). In the FINRISKI study, clearly the most common obstacle to taking physical activity for both men and women was the lack of time. For the elderly, the biggest reason for not taking physical activity was poor health. Women reported more health reasons than men. Other factors discouraging physical activity for the elderly include the lack or poor condition of walking and bicycle lanes, an unsafe or difficult environment, fear of accidents, poor weather, lack of suitable clothing or equipment, and poor availability of sports groups and services for the elderly (Rasinaho et al. 2007; Hirvensalo 2008, 64; Mäkilä et al. 2008, 53).

### **3.2 Participation in organised physical activity**

Participation in organised physical activity increased with both girls and boys from the early years up until the age of 12. According to the latest

nationwide studies, boys continue to participate in sports club practices more than girls both in terms of number and frequency (National Physical Activity Survey 2009–2010b; Laakso 2006a; Laine et al. 2011; Vuori et al. 2007). The participation of girls and boys in sports club activities has increased continuously in the past few decades and it would seem that at least girls' participation rate will still continue to do so in the future (National Physical Activity Survey 2005–2006b; 2009–2010b; Laakso et al. 2006a, 9; Palomäki & Heikinaro-Johansson 2010, 117).

There are clear gender differences in the participation in organised physical activities. The three most popular types of organised sports for boys were football, ice hockey and floorball. The most popular types of sport among girls are football, track and field, basketball and gymnastics. Sports with an even gender distribution include swimming, skiing, pesäpallo (Finnish baseball) and orienteering (Nupponen et al. 2010; Lämsä et al. 2011).

When moving on to lower secondary school, the popularity of organised sports decreases among both girls and boys. For example, more than 60% of 12-year-old boys participate in sports club activities at least once a week, while the figure at the age of 18 is only 40%. Of 12-year-old girls more than one half participate in sports club activities at least once a week, while at the age 18 the figure is less than 30% (Laakso et al. 2006a, 9).

After reaching adulthood, 16% of men and 12% of women are estimated to participate in sports club activities. In the past four years, the gender difference has narrowed to some degree (National Physical Activity Survey 2005–2006a; 2009–2010a). Sports services provided by private companies have increased in the past few years. Women use private sports services more actively than men (National Physical Activity Survey 2009–2010a). Private sports centres have been able to respond to the types of sports that women demand, including various group classes and dance. The number of businesses in the field of sports, fitness centres in particular, has increased dramatically in Finland (Statistics Finland 2010). The role of private businesses in the total number of sports service providers is an interesting

issue both from the perspectives of gender equality and non-discrimination. It is more expensive to attend activities in private centres, which increases inequality and excludes many potential customers. There is, however, currently very little scientific data on private sports and fitness businesses. More data is also needed on the service and business activities of sports clubs (Kosonen & Tiikkaja 2008; Koivisto 2010).

Cohort studies (Hirvensalo et al. 2006; 2008) have shown that participation in organised sports has increased particularly among elderly women. Women in later cohorts engage in sports more frequently and with greater intensity than earlier cohorts.

The biggest obstacle to participation in supervised sports for aging men and women is poor health. More women than men report poor health as being an obstacle to their participation. Other obstacles include lack of interest, long distance to the services, age and the wish to engage in physical activity alone (Mäkilä et al. 2008, 53).

### 3.3 Physical activity in schools

Physical education (PE) in the traditional sense is understood to mean PE classes held at school. School days comprise, however, various kinds of physical activity outside the actual PE classes, for example, travel between home and school, breaks, outings and events. Therefore, it is more to the point to talk about physical activity at school rather than physical education. Currently, it is deemed more appropriate to extend the discussion to cover physical activity at schools instead of PE classes alone. When promoting the physical activity of children and young people, it is no longer enough to review the content of PE classes; the aim must be to increase the level of physical activity throughout the school day and school environment (Ministry of Education and Culture 2010c, 19–20).

Activities during breaks show a clear difference between girls and boys. Boys prefer ballgames and run around more than girls, who prefer to stroll around, chat with their friends, stand in groups and play (Nupponen et al. 2010, 133–134; Laine et al. 2011, 22).

According to surveys, boys and girls enjoy PE. Boys have a slightly more favourable attitude towards PE than girls (Huisman 2004, 80; Palomäki & Heikinaro-Johansson 2010, 119; Zacheus & Järvinen 2007). Surveys reveal that 78% of the boys and 65% of the girls responded that they enjoy physical education, while 12% of boys and 21% of girls find PE uninteresting. Seventy percent of boys and half of girls wish there were more compulsory joint PE classes (Palomäki & Heikinaro-Johansson 2010, 119). The attitude of boys and girls towards PE differs from each other to some extent: boys' attitude towards PE is more positive than girls' and they have more confidence in their physical activity skills than girls. Boys are more interested in playing different games, competition and physically strenuous classes. Girls focus more than boys on the physical effects on health and they value encouragement from the teacher and the freedom of choosing the activities for themselves. Girls would appear to be more sensitive than boys to peer comparison (Palomäki & Heikinaro-Johansson 2010, 120). Boys' attitudes, in particular, appear to have changed to the more positive during the observation period 2003–2010. What is significant, however, is that the statistical variability has increased with both genders (Palomäki & Heikinaro-Johansson 2010, 71–72). Polarisation among girls and boys is, in other words, also clearly evident in attitudes towards PE.

The type of activity undertaken was the main factor determining how interesting and enjoyable the students found their PE classes to be. Both boys and girls liked team sports, but boys find them more rewarding than girls. Girls, on the other hand, prefer dance and music-based physical activity. PE at Finnish schools is largely highly focused on individual types of sports, which is not necessarily motivational for all young people. Furthermore, the types of sports tend to be highly traditional. According to the National Core Curriculum, it is important in PE to take into account local conditions and the national sports traditions. In the light of the most recent studies, it is, however, equally important that the content of PE is reviewed as necessary so that they resonate with the lifeworld

of today's young people (Palomäki & Heikinaro-Johansson 2010, 119).

It is tradition that girls and boys have separate PE classes. This is a major gendering practice in the everyday life of schools. Previously, separate PE classes for girls and boys at the lower secondary level was prescribed by the Basic Education Decree (718/1984), but this decree is no longer in force and in fact there has been discussion recently that mixed PE classes could be introduced. The advantage of mixed classes would be the opportunity for girls and boys to cooperate, interact and learn to take others into consideration (Palomäki & Heikinaro-Johansson 2010, 120). It could also expand the opportunities for both genders to try out different sports. A follow-up evaluation of physical education learning outcomes (2010), however, comes to the clearly grounded conclusion recommending that the practice of separate PE groups be retained. The grounds cited were the different outlook of girls and boys on PE, their different preferences regarding types of sports and the difference in strength. It is anticipated that shy and physically less confident girls in particular would end up being sidelined and even discriminated against in a mixed-sex class. Separate PE groups are also recommended because this allows teachers to better take into account the special requirements of either gender, which will ultimately secure pupils a more equal grounding to learn at a level appropriate to them as individuals. Gender equality can namely be achieved only when each pupil has the chance to learn at his or her own development and skill level (Palomäki & Heikinaro-Johansson 2010, 120, 123). Julkunen (2010, 137) also points out that girls and boys may be able to learn more efficiently in single-sex groups, because mixed groups usually develop a heterosexual dynamic which would result in the emergence of gendered practices within it. However, the follow-up evaluation of physical education learning outcomes also states that it may sometimes be the best option from the perspective of objectives, content and chosen methods for physical education to introduce mixed-gender groups. The teaching arrangements should be flexible enough to allow this alternative (Palomäki & Heikinaro-Johansson 2010, 120).



