

If the New Finnish Prime Minister, Sanna Marin's Childhood is Anything To Go By, She's Going to be an Able Match for the Far-Right

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Raised in a rainbow family, 34-year-old Sanna Marin will lead a five-party coalition headed entirely by women in Finland. Her experience growing up with same-sex parents will shape her tenure as Finland's youngest Prime Minister ever.

This week, Sanna Marin became the third female Prime Minister of Finland and the youngest head of government in the world at the moment. The rest of the Finnish coalition is entirely female led, formed by Li Anderson, Maria Ohisalo, Katri Kulmuni and Anna-Maja Henriksson. Only Henriksson, Minister of Justice, is over 35.

Marin has made global headlines for being currently the youngest Prime Minister in the world, for being the child of lesbian parents, for being part of an all-female coalition, but the truth is that the party she leads, the Social Democrats, are not so beloved in Finland. In fact, the country's most popular politician is 48 year-old Jussi Halla-aho, the leader of the populist Finns party, which has almost twice as much support as the Social Democrats.

Marin's rise to the top of the political ladder points to a war about to be waged between the new and the old, a generation defined by the uncompromising, anti-establishment passion of climate-crisis activist Greta Thunberg and one defined by the uncompromising passion of the patriarchal establishment, as defined by populist leaders from Putin to Trump, Bolsonaro to Orbán.

With Marin as Finland's Prime Minister, that battle between is well and truly on and the world will be watching to see which style of politics comes out on top. Climate change, equality and social welfare are Marin's top priorities. "Finland will not be finished in four years but it can get better," she said recently on social media. "That's what we're working on. I want to build a society where every child can become anything and every person can live and grow in dignity."

A tenacious personality

Marin was sworn into office on December 10 after the resignation of the leader of the Social Democratic party and at an agitated time in Finland, marked by strikes. She is a Member of the Parliament since 2015 and previously served as the Minister of Transport and Communication.

"For me, human rights and equality of people have never been questions of opinion but the basis of my moral conception," Marin states on her website. After the separation of her parents, she was raised by her mother and her mother's female partner.

In a [2015 interview](#), she said being the child of a rainbow family shaped her values as a politician. Two decades ago, diverse types of families were barely recognised in Finland and society was far less open to different sexualities. Marin acknowledged the isolation she suffered because she could not speak freely about her family.

“Silence was the hardest. Invisibility caused a sense of exclusion,” she said. “We were not recognised as a real family or equal with others.”

However, she did not encounter other difficulties the children of same-sex parents often face, possibly because of her tenacious personality. “I wasn’t really bullied at all. Even when I was small I was very direct and stubborn. I wouldn’t have easily stood for anything.”

This week’s world headlines won’t have done Marin any harm in terms of recognition in her country, but all eyes will now be trained on her as she fights to keep **Finland’s political landscape centre-left while much of the rest of Europe continues to elect right-wing leaders**, the landslide win for Boris Johnson in the UK being the latest. A lot rests on her shoulders, but that direct and stubborn personality, formed in the social exclusion of a rainbow family, might just be what’s needed to lead a coalition that can seriously challenge the popularity of Jussi Halla-aho and the Finns party.