

# FINNISH SOCIETY, CULTURE, POLITICS AND HISTORY

**A short introduction**

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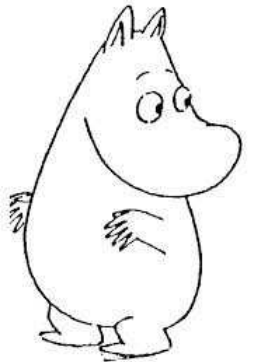
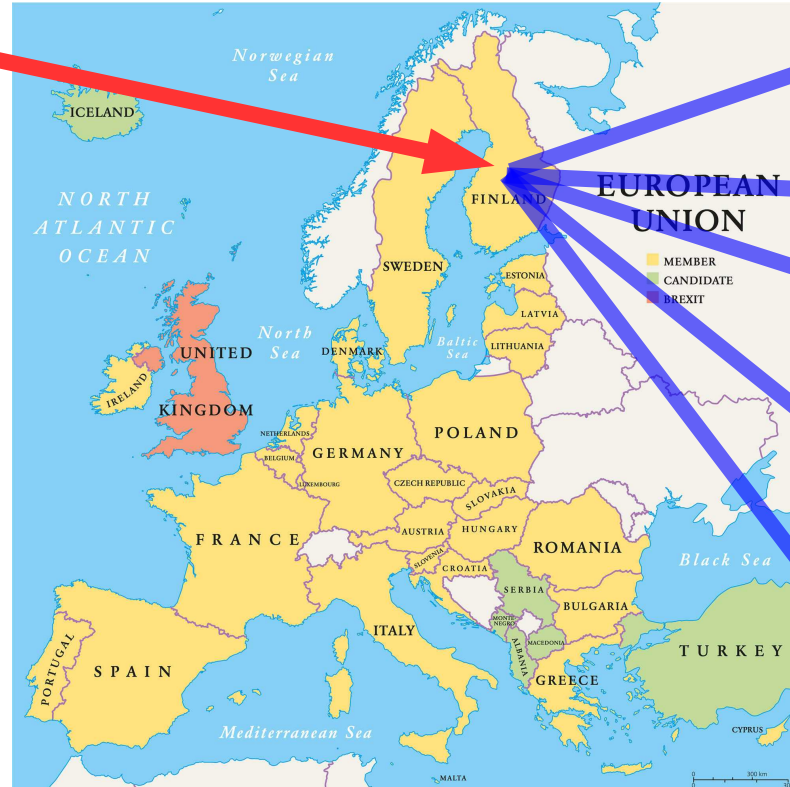
# Topics today

- The Finnish way of life and its peculiarities
- A short history of Finland
- Key facts and figures about the contemporary Finland
- Contemporary Finnish political system and society
- Finland today – between the past, the present and the future

# Where are you?

# What you might know?

- Finland is one of the Northern Countries, located in the Northern Europe
  - Lakes, forests, rocky ground, no mountains
  - Winter is cold, summer is not so warm
  - Capital city: Helsinki (~650.000 inhab.)
- Periphery of “classical” Europe and the Russian, Eastern sphere, dependency on others but also isolation
  - Crossroad of influences and battlefield
  - “Nordic community” with Sweden, Denmark and Norway
- Member of the European Union (EU) since 1995, NATO since 2023
- **National languages (2022) Finnish (86.5 %), Swedish (5.2 %), Sami – foreign languages 8.9 % (Russian 1.7%, Estonian 0.9%, Arabic 0.7%, English 0.5%)**



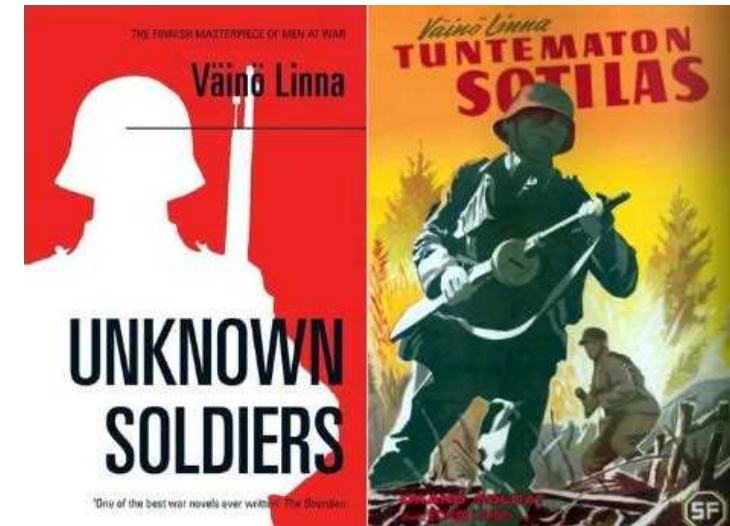
# The Finnish Way of Life

- Finland is officially “an orderly, peaceful, functioning, educated society”
- A liberal, European society with few problems and small differences in standards of living, a safe place to live
- The nature – forests, lakes, archipelago, sea – still belong closely to the Finnish mental landscape
  - unique summer cottage (*kesämökki*) lifestyle, berry & mushroom picking, hunting and fishing
  - The so-called “everyone's right” (in (gender-free) Finnish: *jokaisenoikeudet*) allows you to move freely in the nature (no free camping, no fire), pick berries, mushrooms etc. in forests and to catch fish with a rod and line (spinning/trolling only against a fishing fee!)
- A rather strong “Protestant ethics” stressing hard work and traditional values (~67 % Evangelical Lutherans [in 1950. 95.0 %, in 2000: 85.1 %])
  - The younger generation “ticks differently” in some respect → a rather strong cleavages between “cosmopolitan value-liberal” and “national conservative” groups
- A catching-up urbanisation (urbanisation rate (2022): ~85 %)



