

# From Agenda to Action

Implementation of the UN Sustainable  
Development Goals in Helsinki 2025

Helsinki



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# Sustainable Helsinki

The strategy period is coming to an end, and the past four years have brought major changes. The Russian invasion of Ukraine forced Helsinki to rapidly overhaul its energy production and raised the 2022 emissions to a very high level. Moreover, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the mental well-being of young people did not develop in the desired direction. However, Helsinki has taken action to address these problems: in 2023, greenhouse gas emissions fell by more than a quarter from the previous year after the closure of the Hanasaari coal power plant. Access to mental health services, especially for children and young people, has also been improved with the opening of Mieppi low-threshold mental health service units in Haaga and Kalasatama, for example.

Children and young people are at the heart of the City's strategy in other ways as well. In autumn 2024, Helsinki became the first Nordic capital to be recognised as a Child Friendly Municipality by UNICEF. The recognition is granted to municipalities that promote children's rights in all of their activities. Physical activity among primary school children has also picked up during the strategy period: Helsinki has promoted

this by offering free activities based on the wishes of children and young people during the school day, in line with the Finnish Model for Leisure Activities.

For Helsinki, the well-being of all districts has been important during this strategy period. In the suburban regeneration areas of Kannelmäki–Malminkartano, Malmi, Mellunkylä and Meri-Rastila, efforts have been made to improve services and amenities. Helsinki is taking these measures to achieve equality between its areas, and area development has been taken into account in the City's budget and funding allocation. The development of the city's areas is a long-term process and has started with such measures as the renovation of playgrounds and local sports facilities in the suburban regeneration areas.

The prevention of severe segregation of the city's neighbourhoods and population groups has also been a key objective during the strategy period. Violent crimes committed by young people and a growing sense of insecurity in neighbourhoods point to increasing and diverging well-being support needs. The accumulation of risk factors can lead to disengagement or marginalisation, deepening the lack of

prospects, mistrust and alienation from society and other population groups. To stop this trend, the City has taken steps to strengthen protective factors and increase communality in schools, educational institutions and leisure activities. The City also provides targeted support for troubled children and young people and their families.

The city has been growing at a record rate for the last four years. With this growth, the need for housing and construction is immense, but there is much to reconcile. The City's ability to reconcile conflicting sustainability goals is becoming ever more crucial as Helsinki's ambitious climate and biodiversity goals need to be balanced with the growing city.

The ambitious climate targets have progressed according to plan. Helsinki's last coal power plant in Salmisaari will close in 2025. Based on the current measures, Helsinki will reach its target of cutting emissions by 80% from the 1990 level by 2030. Transport emissions will become the largest source of emissions from 2025 onwards, and the City will have to find solutions to this problem as well. During this strategy period, Helsinki has addressed this by making significant investments in low-carbon transport infrastructure: a new tram line was completed between Nihti and Pasila, and the network of cycle lanes with enhanced winter maintenance has been extended around Helsinki, for example in Kulosaari and Munkkiniemi.

In addition to its climate work, Helsinki has taken significant steps to increase biodiversity. Helsinki achieved its strategic goal of adding five new nature reserves every year until the end of 2024. The City of Helsinki's new environmental protection targets for 2040 aim to increase the proportion of strict nature reserves to at least 10% of both land and sea area – ensuring that the commitment to nature conservation is future-proofed.

As a city, we have also wanted to punch above our weight. We have invited top sustainability experts to the Sustainable Cities Discussion Forum events hosted by me to discuss issues such as the challenges of carbon-neutral cities and quality education. We have also received international recognition: in 2022, Helsinki received the Access City Award for its accessibility work, and in 2024, Helsinki was ranked first in the Global Destination Sustainability Index, which measures the sustainability of travel and event destinations. We want to continue our ambitious work so that others can learn from our example

In January 2025,

**Juhana Vartiainen**  
Mayor of Helsinki

# Fourth Voluntary Local Review

The City of Helsinki is committed to promoting and assessing the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in its City Strategy 2021–2025: A Place of Growth. Helsinki has carried out Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) in 2019, 2021 and 2023. This is the City's fourth review and continues and deepens the assessment of the key themes, building on the development work based on the 2023 report. In 2023, the Voluntary Local Review was part of the mid-term review of the City Strategy, and this fourth review is part of the final review of the strategy period.

## The objectives of the review are the following:

- to provide an overall picture and understanding of Helsinki's status and progress towards the SDGs
- to openly highlight Helsinki's successes and areas for development
- to develop and deepen the assessment and measurement of key sustainability themes
- to assess the successes and challenges of the strategy period in achieving the SDGs.

The review seeks to assess Helsinki's development from the perspective of the SDGs, emphasising concrete actions while simultaneously identifying themes for development. VLR 2025 is an expert review, consisting of a concise description of various themes, indicators measuring progress and story-like examples of the City's various activities in everyday life.

## A changing operating environment

Helsinki and Finland continue to live in a time of uncertainty. During this council period of office, the COVID-19 crisis has eased, but the long-term effects are still being felt. Moreover, the wars in both Ukraine and the Middle East and the general geopolitical uncertainty translate into an increased focus on safety issues and preparedness. Fortunately, the energy crisis has abated, and the inflation and rising interest rates have also levelled off. However, the positive development of the economy is slow and the employment situation is showing signs of deterioration.

The population of Helsinki has started to grow and is projected to keep growing and diversifying at a rapid pace. The segregation of neighbourhoods and the well-being of children and young people continue to pose challenges for Helsinki. Internationally, opposition to gender equality, women's and girls' rights and the rights of gender and sexual minorities has been growing recently. There has also been an increase in crime and domestic violence.

## Summary of the SDGs

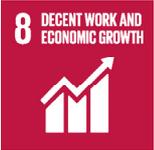
The SDGs are strongly interlinked, and it is challenging to make completely unambiguous interpretations between the SDGs and the City's themes. The table below summarises Helsinki's key indicators, goals and notes related to the different SDGs.

### Explanations of the icons

-  The indicator has developed positively
-  No significant change in the development of the indicator
-  The indicator has developed negatively
-  SDG achieved or close to being achieved
-  Challenges in achieving the SDG
-  Significant challenges in achieving the SDG

SDG	Key indicators (indicator trends 2017–2024)	Relevant notes and goals for Helsinki	Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Share of people with low income (%)</li> <li> Share of people receiving social assistance (%)</li> <li> Number of unhoused people</li> <li> Amount of household debt</li> <li> Share of households receiving a general housing allowance (%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New Government policy decisions on housing allowances are having a negative impact on the housing and livelihoods of many Helsinki residents. The number of Finns at risk of poverty or marginalisation has continued to increase after the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> <li>● Helsinki's budget decisions are mitigating several of the cuts imposed by the Finnish Government: for example, Helsinki will not introduce health centre fees, will keep the age limit for after-care in child welfare at 25 and will capitalise Heka's rent increases in 2025–2027.</li> <li>● Helsinki aims to end homelessness by 2025. Homelessness has fallen substantially, but the target is unlikely to be met.</li> </ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Helsinki has increased cooperation to develop food aid activities through the Stadin Safka model and invested in nutrition counselling.</li> </ul>	

SDG	Key indicators (indicator trends 2017–2024)	Relevant notes and goals for Helsinki	Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Perceived quality of life: share of people who feel that their quality of life is good on average (%)</li> <li> Perceived health: share of people who feel that their health is average or below average (%)</li> <li> Mental well-being (entire population and children)</li> <li> Body mass index: share of overweight people (%) in basic education</li> <li> Body mass index: share of overweight people (%) in adults</li> <li> Share of people who meet the requirements for a healthy amount of physical activity (%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The majority of the adult population are happy and feel that their quality of life and health are good, but there are differences in their experiences of quality of life, health and happiness depending on factors such as perceived income adequacy, and perceived quality of life has declined.</li> <li>● Loneliness is more common in many population groups than it was in the 2010s.</li> <li>● The mental well-being of children and young people, especially girls, has deteriorated according to many different indicators.</li> <li>● In particular, the trends in student welfare and bullying in vocational education and training are more negative than in other education groups.</li> <li>● The share of people achieving the physical activity recommendations has improved to 48%.</li> <li>● Physical activity among children and young people has increased, and their body mass index has shown a positive trend.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Share of people with a master's degree (%)</li> <li> Share of children in early childhood education (%)</li> <li> Share of foreign-language speakers among general upper secondary school graduates (%)</li> <li> Share of those who chose a school in their own school admission area, 1st grade, Finnish-language basic education (%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Children and young people's mental well-being challenges are affecting their learning.</li> <li>● Experiences of bullying have increased at all levels of education.</li> <li>● Training in emotional and interaction skills and sustainable development has been widely provided from early childhood education to upper secondary education.</li> <li>● Helsinki has invested in literacy during the 2021–2025 strategy period, but there is no comprehensive overview of literacy at the city level.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Gender gap in unemployment</li> <li> Women's perceived quality of life</li> <li> Gender gap in higher education graduates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Women's perceived quality of life has deteriorated significantly more than that of men.</li> <li>● Around one in five women have experienced discrimination, more than 1.5 times more than men. Around a fifth of the City's female employees have also been discriminated against in their work in 2023.</li> <li>● The gender gap in the well-being of children and young people has increased. Girls' experiences of sexual harassment are alarmingly common.</li> <li>● Helsinki makes visible contributions to the non-discrimination of gender minorities (e.g. through Pride partnership). The knowledge base on the situation of gender minorities in Helsinki requires improvement.</li> </ul>	

SDG	Key indicators (indicator trends 2017–2024)	Relevant notes and goals for Helsinki	Assessment
 <p><b>6</b> CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Percentage of wastewater treatment (nitrogen and phosphorus)</li> <li>Share of purified wastewater (%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water quality and purification are at a high level.</li> <li>Further measures would be needed for the qualitative management of stormwater.</li> <li>80% of groundwater is in good condition.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>7</b> AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Renewable energy production and share (%)</li> <li>Energy consumption per capita (kWh)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The production of renewable energy has increased.</li> <li>The last coal power plant in Helsinki will be closed in 2025.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>8</b> DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth unemployment rate</li> <li>Long-term unemployment</li> <li>Unemployment rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The employment situation has deteriorated slightly since spring 2023.</li> <li>More action is needed to tackle long-term unemployment and the employment of foreign-language speakers.</li> <li>Many sectors are facing labour shortages. Solving this problem has become one of the key strategic objectives, and work-based immigration has grown significantly.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>9</b> INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Starting businesses</li> <li>Companies' willingness to recommend Helsinki as a location (share of recommendations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of starting businesses has increased, but so has the number of closing businesses. The business promoter score has weakened.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>10</b> REDUCED INEQUALITIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Geographical segregation index</li> <li>Gini coefficient</li> <li>NEET share (Not in Employment, Education or Training)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Socio-economic and ethnic segregation have increased somewhat, especially in the case of children.</li> <li>The suburban regeneration model is one of the ways in which Helsinki develops its neighbourhoods and prevents their segregation.</li> <li>In education and training, Helsinki has developed a model of needs-based funding and measures to prevent the growth of inequality.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>11</b> SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share of sustainable modes of transport</li> <li>Air quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Major investments have been made in rail and cycling infrastructure and new neighbourhood construction sites, in particular.</li> <li>The share of sustainable modes of transport has not increased as hoped. In particular, public transport is struggling, with passenger numbers still not reaching the levels seen before the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> <li>Air quality in Helsinki has improved.</li> <li>Pioneering efforts have been made to cut emissions from construction, but these are not enough to meet the emission targets. Promoting the circular economy requires investment.</li> <li>Helsinki is committed to taking cultural environments into account in its new Cultural Environment Programme.</li> </ul>	

SDG	Key indicators (indicator trends 2017–2024)	Relevant notes and goals for Helsinki	Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consumption-based emissions</li> <li>Municipal and household waste recycling rate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consumption-based emissions are high in Helsinki, more than twice as high as direct emissions generated within the city.</li> <li>The transition to circularity has been slow and requires active measures.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (CO<sub>2</sub>e) and change in emissions: total emissions</li> <li>Per capita CO<sub>2</sub> emissions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Direct emissions in Helsinki decreased by 26.1% from 2022 to 2023.</li> <li>Helsinki's natural carbon sinks absorb about 3% of the emissions generated in the area. To reach the net zero targets, there should be a significant increase in natural and technological carbon sinks and significant further reductions in emissions.</li> <li>Traffic emissions are the biggest challenge to reducing emissions locally. In addition to existing emission reduction measures, new ones are needed.</li> <li>Greater effectiveness is being sought for climate change adaptation goals.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ecological status of surface waters 2019</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing contaminants in stormwater pose a risk to small water bodies and the coastal area.</li> <li>The status of the Helsinki sea area is moderate and the status of the inner bays is poor. The status of the sea area has not developed according to expectations.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of nature reserves and their share of the total area (%)</li> <li>Total surface area of forested and wooded areas or their relative share of the land area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of nature reserves in Helsinki has increased by 17 reserves in 2021–2024, and the implementation of measures under the Biodiversity Action Plan is underway.</li> <li>The growth of the city and safeguarding nature values have become a key challenge.</li> <li>The status of small water bodies in Helsinki is moderate.</li> </ul>	

SDG	Key indicators (indicator trends 2017–2024)	Relevant notes and goals for Helsinki	Assessment
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Perceived safety</li> <li> Turnout in municipal elections</li> <li> Number of young people committing crimes (per 10,000 young people)</li> <li> Crimes against life and health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Criminal behaviour among young people and violence against women have increased, and Helsinki residents' experience of safety has deteriorated.</li> <li>● Efforts to improve young people's experience of safety and prevent radicalisation have included training and a partner model between school exercise coaches and youth workers in comprehensive schools and the student welfare of upper secondary schools. Development achieved through project work must be made permanent and the necessary resources must be guaranteed.</li> <li>● The jointly agreed objectives of the participation and interaction model made during the strategy period are being implemented in all City divisions. The links between sustainability work and participation need to be developed.</li> <li>● Human rights issues and labour exploitation have become more prominent. Measures have been taken to promote ethical procurement in Helsinki.</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Number of grants distributed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Helsinki has developed a new model for coordinating NGO cooperation.</li> <li>● In 2023, almost EUR 47 million were allocated in grants. As grant funding for organisations from elsewhere decreases, the importance of the grants allocated by Helsinki increases.</li> <li>● International cooperation and interest representation are actively carried out.</li> </ul>	

# Summary

- Finland has maintained its leading position in the implementation of sustainable development. However, per capita consumption-based carbon emissions and natural resource consumption are at a high and unsustainable level in Finland and Helsinki by global standards.
- A large proportion of Agenda 2030 objectives are implemented at the municipal level, and cities play a key role in achieving these objectives. Key actions related to the promotion of sustainable development objectives in cities include land use and construction, promotion of wellbeing and health, education and activities related to vitality and employment. Helsinki has every opportunity to be a global leader in the sustainability transition.
- During the current council period of office, Helsinki has improved its competence and integration of sustainability thinking. The divisions and the City Executive Office have advanced their own work on sustainability through various programmes, principles and training. Group companies have implemented their own sustainability programmes, and eight large group companies have prepared for EU sustainability reporting.
- Sustainable development goals have been developed and their effectiveness analysed in City-level programmes and plans. Sustainable procurement and financial and operational planning, among other things, have also been developed.
- There has been an increase in mental health challenges and loneliness experienced by children and young people, especially girls. Experiences of bullying have also increased. This is particularly pronounced in the experiences of vocational education and training students.
- Safety and preparedness have featured more prominently in the review, with particular concerns about children and young people's experiences of safety, radicalisation and violence in close relationships. Indicators show that the number of young people committing crimes and violence against women have increased, for example.
- The conflict between the city's growth and the objectives of protecting green spaces and the environment has become increasingly apparent, for example in the case of certain urban infill and new development sites.
- The current climate measures will not fully achieve Helsinki's carbon neutrality target, but it seems that the minimum level of 80% reduction in direct emissions in the area will be achieved by 2030. This means that the remaining 20% of emissions must be covered by natural or technological carbon sinks. Going forward, reducing emissions from transport in particular will be a challenge. It is estimated that Helsinki's carbon sinks cover only about 3% of the current emissions in the area. Consumption-based emissions are estimated to be significantly higher than the emissions generated in the area, but it is challenging to calculate them reliably.
- Climate change adaptation and risk preparedness also require more effective action, in particular in the areas of stormwater flooding and heatwave preparedness.
- Developing inequalities and regional segregation are among the biggest challenges to social sustainability, and measures are needed to address and prevent them in Helsinki. Particular cause for concern is the segregation of children and young people on the basis of their ethnic background, which is reflected, among other things, in regional differences in schools.
- The majority of Helsinki residents feel that their quality of life and health is good, but this figure has declined over the strategy period. There is significant variation in the prevalence of morbidity and public diseases between the districts of Helsinki.
- With the exception of children under school age, the majority of Helsinki residents engage in too little physical activity for their health, even though the proportion of people achieving the physical activity recommendations has increased slightly over the past two years.



### Five selected success stories from Helsinki:

- Helsinki has invested in the prevention of segregation and the well-being of children and young people. Through its targeted work to promote children's rights, Helsinki has become the first Nordic capital to be recognised as a Child Friendly Municipality.
- The Finnish Model for Leisure Activities has become a permanent fixture for pupils in grades 3–9. In upper secondary education, efforts have been made to prevent segregation and improve young people's mental health through systematic action to promote youth physical activity in almost all institutions.
- In 2021–2023, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the Helsinki area decreased by 17 per cent and 17 nature reserves were established.
- Helsinki ranked number one in the 2024 international Global Destination Sustainability (GDS) index, which measures the sustainability of travel and event destinations.
- The City carries out sustained work on equality and non-discrimination, such as the City's Pride partnership, anti-racist work and training, particularly in the Education Division and Youth Services.

## 10 recommendations based on the results of the report:

1. Just as it has done for ecological sustainability, Helsinki should set long-term goals for social and economic sustainability that extend beyond the council term and include sustainability goals, progress indicators and target values.
2. In implementing the SDGs, the most strategically effective actions should continue to be identified and implemented more effectively as part of key processes, such as economic, investment, land-use and construction planning.
3. Attention must also be paid to the effectiveness of measures and indicators at a more operational level in the planning of different units' activities and in the City's various programmes and plans.
4. Conflicting goals should be addressed more thoroughly, different impacts identified, goals reconciled and compromises sought in a transparent way, for example in relation to the growth of the city and the reconciliation of nature values.
5. In the preliminary impact assessment of decisions, Helsinki should better identify and assess the ecological, social and economic impacts of decisions simultaneously.
6. The idea of planetary well-being and respect for ecological limitations should guide the City's actions more strongly.
7. Helsinki should pay more attention to the global ecological and social impacts of the City's production chains and consumption, while also focusing more on its potential to be a pioneer in supporting and influencing cities' positive development on a global scale.
8. Fostering children's and young people's faith in the future is essential to achieving a sustainable future. The Education Division must systematically improve psychological safety, hopefulness, resilience and inclusion among children and young people. This requires strengthening the competence of staff based on research.
9. The understanding of sustainability issues and management based on knowledge and science must be developed at all levels. The knowledge base and analyses of key sustainability objectives should be further developed to better serve decision-making and planning.
10. Cooperation with and the participation of residents, companies, research operators and the third sector should be further developed and made more effective in order to address sustainability issues.



# Assessment of sustainability work over the strategy period

The Helsinki City Strategy for 2021–2025, entitled A Place of Growth, includes ambitious sustainability objectives. Even in the preface, it is pointed out that sustainable growth in Helsinki should be in balance with the prevailing ecological limitations, creating benefits that are socially, financially and culturally sustainable. The key sustainability objectives of the strategy period have been the prevention of segregation, ambitious climate responsibility and nature conservation, the development of the city's comfort and vitality, and the improvement of productivity and the availability of labour. To support the progress and

success of these key strategic objectives, the City has set up strategic programme groups led by the mayor, which have intensified cross-sectoral cooperation to promote the objectives, among other things.

The table below shows the links between the strategy's 13 priorities and the UN's SDGs. Like the SDGs, the strategy's goals also have impacts that conflict with each other and in relation to the sustainability goals. For example, strong urban growth and construction will increase greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental impacts in the area.

# Strategy priorities and SDG tabulation

● Direct positive    
 ● Indirect positive    
 ● Direct negative    
 ● Indirect negative    
 ● Conflicting

	1 NO POVERTY	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	9 INDUSTRIALIZATION, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	13 CLIMATE ACTION	14 LIFE BELOW WATER	15 LIFE ON LAND	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS
The most equitable and effective place to learn	●		●	●	●			●	●	●	●						
Ambitious climate objectives and nature conservation			●	●		●	●	●	●		●	●	●	●	●		
Art and culture as enablers of a good life			●					●		●	●						●
An international city of equality	●		●		●			●		●	●					●	●
Cultivating safe neighbourhoods with distinctive identities			●							●	●					●	●
A smoothly functioning and beautiful city			●					●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
Intelligent traffic solutions underpin smooth transport			●				●		●	●	●		●				
Improving the health and well-being of Helsinki residents	●	●	●	●				●	●	●							
Responsible finances as the basis for sustainable growth	●		●	●				●	●	●	●					●	
Helsinki is an attractive employer			●	●	●			●		●							
Data and digitalisation help run a smart city			●	●				●	●	●	●		●			●	●
International workers and businesses find Helsinki appealing	●				●			●	●		●					●	●
Promoting Helsinki's interests nationally and engaging in international cooperation			●	●				●	●	●	●		●			●	●

## Identification of conflicts and boundary conditions

In 2023, Helsinki wanted to incorporate the core ideas of ecological boundary conditions and a social foundation to its interpretation of the SDGs. Growth and wellbeing should be built in a way that does not jeopardise ecological sustainability or leave poorer countries behind. At the time, it was stated that this is also a sustainability transition, a change in the mindset and operating culture of the City organisation, which requires long-term action, goals and decision-making. There has been no significant change in these two years, but there are signs of progress in the sustainability transition, for example in the cross-cutting work being done to promote the SDGs and the increased use of sustainability language. Efforts have been made to open up and describe the global SDGs from the perspective of Helsinki's operations.

