

FINLAND 2019 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Republic of Finland is a constitutional republic with a directly elected president and a unicameral parliament (Eduskunta). The prime minister heads a five-party coalition government approved by parliament and appointed by the president on June 6. The parliamentary election on April 14 and the presidential election in 2018 were considered free and fair.

The national police maintain internal security. Both Finnish Customs and the Border Guard have law enforcement responsibilities related to their fields of responsibility. The Border Guard has additional law enforcement powers to maintain public order when it operates in joint patrols and under police command. The defense forces are responsible for safeguarding the country's territorial integrity and providing military training. The defense forces also have some domestic security responsibilities, such as assisting the national police in maintaining law and order in crises. The national police and Border Guard report to the Ministry of the Interior, which is responsible for police oversight, law enforcement, and maintenance of order; the Ministry of Defense oversees the defense forces. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over security forces.

There were no reports of significant human rights abuses.

The government took steps to prosecute officials who committed human rights abuses.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution and law prohibit such practices, and there were no reports that government officials employed them.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

There were no significant reports regarding prison or detention center conditions that raised human rights concerns.

Physical Conditions: There were no major concerns in prisons and detention centers regarding physical conditions or inmate abuse.

Administration: Authorities conducted proper investigations of credible allegations of mistreatment.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted monitoring visits by independent human rights observers.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention and provide for the right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court. The government generally observed these requirements.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

The law requires police to have a warrant issued by a prosecutor to make an arrest. Police must obtain a warrant within three days if an individual is arrested while committing a crime. Arrested persons must receive a court hearing within three days of arrest, and police must promptly inform detainees of the charges against them. Authorities respected most of these rights. Before trial most defendants awaiting trial are eligible for conditional release on personal recognizance. Detainees generally have access to a lawyer promptly after arrest. Persons detained for “minor” criminal offenses, however, do not have a right to an attorney from the outset of detention or prior to interrogation. The government must provide lawyers for the indigent.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence and impartiality.

Trial Procedures

The constitution and law provide for the right to a fair and public trial, and an independent judiciary generally enforced this right.

Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty. Authorities generally informed detainees promptly and in detail of the charges against them. Trials are fair and public, and take place without undue delay. Defendants have a right to be present at their trial and to consult an attorney of their choice in a timely manner before trial. The government provides attorneys at public expense if defendants cannot afford counsel. Authorities give defendants adequate time and facilities to prepare their defense. Defendants are provided free interpretation as necessary from the moment an individual is charged through all appeals. They can confront and question witnesses for the prosecution and present witnesses and evidence on their own behalf. Defendants may not be compelled to testify or confess guilt and have the right of appeal.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

Individuals or organizations may seek civil remedies through domestic courts for human rights violations. Persons may appeal court decisions involving alleged violations of the European Convention on Human Rights to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) after they exhaust all avenues of appeal in national courts.

Property Restitution

The government reports Finland did not confiscate property belonging to Jews during the Holocaust era, that Holocaust-era restitution has not been an issue, and that no litigation or restitution claims were pending before authorities regarding real or immovable property covered by the Terezin Declaration, to which the government is signatory.

f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and there were no reports that the government failed to respect these prohibitions.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press

The constitution and law provide for freedom of expression, including for the press, and the government generally respected this right. An independent press, an effective judiciary, and a functioning democratic political system combined to promote freedom of expression, including for the press.

Freedom of Expression: Public speech intended to incite discrimination against any national, racial, religious, or ethnic group is a crime. Hate speech is not a separate criminal offense but may constitute grounds for an aggravated sentence for other offenses.

Press and Media, Including Online Media: The distribution of hate material intended to incite discrimination against any national, racial, religious, or ethnic group in print or broadcast media, books, or online newspapers or journals is a crime.

Independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views with little restriction.

Violence and Harassment: Journalists who covered sensitive topics, including immigration, far-right organizations, and terrorism, reported continuing harassment by private entities, including being targeted by defamation cases.

