

Semaglutide in Transition: A Nationwide Register-Based Study in Finland, 2019–2024

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Objectives

In recent years, the use of semaglutide has expanded from treating type 2 diabetes (T2D) to treating obesity. In this nationwide retrospective register study, we examined the use of semaglutide for the treatment of T2D and obesity in Finland during 2019–2024.

Methods

Data on all semaglutide dispensations between 2019–2024 were retrieved from national prescription registers. Use for the treatment of obesity or T2D was classified according to reimbursement status. In Finland, semaglutide is reimbursed only for the treatment of diabetes.

Results

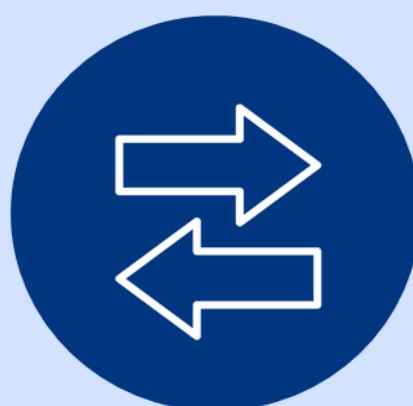
The number of individuals who purchased semaglutide increased 17-fold, from 6,406 in 2019 to 109,133 in 2024. During the study period, the main use shifted from T2D to obesity (85% and 15% in 2019 vs. 47% and 53% in 2024). In all years, a higher proportion of men used semaglutide for T2D than women (53% vs. 47% in 2024). In 2024, the average age of individuals using semaglutide for T2D was higher than the age of those using it to treat obesity (64 vs. 53 years, respectively). The age and sex distribution of those using semaglutide to treat T2D remained relatively stable from 2019 to 2024. Women used semaglutide for obesity more often than men. Their proportion increased from 58% in 2019 to 71% in 2024. Between 2021 and 2024, the number of female users increased 5.6-fold and in men, the increase was 5.9-fold.

Key Findings



Rapid growth in semaglutide use

Between 2019 and 2024, the number of semaglutide users in Finland increased 17-fold, rising from 6,406 to 109,133.



Shift from diabetes to obesity treatment

Semaglutide use for obesity surpassed diabetes by 2024.

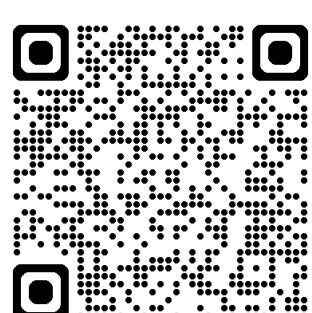


Strong gender differences in obesity treatment

By 2024, 71% of semaglutide users for obesity were women

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Conclusion

Findings indicate that the use of semaglutide for the treatment of obesity increased substantially in Finland from 2019 to 2024, especially among women. It is expected that the demand for medications used for obesity and T2D will increase, and public payers should anticipate assessing what the roles of society and the individual are in the distribution of costs.

Figure 1. Annual number of semaglutide users in Finland for type 2 diabetes and obesity from 2019 to 2024 *