During this strategy period, Helsinki has focused more on the conflicts between the SDGs, better identifying them and incorporating them into the strategic themes, such as the reconciliation of the city's growth with nature values.

Helsinki also participated in the national challenge cluster work on the theme of urban planning that takes sustainability targets into account together with a group of other cities. The challenge cluster work showed that there is still a long way to go to adequately integrate sustainability targets into urban planning. We are not yet harnessing the full 'sustainability potential' of our planning system, as it is very growth-oriented and focuses heavily on new construction rather than existing structure and facilities. On the other hand, it should be clear that the equation of sustainable urban planning cannot be solved by simply adjusting the system. Change starts with the system's users, who highlight problems and seek solutions. The challenge cluster work has shown that there are ambitious and visionary planners in cities, who are ready for the reforms required by the planetary limits of urban development.

## SDG analyses for key programmes in the 2021–2025 strategy period

● Positive impact     
 ● Indirect positive     
 ● Conflicting     
 ● Indirect negative

City-level programme / SDG	1 PEOPLE	2 ZERO HUNGER	3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING	4 QUALITY EDUCATION	5 GENDER EQUALITY	6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION	7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY	8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH	9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE	10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES	11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES	12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION	13 CLIMATE ACTION	14 LIFE BELOW WATER	15 LIFE ON LAND	16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS	17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS		
Welfare Plan 2022–2025	●	●	●	●				●		●	●						●	●	
Implementation Programme on Housing and Related Land Use	●		●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Carbon-neutral Helsinki 2030			●				●	●			●	●	●					●	
Integration Priorities 2022–2025	●		●	●	●			●		●	●							●	●
Economic Policy Priorities	●		●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●
Nature Reserve Programme 2024–2040			●	●		●		●		●	●	●	●	●	●			●	
Tourism and Events Programme 2022–2026		●	●	●	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●			●	

## Evolution of sustainability management over the strategic period

The 2021–2025 strategy period has been the first strategy period during which sustainability management has been systematically developed in the City Executive Office's Strategy Department. In addition to sustainability assessments and cooperation and support within the City and Group, this work has included the development of various processes, training and skills. During the strategy period, the City has launched an online training course on sustainable development for its staff and organised around 25 different training courses and workshops. In addition to these, the City has developed its set of ethical guidelines, improved the social responsibility of procurement and prepared the Helsinki Group for EU sustainability reporting, among other things.

In addition to the City Strategy, the Sustainable Development Goals are also reflected in other key programmes of the City, through which many of the goals are being promoted. Over the past three years, the City of Helsinki has also examined its strategic programmes and financial and operational planning from the perspective of sustainable development with an SDG analysis tool. The analysis helps open up the links between the objectives of the City's programmes and the sustainability goals of the City Strategy, and identify the UN SDGs that the programme plays a key role in implementing. An SDG analysis has been carried out for ten key programmes, including the City of Helsinki Welfare Plan 2022–2025, Economic Policy Priorities, the Tourism and Events Programme 2022–2026 and the Carbon-neutral Helsinki 2030 emissions reduction action plan.

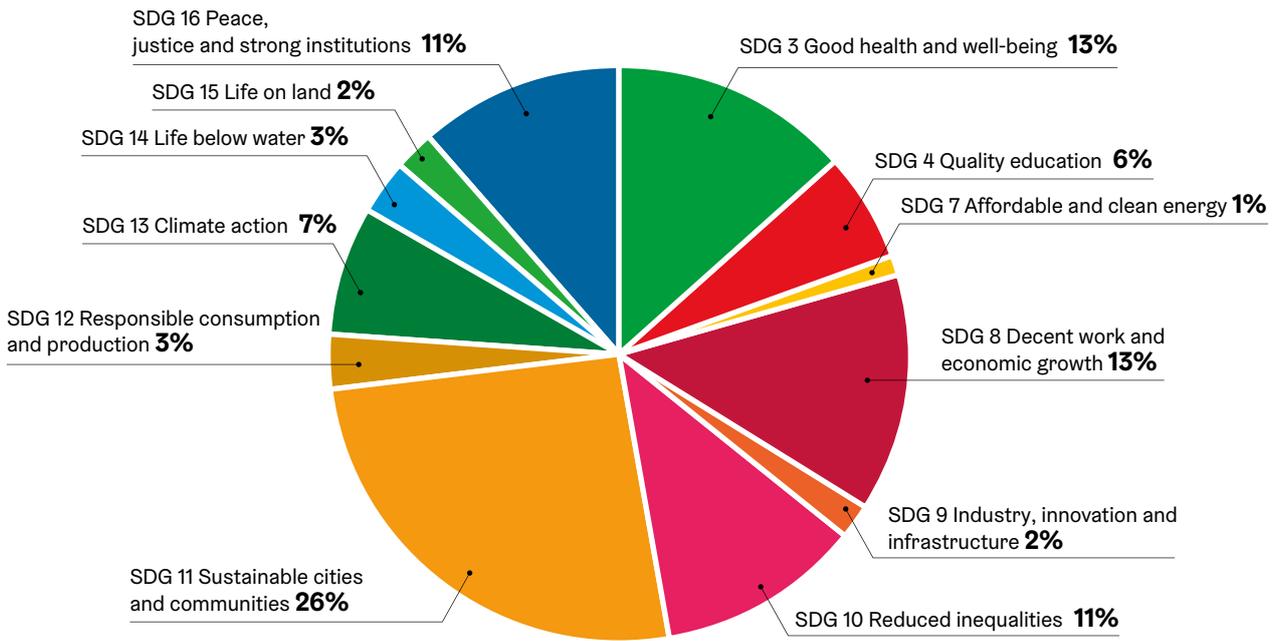
The analysis tool has been found to be a useful way of assessing the programmes' wider impacts more comprehensively. The analysis tool assesses the potential direct or indirect positive or negative impacts of the programme on each of the SDGs. This analysis illustrates and articulates the conflicting impacts of the programmes on city residents, biodiversity or Helsinki's climate objectives. It is essential to bring these conflicts to light so that their impacts can be minimised and managed.

## SDGs as part of financial and operational planning

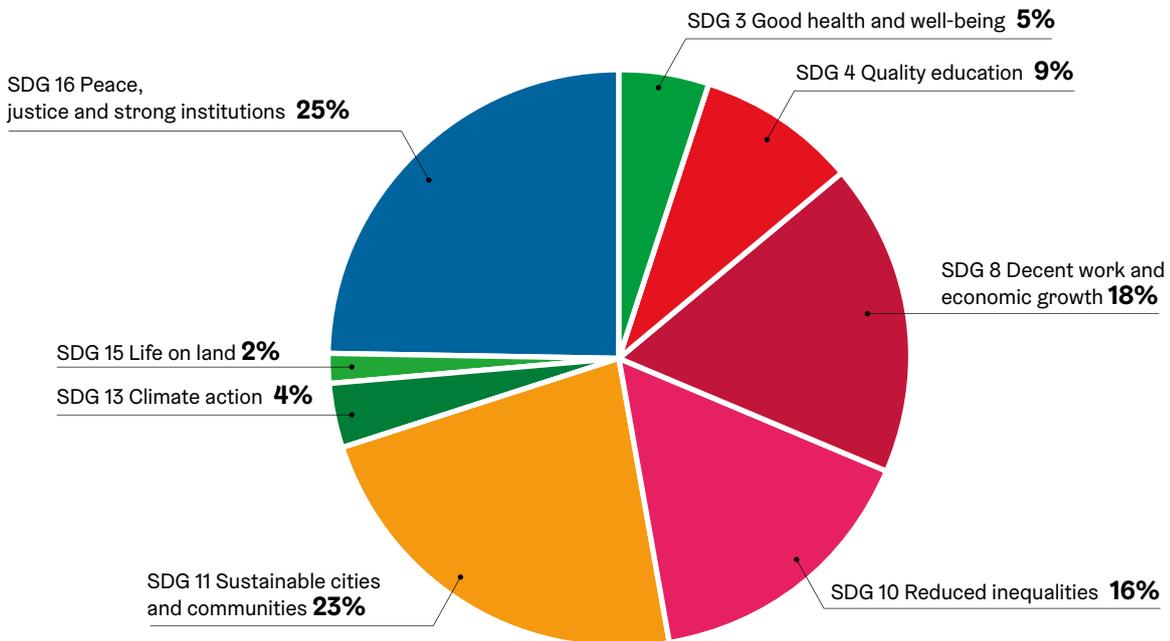
During the 2021–2025 strategy period, the link between financial and operational planning and sustainable development has been developed. In 2022–2023, Helsinki participated in the national development work on sustainable development budgeting with six other municipalities. In addition to the climate budgeting already in place, Helsinki looked at sustainable development budgeting as a whole, in particular the setting of budgetary targets and the aspects of effectiveness and sustainability. The development work included a background study on the relationship of the divisions' budgetary targets with the SDGs and the key sustainability goals of the City Strategy in 2022 and 2023, and linked the budgetary targets to the SDGs in the table of objectives. A five-part training course on effectiveness was organised for the divisions' experts who set budgetary targets, which improved the quality and effectiveness of the targets and indicators. The focus of City-wide objectives was broadened to include not only social and economic but also environmental sustainability. The development of effectiveness and sustainability analysis has been found to take several years. Further development work is still needed to set City-wide objectives, communicate on objective and strategy indicators, and assess impacts from a sustainable development perspective.

The graphs below show the links between the 2024 and 2025 budgetary targets and the SDGs. They show that the divisions' budgetary targets have a strong focus on social and economic sustainability.

## Budgetary targets 2024



## Budgetary targets 2025





## Finland's six largest cities as pioneers of sustainable development

Finland is a forerunner in the work on sustainable development and has also been recognised for it. During this strategy period, Helsinki has actively participated in cooperation promoting sustainable development at the national and international level. Helsinki has been active in promoting the Strategic Management of SDGs in Cities network project of Finland's six largest cities, which was launched in 2021 and extended in 2023. The network has developed practical tools for cities, promoted national and international cooperation and shared best practices. Helsinki also participates in many different international networks or projects promoting sustainable development, including Eurocities SDG Taskforce, UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Initiative, the projects of Bloomberg Philanthropies and various ICLEI working groups. Helsinki also actively participates in the WHO Healthy Cities Network.

Helsinki has also highlighted the SDG work in the networks it coordinates and its business and partnership cooperation. A large number of Society's Commitments to Sustainable Development have been made in Helsinki. Most of the commitments are made by individuals, companies and various organisations and associations.

Over the past four years, Helsinki has actively cooperated with UN operators and the cities of New York and Tokyo, for example, and has participated several times in the UN's summits on sustainable development as part of the Finnish delegation. Helsinki's SDG work has contributed to the emergence and deepening of many strategic international partnerships. By setting an example in the promotion and reporting of the SDGs at the local level, Helsinki can promote sustainable development globally and influence the promotion of the SDGs beyond its own borders in cities around the world.

# Sustainability work in divisions and group companies

In addition to the strategic sustainability work led by the central administration, Helsinki's divisions and group companies have promoted the Sustainable Development Goals in their own operations. The SDGs need to be worded and adapted to fit the specific tasks of the City organisation. During the 2021–2025 strategy period, two of the City's divisions, the Urban Environment Division and the Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division, have drawn up their own sustainability guidelines. Among Helsinki's municipal enterprises, Palvelukeskus Helsinki has its own sustainability programme. Other divisions and enterprises carry out active environmental work. The City's group companies will have to adapt their data collection as the European Union's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive expands to cover a wider range of organisations.

The Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division's sustainable development programme for 2024–2026 looks at the division's activities through the Agenda 2030 framework and its 17 SDGs. The programme excludes goals related to the division's core activities, such as SDG 3 Good health and well-being and SDG 1 No poverty, as their perspectives and targets are constantly being evaluated in the division's activities. The sustainable development programme focused on goals 13 Climate action, 11 Sustainable cities and communities, 10 Reduced inequalities and 12 Responsible consumption and production, on which the division's service departments have a major impact. The sustainable development programme brings together the most relevant policy documents that guide the Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division's efforts to contribute to these four SDGs. In addition to this, the programme outlines the operational goals for SDGs 10, 11, 12 and 13, the measures to be taken to achieve them and the indicators to monitor success. The goals to be monitored include the ability to reach older people with an immigrant background, the reuse of furniture and the reduction of emissions from the division's car fleet, among others.

The Urban Environment Division has started work to develop sustainability work in the division during this strategy period. The aim is to integrate the 17 SDGs into the division's environmental management perspective, so that the division can be managed more sustainably as a whole. The end result is a better integration of sustainability management with financial and operational planning.

The European Union's Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) has been phased in over the strategy period. Eight of Helsinki's group companies will be subject to reporting obligations from 2025 onwards: Helen Ltd, Port of Helsinki, Metropolitan Area Transport Ltd, Helsingin kaupungin asunnot Oy, Helsingin Asumisoikeus Oy, Auroranlinna, Seure and DigiHelsinki. Helsinki has supported reporting readiness by providing training on the CSRD during 2023 and 2024. To achieve reporting readiness, group companies must, among other things, carry out a double materiality analysis and identify the reporting standards and data points that apply to them.

Other Helsinki subsidiaries have also made progress in their sustainability work: for example, Helsinki City Premises Ltd has also conducted a materiality analysis of its operations for its sustainability programme to be finalised in 2025, even though the company is not covered by the CSRD's reporting obligation. The company wants to contribute to a vibrant and sustainable urban culture and create an operating environment for its lessees that supports responsible business and encourages new operating models. Helsinki Events Foundation calculated the carbon footprint of its events in 2023 and aims to minimise the environmental footprint of its events in terms of energy, waste, procurement and accommodation. The foundation also requires its staff, performers, event partners and subcontractors as well as event visitors to commit to the principles of equality, fairness and non-discrimination. Other subsidiaries also have their own sustainability and environmental programmes.

# Environment



Helsinki faces significant environmental sustainability challenges, as the high standard of living and high consumption in the city are putting pressure on the environment. On a global scale, the ecological footprint of Helsinki residents is considerable, and our consumption exceeds the limits of the Earth's carrying capacity. It is estimated that Helsinki's consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions are more than double the direct emissions generated within the city.

The City plays a key role in promoting ecological sustainability, as it is responsible for many related activities, such as city planning, infrastructure maintenance and construction, local climate and environmental protection, and the maintenance of green and recreational areas. In addition to this, the City is responsible for energy production through a group company and waste and wastewater treatment in cooperation with other municipalities in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

The loads on water bodies, air and soil have decreased in Helsinki in recent years. As the city grows, the biggest challenges for the future relate to minimising the environmental impacts of transport and

construction and promoting sustainable consumption. The circular economy must be more strongly integrated into key processes to reduce emissions and improve resource efficiency. Tackling these challenges requires ambitious targets, skills and research.

In this strategy period, Helsinki set ambitious environmental protection targets for 2040, which bring together the goals of ecological sustainability and set a long-term direction for the consistent implementation of environmental protection.

## Programmes and studies:

[City of Helsinki's Environmental Protection Targets 2040 PDF](#) >

[City of Helsinki Environmental Report 2023 PDF](#) >

# Climate

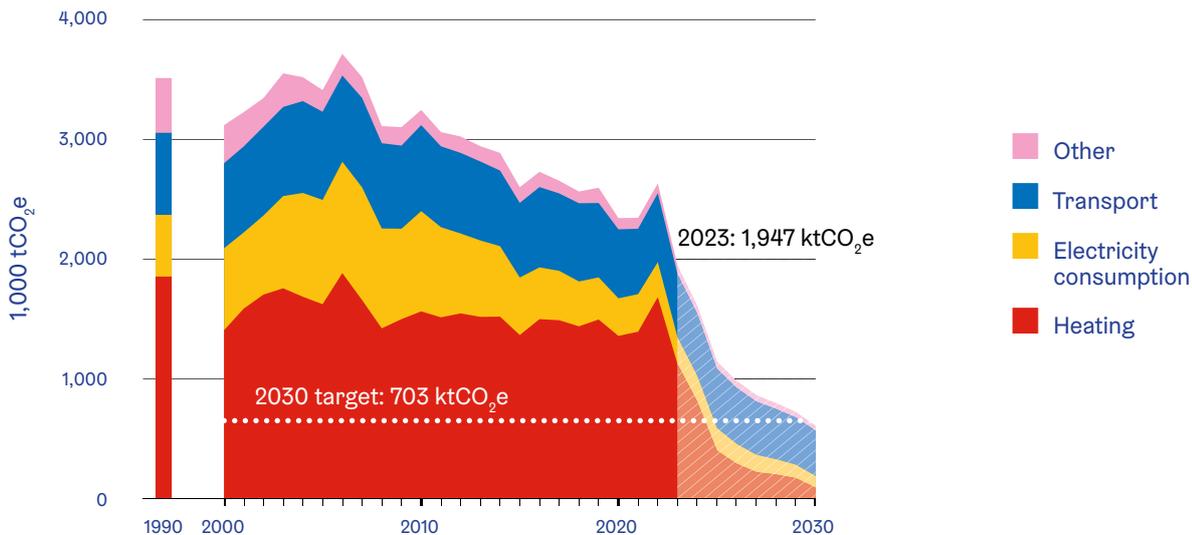


Helsinki is aiming at carbon neutrality by 2030, net zero by 2040, and then carbon negativity, which means that the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions generated in the area must be less than the area's capacity to store carbon dioxide. To reach the net zero targets, there should be a significant increase in natural and technological carbon sinks and significant further reductions in emissions. The number of carbon sinks was assessed in 2024, and a preliminary study on how to increase the number was carried out, which showed that increasing the number will be challenging. Natural carbon sinks currently cover about 3% of Helsinki's direct emissions. At the same time, adapting to the already visible impacts of climate change is highlighted and green structures also play a key role in this.

The climate goals concern direct emissions (scope 1 and 2), but Helsinki's environmental protection targets for 2040 also aim to reduce city residents' carbon footprint. The Carbon-neutral Helsinki Action Plan addresses the carbon neutrality objective and reduces direct emissions and, in the case of construction, also indirect (scope 3) emissions. Influencing and communication efforts related to other indirect emissions, such as the consumption and dietary habits of city residents, are primarily carried out by Helsinki Region Environmental Services HSY under the strategic guidance of the City. The City is also currently exploring new ways to influence the carbon footprint of its residents. The Ambitious Climate Responsibility programme group, chaired by



## Emissions development by sector (ktCO<sub>2</sub>e)



Source: HSY

the Mayor, sets out guidelines for climate action and ensures a sufficient level of ambition in both mitigation and adaptation work.

From 1990 to 2023, the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in Helsinki decreased by 45%. The most significant reason for the decrease in emissions is the cessation of burning coal at the Hanasaari power plant. At the end of 2023, Helen Ltd published a strategy that puts green transition, flexibility and profitability at its core. Helen Ltd's goal is carbon-neutral energy production by 2030, and the use of coal will also end in Salmisaari in spring 2025. Emissions from electricity consumption have fallen steadily, which is explained by the reduction in the national electricity emission factor. Emissions from transport have also decreased, but more slowly than in other sectors, and as early as 2025, transport will be the largest source of direct emissions in Helsinki. According to a projection made in 2024, Helsinki is expected to achieve an 81–83% reduction in emissions by 2030 compared to 1990, so new measures are still needed. To this end, a proposal for new additional measures for transport is on the table.

Climate emotions and concerns about climate change have steadily increased among Helsinki residents. In the Helsinki Barometer survey in autumn 2024, the climate crisis was the third most common concern, after the well-being of children and young people and the well-being of older people. According to a 2024 study, around a fifth of children aged 11–15 years were emotionally invested in climate change, and felt concern, inadequacy and guilt about the issue.

## Towards a Helsinki prepared for extreme weather phenomena

Climate change requires adaptation to its effects. Helsinki aims to be prepared for extreme weather events and their indirect effects. Preparedness must be taken into account in city planning and new construction and renovation projects. In recent years, adaptation measures have focused on the development and implementation of natural stormwater management methods, the strengthening of the green structure, the development of the green factor tool, and the improvement of summer cooling in the City's schools and care homes, as well as climate change risk management.

Adaptation work has been fragmented and not sufficiently integrated with other planning. In Helsinki, adaptation is divided into two time spans: preparation for extreme weather events and longer-term adaptation, which requires changes to the way the city is planned and built. Short-term preparedness actions have been prioritised on a risk basis. An overall plan for longer-term adaptation is under preparation. The City started the risk-based work in 2023 with the planning of heavy rainfall preparedness for the inner city and completed the legislative study and modelling of flood hazard areas in the inner city in early 2024. Furthermore, the City completed a rainfall scenario analysis for the statistical frequency of rainfall in the future climate. During 2024, the City will complete a more detailed modelling of stormwater flows in the inner city to assess the costs of flooding and possible preparedness solutions. By comparing these, the aim is to set the level of preparedness for



heavy rainfall in Helsinki. In addition to this, the City's flood group has defined the tasks involved in preparing for seawater floods and is continuing to identify the parties responsible for these tasks. The next adaptation task is a heatwave plan. While current extreme weather events such as heatwaves can be prepared for and the immediate effects of heatwaves can be responded to, adaptation to more intense heatwaves in the future has not started. It requires cooperation between divisions and the creation of processes. As part of the planning of adaptation to heatwaves, the City will also carry out a vulnerability assessment of the impacts of climate change to understand the equity of adaptation measures.

In terms of the green structure, the City is investing in strengthening the effectiveness of green factor tools. 'VALUE – Valuation and strengthening of urban green spaces in landscape planning in cities' is a project that focuses on strengthening green structure in detailed planning through the further development and implementation of the green area factor tool. The plot-specific green factor was included in the new building regulations adopted in summer 2023. Work is underway to update the tool to place greater emphasis on biodiversity and adaptation to climate change.

