

# ALU – WOMEN’S STUDIES E. NEWSLETTER

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Theme – Women and Happiness

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## **Editor’s Desk**

*"Don't wait around for other people to be happy for you. Any happiness you get you've got to make yourself." – Alice Walker, (Alice Walker is an American novelist, short story writer, poet, and activist.)*

Women in India have improved over the past three decades, yet the measures of subjective well-being indicate that women's happiness has declined both absolutely and relative to men. In many countries women are still unable to express their capabilities or achieve their status. Gender inequality remains present in societies in general and workplaces in particular. Today, many countries are making it a priority to fight gender inequality and promote human rights through education and regulations that enforce equal treatment of genders. Women face numerous forms of discrimination such as unequal pay, sexual harassment, and promotion obstacles known as the glass-ceiling, where female employees are prevented from reaching higher positions in the workplace. Researches suggested that women today are unhappier than they have been in four decades. A recent group of studies have found that women's happiness level has been dropping steadily over the last few decades, to the point that women now report lower happiness levels than men, a role reversal from the 1970s with a given social improvements in women's lives over the intervening decades-increased work opportunities, higher salaries, and more reproductive choice. A study conducted by Helliwell et al. (2016) found that the higher the Gender Inequality Index (GII) the lower the Happiness Index (HI) in a country. The Global

Organization of Parliamentarians Against Corruption (GOPAC, 2014) also states that in order to reduce corruption, countries should hire more women into the workplace. A study conducted by Stefane Kabene, Said Baadel, Zahra Jiwani, Vanessa Lobo on Women in Political Positions and Countries' Level of Happiness results show that lower the Gender Inequality Index, higher the percentage of Women in Parliament Positions and higher the Happiness Index. Furthermore, the results indicate that a higher number of women in leadership position is associated with a lower corruption level and a higher degree of Happiness.

### **WORLD HAPPINESS INDEX 2018: INDIA RANKS 133**

India was ranked 133rd among 156 countries in World Happiness Index 2018, recently released by the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. The index ranked 156 countries based on factors (Parameters) such as inequality, life expectancy, GDP per capita, social freedom, generosity, public trust (i.e. lack of corruption in government and business) and social support. Together these parameters are used to generate a happiness score of country on a scale from 1 to 10. The 2018 report, for the first time ranked happiness of foreign-born immigrants in 117 countries.

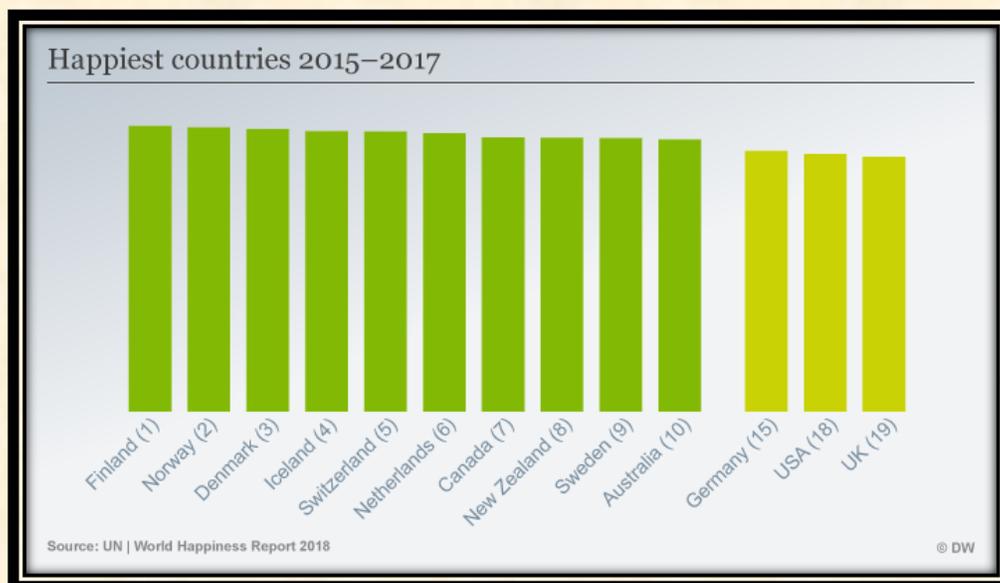
**10 Happiest Countries:** Finland (1<sup>st</sup>), Norway (2<sup>nd</sup>), Denmark (3<sup>rd</sup>), Iceland (4<sup>th</sup>), Switzerland (5<sup>th</sup>), Netherlands (6<sup>th</sup>), Canada (7<sup>th</sup>), New Zealand (8<sup>th</sup>), Sweden (9<sup>th</sup>) and Australia (10<sup>th</sup>). United States was ranked 18<sup>th</sup> down from 14<sup>th</sup> place last year. Britain was 19<sup>th</sup> and United Arab Emirates at 20<sup>th</sup>. In 2018 rankings, top-10, as ever dominated by Nordic countries.

