



## Parenthood and caregiving in Finland

Women shoulder most of both private and public caring responsibilities in Finland. This is reflected in issues including mothers taking the bulk of family leaves and the majority of single parents and informal carers being women. The daily time mothers spend caring for children is around double that spent by fathers. The bulk of health and social services employees and students are women. It is important to pay attention to the status of women as non-employed caregivers in contexts such as employment career and pension accrual.

### **Reconciliation of work and family life**

A key gender equality policy objective in Finland has been to aim at more equal sharing of child care and family leaves between the parents. For gender equality to be achieved, both women and men must have the opportunity to reconcile paid employment and family life. In gender equality policy, the reconciliation of work and family life has mainly meant sharing family leaves more equally, increasing the family responsibilities of fathers, improving the status of women in the labour market, and equalising the employer costs arising from family leaves.

A well-functioning child daycare system has been created and family leaves and morning and afternoon care for young schoolchildren have been developed to facilitate the reconciliation of work and family life. More and more people of working age look after their ageing parents. Flexible

### **INFORMATION ABOUT GENDER EQUALITY AND FAMILIES**

The Centre for Gender Equality Information (National Institute for Health and Welfare) is a national information service providing up-to-date and research-based information about gender equality.

[www.thl.fi/en/web/gender-equality/gender-equality-in-finland/wellbeing/the-reconciliation-of-work-and-family-life](http://www.thl.fi/en/web/gender-equality/gender-equality-in-finland/wellbeing/the-reconciliation-of-work-and-family-life)

solutions for the reconciliation of work and family life are also needed for families other than those with small children.

## Family leaves

Family leaves support parents' opportunities to reconcile paid employment and caring for young children. In Finland, most family leaves are taken by women. Long periods of absence from employment have a negative effect on mothers' career, pay development and pensions. On the other hand, discrimination relating to potential motherhood is also experienced by women of childbearing age who do not have children.

The more equal distribution of family leaves would support the status of women in the labour market, increase the parents' joint responsibility for children and strengthen the relationship between fathers and children. Nordic comparison shows Finnish fathers as being at the bottom end of the scale with regard to taking parental leaves. This means fathers may miss out on a solid foundation for their parenthood.

## Caring for children and child custody

In two-parent families, the division of household tasks still remains quite traditional. Men's contribution of time to household tasks has, however, increased. In most families, women spend more time than men looking after children and child-related matters. Tasks relating to caring for children are, however, typically also those where the responsibilities are shared the most equally between the parents.

Issues relating to children's residence arrangements and the other parent's access to children play key roles if the parents break up. It is important that the children's relationship with both parents can continue despite the parents' separation. Child custody and right of access practices have been addressed as equality issues.

## Family diversity

Finnish families are diverse. The various forms of family include single-parent, non-resident parent, adoptive, multiple-birth, LGBT and foster families and families with two parents living together. Family diversity has started to be recognized better than before when developing legislation, services for children and families and the family leaves system. The key issue is for the status of children to be equal regardless of the type of family into which they are born.

## GENDER EQUALITY BAROMETER

The Gender Equality Barometer provides information about gender equality attitudes and experiences among people in Finland. It covers matters such as the division of caregiving responsibilities and household tasks. The Gender Equality Barometers from previous years (2004, 2008 and 2012) and the new publication available in May 2018 can be found at [www.julkari.fi](http://www.julkari.fi).

