

STUDENT PROFILE IN LIBERAL ADULT EDUCATION 2019



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LIBERAL ADULT EDUCATION

The aim of liberal adult education is to organize education on the principle of lifelong learning in a way that supports social cohesion, equality and active citizenship. The aim of liberal adult education is to further human development, well-being and to achieve democracy, diversity, sustainable development, and internationality. Liberal education emphasizes self-motivated learning, community and participation (free translation Act on liberal adult education 632/1998, 2009/1765 1§).

Liberal adult education institutions include adult education centres, folk high schools, sports institutes, summer universities and study centres.

- **Adult education centres** are educational institutions that are based on local and regional educational needs and offer opportunities for self-motivated education and the development of civic skills.
- **Folk high schools** are boarding schools that provide full-time studies, organize self-motivated, non-formal studies for young people and adults, further the study skills of their students and support their growth as individuals and members of society.
- **Summer universities** are institutions that provide education within the regional educational system, emphasizing open university education as well as responding to other regional needs in education, also considering the further education needs of degree holders.
- **Sports institutes** are national or regional educational institutions based in boarding schools that provide full-time education with the assignment to organize education that promotes sports hobbies, well-being, and health for the whole population as well as education and training that supports sports organizations and elite athletes.
- **Study centres** are national educational institutions that organize education both independently as well as together with civic and cultural organizations to further lifelong learning, well-being, and active citizenship as well as democracy and civil society.

The education programs of the liberal adult education system are self-motivated and non-formal in nature. They range from short courses a few hours long to studies that take up a whole academic year. It is typical for liberal adult education programs that their contents and goals are decided by the institutions and their background organizations according to their authorization to provide education. Aspects like community and civic participation are important goals for liberal adult education, and the importance of multiculturalism is also growing rapidly.

The participants in liberal adult education are mainly adults who study to develop themselves, learn new skills and to sustain skills they already have. The starting point for an individual to develop one's skills can be the will to use the education as a part of formal education, in applying to formal education, or to improve one's working life competencies. For some students learning new things and developing one's skills are in themselves a motive to take part in educational programs. Other key reasons for participation in liberal adult education are hobbies and social contacts.

Since 2018 liberal adult education institutions, namely adult education centres, folk high schools, summer universities and study centres, have offered education in reading and writing to support the integration of migrants. The liberal adult education institutions have also, with special support from the Finnish National Agency for Education, offered adult education programs in basic skills and digital skills, labour market training and personnel training for teachers in liberal adult education institutions.

Some of the most recent significant foci in liberal adult education include competence-based education and the assessment of competencies, along with programs for students completing their compulsory education in folk high schools.

EDUCATION AND THE STUDENT PROFILE IN LIBERAL ADULT EDUCATION

Statistics Finland collects quantitative information about liberal adult education yearly. Information is not collected from individual participants, which means that the quantitative statistical information gathered through national data collection is approximate. The statistics still give a clear overview of the volume and the direction of liberal adult education. On request by the Finnish National Agency of Education and the Ministry of Education and Culture, in 2019 Statistics Finland also started gathering information on the age of the participants in adult education programs, their level of education, main activity at the time of enrolment (working, unemployed, student, retired, other) and native language to create a more comprehensive student profile.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS AND NUMBER OF STUDENTS

Every year educational institutions in the liberal adult education system organize almost 100,000 courses or other educational programs that range in length from a few hours to a whole academic year (Figure 1). In 2019 there were 1,563,795 total enrolments in the programs (net number of enrolments) (Table 1). The net number includes all enrolments by every participant. If the same individual has participated in several courses or programs, they are all included in the net enrolments figure as separate enrolments. The net number of participants in programs was around 830,000. This number includes every individual only once, regardless of how many programs they have participated in at the same educational institution. Approximately 72 percent of the participants were female.

Figure 1. Liberal adult education programs by year, 2016–2019. Source: Statistics Finland, Vipunen – Education Statistics Finland by the Finnish National Agency for Education.