On April 12, the Oulu District Court convicted and fined journalist Johanna Vehkoo of the investigative journalistic website *Long Play* for defamation of Oulu city councilor Junes Lokka, an anti-immigration activist with a history of making xenophobic remarks and a member of the Genuinely Finnish Joint List political group. Vehkoo had called Lokka a “Nazi,” “Nazi clown,” and “racist.” Separately on April 1, Lokka himself was charged with four counts of defamation and invasion of privacy for his internet postings.

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The constitution and law provide for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, and the government generally respected these rights.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

d. Freedom of Movement

The constitution and law provide for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights. The government continued to accept returned asylum seekers who had first entered in Finland but then moved on to other European countries according to the Dublin Regulation.

e. Internally Displaced Persons

Not applicable.

f. Protection of Refugees

Refoulement: On November 14, the ECHR decided that the government violated the European Convention on Human Rights when it deported an Iraqi man to his country of origin, where he was killed three weeks later. The ECHR found that authorities had not carried out a sufficiently thorough assessment of the risks faced by the man despite accepting his account of enduring two attacks on his personal safety while in Iraq. The police and Finnish Immigration Service subsequently

suspended repatriations to Iraq, although this suspension does not apply to convicted criminals.

Following an investigation in Afghanistan in 2018, the government resumed deportation flights to that country during the year.

The number of Russian-origin members of Jehovah's Witnesses applying for asylum based on alleged religious persecution increased significantly over 2018, reaching 200 individuals by the first seven months of the year. The Finnish Immigration Service rejected approximately 90 percent of the claims by members of Jehovah's Witnesses, and unofficial reports indicated that asylum adjudicators did not consider membership in the church alone to be sufficient basis for an asylum claim.

Access to Asylum: The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. Parliament sets an annual quota for refugee admissions, and the government decides its allocation. Asylum seekers have the right to free legal representation throughout their application procedure. There were numerous reports by media and civil society organizations, including the president of the Supreme Administrative Court responsible for reviewing asylum decision appeals, that asylum seekers lacked adequate access to legal assistance during the initial stages of the asylum application process and during subsequent appeals.

Safe Country of Origin/Transit: The government adheres to the EU's Dublin III Regulation that establishes which EU member state is responsible for examining an asylum application.

Durable Solutions: According to the Finnish Immigration Service, 606 refugees were accepted for resettlement in the country during 2018. The government also assisted in the safe, voluntary return of migrants to their home countries.

Temporary Protection: From January to August, the government provided temporary protection to 289 individuals who did not qualify as refugees but who were deemed to qualify for subsidiary protection. During the same period, the government also offered protection to 278 individuals based on "other grounds," including medical and compassionate grounds.

g. Stateless Persons

According to the UN High Commissioner Refugees, 2,759 stateless persons resided in the country at the end of 2018. Involuntarily stateless persons and certain other special groups, such as refugees, have a shorter residency requirement--four years instead of six--than other persons before they are eligible to apply for citizenship. A child may obtain citizenship from either the mother or father regardless of the place of birth and may also acquire citizenship if the child is born in the country and would otherwise be stateless.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

The constitution and law provide citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage.

Elections and Political Participation

Recent Elections: The country's national parliamentary election on April 14 and the presidential election in 2018 were considered free and fair. In January an evaluation by the Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe found evidence that preparations for the election were sufficiently transparent that the ODIHR did not recommend deploying any observers for the April election itself, although it noted a need to review campaign finance limits, self-reporting of financing, and access to the polls for persons with disabilities. The Office of the Parliamentary Ombudsman issued a similar call for greater accessibility at polling sites.

Participation of Women and Minorities: No laws limit participation of women and members of minorities in the political process, and they did participate.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, and the government generally implemented these laws effectively. There were isolated reports of government corruption during the year.

Financial Disclosure: By law, appointed and elected officials must each year declare their income, assets, and other private interests that could overlap with their official duties. Officials must make their initial declaration within two months of assuming office and declare any potential conflicts of interest that arise during their tenure. The law does not provide for specific criminal penalties for

nondisclosure. By law income and asset information from the tax forms of all citizens must be made public each year.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights

A number of domestic and international human rights groups generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials often were cooperative and responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: The parliamentary ombudsman enjoyed the government's cooperation, operated without government or party interference, and had adequate resources. The parliamentary ombudsman investigates complaints that a public authority or official failed to observe the law, fulfill a duty, or appropriately implement fundamental human rights protections.

