

INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION



- Contributors

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Inequality in education

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- Finland is among the top countries in Europe in education and the education level of the population is relatively high.
- The level of education has risen along with the expansion of education, which has also increased the significance of education for example in the labour market. Conversely, having no qualifications has become a significant risk for social exclusion.
- An individual's right to education is secured, for example, through free education and various transfer payments but, for example, one's socioeconomic background or ethnic background still influence the gained education.
- Children of low-qualified parents still have, on average, lower qualifications than children of high-qualified parents, and children of immigrants have lower qualifications than children of the majority population.

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- The effect of parents' educational background on children acquiring a university education has increased when comparing those born in 1950–1965 and in 1966–1990.
- Universities of applied sciences (unlike universities) offer a path to a slight decrease in inequality. Universities of applied science have made it possible particularly for children of parents who have completed the old post-secondary education to gain higher education and thus narrow the educational gap in relation to children of university educated parents.

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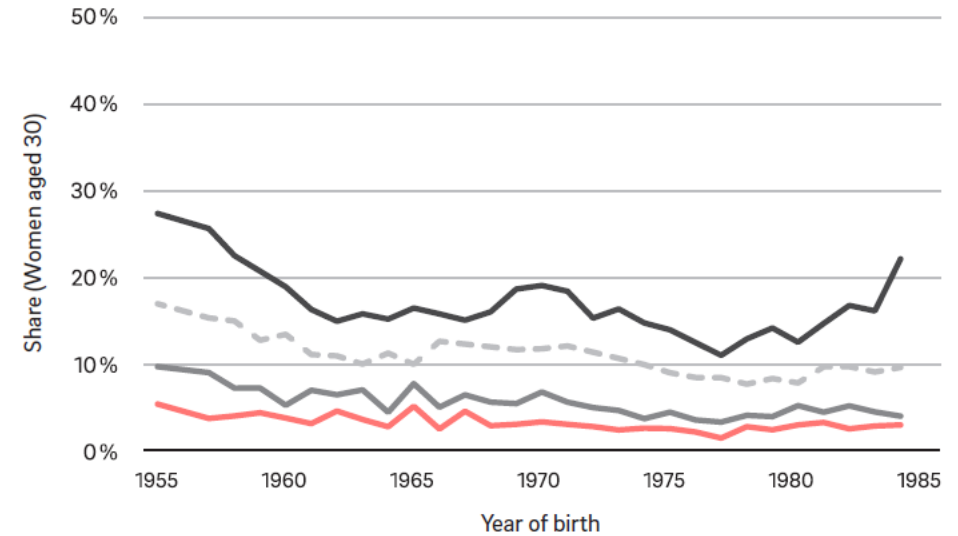
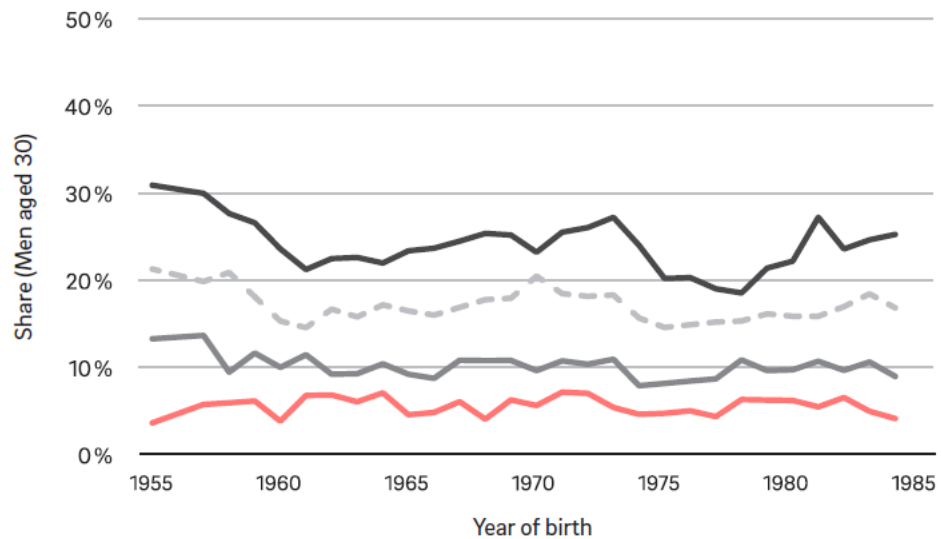
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Figure 3.1 Level of education at the age of 30 by gender, year of birth and parents' highest education level. (1956 as a year of birth is not included due to the data set.)

