

# These 4 Nordic countries hold the secret to gender equality <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

Nordic countries lead the world at closing the gender gap and, in recent years, have taken root at the top of the global rankings. But why are these nations so far ahead of others?

According to the OECD, almost three in four working-age women in Nordic countries are part of the paid labour force, and policy-makers explicitly support gender equality at work, at home and in public.

Nordic countries all benefit from a developed welfare state and foster forward-thinking initiatives, which support women joining, or returning to, the workplace.

The World Economic Forum's recently released Global Gender Gap Report 2018 shows the dominance of Nordic countries, which take up the top four places.

### 1. Iceland

The island nation has a culture of political empowerment and boasts many strong female role models. Female empowerment emerged from the strong political feminism movement of the 1970s and has permeated every aspect of Icelandic society.

Progressive childcare policies mean that women in Iceland aren't faced with a choice between work or raising children. Universal childcare and generous parental leave policies - women and men both get 90 days leave - help to remove the burden of childrearing from mothers.

When it comes to closing the gender pay gap, Iceland ranks No 1 for 'Wage equality for similar work', but 26 for 'Estimated earned income'.

### 2. Norway

Norway has closed more than 83% of its overall gender gap and continues to make steady progress.

Supportive parenting policies and heavily subsidized childcare provision have led to a high percentage of women entering the workforce. Since 2013, mothers and fathers have been obliged to take at least 14 weeks employment leave following the birth of a child.

Norway enjoys a near-even distribution of male and female workers, with many women in positions of power.

Gender quotas legislate for a 40% female presence in the country's parliament and on business boards, resulting in a strong female presence - Norway's prime minister, minister of finance and minister of foreign affairs are all female, while women make up 41% of the C-suite.

### 3. Sweden

Sweden has the most generous parental leave policy in the world, with parents entitled to share 480 days - or around 16 months - paid leave following the birth or adoption of a child. This is just one of the initiatives that have helped the nation close 82% of its gender gap.

In recent years, Sweden has seen an increase in female legislators and bolstered numbers of senior officials and managers. In 2016, the number of Swedish women equalled males in ministerial positions for the first time and it ranks No 1 in the index for this.

### 4. Finland

Finland has the fourth greatest gender equality of any nation, with 82% of its overall gap closed. It is the only top-ranked Nordic nation to fully close the gender gap in educational attainment.

The nation played a pioneering role in bringing about gender equality, becoming the second country to grant women the right to vote and, in 1906, was the first to award women full political rights.

Women make up 42% of Finland's parliament and 38.5% of ministers, which accounts for the nation's strong political empowerment rating.

**Related link:** The Global Gender Gap Index 2018 <sup>[3]</sup>

**Region:** Europe <sup>[4]</sup>

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