The Human Rights Center operates as part of the parliamentary ombudsman's office. The center's functions include promoting human rights, reporting on the implementation of human rights obligations, and cooperating with European and international bodies on human rights matters. The center does not have authority to investigate individual human rights abuses. A delegation of representatives from civil society who participated in promoting and safeguarding human rights frequently cooperated with the center.

The parliamentary Constitutional Law Committee analyzes proposed legislation for consistency with international human rights conventions. The committee deals with legislation relating to criminal and procedural law, the courts, and the prison system.

The law requires the ombudsman for children, the nondiscrimination ombudsman, and the ombudsman for equality impartially to advance the status and legal protection of their respective reference groups. These ombudsmen operate under the Ministry of Justice. Responsibility for investigating employment discrimination rests solely with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

Responsibility for developing antidiscrimination policies and legislation as well as for the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations resides with the Ministry of Justice's

Unit for Democracy, Language Affairs, and Fundamental Rights. The Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations advocates for policy changes to improve integration.

The nondiscrimination ombudsman also operated as an independent government-oversight body that investigates discrimination complaints and promotes equal treatment within the government. The nondiscrimination ombudsman also acted as the national rapporteur on trafficking in human beings and supervised the government's removal of foreign nationals from the country.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: The law criminalizes rape, including spousal rape, and the government enforced the law effectively. Rape is punishable by up to four years' imprisonment. If the offender used violence, the offense is considered aggravated, and the penalty may be more severe. The maximum penalties are six years' imprisonment for rape and 10 years for aggravated rape. All sexual offenses against adults, except sexual harassment, are subject to public prosecution. Sexual offenses against a defenseless person (intoxicated or with a disability) are considered as severe as rape.

Authorities may prosecute domestic abuse under various criminal laws, including laws prohibiting rape, assault and battery, harassment, and disturbing the peace. The penalty for physical domestic violence ranges from a minimum of six months to a maximum of 10 years in prison.

Civil society organizations criticized the emphasis on intentional violence in the legal definition of rape, which they alleged led courts to find assailants not guilty in cases where the coercion was less explicit. In one high-profile court case decided in January, the Eastern Finland Court of Appeals overruled a lower court's rape conviction due to the fact that the assailant was not aware that his violence had compelled the victim to have sex with him.

Violence against women, including spousal abuse, continued to be a problem. In September, following a country inspection, the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) reported that key professionals in the criminal justice system, such as prosecutors and law enforcement officers, were not systematically trained before taking up their duties on how to intervene in cases of violence against women,

including domestic violence. The ombudsman for equality at the Ministry of Justice highlighted problems with access to domestic violence shelters in remote rural areas.

The government funds shelters specifically for victims of domestic violence. In 2018, the most recent year for which data was available, 179 beds were available in shelters throughout the country, a 25-percent increase over the year before. Demand for shelter space, as indicated by the number of days residents spent in each shelter, also grew by 25 percent during the same period. GREVIO reported a need for more female police officers to fulfill the government's pledge always to match a victim of violence with an officer of the same gender. GREVIO also highlighted the need for additional shelters for victims of intimate partner violence.

Sexual Harassment: The law defines sexual harassment as a specific, punishable offense with penalties ranging from fines to up to six months' imprisonment. Employers who fail to protect employees from workplace harassment are subject to the same penalties. The prosecutor general is responsible for investigating sexual harassment complaints. The government generally enforced the law.

On March 22, the Helsinki appeals court increased to 5,440 euros (\$6,000) the fine of Member of Parliament Teuvo Hakkarainen (Finns Party) for sexually harassing fellow parliamentarian Veera Ruoho.

Coercion in Population Control: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization.

Discrimination: The law provides for the same legal status and rights for women as for men. The government enforced the law effectively. The ombudsman for equality at the Ministry of Justice highlighted problems with workplace discrimination against pregnant women.

Children

Birth Registration: A child generally acquires citizenship at birth through one or both parents. A child can also acquire citizenship at birth if the child is born in the country and meets certain other criteria, such as if the parents have refugee status in the country or if the child is not eligible for any other country's citizenship. A local registration office records all births immediately.

