



Sweden equals equal?

Ok, we are not perfectly equal yet, there are still things to be done. But it's an important part of our lives, in our personal lives, in our work life and on the political agenda. In this newsletter we would like to tell you a little something about how things work in Sweden.

Sweden

– one of the most equal countries in the world

Sweden, along with Iceland, Norway, and Finland are the most equal countries when it comes to equality between men and women, according to the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2010.

Sweden held the number one spot in 2006 and 2007, but since its gap has remained either unchanged or widened slightly over the last three years. No country in the world has achieved gender equality. Sweden has closed a little over 80% of the gender gap in the country.

One reason for the Nordic countries lead can be that they were early starters in providing women with the right to vote (Sweden in 1919, Norway in 1913, Iceland and Denmark in 1915, Finland in 1906). In Denmark, Sweden and Norway, political parties introduced voluntary gender quotas in the 1970s, resulting in high levels of female political representatives over the years. Sweden has among the highest percentage of women in parliament in the world (47%) and has a similarly strong record on the percentage of women in ministerial level positions (45%).



All Nordic countries display gender parity at both primary- and secondary-level education. At the tertiary level, in addition to very high levels of enrolment for both women and men, the gender gap has been reversed and women now make up the majority of the high-skilled workforce. In Norway, Sweden and Iceland there are over 1.5 women for every man enrolled in tertiary education.

The Nordic countries also exhibit very high healthy life expectancies

for both women and men, with women living on average three to four healthy years longer than men.

Slowly more equal – but main differences remain

Sweden is slowly becoming more equal, but in general, the main differences remain between the sexes. For example the gender-segregated labor market is almost intact. Few professions have an equal gender-balance.

One concern for the equality between men and women is the possibility to combine parenthood with employment. One way of measuring this is how parents make use of the paid parental leave. The length of parental leave in Sweden is 480 days. Parental leave benefits amount to 80 % of wages paid up to a ceiling of 390 days with a flat rate for remaining 90 days. The parental coverage is provided by the social insurance. The Swedish parental insurance is constructed so the parents can divide the time they stay at home with the children. Still women stay home the major part of the parental leave.

In order to encourage more men to be home with their children, the government has decided that there should be a bonus. This means that parents who share the parental leave more equally may get more money.

The differences are slowly smoothed out between the sexes, but the difference is still large. In 2009 men used 22 % of the parental days, compared to women who used 78 %. More women than men also work part time, especially if they have young children. Women's part-time labor increases with the number of children. Among those with three or more children, where the youngest child is under two years, half of the women are working part-time. The same pattern is not found among men. Men are also less probable to stay home if children are ill. One in five women and one in twenty men takes time off to care for sick children during one whole week, sometime during a year.

According to Statistics Sweden's Time Use Survey 2010, women spend less time on housework and men spend more than before. Women spent about 14 minutes less on unpaid housework per day in 2010 compared to 2000. Compared to 1990 women have reduced their time spent on homework with more than one hour per day, about 20 percent less. Men put more time on unpaid housework compared to 2000, on average 11 minutes more per day.

Although men have increased their share of unpaid household work slightly, they spend on average 45 minutes less than women. Compared to 1990, there has not been any marked difference. Men spend about



as much time on housework as they did 20 years ago.

Instead, women put more and more time on paid work, 21 minutes more per day while the time for men decreased by 14 minutes, compared to 2000. With regard to the household work, women and men spend their time differently. Women spend almost two hours a day doing housework while men spend just over an hour. Men spend, however about 40 minutes per day doing maintenance work, which is the double of what women do.



Equality in Sweden

In Swedish culture, there is a strong belief that a more just and democratic society results from women and men sharing power and influence equally. Equality is such a big part of Swedish society that there are two specific words for it in Swedish: *jämställdhet*, for gender equality, and *jämlikhet*, for equality in general.