Studies show that the everyday activities and practices in schools involve several gendering processes. Basic education is directed by unquestioned gendering practices, or gendering structures and processes (Brunila et al. 2005, 16; Ståhlberg 2007). Yet one of the main tasks of school education is to promote gender equality (Ståhlberg 2007). According to law, teaching, research and instructional material must support the attainment of the objectives of the gender equality legislation. In spite of this, gender and the several distinctions it entails have remained in a marginalised position in the planning and execution of teacher training and research into it (Lehtonen 2011). Finnish schools are typically gender-neutral and gender-blind. In teachers, rectors' and headmasters' experience, girls and boys are treated equally at school. However, research has revealed clear gendering practices and treatment that is discriminatory against either girls or boys (Lampela 1995, 70–71; Ståhlberg 2007).

In the everyday activities at school, there is an obvious need for better acknowledgement of gender and for more gender-sensitive practices (Lehtonen 2011). Gender sensitivity in physical education may mean, for example, that the instructor or teacher has theoretical knowledge about gender socialisation, gender roles, the gendered practices in sports, the general gender system in society and gender equality legislation. The goal is to give instruction based on an individual's personality and life situation, not the conventional gender assumptions. Awareness of gender and equality issues means an awareness of various social and cultural differences, inequality and otherness being created within the practice of upbringing and education. Awareness of these issues also means understanding that these practices can be changed (Hynninen, Helakorpi, Lahelma, Lehtonen & Snellman 2011).

### 3.4 The meanings and motives for physical activity

Gender differences in the motives for and meanings of physical activity vary depending on the study. According to the 2006 WHO school children survey, the motives for boys and girls to engage in physical activity were largely similar. The three most important reasons for 11–16-year-old girls and boys were enjoyment, a wish to be fit and improve one's health. For girls, improving health was the most common among the most important reasons for physical activity, while among 7th-grade boys the most commonly cited most important reason was enjoyment and among 9th-grade boys fitness. Among 9th-grade girls, the wish to look good was cited as one of the most important reasons for physical activity (Vuori et al. 2007).

Tuomas Zacheus, who has studied the changes in physical activity behaviour over generations (2009), points out that the gender differences in the meanings linked with physical activity seem to have evened out. What he means by this is that, for example, the significance of physicality has increased particularly for girls and is almost as important a motive for physical activity for girls as for boys. Traditionally, physicality in physical activity has been more important for boys than for girls.

For girls, an important incentive for taking physical activity in their youth is to look after their body in terms of both its wellbeing and its appearance, and this motive remains an important one as they grow up into womanhood. Women feel a need to maintain a good physical appearance. Changes in the body caused by pregnancy also serve as a trigger for many women to take up physical activity as a hobby. Women value the feel-good factor and health benefits brought by physical activity more than men. Women's motives to take physical activity appear to be more stable throughout their lifecycle than men's. Men, on the other hand, emphasise social motives more than women (Ponto et al. 2010).

## 4 Men and women's different choices of sport

### 4.1 Gender distribution in national sports federations' licences

The licence system in Finnish sports provides accurate numeric data on the gender distribution in various sports. The licence system allows for an analysis of the gender differences in the participant profiles as well as changes in them in different age groups, when participation ends or when people change to a different type of sport. There are differences in the participant profiles in different sports, which are explained by cultural, social, sports-related and environmental factors. The licence data also reveals some patterns that are similar across the board. For example, in terms of age, the licence distribution is almost the same in all types of sport. In other words, the age group with the largest number of licences in all types of sports is the 12-year-olds, after which age the number of licences awarded decreases.

There are some differences in the licensing system for different sports. In the case of some sports, the licensing system does not provide exhaustive information on overall participant profiles, because the sport can be participated in also without a licence. In all team ball games, the licensing systems are relatively uniform, so they provide the best comparative data. For example in basketball and volleyball, the graphs depicting the distribution of licences are very similar (Figures 3 and 4). There are, however, noticeable differences between the two sports. In basketball, more licences are held by boys and men than girls and women, while in volleyball, girls hold a significantly larger number of licences. For some reason, these two sports have developed so

that basketball has become a male-dominated sport and volleyball a female-dominated one, but there is no apparent reason why this should be so.

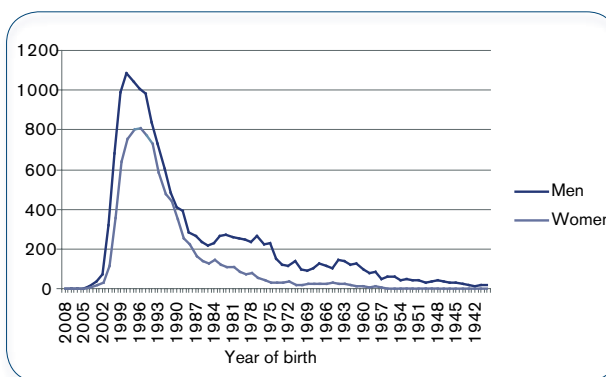


Figure 3. The distribution of basketball licences by year of birth and gender in 2008 (Lämsä, Laine & Hakonen 2011).

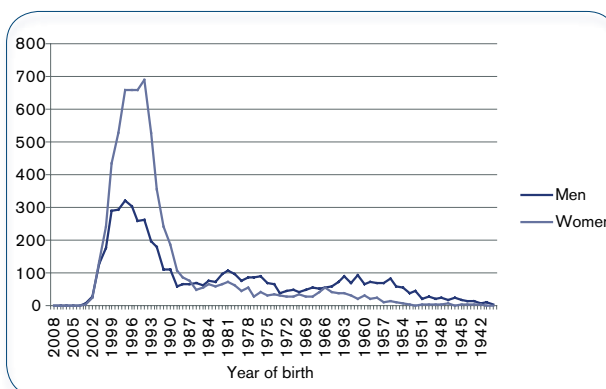


Figure 4. The distribution of volleyball licences by year of birth and gender in 2008 (Lämsä et al. 2011).

Floorball has become one of the favourite sports among Finnish children and young people in the past

ten years. According to the National Physical Activity Survey, only football has more participants in Finland than floorball. In terms of the number of licences, floorball is the fourth biggest sport in Finland. Floorball is clearly a sport favoured by boys (Figure 5). The number of floorball licences peaks clearly at the age of 12 both for girls and boys, but in case of men, the number of licences does not steadily decrease after that age and in the age group 25–30 years, there is a clear increase in the number of licences.