# A short history of Finland (I)

- From the 13<sup>th</sup> century to 1809 Finland was part of the Kingdom of Sweden
- From 1809 to 1917 Grand Duchy of Finland ruled by the Russian Empire
- **The Finnish Parliament declared independence on 6 December 1917**
- Following the February and October revolutions in Russia, there was a similar breakdown in Finnish society
  - In the spring 1918 armed military groups - the White (republicans) and Red Guards (communists) – fought against each other in the Finnish Civil War
  - The White Guards won the Civil War, but the country was in a turmoil, its economy destroyed, its political apparatus and its people divided
- During the inter-war period Finland was slowly reunited through compromises of moderate political groups on both the left and right
- During the WW2 Finland fought twice – in the Winter War (1939-1940) and the Continuation War (1941-1944) against the Soviet Union
  - Finland allied itself with the Nazi-Germany
  - After the signing of the Moscow Armistice (September 1944) Finland was obliged to force German troops from its territories → the Lapland War (1944-1945)
- In the aftermath of the WW2 Finland had to cede a number of territories, including much of Karelia, to pay the Soviets reparations of \$300 million (~ ½ of the Finnish GDP in 1939)
  - More than 63.000 Finns died, almost 160.000 wounded during the WW2



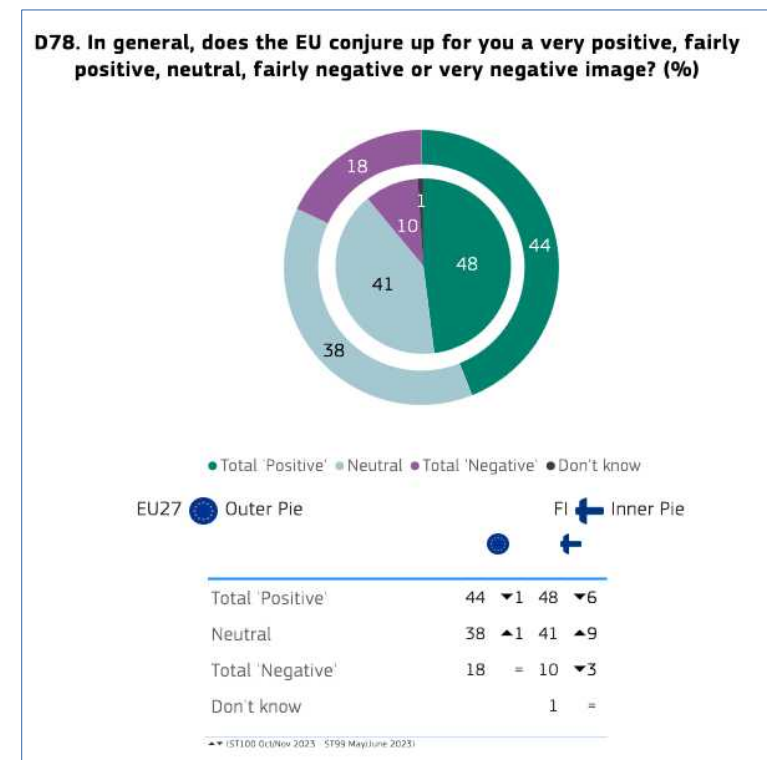
# A short history of Finland (II)

- Finland could retain its democratic structures and market economy
- During the period from the late 1940s to the mid-1990s Finland transformed from an agricultural to a post-industrial, service-based information society
- Although heading to the West(ern Europe), Finland remained politically and militarily non-aligned
  - In 1948 Finland signed the Agreement of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance with the USSR
  - Despite the treaty Finland succeeded in balancing between the West and the East and in maintaining its status as a neutral country between the superpowers
  - In 1975 Finland hosted the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which was a personal triumph for President Urho Kekkonen
- The severe depression in 1991-1993 was a shock for the Finnish economy and left deep trails in the Finnish society

