

THE DANISH GOVERNMENT

ACTION PLAN ON GENDER EQUALITY FOR MEN AND BOYS

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ENQUIRIES ABOUT THE PUBLICATION CAN BE MADE TO:

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PREFACE

Gender equality is about real equal opportunities and freedom. Freedom to be able to express oneself without gendered norms, structures or expectations restricting the individual man or woman.

Historically, the fight for equality has been a women's issue. With good reason. Because women throughout time have had to fight to get the same rights and opportunities as men.

In Denmark, we have made substantial progress in achieving gender equality. However, there is a need for us as a society to recognise that modern equality policies need to involve both women and men. It is about promoting freedom and opportunities for both genders to live the life they want.

Gender specific norms and expectations also have an impact on the living conditions and circumstances of men and boys. On their opportunities, their challenges and their behaviour.

We have not sufficiently recognised that when men's health is worse than women's, when more boys drop out of the education system, when men end up in abuse, crime or homelessness, and when men commit suicide more often than women, it is also connected to their gender and the expectations placed upon them.

With this first ever action plan, we are, together with the parties in the Danish Parliament, taking a number of concrete initiatives to promote equality for men and boys. The action plan far from solves all challenges, but our wish is that the action plan can provide a more comprehensive and broader view of how gendered expectations can limit men and boys. And that we provide a greater focus on the fact that gender stereotypes also play a role for men and boys, and on what can be done to promote their equal opportunities and gender equality.

With the action plan, we would also like to emphasise that gender equality is for both women and men. It's not about either-or. But about both-and. About individual freedom and opportunities, about the society we want, about growth and prosperity and about the cohesion of our society.

Enjoy your reading

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, a number of important steps have been taken to do away with legislation based on traditional gendered expectations of, for example, men as caregivers. This applies, among other things, to the implementation of earmarked and non-transferable parental leave, which gives men the same rights as women to take leave with their children, the equal sharing of the child and youth allowance between both parents, and legislation enforcing that digital mail from the public sector regarding a shared child must be sent to both parents.

Most recently, the government and Parliament has decided to ensure equal rights to crisis centre services for men experiencing intimate partner violence, so that these men have the same right to help and support at a crisis centre as women, including psychological support for the men and their children. With it, society recognises that men also can experience intimate partner violence and need help.

At the same time, a large number of other actions focus on areas where men are overrepresented, e.g. substance abuse, homelessness, suicide etc. Actions in these areas will benefit both men and women.

With this action plan, the ambition is to focus on areas where men and boys in particular are overrepresented, and where gender norms, cultures and expectations can challenge equal opportunities for men and boys. At the same time, the action plan will contribute to creating greater visibility and recognition that gender equality is also about equal opportunities for men and boys.

This action plan contains 14 initiatives that cut across a number of thematic areas and line ministries. As part of the agreement on the use of the reserve for measures in the social, health and labour market area (the SSA reserve) for 2024-2027, the parties behind the agreement have set aside DKK 35 million for eight of the initiatives.

The action plan also presents a number of recent efforts and agreements which focus on areas where men and boys are overrepresented or particularly vulnerable. Among them are also efforts that can particularly benefit men and boys. These efforts are presented in separate text boxes under the individual sections.

The action plan has four focus areas

1. Fathers, children and families: Men's equal opportunities in relation to family life can be limited by societal expectations of and ideas about men's and women's roles, e.g. as caregivers. The father's role has developed significantly in recent years, fathers have been given the same rights to parental leave as mothers, and many men are actively involved in their children's lives and family life. But there are still many places in society where the mother is perceived as the primary caregiver, which can neglect the father's role as a parent while assigning women with the bulk of unpaid care responsibilities.

2. Physical and mental health: Men have shorter average life expectancies than women, they visit the doctor less often, are at a higher risk of dying from treatable illnesses, and far more men than women commit suicide. Men use significantly fewer health services than women. This may mean that they do not get the help they need in time. In the case of psychological problems, it is well known that men in particular do not seek out help and support. Almost three times as many women as men are referred for psychological help by their doctor. It is especially men with less formal education who lag behind in terms of health.

3. Vulnerability: When men fall, they tend to fall hard. For example, the vast majority of people experiencing homelessness are men, and more often men have substance abuse problems and are involved in criminal activities. Men who are vulnerable to social exclusion more often have complex and intersecting problems, for instance simultaneous mental health issues and substance abuse. The traditional expectation for men and boys to be tough and deal with their problems themselves can negatively influence their opportunities for reaching out and acknowledging their problems, and can also affect how society views and responds to the needs of men and boys.

4. Education and working life: There are differences between boys' and girls' academic results. And fewer young men obtain a secondary education. Both the education system and the labour market are still highly gender-segregated, and many work in traditionally male or female occupations. Men are, for example, largely absent from welfare and care oriented programmes. This is relevant for the opportunities of the individual, but also for the flexibility of the labour market.