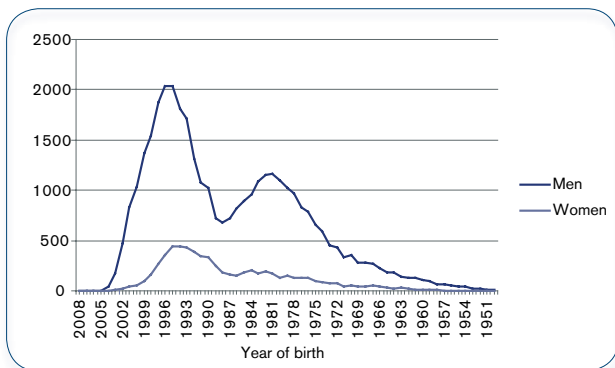


Figure 5. The distribution of floorball licences by year of birth and gender in 2008 (Lämsä et al. 2011).

Football and ice hockey are traditionally very masculine sports. In the last few years, however, both sports have made a concerted effort to increase the number of female participants and clear progress in this has been made. In ice hockey, the number of under-20 female license holders has increased by 62% between 2004 and 2008 (Figure 6). In 2008, there were 3,100 female and 38,000 male licence holders in the under-20 age groups.

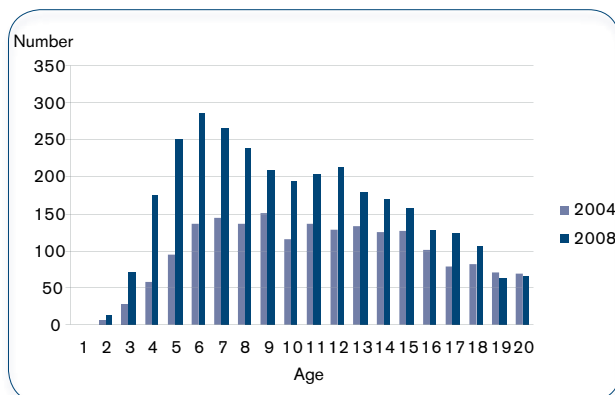


Figure 6. The number of ice hockey licences held by girls by age group in 2004 and 2008 (Lämsä et al. 2011).

In football, the number of female participants began a steady rise in the late 1980s, but the strongest growth period took place in the early 2000s. The number of under-20 female license holders has increased by 33% between 2004 and 2008 (Figure 7). All in all, the number of license holders among girls in 2008 was 23,000 and among boys 69,000. Measured in licenses, football is, in other words, a major sport both among boys and girls. The participation of girls and women has been encouraged in the 2000s by concerted efforts by the Football Association of Finland.

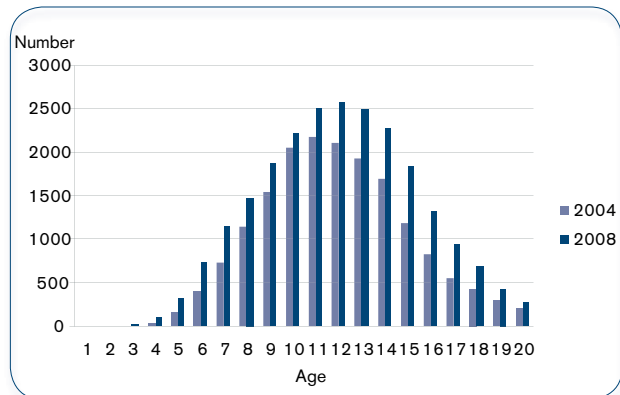


Figure 7. The number of football licences held by girls by age group in 2004 and 2008 (Lämsä et al. 2011).

The number of participants of different sports are not stable, as they change and can be changed. The increase in the number of football and ice hockey licences held by women and girls are an illustrative case in point, showing how the gender structure can be changed among participants of a sport.

## 4.2 Coaches and instructors

Finnish sports clubs are estimated to employ more than 100,000 coaches. The number of other instructors, trainers and assistant instructors is nearly 174,000 (Lämsä 2009, 31). Instructors and coaches involved in sports clubs are mainly former participants of the sport or have become involved through their children's participation, or a combination of both (Lehtonen 2009, 76). According to the 2005 Draw report and Men and Women in Sports in Numbers publication, sports coaches and instructors are still mainly men. In the

2004 sports register of the Finnish Sports Federation (FSF), 94% of coaches were men (Ministry of Education 2005, 36).

Reliable data on the actual number or gender distribution of instructors and coaches is, however, impossible to obtain. Some of the operators are trained professionals, some are children's parents, some are committed to long-term involvement, some are working only on a project basis. Only a fraction of coaches and instructors perform the work as their main occupation. According to a study carried out by the Finnish Coach Association, there were 1,200 professional coaches operating in Finland in 2001. Of these, 23% were women.

The Finnish Coach Association is the national cooperation, training and lobbying body for coaches in Finland. The members are both professional and volunteering coaches. In 2009 25% of the association's members were women (Finnish Coach Association 2011). Most female coaches work in the federations and clubs of female-dominated sports, such as the Finnish Gymnastics Federation and the Finnish Figure Skating Association. The Finnish Coach Association's objective for the next few years is to develop sports coaching to better include the gender perspective (K. Danskanen, personal statement 17 March 2011).

Finnish coach and instructor training has been developed in the period 2005–2010 through a specific development project. The main objectives of the project were to clarify the structure of coach and instructor training, strengthen the competencies of coaches and instructors and enhance cooperation between different actors as well as spread the best practices developed in the course of the project. Actors participating in the development project also committed to mainstreaming the gender perspective, and one of the objectives of the project was, therefore, a better acknowledgement of gender differences in the structure and content of coach and instructor training. In practice, this means, for example, that the number of coaches and instructors representing the minority gender in a given sport will be increased and that the competencies of coaches and instructors to recognise the needs and

qualities of both genders be improved (FSF Annual Report 2009; Korpi 2010).

The development project highlighted several challenges regarding gender-equality skills and promotion within different sports. Although 15 of the sport-specific sub-projects identified clear gender bias among coaches, instructors and participants, only three sports organisations took action to change this situation. National sports federations do not necessarily have an insight into why or how advancing gender equality should be made part of their activities. According to the results of the project, gender equality and mainstreaming the gender perspective was promoted in the sub-projects relatively inefficiently, if at all. There is a clear shortage in the skills required for understanding and improving the status of men and women. It is not clear to all national sports federations how and why gender equality should be promoted. Similarly, recognising the problems standing in the way of achieving gender equality seemed to be lacking (Korpi 2010). Many national sports federations do not necessarily see the unequal position of men and women as a problem, although their activities would show a heavy gender bias. Sports organisations are expected to show sensitivity, based on knowledge about gender equality, to identify gender-related issues and the manifestations of gender in the discourse, materials and communications within the culture prevailing in the particular sport.

