



Work life visits

General upper secondary education subject teachers'
support material



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We warmly thank the funders for supporting the work and all the teachers, working life representatives and students involved in the projects and implementation for their feedback and valuable discussions and sharing experiences. Based on these, the training materials now at hand have been developed.

*For the linguistic finishing and streamlining of the text of this publication, MOT Kielipalvelu® was used.
All content has been reviewed and approved by the authors.*

Foreword

This support material is intended for teachers and instructors who arrange a working life visit for general upper secondary education students. The material provides tips for planning a visit with a working life representative as well as working tips before, during and after the visit.

In the KoKiVa project, we developed and tested a gender-sensitive working life-visiting model for cooperation with working life in general upper secondary schools. Education and career paths are strongly segregated by gender in Finland and that is why we developed and tested the model, website and teaching material together with general upper secondary education subject teachers and study counsellors as well as representatives of working life. The aim of the project was to develop a model to strengthen young people's understanding of working life and to offer perspectives on previously unknown fields as told by role models. We piloted the model with female representatives from the ICT sector and male representatives from the education and training sector. Organisations in the Oulu region, subject teachers, guidance counsellors and high school students, whose experiences and views have guided the formation of the material content, were involved in the development of the project. Now the material produced in the KoKiVa project has been compiled into educational material that can be utilised as part of the general upper secondary education's guidance and by subject teachers in the planning and implementation of teaching in different subjects. The material produced in the project, the experience of development and testing work during the project, and current results from the research field have been utilised in the compilation of the supporting material. We hope that this material will serve as a practical tool in the planning and implementation of teaching, and above all inspire general upper secondary education students to reflect on their own future and their relationship with working life.

We express our gratitude to both those who have worked on the projects and those who have funded the projects. We would also like to express our gratitude to the high school staff, working life representatives, and the young people involved in the projects.

Thanks also to Mervi Heikkinen for the interview and Kati Ilkka for the recording and the opportunity to make use of these as part of the open learning materials.

Happy readings by Jenni, Suvi and Hanni
21.1.2026

Welcome to prepare for the working life visit!

This supporting material is intended for general upper secondary education teaching staff to support the planning and implementation of working life visits. The material is suitable for working life visits in the context of general upper secondary education, where students familiarise themselves with different fields and professions in local companies or organizations.

The aim is that the supporting material will help to carry out a pedagogical visit. The support material contains instructions, information and materials for carrying out a working life visit and finding a visitor. It contains practical instructions, background information and ready-made content, such as downloadable PDF files, which can be utilized as part of the instruction before, during and after the visit. It takes about 20 min to go through the material and includes additional reading material, which you can read according to your interest and time resource.

These visits allow young people to look at their competence, strengths and identify the connections between studying and working life with the subjects studied. The aim is that after the visit, young people would have more resources to plan their career choices guided by interest and strengths. This will help young people plan for future career choices by increasing their knowledge of working life as part of their general upper secondary education studies.

You can start by watching this short animation on gender segregation:

<https://youtu.be/OpvtX7OOF2w> (English subtitles)

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1. Introduction

The National Curriculum and the reformed General Upper Secondary Schools Act are making work life-orientation a part of all upper secondary education. A successful work life visit supports teaching, learning and orienting young people's interests and strengths towards future education and career paths.

1.1. Young people need information about working life

Working life, competence needs and ways of working are changing rapidly with technological development, the sustainability transition and globalization, among other things. Do you remember your own thoughts about your study and career path as a general upper secondary education student? What did working life look like then? Time travel will help you orient your visit from the perspective of young people.

Young people want to be working life-oriented in their general upper secondary education studies to make it easier to make plans for the future and, already during their studies, to form realistic perspectives on work tasks and working life in general.

