

Helsinki in 2005

In the 1990s, Helsinki's population grew by 60,000 people, i.e. by 6,000 a year on average. In 2000, however, this growth stopped completely, owing partly to a decreasing migration surplus from the rest of Finland, partly to growing migration losses to surrounding municipalities. Foreign migration, however, still gives a surplus, and the number of births is greater than the number of deaths. The year 2005 has seen new population growth.

The decreasing appeal of the Helsinki Region is, primarily, a consequence of the employment situation. The upswing that followed the economic depression of the early 1990s created growth in the big university cities in Finland, particularly in the Helsinki Region, where employment grew drastically. Helsinki has the greatest accumulation of business enterprise in the country, and it has dominated the fastest growing production sector, namely the information sector. Information services and production of information content, in particular, are strongly concentrated in the Helsinki Region.

So when growth weakened in the information sector, employment in the region was immediately affected, and in 2002, the number of jobs decreased in the region. While in Helsinki, this decline continued in 2003, in Vantaa, especially, a new growth started. The increase in the number of employed people declined, too, and at times employment has grown faster in the rest of Finland than in the Helsinki Region.

Helsinki's loss of inhabitants to its neighbours is, of course, nothing new: in the 1970s, especially, many people moved out to new housing estates in the periphery, and the 1980s were a time of very slow population growth in Helsinki. But in the 1990s, immigra-

tion and thereby population growth picked up again, with 18-29 year olds providing the greatest influx. Today, many of these people are in the process of moving to a bigger home, often in a peripheral municipality where housing prices are more affordable. Current low and, as many feel, stable EU interest rates also stimulate investment in larger homes.

Population in Helsinki and the Helsinki Region

Helsinki has long since grown beyond its borders, and today its labour and housing market or commuting area, which is usually referred to as the Helsinki Region, comprises the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, i.e. Helsinki and its three nearest neighbours Espoo, Kauniainen and Vantaa, and ten adjacent municipalities, with a total of 1.26 million inhabitants. After Helsinki became the national capital in 1812, its population doubled at 20-30 year intervals up to the 1960s, when this growth shifted over to the nearby municipalities. People looked for more spacious housing outside the city. After the "escape from the countryside" in the 1960s, a calmer period set in, to be followed by a new rapid population increase in the region. This growth, however, gradually ebbed away, and turned into a slight population drain in 1989, at a time when economy was still red hot.

A new period of even faster growth started in the early 1990s, when migration from abroad grew very significantly, too. Over the last ten years, the population figure of the Helsinki Region has risen by 140,000 equalling 1.25 per cent a year.

Compared with the rest of Finland, Helsinki's population is characterised by a great pro-

portion of young adults, and compared with the rest of the Helsinki Region, Helsinki has a smaller proportion of children and a greater proportion of over 65 year olds – although not as great as in Finland as a whole.

In the 1990s, the number of children of day care age increased rapidly and culminated in 1997. Since then, the number of 0-6 year olds has decreased by 13 per cent to 5,800. The number of 7-12 year olds, too, started falling in 2002. Instead, the number of 13-15 year olds is expected to rise up until 2007. The number of 16-18 year olds has begun to grow in 2005.

Those people born in 1945-50, the so-called large age cohorts, strongly influence the age structure in Helsinki. The proportion of elderly people in Helsinki is going to grow slowly for another few years, and a faster increase will set in when the large age cohorts start retiring after 2010. This is heralded by a rising average age among people of working age: the number of 55-64 year olds has increased by 30 per cent in the 2000s.

Recent changes in Helsinki's districts

Over the period 2003-2005, Helsinki's population figure fell by 570. Certain districts, however, experienced population growth, namely Vuosaari with 1,800 people, Malmi 1,500, Vanhakaupunki 1,260 and Latokartano 1,100. The population decreased most in Herttoniemi, by 540, and in Haaga by 500 people.

Over the period 2003-2004, some 6,700 new dwellings were completed in Helsinki, most of which in new developments in Vuosaari, Malmi and Latokartano. 80 per cent of these dwellings were flats.

In 2002, the number of jobs in Helsinki decreased by 2,400, most strongly in the business districts of Inner Helsinki and in Pitäjänmäki and Lauttasaari. In 2003 and 2004, about half a million square metres of business premises were built in Helsinki, most of all in Latokartano, Pitäjänmäki ja Vironniemi.

Population structure

Helsinki's population differs clearly from Finland's as a whole in terms of age structure. The capital has a notably stronger element of young adults – and fewer school children. In Helsinki, 25-29 year olds form the largest age group, while in Finland as a whole the 55-59 year olds do. The proportion of elderly people in Helsinki is somewhat smaller than the national average.