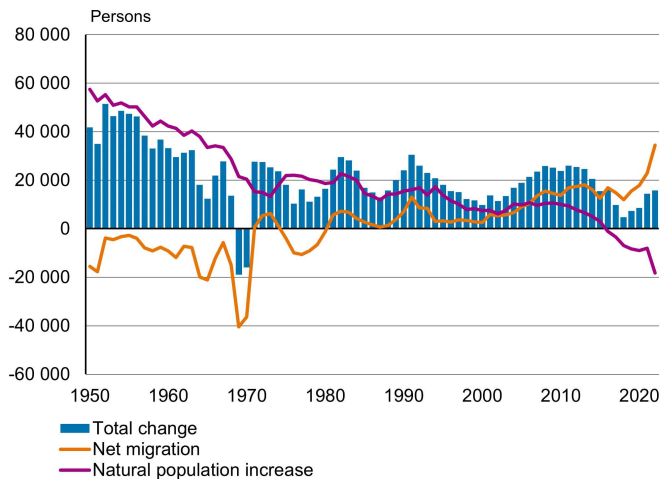
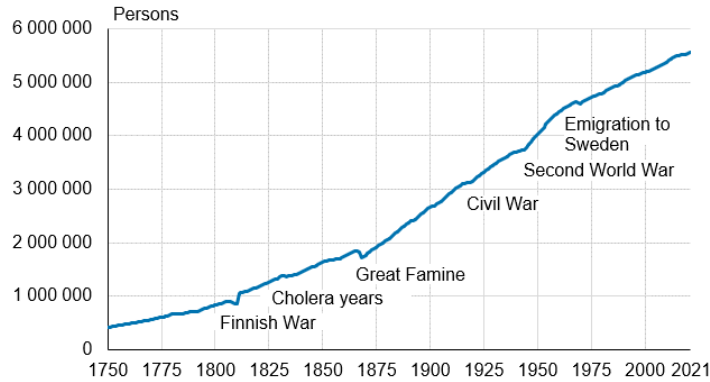


# A short history of Finland (III)

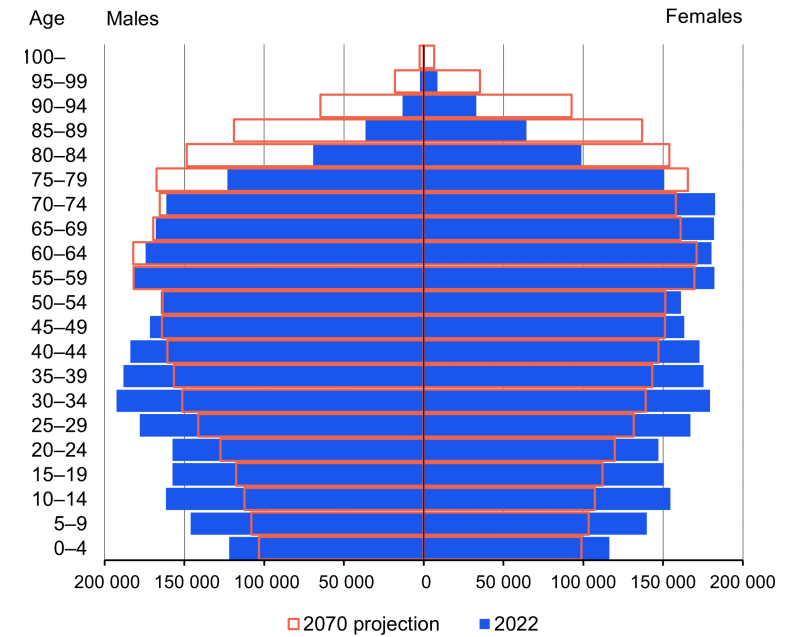
- Joining the EU in 1995 – together with Sweden and Austria – was one of Finland’s most important and impactful decisions after WW2
- In the contemporary EU Finland is one of the smallest member states → the most important reference countries are the other Nordic EU-countries and Germany
- Generally speaking, the Finns are rather positive about the EU and Finland’s membership in the EU
  - Main societal trends mirror wider European trends
  - Turnout in the EP elections has been remarkably low (<50%)
- Russia’s aggressive war against Ukraine since February 24, 2022 has dramatically changed the “mental map” of the Finns (more on that on the last slides)



# Population



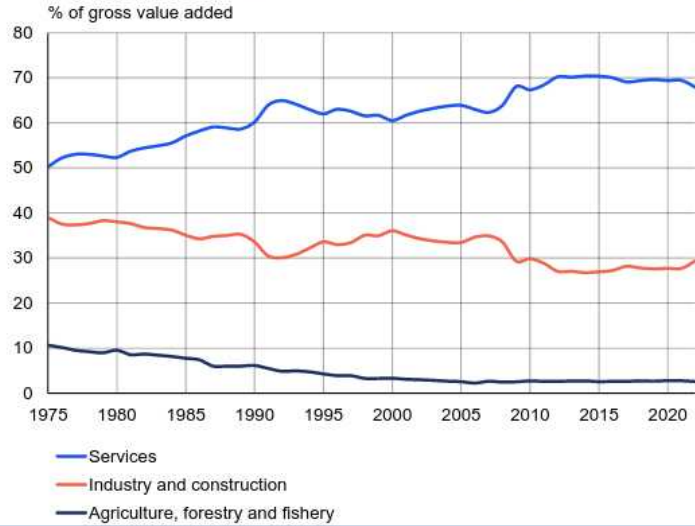
|  |  |
|--|--|
| Population 31.12.2021<br>5 548 241           |  |
| Persons with Finnish background<br>5 078 608 | Persons with foreign background<br>469 633 |
| Born in Finland<br>Native language:          | Born in Finland<br>Native language:        |
| Finnish 5 024 514                            | Finnish 81 437                             |
| Swedish 4 739 395                            | Swedish 13 535                             |
| Sami 274 113                                 | Swedish 1 246                              |
| Other language 1 950                         | Sami 8                                     |
| Born abroad<br>Native language:              | Born abroad<br>Native language:            |
| Finnish 9 056                                | Other language 66 648                      |
| Swedish 54 094                               | Born abroad 388 196                        |
| Sami 40 361                                  | Native language:                           |
| Other language 7 110                         | Finnish 6 952                              |
|  | Swedish 5 464                              |
|  | Sami 29                                    |
|  | Other language 375 751                     |