## Successes:

- Emissions from heating have fallen significantly and will continue to fall in the coming years.
- Awareness of the local role of green structure in strengthening the city's climate resilience has increased.
- Helsinki has set a limit value for the lifecycle carbon footprint of new blocks of flats.
- The energy advice service for housing companies has promoted the energy efficiency of housing companies.
- The City has enhanced emission reductions by focusing on the most effective measures in heating and construction.

## Areas for development:

- New measures to reduce emissions must be introduced in transport.
- Climate change adaptation and urban growth need to be reconciled and actions to adapt to climate change need to be prioritised.
- Measures to cut consumption-based emissions are needed.

## Programmes:

[Carbon-neutral Helsinki PDF](#) >

[Helsinki's Climate Change Adaptation Policies PDF](#) >

[City of Helsinki Storm Water Management Program PDF](#) >



## VALUE – Valuation and strengthening of urban green spaces in landscape planning in cities

The VALUE project aims to preserve and strengthen the green structure in densely built-up cities to prepare for and adapt to climate change. The project includes the development of a tool, the green area factor for districts, which can be used to assess the quantity and quality of both ecosystem services and

biodiversity. The project will also draw up national recommendations for strengthening the green structure of cities.

[Read more at >](#)



## Energy advice service for housing companies

The City of Helsinki offers the help and support of its energy experts to housing companies that want to carry out financially viable, energy-efficient and emission-reducing energy renovations.

[Read more at >](#)

# Local nature and diversity



Helsinki is a green seaside city, with green spaces covering more than a third of the land area and the sea covering two thirds of the total city area. By international standards, the amount of green space is good, but green spaces are fragmented due to wide traffic routes. Helsinki's diverse nature consists of forests, meadows, rocky outcrops, wetlands, beaches, islands, streams and parks. In Helsinki, around 42% of the land area is wooded and around 35% is forested. Indeed, Helsinki's urban nature is diverse, ranging from near-natural to heavily modified by humans. Particularly in forests and on the shores, there are still some quite natural habitats, such as spectacular cliffs. Human influence, on the other hand, has contributed to species diversity in parks, yards and gardens, as well as in meadows, fields and street greenery.

The city is growing and developing rapidly, which brings challenges. Construction and climate change are the main threats to biodiversity. It is therefore significant that in spring 2024, the City Board decid-

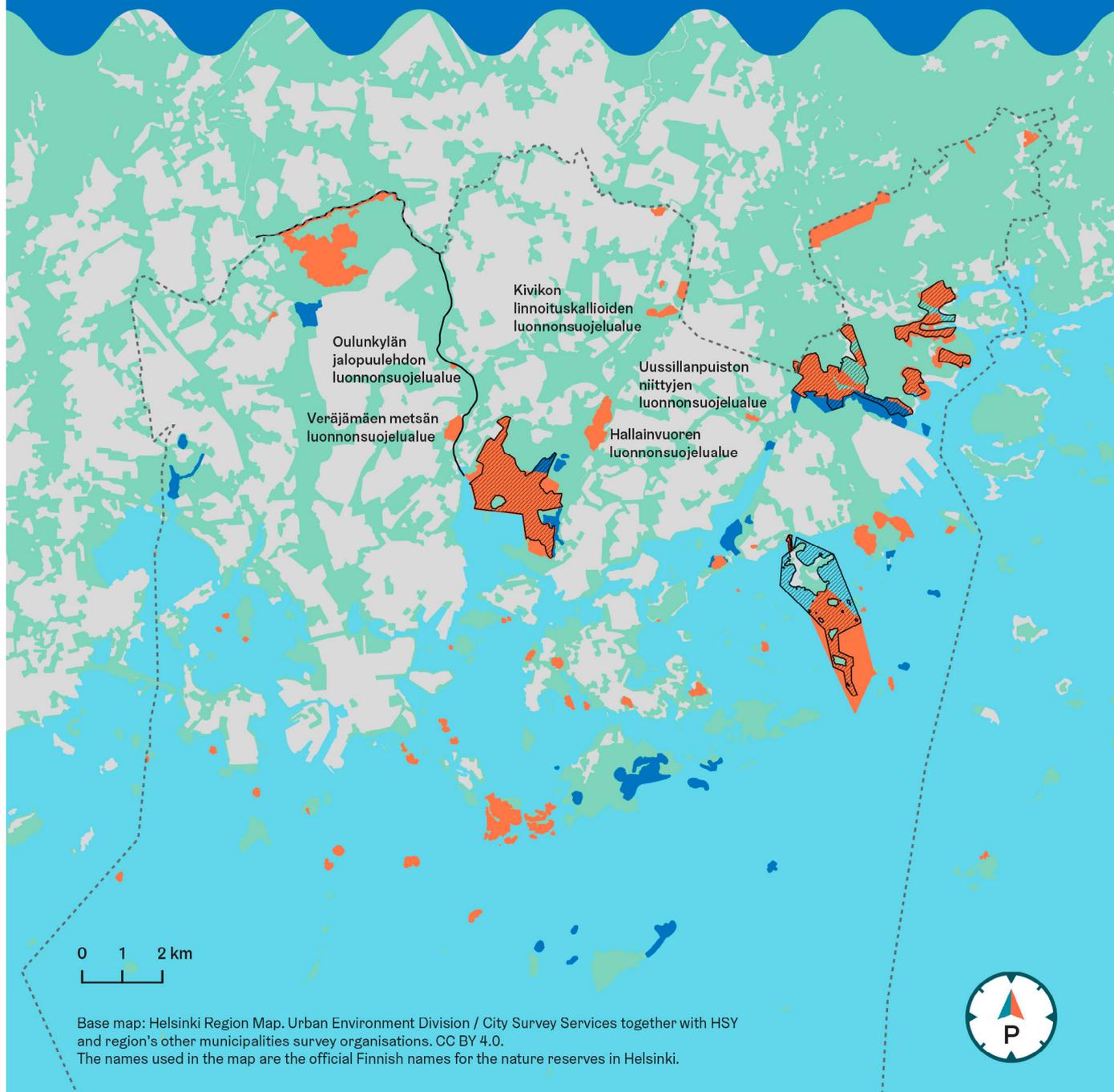
ed on medium- and long-term targets for environmental protection in Helsinki, which are also ambitious in terms of biodiversity protection: the City aims to halt biodiversity loss in Helsinki by 2030.

An important part of biodiversity protection is the establishment of strict nature reserves. Helsinki's goal is that by 2040, one tenth of the city's land and sea area will be protected. This has progressed in line with the City Strategy, with the City proposing the creation of five new nature reserves each year. At the end of 2023, nature reserves accounted for 4.4% of the land area and 1% of the water area. The most typical conservation criteria are birdlife, forests, mires, meadows, geology and endangered plants. In 2023, the City started preparing its fourth consecutive nature reserve programme. The programme will run from 2025 to 2040. The nature reserve programme will determine the sites to be established as nature reserves under the Nature Conservation Act.



# Nature reserves in Helsinki

- |   |  |   |                                  |
|---|--|---|----------------------------------|
|  | Nature reserves  |  | Natura areas                     |
|  | Nature reserves included in the Helsinki Nature Conservation Programme for 2015–2024 |  | Green space                      |
|   |  |  | Residential and industrial areas |
|   |  |  | Helsinki city border             |



## Promotion of diversity in Helsinki

The City of Helsinki Biodiversity Action Plan 2021–2028, implemented during the strategy period, seeks to integrate the consideration of biodiversity into all of the City’s activities. At the end of 2023, 79% of the 92 measures in the programme were on track.

In 2024, Helsinki updated the principles guiding the management plans and management of its forests. The City will continue to systematically promote forest biodiversity, and an increasing proportion of forest areas will be left to age naturally. In its forest management, the City is also preparing for the effects of climate change, the growing population and the densifying urban structure. The next steps will be to update the guidelines for the management of meadows and open spaces and the work instructions for nature management. The blue network survey was completed in 2023 to build up a repository of information on the city’s ecological networks. This will be followed by a combined review of ecological networks, which will further determine the effectiveness of strengthening these networks.

The consideration of nature values and the development of ecological and recreational networks are part of land use and public area planning. A green factor was introduced into Helsinki’s building regulations in 2023 to ensure that plots have a sufficient share of green surface area, thereby helping prevent stormwater floods. Biodiversity can be further enhanced through regulations on green roofs and green walls. Furthermore, the City published the ‘Sallitusti villi’ biodiversity guide in 2024. The main aim of the guide is to help prevent biodiversity loss in the city and preserve and enrich biodiversity in the built environment. The guide focuses on the design of urban greenery in public areas in Helsinki, but it can also be applied to other cities and municipalities, and private yards.

Dozens of lawns not in active use have been converted into meadows by changing the way they are managed. In addition to this, OmaStadi participatory budgeting projects have created new meadows in places such as Töölönlahdenpuisto, Savelanpuisto, Kurranummi, the southern slope of Alppikylänhuippu and Nummisuutaripuisto.

The City has started to prepare its first nature services development plan, which will be completed in 2025. The plan will help develop recreational services in a way that ensures equitable recreational opportunities for all residents and prevents the deterioration of nature in the most sensitive areas.

## Nature monitoring

To obtain more comprehensive information on nature, the City is implementing the nature monitoring plan completed in 2022. In 2023, Helsinki surveyed its polypore species. Of the 260 or so species of dwarf hunter in Finland, as many as 200 have been found in Helsinki, reflecting the exceptionally high diversity of Helsinki’s forests and the large number of forests that are in a natural state or in the process of being restored to their natural state.

A mammal survey was also carried out in 2023. The City collected residents’ sightings of six mammal species. The sightings of foxes, badgers, squirrels, rats, hedgehogs and raccoon dogs showed that mammals are abundant in Helsinki. City residents actively reported their mammal sightings via the dedicated online service.

## Nature information management and use

The Urban Environment Division has identified the need to develop both the production and use of nature assessments throughout the whole chain, from planning to the implementation of contracts, projects and maintenance. During 2024, the division carried out a comprehensive inventory of the nature surveys already completed: they were compiled in a shared directory and the nature information was made available to various operators in a geospatial format. The process of carrying out future nature surveys and storing and using the resulting nature information will be reviewed to ensure that the nature information generated by the surveys can be used to the maximum extent possible for all future activities.

## Successes:

- Setting of an ambitious target for halting biodiversity loss.
- Determined promotion of the Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Full implementation of the Nature Conservation Programme 2015–2024 for areas owned by the City.
- Inclusion of the green factor in building regulations.
- A thorough survey of ecological networks and their integration into geospatial data. Building on this information to develop project programmes and strengthen the network in both land-use and park planning projects.
- Monitoring of the implementation of the principles for the development of the green and recreational network.

## Areas for development:

- Management of nature information in planning processes and its communication throughout the chain of operators right down to the contract or project implementation.
- Concrete leadership tools to reconcile urban growth with the preservation of nature values.
- Indicators and metrics to measure the development of biodiversity and the quality, quantity and accessibility of green spaces.

## Programmes:

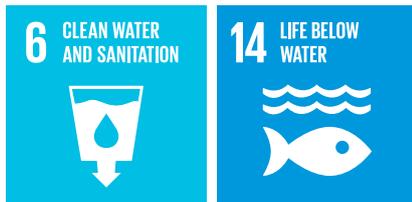
[City of Helsinki Biodiversity Action Plan 2021–2028 PDF](#) >

### Lawns into meadows

Lawns are transformed into meadows at the request of residents – natural vegetation absorbs water and increases biodiversity.

[Read more in Finnish at](#) >

# Aquatic ecosystems



## SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation

Helsinki is committed to caring for the Baltic Sea and its shores and reducing emissions discharged into the Baltic Sea. Helsinki's drinking water is clean and not at risk of contamination. The wastewater network is extensive and wastewater treatment is world-class.

## SDG 14 Life below water

Helsinki's underwater life is diverse and valuable. Helsinki's water areas include large sea areas as well as small water bodies and the Vantaa River. Helsinki's numerous islands, coastal shallows and reefs create a diverse habitat for marine life. Freshwater streams, ditches, ponds and springs, on the other hand, support an abundance of freshwater life. The Vantaa River and several streams are valuable habitats where trout return to spawn and spend the early part of their lifecycle.

The status of Helsinki's sea area and small water bodies is adequate and the status of the inner bays is passable. The chemical status is worse than good. Water quality is impaired by nutrients and pollutants entering the water from land, as well as littering and heavy use of the areas, among other factors. The effects of climate change are also reflected in water bodies, for example as rising water temperatures. Efforts are being made to improve the status of the sea and small water bodies through both statutory and voluntary water protection measures, sustainable maritime spatial planning and the protection of the most ecologically valuable waters. The Baltic Sea Challenge's Baltic Sea Action Plan for 2024–2028 includes 23 voluntary measures that Helsinki is taking to improve the status of coastal waters and the Baltic Sea as a whole. The City monitors the state of the marine environment in a long-term, comprehensive and high-quality manner. The monitoring data can be used in a variety of ways, both internally and in cooperation with external research bodies. The City has developed the monitoring of small water bodies with stream-specific continuous water quality indicators.

## Successes:

- In the Hevosenkälähti bay of Lauttasaari, the seabed has been restored and some eelgrass has been experimentally introduced into the area. The aim is to rehabilitate the underwater habitat and increase biodiversity.
- Underwater nature reserves are strongly highlighted in the new nature reserve programme for 2025–2040.
- Work on the blue network has continued and new water channels have been mapped during 2024.

## Areas for development:

- Qualitative management of stormwater.
- Control and mitigation of human pressure on water areas.
- Meeting the challenges of water management in maritime Helsinki.
- Identification and protection of small ecologically valuable water bodies.
- Monitoring and classification of the ecological and chemical status of small water bodies in Helsinki.
- Mitigation of the littering of water bodies.

## Programmes:

[Baltic Sea Action Plan 2024–2028 PDF](#) >

## Guidelines for construction site water management in the capital region

The guidelines for construction site water management in the capital region were published in March 2024. The aim of the guidelines is to prevent harm and guide the treatment of construction site water so that it does not cause significant harm to the aquatic environment. The guidelines emphasise the prevention of harm caused by construction site water, good planning, proper treatment of construction site water, maintenance of systems and in-house control at construction sites.

[Read more in Finnish at >](#)



# People



Social sustainability and well-being are at the heart of the City's activities and are directly related to the basic public services provided by Helsinki and cross-administrative cooperation within the City and with partners. The theme is broad and linked in particular to the SDGs related to good health and wellbeing, learning, reduced inequalities and gender equality. By international standards, Helsinki is a prosperous city where basic public services related to people's well-being, health and education are at a good level and equally accessible to all. Social sustainability challenges relate in particular to an increase in inequalities and wellbeing disparities, mental wellbeing, excess weight, violence in close relationships and non-discrimination.

# Well-being and health



Health and well-being promotion (HYTE) involves preventive activities carried out jointly by all of the City's operators, based on sustainable development, to boost the resources of different population groups. As part of the overall reform of the health care and social welfare system, the tasks of health and well-being promotion were given a strong legal basis.

The main objective is to reduce disparities in health and welfare. During the current council period of office, the City will strengthen its residents' mental well-being, healthy lifestyles and everyday physical activity, as well as opportunities for meaningful recreation and leisure. Furthermore, the City will promote the development of good community relations and sets of objectives related to everyday security.

As part of the implementation of the work on health and well-being promotion, the Helsinki Welfare Plan 2022–2025 was approved by the City Council in November 2022. The contents of the plan promote the objectives of social sustainability from a cross-administrative perspective, addressing the well-being challenges identified through research.

In 2024, the first statutory health and well-being promotion negotiations were also held, where the City, in cooperation with organisations and other partners, discussed the objectives and measures to promote well-being and health.

## City residents face diverse wellbeing challenges

Helsinki's population is increasingly diverse. Alongside the increasing diversity of lifestyles, linguistic diversity is also growing, and the number of older people is increasing along with young age groups. An individual's experience of their health and wellbeing affects their resources and also reflects on e.g.

quality of life, social relationships, activity in society and ability to manage in everyday life. The majority of the adult population are happy and feel that their quality of life and health are good. However, the proportion of people who consider their quality of life to be good on average has declined in recent years, especially among working-age people. The perceived mental well-being of children and young people has also been at a more worrying level than in the past. Around one in five of the adult population also experience significant mental stress and 14% of older people experience loneliness.

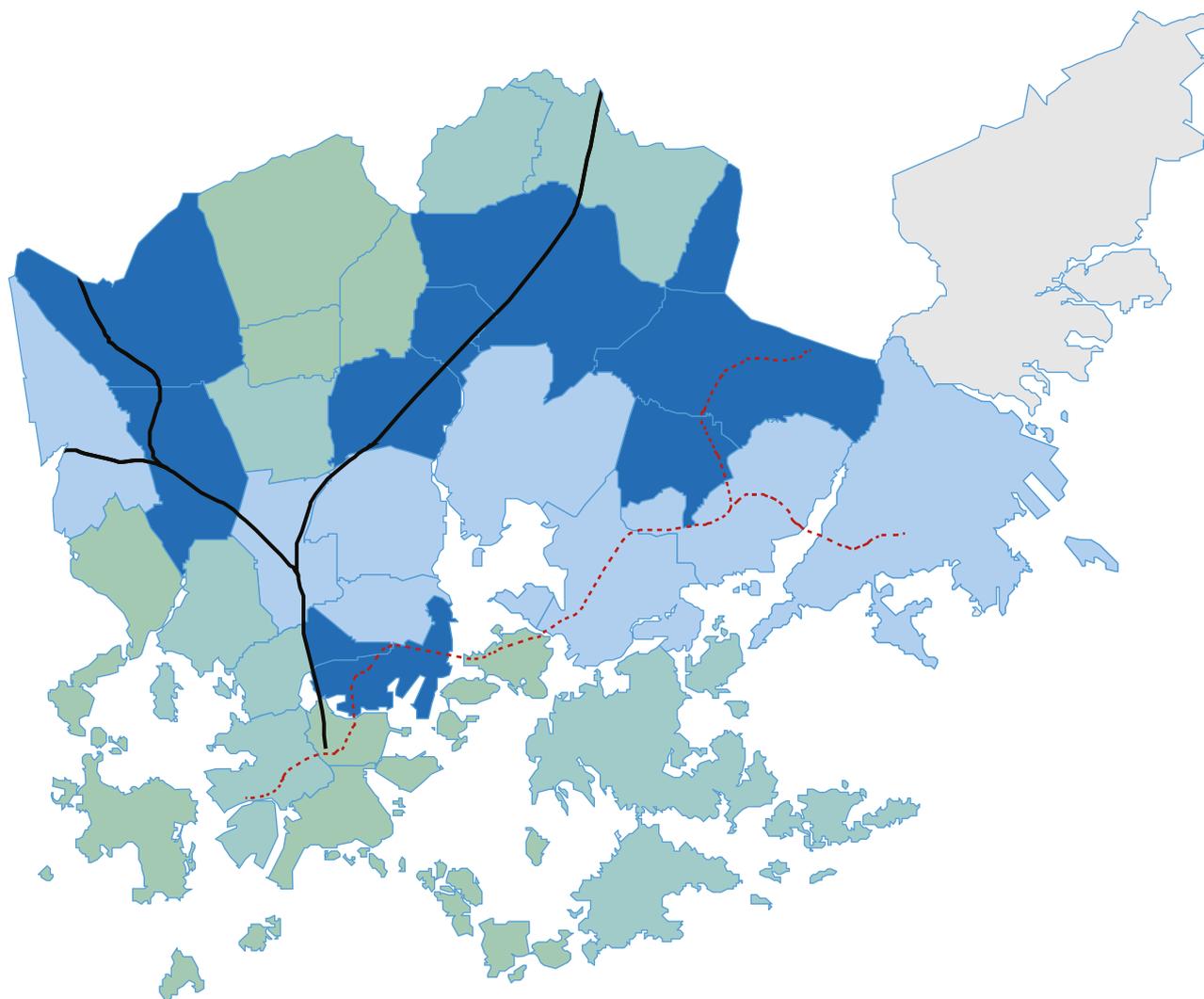
There are differences in experiences of quality of life, health and happiness depending on perceived income adequacy. These differences may, in turn, be reflected in differences between population groups in lifestyles, mental wellbeing or morbidity. There is significant variation in the prevalence of morbidity and public diseases between the districts of Helsinki. The social challenges and unhealthy lifestyles underlying morbidity are concentrated on residents who are already in a vulnerable position.

Lifestyle greatly influences health and well-being. In addition to physical inactivity, obesity, smoking and alcohol abuse are all linked to morbidity and reduced capacity to work. Perceived income adequacy has a connection to physical activity, i.e. young people who feel very good about their family's economic situation and residents who perceive their income as fairly good or good are physically more active than the other population groups. Choices regarding modes of transport have a significant impact on the physical activity and well-being of residents: the city must be designed to make walking, cycling and public transport attractive choices that are competitive in terms of travel time. This can be influenced by traffic planning, land use planning, service network planning, maintenance, urban space planning and additions to street greenery.

The majority of Helsinki residents still consider their neighbourhood to be pleasant and safe at weekends, although these proportions have decreased compared to before. There has also been a slight increase in concern about disruptive behaviour. Safe, beautiful and functional everyday environments form the basis of the wellbeing and health of the city's residents. As safety improves, people's physical, mental and social health, well-being and quality of life

are strengthened. Everyday environments refer to people's homes, the surrounding environment and yard areas, the broader urban space and structure, and nature. This means that both the development of the broader urban structure and the promotion of safe living in the home environment are key to promoting health and welfare. Urban nature and green spaces also have a significant positive impact on health and wellbeing.