Read more

For young people's views on working life, you can read, for example:

- Junior Achievement (JA) Finland: (<https://nuortenny.fi/en/teachers/>)

1.2. Occupational segregation by gender requires attention

Gender can be approached from several different perspectives. The gender sensitive perspective recognises the effects of cultural meanings. In the process, the perspective is shifted from children to the adults who educate and guide them. The educator's activities as well as the perceptions, assumptions and prejudices guiding them become the focus (1).

The Finnish education sector as well as the Finnish labour market are segregated by gender (2). Gender differences often manifest themselves in the speech and behaviour of individuals without them noticing or meaning it, and making these unconscious practices and attitudes visible enables the development of equal practices (3).

Gender segregation already manifests in the school system (4). In the Education sector and on the labour market, gender segregation influences all genders' salaries and job roles, as well as their ability to influence their circumstances (5). Gender-sensitive practices can help mitigate the situation.

Gender-sensitive approaches to guidance are important for all genders. To reduce gender divisions in employment, guidance should provide students with new educational and career opportunities and encourage young people to make choices based on their interests and strengths (6). Support and information are needed for gradual development of permanent interest (7). In other words, this is not a characteristic that a person either has or does not have.

Gender-conscious approaches can mitigate the way that gender affects career choices (8). The visit model has been planned to promote this goal by raising awareness of the phenomenon, supporting educators and visitors, and providing students with role models. Employer representatives who participate in visits are instructed to discuss their workplace and field with a gender-sensitive approach. They are instructed to emphasise factors that studies have shown to raise interest towards segregated sectors, including in underrepresented groups.

Read more

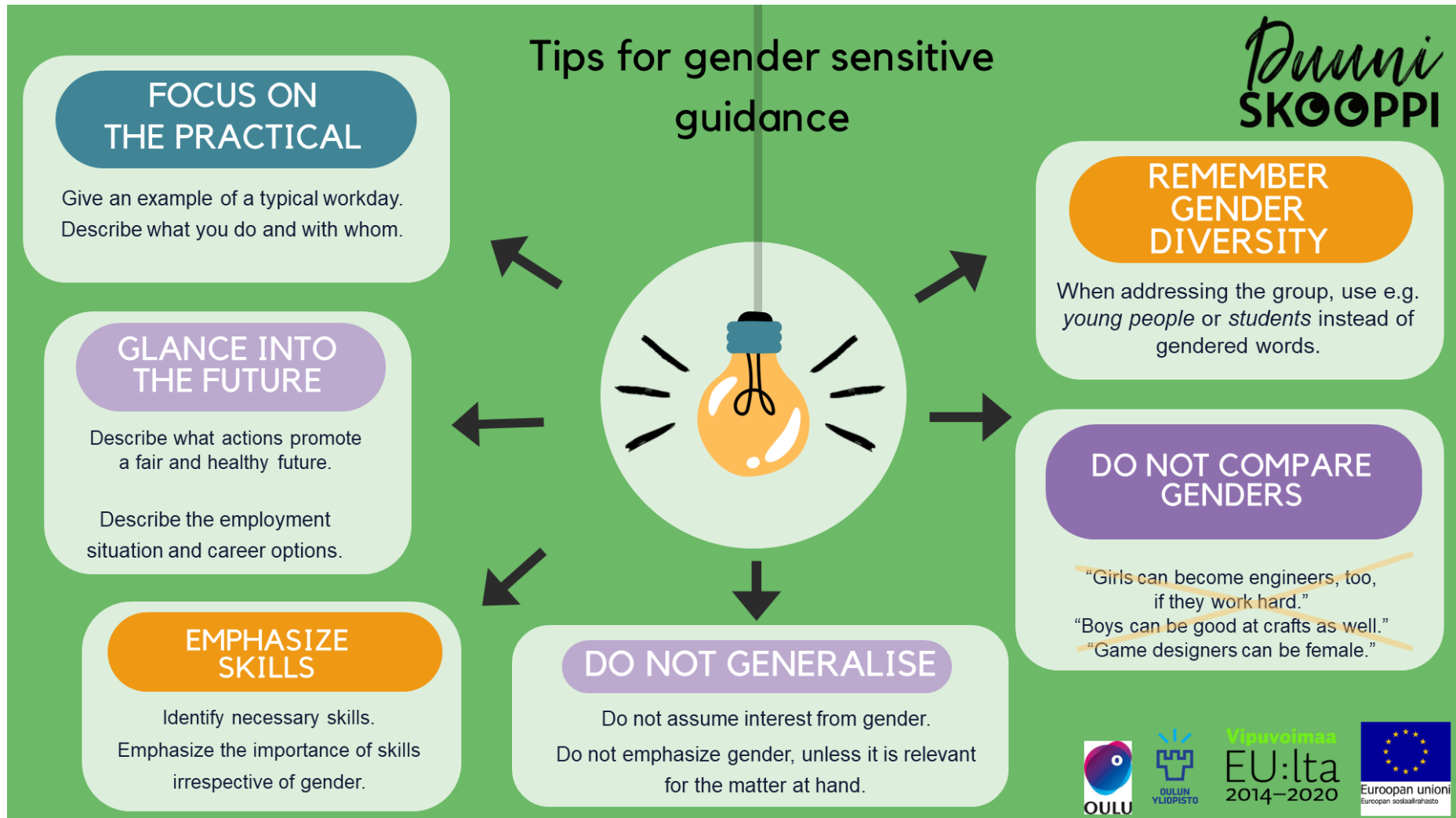
- **We interviewed university lecturer and researcher Mervi Heikkinen about equality, gender and intersectionality.**
[Expert interview - Mervi Heikkinen](#) (Finnish subtitles included)
- If you wish, read more about gender segregation in additional materials (in this material): [Segregation of professional sectors by gender requires attention](#)