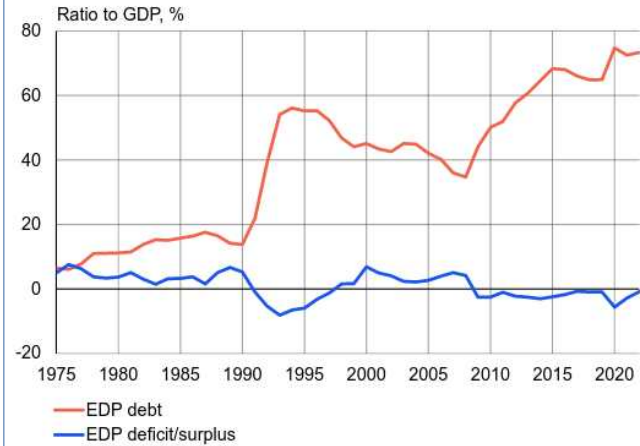


# Economy

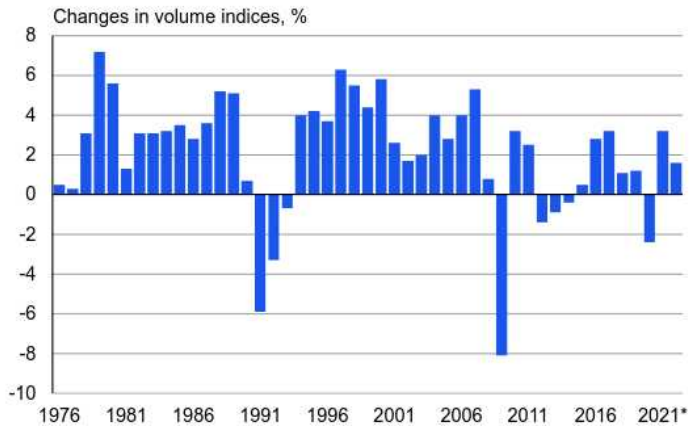
Structural change of the economy, 1975–2022\*



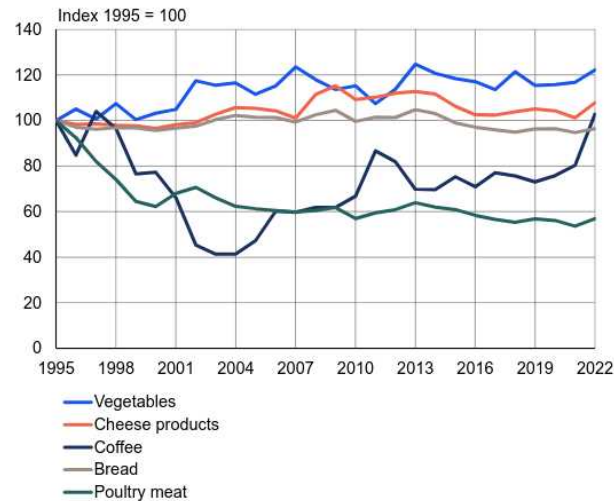
General government deficit/surplus and debt, 1975–2022\*



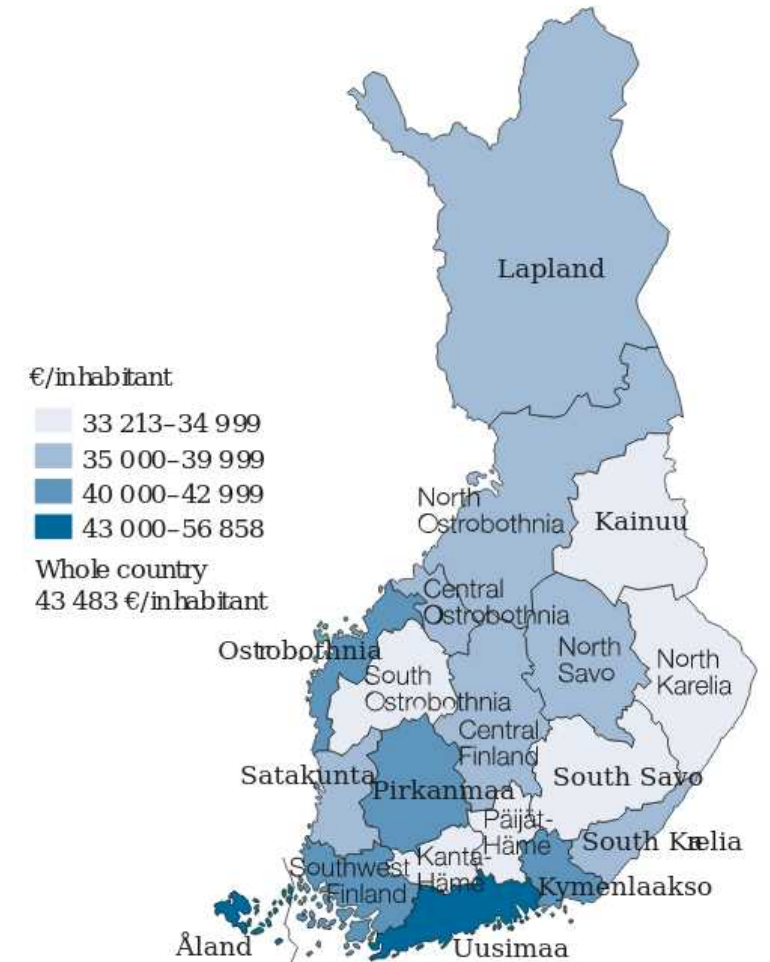
Annual change in the volume of gross domestic product, 1976–2022\*