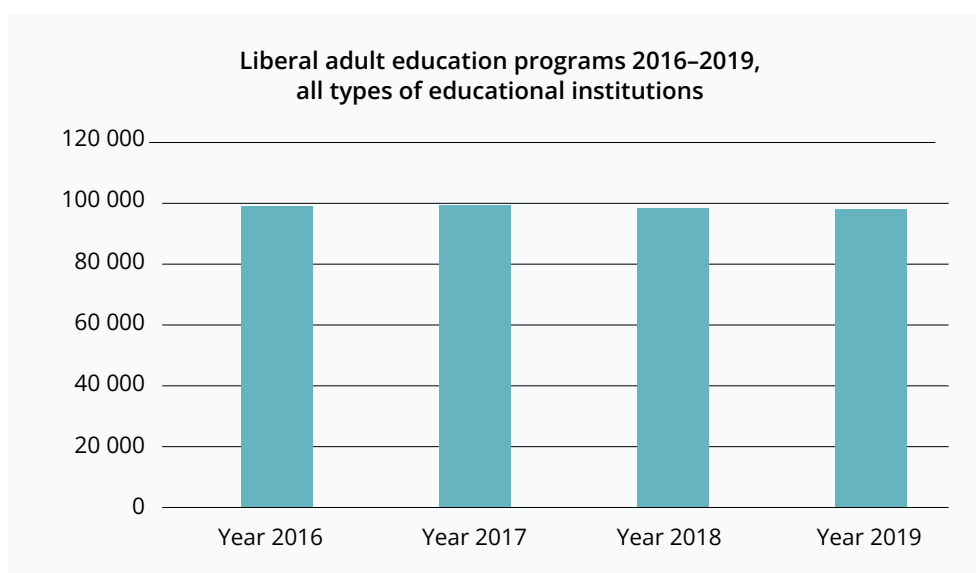


Table 1. Net number of participants in educational programs classified as liberal adult education in 2019, categorized by type of educational institution. Source: Statistics Finland, Vipunen – Education Statistics Finland.

Type of educational institution	Net number of participants
Adult education centres	1,066,712
Folk high schools	98,463
Summer universities	44,241
Sports institutes	113,088
Study centres	241,291
Total	1,563,795

VOLUME OF TEACHING IN LIBERAL ADULT EDUCATION BY LESSON HOURS

If calculated by 45-minute lesson hours, around 94 percent of the non-formal tuition in liberal adult education institutions was classified as liberal adult education in 2019. Moreover, liberal adult education institutions provided vocational further education and training, labour market training and courses commissioned by employers. Some liberal adult education institutions organize formal education, for example general upper secondary education, basic education for adults and vocational education and training. Authorization is required for providing formal education.

The different types of educational institutions offered 2,716,770 lesson hours of liberal adult education activities in 2019, which amounts to half of all non-formal lesson hours. Almost half of the lesson hours were used for education in the cultural field such as crafts, music, visual arts, literature, and performative arts. Just over a fifth of the lesson hours were used for the fields of humanities and education. Most of these were language studies. A little less than a fifth of the lesson hours were used for studies in the fields of welfare and health or physical education – most of these in sports and exercise. (Table 2)

Table 2. Lesson hours in liberal adult education by education field in 2019.
Source: Statistics Finland, Vipunen – Education Statistics Finland.

Education field	Lesson hours	%
General education	5,7558	2,1
Humanities and education	56,6504	20,9
Culture	132,1878	48,7
Social sciences, business and administration	75,046	2,8
Natural sciences	66,992	2,5
Engineering and transport	24,855	0,9
Natural resources and environment	12,010	0,4
Welfare, health and physical education	535,899	19,7
Tourism, catering and economics	18,581	0,7
Another field	37,447	1,4
Total	2,716,770	100

Figure 2. Lesson hours in liberal adult education by education field in 2019.
Source: Statistics Finland, Vipunen – Education Statistics Finland.

