



GENDER

EQUALITY IN FINLAND

**Freedom of choice
enhances quality of life**



Equality brings prosperity

Finland has led the way in gender equality with other Nordic countries for decades and is today one of the most equal countries in the world. Various high international rankings in equality for Finland are no coincidence – many brave men and women have fought for equality in education, politics and working life.

Gender equality is one of the core values of the Finnish society. There is reason to believe that Finland would not be one of the most advanced countries in the world had it not been for its strong commitment to equality.

Women participate in working life on an equal footing with men and our day care system makes it easier for parents to balance work and life. Nowadays, the majority of university students are women. The number of female CEOs and board members of listed companies has grown steadily for many years.

Finland has strong legislation to combat discrimination – and an obligation

to promote equality in schools and workplaces. While many glass ceilings have been broken, there is still a lot to do and accomplish in the field of equality. The gender pay gap still exists and men use only a fraction of parental leave. Our labour market is heavily divided into women's and men's occupations.

Equality cannot be taken for granted – it can also be challenged. There is still room for improvement before everyone has the possibility to fulfil their full potential. Finland is a trusted and committed partner in finding solutions to these challenges.

Jukka Maarianvaara

The Ombudsman for Equality



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*Freedom to follow
your own aspirations*

Forerunners

The grand old lady of Finnish literature:

Minna Canth

One of the first authors to write in Finnish, Minna Canth (1844–97) is celebrated as a pioneer of women's rights in Finland. She wrote plays, novellas and short stories portraying women from versatile backgrounds.

She gave a voice to working class women through her work. She refused to portray poor people idealistically. She took her stylistic inspiration from the realist and naturalist literary movements of her time. In her play *The Labourer's Wife* (1885), she showed how an alcoholic husband's rights over his wife and her earnings lead the whole family to ruin. Canth was strongly

criticised by conservatives for writing, for example, about adultery. Her work has, however, also been eye opening for many readers for decades.

Canth was not only a writer. She was a businesswoman, journalist and a mother of seven children. She had her own draper's shop in Kuopio where she lived with her family. She actively took part in associations supporting women's rights and the role of the Finnish language.

Minna Canth was the first woman in Finland to be honoured with a flag day. On 19 March, Finland celebrates her birthday and gender equality by raising the Finnish flag.



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First women in Parliament 1907

In 1906, the Finnish Parliament became the first in the world to allow all women to run for office. All adult women were eligible to stand as candidates in national elections. Universal and equal suffrage was enacted in Finland in 1906 and the first elections for the new unicameral Parliament were held in 1907. The percentage of female Members of Parliament was greatest from 2011 to 2015, when 85 women (42.5%) were elected.



The photo shows 13 of the 19 women elected to Parliament in 1907. Photo: Photographic Studio J. Indurski / Feminist Association Unioni

**IT TAKES
JUST ONE
BRAVE
FORERUNNER.**



1870

Marie Tschetschulin
Matriculation examination



1878

Rosina Heikel
Licentiate of Medicine



1882

Emma Irene Åström
Master of Arts



1895

Karolina Eskelin
Doctor of Medical Science



1905

Jenny Markelin
Road and bridge construction engineer



1918

Agnes Sjöberg
Doctor of Veterinary Medicine – the first woman in Europe



1926

Miina Sillanpää
Minister of the Government, influential trailblazer



1927

Alma Söderhjelm
Professor



1938

Eugenie Lisitzin
Doctorate in Physics



1942

Eeva Lindén
Doctorate in the Finnish language



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The first female government minister:

Miina Sillanpää

Miina Sillanpää (1866–1952) was among the first 19 women elected to Parliament in 1907. During her 38 years as a Member of Parliament, Sillanpää worked tirelessly to promote the social issues she believed in. She continuously supported measures to improve the position of women in society. From 1926 to 1927, she served as Minister of Social Affairs, becoming Finland's first female government minister.

Sillanpää's parents were poor and she had eight siblings. She started working in a cotton mill at the age of 12. Later, she moved to Helsinki to work as a domestic aide. In 1898, she helped

found the Servants' Association, taking over as director in 1901 – a post she would hold for half a century.

In the 1930s, she helped start an organisation that provided shelters for single women and their children, overcoming long-time cultural resistance to the idea. She was a determined and effective fighter for improvements to the lives of the disadvantaged and the elderly, motivated by her values of fairness and equality.

Finnish flags are hoisted on 1 October in memory of her contributions.



