


KUN Centre for Equality and Diversity

The Norwegian experience, discrimination and equality regarding the rights of female prisoners

Iceland
Liechtenstein
Norway



**Active
citizens fund**



Regulations in Norway guarantee:


- The **right to equal access** for women and men to all forms of healthcare, at the highest available level, including access to alternative health provisions such as homeopathy, naturopathy, etc.
- Access to sexual and reproductive **health services**
- Women's rights to make **autonomous decisions** regarding their sexual and reproductive lives

Medical services related to women's sexual and reproductive life and/or violence against women are covered by universal health

1. Contraception Services
2. Prenatal Care
3. Abortion Services - The Abortion Act (Lov om svangerskapsavbrudd)
4. Post-Abortion Care
5. Violence Against Women Services
6. Sexual Health Services

Equal access for women to criminal justice

- Norwegian law ensures equal access to criminal justice for women. The Constitution of Norway guarantees equality under the law (Grunnloven § 98).
- The criminal justice system, including the police, prosecution services, and the courts, operates without discrimination based on gender. Women have the same legal rights and protections as men when it comes to accessing and participating in the criminal justice system (Grunnloven § 98).



Norwegian Correctional Services


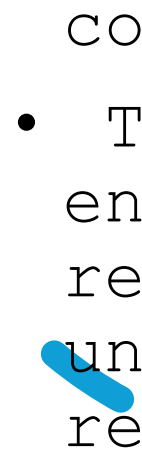
- Strategy for Women in Detention and Execution of Sentences (2017-2020)
- The specific health and safety protective measures are in place for women in "closed" institutions, particularly for mothers with young children. These measures include a thorough assessment of the convicted person's health condition before the commencement of their sentence to ensure they are capable of undergoing it.
- Pregnant women or those who have given birth within the last six weeks are eligible for sentence execution postponement. However, they can still opt for sentence execution if they wish, with the consent of the prison director and any legal guardian, while obtaining medical opinions regarding their health is a standard practice.

Reference: Kriminalomsorgen. (2023). Postponement of Sentence Execution. <https://www.kriminalomsorgen.no/utsettelse-av-soning.535460.no.html>

Police Detention Cells

- Detention facilities, including police detention cells, in Norway are expected to adhere to high standards regarding the treatment of detainees. This includes specific considerations for the rights and well-being of female detainees. The Norwegian Police Directorate (Politidirektoratet) provides guidance and oversight of law enforcement agencies.
- In Norway, health, safety, and protection measures in police detention cells aim to safeguard the well-being and rights of all detainees, including women. These measures encompass access to medical care and assessments, privacy and dignity preservation, legal rights, non-discrimination, responsible use of force, and regular oversight by relevant authorities. While there may not be specific gender-related provisions exclusively for women, these general principles apply to all detainees. Specific and detailed information on health and safety measures in police detention cells can be found in Norwegian legal and regulatory sources.
- References:
- The Police Detention Act - Lovdata: <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/1995-08-04-53?q=politiloen>
- The National Police Directorate - The Norwegian Police: <https://www.politiet.no/en>
- Norwegian Ombudsman for the Police: <https://www.sivilombudet.no/en/>

- Approximately **6%** of the nation's total prison population comprises women, and this proportion remained stable at 5.6% in 2022.
- Norway's dedication to **gender-specific incarceration** is evident in its practice of segregating male and female inmates.
- The Norwegian correctional system actively considers the accommodation and rehabilitation needs of female prisoners and is currently working on expanding specialized facilities for women, including the establishment of dedicated women's units within existing correctional institutions.

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- At present, the nation operates four exclusive women's prisons and integrates three distinct women's units within male prisons.
 - This approach underscores a commitment to delivering tailored and comprehensive support to female inmates, addressing their specific challenges and requirements, which encompass healthcare, mental health, and maintaining family connections.
 - The allocation of designated spaces for women enables authorities to create a safer and more rehabilitative environment that caters to their unique needs. This strategy has garnered recognition for its effectiveness in dealing with issues such as trauma, addiction, and the reduction of recidivism among female offenders.
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Women's Coordinators in prisons

- The establishment of Women's Coordinators in all correctional units, including probation offices and prisons, that accommodate both male and female inmates is a noteworthy practice aimed at ensuring gender equality in the Norwegian correctional system.
- These Women's Coordinators play a crucial role in upholding the female perspective within correctional facilities and advocating for equitable conditions for all genders. Their responsibilities include coordinating efforts to ensure that the entire unit aligns with the female perspective, in compliance with existing regulations and the overarching objectives outlined in the correctional system's strategy for this domain.

Equitable Conditions for Female Inmates

- Efforts to create equitable conditions for female inmates in Norway encompass a range of strategic measures and recommendations.
- The Kvinnesoningsutvalget report of 1989, commissioned by the Ministry of Justice and Police, identified 32 measures to address disparities in the material conditions and activities available to incarcerated women when compared to their male counterparts. However, a follow-up report in 2015 revealed that only a few of the original measures proposed by the committee had been implemented.



Enhancing Healthcare Services in Prisons

- The provision of healthcare services within the correctional system in Norway is a practice that reflects a commitment to upholding the rights and well-being of incarcerated individuals. In 2023, a new guideline for prison healthcare services was put forward for public consultation. This updated guideline includes a dedicated chapter on the role of relatives or significant others of inmates, highlighting the importance of their involvement during the period of incarceration.
 - One notable proposal is to involve the municipal health and care services in collaboration with inmates to identify who qualifies as a relative and what roles they play during the period of sentencing. This collaborative approach extends to seeking the consent of inmates to share relevant information with their relatives. Furthermore, the municipal health and care services are tasked with actively engaging and offering support to the relatives of inmates.
 - The comprehensive approach, encompassing the rights and healthcare of inmates, emphasizes the significance of involving the community in addressing the holistic needs of incarcerated individuals. This practice fosters a sense of responsibility and inclusivity within the correctional system, recognizing that inmate well-being is interconnected with their relationships and support systems outside the prison walls.
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Mental Health Challenges Among Female Inmates

- Numerous reports have highlighted the prevalence of mental health disorders among inmates, with a particular emphasis on the female inmate population. This issue has become notably more pronounced among women, leading to a heightened demand for secure beds.
- In 2022, there were 43 recorded cases of such bed usage, with the majority involving female inmates. This increase is often linked to instances of self-harm and suicide attempts among women in custody.

Improving
Mental Health
and Reducing
Suicidal Rates
Among Female
Inmates

- ✓ Establish and Foster Meaningful Family Connections
- ✓ Enhancing Contact Opportunities
- ✓ Introduction of Travel Assistance
- ✓ Creation of Visitation Houses or Apartments

Thank you for your attention!

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<https://www.kun.no/english.htm>
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