## Helsinki morbidity index by district



Source: City of Helsinki Urban Research and Statistics Unit

Age-standardised morbidity index in 2023 relative to Helsinki average, Helsinki = 100, variation between districts 64–128

- Well below the Helsinki average
- Helsinki average or slightly below
- Slightly above the Helsinki average
- Well above the Helsinki average
- No information available



## Addressing wellbeing challenges through City-wide development work

The City's services have developed a range of early support models to strengthen the mental well-being of city residents. Examples include school coach activities, exercise coaches, learning of emotional and interaction skills, youth work and various recreational activities. The City has increased training for professionals in the early identification of mental health problems in children and young people.

There are many events aimed at older people to promote mental well-being, such as library walks and dancing events. Awareness of existing self-care programmes has been raised among all residents by organising information events led by professionals at the Helsinki Finnish Adult Education Centre Työväenopisto. There are many training courses for staff on mental well-being methods, materials and self-care programmes.

The City has offered children and young people a wide range of group-based leisure activities, for example as part of the Finnish Model for Leisure Activities and in Sports Services, Youth Services and

libraries. The activities reach nearly 8,000 children a week with regular free hobbies, and the provision has been strengthened in areas where activity levels are lower.

The development of cultural work with older people is one of the priorities of senior centres, and staff skills in this area have been increased. Volunteering and peer activities and cooperation with organisations have been developed extensively. A wide range of training courses, lectures and events have been organised for volunteers on topics such as memory, non-native plant species, preparedness, emotional intelligence, voice care, exercise and loneliness.

The City has prioritised physical activity in its Welfare Plan 2022–2025 and targeted efforts at the city's least physically active residents. The physical activity recommendation is currently best met by young children, whose physical activity has been increased by reinforcing physical activity as part of the basic early childhood education activities and by including the discussion of physical activity in children's individual early childhood education plan discussions.

Comprehensive schools have promoted physical activity as an objective of the school action plan,

through the development of national Move! measurements and through the KouluPT physical activity counselling service. Schoolyards have been equipped with 4,000 additional bicycle parking spaces.

Exercise coach activities have been extended to almost all of the City's upper secondary schools, reducing the proportion of upper secondary school students who are the least active. In upper secondary education, the promotion of physical activity has been linked to communal student welfare, operating culture and safety work. The City has encouraged its employees to be more active through culture and sports benefits, exercise coaching and the promotion of active commuting.

The City has encouraged sedentary residents to engage in low-threshold physical activity through measures such as LiiKu support's Physical Activity Card, library walks, an outdoor gym campaign, increased winter swimming opportunities and improved accessibility of beach signage. A mini-intervention model for the promotion of physical activity has been developed in multidisciplinary cooperation to support bringing up physical activity, providing service coordination and motivating clients to be more physically active.

A mobility agreement has been drawn up with 77% of the clients of Hospital, Rehabilitation and Care Services. Between 2021 and 2024, around 10–15 actions have been implemented each year to support older people's physical activity, in cooperation between City operators, organisations and businesses. In 2023, a new Physical Activity Promotion Unit was launched in the City organisation to coordinate and develop joint work across the City to promote everyday physical activity.

The realisation of healthy lifestyles has been promoted through activities such as wellness cafés for upper secondary level students. Parents' evenings have been organised for the guardians of upper secondary school students on topics such as sleep and nutrition. There is a wide range of courses and events for older people every year, including the arterial disease counselling tour, the brain health fair and the well-being and health fair.

An increasing number of people have taken the Omaolo digital health check. When a person completes the health check, they receive an estimate of their life expectancy and the most common disease risks. Around half of results indicating risks were sent to professionals for further action. The practices of substance abuse prevention have been improved, and the Smoke-free Helsinki network, for example, has responded to the increased use of e-cigarettes by children and young people by increasing awareness and knowledge of e-cigarettes among staff and parents. Cooperation between divisions will be strength-

ened when the welfare officers and psychologists of student welfare in basic education and upper secondary education move to the Apotti information system from January 2025 onwards.

Helsinki has participated in the Child Friendly Municipality initiative in cooperation with UNICEF. In September 2024, Helsinki became the first Nordic capital to be recognised as a Child Friendly Municipality. The work has advanced the rights of children through five different sets of objectives. Our professionals have actively participated in child rights training, and the number of participants is steadily increasing. A child impact assessment model to support decision-making has been completed and tools for involving children have been created. As part of the work, a bullying prevention and intervention policy and feedback collection models have been produced. Several pilots have also been carried out to increase children's and young people's sense of security. At the upper secondary level, the action cards on addressing bullying, harassment and violence have increased the capacity and activity of staff to promote the safety and well-being of young people in educational institutions.

Helsinki has implemented a wide range of measures to strengthen the experience of safety and neighbourhood comfort in cooperation with its residents. The measures are also reflected in the everyday environments of city residents in the form of works of art and safer schoolyards, for example. Furthermore, the City has carried out nine placemaking pilots in suburban regeneration areas, creating temporary improvements to the environment in intensive cooperation with children and young people.

The work of the home and leisure injury working group has included identifying data on road traffic accidents, drownings, poisonings and burns, classifying different types of accidents and making suggestions on how to improve the work.

As a city, we participated in an extensive education and partnership programme with Bloomberg Philanthropies and Harvard University. It provided training for our professionals in cross-administrative cooperation in the field of child and youth safety and regional cooperation. This work is still ongoing in the regional cooperation networks for children, young people and families.

Helsinki has been actively involved in international cooperation on the theme. Under the Partnership for Healthy Cities, Helsinki receives annual funding to prevent the increase in non-communicable diseases. For 2020–2022, the City of Helsinki received funding for a project to develop and pilot a model for promoting children's safe and active travel to school and everyday physical activity. In 2023–2024, the funding has been allocated to the production of new regional

research data in cooperation with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare THL. The development work has resulted in new and unique regional data produced by businesses and organisations.

Planetary well-being has been addressed as part of the WHO Healthy Cities network. In 2024, a collaborative seminar on shared health and planetary well-being was organised, focusing on exploring the role of the urban environment in promoting health and well-being. As part of this work, the Place Standard Tool was published in Finnish to help strengthen participation in neighbourhood planning.

### Successes:

- The safety aspects of residents' daily lives have been actively promoted with residents, organisations and other partners.
- Through its targeted work to promote children's rights, Helsinki has become the first Nordic capital to be recognised as a Child Friendly Municipality.
- The Finnish Model for Leisure Activities has become a permanent fixture for pupils in grades 3–9.
- Physical activity has been promoted as a common objective across all divisions. Hundreds of thousands of Helsinki residents have been reached through campaigns, events, websites and materials.
- In upper secondary education, the proportion of students who are the least active has decreased.

### Areas for development:

- We still need evidence-based approaches and services to address mental well-being challenges. The perceived mental well-being of children and young people, especially girls, has been at a more worrying level than in the past. More than a third of young girls experience moderate or severe anxiety. Mental stress is also common among working-age and older people.
- Young people's mental health must be improved while supporting future work ability and the vitality of the city. Physical activity must be promoted as part of student welfare; increasing physical activity has been shown to improve not only physical health, but also mental health, learning ability and cognitive skills. A pedagogy of hope must be promoted across the board in upper secondary education to ensure faith in the future and future competence.
- Different population groups' experiences of safety in everyday life must be improved through City-wide development measures.
- Healthy lifestyles need to be promoted and policies strengthened through City-wide development (physical activity, sleep, nutrition, substance abuse prevention).
- A shared understanding of the importance of nature and the urban environment for the well-being of city residents must be increased.

### Programmes, studies and websites:

[Health and welfare promotion website](#) >

[Well-being, Health and Safety for Everyone – The City of Helsinki Welfare Plan 2022–2025 PDF](#) >

[Annual monitoring reports and indicators of the City of Helsinki Welfare Plan](#) >





## Physical activity of older people at the centre of the City's well-being work 2021–2024

Physical activity is particularly important for maintaining health and functional capacity as we age. Helsinki has recognised that a much broader approach than just fitness exercise is needed to increase the physical activity of older people and improve their opportunities for physical activity.

Since 2021, dozens of measures have been taken in the divisions to promote older people's physical activity. The Urban Environment Division has increased the number of street and park benches, improved the conditions for walking and cycling and enhanced winter maintenance. The introduction of the mobility agreement has been extended to all hospital, care and rehabilitation services. Bringing up physical activity and advice on physical activity have been increased, as have dance and exercise classes for older people. Other ways of promoting older people's physical activity have included grants to organisations and associations, physical activity campaigns and peer instructor training.

In 2024, the City's divisions implemented several measures to promote the physical activity of sedentary older people. In Malmi, a multi-operator project to promote physical activity among older people was carried out in 2024, resulting in a replicable collaboration model. Across the city, both the number of foreign-language students at the adult education centre and the occupancy rate of the senior exercise classes organised by the City have increased. Digiystävä courses have been held for older people, helping them learn digital skills in a communal and meaningful way. The evaluation model for projects to support physical activity and culture for older people has been revised. By August 2024, 77% of the clients of Hospital, Rehabilitation and Care Services had a mobility agreement in place. The number of benches will be further increased by 200 by the end of 2025.

# Learning



Helsinki wants to be the most equitable and effective place to learn. The City offers high-quality and attractive local services in early childhood education and basic education, as well as general upper secondary education, vocational education and training and liberal adult education. In a growing Helsinki, active measures are constantly needed to ensure accessible and equitable education that promotes equality, and provide lifelong learning opportunities.

The aim is to ensure a smooth path from early childhood education to upper secondary education in Helsinki. The availability of qualified staff is essential to ensure the equal quality of education. To reduce inequality, Helsinki allocates needs-based funding to daycare centres and schools in need of funding. In Helsinki, the well-being and learning of people of all ages are supported not only by teaching staff but also by the welfare officers, psychologists, public health nurses and doctors of student welfare, as well as school coaches, multilingual instructors, exercise coaches and KouluPT counsellors, who offer a low-threshold exercise counselling service. Well-being and learning are also supported through the systematic teaching of emotional and interaction skills.

## Emotional and interaction skills in early childhood, basic and upper secondary education

The City has strengthened children's emotional and interaction skills in early childhood education through staff training. The aim was for at least 80% of the early childhood education units selected for the target group to have participated in the training. This target was achieved, with 85% of the selected early childhood education units having participated in the training. The target for basic education was for at least 80% of schools to systematically use one or more emotional and interaction skills programmes. The objective was achieved.

Five evidence-based emotional and interaction skills programmes were recommended to schools, of which the schools selected one or more for system-

atic use. The introduction of the programmes was supported through staff training, and the schools' own development work was supported by an external facilitator. The schools created their own structure for teaching in both Finnish and Swedish, typically a year plan, based on the chosen programme or programmes. Practising emotional and interaction skills supports learning and reduces inequalities by providing pupils with core skills and self-knowledge. The skills help regulate emotions and facilitate interactions. The aim is to improve pupils' concentration and learning outcomes and promote a positive atmosphere at school. Practising these skills also prevents bullying and conflicts, creating a more equitable and safer learning environment for all pupils.

In upper secondary education, the emotional skills workshops run by the exercise coach and youth worker partners have also strengthened students' interaction and emotional skills. At the upper secondary level, the various opportunities to influence have given students the chance to develop their interaction skills. Upper secondary institutions have reconnected with interaction and emotional skills by emphasising respectful encounters and psychological safety in their overall operating culture. The pedagogy of hope developed in general upper secondary education also takes this principle to the level of teaching.

According to the 2023 School Health Promotion study, the perceived empathy and cooperation skills of learners in Helsinki are better than in the rest of the country.

## Fox model of sustainable development

Every learner has the right to be taught the core skills for the future, and sustainability skills are among these core skills. Sustainable development goals and contents are present in curricula at all levels of education from early childhood education onwards. The learning path from early childhood education to upper secondary education is based on the value base of eco-social education and creative learning.

The early childhood education Fox model, which guides children towards a sustainable lifestyle, was expanded in 2024 to include the first two years of basic education. The Fox model combines sustainable development, climate and environmental education, agency and influencing, future literacy and creative learning. Children's views are at the heart of the model, and the Fox models have been developed together with children. Staff in early childhood education and basic education were trained on sustainable development, sustainability education and the Fox model.

## Sustainable development in City of Helsinki general upper secondary schools and Helsinki Vocational College

A cross-curricular Carbon-neutral Helsinki course was developed with the staff and students of general upper secondary schools. It is a compulsory course for first-year students and is offered at all general upper secondary schools. Helsinki Vocational College introduced a sustainable future programme. The programme responds to students' needs for competence development, and the college's sustainable development study path integrates sustainable future studies into the students' own studies. The aim is that all fields of study will offer elective sustainable future studies. Sector-specific and cross-sectoral teaching materials have been produced, and the recognition of competences and the orientation of workplace instructors and assessors have been developed.

Social sustainability is promoted in upper secondary education by developing learning support in addition to communal student welfare. For example, in some general upper secondary schools, language pedagogical measures such as the 'Girlhood as a resource' course and language awareness training for subject teachers have engaged students with an immigrant background. Multilingual instructors have created a link between home and school in a way that prevents segregation. Young people's equal right and responsibility to learn has been promoted through the provision of compulsory education support services and the expertise of the compulsory education team.

## Sustainable development themes in other activities

In addition to teaching, sustainable development is also promoted in the other activities of daycare centres, schools and educational institutions. Each unit of the Education Division has an appointed eco-supporter who promotes environmentally sustainable practices and raises environmental awareness as part of their duties.



The City of Helsinki aims to halve the consumption of meat and liquid dairy products in food services by 2025. To achieve this, red meat dishes have been replaced by plant-based and fish dishes in the meal planning of schools and daycare centres. Furthermore, oat drink has been introduced as a freely available drink option in daycare centres and the amount of dairy products used in cooking has been reduced. Sustainable travel habits among pupils have been supported in cooperation between divisions through environmental education on traffic, and transport education workshops in lower secondary schools.

## Literacy

Under UN SDG 4 Quality education, one of the key targets is that by 2030, all young people and a substantial proportion of adults have achieved literacy. The central importance of literacy is also recognised in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which sets the eradication of illiteracy as a key objective. From the perspective of social sustainability and the reduction of inequalities, literacy plays a major role in society: it contributes to equality, equity, inclusion and well-being. Literacy is also one of the pillars of democracy.

In autumn 2024, pilots were launched for environmental and media education sessions for fifth graders. The City will continue to focus on strengthening literacy in 2025, as it has been made a binding target for the Education Division in early childhood education and basic education.



### Successes:

- Each Finnish- and Swedish-language comprehensive school has its own structure (year plan) for teaching emotional and interaction skills. Early childhood education staff have actively participated in emotional and interaction training.
- The Fox model of sustainable development has been extended from early childhood education to instruction in grades 1 and 2 of basic education.
- The Carbon-neutral Helsinki course has been established in the first-year general upper secondary school curriculum.
- Helsinki Vocational College has expanded the 'Working with climate responsibility' study unit and introduced it to new fields of study.
- Established structures for library cooperation, continuing education, developer teachers and support needs assessments have been put in place.
- The upper secondary level exercise coach and youth worker partnership has significantly increased students' exercise opportunities and physical activity during the school day, improved students' emotional and interaction skills, and reduced conflicts and safety deviations at educational institutions.

### Areas for development:

- Monitoring of the implementation of systematic teaching of emotional and interaction skills in early childhood and basic education. Integration of the reinforcement of well-being and interaction skills in the education of upper secondary level students, and its systematic validation. Implementation of the pedagogy of hope at the upper secondary level.
- Development of climate and sustainability competence and its models for grades 3–9 in basic education.
- Reinforcement of the foresight of staff, students and activities, and reinforcement of future skills at Helsinki Vocational College.
- Development of library visits, especially for grade 7 pupils, and cooperation with upper secondary education.
- More comprehensive assessment of literacy levels for certain people of different ages in Helsinki. There is no comprehensive data or overview at the city level, although self-assessments and national learning outcomes assessments provide insights, particularly for certain age groups in basic education.
- With the extension of compulsory education, better assurance of its implementation. The different situations of people of compulsory education age require City-wide cooperation between different divisions, including international and integration services.

# Non-discrimination and gender equality



In the City Strategy, Helsinki has committed to promoting non-discrimination, equality and human rights in all its activities. The City's work on non-discrimination and equality aims to highlight human rights as a basis for activities, particularly from the perspective of non-discrimination.

Based on the interim report of the City of Helsinki equality and non-discrimination plan for services 2022–2025, the implementation of the plan was well underway across the City organisation and almost all measures were expected to be completed by the end of the plan period. In the next strategy period's City-wide equality and non-discrimination plan for services, it is important to seek to refine the quality and effectiveness of measures, while further clarifying the relationship between the plans for social sustainability.

The City will continue as Helsinki Pride's main partner in 2024–2026. The City is also involved in the national campaign against racism, as part of which it will continue and strengthen its anti-racism work across the City organisation, a work that has long been considered important. The hel.fi redesign during the strategy period also included an update of the equity-related content to better serve the city's residents.

A sample survey was carried out in autumn 2024 to find out residents' views on the implementation of equality and non-discrimination and their experiences of discrimination and inappropriate treatment in City services. Of the nearly 950 respondents to the survey, 21% reported having experienced discrimination in City services and 15% had experienced inappropriate treatment. A clear majority (around 70%) of both those who had experienced discrimination and those who had experienced inappropriate treatment were women. Of the total number of respondents, 9.6% had experienced discrimination and 8.4% had been treated inappropriately in the last 12 months. In autumn 2024, a gender analysis of selected strategic indicators was also carried out, revealing gender differences in a wide range of aspects. The School Health Promotion study shows that girls' anxiety and experiences of sexual harassment are alarmingly common.

In the Education Division, the key successes of the strategy period are considered to be the strengthening of the prevention and identification of discrimination and inappropriate treatment, as well as the strengthening of the response to them. The understanding of the themes of equity and gender equality among both learners and staff has been enhanced through teaching and training on the subject from different perspectives. A low-threshold channel for reporting inappropriate behaviour has been made available to learners in basic education. A City-wide hate speech intervention model has also been developed and implemented, coordinated by the Education Division. Challenges are identified in terms of commitment to promoting equality and non-discrimination in the everyday activities of educational institutions, enhancing norm awareness and addressing the challenges of girls' well-being.

The Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division has also invested heavily in improving staff skills, and training on the theme has been extensive. The division has intensified cooperation with the office of the Non-Discrimination Ombudsman and Roma organisations and has built up a knowledge base on the discrimination situation. Efforts are being made to improve the process of carrying out preliminary assessments of gender and equality impacts. Services better recognise the diversity of families. Despite the progress made, challenges remain in identifying and tackling discrimination and reaching vulnerable people and identifying their service needs. Culture and leisure services have taken the diversity of residents more systematically into account during the strategy period. The voices of diverse residents have been widely heard in the creation of customer understanding in areas such as the vision work of cultural centres and sports services, and the Culture and Leisure Division's integration promotion project. All youth centres and many other cultural and leisure facilities have adopted safer space principles.

## Staff perspective on equality and non-discrimination

The City of Helsinki is the largest employer in Finland, employing approximately 39,000 people. The City has worked for a long time to promote the wellbeing and equality of its staff. The staff equality and non-discrimination plan guides HR policy work in promoting equal and non-discriminating working life.

The measures of the equality and non-discrimination plan promote, among other things, the employment of people with disabilities or those with partial work ability, summer jobs for young people aged 16–29 who need targeted support for employment, and accessible practical training. The City of Helsinki favours anonymous recruitment and has piloted affirmative action in recruitment. Diverse recruitment is based on the equal and non-discriminating treatment of applicants and promotion of staff diversity. Management and supervisors were provided with training and workshops on accessible recruitment and affirmative action. A diversity clause is used in job advertisements and anonymous recruitment is encouraged.

Work communities use the Helvi virtual facilitator on equality and non-discrimination and diverse recruitment. The equality and non-discrimination Helvi has been translated into Swedish and English, as well as Finnish sign language. A survey on equality and non-discrimination was carried out among the City's staff in spring 2023. Staff surveys are one way to assess and receive information about the realisation of non-discrimination and gender equality, and to identify possible discrimination in the City's workplaces. Work-life balance is one of the key factors in work-related quality of life, which ensure staff coping and well-being and good services. A positive aspect is that a large majority of the respondents across the

City organisation (80%) felt that they had managed to balance their work and personal life very well or moderately well.

The City organised Pride pre-party weeks for its staff in early summer 2023 and 2024. In 2023, work communities were invited to move in the spirit of 'We Walk with Pride', and many communities found their own ways and schedules for physical activity. We also organised an art workshop for the Queer Helsinki network, which offered them the opportunity to express their identity and reflect on their experiences of working for the City while representing a sexual or gender minority. Employees also had the opportunity to attend a discussion event where business experts shared how we can make our working culture truly inviting and inclusive. We also organised a training session led by the Pride manager for our staff. The themes of the training included an LGBTQ+ glossary and a diverse work community where everyone feels well. In 2024, we organised an event for staff to watch the first part of the Suomi on Queer (Finland is Queer) documentary series. The documentary is an interesting and touching look at Finnish queer history from an experiential perspective. We also organised a Pride training course for supervisors, management and HR.

In the spring of 2024, an anti-racism training course was organised for staff across the City organisation to identify, assess and, if necessary, change their own thinking and the organisation's practices. The training strengthened the participants' ability to identify different forms of racism and the practices and patterns that perpetuate racism in their own thinking and work. Staff skills have been strengthened in terms of hate speech intervention and prevention by training staff with the help of Helsinki's hate speech intervention model.

## Successes:

- Overall, good progress has been made on the measures of the equality and non-discrimination plan for services 2023–2025.
- A wide range of thematic training has been provided, some of which has been delivered in a pervasive way for a specific professional group (e.g. anti-racism training for Youth Services and training for early childhood educators on norm awareness and the promotion of equality and non-discrimination).
- The culture of intervening in discrimination and inappropriate treatment has been strengthened across the City organisation, for example by spreading awareness of the City of Helsinki's hate speech intervention model.
- The action cards on addressing bullying, discrimination, harassment and violence in upper secondary education have increased the capacity and skills of staff to address and prevent inappropriate behaviour.
- Sustained work, such as the City's Pride partnership and anti-racist work, particularly in the Education Division and Youth Services.