Initiatives in the action plan



The four focus areas

Fathers, children and family

- Follow-up on agreement on earmarked parental leave
- Funding for activities for vulnerable fathers on parental leave*
- Knowledge about the use of paternity leave
- Funding for networks and support for men in crisis*

Physical and mental health

- Prevention and rehabilitation related to chronic disease*
- Funding for Forum for Men's Health
- De-stigmatisation of mental health problems and suicidal thoughts*
- Improving well-being of young men through physical gaming communities*

Vulnerability and social exclusion

- Early intervention in cases with risk of homelessness or relapse into new crime *
- Anger and conflict management in the Correctional Service in Greenland
- Equal rights to crisis centre services for men exposed to intimate partner violence
- National awareness campaign about intimate partner violence

Education and working life

- Diverse recruitment of students for the social and healthcare assistants (SOSU) education programme*
- Development and testing of the initiative *Boys' Day in Care**

Initiatives marked with * are financed by the DKK 35 million, which was set aside for the action plan with the agreement on the use of the reserve for measures in the social, health and labour market area (the SSA reserve) for 2024-2027.

Fathers, children and family

Fathers and family life

Men and women must have opportunities to participate equally in family life. When fathers are involved with their children, it contributes to a stronger attachment, which benefits the children's development. The health of the fathers also improves and it reduces the risk of conflicts and divorce.

For many years, fathers have only taken up a small part of the total parental leave - approximately 10 per cent. From August 2022, parental leave for all employees is divided equally with 24 weeks for each parent, of which 11 weeks are earmarked and non-transferable. This gives women and men the same right to parental leave. At the same time, it can help break down some of the constricting norms and gendered expectations that men may have in relation to family life, and send a signal that men are caregivers on an equal footing with women.

The majority of men express that they wish to use the extra earmarked leave when or if it becomes relevant for them. And preliminary figures show that the amount of leave taken has increased among fathers following the earmarking, while it has decreased among mothers. However, the offers for fathers and mothers on leave have not kept pace with developments. While all municipalities, for example, offers mothers' groups for mothers on leave, four out of ten municipalities offer neither fathers' nor gender-neutral parents' groups.

For vulnerable men, life circumstances, such as illness, abuse, unemployment or postpartum depression, can pose a particular challenge in relation to becoming a father. Among other things, this can negatively affect their desire to be on parental leave. There is still a need for support of both men and women's opportunities to take part in parenthood, and to ensure that there are relevant offers for fathers on leave as well.

Divorce and life crises

About 40 pct. of all marriages end in divorce. In the majority of divorces, the mother becomes the primary legal parent and the father the secondary parent. Today, more children of divorce live equally or almost equally with their mother and father, but many men still find that they would like to spend more time with their children than what they are offered.

Studies show that fathers have less faith in their own abilities when dealing with the family law system, and that there is a difference in how prepared mothers and fathers are when it comes to discussions about visitation. For example, the mothers are often more prepared than the fathers for meetings in the Family Court, and have prepared proposals for solutions related to visitation.

In general, men are also less likely to reach out for help when they are struggling. This may contribute to the fact that men are at greater risk of social exclusion and vulnerability than women. Men who experience a crisis in their lives, for example in connection with divorce, may therefore have a special need for support.

There is a need - based on the child's best interests - to support that both fathers and mothers have the best prerequisites to get involved in their children's lives.

Facts

- For Danish cohabiting parents who had a child in 2021 and were entitled to parental leave, fathers took an average of 36 days of leave, while mothers took an average of 279 days of leave. This corresponds to the fathers taking 11 pct. of the leave. (Statistics Denmark, 2023).
- Three out of four Danish fathers covered by the new leave rules take or expect to take all 11 weeks of earmarked leave (Megaphone survey from the Egmont Foundation and Mødrehjælpen, 2024).
- For all Danish fathers (including also co-mothers), leave has increased from 6.99 weeks to 10.50 weeks (corresponding to +3.51 weeks) after the new rules on earmarked leave, while mothers' leave has decreased from 40.36 to 35.88 weeks (corresponding to -44.48 weeks) after earmarking the leave. (ATP/Udbetaling Danmark, 2024).[1]
- 41 pct. of Danish municipalities offer neither fathers' nor parents' groups for fathers on leave, while all Danish municipalities have group services for the mothers. (Forum for Men's Health, 2023)
- In municipal health care, 96 pct. of Danish municipalities currently screen fathers for postpartum depression, but only 46 pct. of Danish municipalities offer direct support or treatment for the fathers in the form of, for example, group courses, psychological help or the like. For the mothers, 15 pct. of Danish municipalities do not have an offer. (Forum for Men's Health 2023, and Mødrehjælpen 2021)
- In 86 pct. of all divorces in Denmark, the mothers become the primary legal parent and the fathers becomes the secondary parent (Statistics Denmark, 2022).
- The proportion of Danish children of divorce who live equally or almost equally with their mother and father has grown significantly in recent years, from 15 pct. in 2009 to 41 pct. in 2021. (VIVE, 2022)