### 4.3 Mentoring

Mentoring is used in sports as a tool for the development of coaches and managers. The Finnish Coach Association took on the responsibility of sport-specific mentoring in Finland in 2006. The goal is to create a functioning network of mentors in specific sports. Currently, the Finnish Coach Association has three mentors, all of whom are men. They train coaches and head coaches in different sports. The aim is that the mentors for each sport who have completed this training can then further develop mentoring activities within their own organisation, sport or region (Malvela 2011; Finnish Coach Association 2011).

The Finnish Coach Association's approach to mentoring is based on sport-specific activities and a coaching perspective. In addition, there would be a demand in Finland for mentoring that crosses the boundaries between different types of sport and would focus on, for example, sport management and leadership. In 1995–2000, the FSF coordinated a mentoring programme specifically targeted at women acting in Finnish sports organisations. In recent years, mentoring has been taken up and developed in the national women's sports operators' network LiikunNaiset and the European-wide WILD programme, in which Finland participates. Both bodies have adopted mentoring as a way of promoting women's status in the various positions within the field of sports (FSF 2011; WILD 2011).



## 5 High performance sports

### 5.1 Grants

The Ministry of Education and Culture supports Finnish athletes by awarding coaching and training grants every year, with the aim of securing athletes' opportunities to train in full capacity. There are two types of grants: the large 15,000-euro grants, which are aimed at athletes who compete in individual sports on a top international level and who are expected to win a medal in the next major sporting event, and the small 7,500-euro grants aimed at talented young athletes in individual sports. When awarding grants, the Ministry of Education and Culture aims to take into account women's and men's success potential in each sport, with the objective of advancing gender equality in high performance sports (Pelanteri 2010, 75–76).

Since 2006, after which gender-specific statistics have been compiled on the distribution of grants, the percentage of women among the grant recipients has decreased. While in 2006, 45% of the grant recipients were women (Harju 2008, 70), this figure was 37.5% in 2007 (Hämäläinen 2009, 73), 38% in 2008 (Huhtanen 2010, 78) and 32% in 2009 (Pelanteri 2010, 76). The gender distribution among the recipients of the large grant has been more equal than among those awarded the smaller grant. The gender distribution among top athletes is more equal than among young athletes still working their way to the top. Furthermore, the gender distribution in the grants awarded for summer sports is more equal than those awarded for winter sports (Pelanteri 2010, 76).

In addition, top athletes may also receive financial support from the Finnish Olympic Committee, which also provides support for athletes in non-Olympic sports. In 2011, the Finnish Olympic Committee supported 341 athletes, 68% of whom are men and 32% women (Finnish Olympic Committee 2011a). A third source of financial support for athletes is the Urheilijoiden Ammatinedistämissäätiö (Athletes' Professional Advancement Foundation), which awards grants to athletes who are aiming at an internationally successful career or who have already finished their active sports career for studies leading to qualifications or a degree. In the 2010–2011 term, the foundation awarded a grant to 89 athletes, equally between men and women (Finnish Olympic Committee 2011b).

### 5.2 National teams

The Finnish Olympic Teams have included more men than women in the 2000s (Table 1). The proportion of women among Olympic athletes has been approximately one-third, except in the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympics, where 46% of Finland's team were women. Men and women have been more equally represented in Finland's Paralympic teams than in the Olympic teams, with the exception of the 2008 Paralympics, where 83% of the team were men.

Table 1. Gender distribution in Finland's Olympic and Paralympic teams in the 2000s (Ministry of Education 2009a; Tikander 2011).

Event	Olympics			Paralympics		
	Women	Men	Number of athletes	Women	Men	Number of athletes
Salt Lake City 2002	37 %	63 %	100	50 %	50 %	14
Athens 2004	32 %	68 %	53	42 %	58 %	53
Turin 2006	34 %	66 %	90	43 %	57 %	7
Beijing 2008	46 %	54 %	57	17 %	83 %	30
Vancouver 2010	37 %	63 %	94	40 %	60 %	5

### 5.3 Bringing about change in high performance sports

On 6 November 2008, the Ministry of Education appointed a working group to review the strategic principles and functional responsibilities within goal-oriented high performance sports aiming at international success. The working group prescribed that the coaching and training in high performance sports would be carried out in a manner that advances gender equality and supports the career of an athlete and that the financial practices and the principles for awarding financial support would be socially acceptable and transparent (Government Project Register 2008).

In its report (Ministry of Education 2010), the working group suggested that a project group leading the change in high performance sports be appointed. This working group began its work at the end of 2010. The group has five regular members: four men and one woman. The assistant to the working group is also a woman. The work towards changing high performance sports is governed by a steering group (three men, one woman) and a monitoring group (eight men, five women). The permanent members of the monitoring group are men. The permanent advisor to the group is also a man (Finnish National Elite Sport Development Committee 2011). All in all, 71% of those contributing to the work towards changing Finnish high performance sports are men and 29% women.

One point of departure for the change working group's work is building an athlete's path from childhood to a successful peak. The purpose of the athlete's path is to describe how the journey towards international excellence should be built in different sports. At the same time, the aim is to describe the roles of different actors along that path and the cooperation needs that are involved, for example when combining studies and sporting (Finnish National Elite Sport Development Committee 2011). The path method offers a good opportunity to approach men's and women's different needs and the qualities to succeed as an elite athlete from a gender-sensitive perspective.

## 6 Decision-making and leadership in sports

The culture of sports involves leadership and management duties on many levels. Sports directors are appointed by municipalities and regional and national administration in the public sector, by sports businesses in the private sector, and by anything from sports clubs to international organisations in the third sector. Sports directors may be working as paid employees or, as is often the case in the third sector, in positions of trust alongside their main occupations. There is as yet very little research into leadership and management in Finnish sports. There is particularly little research into women as sports directors.

Equal and democratic decision-making requires that men and women have equal opportunities to participate in decision-making and leadership and management on different levels. Women form nearly one half of Finland's labour force and are, on average, more highly educated than men, but this is not reflected in positions of leadership. Increasing the number of women in decision-making has long been an objective for the government's gender equality policies (Government Report on Gender Equality, 94). It is also one of the themes raised by the European Union and the Council of Europe (The Council for Gender Equality 2009). Advancing women's career development and increasing the number of women in decision-making were key equality goals of the Government Programme of Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen's second cabinet (2008–2011). The government will continue

cooperation with its social partners in order to boost women's career development (Programme of Prime Minister Jyrki Katainen's Government, 67).