## Areas for development:

- Development of an evidence-based overview of discrimination and inappropriate treatment experienced by city residents.
- Long-term and transparent integration of non-discrimination and gender equality into the City's core processes, such as financial and operational planning.
- Dissemination of information and actions on the theme to all levels of the City organisation.
- An increase in compulsory staff training on the theme, so that attitude building and competence strengthening can be achieved across the board.
- Practical effectiveness of equality and non-discrimination measures and its measurement.

## Programmes:

[City of Helsinki equality and non-discrimination plan for services 2022–2025 PDF](#) >



### Support for finding a job

We have improved access to the City's summer jobs and practical training for teenagers and young adults in need of targeted employment support. We have developed the summer recruitment process to make it easier to identify applicants who need targeted employment support. We have cooperated with various operators and carried out targeted marketing of summer jobs for special groups. We recruited 41 summer workers in need of targeted employment support in 2022, around 50 in 2023 and 44 in 2024.

# Reducing inequalities and segregation



In global terms, Helsinki is at a good level in many inequality-related issues when looking at the SDG on reduced inequalities. Nevertheless, inequality and marginalisation remain among the most persistent and long-lasting problems in Helsinki, despite years of City programmes and objectives aimed at reducing them.

The number of Finns at risk of poverty or marginalisation has continued to increase after the COVID-19 pandemic. Health and wellbeing disparities between population groups have also increased, as have regional differences. Homelessness and undocumented status are bigger challenges in Helsinki than in the rest of the country, although in international comparison Helsinki has a low level of homelessness, especially primary homelessness, and Finland has so far been the only country in Europe to reduce homelessness. The challenges of homelessness in Helsinki are exacerbated by the city's attractiveness as a big city, the high cost of housing, the large number of marginalised people and the inadequacy of temporary accommodation. Helsinki achieved its goal of halving the number of unhoused people by 2023. However, the 2025 goal of ending homelessness in Helsinki will not be achieved. The number of homeless people has decreased compared to the situation in 2019. At the end of 2023, there were 739 single unhoused people in Helsinki, of whom 26% were women, 8% were under 25 years of age and 36% had an immigrant background. There were 32 unhoused families. Homelessness among both single people and families has fallen by more than 50% since 2019. For slightly over half of the single unhoused people, the homelessness was long-term.

The number of undocumented people in Helsinki is difficult to estimate. Undocumented people are a diverse group but, in practice, an undocumented

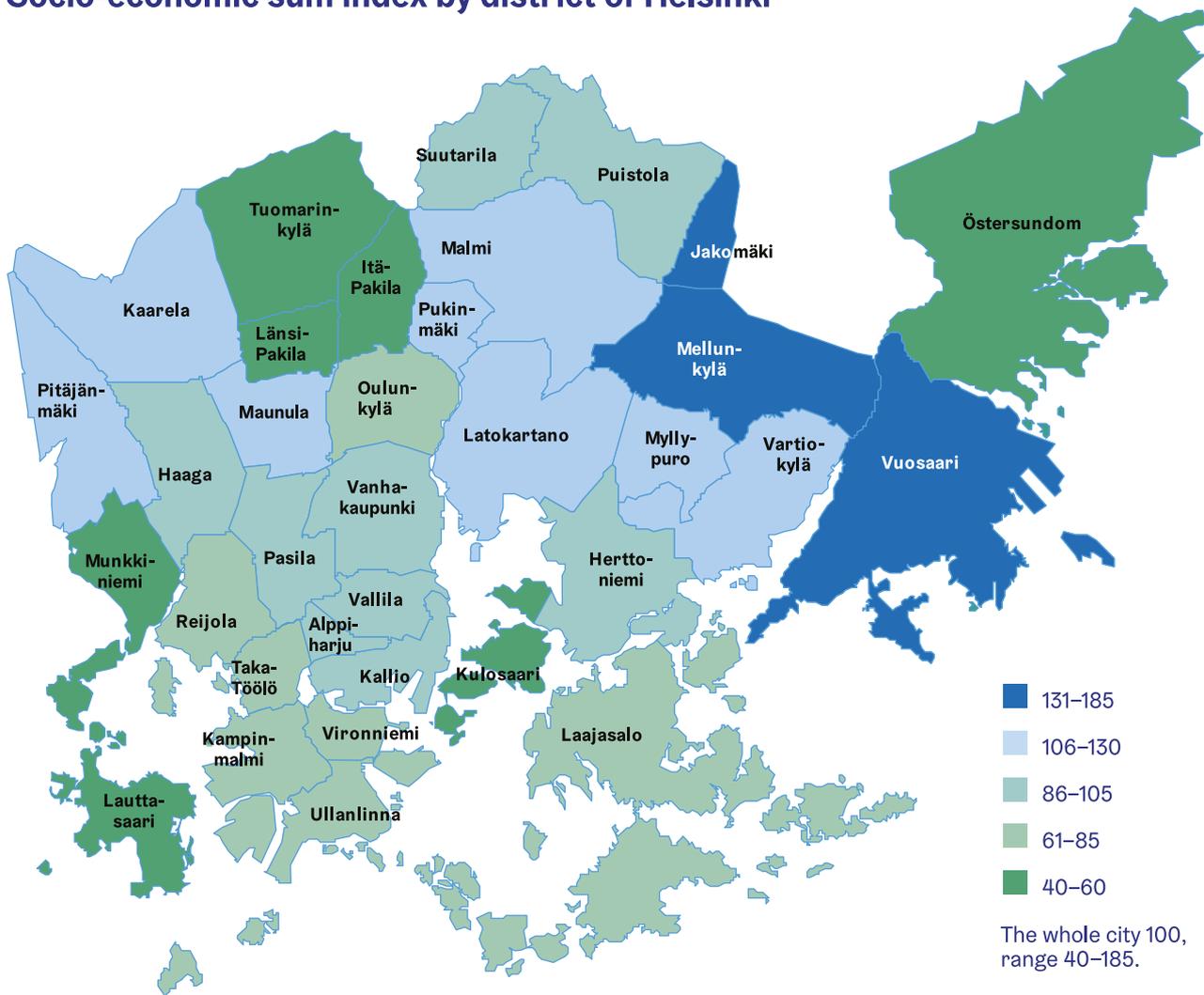
person is someone who resides in Finland without a residence permit. The everyday lives of undocumented and homeless people are marked by constant uncertainty about their future. Homeless and undocumented people are in a vulnerable position and also at high risk of other threats, such as violence and exploitation.

## Segregation development

Ethnic segregation in Helsinki is also relatively low by international standards, compared to Stockholm or Copenhagen, for example. However, there has been an increase in segregation over the past 10 years. The proportion of the population of Helsinki accounted for by immigrants and their children born in Finland has increased considerably in the 21st century, while at the same time there have been major changes in the demographic structure of individual areas.

Regional differences in the socio-economic structure of the population are reflected in differences in morbidity and perceived wellbeing. This is reflected in regionally differentiated service needs. There are also significant regional and school-specific differences in the student, pupil and child structures of educational institutions, schools and daycare centres. In addition, regional differences are reflected in perceived safety. Studies have shown that the segregation development also has an impact on migration choices and on the segregation of housing prices and school learning outcomes. Migration within the city can intensify the segregation development if people who move house start making their choices based on the characteristics of the areas, favouring certain areas and avoiding others.

## Socio-economic sum index by district of Helsinki



Source: City of Helsinki Urban Research and Statistics Unit

## The suburban regeneration model as a corrective measure

During this strategy period, Helsinki has put a great deal of resources into the so-called suburban regeneration areas of Kannelmäki–Malminkartano, Malmi, Mellunkylä and Meri-Rastila. The suburban regeneration is being implemented through cross-administrative cooperation and aims to create new vitality in the selected target areas by investing in the regeneration of the built environment and new construction. The suburban regeneration is also a tool for achieving the City's strategic objectives in terms of preventing segregation and increasing the vitality of the areas.

In addition to residential construction, projects to provide a safe and comfortable living environment have also been carried out in the suburban regeneration areas during the strategy period. As part of the national suburban development programme running

until 2022, recreational areas and playgrounds in the suburban regeneration areas were renovated. Services in the areas are being improved through spearhead projects, such as the construction of a community centre in Meri-Rastila and a family centre and well-being centre in Malmi.

In 2023, the suburban regeneration projects implemented the Bloomberg–Harvard development programme to increase the safety of children and young people in urban environments by strengthening local leadership and local cooperation networks. The aim of the programme was to find solutions to improve the safety of children and young people through a multidisciplinary approach. The programme left the suburban regeneration areas with teams based on the local leadership model, with members from all City divisions.

## Children and young people an important target group in preventing marginalisation and reducing inequalities

The inequality of children and young people is reduced by high-quality teaching and early childhood education. In addition to this, it has been ensured that children and young people can engage in diverse recreational activities during their free time. An example of this is the Finnish model for leisure activities, which Helsinki has implemented very well. Free after-school hobbies are provided at all comprehensive schools in Helsinki. The selection includes more than 30 different recreational activities that children and young people have asked for, and over 8,000 pupils in grades 3–9 choose one every week. The inclusion of the Finnish model for leisure activities in the Youth Act established it as a permanent operating model.

The model for the needs-based funding of early childhood and basic education has been updated and the amount of funding has been increased. The needs-based funding is targeted at the daycare centres and schools that need support in ensuring equal learning opportunities.

In comprehensive schools, the learning and mastery of emotional and interaction skills have been reinforced. Comprehensive schools have drawn up plans for teaching emotional and interaction skills, and the topic is regularly explored with pupils. School

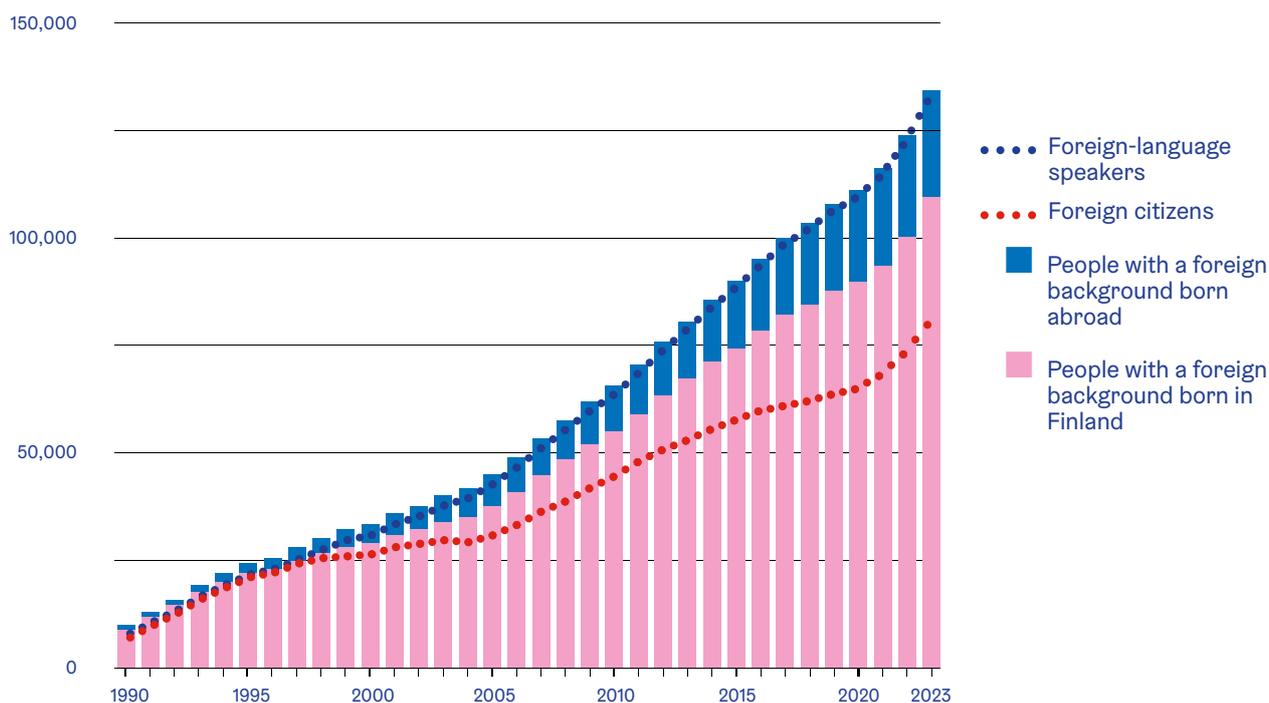
coaches and multilingual instructors offer pupils low-threshold support and guidance. In upper secondary education, work to increase physical activity and safety and strengthen community spirit contributes to reducing segregation and inequality across the city as a whole.

## Integration plays an important role in reducing inequalities

At the end of 2023, the population of Helsinki included 134,000 people with a foreign background. Four fifths of them were themselves born abroad. People with a foreign background accounted for 20% of the population, and this proportion has been steadily increasing. People have moved to Finland for work, study or family reasons, and some have received residence permits on the basis of international protection. At the end of 2022, people with a foreign background born abroad represented 17% of the city's working population and 33% of the city's unemployed population. The unemployment rate of immigrants was 19%. The poor employment situation affects financial resources and thereby the wellbeing of individuals and families.

Integration is a multidimensional phenomenon and includes not only employment, but also aspects related to language and culture acquisition, the building of social relations and networks, inclusion

## People with a foreign background, foreign-language speakers and foreign citizens in Helsinki at the end of the year 1990–2023



Source: Statistics Finland



and participation, and the development of a sense of belonging, among other things. People with foreign backgrounds in Helsinki have integrated in very different ways, with many doing well but some facing various challenges in different areas of their lives. At worst, these are also reflected in their children who have been born and raised in Finland. From the beginning of 2025 onwards, the City of Helsinki's role in promoting the integration of immigrants will be further strengthened. The reform of immigration legislation makes parents caring for their children at home a statutory target group for integration promotion.

### Successes:

- Families with children receive support at an earlier stage thanks to new operating models.
- The model for leisure activities has been developed in cooperation between divisions to ensure that every child gets a hobby.
- The needs-based funding model has had a positive impact on reducing inequalities in education, and the approach was also extended to other divisions.
- The Helsinki Skills Center provides vocational training and employment services to those who have moved to Finland.

- International House Helsinki provides a wide range of authority and advisory services for those who have moved to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area from abroad.

### Areas for development:

- Much of the development work for reducing inequalities and integration is carried out in projects, making it more difficult to carry out systematic and long-term work.
- Cooperation between divisions must be further improved, and structures for preventing marginalisation must be further developed. Upper secondary education must systematically adopt the collective impact framework to promote cooperation between divisions and reduce the fragmentation of services.
- Reaching parents caring for their children and families in order to support the progress of their integration requires further development.
- The prevention of social and regional ethnic segregation and the mitigation of its negative consequences must be developed.
- The employment path of immigrants must be shortened.

# Safety and risk management



Safety issues are present in the daily lives of all city residents, regardless of their neighbourhood, age or background. The reinforcement of safety is an important objective for the City, and a broad knowledge base is needed to develop it. Therefore, the City of Helsinki aims to examine the safety experiences of its residents in a variety of ways: through surveys, research, observations, experiences and safety discussions with adults, children and young people, for example.

The City has made the safety of children and young people a particular focus in the planning of its activities. The Urban Research and Statistics Unit has developed a tool to collect qualitative and quantitative data from professionals working with children and young people in different areas. The regional data model enables the updating and analysis of the situational picture on the safety of children and young people and the development of measures to strengthen safety.

Experiences and suggestions for measures collected directly from children and young people are particularly valuable, as children and young people move around the urban space with agility and make first-hand observations of safety-related phenomena and areas for development. In their experience, particularly frightening places are railway stations, areas around shopping centres, and dark, poorly lit places such as underpasses. Parks and playgrounds without nearby housing, i.e. social control, may also be perceived as unsafe places in the evenings, especially if groups of people perceived as intimidating gather there. Children and young people express particular concern about encountering intoxicated people in their leisure time and along their way to and from school. The abuse of intoxicants in public places is also a concern for the city's adult population. Furthermore, bullying, harassment and violence in schools and educational institutions, during leisure time and online have a negative impact on the safety of city residents and underline the need for cross-administrative development work.

The City has carried out a great deal of development work and many projects to increase the per-

ceived safety in different areas. Lighting and comfort have been improved and safe routes have been developed. Schools, educational institutions and youth work have developed staff skills to prevent and identify bullying, harassment, juvenile delinquency, gang activity, radicalisation and domestic violence, and to address negative trends that have started.

Prevention puts particular emphasis on the importance of interaction skills, communality and safer spaces — supporting children and young people's attachment to the community is key. Therefore, there is an increasing number of education professionals working in Helsinki's schools and educational institutions who do not have teaching or assessment responsibilities but instead focus on positive encounters and presence. The aim is to address problems early on and in multidisciplinary cooperation with the guardians. If necessary, mediation professionals or the police are brought in as partners. In connection with this, the City of Helsinki and the Helsinki Police Department renewed their Anchor cooperation agreement in 2024. Anchor work is multi-professional cooperation aimed at the promotion of well-being and the prevention of crime and radicalisation among children and young people (under 18). The Education Division has worked in close cooperation with the Helsinki Police Department's Preventive Policing Unit. During 2024, efforts have included providing the division's locations with a wide range of training materials to strengthen safety skills and clarify authority processes and responsibilities, as well as organising other safety-related training for staff. Four locations of Helsinki Vocational College have implemented partner work between exercise coaches and youth workers with separate project funding for the prevention of gang activity and crime. The work has helped strengthen students' attachment to their studies, increase students' physical activity, support emotional and interaction skills and community spirit, and reduce conflicts and safety deviations.

In Kannelmäki, the City applied the Bloomberg-Harvard development programme to seek solutions to improve the safety experience of children and young people through extensive cooperation be-



tween professionals, local operators and the police. According to experiences, professionals in the area gained a better understanding of the problems to be solved. The lessons learned about preventive work and operating models in Kannelmäki can also be applied to other suburban regeneration areas.

In addition to investing in prevention, it is important to tackle any problems that arise early on and in the right way. For challenging situations, the City has developed a City-wide hate speech intervention model and instructions for dealing with concerns about radicalisation. In addition to this, schools and educational institutions have introduced an intervention model for bullying, harassment and violence, as well as guidelines for dealing with situations where a learner has an increased number of absences. Helsinki has long been using the Toivo operating model to support children and young people who commit serious and repeated offences, and now the Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division will be able to develop it further thanks to funding from the Ministry of Justice. In addition to this, a cross-administrative youth cooperation group was set up in Helsinki, focusing on children and young people living in Helsinki who commit offences and display disorderly behaviour, as well as their families. The group aims to

use research and operational analysis to guide and evaluate the activities related to the target group and improve their quality.

Well-being inequalities, or segregation, between different groups of people and neighbourhoods are linked to safety. Safety problems are not evenly distributed among the population. According to the spring 2024 Helsinki Barometer, safety experiences have deteriorated most in socio-economically disadvantaged areas, for both men and women. In the most disadvantaged areas, only 39% of women felt safe walking alone in their neighbourhood on a weekend night. Overall, 72% of all respondents across the city felt that their neighbourhood was safe. This proportion has decreased in each round of the survey since spring 2022. In spring 2022, 85% of Helsinki residents felt that their neighbourhood was safe. The difference is primarily due to a marked decline in perceived safety among men.

Committing and falling victim to serious offences is also linked to social disadvantages and marginalisation. Criminals and victims often have low levels of education, financial difficulties and poor links to working life or education. There are also typically other underlying factors, such as impulsivity, learning difficulties or substance addiction, which increase

the risk of marginalisation and crime. Parenting challenges are also highlighted as a factor behind negative trends. Towards the end of the strategy period, the City will therefore give particular attention to the prevention of segregation through a range of concrete measures planned in City-wide cross-administrative cooperation, e.g. for the 2025 action plans.

The safety perspective extends from private and public spaces to the workplace as well. Organisational safety and security have become central to the development of urban safety. City employees experience more violence, intimidation and outright bullying than before. It is important to improve the methods used to support people in challenging situations. Among other things, the City uses a defusing method immediately after a sudden and upsetting situation. Defusing is a scientifically researched discussion model that helps with discussing an unexpected situation and related thoughts with a colleague who has been trained in the method. Organisational safety and security not only protect staff, but also information, materials, technical infrastructure and the environment. Safety is also a key issue at major events managed by the City. The staff of City events

are trained on an event-by-event basis to act in a non-discriminatory manner and commit to the principles of equality, fairness and equity.

Safety phenomena change and evolve over time, and the City needs to continuously develop its operations. Safety considerations are central to more strategic planning in areas such as the accessibility, adequacy and location of services. In addition to the continuous safety work carried out during normal social conditions, the City of Helsinki is prepared for various serious disruptions and exceptional circumstances. To this end, the City has further developed its preparedness in 2024, including updating and renewing its preparedness plans, and carrying out drills and training. The City of Helsinki has also budgeted for major investments in the modernisation of its civil defence shelters, among other things..

To provide an up-to-date situational picture, the City conducted an extensive safety survey in autumn 2024. The survey is carried out every three years, and this time it was sent to 12,000 Helsinki residents aged 15–79. For the first time, the survey was available in seven different languages. The survey investigates Helsinki residents' sense of security,



experiences related to crime and accidents, and trust in the police and the Rescue Department. The results are used to develop the City's activities. By expanding the sample size and the range of languages, the City is hoping to obtain more detailed information on safety experiences not only by area, but also by language group.

## Helsinki City Group's significant risks

The City Group's significant risks are those strategic, financial, operational and external risks that threaten the Group's objectives or otherwise have a very large impact if they materialise.