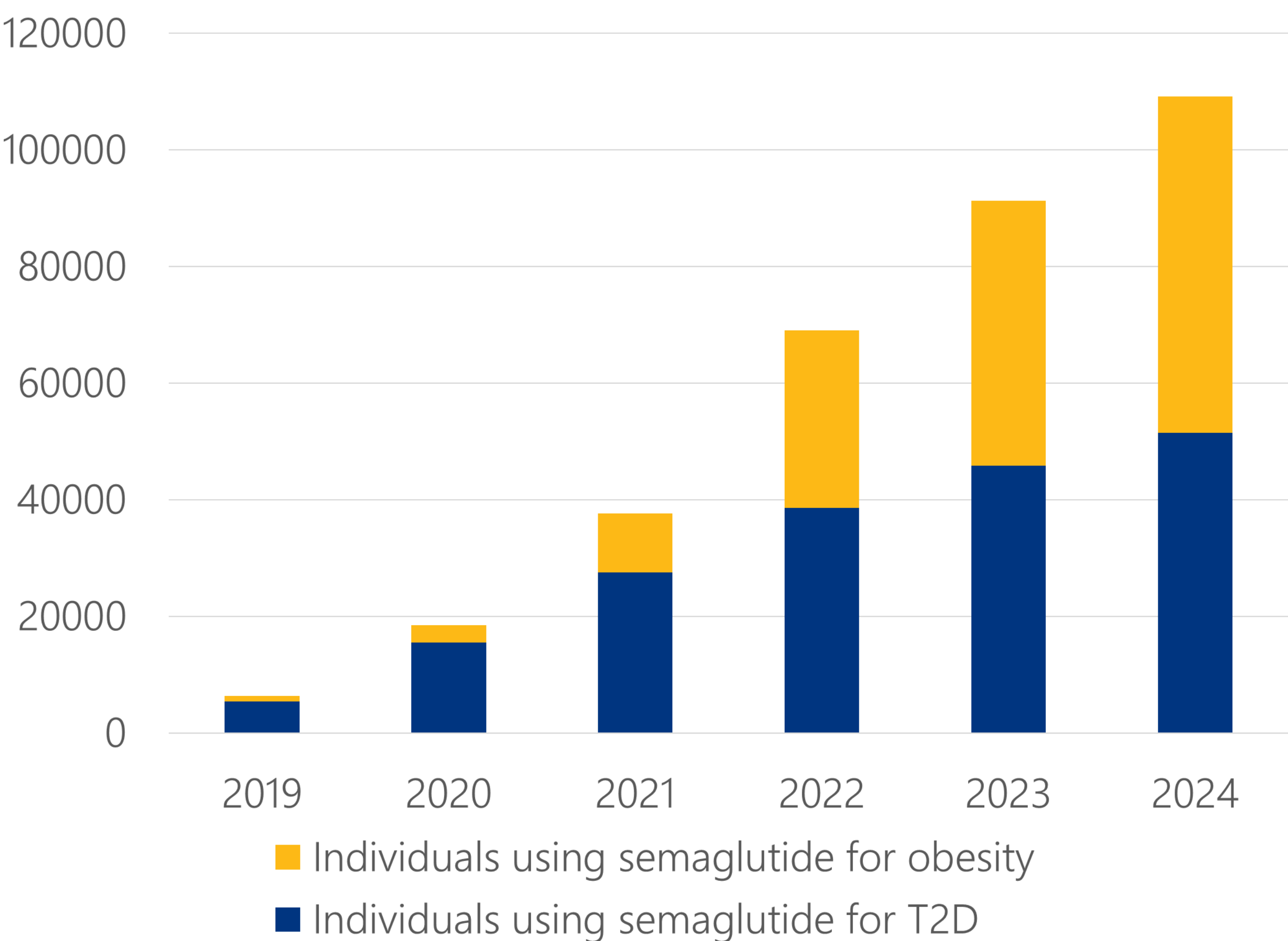
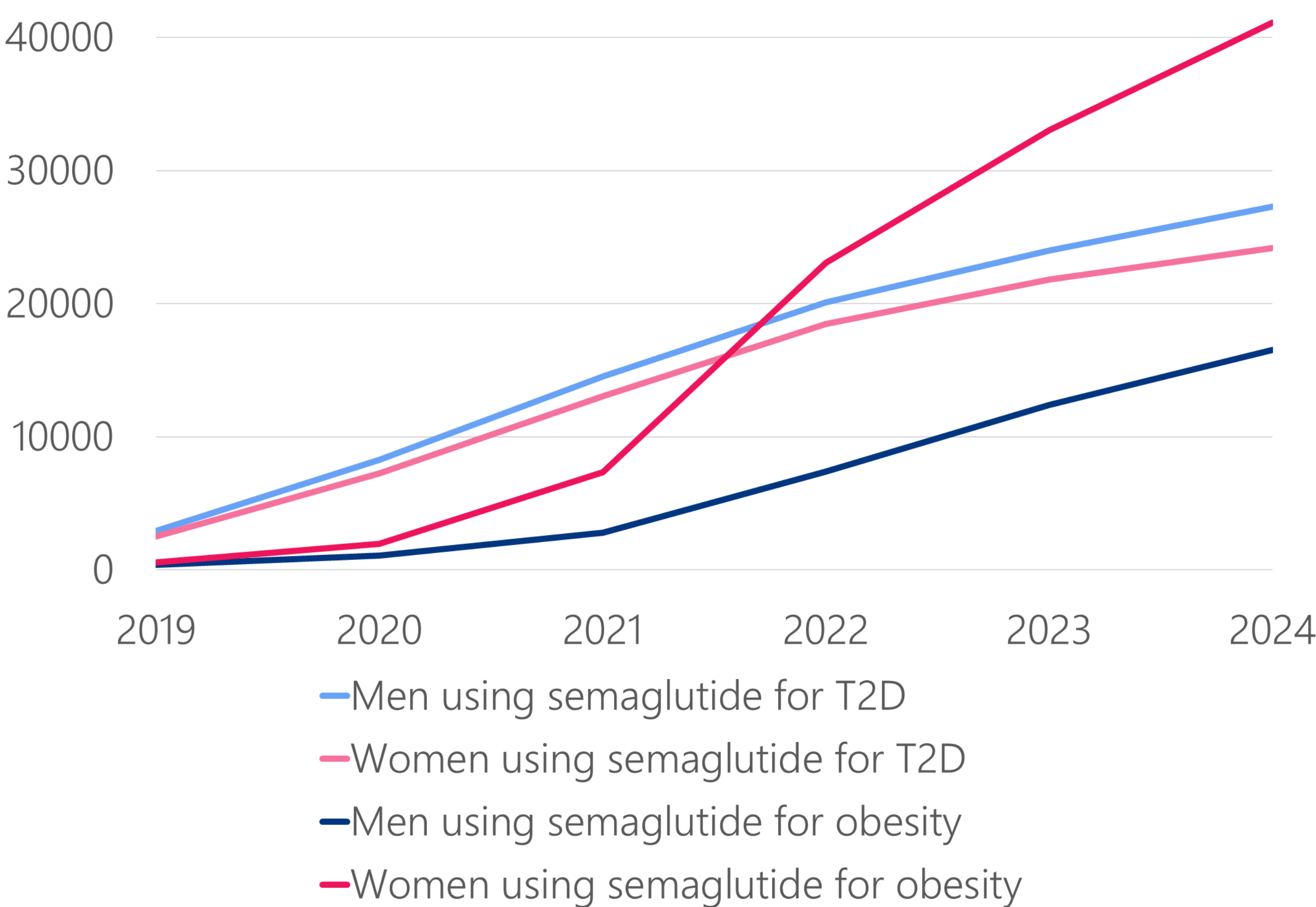


Figure 2. Annual number of semaglutide users in Finland by type of use and gender from 2019 to 2024*



*Semaglutide use for type 2 diabetes was defined as reimbursed use, requiring BMI ≥ 30 kg/m² and insufficient glycemic control with at least one other diabetes medication. All other use was classified as obesity-related.