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Ways to account for gender sensitivity in teaching and guidance

Below are a few tips on how to take a gender-sensitive approach when talking to young people about issues related to education and working life.

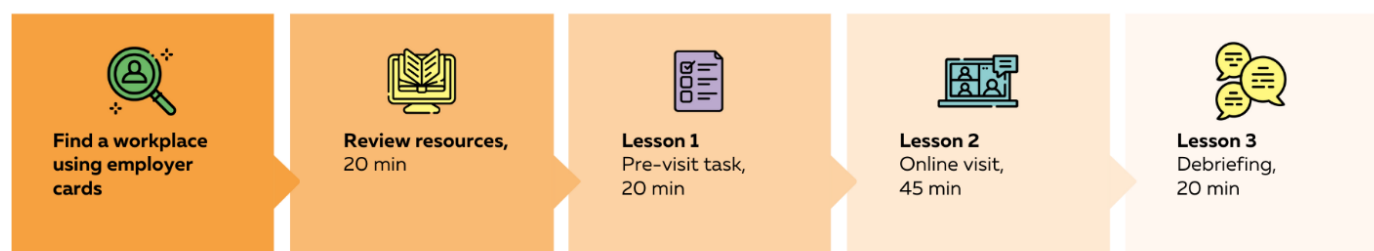


2. Before the visit

2.1. Needed time resources

The working life visit model can be applied to fit your own schedule. The design considers the limited time resources. In the following pages you will find more information and ideas on how to implement the different phases of the model.

Work life visit process for educators



Work life visit process for educators

- Find a workplace
- Review resources, 20 min
- Lesson 1: Pre-visit task, 20 min
- Lesson 2: Online visit, 45 min
- Lesson 3: Debriefing, 20 min

2.2. Tips for Finding a Workplace Visitor

Finding a working life visitor for your own course of study can feel challenging and burdensome. However, here are some tips you can use when looking for a visitor for your lesson. In finding a working life visitor, it is worth taking advantage of:

- **teaching content in one's own subject**, related to the visitor's job duties or training. In this case, the visit is easily linked to the subjects of the course, and it does not remain detached.
- **students' wishes and interests**, whereby students are already invested in the visit. For example, you can ask students about their own desired professions for the future and select a visitor's profession among them.
- **the school's alumni network**, if the school has a ready alumni network, you can find good contacts there or among your own old students.