The first female president of the Sámi Parliament of Finland:

Tiina Sanila-Aikio

"Women and men are equal in the Sámi culture. Traditionally, we have separate work tasks for women and men, but these days everyone can choose what work they want to do. Women's roles are important in many ways, for example, in exchanging knowledge between generations. Nowadays, women are often educated and their work can generate extra income for the family on top of traditional income sources like fishing and reindeer herding," Sanila-Aikio explains.

In 2015, Tiina Sanila-Aikio was the first woman to be elected as President of the Sámi Parliament, the supreme political body of the indigenous

Sámi people in Finland. Ten of the Parliament's 21 members are women.

"I have been active in Sámi politics since I was fifteen years old. During my working career as a rock musician in the Tiina Sanila Band and as a Skolt Sámi teacher, I also worked to benefit the Sámi community. Nevertheless, some people thought that I was too young to become the President of the Sámi Parliament in my thirties. There was talk about the fact that I am a young woman. I think I was elected despite these doubts because of my political activity, language skills, cultural work and large network," Sanila-Aikio says.



1955

Liisi Oterma
Doctorate in Astronomy



1958

Vieno Rajaoja
Doctorate in Economics



1961

Inkeri Anttila
Professor of Law



1976

Sirpa Rautio
Municipal manager



1988

The first 94 women were ordained as priests



1990

Elisabeth Rehn
Minister of Defence



1992

Sirkka Hämäläinen
Director of the Bank of Finland



1994

Riitta Uosukainen
Speaker of Parliament



2000

Tarja Halonen
President of the Republic



2000

Titta Lindqvist
Officer, senior lieutenant



2003

Anneli Jäätteenmäki
Prime Minister



2010

Irja Askola
Bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church



Happy to be equal:

Together for 27 years

Tiina Pelkonen, 62, and Jussi-Petteri (Pete) Nurmi, 64, have been together since 1991. They decided not to get married since they had both been married twice before. They have one adult daughter together and Tiina has two older sons.

“When I was growing up, my parents were both active in working life. My mother was a copywriter and my father was a journalist. They were politically active and our home was always filled with animated discussion. Equality was something I took for granted as a child,” Pete says.

Tiina’s father, who was also a journalist, died when she was young.

“My mother was a dressmaker. She had a strong character and my parents made their decisions together. I had a happy childhood,” Tiina recalls.

Pete was married from 1979 to 1983 and 1987 to 1989, while Tiina was married from 1976 to 1982

and 1983 to 1991. Her two sons were born during her second marriage.

“I was just 21 when I first got married and we got divorced as friends. I have a good relationship with my second husband as well and he’s a good father to our sons. We shared the childcare duties equally when the boys were small. One of the reasons we got divorced was that he didn’t support my idea of quitting my job to re-educate myself,” Tiina says.

Tiina worked as a theatre secretary before she had her sons, but after her maternity leave, she decided to do media studies.

“First I worked at a local free newspaper. In 1999, I started working for my current employer, a communications agency, as a journalist and sub-editor. Our boys’ day care was well organised when they were small,” Tiina says.

Pete is a musician and has had various work assignments.



"I studied music at the Oulunkylä Conservatory in Helsinki. I play the guitar and I'm also a voice technician. I've worked as a musician, I build guitars, I've taught music and sound systems in many schools and I've recorded many records. My working hours are not conventional: I often work in the evenings and at night," Pete says.

The couple have different sleeping rhythms, which made their family life easier when their daughter was born.

"I fed our daughter with a bottle at night when she was a baby, so Tiina could sleep. When our daughter went to school, I was at home in the afternoons and we're still very close. I also did some housework and cooked when Tiina was working," Pete says.

Tiina and Pete met through their common hobby: music. They are part of a band that has ten

members and they still do gigs together. Today, the hobby brings the couple together.

"Everyone is equal in music. You're not a man or a woman, you're a musician," Pete says.

"It wasn't like that when we were young. Female musicians were not appreciated then as much as men. But it's better now," Tiina says.

They agree that an equal society benefits both men and women.

"I've always been a feminist. Equality means that everyone can achieve personal and professional fulfilment and enjoy their career, family life and hobbies," Tiina says.

"Equality makes life easier for everyone. There are more than just two sexes and everybody should be treated the same," Pete concludes.

HAVING A BABY IN FINLAND MEANS...



> **Maternity grant:** Maternity package* or a cash benefit of EUR 170.

> **Maternity allowance**** will continue to be paid after the child is born.

> **Child benefit***** will be paid from the month following the birth of the child.

> **Maternity leave** is 105 working days.

> The mother or the father can take **parental leave** for 158 working days after the maternity leave.

> The father is entitled to receive a **paternity allowance** for 54 working days during **paternity leave**.