[1] The most recent numbers show, that for all Danish fathers (including also co-mothers), leave has increased from 6.18 weeks to 9.26 weeks (corresponding to +3.08 weeks) after the new rules on earmarked leave, while mothers' leave has decreased from 37.96 to 33.38 weeks (corresponding to -4.58 weeks) after earmarking the leave. (ATP/Udbetaling Danmark, August 2024).



Newer initiatives in the field

Various initiatives have been taken in recent years with the aim of promoting equal rights and opportunities for fathers and mothers. These concern i.a.:

- **Equal distribution of child and youth benefits:** On 1 January 2022, new rules on the equal distribution of child and youth benefits between joint custodial holders came into force. The rules mean that from 1 January 2022, the child and youth benefits are paid in equal halves to each of the holders of parental authority.
- **Digital mail to both parents about common child:** The Equality Act was amended in 2021, so that public authorities must, as a rule, send digital mail relating to a joint child and which is aimed at both holders of parental authority over a child, to both parents. The law entered into force on 21 March 2022.
- **Earmarked parental leave for both parents:** Based on the EU work-life balance directive, new rules have been introduced for the distribution of leave between parents. The rules underline that parental leave is now reserved equally between the mother and the father with 24 weeks each, of which 11 weeks of parental leave with maternity/paternity pay for employees are earmarked and therefore cannot be transferred to the other parent. Previously, 14 weeks of the leave were earmarked for the mother and two weeks were earmarked for the father, while 32 weeks could be shared. The rules have entered into force for children born from 2 August 2022.
- **Agreement on an improved family law system:** The agreement was concluded with all parties in the Danish Parliament on 30 November 2023 and focuses on ensuring the best interests of the child and the child's well-being in situations of divorce, strengthening the child's right to both parents and emphasising the parents' responsibility to shield the child from their conflicts. It is, among other things, decided to:
 - expand access to couples counselling in the period 2024-2027 for parents struggling to tackle their mutual problems.
 - offer both parents legal, child-related and procedural advice and guidance from the Family Court in parental responsibility cases already at the time of application.
 - Harassment in relations to the parental collaboration, including parental alienation, is explicitly mentioned in the Parental Responsibility Act, and the consequences of harassment are made one of the law's basic principles focussing on the best interests of the child.

Initiatives



Follow-up on agreement on earmarked parental leave

The Ministry of Employment is following the development in the use of the new parental leave model, and it is agreed that the rules must be evaluated in 2025. The Ministry of Employment will convene the parties behind the agreement to discuss the experiences with the new leave rules.

Funding for activities for vulnerable fathers on leave

Funds will be made available in 2024 for activities for expectant fathers and fathers on leave in particularly vulnerable positions. This could be e.g. the establishment of networks in the form of "fathers' groups" or "fathers' teams". The purpose is to support vulnerable fathers in their use of paternal leave and in their parental role and thereby support their attachment to the child and the positive effects that the use of leave has.

Knowledge about the use of parental leave

In 2026, the Ministry for Gender Equality will prepare a collection of knowledge on the use of leave, which will disseminate knowledge across the various projects and research, etc., which examine the effects of the new leave rules. The Department of Economics at Copenhagen Business School will, for example, in 2021-2025 carry out a large research project on the effects of reforms on parental leave, including how parental couples make decisions regarding work sharing, as well as the different attitudes and expectations towards the parental role of fathers and mothers.

Funding for networks and support for men in crisis

In 2024, a funds will be made available for activities with support and networks for men who are experiencing a life crisis, e.g. as a result of divorce, unemployment, illness, death, etc. This will include projects that can support fathers in their preparation for discussions about visitation in the event of divorce, etc. and support the handling of parenthood after a divorce with a focus on the best interests of the child. The aim is to support men in crisis and thereby reduce the risk of social exclusion.

Physical and mental health

Physical health

Men and women should have the same opportunities for a healthy life, but the health challenges for men and women are different in a number of areas. For example, the incidence of many diseases, including chronic diseases, is greater among men. Just as men generally have a higher mortality rate and shorter life expectancy than women.

Studies show that among other things the higher mortality rate among men from a number of diseases – in addition to lifestyle habits – may be connected to the lack of early diagnosis. Gender norms and expectations plays a role in seeking help and taking care of oneself. Among other things, men do not pay visits to their general practitioner as often as women.