The City Group's significant risks are assessed in a separate process each council term. One of the basic tasks of the City Group's internal monitoring and risk management coordination group is to assist the Group's management by identifying and assessing the Group's most significant risks and methods to manage them. In 2024, the Group started development work on the identification and assessment of its significant risks.

## Violence in close relationships

According to a population survey, 44% of Finns aged 16–74 have experienced intimate partner violence and 65% have experienced violence in close relationships during childhood. 48% of women and 39% of men had experienced intimate partner violence.

## Helsinki City Group's risks and Sustainable Development Goals

Risk area	Key contents of the risk area	SDGs related to the risk area	
Disruptions in the international security environment	State security situation, indirect effects of wars, refugees		-
Disruptions in the price and availability of energy	Price and availability of energy		 
Major ICT disruption	Digitalisation, information security threats, accessibility of information		
Risks related to the availability and coping of personnel	Availability of personnel, occupational well-being, reduced ability to work		
Failure of climate crisis prevention and adaptation measures	Climate crisis, extreme weather phenomena, adaptation, long-term consequences		  
Marginalisation and increased segregation	Regional segregation, deprivation, well-being of residents, transgenerational marginalisation		  
Failure of major change projects	Organisational and policy changes, system projects		

The Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare's School Health Promotion study from 2023 shows that, in Helsinki, approximately one in five boys in grades four and five have experienced physical violence during the past year, and nearly half of girls in grades eight and nine have experienced emotional violence perpetrated by the adults caring for them.

A minority of violence ends up in the crime statistics, and only some seek help for it. Statistics Finland's statistics on offences and coercive measures show that, in Helsinki, the number of victims of domestic violence and intimate partner violence over 18 years of age known to the authorities was 1,214 in 2023. The number of men was 9% higher and the number of women was 3% lower than in the previous year. Of the victims, 70% were women and 30% men. The number of victims aged 0–17 was 334. This was 28% more than in the previous year. The number of girls and boys was the same. In 2023, Helsinki's shelters helped 1,511 clients.

The City of Helsinki has a working group to prevent violence in close relationships, tasked with promoting measures to combat violence in close relationships. In addition to City operators, the working group includes organisations and authorities specialising in domestic violence. Each year, the working group prepares communication campaigns for city residents and training courses for professionals. The City of Helsinki also has a coordinator for the prevention of domestic violence, who led the preparation of an action plan for the prevention of violence in close relationships 2024–2025, approved by the City Manager. The action plan describes violence as a phenomenon, the situational picture in Helsinki and how the City can better respond to national and international obligations. The plan includes a number of measures to prevent violence in close relationships.

As one of these measures, Helsinki has launched a network of key persons in the field of violence in close relationships, where municipal and organisation partners work together to train key persons to identify violence and help those involved in violence in close relationships. The network of key persons is maintained by the working group and the coordinator. The project-based nature of the role of the coordinator for the prevention of domestic violence prevents long-term development work.

## Successes:

- Regional cooperation between different operators has been developed as part of the Bloomberg–Harvard development work.
- Better ways have been found to draw on the experiences of children and young people.
- The partner work between exercise coaches and youth workers in the project for the prevention of gang activity and crime in upper secondary education has improved safety in educational institutions, increased students' emotional and interaction skills, and reduced conflicts and safety deviations in educational institutions. In some institutions, there has been a particular focus on young people of compulsory education age and those at risk of marginalisation or belonging to minorities, as well as young people at risk of violent or criminal behaviour. The work has improved students' attachment to their studies and reduced loneliness, the experience of inequality and the impact of regional segregation.

## Areas for development:

- Segregation-related safety problems are on the rise, despite the many measures taken by the City.
- Violence in close relationships experienced by children and young people has increased. Too many Helsinki residents are experiencing violence in close relationships or other forms of physical and mental abuse.
- The number of violent incidents faced by City employees in the workplace is on the rise.

## Programmes and websites:

[Stop the violence >](#)

[Prevention of violence in close relationships >](#)

# Participation



Participation is about belonging and being heard. The principles of participation in Helsinki include the utilisation of the knowledge and expertise of individuals and communities, enabling independent activities and creating equal opportunities for participation. The experience of participation strengthens citizens' trust in the activities of public authorities and in social activities and services in general. It helps to accept commonly established rules and practices and to understand the reasoning behind different perspectives. Promoting participation is particularly relevant to SDG 10 Reduced inequalities, SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities and SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions, which highlight equal opportunities for participation, resident involvement in urban planning and participatory decision-making.

By global standards, residents' participation and influencing opportunities and interaction are at a good level in Helsinki. Resident participation has been included in the City Strategy and several objectives have been set for it. The goal of the participation and interaction model approved in Helsinki in 2017 is to increase the transparency of decision-making and to strengthen customer- and user-orientation aspects in the development of services.

## Helsinki residents have many opportunities to influence and participate

In recent years, Helsinki has made strides in promoting participation. Issues are increasingly being examined holistically across divisions, knowledge and expertise are being shared and successful practices are being tested together. The City concretises the objectives and perspectives of the participation and interaction model in the City-wide participation plan, which is drawn up every strategy period. The participation plans for 2023–2025 are linked to three objectives: strengthening participation experience, strengthening participation competence and understanding, and strengthening pluralism.

The City of Helsinki has increased its staff's awareness and skills regarding participation and interac-

tion. The City's intranet contains information on and methods for encountering and engaging residents. The intranet also provides support for communications about participation and reaching different target groups. The same themes have been covered in a learning package on participation for all City staff, which is used to train staff and strengthen their skills in practice. The divisions have also developed their employees' participation skills separately; for example, the Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division has been working on digital participation.

The City has clarified its communications to residents on various opportunities for participation by compiling information in one place on the [osallistu.hel.fi](https://osallistu.hel.fi) website. The website provides information on various opportunities to participate in the City's development and decision-making process and support for working together.

Involving city residents in the development of services and gathering user understanding are important parts of the City's development and participation work. The challenge for City services is to engage and provide services to new target groups and reach those who have difficulties in accessing services and who are not yet using the existing services. The whole service chain must take into account the diverse needs and wishes of city residents, as well as the different barriers to using and participating in existing services. Identifying and engaging these target groups is an ongoing development effort for the City.

Services, customer experiences and facilities are designed together with residents through service design and co-creation. The most recent sites where a lot of co-creation has taken place are Kalasatama Library and the expansion and vision work of Cultural Centre Stoa. A good example of the development of the customer experience of services is the creation of safer space principles for all libraries. Different City services utilise experts by experience and organise peer activities. The Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division has launched development work to make expert by experience and peer activities easy to set up and coordinate.



Customer panels and co-creation groups are becoming established in City services and have been used in the development of services such as libraries, health stations and disability services. The City develops its services in interaction with users and stakeholders in various cooperation forums, such as youth organisations' Helsinki Team, sports clubs' Club Parliament and libraries' Kirjastoheimo. The organisations, communities and artists receiving grants form an important group of stakeholders, and the City is constantly developing its cooperation with them.

In major planning and implementation projects related to the urban environment, the City consults its residents through various digital methods and resident events. For larger projects, the City assembles a panel of city residents, who meet with the experts several times during the design or implementation of the project and make suggestions for improvements. The panel is made up of as diverse a group of residents as possible.

## **Participation is brought close to residents in their own neighbourhoods**

Helsinki supports the local participation of residents and has several professional groups that support resident participation in different neighbourhoods.

The City has five community workers, who residents can contact if they want to improve the comfort, safety and well-being of their neighbourhood. The City's seven borough liaisons support residents and various operators in participation, influencing and working together, taking regional needs into account. The borough liaisons operate in the seven major districts, focusing on regional network cooperation, trials of operating models to support resident participation, and the promotion of equal opportunities for participation. Around 20 area and participation instructors are responsible for consulting and involving young people in the planning of services, and promoting participation measures for young people. There are also staff responsible for participation in the regional libraries. The City also has three business liaisons, who help businesses find the right partners and networks, and also help with licensing.

The City of Helsinki maintains nine community houses in different parts of the city. The community

houses act as open, low-threshold living rooms and recreational centres in their area, where everyone is welcome.

Helsinki supports its residents' daily lives and attachment to the city by providing various advisory services. The City's Helsinki-info advisory service offers guidance in three locations across the city, as well as by phone and chat. Various tools have been developed to support the skills of the advisory workers and cooperation in multilingual communications and advice has been stepped up in several projects. Helsinki implemented the Avoin ovi palveluihin (Open Door to Services) project between 2020 and 2024, which focused on the development of advisory services specifically for foreign-language customers.

Regional dialogue and development have also been supported by participatory budgeting implemented by Helsinki since 2018. Helsinki's participatory budgeting system is called OmaStadi, and it is implemented fully on a digital platform. Between 2018 and 2024, the city's residents have had the opportunity to brainstorm and decide how the City will spend more than 22 million euros. Participatory budgeting has resulted in 164 projects across the city. In 2022, Helsinki completely overhauled its participatory budgeting process and succeeded in its goal of making the process simpler to participate in and implement, and shorter in overall duration.

Residents feel that participatory budgeting has increased their opportunities to make a difference, and are more interested in the City's activities and influencing decision-making. Participatory budgeting OmaStadi has brought many new services to the city, especially in the area of sports services, brainstormed by city residents. Indeed, participatory budgeting has increased innovation in City services and has also brought transparency to decision-making. It has also strengthened cooperation between different divisions and services. An example of good cooperation is the fact that children in comprehensive school are the most active of all age groups in participating in OmaStadi.

## Digital participation increases transparency in decision-making

Helsinki offers digital platforms and tools to its residents, which allow them to participate in the planning and development of the City's services regardless of time and place. The City has a digital participation roadmap, which helps develop, promote and support the use of digital participation platforms in the city. Digital participation platforms and feedback systems provide the City with data that can be used to develop the City's services.

Participation on digital platforms requires sufficient skills and suitable devices, to which not all resi-



dents have access. The City's digital support services at service points and in the form of remote digital support make it possible to lower the threshold of participation. The key objectives of digital support are to expand access to free digital support and raise awareness of it.

## Mediation helps young people act fairly

The City of Helsinki organises extensive mediation in criminal and civil cases. Mediation in criminal and civil cases is a free and voluntary statutory municipal service for the parties involved in a criminal or civil case. The purpose of mediation is to provide solutions to a criminal or civil case, in addition or as an alternative to the formal legal process. At the mediation meeting, the parties have the opportunity to discuss the crime or dispute between them, guided by mediators, and agree on how to compensate for any harm caused.

The City of Helsinki's development of mediation is particularly focused on the mediation processes of minors. The aim is to resolve various conflicts and wrongs at an early stage and thereby influence young people's ability and understanding to act amicably and fairly in their communities and shared spaces. Measures to achieve this include a city-wide cooperation agreement with those working with young people with delinquent behaviour, staff training and the development of opportunities for young people to compensate for damage through work.

Together with the police, the Education Division has produced a comprehensive package of materials for staff in early childhood education and educational institutions on cooperation with the police, Child Welfare and the Mediation Office.

## Councils promote the participation of different population groups

The Elderly Citizens Council and the Council on Disability promote the non-discrimination and participation of Helsinki residents who are older or have a disability or long-term illness. These councils influence the planning, preparation and monitoring of the City's activities in matters relevant to wellbeing, health, inclusion, living environment, housing, mobility or the performance of daily activities.

Helsinki Youth Council ensures that young people are heard in Helsinki's decision-making and in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the operations of the City's divisions. The Youth Council prepares opinions and statements on youth issues,

making young people's voices heard in the City's decision-making. Helsinki's elected Youth Council has the right to speak and be present at the meetings of the City's committees and the City Council.

## Supporting free civic activities

Helsinki is a platform for free civic activities that focus on working together and initiatives from organisations. The City supports Helsinki-based organisations, communities and resident groups with almost 40 million euros per year. In Helsinki, NGO cooperation is promoted through a network-based model. The City is looking to strengthen its partnership with organisations and cooperate regularly at the City level. Different City divisions have intensified their cooperation with organisations; for example, the Education Division has developed a model of interaction structures for NGO cooperation, which comprehensively describes the partnership and cooperation with different operators and organisations to promote the well-being of children and young people.

The City has a City-level steering group for NGO and grant activities, which prepares and coordinates the implementation and interaction of the overall model for NGO cooperation. The participation and influence of organisations is promoted in Helsinki in the NGO Advisory Board, which brings together Helsinki-based organisations and trustees, and experts from the City's central administration and divisions. The City also organises annual open events for organisations to promote networking and participation in the development work of the City, both among organisations and between organisations and City employees. In addition to this, we provide training for organisations to strengthen their self-sufficiency, public benefit and impact.

## Children's and young people's participation

Helsinki is committed to promoting children's and young people's participation and opportunities to influence and has set City-wide targets for promoting these, approved by the City Board. Helsinki offers a wide range of influencing opportunities and channels for young people. Helsinki has an elected Youth Council. Young people's participatory budgeting, known as the Youth Budget, engages around 10,000 young people aged 13–17 every year. The Voice of the Young Editorial Board highlights social issues important to young people in Finland's biggest media outlets. Independent activities for young people are supported through the Sponssi! grant, for example. Through

the young people's initiative channel, young people can make their voices heard in City decision-making. The new Club Forum brings the voices of children and young people to the development of sports services. In 2023, the City launched regular *Lasten ja nuorten ääni kuuluu!* (The voice of children and young people is heard!) events, where the deputy mayors and division heads engage in dialogue with children and young people. The aim of these meetings is to strengthen interaction and the understanding of the City's management of the experiences and ideas of children and young people. In 2023, the City completed the *Muistitko lapset ja nuoret?* (Did you remember children and young people?) planning tool, which supports City employees in the consultation and involvement of children and young people.

Work in early childhood education, schools and educational institutions is an important part of promoting the participation and influencing opportunities of children and young people. Families play a key role in promoting the participation of learners. Functional and genuinely communicative contact with homes, daycare centres, schools and educational institutions supports learners' well-being and is also a resource for learning. Training and support materials are available for schools and institutions to strengthen dialogue and to help communities reflect together on how being seen and heard, positive action and community attachment are realised in the daily lives and activities of learners, guardians and employees. The school partnership built between the Myllypuro unit of Helsinki Vocational College and the comprehensive schools in the Myllypuro area and its events (e.g. the *'Ota opiskelupaikka vastaan'* event in the summer) have provided a concrete opportunity for guardians and learners in the transitional phase to get to know the staff of the nearby educational institution. This has increased safety and trust in educational institutions, ensured an understanding of the potential support needs of new learners and initiated cooperation with guardians before the start of upper secondary education, ensuring continuity of cooperation between the home and the educational institution. Helsinki's general upper secondary schools and Helsinki Vocational College have separate forums for student participation (Advisory Board at general upper secondary schools and Influencer Forum at Helsinki Vocational College).

The City-wide promotion and monitoring of the objectives is the responsibility of the steering group on the participation of children and young people, which includes representatives from each division. At schools and educational institutions, the participation of children and young people is monitored through the School Health Promotion study and customer experience surveys, carried out in alternate

years, as well as through various well-being surveys. Furthermore, tools have been developed for schools and educational institutions to measure the experiences of participation in everyday life. The tools help identify learners' experiences of participation, well-being and support needs throughout the school year. As part of UNICEF's Child Friendly Municipality work, Helsinki's different divisions have piloted different ways of collecting and using feedback and experience data from children and young people during 2023–2024.

## Successes:

- Helsinki has developed a variety of participation methods, which are being used extensively in service development and decision-making preparations alike. Digital participation and digital support have been actively developed.
- Participatory budgeting has established itself as one of the City's methods of participation, strengthening transparency in the City's decision-making and the opportunities for residents to participate.
- The City's participation and interaction work is more goal-oriented and more managed than before. The City Executive Office and the divisions have jointly prepared participation plans, which set out both City-wide and division-specific objectives and measures.
- The City established the NGO Advisory Board in spring 2023, and the City's new model for NGO cooperation has provided a clear structure and goals for interaction with organisations.
- Communications about participation have evolved and expanded. The intranet site and training package on participation and interaction for all City employees strengthen the City's ability to involve its residents in development and diversify residents' opportunities to participate.

## Areas for development:

- Further development of multi-channel opportunities for participation, combining digital and face-to-face methods of participation.
- City residents' opportunities to participate in and influence the City's work on sustainability and the environment.
- Cross-administrative cooperation to facilitate residents' local agency.



## Transport climate panel

In the transport climate panel, held for the first time in 2024, ordinary residents of Helsinki discussed from their perspective how future transport will be smooth and fair for everyone: people living in different areas, people with different family situations, people using different modes of transport and people with different income levels.

The panellists received information on transport emissions and their reduction in Helsinki, heard from experts and worked in small groups. The panel met on two Saturdays and two weekday evenings between May and August 2024. The panel prepared a statement, which it will present to City decision-makers.

A random sampling of 5,000 adults living in Helsinki were invited to the panel. Those interested

completed a survey, which the City used to compile a diverse group of 64 people anonymously. The selection criteria and the final panel participants correspond to the population of Helsinki. In addition to this, representatives from Helsinki's Elderly Citizens Council, Council on Disability and Youth Council were invited to join the panel.

The panel held constructive discussions on issues that affect the daily lives of city residents, such as the planned restrictions on the use of combustion engine vehicles. In Helsinki, the use of different modes of transport in limited street space has strongly divided residents in discussions produced in other ways.

[Read more >](#)

# Culture



The UN's 2030 Agenda integrates culture into the Sustainable Development Goals. In particular, the goals relating to education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), reduced inequalities (SDG 10) and sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11) take into account the importance of cultural heritage and cultural diversity. In itself, culture is the lifeblood of good lives for individuals and communities. On the other hand, culture and creativity can also provide solutions to the sustainability crisis. From a sustainable development perspective, culture has a special role to play in promoting the following themes.

- 1. The role of culture and arts in society:** cultural sustainability recognises the role of culture and arts in promoting social cohesion, identities and communality. Culture creates identity and meaning for communities and individuals, and provides direction. Through culture, we strengthen the well-being of both individuals and communities.
- 2. Cultural diversity:** Sustainable development requires that cultural diversity is recognised and nurtured. This relates to how different cultures can thrive and maintain their identity in the face of globalisation and other changes.

- 3. Creativity and cultural innovation:** Culture and creative activities are seen as assets that can contribute to sustainable economic development and improve quality of life. Cultural means are used to build a sustainable Helsinki, through both design and creative methods.
- 4. Protection of cultural heritage:** Culturally sustainable development must take into account the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage for future generations. For example, historical buildings, traditions and languages are key elements of cultural heritage. In Helsinki, the Cultural Environment Programme, alongside legislation, sets out how valuable cultural environments are to be taken into account and preserved, and how they are to be used as a resource as the city grows and becomes more compact.

In other words, the UN SDGs recognise the role of culture in promoting sustainable development, although it is not a separate fourth pillar in the original definition of sustainable development. In this report, we describe the City of Helsinki's role in promoting and supporting culture as part of sustainable development. In the next section, we present the City's cultural services and its work in promoting culture, following the above themes. We will then look at the City's approach to design and cultural heritage.

# Art and culture help face and change the future

Culture and art have a role to play in Helsinki: they create and strengthen the identity and meaning of communities and individuals, and act as a compass for the future. Through culture, we strengthen the well-being of both individuals and communities. Helsinki has more cultural offerings than the rest of the country, and the regional accessibility of culture is very good in Helsinki (Official Statistics of Finland 2021). The wealth of cultural offerings is linked to the size and capital status of the city. In 2023, the City of Helsinki's supply of cultural services already recovered to a level close to that before the COVID-19 pandemic. The Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra, the City's cultural centres, the City Museum and other cultural services drew visitors back to cultural events. In 2023, they reached a total of 1.2 million visitors, which is around 1.8 visits per Helsinki resident, compared to around 2.5 visits per Helsinki resident in 2019 before the pandemic. The number of visitors to libraries increased by 24% in 2023 compared to the previous year.

Helsinki residents are more avid consumers of culture than other residents of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area, but there are large differences between

people with different educational backgrounds in the capital as well, according to the 2021 Well-being Survey for the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. While one in two people with a tertiary education attends an art or cultural event at least once a month, the corresponding figure for people with a basic level of education is only 15%. In contrast, income level is not linked to the consumption of culture. In fact, group-based cultural activities are more common among people with a low income than among people with a higher income. Other research evidence has revealed that groups excluded from cultural services include, in particular, young people with a low level of education and low income, and men, who are less likely than women to attend cultural events.

Accumulating research evidence suggests that arts and culture have causal effects on well-being. There are many mechanisms behind these effects, and some of them come through health behaviours, as the lifestyles of those who enjoy culture are healthier than those who avoid it. In light of the results, a deterioration in the state of health over the previous year reduced both visits to cultural events and cultural group activities. The results suggest that





arts and culture should also — and perhaps especially — be available to those struggling with various well-being challenges.

The City of Helsinki works in partnership with cultural operators and artists, distributing around EUR 18 million annually in support of art and cultural activities. In addition to this, the City provides grants to educational institutions providing basic arts education. In 2024, the City allocated a total of two million euros of state inheritance funds to promote the physical activity and cultural activities of older people. The supported projects will strengthen the participation and active agency of older people. The criteria for awarding these grants include the consideration of equality, non-discrimination and ecological aspects in the organisation of the activities.

## **Libraries are the backbone of culture, and cultural centres are the hearts of neighbourhoods**

The City of Helsinki's extensive library institution serves all Helsinki residents in almost all neighbourhoods. Libraries are a kind of backbone of culture — easily accessible and free of charge, they are

meeting places where you can find not only information but also cultural experiences, equipment for various activities and facilities for gathering. Helsinki has 37 regional libraries, two mobile libraries and two hospital libraries and five service points at service centres. The library has been able to renew itself as the city has changed. The library also offers Helsinki residents services such as the Multilingual Library and eLibrary, which contains thousands of books, magazines, newspapers, films, music, courses and databases. The library is an important place for learning and literacy, serving residents from infancy to old age.