> The father can take paternity leave for 1 to 18 working days while the mother is still receiving a maternity allowance.

> The rest of the paternity allowance can be paid after the maternity allowance and parental allowance periods.

> The mother and the father can take parental leave in turns, for a maximum of two periods of 12 or more days.

> A parent is entitled to take **unpaid leave** and stay at home with a child until the child is three years old, without losing his or her job.



Finland emoji #babyinbox.
Finland was the first country in the world to have its own national emojis.
toolbox.finland.fi

*a maternity package contains clothes and care supplies **the amount of the maternity or parental allowance is based on taxable income. *** the child benefit is determined based on the number of children. The minimum amount for one child is EUR 94 per month. More info: www.kela.fi



Tommi and Satu Koivisto shared the paid parental leave when their children were small. This allowed Tommi to stay at home with the children when Satu returned to work.

Tommi Koivisto encourages Finnish fathers to take parental leave

Tommi and **Satu Koivisto** have two children, a six-year-old girl and a two-year-old boy. The Koivistos agreed already before they had any children that they would try to share parental leave as equally as possible. The state of Finland pays maternity, paternity and parental allowances to parents so that they can take off from work to take care of babies and small children.

“When our daughter was born, I spent the first three weeks at home. Before my wife returned to work, I took the last weeks of my paternity leave and after she started working, I stayed at home on parental leave for six more months. I was away from work for more than seven months in total. With my son, I divided the nine weeks’ paternity leave into four parts and then started six months’ parental leave when he was 16 months old,” Tommi says.

There were many reasons why staying home with the children seemed like a good idea.

“My wife wanted us to share the parental leave as she also has a career and she wanted to return to work. I had already worked for ten years and the timing was good for me to spend more time with my family. The most important reason I took parental leave was to form a close relationship with my children,” Tommi says.

Most men in Finland take some paternity leave, but very few take parental leave.

“My family, friends, colleagues and my employers were all very supportive of me staying home with the children. I am a game producer nowadays and for me it was very easy to transfer my responsibilities to my colleagues. This also provided my colleagues and myself with opportunities to try something new. I’m sure it’s difficult to be the first

man at work who takes longer parental leave, but I encourage fathers to do so,” Tommi says.

Tommi writes a blog about family life and parenting, among other things.

“I want to show the positive side of being a parent and family life. When both parents take responsibility for the children, they have equal chances to build their careers and enjoy their hobbies and children.”

Now that the children are bigger, Tommi takes as much responsibility as his wife for contacting the day care and school and taking care of the children’s health. “We take turns fetching the children from the day care and staying at home with them when they’re sick. When our children wake up in the middle of the night, they call me. I feel that we are equal as parents and we are both close to our children,” Tommi concludes.

Home of four adults and two children

Anna Edgren lives in one part of a semi-detached house with her partner Mia Bäck. Anna's friend Johan Werkelin and his partner Peter Björkfors live in the other part of the house. Their relationship is closer than that of average neighbours, because they form a family of four adults and two children. Anna and Johan are the biological parents of the children.

"The children have a room in the middle of the house. Now that they are of school-going age, they move quite independently from one part of the house to the other, but as parents we have agreed to take turns in being responsible for the children," Anna says.

Despite being different, attitudes towards their family are usually positive. However, the family members sometimes encounter heteronormative presumptions. Peter had a peculiar situation the first time he attended a parents' evening at school where he introduced himself by saying that he was not really anyone's father. This was met with

surprise, but after his explanation the people were full of admiration.

"When children have many parents, we can share responsibility and one of us always has time for them," Anna says.

Gender roles do not determine who does what in the family. Changing car tyres, for example, is as much the women's as the men's duty. The children are also expected to do various chores at home regardless of their gender. Sometimes, Edgren encounters people who suggest that the women in the family probably cook and wash laundry more than the men do.

"Why on earth would I do my neighbours' housework?"

The children were born with the help of a fertility clinic. Edgren felt that the clinic staff were very professional and supportive. Their friends and people close to them were also delighted with their choice.

In same-sex relationships, it is common for one parent not to be around at all. Edgren's family is special, since without their partners, the parents look like a normative family. At the child health care clinic, they had to remind the nurses at times that they do not live together.

Even though their everyday life works well, the society is not quite ready for norm-breaking family forms yet. The most unpleasant indication of this was when the first child was born and Johan was not granted a paternity allowance because the parents did not live in the same household.

"Luckily, my employer was understanding and I could take leave. However, I didn't get paid for that time," Johan says.

In 2017, the law was amended and today the biological father can receive a paternity allowance even if he does not live at the same address as the mother.