There are good results in preventing the exacerbation of diseases and improving the quality of life when citizens with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, COPD and cardiovascular diseases participate in courses on disease management, physical exercise, dietary changes and smoking cessation. But fewer men than women partake in municipalities' prevention and rehabilitation services.

Thus, efforts are needed that focus on the inequality in men's health, as well as targeted initiatives, particularly aimed at men, encouraging them in seeking out and participating in relevant health services to a greater extent.

Mental health

Today, more men than women commit suicide. In general, mental problems and suicidal thoughts are taboo in society. This can be a barrier against seeking help. Studies show that men seek help to a far lesser extent than women when they experience psychological problems - neither from their general practitioner nor from family or friends.

At the same time, studies show that young men who experience poor well-being often lack communities where they can share their problems and receive support, and that many have few or no one in their lives with whom they can talk confidentially. Many young men do not seek help in time because they feel that they have to deal with their problems themselves. Furthermore, vulnerable men and boys may be more difficult to reach and retain in public or other social services.

There is a need to prevent poor well-being and psychological problems and to support more men and boys in seeking help and receiving the right support.

Facts

- In the years 2020-2021, the average life expectancy of Danish men was 79.4 years and women's 83.1 years. This means that women on average live 3.8 years longer than men (Statistics Denmark, 2022).
- In the first 80 years of their lives, Danish men and boys have a higher mortality rate than women and girls for almost all types of diseases and causes of death (Statistics Denmark, 2022).
- The mortality rate of Danish men is particularly higher for diseases of the respiratory and circulatory organs than women and is closely linked to lifestyle habits and lack of early diagnosis (Statistics Denmark, 2022; World Health Organization, 2018, p. 43f; 63f)
- 25 pct. of all Danish men have not visited their general practitioner within a year, while for women it is 13 pct. (Eurostat, 2019)
- Among the Danish 18-24-year-olds, who are at high risk of social exclusion, the average number of contacts with a general practitioner is 5.6 among men and 13.6 among women. The corresponding proportions are 14.1 and 20.8 respectively among the 50-64-year-old men and women. (VIVE, 2023)
- Seven out of ten suicides in Denmark are committed by men (Sundhedsdatastyrelsen, 2021)
- One in five Danish men rarely or never has someone to talk to in confidence. The number among 35-39-year-old men is 27 pct. (Forum for Men's Health, 2023)
- Almost three times as many women as men are referred for psychological help by their doctor in Denmark. In 2020, almost 57,000 women and 21,000 men received psychological help with public funding. Women thus accounted for 73 pct. of the recipients and men for 27 pct. (Statistics Denmark, 2021)



Newer initiatives in the field

Various initiatives have been taken in recent years with the aim of supporting the physical and mental health of men and boys. These concern i.a.:

- **Clinical research on gender inequality in health:** As part of the agreement on the research reserve for 2024, which was concluded between the Danish Government and all parties in the Danish Parliament on 2 November 2023, funds have been allocated for strengthened clinical and independent research. The effort should, among other things, contribute to research on inequality in health between women and men and to limit inequalities in health and disease, e.g. on the basis of disability, working environment and socio-economic conditions, etc.
- **Action Plan for Suicide Prevention:** As part of the agreement *A better psychiatry (En Bedre Psykiatri)* between the Danish Government and all parties in the Danish Parliament from 24 November 2023, a financial framework of DKK 48.75 million was allocated in 2024 and DKK 65.0 million annually from 2025 and onwards to a national action plan for a strengthened prevention of suicide and suicide attempts. In April 2024, an agreement was reached between the Government and all parties in the Danish Parliament on the action plan for a strengthened prevention of suicides and suicide attempts, which contains six initiatives that will contribute to Denmark achieving a drop in the number of suicides by 33 pct. in 2030, which has been committed to in the WHO's Action Plan on the subject.
- **Strengthening the Lifeline (Livslinien):** *The Lifeline* is a nationwide organisation whose purpose is to prevent suicide and suicide attempts. The Lifeline offers anonymous counselling to those at risk of suicide, their relatives as well as those left behind. As part of the agreement *A better psychiatry*, the grant to The Lifeline to remain open during the night is made permanent, and at the same time their permanent grant is strengthened with aim of increasing capacity to ensure that more people in acute suicide crisis receive advice or support from the Lifeline's advisers. DKK 7.0 million has been allocated annually from 2024 and onwards to the Lifeline.
- **The National Partnership Against Loneliness:** The partnership consists of over 130 actors across government agencies, businesses, organisations, civil society etc. who work together against loneliness throughout society. In 2023, the partnership launched a strategy and an action plan against loneliness. Against this background, an agreement was reached in 2023 to allocate DKK 20.8 million from the reserve for measures in the social, health and labour market area (the SSA reserve) for 2022-2025 to the following four initiatives:
 - a national effort to destigmatise loneliness,
 - communities and support for young people who experience loneliness,
 - community guides for older citizens, and
 - community guides for vulnerable and socially disadvantaged citizens.