Source: Own calculations based on Statistics Finland data regarding social environment.

Comprehensive school



Parents' education

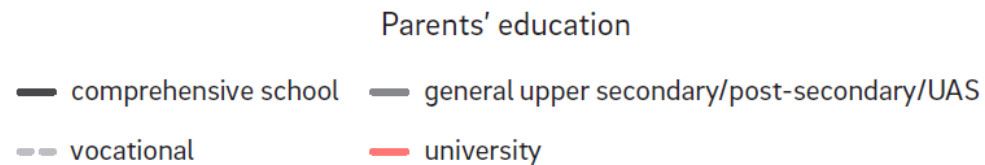
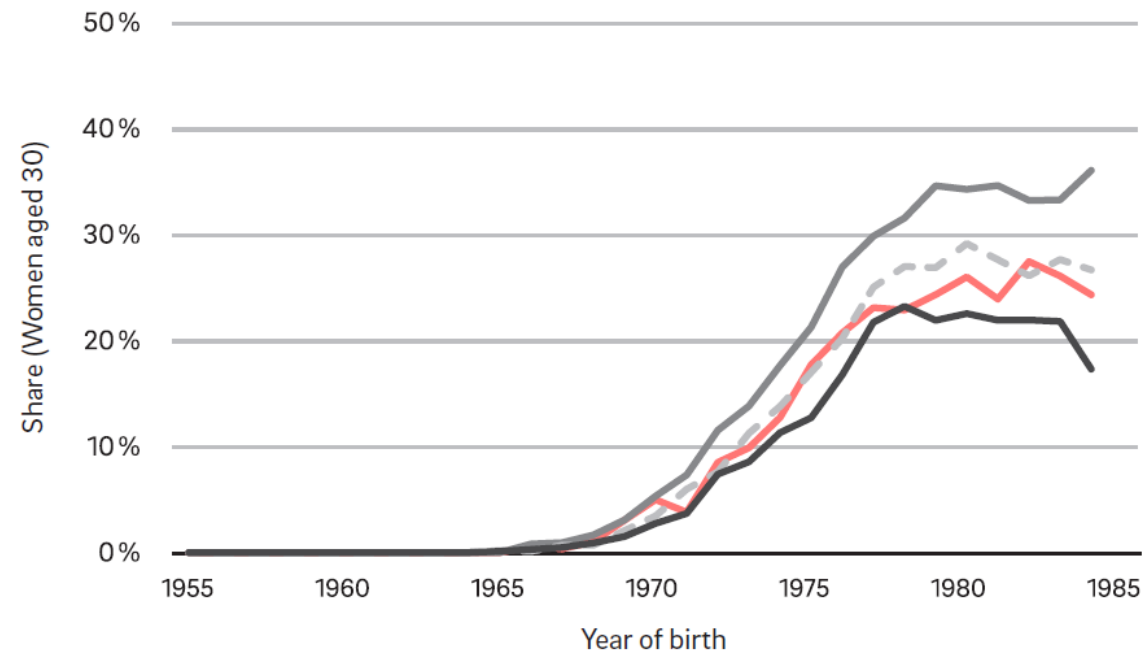
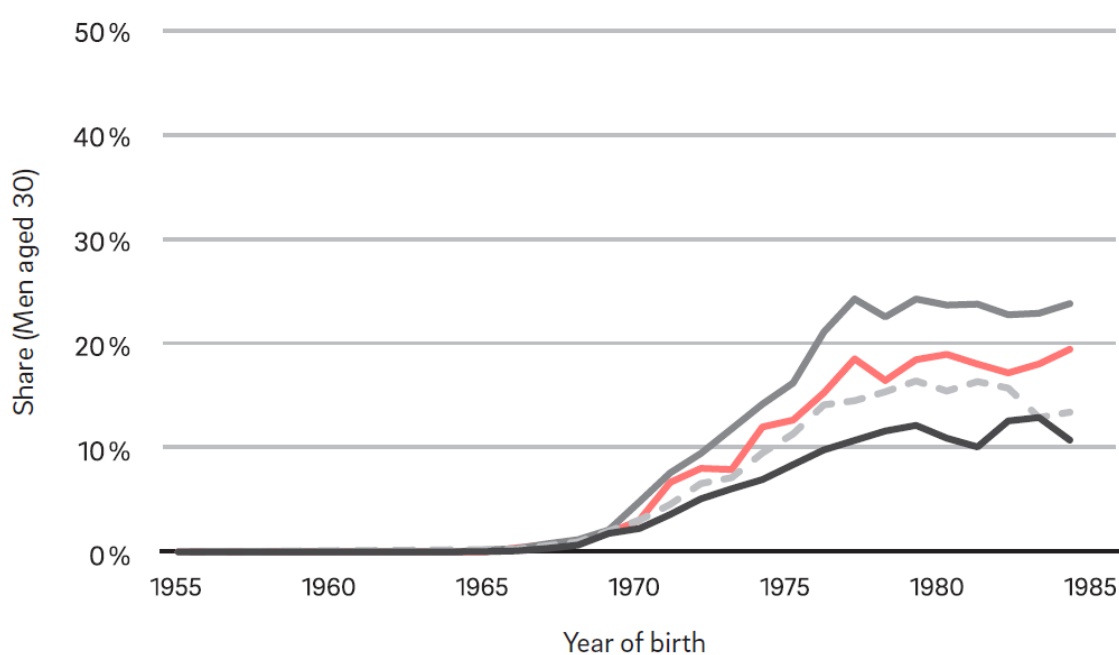
- comprehensive school
- general upper secondary/post-secondary/UAS
- - - vocational
- university

