



INFORMATION
on
Gender Equality

Gender Equality in Finland

■ MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH



Gender Equality in Finland

Gender equality is regarded as a fundamental human right and a core value in Finland. The Finnish Government is committed to promoting gender equality in all its decision-making. The purpose of the Finnish Equality Act is to promote gender equality and to prevent discrimination based on gender, gender identity or expression of gender.

In Finland, all children attend school for at least nine years, and they do so in mixed classes. They also receive free lunch at school. The level of education of women is higher than that of men, and women represent more than half of all university graduates. Women and men are equally represented in the Finnish labour market. This is supported by individual taxation of spouses, the provision of affordable and high-quality public child care, and an extensive family leave system. The aim of the policies is to encourage fathers to make full use of the family leaves they are entitled to. The division of the labour market into men's and women's jobs, professions and tasks is particularly strong in Finland. The gender pay gap in the Finnish labour market is also still a big issue.

Women have a long tradition of participating in national and local politics in Finland. In recent years, more than 40 per cent of Members of Parliament have been women, and in municipal councils women account for nearly 40 per cent of councillors. Gender quotas are applied in various planning and preparation bodies at governmental, municipal and inter-municipal level. However, quotas do not apply in elections. In economic decision-making, women are underrepresented in Finland and there are substantially fewer women in top corporate positions than men.

Promoting gender equality requires taking into account not only gender but also factors such as age, ethnic background and sexual orientation.

INFORMATION ON GENDER EQUALITY

- Centre for Gender Equality Information (National Institute for Health and Welfare)

The Centre is a national information service that offers updated, research-based information on gender equality.
www.thl.fi/gender-equality
tasa-arvotieto@thl.fi



There are differences between women and men in health and wellbeing. For example, the average life expectancy of men is several years lower than that of women. However, there are significant differences in health and wellbeing among men, based on social and educational status and income. Among women, single mothers and older women are especially affected by poverty.

Violence against women is a serious human rights violation and a notable gender equality problem in Finland. Apart from the human suffering involved, the cost of violence for society at large is significant.

Finland's strengths:

- Women's high participation in the labour market
- High level of education of women
- Support for reconciliation of work and family
- Tradition of women's participation in political decision-making
- Tools made available for promoting gender equality

Finland's challenges:

- Gender pay gap
- Gender stereotypes
- Gender segregation in education and the labour market
- Violence against women
- Health and welfare inequalities among men

PUBLIC AUTHORITIES PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY IN FINLAND

• Ministry of Social Affairs and Health: Gender Equality Unit

The Unit prepares and implements the Finnish Government's gender equality policy and develops gender equality legislation.

www.stm.fi/en/gender-equality
tasy@stm.fi

• Council for Gender Equality (TANE)

The Council is a parliamentary council working to promote gender equality in Finnish society.

www.tane.fi/en/frontpage
tane@stm.fi

• Ombudsman for Equality

The Ombudsman is responsible for supervising compliance with the Act on Equality between Women and Men. The Ombudsman instructs and advises in matters pertaining to the Act.

www.tasa-arvo.fi/web/en
tasa-arvo@oikeus.fi

• National Non-Discrimination and Equality Tribunal

The Tribunal supervises compliance with the Non-Discrimination Act and the Act on Equality between Women and Men both in private activities and in public administrative and commercial activities.

www.yvtltk.fi/en/index.html
yvtltk@oikeus.fi

Milestones of gender equality in Finland

1878	Equal hereditary rights for men and women
1906	Finnish women are the first in Europe to obtain suffrage in national elections and the first in the world to obtain the right to stand as candidates
1917	Women and men obtain universal suffrage in local government elections
1926	First female minister in Government: Miina Sillanpää, Assistant Minister for Social Affairs
1930	A new Marriage Act takes effect: guardianship over wives by their husbands is abolished and wives are given the right to own property in their own name
1943	Statutory school meals
1944	Act on Prenatal and Child Health Clinics
1961	Use of the contraceptive pill is accepted
1962	Finland ratifies the ILO's Equal Remuneration Convention, calling for equal pay for work of equal value
1970	Act on the Interruption of Pregnancy: abortion is allowed for social reasons
1973	Day-Care Act takes effect
1978	Right of parents to divide parental leave entitlement between them
1980	First Government Action Plan for Gender Equality
1986	Names Act, under which a woman getting married may keep her surname and the surname of either parent can be given to a child
1987	Act on Equality between Women and Men is adopted (Equality Act)
1994	Rape within marriage is criminalised
1995	Voluntary military service becomes a possibility for women
1996	Children obtain the subjective right to municipal day care until school age
2000	First woman President of Finland: Tarja Halonen
2003	First woman prime minister: Anneli Jäätteenmäki
2010	First female bishop in Evangelical Lutheran Church: Irja Askola, Diocese of Helsinki
2015	Non-discrimination of gender minorities included in Equality Act
2015	Equal Marriage Act
2015	Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) enters into force

More gender equality milestones in Finland: <https://www.thl.fi/en/web/gender-equality/promoting-gender-equality/milestones-of-gender-equality>