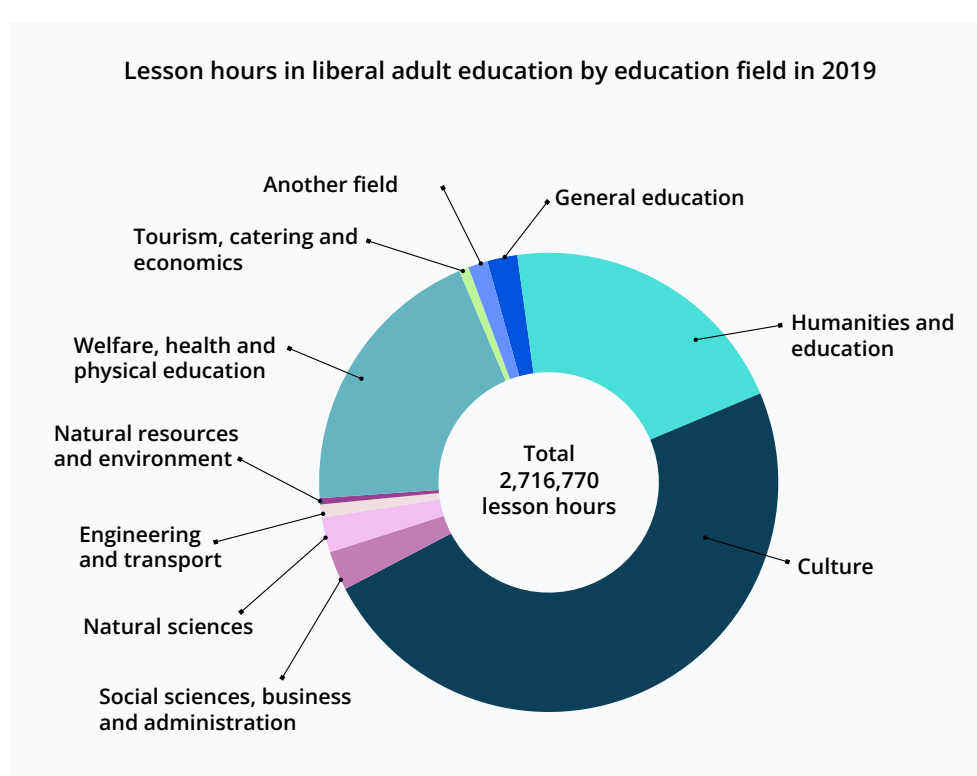


Table 3. The main programs in liberal adult education by educational institution in 2019. Source: Statistics Finland, Vipunen – Education Statistics Finland.

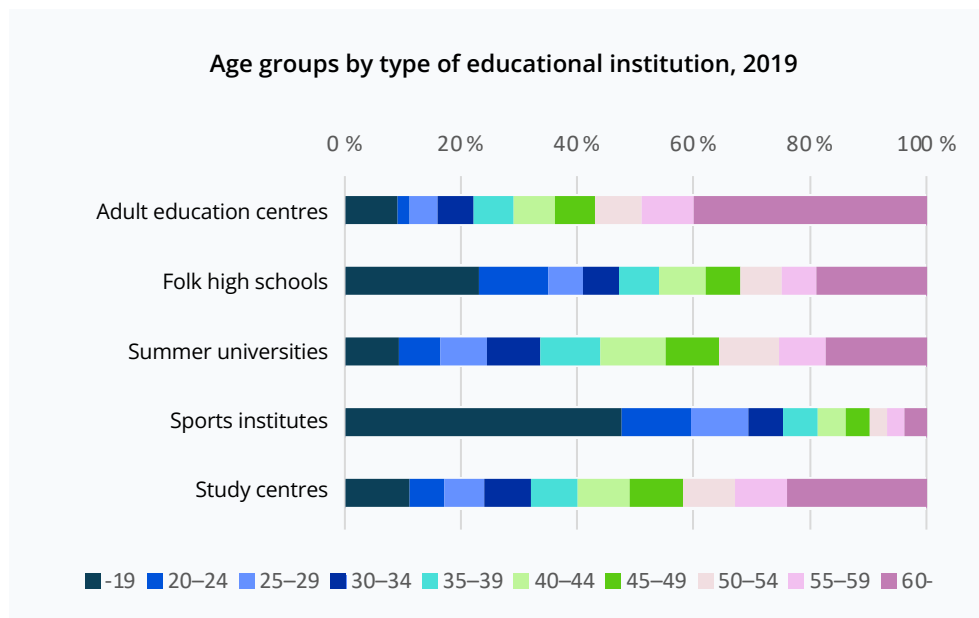
Adult Education Centres	Sports Institutes
Culture	Welfare, health and physical education (100 %)
Humanities and education	
Welfare, health and physical education	
Folk High Schools	Study Centres
Culture	Culture
Humanities and education	Social sciences, business and administration
Welfare, health and physical education	Welfare, health and physical education
Summer Universities	
Humanities and education	
Welfare, health and physical education	
Culture	

During the last ten years the number of lesson hours at liberal adult education institutions has decreased slightly. The biggest decrease in lesson hours was in the field of culture, but there has also been a decrease in humanities and education. On the other hand, the lesson hours in the field of welfare, health and physical education have increased.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDENTS

AGE. The age range of students varied between the different types of educational institution. In 2019 about half (49 %) of the students at adult education centres were over 55, while around 11 percent of the students were under 25. A little over a third of students at folk high schools were under 25 and every fourth (25%) student was over 55. 40 percent of the students at folk high schools were between 25 and 54. One in four students at the summer universities (25 %) was over 55 and 18 percent were under 25. 60 percent of the students at sports institutes were under 25 and only 7 percent were over 55. In study centres around a third (33%) of the students were over 55 and 17 percent under 25. (Figure 3)

