

# Gender and Politics in Finland

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Gendered structures do not always benefit men...

• Child custody vs. pay differentials

• Multidimensional domestic violence

• Men at the top and the bottom of the class hierarchy,  
women "in the middle"

...except in politics. Where men rule

In 1906, the first in the world,  
women were allowed to vote  
and run for national elections  
in Finland

9 female members of parliament

first female minister in 1926

first female president 2000

the number of women has increased,  
especially since 1970



...behind this is the Finnish female image:  
in a poor agrarian society, a woman is  
primarily seen as "a good workman"

- Finnish folklore filled with strong women
- Women active in non-governmental organizations already in the 19th century
- "Two-provider model" is seen as normal



After 110 years,  
there is still work to do:

- Women in elections with fewer candidates and smaller campaign budgets
- About 40% of MPs female, even though majority of voters are female
- 17 ministers, 5 females, only male in the first chain



## Men are more often experts:

- 2/3 of the committees' experts are men
- 3.4% of experts interviewed by media in the context of the financial crisis were women
- Segregation of expertise: men's expertise (economy, defense, zoning) is more valued than women's expertise (family, health, culture)

Things can change, however, if we choose so:

Last year's best plenary session speech slots went to men:  
women's representatives got their turn after ministers and  
media left for coffee break

The new female chairman dismantled this practice and now  
shares the speaking turns on basis of gender representation

Sexism and chauvinism are  
disappearing, though slowly

Appearance pressures

Harassment in parliament is  
diminishing

Still: the new hate speech is  
directed at female politicians





But why is it important?

Doesn't opinions count in politics, not gender?

As long as gender determines our world of experience  
matters

The whole idea of democracy is that, from a different point  
of view, society seems different - and that the wisest decisions  
require everyone to participate

...and if gender roles some day disappear, there are many  
other divisions in the queue: class, ethnicity, health, etc...

Thank you

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