From time to time, research on leadership and management and gender equality has raised the issue of whether the absence of women in positions of leadership has to do with women's identity and is thereby their own conscious choice or if it is a consequence of a culture of inequality, which should be fought against even more vigorously than has been done thus far (Hakim 2006; Julkunen 2010). There are numerous reasons for women being sidelined from leadership and managerial positions. Reasons cited for this include prejudices and discrimination against women, gender stereotypes, men's homosociality, the masculinity of organisations, the male-centred conditions for career paths, a lack of mentoring and unofficial networks, and women's own preferences (Levin & Mattis 2006; Litzky & Greenhouse 2007; Julkunen 2009, 71). Leadership is also a lifestyle choice, which to some women seems to be unappealing. This is not, however, necessarily something stemming from women themselves rather than social structures (Lewis & Simpson 2010). In reality, the issue is more complex than a matter of appeal. Research has shown (e.g. White 1995, Lämsä & Hiillos 2008, Välimäki et al. 2008; Kukkonen 2010) that the career of a female leader is affected by many different areas of life. Spouse and family form a stronger element in the stories of women in leadership positions than in those

of men in similar positions. Reconciling the demands of work and family still remains a much greater problem for women than men.

Owing to the highly masculine history of sports, women have much larger obstacles to their career progress in the field of sports than in other areas, according to a commonly held view. In addition to history and tradition, other reasons cited for women's small representation in the decision-making in sports include general attitudes towards women operating in a sports organisation, the lack of role models and networks, gender-based recruitment systems, women's lower level of participation in competitive and organised sports in comparison to men, women's lower visibility in the media and family duties (Aalto 2003, 161, 166; Kukkonen 2010).

There is some scientific evidence in Finland for the advantages of the female habitus in leadership and management positions. For example, a study on working conditions (Lehto & Sutela 2004) has revealed that female managers received better evaluations than their male counterparts on statements regarding the ability to motivate, support and encourage their staff, giving praise for good performance, and supporting studies and professional development. International studies have shown, on the other hand, that management styles do not show any obvious gender differences. Female managers stand apart from their male colleagues because of their personality and the role their family plays in their lives, but not because of their management style or working methods (Wajcman 1996; 1998). In this light, it does not seem plausible to claim that women would act differently within an organisation than men (Julkunen 2010, 226). Instead of studying women's individual characteristics, Wajcman (1996) argues that the focus should be on removing structural obstacles that women encounter in the world of work today.

When both men and women hold decision-making and leadership positions, the needs of different people will be better met and the resources more effectively used. Involving women in sports leadership is a question that is linked with the larger issue of sports leadership and the operating culture in the field of sports. From the perspective

of promoting physical activity for both men and women, it would be important to bring to the fore a plurality of perspectives and voices (Aalto 2003, 151). An equal distribution of opportunities to influence is believed to enable an equal amount of attention to be paid to the promotion of both girls' and boys', and women's and men's, physical activity (Aalto 2003, 167).

## 6.1 Administration in sports organisations

There are only few women in major positions in sports organisations (e.g. Litmanen 2008, Kukkonen & Pyykkönen 2011). In the past fifteen years, the number of women in leadership and decision-making positions in these bodies has, however, been on a slow increase. However, decision-making remains strongly in men's hands in the field of sports.

The Act on Equality between Women and Men (Section 4a) stipulates that "The proportion of both women and men in government committees, advisory boards and other corresponding bodies, and in municipal bodies and bodies established for the purpose of inter-municipal cooperation, but excluding municipal councils, must be at least 40 per cent, unless there are special reasons to the contrary." The Finnish Sports Federation has referred to this piece of legislation when including in its objectives in 1998 that the decision-making bodies of sports organisations should have at least 40% representation of both men and women or the gender representation should be in line with the gender distribution of the members of the organisation. Currently, sport organisations are still far from having achieved this objective.

The gender bias in the decision-making bodies of sports organisations varies widely from one organisation to another. The 2009 executive board of the umbrella organisation FSF was the most equal in its gender distribution among the FSF community, with 53% men and 47% women. The most male-dominated decision-making bodies exist in national sports federations (Figure 8). Some national sports federations are heavily gendered, and 12 federations

have no women in their boards at all, while one federation's board has only female members.

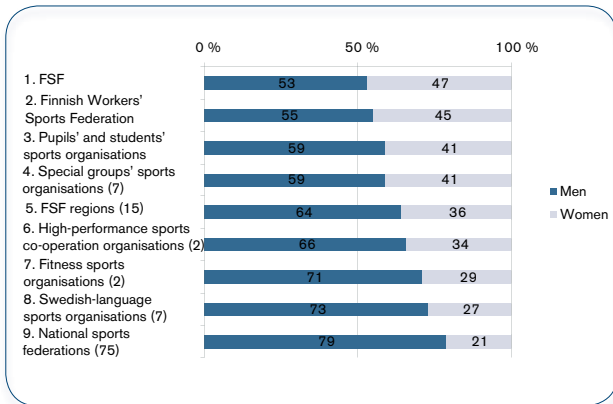


Figure 8. Gender distribution in the boards of the FSF community by type of member organisation in 2009 (FSF 2009).

The FSF community consists of 114 member organisations in addition to the umbrella organisation. For this reason, the figures for the FSF community can be considered to reflect the situation in the field of sports as a whole. The proportion of women on boards in the FSF community has risen from 16% in 1995 to 27% in 2009 (Figure 9). This progress, however, has not been entirely linear. The proportion of women on the FSF community boards shows a clear increase between 1995 and 2002. Based on a policy adopted in 1998, the FSF recommended that the boards of its member organisations should have at least 40% of both men and women. In 2002, the proportion of women was 30%, and this figure has remained approximately the same since.

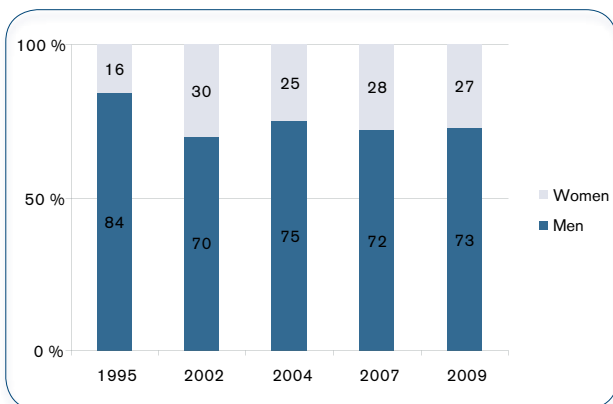


Figure 9. The proportion of men and women on the boards of the FSF community, 1995–2009 (FSF 2009).

The proportion of women chairs on the boards of the FSF community has risen from 6% in 1995 to 15% in 2009 (Figure 10).

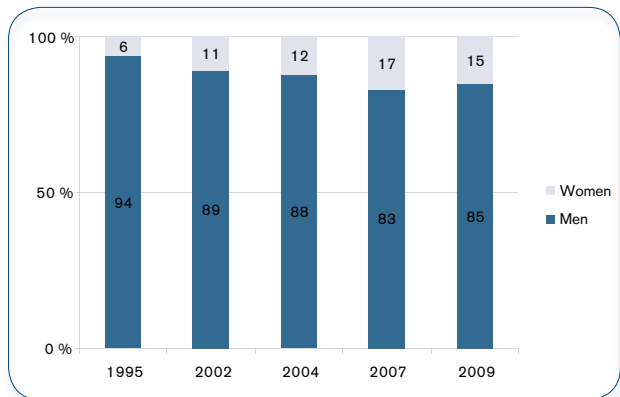


Figure 10. The proportion of men and women chairs on FSF community boards, 1995–2009 (FSF 2009).