Child Abuse: The law prohibits child abuse, defining children as individuals younger than age 16. The law defines rape of a minor (younger than 18 years) as aggravated rape. Rape of a child carries a minimum penalty of one-year imprisonment and a maximum of six years. Child negligence and physical or psychological violence carry penalties of up to six months in prison and up to two years in prison, respectively. Aggravating factors may increase the length of the prison term.

The GREVIO report found judges did not always consider violence by one parent against another as a reason to restrict the abuser's right of access to his or her child, reflecting a lack of awareness of the impact that exposure to violence may have on a child's development.

Early and Forced Marriage: The minimum age of marriage is 18. In February parliament amended the law to disallow marriage of individuals under that age, even with an exemption from the Ministry of Justice. In recent years the ministry had issued between 10 and 30 exemptions per year. The National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking reported an increase in cases of forced marriage among its target population, rising to 26 in the first six months of the year, compared with 20 cases in all of 2018.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The country prohibits the commercial sexual exploitation of children, including child pornography and the sale, offering, or procuring of children for prostitution. The law prohibits purchase of sexual services from minors and covers "grooming" (enticement of a child), including in a virtual environment or through mobile telephone contacts. Authorities enforced the law effectively, including through a one-million-euro (\$1.1 million) grant announced in August to fund training on how to recognize online solicitation and exploitation.

The minimum age for consensual sex is 16. The law regards a person whose age cannot be determined, but who can reasonably be assumed to be younger than 18, as a child.

In March the National Bureau of Investigation completed a pretrial investigation of five men suspected of importing, receiving, and distributing sexually offensive material involving children between 2004 and 2018. Some of the suspects were also accused of having sexually abused the victims. In July police detained a Helsinki man on the suspicion of committing sex crimes, including aggravated rape and aggravated child sexual abuse, against 12 girls. In August police

completed a pretrial investigation of a resident of the city of Espoo who was suspected of committing sex crimes against 52 girls through social media. In the first quarter of the year, there were 475 reported cases of child exploitation.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's *Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction* at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction/for-providers/legal-reports-and-data/reported-cases.html>.

Anti-Semitism

Government statistics and Jewish leaders place the size of the Jewish population between 1,500 and 2,500 individuals, most living in the Helsinki area.

In July vandals in Helsinki defaced the entrance of the building housing, inter alia, the Embassy of Israel with anti-Semitic stickers glorifying Adolf Hitler and smashed the glass door to the building. Police and Jewish community representatives suspected the neo-Nazi Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM) was behind the vandalism, although police did not make any arrests. Over the previous two years, the Helsinki Synagogue was similarly defaced in multiple incidents. The government provided funding for the security of the synagogue. Representatives of the Jewish community reported feeling under threat and specifically targeted due to their beliefs. In May, Petri Sarvamaa, a Finnish member of the European Parliament campaigning for re-election, was approached on the street and threatened by an assailant who called him a derogatory slur for a Jewish person. In September the media reported that a recently elected member of parliament, Hussein al-Tae of the Social Democratic Party of Finland, had made anti-Semitic comments online.

Police continued to implement the 2018 court ban on the neo-Nazi NRM. The Finnish-language website of the organization was no longer online, and public displays of their symbol decreased in frequency, although members continued to spray graffiti. The National Bureau of Investigation suspected the NRM continued to operate underground. In February the nondiscrimination ombudsman announced the conclusion of a case her office brought before the National Nondiscrimination and Equality Tribunal in which an individual had prominently displayed a Nazi flag to the public. In the first ruling of its kind, the tribunal found such displays illegal. During a speech at the official Holocaust remembrance ceremony in January, Interior Minister Kai Mykkanen highlighted the prominent

display of Nazi flags by marchers at a December 2018 demonstration in Helsinki as a reason for concern and reaffirmed government support for the fight against anti-Semitism.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

Persons with Disabilities

The constitution and law prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities in all fields, including the provision of government services. The government effectively monitored compliance with these laws and implemented enforcement actions. In response to complaints of lack of accessibility, the ombudsman carried out unannounced inspections on polling stations, schools, prisons, medical facilities, and other locations. The findings of the inspections were released during the year, and improvements were made, including in two voting locations that did not have accessible voting booths and in multiple prisons. The spot report found two prisons to be completely inaccessible.