**India's ranking:** The world's largest democracy's rank fell to 133<sup>rd</sup> position from 122<sup>nd</sup> last year. India was behind majority of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) nations apart from war-ravaged Afghanistan, which was ranked 145<sup>th</sup>. Pakistan (ranked 75<sup>th</sup>) and China (86<sup>th</sup>) were well ahead of India in happiness index despite being not the most democratic or free country.

**SAARC Nations:** Pakistan (75<sup>th</sup>), Nepal (101<sup>st</sup>), Bhutan (97<sup>th</sup>), Bangladesh (115<sup>th</sup>), Sri Lanka (116<sup>th</sup>).

## FINLAND

The UN places Finland, a country of 5.5 million people that only 150 years ago suffered Europe's last naturally caused famine. The country has been ranked the most stable, the safest and best governed country in the world. It is also among the least corrupt and the most socially progressive. Its police are the world's most trusted and its banks are soundest. Access to nature, safety, childcare, good schools and free healthcare were among the best things about in their country. The World Happiness Report ranked 156 nations according to their scores for things such as GDP per capita, social support, healthy life expectancy, social freedom, generosity and absence of corruption



## WOMEN IN FINLAND

Women in Finland enjoy a "high degree of equality" and "traditional courtesy" among men. In 1906, the women of Finland became the first women in Europe to be granted the right to vote. There are many women in Finland who hold prominent positions in Finnish society, in the academics, in the field of business, and in the government of Finland. An example of powerful women in Finnish politics is Tarja Halonen, who became the first female president of the country (she was Foreign Minister of Finland before becoming president). In terms of finance, Finnish women have been described as "usually independent financially". A married woman, by custom, introduces themselves by mentioning their forename first, then their maiden name, and then the surname of their husbands. Finnish women are much more outgoing and

approachable than the men and often command three or four languages. Their position in society and business is well-respected and superior to that of women in most other cultures. Finland is a pioneer in gender equality, and is the first country in the world to give women both the right to vote and stand for election (1906).

### **Notion of gender equality had early beginnings**

A move towards the equality of women and men was taken in Finland long before the country became independent. In the 1850s, Finnish women activists read John Stuart Mill and spoke about the importance of education for girls. The first women's organisations were established in the 1880s, and the voice for women's rights grew in strength. Equal inheritance rights were provided for women and men in 1878. In 1886, the first coeducational school was opened. Women won the right to study at university in 1901.

### **Political rights – the first parliament in the world to have women MPs**

However, it took much strenuous work before women in Finland became the first in the world to obtain full political rights, in 1906. When the first 19 women members of parliament in the world started working, the hopes of the women's movement were high, and not without reason. The first parliament of the decade initiated many important legislative social policy reforms that benefitted women in their many roles. Finland's first woman minister was Miina Sillanpää, who became Second Minister of Social Affairs in 1926. The same year a law was passed on the eligibility of women to hold public office.



*Source:* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women\\_in\\_Finland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_Finland) accessed on 14.05.2018

## **Pioneer in gender equality**

In the early 1980s, gender equality became a prominent matter of discussion in international cooperation. The UN was a pioneer in creating gender equality at national and international level. The status of women was included in structures in addition to debate, and Finland was an important factor in this development. It raised issues such as violence against women, sexual and reproductive rights. Finland ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 1986, and established the first office of Ombudsman for Equality in the following year. Finland has provided funding for UNIFEM, UNICEF and other UN institutions. In the wake of the wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, the status of women in war and post-conflict situations became prominent. Finland also supported the UN resolution on Women, Peace and Security. Among the Nordic countries, Finland's reputation as a model of gender equality was established. Finland has also gained much from the international community. Many important legal reforms and programmes on gender equality originated in international arenas. The UN and the European Union have had a tremendous impact on Finland's gender equality and non-discrimination policy.

## **The path of Finnish women towards liberty**



Finland is often regarded as one of the world's leaders for women's rights and gender equality. The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2014 has placed Finland in second place. Sexism and gender inequality do still exist in Finland, particularly with regard to the wage gap and employment discrimination, but are not felt on the same sweeping levels as many other European

countries. Many believe this is due to a long history of socialist and secular values, stemming back to a time when ancient Finns worshiped female deities and both men and women had to work together to survive. Given below are some of the top moments over the past century that has improved Finland's gender equality.

## **Finnish Women's Association**

The history of gender equality in Finland arguably started back in 1884 with the formation of Suomen Naisyhdistys, or the Finnish Women's Association, the first women's association in Finland and established by author, social activist, and politician Alexander Gripenberg.

## **Women's Suffrage**

In 1906, Finland became the first country in the world to give full voting and parliamentary rights to women, a feat which most other Western nations wouldn't achieve until after the First World War. In the following year, 19 women, including Alexander Gripenberg, were elected as members of parliament, making up 9.5% of the total seats, a number which has been rising ever since.

