

Specialists insist female genital mutilation must be brought to public debate in Finland

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Female genital mutilation is a harmful practice violating female genital organs for non-medical reasons. It is estimated that in Finland, there are approximately 10,000 girls and women who have undergone FGM, and

an additional 650–3,080 girls and women at risk of FGM. Female genital mutilation violates human rights and causes serious harm to physical and psychological health.

Eliminating female genital mutilation by 2030 is a global public health priority and, according to the authors, FGM deserves greater attention and public health prioritization also in Finland. The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare has worked persistently to prevent FGM, but the topic continues to receive little attention in research, [health care](#) and [political debate](#).

Female genital mutilation has been a concern in Finland for more than 30 years, following migration from countries where the practice is upheld. Today, about 8.5% of Finland's population –a total of 470,000 people—are of immigrant origin. According to a report published by ETLA Economic Research, Finland needs annual net migration of up to 44,000 people to stabilize birth cohorts and labor force.

The authors point out that for the future, consideration should be given to how Finland intends to support girls and women arriving from FGM-risk countries, and what role health care and education should play in preventing and eliminating FGM. The work is published in *The Lancet Regional Health—Europe* journal.

"Public awareness of female genital mutilation should be increased in order to better understand its harmfulness, and to reduce the stigma around it. In addition, professionals from different fields should receive further training to intervene in FGM," says Senior Specialist Mimmi Koukkula from the Competence Cluster for Violence Prevention Work at the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare.

The article also emphasizes the need for increasingly multidisciplinary research on female genital mutilation.

"Another important consideration is whether [female genital mutilation](#) could be prevented, for example, through the Child Welfare Act. In any case, effective collaboration and [political leadership](#) are needed to prevent and eliminate FGM," say Doctoral Researcher Roosa-Maria Savela of the Department of Nursing Science, and University Lecturer Javkhlanbayar Dorjdagva of the Institute of Public Health and Clinical Nutrition, both at the University of Eastern Finland.

More information: Roosa-Maria Savela et al, Female genital mutilation requires public health and political debate in Finland, *The Lancet Regional Health—Europe* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.lanepe.2023.100685](#)

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