During the year reports of understaffing at assisted living facilities led to numerous investigations and the closure of three such facilities for violations, most recently in August. One facility that lacked adequate staff to assist residents during the night subsequently hired enough staff to correct the problem.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The law specifically prohibits discrimination on the basis of origin and nationality. According to the results of the European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey published in November 2018, 14 percent of persons of African descent in the country stated they had been subject to racist harassment in the previous five years. The most frequent complaints of discrimination or harassment concerned employment and online communication.

Media reports highlighted discrimination by private security guards as a concern. In February, Habiba Ali, a member of the Espoo City Council of Somali descent, complained after a security guard without cause accused her of shoplifting. In August an investigation of security services at the country's largest amusement

park found a history of training that encouraged ethnic profiling and discrimination against Romani visitors.

The nondiscrimination ombudsman is responsible for responding to complaints of discrimination and regularly mediated between business owners, government agencies, and public service providers regarding treatment of customers and clients. The Ministry of Justice also responds to complaints of discrimination. During the year the Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations pointed out the vulnerability of first- and second-generation immigrant youth to discrimination.

The government strongly encouraged tolerance and respect for minority groups, sought to address racial discrimination, and assisted victims.

Indigenous People

The constitution provides for the protection of the Sami language and culture, and the government financially supported these efforts. The Sami, who constituted less than 0.1 percent of the population, have full political and civil rights as citizens as well as a measure of autonomy in their civil and administrative affairs. A 21-member Sami parliament (Samediggi), popularly elected by the Sami, is responsible for the group's language, culture, and matters concerning their status as an indigenous people. It can adopt legally binding resolutions, propose initiatives, and provide policy guidance.

During the year there were complaints the national government intervened election procedures of the Sami parliament by adding new voters to voter lists before elections in September. Members of the outgoing Sami parliament described the ministry's actions as a violation of their right to self-determination and a threat to the viability of their self-governance. Representing the numerically small Sami minority, members of the Sami parliament asserted that the new voters recognized by the Ministry of Justice would overwhelm their traditional constituency and block their efforts to preserve cultural and traditional agricultural practices. In February, following a decision by the Ministry of Justice to compel the inclusion of a statistically significant number of new voters and a decision by the Supreme Administrative Court affirming it, the UN Human Rights Committee recommended that the Ministry of Justice abide by voter eligibility requirements previously established by the Sami parliament. The Supreme Administrative Court confirmed its decision, and elections went forward in September.

The ombudsman for gender equality stated that Sami victims of domestic violence were at a disadvantage in accessing public shelters due to the long distances between population centers in the northern part of the country. The nondiscrimination ombudsman also highlighted the challenges facing Sami due to the lack of government services in their own language, particularly in education and health services.

Sami objected to plans to develop an Arctic railway running from Helsinki to the northern border, citing the railway's potential impact on natural resources critical for their livelihoods, including reindeer-herding land and Arctic nature tourism. In May activists demonstrated in Helsinki against the railway and plans to increase mining activities in historically Sami areas.

Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

The law prohibits discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation in housing, employment, nationality laws, and access to government services, and the government enforced the law.

The law requires that a transgender person present a medical statement affirming their gender identity and a certificate of infertility before the government will legally recognize their gender identity. In addition to the requirement that an individual submit to sterilization, activists criticized the duration of the legal process, stating it can take up to three years to obtain identity documents with the new gender markers. Trafficking authorities and civil society stated they have no specialized services for transgender victims of trafficking and are unaware of their status among the trafficking-victim population.

While the law prohibits “conversion therapy” in medical settings, it continued to be practiced privately, most commonly in religious associations. The media reported that the Christian organization Journey Finland, as well as strict branches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and Orthodox Church, continued to practice conversion therapy.

Other Societal Violence or Discrimination

In July police reported they were still searching for an individual who smeared feces on and vandalized a halal grocery store in the city of Hyvinkaa two to three times a week during 2018.