There are cultural centres in four neighbourhoods in Helsinki. The inner city is home to the Annantalo children's cultural centre and the diverse arts and culture centres Savoy and Caisa. The future role, mission and way of working of the local cultural centres have been built from 2023 onwards through vision work involving around 2,400 residents. Residents' views are the basis for planning the future in the vision work. City residents and other stakeholders need cultural centres that serve as meeting places that strengthen community spirit and highlight the stories, points of pride and cultures of their area. City residents who participated in the vision for

the future of cultural centres wanted cultural experiences clearly targeted at different groups, as well as physical activity and creative activities that are made as easy as possible to participate in.

The current local cultural provision is also complemented by the Helsinki Model, which aims to balance and diversify the arts and cultural provision in the city's neighbourhoods. During the third project period, 2022–2024, the Helsinki Model's activities were targeted at the areas of Tapulikaupunki–Suutarila, Kontula, Malmi and Pihlajamäki–Pihlajisto with a total grant budget of EUR 600,000. From 2024 onwards, the activities will be targeted at the suburban regeneration areas of Malminkartano, Kannelmäki, Malmi, Mellunkylä and Meri-Rastila, which are being developed in City-wide cooperation.

The aim is to develop the suburban regeneration areas comprehensively through art and culture: in the summer of 2024, Malmitalo organised a month-long urban festival in the Ala-Malmi Park: concerts, a circus, workshops, park exercise classes, urban dances, flea markets and picnics invited residents to enjoy the area and its events together.

## Cultural diversity

Sustainable development requires that cultural diversity is recognised and nurtured. This relates to how different cultures can thrive and maintain their identity in the face of globalisation and other changes. In Helsinki, cultural diversity has been promoted by targeting activities at children, older people and socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Cultural diversity and better accessibility of minority cultures have also been a focus of work in cultural services.

The aim of cultural services has been to develop content production from a diversity perspective. The target group analysis of the services, carried out and discussed with staff, has led to a better understanding of the minorities included in the activities and the groups excluded from them, among other things. The aim is to strengthen the agency and participation of minority groups in cultural services, so that cultural services can reach and represent the residents of Helsinki better. In particular, the activities of Caisa, a cultural centre managed by the City of Helsinki, support the strengthening of diversity and inclusiveness in the City's cultural and art activities. The City also pays attention to the role of the Swedish language and the promotion of bilingual culture, as well as regional equality. Through the Multilingual Library, the libraries offer books, audio books, newspapers and magazines in over 80 languages for children, young people and adults. You can borrow materials from

the Multilingual Library through your local library. Culture is used to strengthen the identity of the different areas of Helsinki.

Thanks to the trials of the Demokratiakahvila (Democracy Café) project that ran at Itäkeskus Library from 2021 to 2023, the Eid celebration has established itself as part of the events programme at Cultural Centre Stoa in Itäkeskus. In addition to this, events celebrating cultures were taken into account in the service design of Cultural Centre Stoa as one of the main objectives of its activities and in the planning of the future renovation. During the project, Itäkeskus Library launched a fortnightly book club in simplified language and Finnish language help for adults. These activities will also continue after the end of the project, and they are both aimed at supporting the learning of the Finnish language. The project's activities reinforced the understanding that serving a diverse population requires a diverse staff – for example, library staff should reflect the cultural and linguistic make-up of the area. This relatability makes the library even more inviting to many residents. It is important to create structures for the development of multicultural services that can be replicated and extended to all cultural and leisure services.

## Focus on children

In the promotion of children's culture, the City of Helsinki aims to orient its activities in such a way that it can ensure equal opportunities for all children to experience art and culture. The City also implements UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities model. At the heart of the activities is Annantalo Arts Centre for Children and Young People, which coordinates activities such as the 5x2 art education for all of the City's primary schools, introducing around 4,400 children each year to artistic activities under the guidance of professional artists at the City's cultural centres.

In addition to basic art education, hobbies in art, music and culture are supported by the Youth Services' hobby groups and the Finnish Model for Leisure Activities. The Finnish Model for Leisure Activities is a form of activity included in the Youth Act in 2023, which aims to provide an opportunity for hobbies for all pupils in grades 3–9. Free after-school activities bring hobbies closer to also those children and young people who have fewer opportunities to try out different activities. The Finnish Model for Leisure Activities allows us to create pathways for long-term hobbies.

All Helsinki residents born in or after 2020 are invited to become Culture Kids. The Culture Kids sponsors organises activities for the children based on their stage of development until they start school.

The Culture Kids sponsors include around 30 arts and culture operators. By the summer of 2024, around 18,000 Culture Kids had already joined the activity. The participating operators work together on ways of implementing culturally responsible art and cultural education.

## Age-friendly cultural services

The City of Helsinki wants to ensure that all older people in Helsinki have the opportunity to get out and about, be active citizens, develop their skills, participate and experience art and culture, regardless of their circumstances, such as age, physical condition, financial situation or place of residence. The operating models of cultural work with older people and age-friendly cultural services have contributed to increasing opportunities for older people in Helsinki to participate in art and culture, as both creators and experiencers. For example, the Lämpiö remote culture platform for older people increases accessibility, and the Suitcases of Memories from the City Museum's collections and local events produced by cultural centres lower the threshold for participation. City-supported projects have included the development of aerial acrobatics for older people and the production of contemporary dance performances with professionals, among other things.

## Engaging vulnerable residents in cultural services

The national Sustainable Growth Programme has been building a systematic guidance model, where social services and healthcare professionals guide vulnerable residents towards cultural and leisure services. The work to develop this model is still ongoing. Multi-sectoral funding models and the design of services to meet the needs of vulnerable people will be particular areas for future development.

## Successes:

- Individual artists and art institutions, as well as many other cultural operators, constantly raise issues of sustainable development in their public activities and produce works that increase the understanding of Helsinki residents on these issues and their ability to find creative solutions to the challenges that arise.
- The promotion of cultural equality has been made an important priority throughout the cultural sector. In particular, the City has identified children, older people and vulnerable residents of Helsinki as groups whose cultural rights should be focused on.
- The target groups' voice has been strengthened, and knowledge and understanding of phenomena related to the target groups is shared across sectors and with third sector operators, among others.

## Areas for development:

- The visibility and involvement of different minorities in the planning and implementation of cultural services and the inclusion of content relevant to them in the provision of cultural services must be increased.
- More discussion and common understanding is needed among cultural and art operators on the principles of art and culture education and other cultural activities that take into account diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Skills on diversity and inclusion issues must be developed in cultural services at all levels (senior management, supervisors, operational staff) through training and a shared vision on diversity.
- The design of services to meet the needs of vulnerable people and multi-sectoral funding models for the provision of cultural services to vulnerable people require further development.

# Design

Design has been part of the Helsinki City Strategy for more than a decade. For example, Helsinki is one of the world's first cities to appoint a Chief Design Officer. During this strategy period, design has been a more systematic part of user-oriented service renewal and the development of urban space.

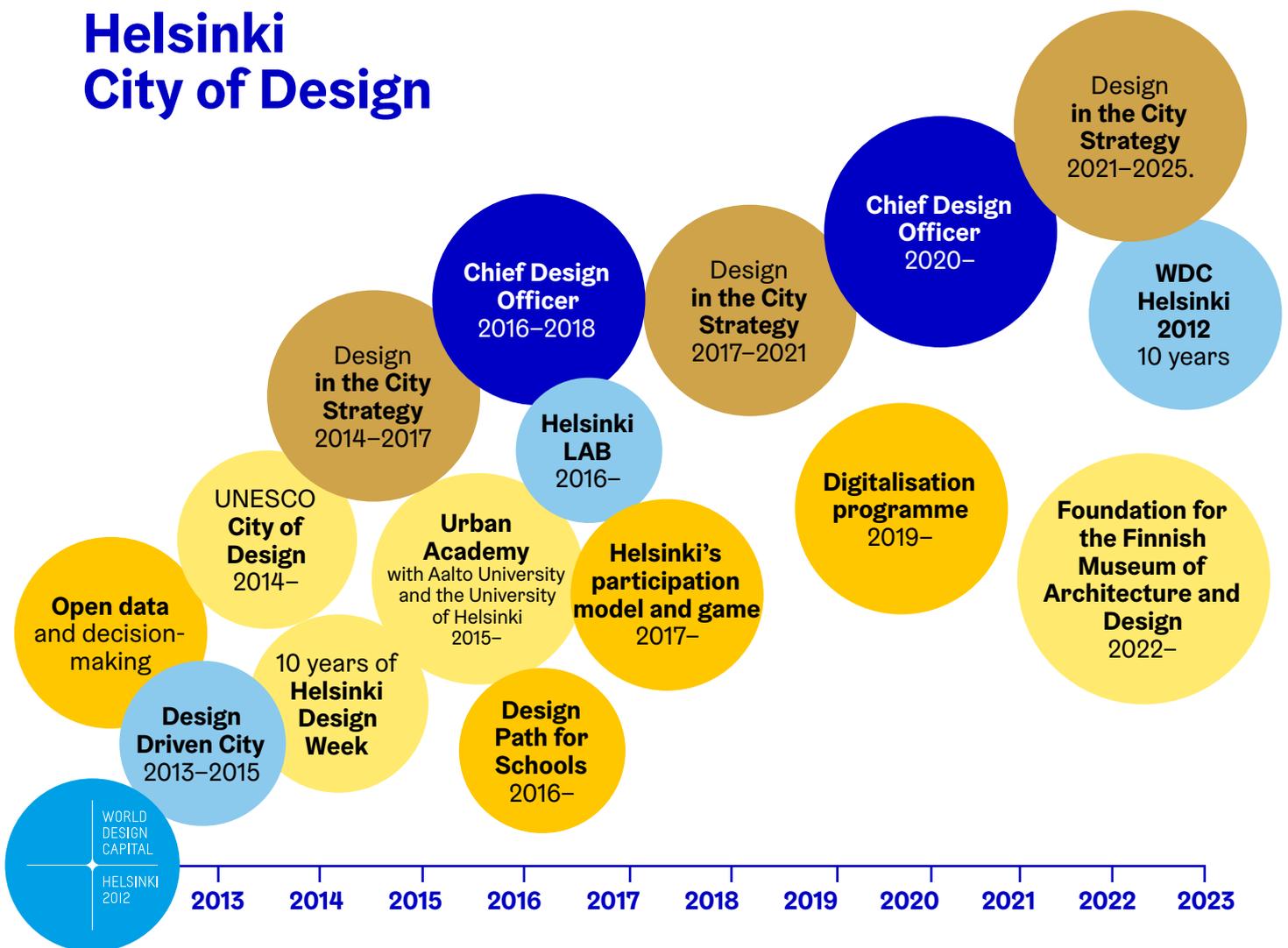
Helsinki is known for great design. Design is a way for Helsinki to build a functional and equal city. Design is a tool for understanding the needs of residents and solving relevant problems. Design and architecture have long played an important role in the building of the Finnish welfare society and better daily life at both the national level and in Helsinki.

The City of Helsinki's design journey began in 2012, when Helsinki was selected as the World Design Capital together with the cities of Espoo, Vantaa,

Kauniainen and Lahti. For the City of Helsinki, that year was a starting point for utilising design in the development of the City's services and operations. As a result, design became a strategic-level focus area for the City. During its design journey of more than ten years, Helsinki has consistently strengthened the role of design as part of the City's core activities. One of the key factors behind the success of this design journey has been the strong role of design in the City Strategy.

Helsinki is one of the world's first cities to appoint a Chief Design Officer. In 2020, the City appointed its second Chief Design Officer to promote the use of design and architecture in the development of the city and strengthen Helsinki's reputation as an internationally renowned design city.

## Helsinki City of Design





The Chief Design Officer is supported by the City's internal design team and the City's internal design network of more than 300 experts. From 2024 onwards, the internal design team will work as part of the strategic development within the City Strategy Unit, becoming even more closely involved in the assessment of the City Strategy, the preparation of the strategy knowledge base and the implementation of the strategy by supporting the City's key projects and processes, among other measures.

Helsinki implements design projects in close cooperation with design agencies. Helsinki has a framework agreement on service design, which covered a total of 5 million euros in design procurements in 2023. Design procurements in Helsinki have increased more than tenfold in the last eight years.

During the strategy period 2021–2025, design has been a more systematic part of user-oriented service renewal and the improvement of the City organisation's productivity. The goal is to increase the attractiveness of public urban spaces by means of insightful design and experimentation. New initiatives in this area include the placemaking programme focusing on the co-creation of pleasant urban spaces and the completion of the Helsinki architectural programme. Design is an important factor in setting Helsinki apart internationally, and this objective is supported through networking and by promoting the realisation

of the new museum of architecture and design. An important challenge for the future is to develop the assessment of the effectiveness of design activities and the utilisation of data generated in design work.

### Successes:

- Co-creation of urban spaces: the launch of place-making activities.
- Completion of Helsinki's first themed playground.
- Completion of Helsinki's architectural programme.
- Service design of the Hel.fi website.

### Areas for development:

- Design of public urban spaces.
- Strategic design: systems, phenomena and anticipation.
- Development of the effectiveness and effectiveness indicators of design activities.

### Tutkimukset ja verkkosivut:

[Design Helsinki website](#) >

[UNESCO – City of Design Report 2019–2022 PDF](#) >

# Cultural heritage

Cultural heritage is the result of human activity and interaction with the environment. Cultural heritage and the cultural environment are intertwined. The changing of values, beliefs, skills and traditions is a key characteristic of cultural heritage, but cultural heritage also represents continuity in a changing world. A lovingly nurtured cultural heritage is an economic attraction factor and plays an important role in the development of tourism. Therefore, cultural heritage is also a resource for development from an economic point of view.

Cultural heritage and related information are produced, used, managed and preserved by a wide range of actors, from private enthusiasts to public sector operators. In Helsinki, the Culture and Leisure Division is responsible for library materials, museum collections, the maintenance and renewal of cultural heritage and the protection of the cultural environment, and supports art and cultural activities. Helsinki City Museum in particular has the task of giving the people of Helsinki roots and helping them form their own, unique relationship with Helsinki and identity as a Helsinki resident. As a cultural environment authority, the City Museum brings a cultural heritage perspective to the town planning process and urban development. HAM Helsinki Art Museum, on the other hand, fosters, presents and develops artistic heritage and supports the emergence of new cultural heritage in the field of contemporary art.

The City Archives is responsible for the City's permanently archived document data. Schools and other educational institutions uphold and pass on cultural heritage in their daily work. There is a lot of cross-sectoral cooperation, ranging from daycare to upper secondary education, as well as with the Työväenopisto and Arbis adult education centres.

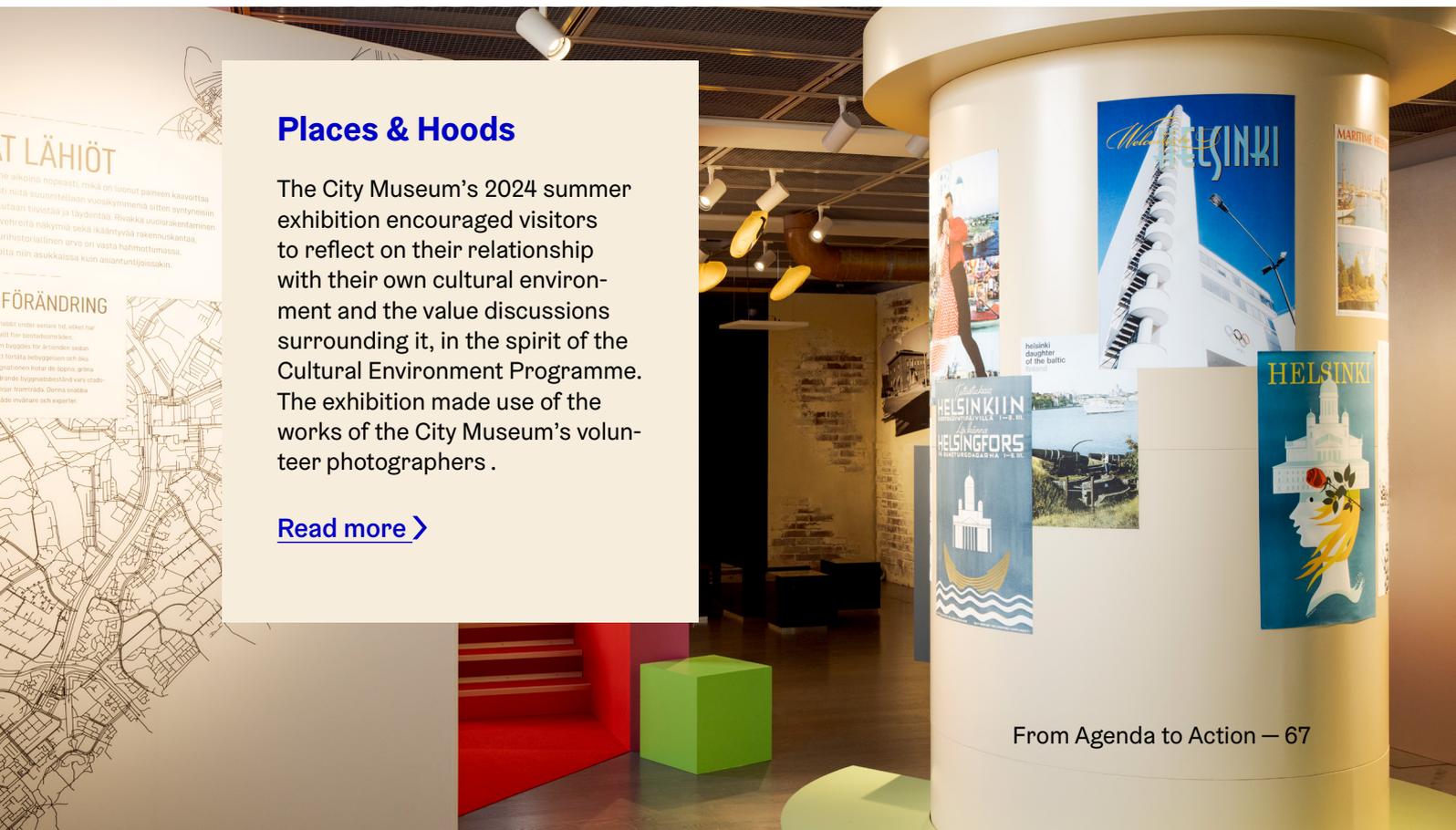
Cultural heritage data and related services are digitalised at the same pace as the rest of society. Digital tools have opened up new opportunities for both professional cultural heritage operators and citizens. Helsinki's tangible cultural heritage is easy to access digitally through the national Finna search service. Through Finna, the materials have been part of the pan-European Europeana service since 2021, and have thereby become part of the European cultural heritage. Finna also shares cultural heritage information related to the built environment. The City Museum's photo collection is also accessible through the Helsinkiphotos.fi service. The freely usable high-resolution images also create preconditions for business activities.

The City of Helsinki's History Committee, which operates under the City Executive Office's Information Management Unit, maintains the History Helsinki online service, which distributes history and cultural heritage materials related to Helsinki and information derived from them.

## Places & Hoods

The City Museum's 2024 summer exhibition encouraged visitors to reflect on their relationship with their own cultural environment and the value discussions surrounding it, in the spirit of the Cultural Environment Programme. The exhibition made use of the works of the City Museum's volunteer photographers.

[Read more >](#)



## Cultural Environment Programme

The Cultural Environment Programme, which the City Board approved in 2023, is a joint policy of the City Museum and the Urban Environment Division on the consideration of cultural environments and their management and utilisation in Helsinki. The programme provides an overall view of the values of Helsinki's cultural environments and the related cultural heritage. The preparation has been carried out in consultation with and with the participation of the City's divisions, businesses and residents. The programme focuses in particular on reconciling the preservation of cultural environments with the City's other objectives, as well as on supporting residents' independent activities. Combining sustainable growth with the preservation of cultural environments is crucial. The objectives of the programme support many of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in relation to ecological sustainability and natural environments, as well as wellbeing and sustainable tourism.

### Successes:

- Active participation in the preservation and renewal of cultural heritage has important welfare effects. In the Adopt a Monument activities, volunteers manage archaeological sites under the guidance of the City Museum, and the Kuvasakki photography group documents the city by taking photographs. Museum grandmas and grandpas pass on cultural heritage in Children's Town. The City Museum also works with operators often perceived as marginal. Its exhibition production involved the Afro-Finnish community in 2023–2024, and in November 2024 it opened the exhibition M/S Baltic Queens, shedding light on the little-studied subject of LGBTQAI+ migration. The materials and script for both exhibitions were based on documentation carried out with the respective communities.
- The Cultural Environment Programme is being implemented in close cooperation within the City and involving residents. Working together has increased Helsinki residents' awareness of cultural environments and their values. At the same time, there has been extensive networking, emphasising the diverse values and vitality impacts of the cultural environment, and highlighting the importance of conservative repair of buildings as part of sustainable development. The vision of the programme is that the Helsinki of 2050 will be a historically interesting and sustainably changing city that values its cultural environment and where everyone can put down roots.

## Areas for development:

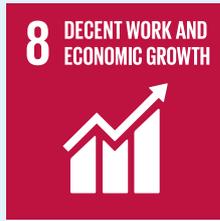
- The challenges of regionality and diversity affect the sustainability of cultural heritage as much as the urban organisation in general.
- The Culture and Leisure Division continuously develops digital tools and working methods to make cultural heritage and experiences based on it more accessible. The Library Services offer a wide range of electronic materials and tools, advice and support for the use of digital services. The development of digital operating models and the maintenance of systems require continuous investments. Combining digital accessibility and performance expectations requires a wide range of skills.
- Those involved in highly specialised aspects of cultural heritage are often older people, and passing on their skills to the next generation is a key challenge. Volunteers often have very limited resources.