In order to support these ideals, a well-developed welfare system is in place that makes it easier for both genders to balance their work and family life. Beyond gender issues, Sweden supports a wider scope of equality. Here, professional titles are rarely used when addressing another person, and the social hierarchy is flat. Laws are in place to ensure that salaries are not affected by gender or ethnicity. The Equality Ombudsman is the government organization that protects against discrimination on several grounds, such as religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or disability. Other laws are in place to protect employees or applicants from harassment and discrimination in the workplace.

The Swedish school system aims to stop prejudice before it leads to inequality. For this reason, gender pedagogy is increasingly common in Swedish preschools. The goal is to give children the same opportunities in life, regardless of their gender, through teaching methods that allow each child to grow into a unique individual. The Swedish government has appointed a special committee to find more ways to boost gender equality in schooling and adult education.



Gender equality: The Swedish approach to fairness

Sweden has one of the highest levels of gender equality in the world. A well-developed welfare system makes it easier for both sexes to balance their work and family life. Sweden has, in effect, an almost single-class society. The government consists of nearly equal numbers of men and women, and almost everyone in the country is on a first-name basis.

Gender equality is one of the cornerstones of Swedish society. It means that women and men enjoy the same opportunities, rights and obligations in all areas of life. Everyone has the right to work and support themselves, to balance their career and family life, and to not worry about being subjected to abuse or violence. In the Global Gender Gap Report 2010, Sweden is one of the world leaders in equality. The report, drawn up at the initiative of the World Economic Forum, measures equality in four areas: economics, politics, education and health. It can be read at www.weforum.org

Gender equality at school

Applying gender teaching in Swedish preschools is increasingly common. The aim is to give children the same opportunities in life, regardless of their gender, through teaching methods that allow each child to grow into a unique individual. Gender equality is an important topic that is addressed continuously throughout elementary school to prepare students for further education.

A greater proportion of women than men complete their upper secondary education. Women comprise roughly 60 percent of all students in under-graduate university studies and almost two-thirds of all degrees are awarded to women. Significantly more women than men participate in adult education. The gender distribution among students in postgraduate studies and doctoral degrees is today equal.

Parental leave

In Sweden, parents are entitled to 480 days of parental leave when a child is born or adopted. Women claim most of the days. Sixty days of leave is allocated specifically to each of the parents, which means these days cannot be transferred to the other. In addition, the father of a newborn baby gets 10 extra days leave in connection with the birth or 20 days if they are twins.

Several forms of childcare

In Sweden we have a well-developed childcare which is an important prerequisite for both parents to have a career. Childcare is for children aged 1-12 years. Children in Sweden start compulsory school when they are 7 years old but almost all children go one year before that in the voluntary preschool.

The preschool accepts children when their parents are working, studying or if the child has its own needs of the preschool. Preschools are open all year and the daily hours adjusted to parents' working hours. The children are enrolled, and parents pay a fee as in most municipalities is related to family income and child's attendance.

In the family day nursery, a child-minder receives children in their own home while their parents work or study. The children are enrolled and opening hours adjusted to parents' working hours. The families pay a fee in the same way as for children in preschool.

The open preschool is a complement to preschool for children whose parents are home during the day. It may also be complementary to the family day nursery. The children are not enrolled and there is no requirement for regular attendance. The open preschools are generally free of charge.

After-school recreation centres receive school children whose parents work or study when the children are not in school, that is during mornings, afternoons and holidays. After-

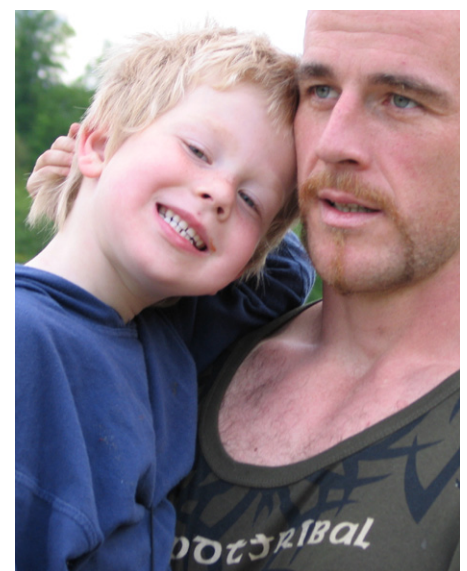
school recreation centres are open all year and the daily hours adjusted to parents' working hours. The parents pay in preschool and family day nursery a fee which in most municipalities depend on parental income and children's attendance.