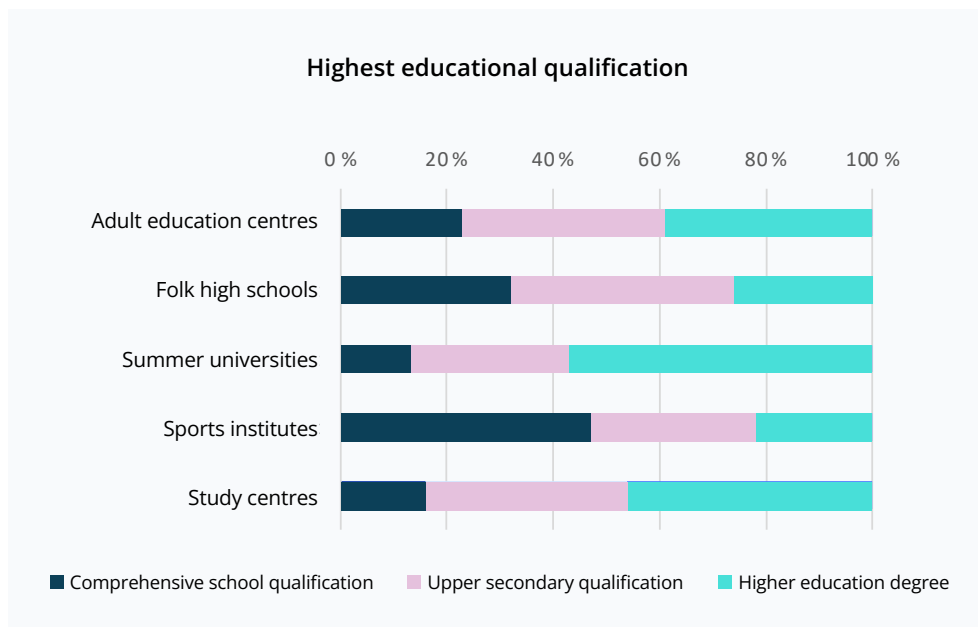
Figure 3. Participants in education programs at liberal adult education institutions in 2019 by age group. Source: Statistics Finland.



EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND. The educational attainment of liberal adult education students is somewhat higher than that of citizens aged 15 or older in general. 24 percent of liberal adult education students did not hold a post-basic education qualification, while the corresponding share was 26 percent for all citizens aged 15 or older. 37 percent of liberal adult education students held a tertiary education degree, while 33 percent of the general population had one. However, it is important to note that a large share of students at liberal adult education institutions are over 60. Among older age groups in particular, students at liberal adult education institutions are often more highly educated than the general population. (Figure 4)

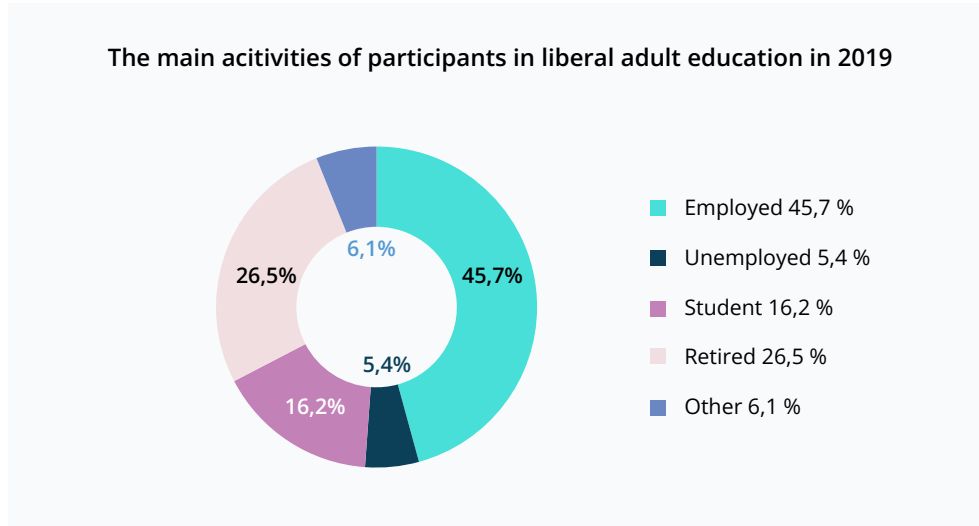
The differences in the educational background of students between the liberal adult education institutions are mostly explained by their age.