The proportion of women among the executive directors of the FSF community has risen from 13% in 1995 to 24% in 2009 (Figure 11). This proportion has risen between 2007 and 2009 as well, unlike the percentage of women on the boards and the percentage of women chairs of the boards of the FSF community.

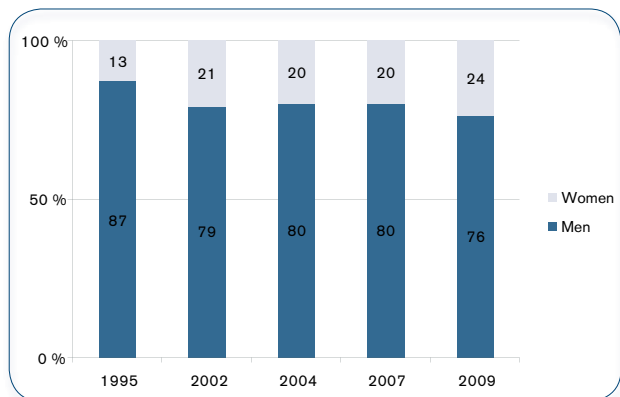


Figure 11. The proportion of men and women among the executive directors of the FSF community, 1995–2009 (FSF 2009).

Sports organisations do not necessarily yet realise how the promotion of equality in their decision-making bodies would serve the whole culture of sports as well as various individual sports. If the two genders were equally represented in different sports, this would likely diversify the perspectives from which the cultures prevailing in different sports

are examined and created. Regardless of the gender division among sports enthusiasts, all sports can be considered to benefit from having both men and women in the decision-making process.

## 6.2 Leadership and decision-making in sports in municipalities

Finland has 336 municipalities. Municipal decision-making has an essential impact on what type of sports infrastructure and culture will be created in a municipality. For this reason, gender division in municipal decision-making bodies and among municipal officials matters as well. Previously, most of the municipal officials responsible for sports, as well as the elected officials responsible for sports departments, have been men. However, the Act on Equality between Women and Men (609/1986) has balanced the situation since the 1990s, obliging authorities to promote gender equality. In addition, according to section 4a of the act, the proportion of men and women in municipal bodies and inter-municipal cooperation bodies, excluding municipal councils, must be at least 40%, unless there are special reasons to the contrary.

In municipal representative bodies related to sports, the proportion of women is now significantly higher than a few decades ago. In 1993, women constituted 21% of the members of municipal boards. Today, 48% of municipal board members are women. According to statistics published by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the proportion of women on municipal boards responsible for sports has remained practically the same – at 48% – since 2000. The proportion of women among the chairs of municipal boards has increased slightly and was 36% in 2009. The quota stated in the Act on Equality does not concern the selection of chairs. As a result of the structural reform of municipalities in recent years, the number of municipal boards responsible for sports has decreased from 253 in 2005 to 141 in 2009. So far, this change has not affected the proportion of men and women.

Of all municipal employees in sports (n=3,092), 56% are men and 44% are women. The most male-

dominated sector is the maintenance of physical activity and sports areas. There are no women among, for example, sports ground managers (n=52) and caretakers (n=32). On the other hand, women represent the majority among secretaries, cashiers and cafeteria managers. The proportion of women among leading officials in sports has risen in recent years, but most leaders are still men. According to the latest municipal salary statistics (2009), men represent 69% and women 31% of leading sports officials (n=81). In the 1970s, there were not yet any women directors of municipal sports departments (Heinilä 1977; Local government sector wages and salaries 2009). Table 2 illustrates gender divisions in municipalities among leading sports officials, secretaries of sports, sports instructors and members of municipal boards.

Table 2. Gender divisions among members of municipal boards related to sports and officials of municipal sports departments.

		Men	Women	n
<b>Boards</b>				
	Chairs	64.5%	35.5%	141
	Members	51.9%	48.1%	1,210
<b>Officials of sports departments</b>				
	Directors	69.1%	30.9%	81
	Secretaries of sports	52.6%	47.4%	137
	Sports instructors	33.7%	66.3%	572

In recent decades, as gender equality has improved among the employees of municipal sports departments, the entire field of sports has diversified in the municipal sector, expanding from traditional sports to cover many other kinds of sports and health-enhancing physical activity. Family and other areas of life were more strongly present in the narratives of women than in those of men. It is possible that the presence of women has resulted in the shift from traditional sports towards a more comprehensive array of physical activities in the municipal sector.



### 6.3 Gender impact assessment as a decision-making tool

Gender impact assessment can be regarded as an important decision-making tool (e.g. Teräs 2007b, 17). Gender impact assessment refers to evaluating the effects of a measure or proposition separately in terms of women, men and gender equality (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health 2009, 22). This report examined any gender impact assessments made in the sports departments of Finland's seven largest municipalities.

The phone survey revealed that gender impact assessments are still rare in municipal sports departments, even when equality issues have been discussed in other ways. Two municipalities – Oulu and Helsinki – have performed gender impact assessments, and one municipality – Vantaa – is in the process of carrying out one. Of other Finnish municipalities, at least Hämeenlinna and Kokkola have performed gender impact assessments in the sports sector (Tanhua & Leinonen 2011, 44–45).

Judging from this report, one of the problems related to gender impact assessments is a lack of resources. In Vantaa, employees of the sports department engage in gender impact assessments “when other work allows”. In Oulu, the assessment was ordered from an external party. The ideal solution would be to perform a gender impact assessment once a year internally and to order one from an external party at longer intervals.

From the perspective of equality, sports facility reservations and funding granted by municipalities to sports organisations were the issues that evoked the most discussion. In most municipalities, the criteria for allocating these resources do not include gender. The main focus of municipal sports policies is supporting physical activity among children and young people, regardless of gender. In some municipalities, the director of the sports department wanted to point out that sports organisations further allocate the facility reservations to their teams, and the municipalities have no say in this process.

As a whole, the phone survey of municipal sports departments showed that the municipalities have started to evaluate their offering of sports services

from the perspective of gender, but there is still ample room for development.

The sports department of the city of Helsinki carried out a gender impact assessment in 2007. Equality work in the department is based on the department's first gender equality plan, which was completed in 1997, and the city of Helsinki's sports policy for 2001–2010, the goals and proposed measures of which include equality considerations. Every four years since 1994, Helsinki has also carried out a study on the physical activity habits of local men and women (Jyrkiäinen 2007, 4–5). The gender impact assessment performed by the sports department of the city of Helsinki covers the services offered by the department and describes their use as well as physical activity habits among local women, men, girls and boys. It also reports on the division of funding granted by the department to sports organisations as well as sports facility reservations according to gender. The document emphasises that the services offered by the sports department are targeted at municipal residents in general, rather than women or men in particular. As a whole, the gender impact assessment carried out by the Helsinki sports department is mainly focused on discussing the physical activity habits of municipal residents and the related differences between men and women. The budget of the sports department is not discussed in the assessment.