RAINBOW FAMILIES ARE ACKNOWLEDGED BETTER THAN BEFORE IN THE STATUTES THAT CAME INTO EFFECT IN 2017:

- The biological father of the child has the right to paternity and parental allowances, when he is responsible for the childcare.
- The law allows the female partner of the mother to take parental leave.
- The partner of the mother has the right to a paternity allowance.

www.kela.fi/web/en/rainbow-families



Facts about Finland

Finland is one of the world's leading countries in fostering equality. The first steps towards equality between men and women were taken already before the country's independence.

Usually, the gender equality goal is associated with the idea that both men and women should be able to work and have a family life. Men and women have the right to enjoy and take responsibility for taking care of children and earning

a living. According to 2017 statistics, there are 569,700 families with children in Finland. In total, 2,139,700 people live in a family with children, which accounts for 39% of the population.

In families with children, the most common family form is a married couple with children, which makes up 59% of families. Unmarried couples constitute 20% and about 9% of families with children are blended families.

POPULATION preliminary figure 2018

WOMEN 2,795,808
MEN 2,723,655

LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH 2017

GIRLS 84.2 YEARS
BOYS 78.7 YEARS



29.1

AVERAGE AGE OF
FIRST-TIME MOTHERS
(2016).

Population information, source: Statistics Finland

31.2

AVERAGE AGE OF
FIRST-TIME FATHERS
(2016).

AVERAGE TIME PER DAY SPENT ON ROUTINE HOUSEWORK

WOMEN 3 H 41 MIN
MEN 2 H 33 MIN



26 542

MARRIAGES
2017

SAME-SEX COUPLES 2.1%
OPPOSITE-SEX COUPLES 97.9%



EMPLOYMENT RATE FOR PERSONS AGED 15-64 (2018/08)

70.8% 74.4%

WOMEN

MEN

GENDER PAY GAP

2016
(difference between average gross hourly earnings of male and female employees as % of male gross earnings)

WOMEN:

84
CENTS

MEN: 1 EURO

FIRST PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 1907

WOMEN



19

MEN



181

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS 2015

WOMEN



83

MEN



117

WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE

FINLAND
1906

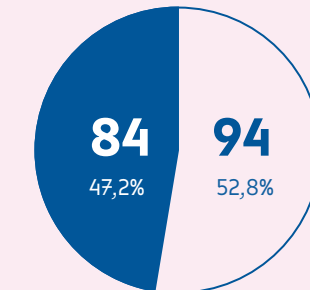


NEW ZEALAND
1893

AUSTRALIA
1902

MINISTERS IN THE GOVERNMENT OF FINLAND IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Women



Men

Source: Finnish Government

GENDER EQUALITY TOP TEN

- | | |
|-----------|----------------|
| 1 Iceland | 6 Nicaragua |
| 2 Norway | 7 Slovenia |
| 3 Finland | 8 Ireland |
| 4 Rwanda | 9 New Zealand |
| 5 Sweden | 10 Philippines |

Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2017, World Economic Forum (rank out of 144 countries)

Inspirational women

In Finland, both women and men can build a career. The following pages showcase women who have found a position that suits their needs and talents.



Motorcycle police officer Minna Kastrén

Women were employed as police officers in Finland already in 1907. Today, police officers receive a three-and-a-half-year education at the Police University College and about 30% of the students are women.

Minna Kastrén, born in 1978, is one of the two female police officers in Finland who have passed the motorcycle police exam. She lives and works in Kokkola, on the West Coast of Finland. The entrance examination for the motorcycle police course and the training itself are very tough and demand a lot of physical strength.

"I've never thought that something would be impossible for me because I'm a woman. In 2002,

I started to work as a police officer, and in 2016, I got the rare possibility to take the examination to become a motorcycle police officer. It didn't matter whether I was a man or a woman. I just had to pass the exam and the course. It all depended on myself and it took a lot of work. Some people doubted my ability to pass the entrance examination, but many others were supportive," Kastrén says.

She has four children and it felt natural for her to stay at home with them when they were small.

"Now that the children are bigger, my husband is the one who can arrange his work according to the children's needs during my work shifts."



Photo: Ulla Nikula

MILESTONES OF EQUALITY.

From the very beginning, the Finnish welfare state has been based on equality between women and men, and most women of working age have been engaged in paid labour.