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University of applied sciences

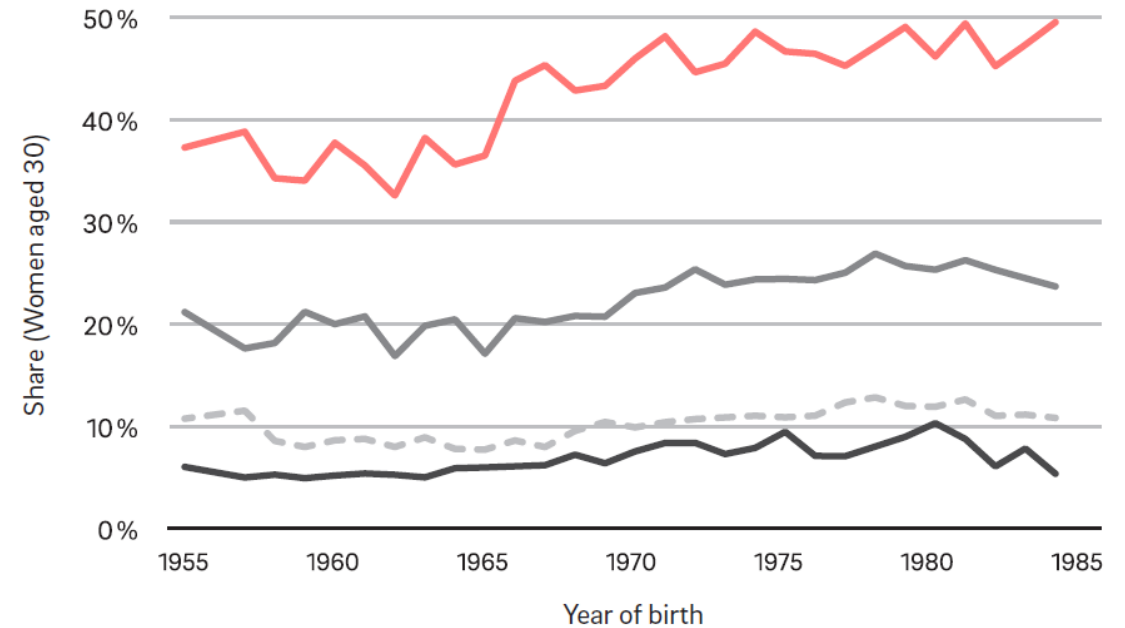
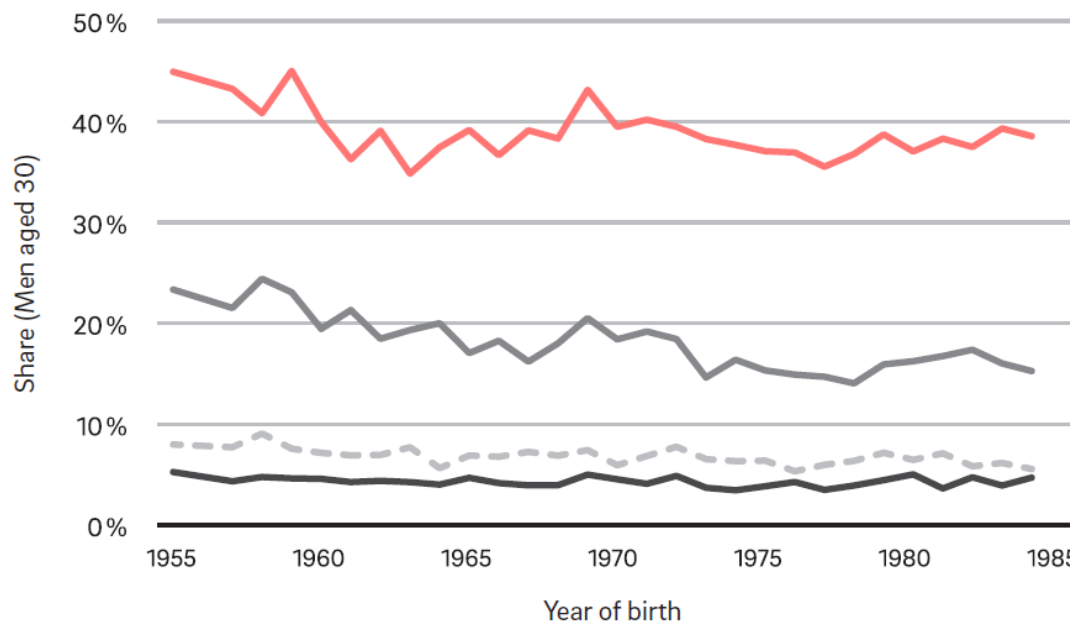