- It is worth enquiring about the interest of **students' guardians** as visitors to working life. Guardians are already familiar characters to the teaching staff, making it easier to communicate with them about the visit, among other things.
- **local businesses and operators** that could be contacted

2.2. The visit is a pedagogical unit

The success of a working life visit requires planning. The preparation of both the teacher and the visitor for the visit with the help of supporting material supports a pedagogically high-quality outcome. Think before visiting, what is the goal of the visit and what do you want young people to learn during the working life visit?

Before the visit, contact the employer representative and agree on:

- **Mode of visit:** online, on-site or students visiting the organisation's premises
- **Duration:** The visit has been designed to fit a single general upper secondary school lesson (75 min) with a total length of **approx. 45 min**. You can also agree on a longer duration.
- **Practical arrangements and any additional information about the students**
- **Division of roles and labour:** would you like to utilise your skills and familiarity with the student group to create interaction or take a more observational role?

Will you be using the [life path task](#) (see resources in this material) as a guideline?

If yes, the teacher, student and employer representative each complete the task in preparation for the visit. The employer representative uses the task to present their career path during the visit. The task can also be used to align students with the visit and for debriefing. The task helps students in understanding their life path phases.

2.3. Roles of the teaching person and the working life representative

Teaching staff (subject teacher or guidance counsellor)

- Find a suitable place to visit
- Contact the selected organization and agree on visiting time
- Review the supporting material of the teaching staff
- Prepares for a visit with support materials
- complete the visit during the course (close or remote implementation)
- After the visit, a summary discussion at the end of the lesson or at the next lesson

Working life representative

- Go through the working life representative's support material before visiting
- Prepares for a visit with support materials
- prepares a proposal to support the implementation of the visit
- implements a visit to a high school course (close or remote implementation)

Please share support material for working life representatives, which can be found at the following link:

[Support material for working life representatives](#)

2.4. What to consider when choosing a mode of implementation

If visiting the organisation's premises

- Teacher and school are responsible for the students; notify the principal and guardians if applicable
- Review possible safety and data protection rules with the students

Employer representative visits the school

- Discussions and active students add value to an on-site visit
- Encourage students to interact and ask questions during the visit
- You should also participate by asking questions

Online visit

- Select a suitable video call service (e.g. Teams), create an invitation link and send it to the visitor.
- Determine how to include students in the online meeting:
 - What kind of technology is available in the classroom? Could you use the camera on your own computer?
 - Does the school have a dedicated space for online meetings with the appropriate technology?
 - Will the students join the meeting from their own computers? If students join the meeting from their own computers, having them have their cameras on improves their concentration.

2.5. Lesson 1 - Introduction, approx. 20 minutes

Prepare your students for the visit so that they know something about the applicable field and organisation. Browse the company website.

To introduce the visit, you can for example

- Think about and prepare questions to ask the employer representative
- Collect your students' preconceptions of the field or organisation
- Ask students whether they are interested in the field and factors affecting their answer
- Consider what skills and knowledge might be required in the field and how this related to your subject content

You can download the finished pdf slideshow here: [Lesson 1 orientation for the visit](#)
Instruct students if necessary to complete their own life path as a homework assignment. You can also start the task with a lesson schedule. The task can be found in [additional teaching materials](#).

3. During the visit

3.1. Take these into account in different implementations during the visit

As a teaching staff, during the visit you have the responsibility to guide and enable interaction between the visitor and the students, introduce the visitor to the students, take care of the rules of conduct and order of the class, and the safety of the students.