Source: Centre for Gender Equality Information, National Institute for Health and Welfare



1901

Women no longer need special permission to attend university

1906

Women are granted the vote and the right to stand for election and serve as Members of Parliament



1910's

The first decree on four-week maternity leave after childbirth

1917

Universal suffrage in municipal elections



1921

Compulsory Education Act, pertaining to girls and boys

1926

Act on Women's Eligibility in State Posts



1930

Wives are released from the guardianship of their husbands



1937

Maternity Grants Act for women of poor means



1940's

Child benefit is introduced

1948

Free school meals

Deputy Mayor of Helsinki

Nasima Razmyar

Nasima Razmyar was born in Kabul in 1984. Her family came from Afghanistan to Finland as refugees in 1992. She has pursued her dreams with great determination.

“I hope I can be a role model for young immigrants, especially girls. It’s possible to achieve anything in Finland regardless of your gender or your background. Unfortunately, it is still harder for non-white girls, but I believe that attitudes are changing,” Razmyar says.

Razmyar has helped immigrants through various organisations. She studied political science and graduated as a community pedagogue. In 2010, she was chosen as Refugee Woman of the Year for her work in promoting equality and

diversity. In the same year, she was elected as a city councillor in Helsinki. In 2011, she was elected as a Deputy Member of the Finnish Parliament and in 2015 as a Member of Parliament. In 2017, she was elected Helsinki’s Deputy Mayor for Culture and Leisure.

As the Deputy Mayor, she promotes equality in many ways.

“For example, the City of Helsinki’s youth services have made a considerable effort to pay attention to gender diversity and gender equality. Girls and boys should have equal chances to attend hobbies. The city has a great responsibility to deconstruct gender norms instead of enhancing them through public services,” Razmyar concludes.



Deli owner and entrepreneur

Päivi Harttunen

There are more than 280,000 businesses in Finland, of which about 93% employ less than 10 people. About one third of all businesses are owned by women. One of them is Päivi Harttunen’s Mandragora in the centre of Turku.

Harttunen runs a coffee, tea and chocolate deli called Mandragora with her husband. Her duties include mainly marketing and management. The deli is a new line of business for Harttunen, but she has a long history as an entrepreneur.

“When I graduated as a cosmetologist in the 1980s, I immediately started a business of my own. Now, running Mandragora is my main profession but I still work part-time in cosmetology.”

In addition to running her own companies,

Harttunen has taught at the cosmetology school and done makeup at theatres and fashion shows. When she started her first company, her children were small.

“Our home and my beauty salon were located in the same building, so in a sense I was always at home. Everything went quite smoothly with our three children. They were at the day care and sometimes the grandparents came to help.”

Harttunen has been active in entrepreneur networks and she recommends networking to everybody.

“We often visit each other’s companies and exchange experiences. It’s a great way of learning something new.”



1949

Maternity grants are expanded to cover all women, regardless of financial standing



1963

Equal pay for equal work for men and women in public office



1964

Maternity allowance for 54 working days

1970

Discrimination based on gender is prohibited in working life



1972

Comprehensive School Act: all children are entitled to publicly funded basic education



1972

Council for Gender Equality is established



1973

Child Day Care Act



1974

Maternity allowance for six months

1975

National Pensions Act gives women and men equal rights to basic national pension



1975

Women can be appointed to nearly all offices

1976

Separate tax assessment of spouses



1978

Parents receive the right to divide parental leave between them

CEO of Nokian Tyres

Hille Korhonen

“My mother was a strong woman. She used to say that a woman should be able to take care of herself. She always encouraged me to push myself and she helped me to take care of my children when they were small,” Hille Korhonen says.

Nokian Tyres is a tyre manufacturer that employs about 4,600 people. In 2017, the listed company’s turnover was approximately EUR 1.6 billion. Hille Korhonen, born in 1961, has been the company’s CEO since 2017. Before that, she sat on the board of directors of the company for ten years. She has held seats on many boards during her career. She came to Nokian Tyres from the Finnish alcohol monopoly company Alko, where she was CEO.

Korhonen is a Licentiate of Science in Technology. In 2018, she was awarded an honorary doctorate by The University of Tampere.

“When I was at university studying engineering, there were 105 men and five women in my year. I have also built my career working in male-dominated fields. I don’t think I’ve ever been disrespected because I’m a woman. I have always concentrated on the job at hand and tried to do my work well,” Korhonen says.

Sports are very important for Korhonen’s well-being and she is even a veteran Finnish Champion in weightlifting (Masters, 63kg, from 2015 to 2018). Exercising also helps her to keep going at work.



© Lehtikuva

Professor of Forensic Dentistry

Helena Ranta

Helena Ranta, born in 1946, is an internationally renowned forensic dentist who has worked in victim identification. She has also conducted forensic investigations in war zones and catastrophe areas around the world, for instance, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Cameroon, Peru, Iraq and in Southeast Asia after the 2004 tsunami.