But there are great differences between Helsinki districts in these respects. The adjacent figure compares the population structure in three districts of totally different character: first, the inner city district Alppiharju with a strong element of small dwellings where young people moving to Helsinki often find the first home of their own; second, suburban Maunula, where two-thirds of dwellings lie in blocks of flats built in the 1950s or 60s and where the proportion of over 65 year olds is greatest in Helsinki, and third, the dynamic small house area Tuomarinkylä with the city's strongest element of families with children. By our definition, families with children must have at least one child under 18.

Families and dwelling households

At the end of December 2004, 66 per cent of Helsinki's population belonged to a family, the average size of families being 2,67 persons. The proportion of families is greatest in the detached and terraced housing areas of northern and north-eastern Helsinki. Among the households in Tuomarinkylä, almost half are families with children under 18 years of age. The element of single parent families among families is greatest in Vallila and Pasila: 43 per cent. Single housing is most common in eastern Inner Helsinki, where dwellings are generally small: 75 per cent of dwellings in Alppiharju are inhabited by only one person.

In Helsinki, housing space per person is 33.3 square metres, versus 36.6 in Finland as a whole, but among families with three or more members, the difference is even bigger. Housing is most spacious in old detached hou-

se areas and least spacious in new suburban developments where families with children have moved in, and in the eastern parts of Inner Helsinki, where small dwellings predominate.

The dwelling stock

The dwelling stock in Helsinki is dominated by small flats in blocks-of-flats. Dwellings located in detached, semi-detached or terraced houses account for only 12.8 per cent of all dwellings in the city. One-room flats account for a quarter, and flats with two rooms or less for well over half of the dwelling stock. While the average size of dwellings in the whole city is 63 square metres, it is largest in Länsi-Pakila, 97.5 sq.m., and smallest in Alppiharju, 38.1 sq.m.

48 per cent of dwellings in Helsinki are rented and 42 per cent owner-occupied. There are great differences between districts in landlord structure: While in Inner Helsinki rented dwellings are predominantly private, in Outer Helsinki 80 per cent are owned by the city. The largest proportions, over 40 per cent, of state subsidised rented dwellings are found in the districts of Jakomäki, Pasila and Maunula.

The socio-economic structure of the population

The socio-economic structure of the districts is largely linked to the structure of the area's dwelling stock. In Helsinki and its vicinity, a strong element of detached or terraced houses and owner-occupied housing correlates with a high level of education, whereas rented housing in developments correlates with low-income earners and less educated inhabitants. Unemployment is still worst in those areas where the level of education is lowest. A higher average age among the population also reflects itself in the employment figures, because long-term unemployment is clearly more common among older people than among young people. Eastern Inner Helsinki stands out as a home for "spell workers" – a

consequence of the youngish age structure. In the eastern parts of Outer Helsinki, the great proportion of ageing people with a relatively low education appears in the form of high long-term unemployment.

The use of municipal services

The use of the services provided by the municipality depends on the inhabitant structure, but also on the quality and quantity of the service. To give an example, 55 per cent of children of day-care age (0-6 years old) in Helsinki receive full-day care in municipally provided day care centres or family care. The municipal day care, both full-time and part-time, is somewhat more frequented in the northern, north-eastern and south-eastern parts of the city than in Inner Helsinki and the eastern districts. In areas with a stronger element of young families with children, the use of municipal day care is not more frequent in proportion, because in families with many children it is often more interesting to look after your children at home.

The use of municipal health services is influenced by, above all, the age structure of the population. In areas with a high average age or many children or a low income level, municipal health care is frequented more than elsewhere. People are more inclined in Inner than in Outer Helsinki to frequent private medical services. This probably comes from the fact that the provision of private medical care is concentrated in the inner city.

Smoothness of traffic

Ever since 1991, the smoothness of car traffic in Helsinki has been surveyed on 14 different roads, eight of which run towards the city centre, the remaining six running transversally. In 2005, traffic during morning rush hours was smoothest on the Itäväylä eastern urban main road and the Lahti motorway north-eastwards. Since 2001, however, traffic smoothness has deteriorated overall, with Itäväylä as the only exception.

Traffic has increased on the transversal roads, too. Therefore, smoothness on the Ring III has been improved by means of viaducts. Westwards, however, the increasing number of jobs in Espoo has implied growing pressures on road traffic.

Differences between Helsinki districts by international comparison

The Department for Regional Policy of the European Commission and the Eurostat have cooperated for a project by the name of Urban Audit, as a result of which the Urban Audit Database has been created featuring harmonised statistics on large and medium size

European cities. Indicators at regional, city and district level on living conditions and quality of life have been included in the database.

Statistics on some EU15 cities are presented here at district level. The diagrams show the average for each city as well as the figure for its lowest and highest ranking districts. Large cities, in particular, typically show considerable local differences in terms of unemployment, education and household structure, for example. Helsinki has a strong element of small households, in which respect the city resembles other cities of northern Europe. The average level of education is highest among the cities compared, and unemployment in 2001 was nowhere near the EU15 average.