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University



Parents' education

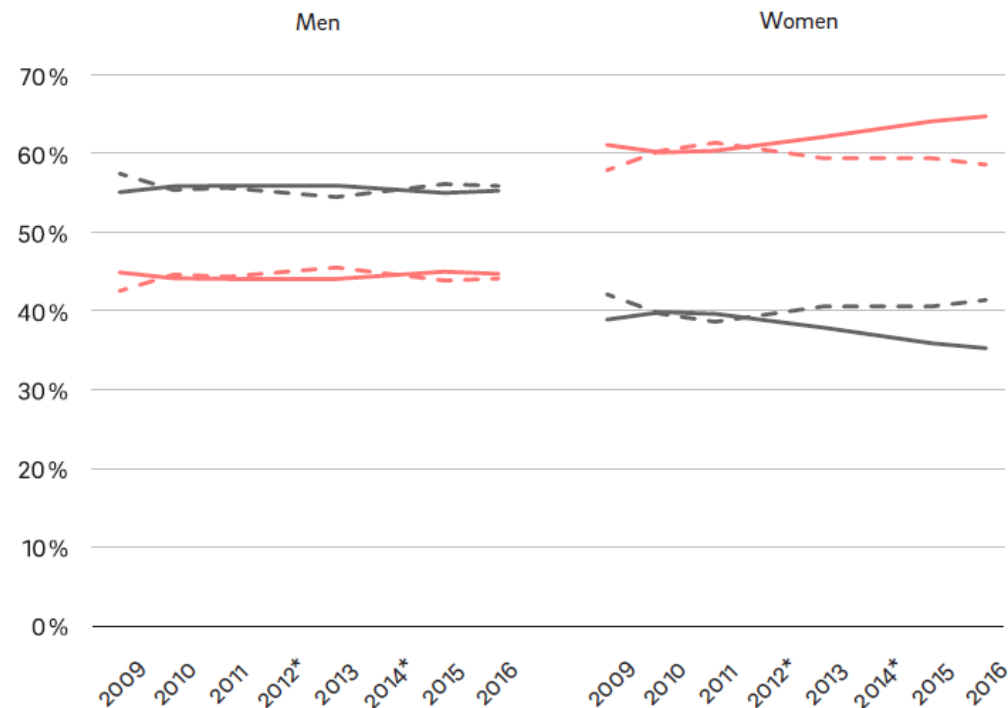
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Figure 3.2 Young people studying on the upper secondary level one year after finishing comprehensive school, by year of completing comprehensive school, gender and native language (%).



* Average of previous and next year

- % general upper secondary, native language Finnish, Swedish or Sámi
- % vocational upper secondary, native language Finnish, Swedish or Sámi
- - % general upper secondary, other native language
- - % vocational upper secondary, other native language