Initiatives



Prevention of and rehabilitation after chronic disease

In order to increase the life expectancy and quality of life for people with chronic illness, a total of DKK 7.3 million has been allocated from the reserve for measures in the social, health and labour market area (the SSA reserve) for 2024-2027 for an effort anchored in the National Board of Health aimed at increasing the participation of men and women in the municipalities' prevention and rehabilitation services. The effort is particularly targeted men, as fewer men than women participate in the offers, and more men live with chronic illness.

Forum for Men's Health

The organisation *Forum for Men's Health (Forum for Mænds Sundhed)* collaborates with e.g. organisations and public authorities to promote equality in health by exchanging knowledge about and participating in activities that deal with men's health. From the reserve for measures in the social, health and labour market area (the SSA reserve) for 2024-2027, DKK 3.0 million has been allocated for the work of the *Forum for Men's Health* in 2024-2025.

Destigmatisation of mental health problems and suicidal thoughts

Funds have been allocated to contribute to the destigmatisation of mental health problems and to emphasise that no one should feel hindered in talking openly about their mental health problems or suicidal thoughts. From the reserve for measures in the social, health and labour market area (the SSA reserve) for 2024-2027 a total of DKK 3.0 million have been allocated to carry out a citizen-oriented information and awareness campaign particularly targeted men, as three out of four suicides in Denmark are committed by men. The campaign will benefit both men and women and will be implemented in 2026-2027.

Improving well-being of young men through physical gaming communities

With the agreement on the use of the reserve for measures in the social, health and labour market area (the SSA reserve) for 2024-2027, a total of DKK 1.8 million has been allocated in 2025-2027 to the *Centre for Digital Youth Care (Center for Digital Pædagogik)* to support and disseminate knowledge about physical gaming communities as an educational tool for e.g. municipal special offers, municipal collaboration regarding schools, social services and police (the SSP collaborations) and housing offers. The purpose is to improve well-being of young people and especially reach vulnerable young men and boys through gaming communities.

Vulnerability and social exclusion

Vulnerability, homelessness and crime

Men are overrepresented in most statistics on groups vulnerable to social exclusion, and more than twice as many men as women in Denmark are classified as particularly vulnerable. Men are also faced with complex and intersecting challenges to a greater extent than women.

More women than men have been registered with a mental disorder within the last five years. But far more men than women with a mental disorder also face other social challenges, e.g. almost one in four men with a mental disorder has also experienced substance abuse. This only applies to barely one in every ten women. In general, far more men than women are addicted to gambling, are homeless or have a substance addiction.

Men are also heavily overrepresented in crime statistics and in prisons. Here, many find themselves in a particularly vulnerable position when they are released from the Correctional Service. They may be challenged by substance problems, poor finances, weak connection to the labour market, without a network and an uncertain housing situation. By facilitating smoother transitions in relation to incarceration and release as well as securing housing, it is expected that homelessness and new crime can be prevented. But too many men still end up without a home after their release.

There is a need to focus on the complexity of men's vulnerability for social exclusion, and for early help and support, so that further marginalisation and vulnerability is prevented.

Intimate partner violence

Women are more exposed to intimate partner violence, the violence is often more serious, and far more women than men are killed by their partner or ex-partner. However, men are also exposed to intimate partner violence and may need help and support.

Studies show that boys from an early age experience the societal expectation that they should be able to fend for themselves and not ask for help, as this appears unmanly and weak. It can therefore be particularly taboo for men and boys to talk about their exposure to intimate partner violence, precisely because of their gender.

More men than women are perpetrators of intimate partner violence. Those who perpetrate this violence have often themselves experienced violence in their childhood, and the violence is typically carried over from one relationship to another if it is not stopped. In recent years, there has been an increased focus on the perpetrator with the aim of breaking the cycle of violence.

There is a need for a greater recognition that men and boys can also be exposed to violence in intimate relationships and for efforts targeted both victims and perpetrators of violence.

