

LIIKE- JA VIRKANAISTEN LIITTO r.y. –  
TJÄNSTE- OCH AFFÄRSKVINNORS FÖRBUND r.f.

AFFILIATED TO THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION  
OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN

# STATUS OF WOMEN IN FINLAND IN 1935

HELSINKI 1936 HELSINGFORS



418

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KIRJAPAINON OY.

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### *Franchise and Eligibility.*

The new Constitution of 1906 established complete political equality in giving Parliamentary Franchise and Eligibility to all citizens, *to women as to men*, at the age of 24.

According to the Municipal Laws of 1917 women citizens have *the same rights as men* to vote for Municipal Councils and Local Governments at the age of 21. They may also be elected as Local Authorities.<sup>1</sup>

### *Church of Finland.*

The Ecclesiastical Law of 1869 restricts women's rights considerably. Women may attend vestry meetings at the age of 24. They have the right to vote for and be elected Members of Church Councils and Representatives of the Congregation at Church Congresses. Women may also take part in the election of Church officials *in the same way as men*, but they are not eligible for and have so far not been allowed to take Holy Orders. The Law mentioned above implies that a person appointed to the Ministry of the Church must be a man, and consequently women have not been ordained.

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<sup>1</sup> A new Law was passed in January 1936 regarding the Protection of Children and the Social Welfare of tramps and drunkards. This Law states that at least one member of the Municipal Committee in charge of these services must be a woman.

### *Nationality.*

A woman Finnish national retains her Rights of Citizenship on marriage with a foreigner as long as she lives in the country, unless she renounces them explicitly.

If residing abroad or leaving the country a woman married to an alien loses her Rights of Citizenship in Finland, as soon as she acquires another nationality.

A legitimate child has the nationality of its father, whereas a child born out of wedlock has the same nationality as its mother.

Through a later marriage between the parents, an illegitimate child obtains the nationality of its father.

### *State Service.*

A woman's Right to enter the Service of the State is granted by the Law of April 1926. According to this all professions and posts, with certain exceptions for the Ministry of Defence, the Police, the Customs etc., are open *to women as to men*. In regard to official duties the Law states some positions are to be filled *either by a man or a woman*. The following positions are to be held

#### *by women only:*

- 1) Assistant second vice-director of a prison where women are kept.
- 2) Warden, Foreman, Teacher, Jailer, and Nurses for women prisoners.
- 3) Inspector of Domestic Economy in the Agricultural Department.
- 4) State Inspector of Gymnastics and Hygiene for girls, Teachers of Gymnastics for girl students at the University and girls' schools, and Headmistresses of and Teachers of Gymnastics at training colleges for women teachers.
- 5) Certain posts in the Ministry of Defence, the State Medical and the Factory Inspection Departments, which by their titles are indicated as being for women.

#### The following posts are for *men only:*

- 1) All posts in the Ministry of Defence with the exception of certain office clerks.
- 2) Chairman, Member of and Prosecutor in a Court-Martial.
- 3) Director, Business Manager, Teacher, Foreman, Jailer, Warden etc. in prisons for men.

- 4) Governor of a Province, Deputy Governor, Chief of Police, Chief of Detective Police, District Bailiff, Sheriff's Officer, Police Constable.
- 5) Director of a Custom House in coastal districts, Surveyor of Customs, Engineer in the Coast Guard, Frontier Inspector, Custom House Watchman etc.
- 6) Teacher of Gymnastics for men at the University, Teachers of training schools for men and at boys' schools, State Inspector of Gymnastics for boys.
- 7) District chiefs of Forests and Forest Keepers.
- 8) Engine-driver, Fireman, and Guard on the State Railways.
- 9) Chief Factory Inspector and other Factory Inspection posts which by their title are indicated as being for men.
- 10) Board of Navigation Officials except certain office clerks.
- 11) Marine Research Institute Officials with the exception of those in the chemical department.

#### *Positions of Trust.*

What is stated in the Law of 1926 regarding women's right to enter the State Service also applies to women's right to hold positions of trust.

#### *Municipal Service.*

The Law of April 1926 regarding women's right to enter the State Service also applies to holders of positions under the Local Authorities, whom Government officials appoint or legalize.

The Law mentioned above makes no distinction between married and unmarried women. A woman married under the old Marriage Law of 1889 is, however, obliged to produce a guarantee of her husband, when she applies for a state appointment where she would handle public funds, that he will be responsible for any deficit in her accounts.