Oulu is among the most advanced municipalities in Finland in terms of promoting equality. The city has sought to integrate equality strategies into all of its operations in accordance with the principle of mainstreaming. Equality has been promoted through consistent measures over several years. The city has sought to increase equality in its operational culture through strategic guidelines and measures based on these. Resources have been allocated for this work, and the sports department has actively promoted gender equality and non-discrimination. In accordance with the city of Oulu's equality plan, the sports department has carried out two gender impact assessments related to its budget. These were completed in 2007 and 2009.

The gender impact assessment in Oulu in 2007 was the first one of its kind in Finland. It proved

to be challenging because of lacking models and indicators and, above all, incomplete statistics (Teräs 2009, 10). The availability of gender-related statistics largely determines the accuracy of the assessment. If such statistics are not available, existing statistics must be examined from the perspectives of gender and equality (Teräs 2009, 8). The summary of the gender impact assessments in Oulu recommends the development of documentation.

The gender impact assessment in Oulu in 2009 was based on the budget of the sports department for the same year. It used the 3Rs method, which was developed in Sweden. The method focuses on the following three areas: representation (the proportion of men and women in decision-making in sports, organisations, projects, etc.), resources (the division of the funding and sports facility reservations issued by the sports department as well as the use of facilities between genders) and realia (interpretations of the norms and values integral to administrative structures and the products and services these structures produce) (Teräs 2009, 10–11). The results of the gender impact assessment indicate that the investments made by the sports department promote opportunities to engage in sports favoured by men and boys in particular (Teräs 2009, 14, 17).

The two gender impact assessments in Oulu are good examples of how it is possible to carry out measures to promote equality after first receiving accurate information on the current state of affairs. After the gender impact assessments, the city of Oulu has sought to make improvements in the areas where inequality was detected. According to the gender impact assessment in 2009, the city was able to address many of the development needs detected in the first assessment in a short period of time. Improvements in common activities for girls and boys as well as physical activities for families were regarded as particularly successful (Sjöholm 2010, 17).

# 7 Measures carried out to promote gender equality

## 7.1 Public administration

Equality work in Finnish sports received a boost in 1994 when Minister of Culture Tytti Isohookana-Asunmaa established a working group to study the position of women in sports culture. The working group presented an action programme to promote equality, including suggestions related to the division of funding as well as the position of women as decision-makers and participants in physical activity. The working group also introduced an annual equality award.

In this century, significant advances in equality work include the achievements of the Draw working group, which was established by the Ministry of Education in 2004. In its report, Draw (Ministry of Education 2005), the group extensively discussed the promotion of gender equality and the assessment of gender impacts in sports. Its statistical appendix, Men and Women in Sports in Numbers (Koivisto 2005), illustrated the position of the two genders in many sectors of sports and physical activity.

The Ministry of Education and Culture has decided to include gender equality in the criteria for government grant applications for projects related to health-enhancing physical activity and physical activity among children and young people. The criterion will be adopted in the 2012 application process. This is a significant advance in equality policy.

Cooperation between sports organisations and the Ministry of Education and Culture has played an important role in improving women's position and promoting equality in the field of sports. The ministry guides sports organisations in improving equality in two ways. It grants development and project subsidies to sports organisations to advance different aspects of equality work. In addition, the advancement of gender equality is included in the criteria of the government grant system for sports organisations. Moreover, one of the purposes of the government grant issued to the Finnish Sports Federation (FSF) since 1995 is advancement of gender equality. In the equality work carried out by the FSF, the Ministry of Education has been the principal financier, cooperation partner and creator of guidelines.

## 7.2 The FSF

As an umbrella organisation, the Finnish Sports Federation (FSF) is responsible for equality work in general in the Finnish culture of sports and physical activity. The FSF has actively promoted equality in sports since the Ministry of Education's working group presented its action programme in 1995. In 1996, the FSF decided on its first equality guidelines, including the promotion of equality in its strategy to a significant degree. Since 1998, the

FSF has employed an official responsible for equality issues (FSF 2010).

Over a period of 15 years, the FSF has created and coordinated many types of measures to promote equality work in sports. The most significant of these include Common Goal, a programme for sports organisations to promote equality (1998–2000). The FSF decided to recommend that all of its member organisations should adopt the goal of having either at least 40% of both men and women on their boards or, alternatively, men and women in the same proportion as they are represented in the membership of the organisation in question. The FSF regularly compiles statistics on the gender make-up of its member organisations' boards and chairs and executive directors (FSF 2010).

Equality work in the FSF has focused on increasing the number of girls and women in leading positions in sports. The FSF organised a mentoring programme specifically for women in Finnish sports organisations that ran from 1995 to 2000. The programme was the largest mentoring project targeted at decision-making related to sports and physical activity in Finland. Over the period of five years, 53 women took part in the programme. The LiikunNaiset network for Finnish women, established in 1993, has been a significant enabler of unofficial mentoring. The network operates nationally as well as regionally. Its goals include promoting an equal culture of sports, supporting the advancement of women in the field of sports, creating networks and offering peer support. In the spring of 2011, the FSF and the LiikunNaiset network began to prepare practical recommendations for sports organisations, sports clubs and municipalities to promote equality.

National and international networking is an important part of equality work in the FSF. From 1998 to 2000, the FSF held the presidency of the European Women and Sport (EWS) network. The EWS conference organised by the FSF is considered to have impacted equality work related to sports and physical activity both nationally and internationally. In addition, the FSF participates in ENGSO ENTER, an equality project of the European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation

(ENGSO). The goal of the project is to encourage women to advance to top positions in European sports organisations. The FSF also took part in ENGSO's WILD project, which aimed to increase women's expertise and input in managerial positions in sports and to strengthen the network of women managers both nationally and internationally. The latest milestone for equality work in the FSF is the presidency of the International Working Group on Women and Sport (IWG). The presidency culminates in the international Women and Sport congress, which will be held in Helsinki in 2014.

According to the FSF, awareness of gender issues in Finnish sports organisations has increased over the past 15 years as a result of consistent training, constant production of materials, communications, recommendations, networking and the rewarding of good practices (FSF 2011, 14). The umbrella organisation and its member organisations have carried out measures to promote equality on many levels. Some national sports federations have launched specific programmes as well as projects targeted at promoting gender equality. Examples of successful projects include those of the Football Association of Finland and the Finnish Athletics Federation.