Facts

- Men make up three quarters (77 pct.) of the people experiencing homelessness in Denmark (VIVE, 2022).
- In 2021, men made up 74 pct. of people in treatment for substance abuse in Denmark (Statistics Denmark, 2022).
- 96 pct. of all inmates in the Danish Correctional Service are men (Kriminalforsorgen, 2021)
- In 2015, every third parolee was released into homelessness. At the same time, 34 pct. of all men experiencing homelessness aged 25-49 are registered with an unconditional conviction one year before homelessness occurs. In contrast, this only applies to between 5-7 pct. of women (Kriminalforsorgen, 2015, and VIVE 2017)
- Around 28,000 men in Denmark are classified as particularly vulnerable to social exclusion, compared to around 12,000 women. This classification entails people who have little/no employment and who are also registered with a simultaneous mental disorder and an abuse problem ('double diagnosis') and/or with homelessness and/or a stay in prison within five years. (VIVE, 2023)
- 23.9 pct. of men who have been registered with a mental disorder within the last five years have also been registered with an abuse problem within the last five years, while the same applies to 9.1 pct. of women with a mental disorder. (VIVE, 2023)
- Of men who are registered with a mental disorder within five years, 5.2 pct. are also registered with homelessness within five years, while the corresponding proportion among women is 1.7 pct. (VIVE, 2023)
- 85 pct. of men in the group with the most complex social challenges are single and without children living at home, while for women it is 69 pct. (VIVE, 2023)
- 76 pct. of those registered in ROFUS (the Danish Gambling Authority's Register of Voluntarily Excluded Players) are men, and 86 pct. of players who have used the gambling helpline, StopSpillet, are men. Younger men aged 18-25 make up 35 pct. of all calls from players. (The Gambling Authority)
- Approx. 118,000 women and approx. 83,000 men were in 2021 exposed to physical or psychological partner violence. (State Institute for Public Health, 2022)



Newer initiatives in the field

Various initiatives have been taken in recent years with the aim of preventing vulnerability in areas where men are overrepresented. These concern i.a.:

- **Reorganisation of the homelessness effort:** Efforts against homelessness have been strengthened in recent years. Among other things, a significant reorganisation of the homelessness effort has been introduced, where, e.g., the *Housing First* effort in Denmark is strengthened, and the reimbursement rules are being changed so that it is more profitable for the municipalities to help people move into their own housing with support. In an agreement between the then Government (the Social Democrats) and the Green Left, The Red-Green Alliance, the Danish People's Party and the Christian Democrats, over DKK 1 billion was allocated for 4,050 affordable homes for *Housing First* initiatives.
- **Strengthening of the homelessness efforts:** In the agreements on the reserve for measures in the social, health and labour market area (the SSA reserve) for 2020, 2021 and 2022, a total of DKK 141.3 million has been allocated a strengthening of the homelessness effort, which i.a. has resulted in the establishment of a *Homelessness Task Force*, the establishment of a national partnership of stakeholders regarding homelessness, a funding programme for investment in the role of civil society in the implementation of *Housing First*, a funding programme for care centres for citizens in homelessness after admission and a funding programme for developing an effort targeting young people in or at risk of homelessness, including Greenlandic young people.
- **Skills development on the Housing First approach:** With the reorganisation of efforts against homelessness, a greater incentive has been created for municipalities to use the *Housing First* approach. The Social and Housing Agency is experiencing a great demand for skills development courses on the methods for professionals in municipalities and in housing forms. With the agreement on the use of the reserve for measures in the social, health and labour market area (the SSA reserve) for 2024-2027, a total of DKK 4.7 million has therefore been allocated in 2025-2027 to ensure that sufficient skills development courses can be offered.
- **Prevention of gambling addiction:** With the agreement *Reducing Danes' debt to the public sector (Nedbringelse af danskernes gæld til det offentlige)* from June 2022, DKK 10 million is allocated annually in 2023-2025 for efforts against gambling addiction. The funds from 2023 are used for research into gambling addiction, a nationwide information campaign about gambling targeted children and young people as well as parents and other relatives, a new national platform for information about gambling problems and gambling addiction. The disbursement of the remaining funds is expected to be the subject of political negotiations in the upcoming negotiations on gaming.
- **Outpatient treatment of perpetrators of violence and their families:** Treatment services for perpetrators of violence and their families facilitated by the organisation *Dialogue against Violence (Dialog mod Vold)* were strengthened with the *National Action Plan to Combat Intimate Partner Violence and Intimate Partner Killings 2023-2026*, resulting in there now existing nationwide treatment services. At the same time, cooperation with the police is being strengthened to guide perpetrators of violence regarding treatment options. With the agreement on the use of the reserve for measures in the social, health and labour market area (the SSA reserve) for 2024-2027, funds have also been allocated in 2024 and 2025 to the initiative *Let go of the violence (Slip Volden)*, which is a telephone counselling service for men and women who practice violence, facilitated by the organisation *Live Without Violence (Lev uden Vold)*.

Initiatives



Early intervention in cases with risk of homelessness or relapse into new crime

In order to strengthen the municipal efforts and cooperation regarding persons who have received a sentence, and thus reduce the risk of homelessness and new crime in connection with release, the agreement on the use of the reserve for measures in the social, health and labour market area (the SSA reserve) for 2024-2027 has allocated DKK 10.3 million in 2025 for a funding programme for municipalities that want to strengthen their efforts on the subject. The effort will benefit both women and men, but since men are overrepresented both among convicts and people in homelessness, the effort will especially benefit men. Likewise, funds have been allocated in order for the Social and Housing Agency to support the efforts of the applicant municipalities and prepare a collection of experience for other municipalities. A total of DKK 13.7 million has been allocated in 2025-2027 for the initiative.