Section 7. Worker Rights

a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining

The law provides for the right to form and join independent unions, bargain collectively, and conduct legal strikes. The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and any restriction or obstruction of these rights.

The government effectively enforced all applicable laws regarding the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. Workers without permanent residence may not be eligible to join voluntary unemployment insurance funds. Employers who violate the rights of employees to organize and retain employee representatives may face administrative measures, legal proceedings, and fines. The penalties were generally sufficient to deter violations. Authorities and employers generally respected freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, and there were no reports of violations. All workers, regardless of sector union membership, or nationality, are entitled to the same wages negotiated between employers and trade unions via generally applicable collective agreements.

The law does not permit public-sector employees who provide “essential services,” including police officers, firefighters, medical professionals, and border guards, to strike. An official dispute board can make nonbinding recommendations to the cabinet on ending or limiting the duration of strikes when they threaten national security. Employees prohibited from striking can use arbitration to provide for due process in the resolution of their concerns.

b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor. The government effectively enforced the law. Penalties for forced or compulsory labor depend on the severity of the crime but were generally sufficient to deter violations. Despite strong penalties for violations, some cases of persons subjected to conditions of forced labor in the country were reported during the year.

Men and women working in the restaurant, cleaning, construction, and agriculture industries were the most likely to face conditions of forced labor. The sexual services sector, legal in certain circumstances, also saw incidences of trafficking and forced labor.

Also see the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The law prohibits all of the worst forms of child labor but allows persons between the ages of 15 and 18 to enter into a valid employment contract as long as the work does not interrupt compulsory education. It provides that workers who are 15 to 18 years of age may not work after 10 p.m. or under conditions that risk their health and safety, which the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health defines as working with mechanical, chemical, physical, or biological hazards or bodily strain that may result from lifting heavy loads.

Penalties for violations of child labor regulations are sufficient to deter violations. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment effectively enforced child labor regulations. There were no reports of children engaged in work outside the parameters established by law.

d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation

The Occupational Safety Administration (OSHA) received 500 reports of workplace discrimination in 2018. Of the 157 reports that resulted in further inspection, 7 percent concerned ethnicity, nationality, language, or religion, a number similar to previous years, 12 percent concerned age discrimination, and 2 percent concerned disability. The government effectively enforced applicable laws against employment discrimination.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

While there is no national minimum wage law, the law requires all employers, including nonunionized employers, to pay the minimum wages stipulated in collective bargaining agreements. Authorities adequately enforced wage laws.

The standard workweek established by law is no more than 40 hours of work per week with eight hours work per day. Because the law does not include a provision regarding a five-day workweek, regular work hours may, at least in principle, span six days. The regular weekly work hours can also be arranged so that the average is 40 hours over a period of no more than 52 weeks. Certain occupations, such as seamen, household workers, road transport workers, and workers in bakeries, are

subject to separate workweek regulations. The law entitles employees working shifts or during the weekend to one 24-hour rest period per week. The law limits a worker to 250 hours of overtime per year and 138 overtime hours in any four-month period.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is responsible for labor policy and implementation, drafting labor legislation, improving the viability of working life and its quality, and promoting employment. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is responsible for enforcement of labor laws and regulations. In addition, OSHA enforces appropriate safety and health standards and conducts inspections at workplaces. Individuals who commit work safety offenses are subject to a fine or imprisonment for a maximum of one year; individuals who commit working hours' offenses are subject to a fine or imprisonment for a maximum of six months. The center informs employers of inspections in advance unless a surprise inspection is necessary for enforcement purposes. A subsequent inspection report gives employers written advice on how to remedy minor defects. In the case of serious violations, the inspector issues an improvement notice and monitors the employer's compliance. When necessary, OSHA may issue a binding decision and impose a fine. If a hazardous situation involved a risk to life, an inspector can halt work on the site or issue a prohibition notice concerning the source of risk.

Authorities adequately enforced wage and overtime laws. Government resources, inspections, and penalties were adequate to deter most violations.

The law requires employees to report any hazards or risks they discover in working conditions, including in machinery, equipment, or work methods. The law also requires employees, where possible, to correct dangerous conditions that come to their attention. Such corrective measures must be reported to the employer.