## 8 Towards equality in sports: discussion and recommendations

The Ministry of Education and Culture aims to strengthen equality comprehensively in sports culture (Ministry of Culture and Education 2011b, 41). Equality between men and women in sports has progressed in recent years, but sports still remains a quite male-dominated sector. Men outnumber women particularly in the fields of competitive sports and management. Similarly, many individual sports continue to be heavily gendered, and traditional stereotypes prevail on both the strategic and the operational level. In many fields of sports, the division between genders is easy to see, but it is much more difficult to outline practical processes and target measures accordingly. For this reason, more gender-specific statistical information, gender-sensitive research and equality measures are needed in the field of sports.

The intensity of equality work has varied over time. Over the years, many fixed-term projects have been launched and project funding has been issued for the promotion of equality. In sports – and society in general – the promotion of various causes often results in an endless list of projects and programmes, the effectiveness of which has never been studied. The advancement of equality is an example of a change that requires time and persistence. The gender system in sports and physical activity, as well as social conventions and behaviour, is slow to change. There seems to be a significant gap between the strong commitment to improvement and the existing heavily gendered structures. This should

be better taken into consideration when preparing action programmes and allocating resources.

### Physical activity and sports as a hobby

Boys engage in more physical activity than girls and in heavier activity than girls. As adults, women are more active physically than men, taking more steps, but men engage in more intensive physical activity. Boys and men engage more actively in physical activity in sports clubs than women and girls. In recent years, organised activity has increased in both genders, but more among women and girls. In general, there seem to be only small changes in physical activity and engagement in sports in both genders in the 2000s.

Increased engagement in physical activity in private companies is a perceived and recognised phenomenon. Women in private companies seem to be more physically active than men. Those involved in the culture of sports on the practical level should consider what this increased activity means for sports clubs, for example, and what the possible consequences of this trend are if it continues.

Engagement in different sports varies between genders. Some of the differences can be seen as characteristic of boys and girls, while some result from infrastructure, the cultures of specific sports, upbringing, general gender perceptions and different habits. In the future, it should be possible to dismantle the gender stereotypes related to different

sports and create opportunities for the participation of both genders. The means to this end include education, the revision of materials related to specific sports in a gender-sensitive manner and changes in the gender division among those involved with a particular sport. As long as the culture of sports maintains stereotypical notions of different sports, many talented girls and boys will not receive the necessary support for their careers in sports. The culture of sports constantly needs new participants. The prerequisite for civic activity in sports in the future is the advancement of equality.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture's action and economic plan, the goal for the next few years is to further improve the conditions for organising major international events in Finland (Ministry of Culture and Education 2011b, 36–43). The potential offered by major events and championships should be better utilised by linking other goals to such events. The economic and cultural leverage that these events provide must be used to advance engagement in sports among girls and boys.

Girls and boys, as well as women and men, should be equal in terms of resources on all levels of sports. Without equal allocation of resources, it is difficult to see genuine equality in attitudes, values and views (Tiihonen 2001, 80). This does not automatically mean, however, that equality work is more effective the more resources are granted for this purpose. The resources granted for equality work should be targeted at areas that can be expected to produce the best results.

### Decision-making and leadership in sports

In the culture of sports, women's opportunities to advance to managerial positions have been promoted through various projects, mentoring, networks, training and seminars as well as quotas. During the 15-year period, the proportion of women in tasks related to leadership and decision-making in sports has gradually increased.

The measures to promote women's undertaking of such tasks must be continued. Change can be boosted by using quotas, for example, which will

make it possible for more women to advance to leadership and decision-making positions. Women's participation in management and decision-making is an issue related not only to sports leadership, but also to operating methods in sports and physical activity in general.

### Mainstreaming of the gender perspective in sports

The mainstreaming of the gender perspective serves to integrate gender considerations and the promotion of equality into all levels of planning and operations. The mainstreaming process requires gender-specific statistics, the analysis of which makes it possible to gain a depth of examination deeper than everyday conceptions. This makes both the monitoring and targeting of measures easier.

Existing statistics relating to economic equality in sports are insufficient. More detailed studies are needed in order to gain information about equality in resourcing in state administration, municipalities and organisations. As pointed out in the "Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on The roadmap for equality between women and men (2006–2010) and follow-up strategy" (2010), gender should be recognised in European and national budgets. This necessitates indicators broken down by gender that help show the situation affecting women and men and assess the degree of compliance with the equality plan (EESC 2010/C 354/01). It remains to be decided whether such a change is necessary, or if it would be more essential in terms of promoting physical activity to examine, for example, if support from the public sector actually increases activity among the people at whom the support and measures are targeted.

Mainstreaming tools include gender impact assessment, which refers to evaluating the effects of a measure or proposition separately in terms of women, men and gender equality. Gender impact assessments can be used to examine the impact of propositions and decisions on the position, resources and interests of women and men. They can also be used to make the position of genders more visible and possibly to make suggestions for improvements



in order to eliminate or minimise the effects of discrimination.

To the extent that the promotion of equality is related to competence, training should be organised for those involved in sports. This makes it possible to achieve successful equality policies. The sharing of good practices related to the promotion of equality should also be encouraged. The Finnish Sports Federation (FSF) could take the main responsibility for organising training and spreading good practices. Management's commitment to the advancement of equality is essential. In future, documents presenting guidelines for operations should include the goal of equality and a practical perspective for taking women, men, girls and boys into consideration.

Gender equality is one of the criteria used by the Ministry of Education and Culture when issuing government grants to sports organisations. In the reform of the government grant system for sports organisations, consideration should be given to putting more emphasis on gender equality as a criterion or recommendation than is currently the case.

### From paths to mainstream

The issue of gender in sports and physical activity is not simply a question of gender division in boards or among decision-makers. In the cultures of specific sports, gender is constantly present in manners of speech, stereotypes, materials and communications. To promote equality, it is not enough to make an impact on gender division among decision-makers. The grassroots levels of physical activity must also be reached. As Tiihonen (2001, 82) argues, the traditional models of masculinity and femininity in the world of sports should be challenged and diversity should be seen as an important value. This is important not only in terms of human dignity, but also in terms of the attractiveness and future of sports. Equality concerns gender as well as social and age groups. The polarisation of engagement in sports makes diversity an important consideration.

Equality should increasingly spring from thinking at the grassroots level – the first level that creates and redevelops gender order in sports. This thinking should stem from girls and boys and their mothers and fathers. Changes related to equality are feasible.

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## APPENDIX 1.

**The following officials (n=7) in municipal sports departments responded to our phone survey:**

Espoo: Mauri Johansson, Sports Director (25 March 2011)  
Helsinki: Pekka Jyrkiäinen, Planning Officer (15 April 2011)  
Jyväskylä: Pekka Sihvonen, Sports Director (19 April 2011)  
Oulu: Niina Epäily, acting Sports Director (25 March 2011)  
Tampere: Pekka Paavola, Director of Sports Department (2 May 2011)  
Turku: Arto Sinkkonen, Sports Director (2 May 2011)  
Vantaa: Pirkko Nurmi, Director of Sports Services (19 April 2011)

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- 10 Hitaasti mutta varmasti? Saavutettavuuden edistyminen yliopistoissa ja ammattikorkeakouluissa 2000-luvulla



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