Anger and conflict management in the Correctional Service in Greenland

With the Agreement between the Government, the Socialist People's Party, the Liberal Alliance, the Social Liberal Party and the Danish People's Party on the Finance Act for 2023 of April 2023, DKK 0.5 million was set aside annually in 2023-2026 for violence prevention through therapy courses targeted men in Greenland. The funds have subsequently been re-prioritised for courses in anger and conflict management in the correctional facility in Greenland. The courses are aimed at both women and men. The courses are expected to consist of three modules, which take place over three days in all institutions twice a year, although the frequency can be regulated between the institutions depending on the composition of the prison inhabitants.

Equal rights to help at crisis centre services for men exposed to intimate partner violence

From 1 July 2024, men exposed to intimate partner violence will have the right to stay at a crisis centre on equal footing with women exposed to intimate partner violence. Men may be accompanied by children who receive care and support during their stay. Both the men and their children are entitled to psychological support that can help with the negative consequences of the violence. And the men receive the right to initial and coordinating support and guidance in the municipality.

National awareness campaign about intimate partner violence

As part of the *National Action Plan to Combat Intimate Partner Violence and Partner Killings 2023-2026*, a national awareness campaign is being carried out, that should contribute broadly in society with more knowledge about violence. The awareness campaign should encourage more people to seek help, including men who are victims of intimate partner violence.

Education and working life

Boys and men in school and education

All children should have a good start to their education with teaching environments and teaching methods that support and contribute to learning and well-being for both girls and boys. However, the average grade differences between girls and boys in primary schools is growing, and these differences increase through secondary education.

Often boys need to begin primary education at a later age than girls. More boys than girls are referred to special needs programmes, and boys are overrepresented among students with behavioural issues and autism spectrum disorders, who may particularly be in need of a calm and safe teaching environment.

In addition, a higher proportion of boys do not pass the final examinations and more boys are not enrolled in youth education eight years after they finish 9th grade. In the agreement on *The Elementary School Quality Programme - freedom and immersion (Folkeskolens kvalitetsprogram – frihed og fordybelse)*, a number of initiatives were agreed upon with the aim of improving primary and lower secondary education for both girls and boys.

Young people's educational choices are still highly gender segregated. For example, more young men than women find it important for their choice of education whether it has a reputation as either feminine or masculine.

There is a need for teaching methods as well as a teaching environment that provide the best conditions for learning and well-being for both boys and girls and to eliminate the gendered barriers related to the choice of education.

The gender segregated labour market

Denmark continues to have a highly gender segregated labour market, with many people working in traditionally female or male occupations. The gender segregated labour market and the differences in education also result in more men than women on the labour market performing unskilled labour. Men are therefore at greater risk of losing their jobs if the demand for unskilled work declines.

An international study shows that men experience discrimination when applying for jobs in traditionally female occupations, while discrimination against women in male occupations and gender-balanced occupations has decreased significantly over the years. According to the study, this may be connected to the fact that there has not been the same focus on creating space for men in traditionally female occupations as there has been for women in traditionally male occupations.

Men are overrepresented in occupational accidents, and work-related accidents resulting in death involves men. This is due, among other things, to the fact that the industries with the most occupational and fatal accidents are male-dominated. At the same time, traditional gender expectations or work cultures can result in it being particularly difficult for some men to talk about or be taken seriously when they highlight unsafe working conditions.

There is a need for continuous work on reducing the gender segregated labour market and an increased focus on attracting and retaining men in traditionally female professions.

Facts

- In Denmark, 16 pct. of boys and 8 pct. of girls often experience being scolded in kindergarten, while 11 pct. of boys and 6 pct. of girls do not experience that an adult is happy to see them when they arrive in the morning (Børns Vilkår, 2019).
- In Denmark, more boys (25 pct.) than girls (16 pct.) experience that they are not hugged by adults in kindergarten (Børns Vilkår, 2019).
- In Denmark, girls receive a higher-grade point average than boys in the compulsory tests in the 9th grade of the public school. The difference has increased from 0.3 in 2008 to 0.7 grade points in 2022. (Ministry of Children and Education, 2024)
- In 2023, girls across upper secondary education had an average of 0.6 grade point higher exam results than boys in Denmark (Ministry of Children and Education, 2024).
- In Denmark, more women than men complete a youth education; 8 years after completing the 9th grade, 83 pct. of men, and 88 pct. of women completed a youth education. (Ministry of Children and Education, 2024).
- In the 2022/2023 school year, boys made up 67.9 pct. of students with school suspensions in Denmark. (Ministry of Children and Education, 2024).
- For 38 pct. of young Danish men, the reputation of an education programme as either being feminine or masculine is important for their choice of education, while this applies to a quarter of young women. (FH, DA, Danish Agency for Personnel and Skills, DR and KL, 2022)
- Boys are underrepresented in vocational training in the care sector in Denmark, where they make up only 14 pct. of the 1st priority applicants for vocational education subjects under "care, health and pedagogy" in the joint registration for youth education after 9th and 10th grade. (Ministry of Children and Education, 2024).
- In Denmark, 37.4 pct. of men between the ages of 19-64 do not have an education that provides vocational skills. For women in the same age group, it is 31.8 pct.
- Men make up 90 pct. of employees in the industry group 'building and construction', while women make up 71 pct. of employees in the industry group 'public administration, education and health'. (Ministry of Employment, 2024)
- Men made up 92 pct. of all victims of occupational accidents in the period 2016 to 2022. (Arbejdstilsynet - The Danish Working Environment Authority, 2022)