“My working environment has been extremely male-dominated. I have commonly been the only woman on site. My gender has surprised some people in the destination countries, especially since I have usually been the leader of our forensic team. They have quickly realised, however, that I am a tough professional. Surprisingly, some older

Finnish specialists have doubted my ability to carry out my tasks on foreign assignments. But I don’t think that my gender has really been a disadvantage. During my lifetime, many glass ceilings have been broken,” Ranta says.

Before retiring, Ranta was Professor at the Department of Forensic Medicine at the University of Helsinki. She is known for her work as a human rights advocate. She is the former president of UN Women Finland and she is currently the president of the 1325 Network Finland. The network aims to enhance the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 “Women, Peace and Security” in Finland. In 2017, she won the first international Prix Lysistrata award for peace mediation.



1980s

Child home care allowance and special care allowance to compensate for loss of income when attending to a sick child



1986

Restrictions on appointing women to ecclesiastical offices are lifted



1990’s

All children under school age are entitled to day care



1991

Paternity leave and paternity allowance that cannot be transferred to the mother or shared with her are introduced

1994

Marital rape is criminalised



1995

Domestic violence becomes subject to public prosecution

1995

Restrictions on appointing women to military offices are lifted



2011

Transvestism eliminated from the classification of diseases



2015

The Equality Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, gender identity and gender expression



2017

Equal Marriage Act grants same-sex couples the right to marriage and enables adoption

2018

Maternity Act (will take effect in 2019) ensures that both women in a same-sex couple are legally recognised as mothers

Equal education



Finland values education

According to Pisa* studies, Finland is one of the leading countries in education within the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), particularly in reading and science. This is explained by the following factors:

Consistently high quality of basic education for the entire age group across the country; highly skilled teachers; neighbourhood school principle: the school that children attend is determined based on their area of residence; a well-functioning and high quality library system.

Today, education continues throughout working life. Most employers in Finland offer their employees courses to update their knowledge. Many people change the field they work in and re-educate themselves. Learning new skills such as languages, ICT or handicrafts can also be a hobby that lasts for a lifetime. Finland has a comprehensive network of institutes and colleges that offer low-cost education and training in various fields that do not necessarily lead to degrees. Lifelong learning benefits both individuals and the community.

*The Programme for international student assessment (Pisa) is a joint research programme by OECD countries that provides information on the state and results of education in international comparison. Every three years, the programme assesses mathematics, science and reading skills among 15-year-olds.

- All children in Finland are entitled to free pre-primary and basic education. There are no separate schools for girls and boys.
- Day care centres and schools provide pre-primary education for six-year-olds.
- Children begin comprehensive school at the age of seven. Teaching, educational materials and school meals are free. Transport is free if the child lives more than five kilometres from the school.
- After nine years of comprehensive school, young people continue to vocational education or an upper secondary school.
- Upper secondary schools provide general education that prepares students for further studies. Upper secondary school can be completed in two to four years. At the end of their schooling, students take a matriculation examination. About 58% of all students who took the matriculation examination in 2017 were girls.

153,262

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
2017

WOMEN 53% | MEN 47%

31,014

UNIVERSITY GRADUATES
2017

WOMEN 58% | MEN 42%

Linda Liukas: Tech can be fun and creative

Linda Liukas has written four innovative Hello Ruby books that explain computers, coding, the Internet and artificial intelligence to children. She is also the main driver behind Rails Girls, a non-profit community that teaches the basics of coding to women around the world. Liukas has studied diverse subjects including philosophy, business, French and visual journalism.

“Too often we see that mathematics and creativity get separated. Girls as young as 10 years old say that they see themselves as creative people and not mathematically oriented and that they want to work with people rather than computers. In my work as a public speaker and a children’s book writer and illustrator, I want to show girls that working with technology is creative and you need social skills to be good at it,” Liukas says.

When she studied coding at Stanford University in California, she learnt how to use coding as a tool to express herself.

“When I came back home to Finland, I started organising weekend events with my friend Karri Saarinen. At these events, women had the opportunity to learn coding, programming and software skills in a playful and fun way,” Liukas says.

“We named these events Rails Girls. The name comes from an open-source web application framework called Ruby on Rails. Soon, the word got out and we were asked to hold a similar event in Singapore.”

Today, Rails Girls is a global non-profit volunteer community. It has already organised events in 500 cities around the world on almost all continents.