#### *Woman as Officeholder and in Private Enterprise.*

Women are by Law given opportunities to hold offices and carry on industry and trade in *the same way as men.*

The *Inheritance Law* applies equally to women and men.

### *The Legal Position of Married Women.*

The New Marriage Law of 1929 removed all the obstacles that had limited the legal and personal rights of a married woman. The tutelage of the husband over his wife was abolished and they are placed upon an equal footing as to rights and duties. Both are as far as possible liable to contribute towards the benefit of the family. The wife has the same authority over the children as the father, and her work at home is considered a contribution. If either husband or wife neglects the duty to allow the other a reasonable share of income for the maintenance of the family and education of the children, the Court may order a certain proportion of the income of the party in fault to be paid to the other direct. A married woman may seek sources of income outside the home. Husband and wife have the same rights to the use of their earnings and income and the disposal of their property. The wife may enter into financial transactions and carry on business and trade in the same way as the husband. She has the right to plead and prosecute in court. Each partner is responsible for his own debts only, whereas the previous Law of 1889, still in force for those who married before 1950, enacts mutual responsibility. The tutelage of the husband over his wife is regarded as abolished by the new Law also for women married before 1950. Certain improvements are also being introduced as to a married woman's right to control inherited property, but the restrictions regarding the husband's right to administer also this are still in force for women married before 1950. In consequence of this a woman married under the old Law is obliged to produce a guarantee of her husband, if she applies for an appointment where she would handle public funds, that he will be responsible for any deficit in her accounts.

Husband and wife are legally given the same right to make marriage settlements. They have also equal rights to make wills.

### *The Unmarried Mother and Illegitimate Child.*

The Law of 1922 entitles the unmarried mother to maintenance by the father of her child during the period when she is incapacitated through confinement.

A child born out of wedlock is in the same legal position to its mother as a legitimate child. The mother is the guardian of the child. If the father acknowledges the child as his own, it obtains the same



legal rights on the paternal side (except nationality) and the father is obliged to support the child up to the age of 17 and to provide even longer for its education.

### *Labour Legislation for Women.*

Labour legislation in Finland has hitherto followed the principle that adult men and women need equal protection against the dangers created by the growing industrialism. All provisions concerning working hours, hours for meals, periods of rest, extra work, holidays, etc. apply equally to every employee of 18 years of age and over, independent of sex.

In Finland's Industrial Labour Act of 1917 the word "night" means the time from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. and work in one shift during that time is prohibited for all adult *men and women*. If divided into two shifts it may be continued until 11 p.m. at a maximum of eight hours for each shift with half-an-hour's rest in each. The work can continue day and night if arranged in three shifts of a maximum of eight hours each, which shifts must relieve each other regularly and be changed every week. With the permission of the Ministry of Social Affairs workers may be employed during part of the night even when it is not divided into shifts as above, if the technical character of the work, the time of year, or traffic conditions so demand. As mentioned before these regulations are the same for adult *men and women*.

Special regulations for women workers only exist in very few cases. The Industrial Labour Act mentioned also prohibits the employment of women in lubricating running engines or transmission plants. Owing to the ratification of some International Draft Conventions, a few special rules have been added. Thus since 1929 women under the age of 20 are not allowed to work on cargo ships and no women as seamen in Ocean traffic. Likewise all females are prohibited from painting work of an industrial character involving the use of white lead, sulphate of lead, or any other products containing these pigments. Women under the age of 21 are not to be employed in loading and unloading vessels running between Finnish harbours and foreign ones, nor in Finnish harbours or certain parts of them as defined by the Ministry of Social Affairs.

The Act relating to Industrial Labour prohibits the employment of women during the first four weeks after confinement. The Shop Act

prohibits the employment of female shop-assistants and clerks during the first six weeks after confinement. Women in an advanced state of pregnancy may not, according to these laws, be employed in work which in their condition might be injurious. No allowances are given during their absence from work. No prohibitions exist concerning married women.

### *Occupation of Women.*

Nearly 60 % of the population of Finland live on agriculture and the same proportion of the self-supporting Finnish Women are occupied in agricultural work. The last official statistics give nearly 500,000 women as engaged in agriculture. Of these about 500,000 are owners of land.

About 100,000 earn their living in the industrial and commercial field.

Educated women predominate as Public and High School teachers, trained hospital nurses, post, telegraph and telephone office employees, commercial and cooperative bank clerks, dentists, official tourist guides.

The total number of women gainfully occupied in Finland is over 700,000, i.e. about 40 % of the number of people engaged in earning their living. (For details see the tables.)