Newer initiatives in the field

Various initiatives have been taken in recent years with the aim of supporting boys' well-being and learning at school, and of preventing occupational accidents. These concern i.a.:

- **Better options for delayed start in school:** From 1 January 2024, an amendment to the Act on Day Care Facilities (*Dagtilbudsloven*) came into force, providing children with better opportunities for postponing starting school by one year if they are not ready for this step. A requirement was introduced that specified that the kindergarten manager is now responsible for preparing an assessment of a child enrolled in the kindergarten if there are circumstances indicating that the child is ready to enter into primary education. Postponing the child's entrance into primary education is expected to particularly benefit boys who are not quite ready yet. According to Statistics Denmark, in recent years, boys have made up around 70 pct. of children who have a delayed school start.
- **Agreement on The Elementary School Quality Programme:** In addition to the above-mentioned initiatives, on 19 March 2024 the Government and the primary school's conciliation circle entered into an agreement on *The Elementary School Quality Programme – freedom and immersion (Folkeskolens kvalitetsprogram – frihed og fordybelse)*, which contains several initiatives with the aim of strengthening the students' academic development, education and well-being. This concerns i.a. strengthened efforts for the most challenged pupils in courses in Danish and Mathematics, more specialised pedagogical competences close to the pupils, and more practical teaching and elective courses for the oldest grades, development of new curricula in primary school with room for immersion in both the theoretical basis of the subjects and their practical application.
- **The expert group on the importance of gender for professional development, learning and well-being in day care, primary school and youth education:** The expert group was established in 2022 and published their recommendations in April 2024. The expert group consisted of practitioners, researchers, representatives from the social partners and gender equality oriented civil society organisations. The starting point for the work of the expert group was that the average difference between boys' and girls' academic results is growing, and that more boys and men generally perform worse in the education system than girls and women. The expert group's recommendations are aimed both at decision-makers at national level and at local decision-makers, managers, educational staff and teachers in the field of day care, primary school and youth education. Several of the expert group's recommendations are met with initiatives that have already been launched nationally - e.g. initiatives in the agreement on the *Elementary School Quality Programme* on more practical teaching, a more varied school day and the possibility of a *junior apprenticeship*, the *Well-Being Commission*, which creates recommendations to support the well-being of children and young people, and with the upskilling funding programme for educational staff in the field of day care.
- **Efforts against occupational accidents:** Based on the working environment agreement 2023, an action plan has been launched to promote a healthy safety culture and prevent the most serious occupational accidents and fatalities in Danish workplaces. The action plan has a particular focus on the industries with the greatest risk of accidents and involves a wide range of efforts that are put in place with strengthened supervision, accident follow-ups, campaigns, guidance and new knowledge. The industries are primarily characterized by having an overrepresentation of men.

Initiatives



Diversity in the recruitment of students for the social and healthcare assistants (SOSU) education programme

With the agreement on the use of the reserve for measures in the social, health and labour market area (the SSA reserve), DKK 3.1 million has been allocated in 2024-2027 for targeted recruitment efforts for the educational programme for social and healthcare assistants (SOSU) to ensure a more diverse recruitment basis for this educational programme. Moreover, the efforts should contribute with positive stories about the SOSU subjects, e.g. in the form of role models who can combat existing prejudices and thus help creating greater gender diversity in SOSU educational programmes.

Development and testing of the initiative *Boys' Day in Care*

With the agreement on the use of the reserve for measures in the social, health and labour market area (the SSA reserve) for 2024-2027, DKK 0.5 million has allocated in in 2025 to uncover, develop and test a possibly recurring *Boys' Day in Care*, which, with inspiration from the *Girls' Day in Science* programme and international *Boys' Day* initiatives, makes it possible for, in particular, boys to visit companies, organisations and educational institutions, where they can meet role models in the care professions, participate in workshops and get inspiration for their future choice of education and job.

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