HELLO RUBY BOOKS FOR GIRLS AND BOYS

Liukas’ first book Hello Ruby: Adventures in Coding (2015) has been translated into 25 languages. The second and third books explain computers and the Internet to kids. The latest book in the series is about artificial intelligence and machine learning.

She aims to provide children with creative thinking tools. The books combine illustrated stories with fun exercises.

“Hello Ruby started as a book and that’s a great platform to start with, but it can become anything. How about a Hello Ruby school? It could become something totally different with the same values and goals,” Liukas says with a smile.

PARENTS ARE THE SAME AROUND THE WORLD

Liukas currently spends about six months a year travelling around the world as an inspirational public speaker. Her audiences include teachers, business managers, opinion leaders and parents.

“Wherever I go, parents always want the best for their children and together we identify what kind of skills their children need to thrive in the future. I’ve managed to combine technology with soft values.”

Liukas is very popular, among others, in Japan, South Korea and China. In May 2017, her Hello Ruby books won China’s top design prize, the EUR 130,000 Design Intelligence Gold Award.

lindaliukas.com
railsgirls.com
helloruby.com



Some equality challenges in Finland

Even though Finland is one of the leading countries in the world in gender equality, there are still issues that remain unresolved in the society.

“One major issue is **economic inequality**: on average, men earn more than women. The vast majority of Finnish women work full-time. The workforce is largely segregated so that men and women work in different fields. In general, female-dominated fields are paid less than male-dominated fields. The unequal share of care responsibilities between mothers and fathers is part of the problem,” **Marjut Jyrkinen** says.

She is an Associate Professor in Working Life Equality and Gender Studies at the University of Helsinki. Jyrkinen leads a research project for equal working life called *WeAll*.

Women in Finland are very well educated and they commonly progress up to middle management.

“Paradoxically, in the highest leadership positions and on corporate boards, women are still a minority.”

Another major problem in Finnish equality is **gendered violence** that women from all social groups encounter.

“The perpetrators are most often current or ex-partners or acquaintances. Intimate violence is a recurring process that will not stop without outside intervention. We need multidisciplinary cooperation between different authorities and NGOs to break the cycle. We need more resources for this work and prevention of violence,” Jyrkinen emphasises.

A concern about gender inequality that is often discussed is that **boys are not as successful at school as girls**.

“This could be as a result of narrow models of masculinity: reading and education are not considered masculine. We must realise, however, that most boys do well at school in Finland and we should remember to celebrate Finnish girls’ success. If we break stereotypical gender roles, we get more equal learners.”

Jyrkinen considers Finland to be a forerunner in involving civil society in advancing equality.

“Many NGOs are active in promoting equality and citizens’ initiatives drive the tabling of amendments to the law. These are very valuable forms of political influencing,” Jyrkinen concludes.



“There are still things to be fixed in Finland. For instance, the #MeToo campaign showed that equality has a thin surface. When you scratch it a little, attitudes resurface that clearly accept inequality. Nevertheless, on a global scale we are progressive in gender equality and we can remind others that the implementation of equality benefits everyone.”

FORMER PRESIDENT OF FINLAND TARJA HALONEN

Anna magazine, August 2018.

Women's rights in developing countries

The rights and status of women and girls is a priority area in Finland's development policy.

The aim of Finland's development policy is to support developing countries' efforts to eradicate poverty and inequality and promote sustainable development.

Finland focuses its activities on four priority areas. One of them is the rights and status of women and girls. Gender inequality is one of the greatest problems in developing countries. Experience has shown that enhancing the rights and the position of women and girls and their opportunities to participate, strengthens the society as a whole. This also promotes the attainment of other development goals. Finland possesses the credibility and expertise to foster gender equality internationally.

Finland has pioneered the promotion of the rights of all women and girls and gender equality. The matter continues to be a significant objective of our development policy.

The Finnish development policy is guided by human rights, which entails their systematic integration as means and objectives in development cooperation.

Gender equality is a crosscutting objective in Finland's development policy. In addition to specific gender interventions, it is taken into consideration in all development policies. Finland has vast experience in mainstreaming gender in various sectors.

UN Women is one of Finland's principal strategic partners in the promotion of gender equality. Finland is one of the largest contributors among UN Women member states. Finland also

gives core funding to the United Nation's Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Furthermore, Finland supports multilateral organisations' capacity to mainstream gender by sponsoring 17 gender expert positions within the UN and multilateral development banks.

Finland's actions strive to promote the following: Women and girls are better educated and have better skills. Women and children have better access to high-quality basic services. Women and girls are included in political decision-making and in economic activities. More women and girls enjoy the right to make decisions that affect their lives – and fewer fall victim to violence and abuse.