## **Lotta Svärd Regiment**

During World War Two, Finnish women contributed to the war effort by joining the Lotta Svärd organization. The volunteer organization had been running since the 1920s and was named after a female character in the famous poem Ensign Stal by Johan Runeberg (which is also where the lyrics for the Finnish national anthem came from). They were mobilized in the war to provide medical support, spot enemy aircraft, warn of air raids, and other duties which men were too busy to perform themselves.

## **The Equality Act**

Since 1987, The Act on Equality between Women and Men has sought to prevent sex discrimination, promote gender equality, and improve the status of women in society and the workplace. A notable amendment in 1995 was that official committees and councils should be at least 40% of their members to be female.

## **Women's Committee on the Sami Council**

The Equality Act inspired many sub-committees, including a Committee of Women on the Council of the native Sami people. Named Sarahkka after an ancient female deity, it is deeply involved in the politics of the Sami population in Finland, Sweden, Russia, and Norway.

## **Female Priests**

Finland has long been a highly secular country, but in 1988 when the Lutheran church permitted the inauguration of female priests, it was still considered a great step forward. There are now over 1,000 female priests in the country. Irja Kaarina Askola was the first female Finnish bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland from 2010 to 2017.



*Irja Kaarina Askola, the first female Finnish bishop*

## **Military Service**

All eligible men in Finland were conscripted into military training, but in 1995, women were permitted to volunteer for the same training and also into full-time military service. Police officers in Finland are required to partake in military training; this has also led to a better balance of male and female police officers, which is especially important for vulnerable people who feel more comfortable interacting with a female officer.

## **Loans for Female Entrepreneurs**

The lack of female entrepreneurs in Finland has always been a problem, especially during the post-recession start-up boom, so one measure put forward to plug the pay gap was offering loans to female entrepreneurs from the state-owned Finnvera financial group. Since the scheme began

in 1997, it has helped to launch 11,000 companies and grown the percentage of female entrepreneurs in Finland to 30%, with hopes to raise the number in the future.

### **First Female President**

Finland elected its first female president, Tarja Halonen, in 2000, and she was re-elected for a second term in 2006 and remained in office until 2012. Finland also elected its first female prime minister, Anneli Jäätteenmäki, in 2003 and its second, Mari Kiviniemi, in 2010.



*Tarja Halonen, first female president in Finland*

### **Government Action Plan for Gender Equality**

Since 2003, the Finnish government has launched an action plan covering multiple projects in an attempt to promote gender equality, reform existing laws, increase the number of women in politics and other key areas, and cut down upon domestic violence. The current action plan for 2016 to 2019 seeks to shorten the wage gap, improve employment opportunities, and provide equal representation on company boards. The long battle for gender equality continues to rage on, but over a century of empowering female figures, legislations, and ongoing action plans have paved the way for a fair and equal society in Finland.

## WORLD'S 20 MOST GENDER-EQUAL COUNTRIES, 2017

CEOWORLD Magazine

- |                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| 1. ICELAND      | 11. FRANCE         |
| 2. NORWAY       | 12. GERMANY        |
| 3. FINLAND      | 13. DENMARK        |
| 4. RWANDA       | 14. UNITED KINGDOM |
| 5. SWEDEN       | 15. CANADA         |
| 6. NICARAGUA    | 16. BOLIVIA        |
| 7. SLOVENIA     | 17. SOUTH AFRICA   |
| 8. IRELAND      | 18. LATVIA         |
| 9. NEW ZEALAND  | 19. SWITZERLAND    |
| 10. PHILIPPINES | 20. BURUNDI        |

The US dropped four places to rank 49th globally.

China ranked 100th  
India ranked 108th  
Japan ranked 114th  
Republic of Korea ranked 118th.

Source: Global Gender Gap Report 2017 issued by the World Economic Forum (WEF)

### INCREASE IN WOMEN'S RIGHTS HAVEN'T MADE WOMEN HAPPIER

Women are outliving men in every country in the world, despite facing higher levels of poverty than men, greater odds of encountering sexual violence and many additional, diverse forms of discrimination. But while women are living longer, it's unclear whether their wellbeing is showing comparable strides. As women gain political, economic and social freedoms, one would expect that they should feel even more contented relative to men. But this isn't so. The "paradox of declining female happiness" was pointed out by economists Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, analyzed the happiness trends of US citizens between 1970 and 2005 and found a surprising result. Stevenson and Wolfers discovered that American women rated their overall life satisfaction higher than men in the 1970s. Thereafter, women's happiness scores decreased while men's scores stayed roughly stable. By the 1990s, women were less happy than men. This relative unhappiness softened after the turn of the century, but men continue to enjoy a higher sense of subjective wellbeing.



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