Different ways of executing a visit bring different responsibilities and tasks during the visit:

If visiting the organisation's premises

- Teacher and school are responsible for the students; notify the principal and guardians if applicable
- Review possible safety and data protection rules with the students

Employer representative visits the school

- Encourage students to interact and ask questions during the visit
- Participate by asking questions yourself.
- Interaction activity can be increased e.g. by creating a Padlet where students can record questions during the visit

Online visit

- Choose your preferred mode of interaction: you best know your students.
- Students can participate in the discussion by for example typing in the meeting chat or turning on their microphones for asking questions.
- Consider creating a Padlet or similar for questions and thoughts during the visit.

4. After the visit

4.1. Lesson 2 – visit and debriefing of the visit

The visit and the debriefing are suitable for one lesson, if you have agreed on a visit duration of about 45 minutes. For a longer duration or a close-up visit to the organization's premises, allow time for disassembly approx. 20 min from the 3rd lesson. We encourage both the teacher and the working life representative to play an active role and interact with the students.

You can download a ready-made pdf slideshow to deconstruct the visit here: [Lesson 2 – visit and debriefing of the visit](#)

4.2. Support for debriefing the visit

In order not to leave the visit as an isolated event during the course, a summary and a small deepening after the visit is in order. **Below are a few tips for deconstructing the visit. Make use of one or more.** It is also worth returning to the themes of the visit later in the course.

Insights and condensation

Students can discuss the following questions in pairs or in small groups, for example:

- Did the perception of the field or profession change with the visit? If so, why?
- What was instructive about the visit and the visitor's career path?
- Could you see yourself working in that field?
- Summarise the different roles in the sector and the training they require. Can you imagine studying any of these options?

What did this have to do with?

Linking the visit to the contents and objectives of the course helps students to understand the importance of broad-based competence in future careers as well as a direct connection to the subject to be studied.

Take up the objectives and contents of the course in curriculum (link to [Study Path](#)) from the curriculum. Ask students to come up with examples of how the content learned during the period could be utilized in the visitor's professional field or work assignment.

The aim is to support students to see the importance of the subject in a concrete way. As working life and competence are changing, the importance of the subject can also be considered in the future, e.g. how will the knowledge and skills of geography or physics be utilized in each organization?

Additional material

Life path task for educators

The life path task can be used as a visiting process guideline. **In this case, the aim is that the assignment is completed by teacher, students and employer representative when preparing for the visit.**

The task helps you understand your career path and factors that influenced it. Seeing your responses during preparation or debriefing may be an interesting experience for your students.

Use significant life events and experiences in the task:

- Years for primary school, middle school, secondary and tertiary education
- Hobbies
- Moving from one municipality to another
- Internships and work placements, studies, summer jobs, other employments
- Mistakes/errors/difficult situations or work assignments
- Competencies/strengths/skills that have contributed to your experience
- Describe how you have benefited from the subject that you teach

Download the printable image by clicking on the text:

[Life Path Printable Image](#)

Download the task to your computer here:

[Life Path Mission for Teaching Staff \(pptx\)](#)

Life path task for students

Use the instructions if you have agreed to use the task with your employer representative. You can use the task for student introduction and debriefing in all cases.

During the pre-visit lesson (lesson 1)

- Instruct students to complete the life path task as homework or start doing the task in class.
- Please note that it can be challenging for a student to do a life path assignment. Putting your present on the path can be difficult. For some, the future looks bright and full of possibilities. Others have no idea what they want in life.

Life path task instructions for student

Write down life phases and experiences that have been particularly significant to you:

- Significant years, e.g. when you finished comprehensive school
- Hobbies
- TET periods, internships, summer jobs, student exchanges
- Strengths, skills and competences
- Moving from one municipality to another
- Trips abroad

You can also think about your life path: where do you see yourself in 10 years?

- What kind of an apartment do you live in? Do you live in a city or in the countryside?
- How do you make a living?
- What do you do on your spare time?
- Do you live alone or with family?

Tips for debriefing

A summary and deepening can help integrate the visit seamlessly into your study unit. The following tips can help in debriefing. You can use one tip or several. We recommend revising the themes of the visit later in the study unit.