Real price development of selected food items 1995 = 100



Gross domestic product per capita by region, 2019



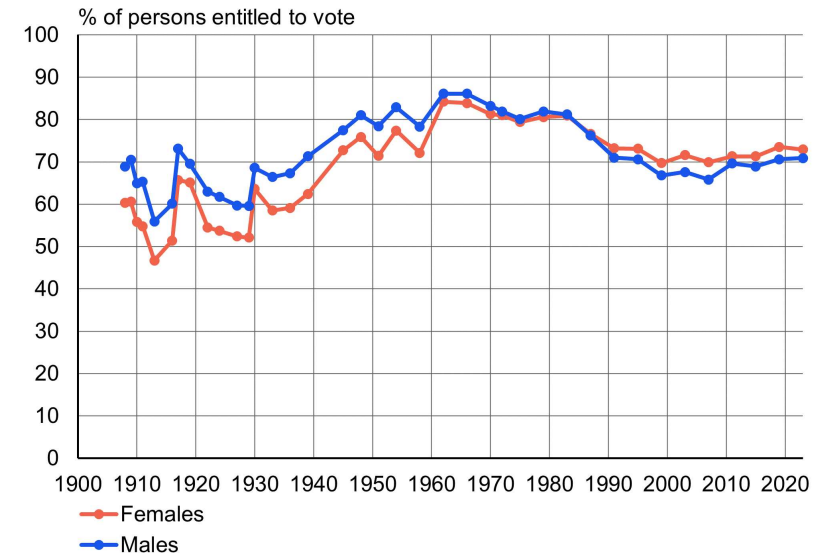
# Political system

- Finland gained independency on 6 December 1917
- Finland is a parliamentary democracy with a multiparty political system
- Legislative power is exercised by Parliament (*eduskunta*)
- Relations between Parliament, the Government and the President are governed by the principles of European party-based parliamentarism
- President (the Head of State): Sauli Niinistö (term: 2018-2024)
  - Minor executive role, major role in foreign policy
  - **Next scheduled elections on 28 January, 2024**
- Prime Minister: Petteri Orpo (National Coalition Party, term: since 6/2023)
  - PM is the most powerful executive actor
  - Current coalition: NCP, Finns, SPP, CD



# Parliament (*eduskunta*)

- At its birth in 1906, the Finnish Parliament (*eduskunta*) was something of a rarity
  - unicameral and elected by universal suffrage, women included
- Consists of 200 MPs, elected by the People for a term of four (4) year
  - Current legislative period: 2023-2027 (scheduled)
- Parliament has three main functions: (1) it passes laws, (2) it debates and approves the national budget and (3) it supervises the way the country is governed (=parliamentarism)



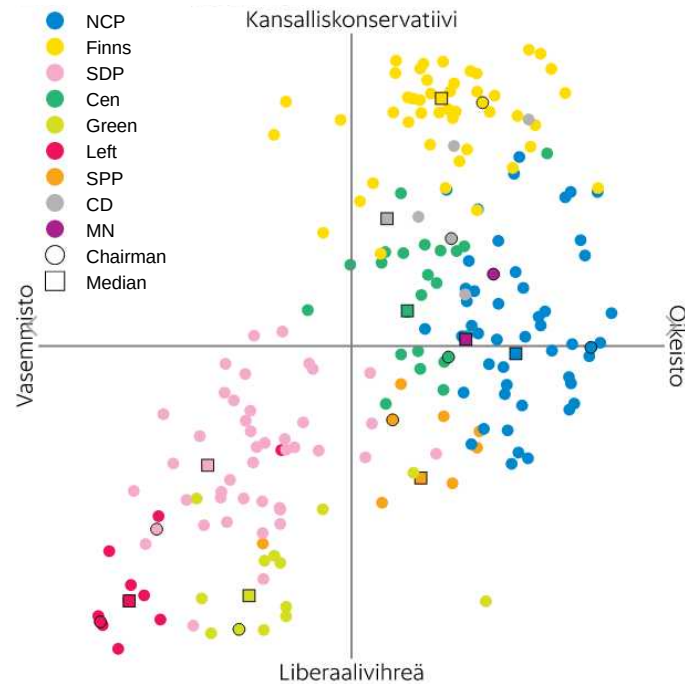
# Parties and elections

## Parliamentary elections 2023

### Value map of Eduskunta 2023

x-axis: left ... right

y-axis: GAL (bottom)... TAN (top)



### Parties

Seats Support % Results table

| Party  | Places ^ | EV2019 | %     | EV2019 % | KV2021 % |
|--------|----------|--------|-------|----------|----------|
| NCP    | 48       | +10    | 20.8% | +3.8     | -0.5     |
| Finns  | 46       | +7     | 20.1% | +2.6     | +5.6     |
| SDP    | 43       | +3     | 19.9% | +2.2     | +2.2     |
| Cen    | 23       | -8     | 11.3% | -2.5     | -3.6     |
| Green  | 13       | -7     | 7.0%  | -4.5     | -3.6     |
| Left   | 11       | -5     | 7.1%  | -1.1     | -0.9     |
| SPP    | 9        | 0      | 4.3%  | -0.2     | -0.7     |
| CD     | 5        | 0      | 4.2%  | +0.3     | +0.6     |
| MN     | 1        | +1     | 2.4%  | +2.4     | +0.8     |
| others | 1        | -      | 0.5%  | -        | -        |