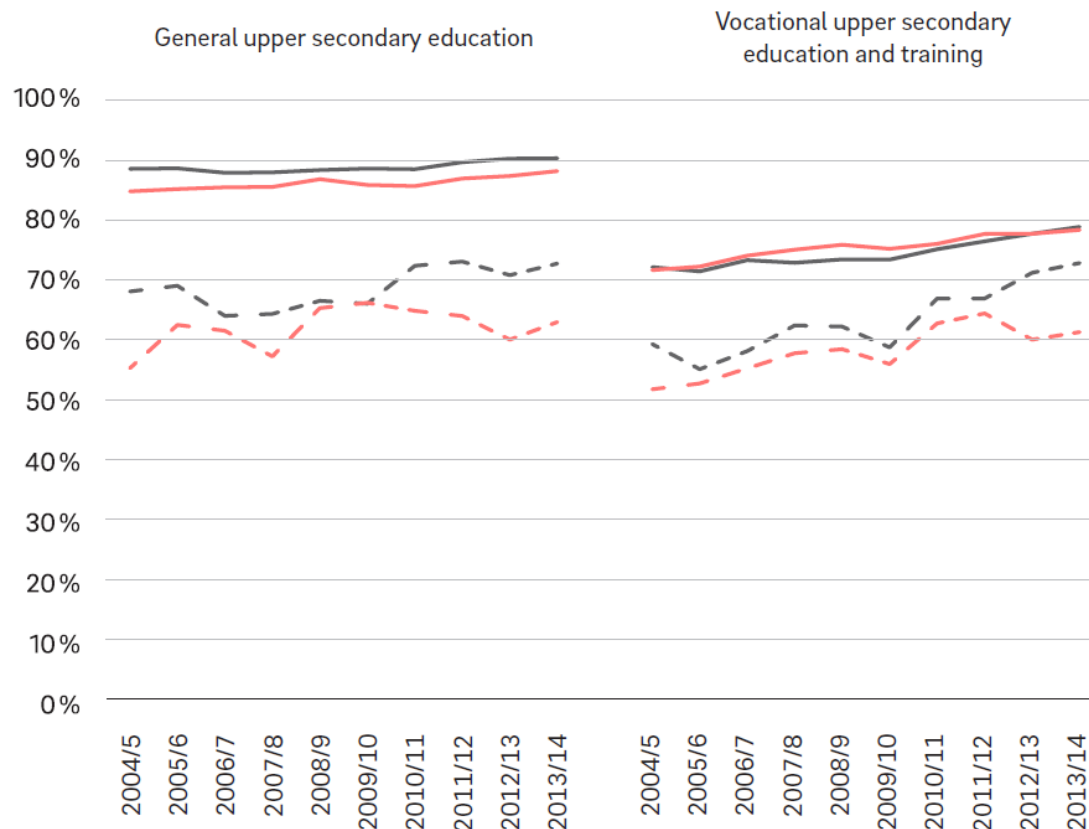
- The educational paths of young people diverge in secondary education based on gender and native language.

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Figure 3.3 Graduation of those who entered upper secondary education at the age of 15–19 four years from the beginning of the studies by gender, native language and year of starting the studies (%).



- The risk of dropping out of upper secondary education affects, in particular, those who have started in vocational education and training as well as young foreign-language speakers.
- The risk of not completing upper secondary level education is manifold for young people with an immigrant background compared to the majority population.

— men % graduated, native language Finnish, Swedish or Sámi
— women % graduated, native language Finnish, Swedish or Sámi
- - men % graduated, other native language
- - women % graduated, other native language

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- Young foreign-language speakers are less likely to enter further studies after upper secondary education than others in Finland.
- These differences are significant particularly for general upper secondary school graduates:
 - Of those who graduated in 2016, the share of foreign-language speaking women who continued into further studies was 22 percentage points lower than of women whose native language was Finnish, Swedish or Sámi.
 - The difference for men was 11 percentage points.
 - The attitudes toward education of young people with an immigrant background hardly explain the lower education level, as people with an immigrant background have generally been observed to have more ambitious educational desires than others in Finland.

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Figure 3.4 Studying after upper secondary level (%) one year after completing the previous qualification. At age 20-24 by year of upper secondary level graduation, previous type of education, gender and native language.



* Average of previous and next year

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• Conclusions and recommendations

- Extending compulsory education while paying attention to the intake in different fields and completion of studies are policy actions that reduce inequality.
- The openness of educational paths should be increased.
- Increasing intake in higher education is, perhaps, the most effective way to reduce the inheritance of inequality, though it must be noted that there is a delay before its effects will be visible.
- The effects of the student admissions reform that favours first-timers on reducing educational inequality are unclear. It seems that the inheritance of education cannot be reduced by influencing student admissions.
- Implementing specific protective measures in the school transitions of children and young people with an immigrant background is necessary, as segregation can be seen between the educational paths of those with an immigrant background and members of the majority population.
- The education system must be open also to the adult population.
- The education system cannot be reformed separately from other policies, but reducing educational inequality also calls for a comprehensive view on available study opportunities and the funding of education, the social security system, and labour market training.