Source: um.fi



Finland has been supporting girls' and women's schooling for decades and it remains one of the key objectives of Finland's development cooperation. Photo © Kirsi Pere / Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Women's Bank is a fund administered by Finn Church Aid, with the aim of ensuring livelihoods and creating sustainable business opportunities for women in developing countries. Photo © Ville Asikainen / Finn Church Aid

Can equality be measured?

In 2017, The World Economic Forum (WEF) reported that the 144 countries covered in their yearly report, on average, have closed 96% of the gap in health outcomes between women and men and more than 95% of the gap in educational attainment. However, the gaps between women and men in economic participation and political empowerment remain wide.

In the report, WEF divided nations into categories based on women's access to healthcare and education, as well as political and financial decision-making. In 2017, Finland was ranked third in gender equality. The countries that did better than Finland were also Nordic countries.

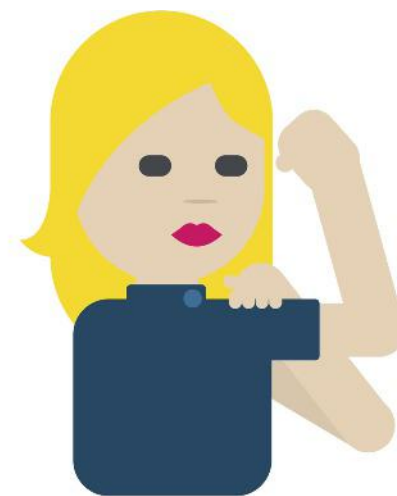
Gender equality in Finland is a result of determined and systematic work over a long period.

Women in Finland have participated in political decision-making for more than a century. Equality between women and men in Finland is not a matter of chance, but the result of persistent work carried out by active and resilient women and men. Today, women wield increasing influence in politics, which is evident in various creative and courageous initiatives.

A high proportion of women ensures more equal decision-making, even though gender is not the only deciding factor. Competence is key in parliamentary work and in a modern information society in general. Finland has good reason to be proud of its highly competent women, whose achievements are internationally renowned.



The Gender Equality Prize, founded by the Government of Finland, is awarded to a person or organisation that has advanced gender equality in a globally significant manner. In 2017, the first recipient of the prize was Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany. She assigned the prize money to a civil society organisation in Niger that advocates the rights of women and girls.



Finland emoji #girlpower.
See all our national emojis on
toolbox.finland.fi

TOP RANKINGS FOR FINLAND OVER SEVERAL INDICATORS

● **Happiest country in the world**
World Happiness Report 2018 ranked 156 countries according to their happiness levels. Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

● **Third most gender equal country in the world**
Global Gender Gap Index 2017 included 144 countries. World Economic Forum.

● **World's most stable country**
Fragile States Index 2018 ranked 178 countries according to states' vulnerability to conflict or collapse. The Fund for Peace.

● **Finnish women's gender equality in working life is the fourth best in the world**
The Glass-Ceiling Index 2018. The Economist.

● **Finland is the second best country to be a girl in the world**
Save the Children, Every last girl: Girl's opportunity index 2016.

● **Finland has the third most personal freedom and choice in the world**
The Social Progress Imperative, 2018 Social Progress Index.

Source: Statistics Finland

GENDER EQUALITY IS MONITORED AND ENFORCED BY OFFICIAL AUTHORITIES

Gender Equality Unit, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

Responsible for the Finnish Government's gender equality policy preparation and coordination.

The Ombudsman for Equality

An independent authority whose main duty is to supervise compliance with the Act on Equality between Women and Men. The Ombudsman has powers related to gender and gender minority matters. The powers of the Ombudsman consist of both combating discrimination and promoting equality. The Ombudsman carries out his tasks primarily by providing guidance and advice. The Ombudsman for Equality falls under the administrative branch of the Ministry of Justice.

Equality Board

An independent committee that monitors compliance with gender equality legislation and discusses and resolves issues related to the legislation.

Council for Gender Equality

A parliamentary committee appointed by the Finnish Government for the duration of a parliamentary term. Promotes gender equality in society.

Centre for Gender Equality, National Institute for Health and Welfare

Collects and provides information on equality between women and men and research on gender equality. Serves a diverse group of users: authorities, politicians, equality organisations and operators, students, researchers, the media and anyone interested in gender issues.

For more information, please see www.stm.fi



Did you know?

In Finland, families are provided with support to combine work and family life. Children are guaranteed good preconditions with a comprehensive child health care system and the right to day care, school health care and school lunches.

The views expressed herein are solely those of the authors.

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**SUOMI
FINLAND**