## European Parliament elections 2019

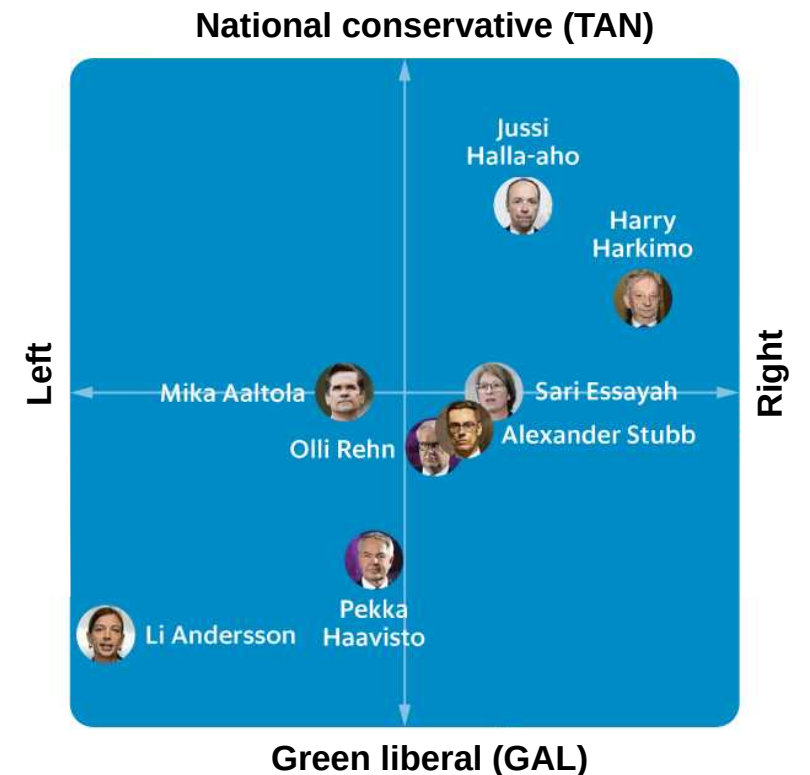
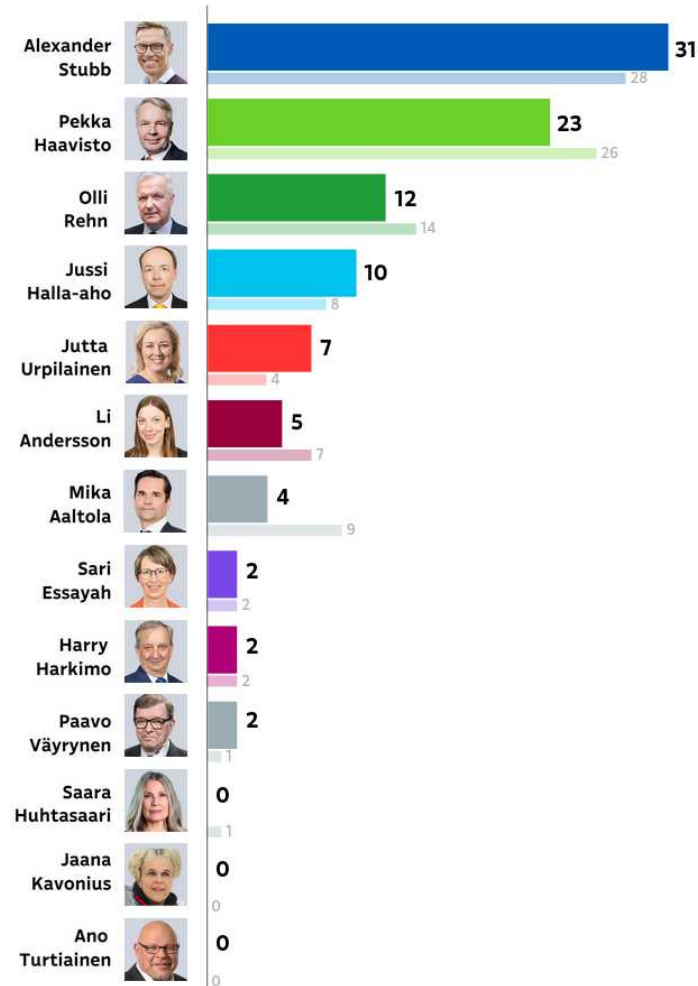
| Party                             | Votes            | %          | Change from 2014 | Number of Euro-MPs elected |
|-----------------------------------|------------------|------------|------------------|----------------------------|
|                                   |                  |            | % points         |                            |
| National Coalition Party          | 380 460          | 20,8       | -1,8             | 3                          |
| Green League                      | 292 892          | 16,0       | 6,7              | 2                          |
| Finnish Social Democratic Party   | 267 603          | 14,6       | 2,3              | 2                          |
| Finns Party                       | 253 176          | 13,8       | 1,0              | 2                          |
| Centre Party of Finland           | 247 477          | 13,5       | -6,1             | 2                          |
| Left Alliance                     | 126 063          | 6,9        | -2,4             | 1                          |
| Swedish People's Party in Finland | 115 962          | 6,3        | -0,4             | 1                          |
| Christian Democrats in Finland    | 89 204           | 4,9        | -0,4             | -                          |
| Others                            | 57 208           | 3,1        | 1,2              | -                          |
| <b>Total</b>                      | <b>1 830 045</b> | <b>100</b> | -                | <b>13</b>                  |
| Females                           | 1 000 059        | 54,6       | 6,0              |                            |