*Population 5,720,000.*

*Finland*

### *Women gainfully occupied according to the latest population Census 1930.<sup>1</sup>*

	Total number women	Percentage	
		1930	1920
<i>Agriculture: Altogether 468,465 women .....</i>		45	41
Landowners and tenants .....	517,598	42	40
Bailiffs & people with agricultural education	1,019	19	11
Workers .....	149,847	46	46
<i>Horticulture .....</i>	1,555	54	50

<sup>1</sup> The first column shows the actual number of women engaged in each class, the second column shows the percentage of women to the total number of workers in each class.

	Total number		Percentage	
	women	1950	1950	1920
<i>Dairies:</i> .....	1,188	55	55	52
<i>Sylviculture</i> .....	265	7	7	10
<i>Reindeer breeding (Lapps)</i> .....	135	29	29	38
<i>Hunting and Fishing</i> .....	1,958	28	28	35
<i>Industry &amp; Handicraft: Altogether 65,195</i> women (of these 11,512 are employers, chiefs & office staff) .....		26	26	24
Metallurgy, mines .....	885	8	8	6
Machine factories .....	1,516	6	6	6
Stone, clay, glass etc. ....	1,526	18	18	16
Leather, rubber, hair, etc. ....	1,881	15	15	12
Textile .....	9,576	72	72	73
Clothing .....	19,855	65	65	57
Paper industry .....	6,108	31	31	35
Wood „ .....	10,247	15	15	13
Building „ .....	1,911	6	6	5
Chemical, wood tar, turpentine, etc. ....	897	35	35	37
Electricity supply .....	349	7	7	10
Food .....	4,025	59	59	52
Alcohol .....	524	38	38	24
Tobacco, etc. ....	2,628	83	83	74
Printing .....	2,204	35	35	41
Other industries .....	1,265	30	30	25
<i>Communications: Altogether 7,575 women</i> .....		14	14	15
Railways .....	1,447	8	8	9
Tramway guards, auto and cab drivers .....	742	7	7	8
Pilotage, navigation etc. ....	568	6	6	6
Loading, discharging etc. ....	1,556	18	18	15
Post, telegraph and telephone .....	3,062	49	49	48
<i>Commerce: Altogether 39,305 women</i> .....		51	51	46
Banking and insurance .....	3,817	54	54	54
Agencies .....	1,175	21	21	
Restaurants, cafés and hotels <sup>1</sup> .....	10,048	86	86	85
Other commercial occupations .....	24,265	42	42	39

<sup>1</sup> 68.5% of the owners and 91.5% of the staffs are women.

	Total number women	Percentage 1950	Percentage 1920
<i>Public services and the Liberal Professions:</i>			
Altogether 27,846 women .....		45	41
Public Services (justice, central and municipal government, police, military) ...	3,617	15	15
Education .....	10,938	66	60
Health Services: nurses .....	7,729	89	28
physicians, dentists, phar- macists, midwives, etc. <sup>1</sup>	2,070	48	30
Artists, journalists, lawyers etc. ....	3,492	41	39
<i>Other professions, not mentioned above</i> .....	19,515	67	57
<i>Domestic service</i> .....	56,089	96	94
<i>Workers without special professions</i> (such as laundry women, charwomen etc.) .....	35,491	57	42
	Altogether	704,151	40.8
			40.5
			1910 36.5

In Government, Municipal and Local Government Service the scales for payment and conditions apply equally to all employees, independent of sex. The same principles are followed in private schools. Government posts are given for life up to 67 years of age, and pensions granted by Law *equally for men and women in the same posts*.

In private enterprises women are generally paid lower salaries, in some branches only half of those given to men for similar duties.

Finnish women have so far not gained the highest judiciary or administrative positions, though they are legally entitled to opportunities of advancement. Women have taken the highest university degrees, but as the Law regarding Women's Rights to enter the Service of the State was passed only in 1926, women have been unable to secure all the necessary qualifications for advancement, among them years of service. In the field of Education women have long had equal standing with men.

In private undertakings the lower posts are generally given to women.

<sup>1</sup> 147 women physicians (1935), i.e. 12%; 477 (out of 685) dentists are women (1935).

There is no restrictive legislation regarding women, but traditional and sex prejudice still exist to some extent. A few private undertakings dismiss their women employees on marriage, but on the whole the economic depression has not caused any change in the attitude of men towards business and professional women. Nor have any women been dismissed from employment so that the work may be given to men.

