

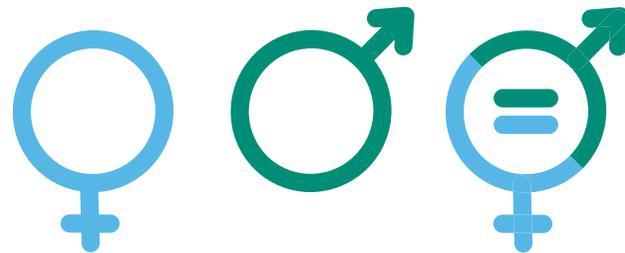


**Maahanmuuttovirasto**  
**Migrationsverket**  
**Finnish Immigration Service**

## Finnish society course



Gender equality in Finland



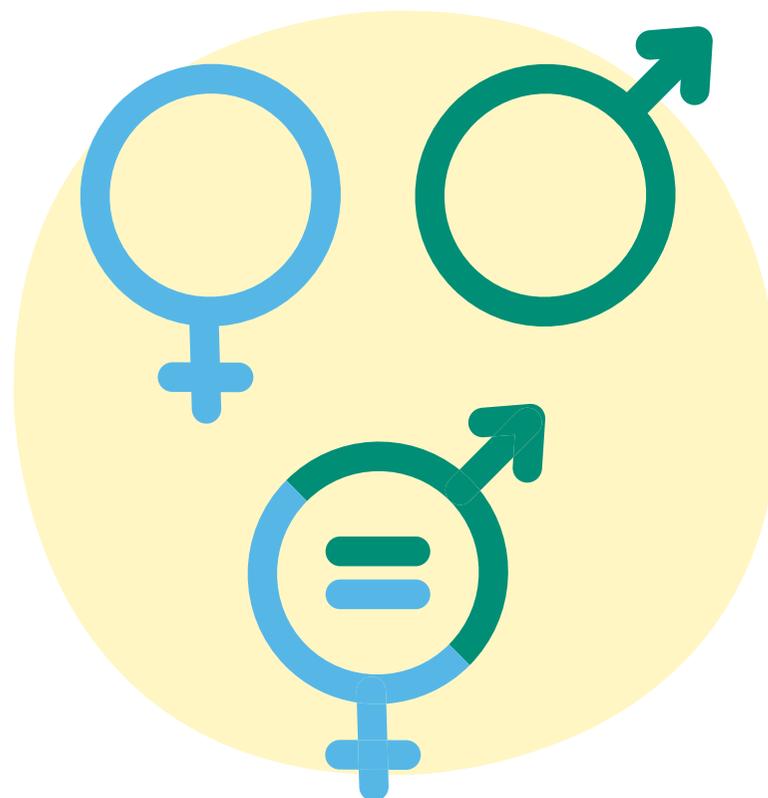
## What does gender equality mean?

Gender equality means that all genders have the same rights, responsibilities and opportunities to realise themselves and participate in society. The aim is that all genders are treated in the same way.

In an equal society, no-one is discriminated against, or treated differently because of their gender. Gender equality is a human right, which is based on both international conventions and national legislation.

## Gender equality and Finnish law

Under Finnish legislation, all humans are equal before the law. Discrimination on the basis of gender identity or gender expression is also prohibited. The purpose of the Act on Equality between Women and Men is to prevent discrimination based on gender, to promote equality between women and men, and to improve women's status, particularly in working life.



## Gender equality in family life

In Finland, everyone makes their own decisions about whom they date and/or marry. Forced marriages are prohibited. You can get married when you are 18. Couples may also live together without being married. Couples living together and married couples have the same status. Divorces are common in Finland. The parents look after the affairs of their children also after divorce.

There are many types of families in Finland. Some families have two parents, some have one, and some have two adults of the same gender. Men also do housework, or cook and look after children.

## Gender stereotypes

Gender stereotypes, or beliefs and expectations of what women and men or girls and boys are like and how they should behave prevent equality. Stereotypes include ideas of which toys or hobbies are suitable for girls or boys. For example, people may think that only girls can play with dolls and boys with cars, or that certain jobs or housework only belong to men or women.

Stereotypes limit children's and young people's choices and how they see themselves. Gender and sexual minorities also suffer from gender stereotypes. Parents, day-care centres, teachers and the media can both do away with and strengthen harmful stereotypes.

## Gender equality in education

In Finland, girls and boys go to the same schools and learn almost all subjects in mixed groups. Equality in education also means that, for example, at the reception centre both men and women have equal rights to go to a Finnish language course.

In Finnish vocational and higher education, men tend to choose certain fields, while women choose others. Women have a higher level of education in Finland than men.

## Gender equality in working life

Almost an equal share of women and men go to work in Finland. Women also keep on working after they have had children. Both women and men can take time off work to care for their children in Finland. Finland also has a public day-care system.

Pay and benefits are paid to each individual personally. Taxation is also personal. Pension is paid to each individual in Finland, and women and men retire at the same age.

The Finnish labour market is strongly divided into men's and women's work. This is a persistent problem, which helps to maintain stereotypes and inequality in working life, for example in pay. Finnish women are paid around 16% less than men, even if the law states that the same salary should be paid for the same work, or for equally valuable work.

Under the law, employees may not be discriminated against because they are pregnant or have children. An employer may not fire employees because they get pregnant or take leave to care for their families, and these circumstances may not affect getting a job.



# Gender-based violence

Women experience violence in all countries, cultures and social classes, also in Finland. Violence against women is a human rights violation.

A woman may experience violence because of her gender in all stages of life. In particular, women experience violence in relationships and families. The person using violence is often someone the woman knows, for example their current or previous partner. When men experience violence, the person using violence is more often a stranger. Violence against women may include:

- slapping, beating, pulling hair or other physical violence
- less favourable treatment of girls or preventing them from studying
- domestic violence
- sexual violence (rape) and abuse
- human trafficking and prostitution
- genital mutilation
- honour violence and forced marriage.

Violent and sexual offences are punishable offences under Finnish law. Physical punishment of children is also against the law. Everyone controls their own body and decides who can touch it and how.

**Sexual harassment** means verbal, non-verbal or physical unwanted behaviour which is sexual in nature and which violates a person's mental or physical integrity. It is violence against a person.

**Gender-based harassment** is unwanted behaviour related to a person's gender, gender identity or expression of gender which violates their mental or physical integrity.

**Sexual or gender-based harassment and molestation are prohibited under the law. This also applies to reception centres, both residents and the workers.**

## Additional material:

The At Home in Finland project has produced videos on Finnish society. One of the videos deals with human rights, equality and non-discrimination.

You can find this video on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/KotonaSuomessa/playlists>

The video can be watched in the following languages:  
Finnish, Swedish, English, Arabic, Dari, Kurmanji, Somali, Sorani, Thai, Chinese, French, Estonian, Tigrinya and Russian.



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