Voting turnout of Finnish citizens resident in Finland 42.7%

# Presidential elections 2024

- The next election of the President of the Republic will be held in Finland in January 2024
- Presidential election may consist of two rounds
  - If one of the candidates receives more than half of the votes in the first round, that person is elected President.
  - If no candidate receives more than half of the votes in the first round, a second round will be held between the two candidates who received the most votes in the first round

Latest opinion poll (Dec 13, 2023, N=2,046)

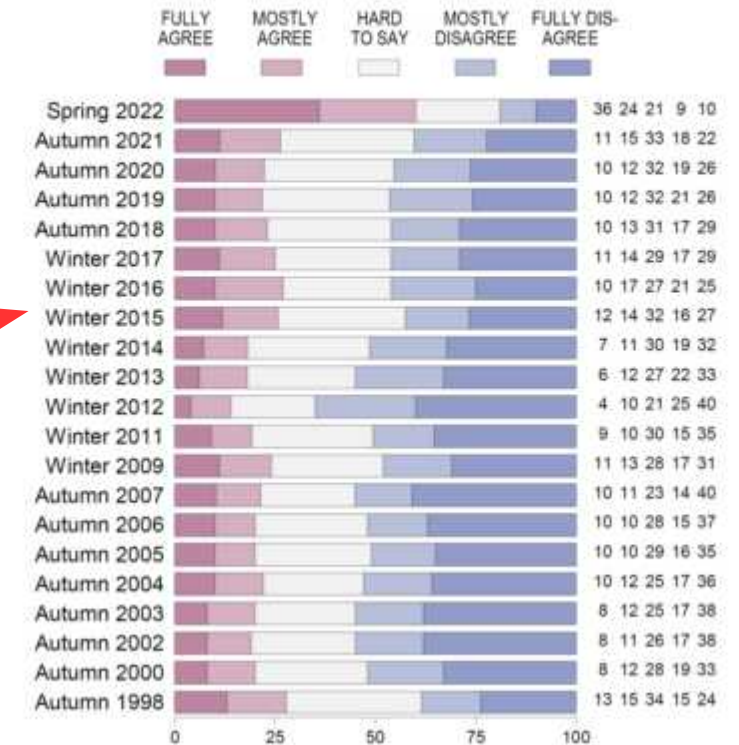


# Finland and the “emerging new normality”



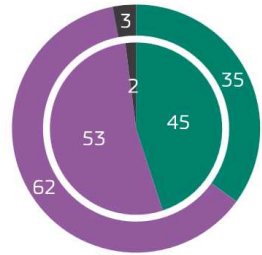
- Russia’s aggressive war against Ukraine has reset the security framework of Europe established in 1975 (CSCE)
- The EU – and Finland as its member – is facing an armed conflict in the closest neighbourhood
  - Finland is only indirectly affected by the energy crisis in Europe
- Finland’s immediate reaction was the decision to apply, together with Sweden, for a membership in NATO in spring 2022
  - This foreign and security political (U-)turn was supported by a “about-turn” of opinion polls on NATO membership within the shortest period of time
  - Finland’s full membership in NATO (since 4 April, 2023) is, as regards its impact, less dramatic compared to the joining of the EU → the strongest expected change will be in Finland’s geopolitical position and status
  - Finland’s (and Sweden’s) membership will also change NATO → 1300 km new border with Russia and a new Northern dimension
- The biggest impact, however, will be on Europe’s future security-political architecture

“Finland should join NATO” (%)



# Finns and Finland in "turbulent times"

QA1.2. How would you judge the current situation in each of the following? :-The situation of (NATIONALITY) economy (%)