The Diversity of Life Paths

- You can introduce students to your own life path assignment and the factors that influenced it. What factors have influenced you to work in your current profession?
- Remember the career story presented by the working life representative in the form of a life path assignment. Was the path surprising or typical for students? What factors had contributed to the current profession?
- What similarities and differences do students find in the life paths of a working life representative and a teacher compared to their own role?

Students' own life path (can be implemented as a couple or group task)

- What kind of knowledge, skills and strengths have they already utilized in their own life path?
- How can you make use of your strengths and expertise in studying the subject at hand? And in the future?
- In what situations has the subject taught in your life path already been beneficial to you (e.g., using a language abroad, understanding chemical processes as part of cleaning at home or cooking, or knowing mathematics as part of sharing expenses with friends or building)?

Towards the future (can be implemented as a pair or group task)

- Where do you see yourself in 10 years?
- What is the smallest possible step you can take today to move towards the future of your image?

Link to printable image:

[Life Path Printable Image](#)

Download the pdf slideshow to your machine by clicking on the text:

[Life Path for students](#)

Further reading

Occupational segregation by gender requires attention

Occupational segregation, or segregation by gender, is a complex phenomenon that involves several factors. Segregation is only the top of the iceberg: there are multiple factors under the surface. Occupational interests are affected e.g. by subject interests, support and barriers, culture, attitudes, expectations and perceptions of each field as well as belief in one's abilities (1). The cultural influence of gender, on the other hand, can have an impact on which paths people are encouraged and guided to take, and this may factor into the segregation of different fields of employment later. Are all genders encouraged to partake in different activities equally, or are individuals automatically and perhaps subconsciously offered different kinds of guidance depending on for example their gender?

While gender-linked attitudes can be subconscious, studies offer extensive evidence of unequal treatment of different genders. Gender has been observed to influence how a child is treated at different ages: for instance, researchers have observed that girls and boys were complimented differently and given different responsibilities in a nursery environment. Girls were complimented for being helpful and a greater degree of independence was expected of them, while boys received compliments for their personality traits (2). Additionally, a study involving upper secondary school students found that guidance counselling received by students is affected by their gender. Girls and boys with the same interests were encouraged to seek different professional roles. For example, girls were encouraged to pursue teaching jobs while boys were encouraged to seek leadership roles (3).

Unequal treatment may have far-reaching consequences, for instance with regard to career choices. Girls have been found to face more negative prejudice towards their mathematical skills at school and at home (4, 5, 6) even though no differences have been found in their mathematical skills compared to boys (7, 8, 9, 10). This, in turn, may affect the development of mathematical self-efficacy and mathematical interest, which have been found to be linked to later interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) (11, 12, 13). In the 2017 Gender Equality Barometer, men reported having received less support for gender-atypical choices after basic education than women (14). Additionally, there is evidence that men choosing to pursue nursing are appreciated less for their choice than women are for

choosing STEM careers (15). Following this, encouragement can have a significant impact when a young person contemplates future career paths (1, 3, 22, 24).

In addition to encouragement, belonging has been found to correlate with women's interest in pursuing STEM careers. The same applies to men's interest in seeking a career in the Social and Health sectors, as well as in Education (16). Students in a field deemed atypical for their gender have been found to discontinue their studies more often than students representing the majority gender in their field (14). Not feeling welcome in gender-atypical education or employment may drive individuals to gender-typical fields (17).

At the moment, not much is known of gender minorities' career choices (18), but gender minorities have been found to be underrepresented in STEM fields. A 2023 study found that non-binary students in technical fields experienced less belonging compared to other students (19). In general, gender minorities experience discrimination in the labour market (20).

A complex phenomenon like segregation needs to be met with collaboration. Attitudes, work cultures and societal structures must change. One way to do this is to provide our youth with role models and inform them of the diverse possibilities of different fields, and by doing so, encourage and drive interest for different options. However, different fields should not be presented as better or worse to people of different genders. Reducing the influence of gender is crucial for enabling each individual to make choices according to their interests and strengths.

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