Girls and boys have equal educational opportunities. (At the State and Private Universities of Finland, 40 % of the students are female, at Technical Universities 10 % female, and at the Commercial Universities 25 % female.)

The liberal attitude of both men and women in Finland gave the Franchise and Eligibility to Parliament to Women 50 years ago, and in recent periods of development Women's Rights have gradually been recognized. (See appendix.)

The satisfactory economic situation of Finland and the growth of industry and trade since the independence of the country was obtained have increased the possibility for women to seek higher education and obtain employment in many new professions.

Helsinki/Helsingfors, November 25rd, 1955.

*Fanny Bonn*

President of Liike- ja Virkanaisten Liitto r.y.  
Tjänste- och Affärskvinnors Förbund r.f.

(Federation of Business and Professional Women)

*Nina Strandberg*  
Secretary.

*Jertta Ruostekorpi*  
Secretary.

# FINLAND.

LANDMARKS on FINNISH WOMEN'S ROAD to SUFFRAGE and  
EQUAL CITIZENSHIP

published by Finlands Svenska Kvinnoförbund  
(Finland's Swedish Women's Alliance)

- 1758 Widows and taxpaying unmarried women in Helsingfors were on the register and voted at the election of a pastor of the Lutheran Church.
- 1779 The first school for "young ladies".
- 1855 The first school for "young ladies" in Helsingfors.
- 1856 School for girls in several other towns with 2 to 4 classes.
- 1859 Women get the right to follow manual crafts in order to support themselves.
- 1865 The first Government Training College for Elementary School-teachers.
- 1864 Young girls at the age of 15 get the right to their own earnings.
- 1864 Women attain the age of majority at 25 and by special permission at 21, and also the right to marry without the consent of their guardian at the age of 21.
- 1865 Women are granted the vote in rural communities for the Parish Council. (The vote was based on property qualifications.) Women were not eligible.
- 1865 Women admitted into the Telegraph Service.
- 1868 The first (private) Training Classes for women teachers for secondary girls' schools.
- 1868 Women on attaining their majority and in possession of real estate are entitled to take part in Church vestry meetings.
- 1868 Married women get the right to judicial separation in some cases and also the right to make marriage settlements.

- 1871 Women desiring to qualify as Doctors of medicine get the right to pass necessary examinations.
- 1871 The first woman passed examination as student in the University of Helsingfors.
- 1873 Taxpaying women in towns get suffrage for Municipal Councils (without eligibility).
- 1878 The first woman physician obtains the right to practise medicine.
- 1879 Equal inheritance law.
- 1879 Women obtain the right to carry on every kind of business and trade. (Married woman only under the condition that her husband undertakes responsibility for all debts and obligations incurred).
- 1881 First woman takes the degree of Master of Philosophy in the University of Helsingfors.
- 1883 The first Coeducational School.
- 1884 Foundation of the first feminist organisation: Suomen Naisyhdistys — Finsk Kvinnoförening (Finnish Women's Association).
- 1884 Unmarried women over 21 and widows obtain the right to be postmistresses.
- 1886 Girls' schools are organised on a new scale with 7 classes and Continuation classes so as to prepare pupils for entering the University.
- 1888 Unmarried women and widows are admitted to certain lower grades in the Central Post Office.
- 1889 Married women obtain right to their own earnings and also to make marriage settlements permitting them to dispose of and manage their own property.
- 1889 Husband desiring to sell real estate which is joint property (if not inherited or bought before marriage) must have the Consent of his wife.
- 1889 Women obtain the right to be members of local Poor Law Boards.
- 1890 Some Secondary Boys' schools of 4 classes allowed to receive girl pupils.
- 1892 Government Ordinance concerning the appointment of trained nurses in hospitals. (Up to that time women without any special training or education were employed as nurses).
- 1892 Foundation of second feminist organisation: Kvinnosaksförbundet Unionen — Naisasialiitto Unioni. (Women's Rights Union).
- 1894 Women admitted to the University of Helsingfors as teachers to train women teachers in Gymnastics.
- 1896 First Woman takes the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