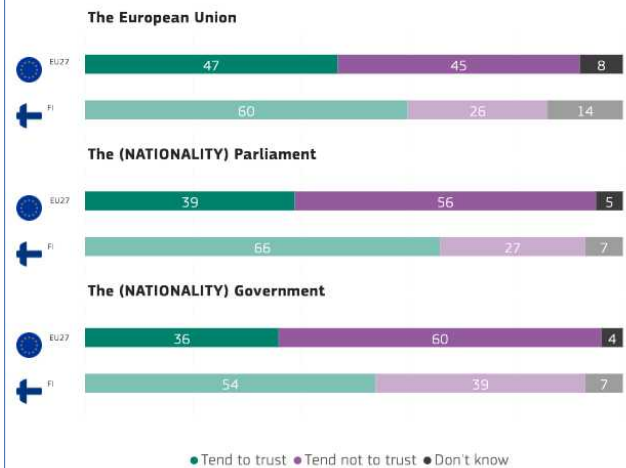


● Total 'Good' ● Total 'Bad' ● Don't know

EU27 Outer Pie

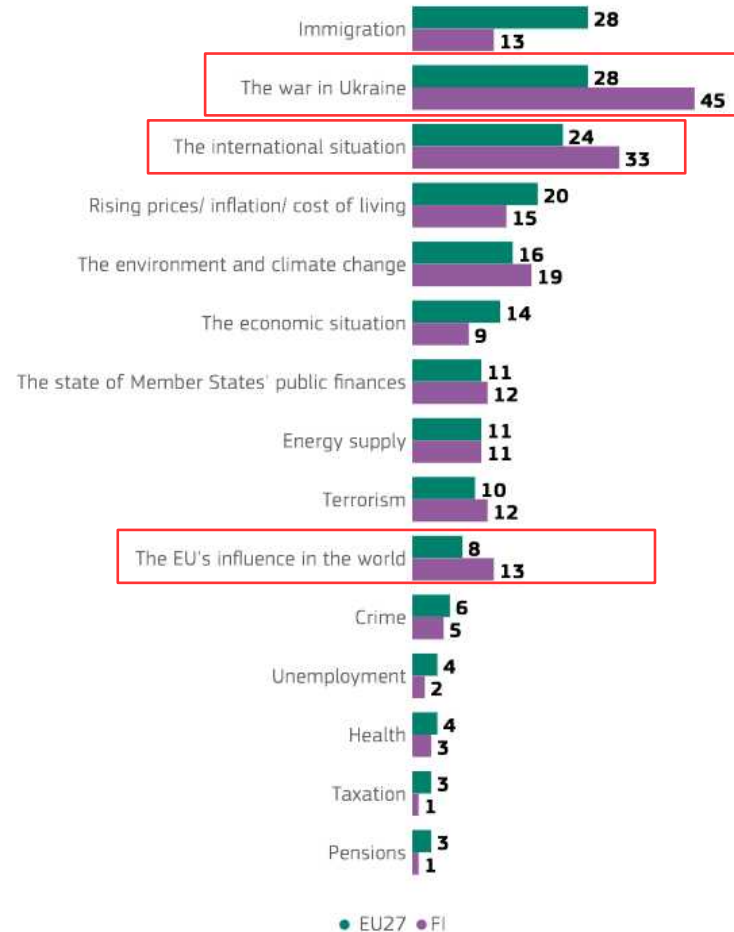
FI Inner Pie

QA6. How much trust do you have in certain institutions? For each of the following institutions, do you tend to trust it or tend not to trust it? (%)



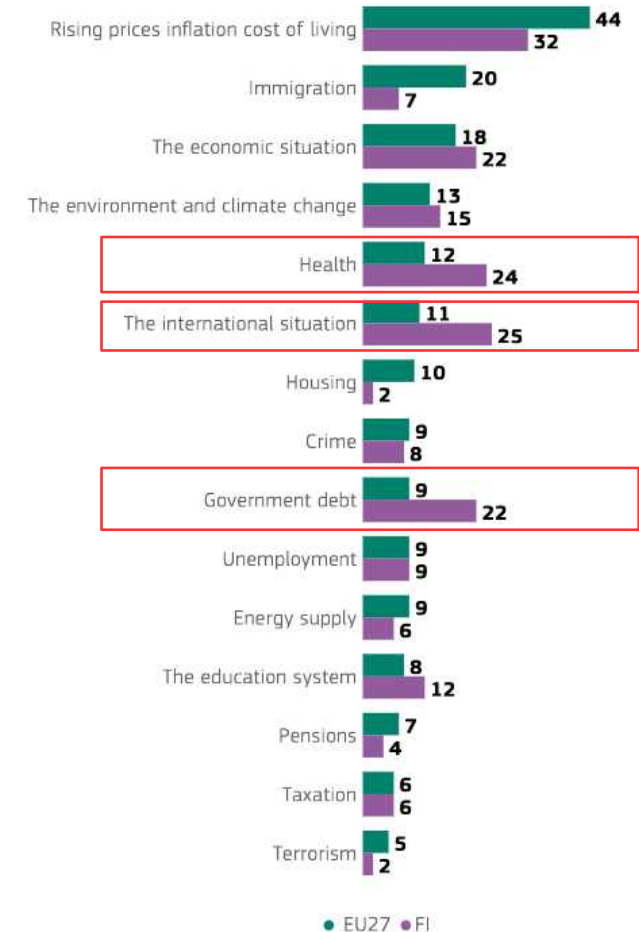
● Tend to trust ● Tend not to trust ● Don't know

QA5. What do you think are the two most important issues facing the EU at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS) (%)



● EU27 ● FI

QA3. What do you think are the two most important issues facing (OUR COUNTRY) at the moment? (MAX. 2 ANSWERS) (%)



● EU27 ● FI

# Want to find out more?

- <https://finland.fi/> - a portal for Finland
- [http://stat.fi/index\\_en.html](http://stat.fi/index_en.html) - Statistics Finland
- <https://toolbox.finland.fi/> - most important facts about Finland
- <https://www.discoveringfinland.com/about-finland/finnish-history/> - Finnish history compact
- <https://um.fi/frontpage> - Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland
- <https://www.kansallismuseo.fi/en/> - The National Museum of Finland





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**Thank you for your attention!  
Have a nice time in Turku & Finland!**