Open leisure-time activities are under the Education Act, an alternative to the after-school recreation centres and family day nursery for children aged 10-12 years.

The municipality may provide grants to individual child care, that is activities operated by another organizer than the municipality.

Since August 1998, the preschool has its own curriculum. An important section of the preschool curriculum is all about values. The same basic democratic values should permeate schools and preschools. It's about caring and consideration for other people, of solidarity, equality and tolerance.

You will find the provisions on child care in the Education Act. It describes which the child care forms that are to be found. The Act also specifies obligations of local government. A municipality is obliged to provide childcare for children aged 1-12 years to the extent necessary for parents to work or study. The obligation also applies to children who have their own need of child care regardless of their parents' jobs. Children with special needs are always entitled to a place in preschool or after-school recreation centres.



If it is true that men are better than women because they are stronger, why aren't our sumo wrestlers in the government?

Kishida Toshiko,
japanese feminist

Sweden is considered the best at integration

The Swedish legislation is deemed to provide good conditions for immigrants to participate in society. In a new study, Sweden is in the top of how countries manage there integration.

- It is clear that there is both positive and encouraging that we are at the top when it comes to providing formal opportunities for integration. Concurrent we should not delude ourselves into thinking that the integration is thus solved. We still have huge challenges in terms of participation and also how long it takes to get into work, says Integration Minister Erik Ullenhag (FP).

In particular valued the Swedish law as beneficial in the labor market, family reunification and anti-discrimination. Housing, education and citizenship do not get as high marks. The study concludes that there really are no formal barriers to successful integration. Yet it has not worked.

- It's been too much of disposal mentality of integration policy. We started setting up operations in Sweden, with a stronger focus on getting people into jobs and to learn Swedish. It is about seeing what people can contribute, rather than the contribution of system they will be in. Ullenhag says that we never had so many foreign-born who has worked as now.

- But it does not help those who waited six, seven, eight or nine years trying to enter the labor market.

- It matters also for the next generation. Today we have really exposed areas where children grow up without knowing almost any adult who has a job to go to. It is clear that it creates an obvious lack of confidence in the future.

Behind the study are among others, British Council, a British independent government agency.



Facts about gender equality in Sweden throughout history

- 1845 - Equal inheritance rights for men and women
- 1870 - Women may graduate high school and attend university, but only as private candidate
- 1873 - Women can take degrees at university
- 1919 - Women from the age of 23 have right to vote
- 1921 - First woman in parliament
- 1925 - Women can get government jobs
- 1931 - Maternity insurance is introduced
- 1938 - Birth control allowed
- 1946 - Right to equal salary for men and women in government service
- 1947 - First woman in the government
- 1958 - Women have the right become priests
- 1964 - Birth control pills permitted in Sweden
- 1969 - Gender equality is written into the goal in the elementary school curriculum
- 1970 - Gender equality is written into the goal in the high school curriculum
- 1974 - The right of men and women to share the parental leave
- 1975 - Women have the right to decide on abortion
- 1979 - Right to a six-hour workday for parents with small children
- 1979 - Law on gender equality at work
- 1980 - JämO (Ombudsman for Equality) is added
- 1995 - Paternity month introduced in the parental insurance
- 1998 - Law on women's safety. Law prohibiting the purchase of sexual services
- 2001 - Equal Treatment of university students

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