Figure 4. The highest educational degree among the participants in liberal adult education programs by educational institute 2019. Source: Statistics Finland.



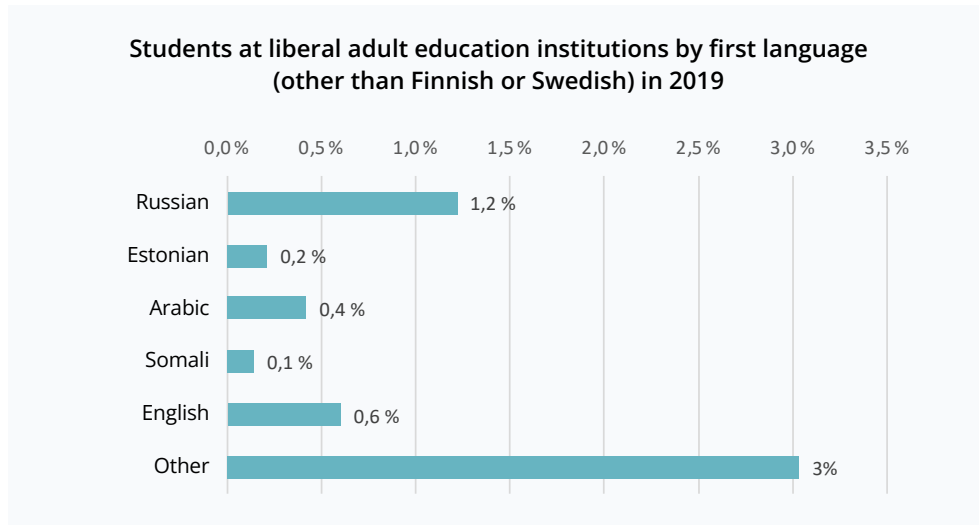
MAIN ACTIVITY PRIOR TO ENROLLMENT. The educational institutes asked the students what their main activity in life was when they signed up for a liberal adult education program. 45,7 percent of the participating students were gainfully employed. Participants in gainful employment were the biggest group at all other liberal adult education institutions except for sports institutes, where most of the applicants were students (56 %). The share of employed participants who signed up for liberal adult education programs was the greatest at summer universities (59 %) and the smallest at sports institutes (35 %). The share of retired participants was the biggest at adult education centres (32 %), followed by the study centres (25 %). 25 % of all participants were retired. The share of unemployed participants was 5,4 percent. (Figure 5)

Figure 5. The main activities of participants in programs organized at liberal adult education institutions at the time of enrolment in 2019. Source: Statistics Finland.



FIRST LANGUAGE. Around 6 percent of the participants enrolled in programs at liberal adult institutions had a first language other than Finnish or Swedish in 2019. The biggest group among these had Russian as their first language; around 10,000 students from this group participated in the programs. The second biggest group comprised English-speaking students, with around 5,000 individuals participating in the programs. Students' linguistic backgrounds are wide and varied, but for the study 5 different languages were chosen: Russian, Estonian, Somali, Arabic and English. The group "other first language" consisted of around 24,500 students. (Figure 6)

Figure 6. Participants in programs at liberal adult education institutions by first language (other than Finnish or Swedish) in 2019.



A SHORT SUMMARY OF THE LIBERAL ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN 2019

- Liberal adult education institutions organized almost 100,000 courses and other programs ranging from a few hours to a whole academic year. In total, they offered around 2,7 million lesson hours classified as liberal adult education.
- Around 830,000 persons participated in liberal adult education programs, they participated in a total of 1,560,000 courses or programs.
- The age structure among the participants varied by educational institute. Sports institutes and folk high schools attracted, on average, younger participants than other liberal adult education institutions. The participants at adult education centres and study centres represented the older segment of the population as compared to the other educational institutions. The participants at summer universities were mostly of working age.
- The differences in educational background between the participants in programs at different educational institutions were explained mostly by the age of the participants. There were more participants who have only completed basic education in sports institutes and folk high schools than in other types of educational institutions. At study centres and summer universities there were more participants with tertiary education degrees than at other liberal adult education institutions. Adult education centres, on the other hand, attracted students from all educational backgrounds.
- Working-age students made up the biggest group of participants in all other liberal adult education institutions except sports institutes, where most of the participants had been students at the time of applying. The share of retired participants was largest at adult education centres and second largest at study centres. The total percentage of retired participants out of all participants was about 25.
- Around six percent of the participants in liberal adult education programs had first languages other than Finnish or Swedish. The largest of these groups were Russian speakers and the second largest English speakers.

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