- 1898 Women get the right to be appointed "lectors" (a higher post than ordinary teachers) in Training Colleges for Elementary School teachers.
- 1898 Unmarried women get the right to be appointed and promoted to certain posts within the Post Office Department.
- 1899 Women doctors get the right to be appointed to different official posts by special Government permission.
- 1899 Government Ordinance that in Training Colleges for women teachers one of the two superintendents should be a woman.
- 1900 Age of majority the same as for men, 21 years.
- 1900 Rural Communities are entitled to Government grants for the appointment of trained midwives.
- 1900 Foundation of Sosialidemokraattinen Työläisnaisliitto (Social Democrats' Working Women's Alliance).
- 1901 Women get the right to matriculate at the University on the same terms as men.
- 1902 Women obtain the right to pass examinations in the University and practise as chemists on the same terms as men.
- 1905 Appointment of the first woman factory inspector.
- 1904 First public meeting for Woman's Suffrage.
- 1906 Constitutional Reform. Adult Suffrage and eligibility at 24 for men and women alike.
- 1906 The first High School for girls in Helsingfors preparing for examination necessary to be admitted as students to the University.
- 1906 First woman appointed Docent in the University of Helsingfors.
- 1907 Foundation of feminist organisation for Finnish-speaking women, Suomalainen Naisliitto (Finnish Women's Alliance).
- 1907 Foundation of feminist and political organisation for Swedish-speaking women, Finlands Svenska Kvinnoförbund (Finlands Swedish Women's Alliance).
- 1907 Abolition of legalised prostitution.
- 1911 Marriage age for women raised from 15 to 17.
- 1914 Women doctors obtain the right to practise on the same terms as men.
- 1915 Government High Schools for girls (9 classes) are opened.
- 1916 Married women obtain the right to appointments in the Post Office on condition that the husband makes himself responsible for the money they handle in their capacity as Government employees.



- 1916 Both unmarried and married women teachers in Government Schools obtain absolutely equal rights and equal pay with men.
- 1917 Municipal Reform (Universal Municipal Suffrage) giving men and women the vote and eligibility on the same terms.
- 1918 Women get the right to take part in Parochial meetings of the Lutheran Church.
- 1919 Republican Constitution giving men and women the same rights and duties in their capacity as citizens.
- 1919 Married women are entitled to enter trades and professions without the consent of their husbands.
- 1922 Law regarding the rights of the mother and the illegitimate child. The mother is the guardian of her illegitimate child. It inherits its mother as a legitimate child and also inherits on the maternal side. If the father acknowledges the child as his, the child has the same right to inheritance as legitimate children and also to inherit the father's family. Obligation of support for the child up to the age of 17. Education of the child according to the status of the mother. If the mother keeps the child after its birth she is entitled to maintenance for 9 months so as to be able to nurse it. This law has been slightly amended in 1927 in regard to some practical details, and also gives the Court the right to decide whether the mother is qualified to be the child's guardian.
- 1925 The greater part of women Government employees were put on the regular estimate and obtained the right to a Government pension.
- 1924 Government Ordinance that in Coeducational Schools either the Headmaster or Pro-headmaster should be a woman.
- 1924 Salary of midwives considerably raised by Government grant, and municipal free lodging and Government pension after 50 years of service.
- 1925 Women belonging to the Lutheran Church get Equal Rights with men, with one exception. They cannot be ordained pastors of the Lutheran Church but they can be elected members of Church Councils and Church Convocations and be appointed "Church elders".
- 1925 The Age of Consent raised from 12 to 15.
- 1926 Women get the right to hold office and to be employed in Government service on the same terms as men. The Government Ordinance practically restricts the application of the principle involved in this law.

- 1927 Married women's nationality. A Finnish woman national marrying a foreigner retains her nationality as long as she resides in Finland with her husband and also keeps it if she leaves her country until she has acquired the nationality of her husband.
- 1927 First time a woman is appointed professor in the Academy (University) of Åbo.
- 1927 A new Government Ordinance gives women the right to be appointed Judges and also to enter Diplomatic and Consular service.
- 1929 New Marriage Law based on equality between husband and wife. Guardianship of the husband over his wife abolished. Equal rights in regard to guardianship over their children. Separate property instead of joint property. The husband's duty to provide for his family recognized, and also that the wife's work within the home is regarded as a contribution to the maintenance of the family.
- 1929 The new Divorce Law applies equally to husband and wife.

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The Finnish Parliament consists of 200 members.

The number of women elected:

in 1907 .....	19
1908 .....	25
1909 .....	21
1910 .....	17
1911 .....	14
1913 .....	21
1916 .....	24
1917 .....	17
1919 .....	17
1922 .....	20
1924 .....	17
1927 .....	17

Helsingfors, May 31 1929.

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The number of women elected:

in 1929 .....	15
1930 .....	14
1935 .....	14

- 1892 First woman architect at the Technical University of Helsingfors.
- 1931 First woman land surveyor at the Technical University of Helsingfors.



SMK. 4:— FMK.