## Programmes, studies and websites:

[Art and Culture in Helsinki 2030: The committee's vision for the city and its citizens, March 2020 PDF](#) >

[History Helsinki](#) >

# Economy



The perspective of sustainable economy is broad and linked to a number of different SDGs. Below are the main SDGs related to poverty, work and livelihoods, consumption, industry and innovation. In this section on sustainable economy, we also discuss the themes of sustainable housing, construction and traffic.

Helsinki's local government finances remain strong, although rising expenditure is threatening the balance. The changing age structure and growing need for investments increase expenses. Growing tax revenue and land property income support future development. The pressure created by the ageing of the population falls on Helsinki's economy, which is responsible for its own health and social services as a result of the health and social services reform.

The economies of Finland and Helsinki have already largely recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic that started in 2020, which is reflected in high employment rates and rising wages in Helsinki, among other things. However, 2022 proved to be another excep-

tional year. Russia's attack on Ukraine had a significant impact on Helsinki as a business environment. The longer-term effects of the war on the geopolitical position of Helsinki, for example, are difficult to fully assess. Helsinki's accessibility by air has deteriorated due to the Russian ban on overflights, which is having a negative impact on the development of tourism. The Finnish economy grew in 2022 thanks to a good start to the year, but the outlook for 2023 is already bleaker.

Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is already well under way, but new major problems have emerged, notably rapid inflation and rising interest rates, as well as labour shortages in many sectors. Economic growth has slowed down and the economy entered a recession in spring 2023. However, the tax base in Helsinki is strong, as the diverse economic structure based on a high level of competence and the large proportion of high-income residents are likely to protect Helsinki from the worst blows.

# Livelihood and employment



Globally, Helsinki is at a good level in achieving SDG 1 (No poverty). Helsinki's challenges have to do with relative poverty caused by high living standards and costs, perceived income adequacy and increasing poverty of families with children. In national comparison, Helsinki has better prospects than most other Finnish municipalities and cities to maintain growth and positive employment trends. In terms of gender, median earnings for women are still significantly lower than those for men. Even though the changes in the population structure affect Helsinki as well, population forecasts suggest that migration will remain favourable to Helsinki, and the diverse business and premise structure will increase employment opportunities and tax revenues.

In addition to the development of the national economy and the related tax revenues, a key issue concerns expenditure in the municipal sector. Pressure is created by the ageing of the population, which affects public finances in two ways: the growth of the elderly population creates pressure on health, care and pension expenditures, and the shrinking of the working-age population weakens the growth potential of the economy, which is directly reflected in the development of the tax base. Measures to improve employment and increase the efficiency of health care and social welfare service provision may improve the sustainability of public finances. Increased work-related migration will, under certain conditions, have a faster impact on long-term sustainability than the birth rate. Permanently higher net immigration would strengthen public finances if the average employment and wage levels of immigrants did not differ significantly from the native population

## Unemployment in Helsinki

	2021 August	2022 August	2023 August	2024 August
Unemployment rate	12,8 %	10,3 %	10,8 %	11,7 %
Unemployment rate of foreign nationals	24,9 %	21,3 %	22,2 %	23,8 %
Unemployment rate of people under 25	12,2 %	8,9 %	9,1 %	10,4 %

Source: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment / Employment service statistics

## Unemployment rate

The employment situation in Helsinki has deteriorated since spring 2023, when the number of unemployed jobseekers in Helsinki started to rise. The unemployment rate in Helsinki was 11.7% in August 2024. At the end of August 2024, there were 42,188 unemployed jobseekers in Helsinki, which was 4,095 (10.8%) more than a year earlier. Over the past year, unemployment in Helsinki has risen relatively most among young people, men, higher education graduates and foreign nationals. The employment situation in Helsinki varies considerably by area, with unemployment being most prevalent in the eastern major district. Employment Services has taken regional differences within Helsinki into account through measures such as extensive operations at the Itäkeskus service point and separate project activities.

The demand for labour in Helsinki has clearly declined in response to the deterioration in the general economic situation. After the COVID-19 crisis, the number of job vacancies increased exponentially in 2021, and the number of job vacancies announced in early 2022 was the highest on record. However, the number of job vacancies started to fall rapidly as early as the end of 2022.

One of the key problems with the structure of unemployment in Helsinki is the high number of long-term unemployed people. Long-term unemployment is in itself a barrier to employment and may lead to health and well-being challenges if prolonged. For those with only basic education, the risk of prolonged unemployment is clearly higher than average. Among unemployed jobseekers in Helsinki, there



were 16,965 long-term unemployed people who had been continuously unemployed for more than a year in August. The relative proportion of long-term unemployed people among all unemployed people (40%) is high in Helsinki compared to the rest of the country (national average 35%). A higher proportion of unemployed men are long-term unemployed than unemployed women.

The number of unemployed foreign-language speakers in Helsinki is also higher than the national average. In Helsinki, 34% of unemployed people are foreign-language speakers, compared to the national average of 21%. Of the long-term unemployed people in Helsinki, 31% are foreign-language speakers. The most common nationalities among unemployed people were Estonian, Iraqi and Russian. Over the last few years, the number of unemployed people has increased the most among Ukrainian nationals. The employment rate for women with a foreign background is significantly lower than for men with a foreign background.

The training requirements of the workforce needed for job openings by 2035 are expected to be significantly higher than those of the employed at the end of the last decade. As skills requirements increase, it is essential to improve the level of education and training of those already in employment. Supply and demand do not properly match in the labour market, and Helsinki suffers from labour shortages, especially in the high-tech and digitalisation sectors. Helsinki must attract experts from abroad.

### **Successes:**

- Services and outreach to people in a weaker labour market position have been developed.
- The local government pilot on employment has supported the City's preparation for the TE services reform 2024.
- The use of the employment clause has been developed.

### **Areas for development:**

- Long-term unemployment is at a high level. Effective measures should be found to reduce long-term unemployment.
- The employment of foreign-language speakers requires support

### **Programmes and publications:**

[City of Helsinki Economic Policy Priorities 2022–2025 PDF >](#)

# Industry and innovation



In a vibrant city, companies have good opportunities to operate, grow and innovate. A well-functioning city is an important prerequisite for the success and competitiveness of companies. The city must be a high-quality and attractive living environment. A pleasant and safe city; well-functioning basic public services; art, cultural and recreational services; adequate housing, business premises and education; smooth transport and efficient administration form the basis for the success of companies and employees. Every division and individual employee of the City of Helsinki influences the city's vitality with their daily work.

Helsinki is an important area of business activity on a national scale, offering opportunities to innovate, develop new things and do profitable and stable business. For example, Uusimaa accounted for nearly 50% of all research and development expenditure in Finland in 2022. Uusimaa's research and development expenditure is strongly concentrated in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. The potential for business renewal and growth in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and Helsinki is also well illustrated by the capital investments received by startup and growth companies in the region. These investments are highly concentrated in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area in Finland.

The economic structure of Helsinki is very diverse. Compared to the rest of Finland, the industrial structure in Helsinki is service-intensive. Around 85% of employees in companies in Helsinki work in the service sector, whereas the figure for the whole country is around 64%. In recent years, the business environment in Helsinki has been subject to a number of external changes. The COVID-19 pandemic seems to have changed the way we work. Increased remote work is affecting the real estate market in Helsinki and has undermined the vitality of the city centre. Russia's invasion of Ukraine, on the other hand, has affected Helsinki's position as a tourist destination. For example, the restrictions on flying over Russian airspace are affecting Helsinki's accessibility from Asia.

The City of Helsinki's Economic Policy Priorities 2022–2025 structure the City's economic policy priorities and activities. The City continues its long-term economic policy by investing in strengthening business and innovation environments that support the competitiveness of companies by means such as developing cooperation with higher education institutions in the region. The City invests in the growth and renewal of entrepreneurship and business in Helsinki by providing services for starting a business. Entrepreneurship opportunities are widely introduced to different population groups.

One of the City's economic policy objectives is to develop Helsinki as a source of business that solves globally relevant problems. The City organisation responds to this objective by providing companies with opportunities to develop products and new solutions in an urban environment and with different City services.

## Innovative piloting for a sustainable and smart city

The Testbed Helsinki activity of the City's Economic Development Department has become established, and the procedure has been harmonised within the City organisation with other innovation service and funding providers that carry out innovation work, such as the City Executive Office's Digitalisation Unit and Forum Virium Helsinki. An active discussion and exchange of information on the needs and supply of solutions to address specific issues between the divisions, Helsinki Group companies, other companies and representatives of the research, development and innovation sector is essential to ensure smooth implementation.

The Testbed Helsinki website provides a wide range of examples of the City's innovation work and serves as a platform and communications channel to companies and for publishing innovation challenges. Companies can also use the form on the site to submit test proposals to help them take their business



forward. Joint development is carried out in areas such as smart mobility, health and well-being and learning environments, and across the urban environment, for example to increase energy efficiency and urban greenery.

The City's divisions employ so-called innovation agents, who are joint experts of the City Executive Office's Economic Development Department and the divisions and whose task is to facilitate cooperation between companies and the City, identify development needs and find new, sustainable solutions to the city's various challenges. This work is important to ensure high-quality and up-to-date work that contributes to the City's shared sustainability goals. The pilots selected should continue to be financed with the Economic Development Department in cooperation with operators such as the divisions' substance units or operators of the Helsinki Group. This approach provides flexibility and engages the different operators in a joint effort to design and implement the pilots in order to achieve the objectives. In some cases, companies also participate in co-financing the pilots themselves.

Joint implementation with the City's innovation company Forum Virium Helsinki has also been further intensified, enabling a broader-based discussion

and co-planning of pilot implementations. Projects in the common themes of university cooperation have also helped clarify common objectives and harmonise activities. This strong cooperation has also resulted in new pilot initiatives.

## **Sustainable innovation development in projects and business cooperation**

Between 2023 and 2024, several new joint projects for sustainable urban development were launched in areas such as the circular economy in construction, energy efficiency and sustainable transport. In particular, work is also underway on new imaging and satellite technology solutions to support city planning and survey the state of urban nature. Forum Virium Helsinki is a key partner in these activities. Some of the solutions found support the development of solutions such as a 3D city information model for residents and solutions for planning activities within the City organisation. Urban greenery and biodiversity have become increasingly central themes. The City has been able to partner with a number of new companies that genuinely want to develop the city with sustainability as a priority,

gaining access to the solutions they offer. Some of the projects have been initiated with the support of the Testbed Helsinki pilot implementations, or the support has reinforced the decision to undertake the projects. A trend that has also emerged is that in many pilots and larger projects, it has become more common to use various AI solutions to facilitate practical work.

Since 2021, the City of Helsinki's Circular Economy Cluster Programme in construction has been a major project, channel and driving force for sustainable urban development that has resulted in scalable implementations from individual trials. It has attracted more than 150 companies and partners from the RDI sector. Many of them have been involved in concrete testing and pilot implementations, and have been able to present their activities to a wide network both in Finland and abroad, as well as spread the word about this activity that brings together cities and the construction sector and is highly significant in terms of its emission reduction and business potential. The cluster is also very active in the pioneering discourse on national and EU-level policy-making issues, developing practical work on green growth and digitalisation.

The City's strategic cooperation with higher education institutions has facilitated the joint planning of sustainable development projects, and operational readiness has developed over the past few years. Network-based collaboration has also increased opportunities to bring in strong talent, and the needs-driven nature of project calls is on a solid footing. The activities increase RDI- and student-driven entrepreneurship and jobs. However, it is still important to develop all network-based development work through regular meetings and information exchange.

The City of Helsinki has long coordinated a local business network on environmental issues, particularly those that address climate challenges, with the aim of making the issue more visible and getting companies to work together with the City on climate and environmental goals. Climate action in the

business world has come a long way in the last ten plus years, with many companies becoming highly responsible leaders in climate action. Environmental issues and sustainability have increasingly received the attention they deserve in recent years, and the Business Services Unit of the Economic Development Department is currently working to activate a broad-based sustainability network called Sustainability Partners. The main principle is to help local businesses improve their sustainability performance, facilitate cooperation between businesses and encourage joint development in line with the City's sustainability goals. Another interesting, burgeoning area for sustainable business is the so-called blue economy, which refers broadly to coastal and marine environments and the sustainable use of resources and job development that preserve and enhance the well-being of their ecosystems. Similarly, the green economy is an emerging theme related to green solutions.

International cooperation and interest in Helsinki in terms of companies' new, sustainable and innovative solutions and trial opportunities have developed positively. One positive channel has been the development of Nordic and wider European cooperation between cities, for example in the context of the annual Barcelona Smart City Expo. A joint visit to the event in 2023 proved to be a very positive experience to showcase local business solutions and establish important contacts. The event also brought concrete benefits to the City, and discussions at the event led to the launch of a joint project with the City of Stockholm to promote biodiversity. In addition to Europe, interest in joint business development and markets on climate and environmental issues has emerged with cities such as New York, Tokyo and Singapore. Experts from the Economic Development Department have also been involved in the City's discussions on developing solutions for the reconstruction of Ukraine and have helped find the right business contacts to develop Ukraine's energy infrastructure and energy self-sufficiency.

## Successes:

- The common benefits of testing activities have been identified through cooperation between the City organisation and Group with several companies, examples of which include the green noise walls as part of a pleasant urban environment and the integration of the testing activities into different projects, such as the PilotGreen urban green pilots coordinated by Forum Virium. Collaborative trials on themes such as biodiversity have contributed to the implementation of wider measures on the theme.
- Innovative and sustainable testing activities have been strengthened and have helped establish networks within the City organisation and with the Helsinki Group's operators, as well as in cooperation with business incubators and universities. An example is the Urban Tech Helsinki business incubator between the City of Helsinki, Aalto University and Metropolia University of Applied Sciences.
- The City of Helsinki's Circular Economy Cluster Programme in construction has strongly developed cooperation in the industry, facilitated by the City. The three-year implementation has brought together business, RDI sector and city network operators and subsidiaries for concrete circular economy actions and actively promoted discussion on joint development and cooperation between operators. The cluster network includes more than 150 operators from the Helsinki Metropolitan Area and beyond.

## Areas for development:

- The aim is to further expand cooperation on innovative and sustainable procurement with the operators of the Helsinki Group and, where possible, in international project cooperation. It is important to make use of different procurement models, and this requires training, courage and implementation examples.
- The activities of the Sustainability Partners network and innovation agents require permanent resourcing to integrate innovation and experimentation into the day-to-day work of the divisions.

## Programmes and websites:

[Testbed Helsinki](#) >

[City of Helsinki Sustainability Partners](#) >

[Forum Virium Helsinki](#) >

[UrbanTech Helsinki](#) >



# Sustainable urban structure



To achieve a sustainable urban structure, the key goals are SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities and SDG 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure. Other objectives, such as SDG 13 Climate action and SDG 15 Life on land, are also linked to the theme. In order to achieve these goals, Helsinki should focus even more on the challenges posed by the built environment to climate change mitigation and ecological diversity objectives. Another challenge for the built environment is adaptation to the changing climate.

However, it can be said that the urban structure of Helsinki is functional and the design and construction organisation is able to adapt to the challenges. The city is constantly being developed in a direction that takes sustainability objectives better into account in planning, design, construction and maintenance. However, the escalation of the climate crisis and loss of biodiversity is creating unprecedented pressure to learn new things, internalise knowledge and change practices. This is a critical factor in the achievement of the goals, as the required systemic change is extensive.

The key document guiding city planning in Helsinki is still the City Plan 2016, which guides the long-term development of the city structure with sights set on 2050. According to the City Plan, the urban structure is planned to rely more on public transport, while preserving the city's key green and recreational values. The implementation of the City Plan in terms of time and the orientation of the city's growth are guided through the City Plan implementation programme.

In 2024, the local master plan for Vartiosaari island was completed, in which the island was designated for green and recreational use, safeguarding its key ecological values. For the surroundings of Länsiväylä, the Lahdenväylä–Viikinranta area and Östersundom, the City continued its planning work at the level of the local master plan and the closely related impact assessment, especially with regard to identified sustainability aspects, such as nature and climate impacts. The aim of all ongoing local master plan work is to deliver an urban structure based on public transport, cycling and walking that will allow the city to grow in the longer term without creating

unsustainable impacts on biodiversity and climate emissions.

In 2023, new detailed plans introduced a limit value for the lifecycle carbon footprint of a building, with the aim of steering building construction towards a lower carbon footprint. During the first phase, the limit value is set for new blocks of flats. As part of the impact assessment of detailed planning, a broader calculation of lifecycle climate emissions is also carried out using a methodology that is used for the most significant detailed plans. The results of the assessment are included in the plan material.

## Functionality of infrastructure

As is usually the case in Finland, the functionality and reliability of Helsinki's infrastructure are very good by global standards. Helsinki has good expertise in ensuring the functionality of infrastructure. As the changes in the operating environment intensify, structural sustainability faces more challenges. For example, climate change and extreme weather phenomena are increasing cost pressures on the maintenance of urban infrastructure. Temperatures fluctuating below and above zero and increased winter precipitation are already causing erosion and unforeseen, expensive repairs. On the other hand, the tightening budget allocates less and less money to the sustainable lifecycle management of infrastructure. Combined with the growth and densification of the built urban environment, this poses real challenges for ensuring quality and functionality.

For infrastructure, determining the repair backlog and sustainable lifecycle management of structures is challenging. It requires the compilation and management of extensive initial data, definition of the scope of the analysis and the performance of condition inspections. For bridges, a study has been carried out on lifecycle management that includes an assessment of the financing needs to maintain the current state of the bridges and eliminate the repair backlog. The method for calculating the repair backlog for green assets has been developed, and the calculation has

been implemented. Green space and street asset management plans are being prepared to improve the situation, but it is not yet possible to form a sufficiently accurate picture of the growing infrastructure repair backlog.

Helsinki's repair backlog of building assets is high compared to other Finnish cities, which is due to its relatively old building stock. The repair backlog of the real estate stock owned by Helsinki has fallen in real terms in recent years. Sales, demolitions, substitutive new construction and modernisation can further reduce the repair backlog.

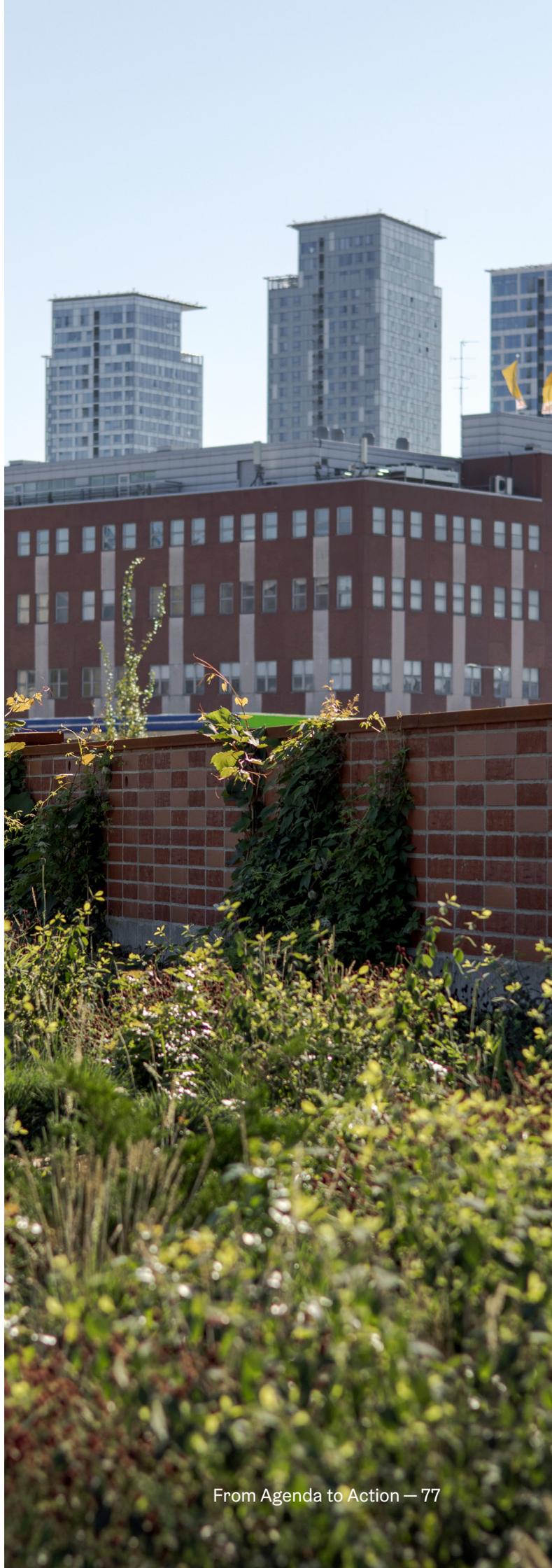
## Participation and interaction in urban planning

The dialogue between planners and residents on urban planning is guided by legislation, the City's participation model and, in 2023–2025, the division's participation plan and the available resources. There is no functional indicator for the effectiveness of interaction. The City considers it important that participants feel heard and perceive the planning process as fair. As part of the planning process, feedback from residents is addressed and decisions based on it are explained. Feedback from residents is part of the decision-making material.

The low participation of less active groups in urban planning is one of the biggest challenges in the interaction process. These groups include young people, less educated people, immigrants and residents of areas with a weaker social status, among others. In some city planning projects, specific measures are taken to involve less active groups, such as communicating in simplified language or conducting interviews or workshops. Greater and more frequent efforts should be made in this area.

There are many ways to take part in city planning. Many city residents want to participate online; there, we are also able to reach residents who lead busy lives and might not otherwise have the time to participate. We organise around 40 online surveys on city planning topics every year and hold a large number of online events.

In 2024, a transport climate panel was carried out, where a sample group of Helsinki residents discussed from their perspective how future transport will be smooth and fair for everyone: people living in different areas, people with different family situations, people using different modes of transport and people with different income levels. The panel discussed the challenging topic constructively, even though opinions were sometimes divided. In Helsinki, the use of different modes of transport in limited street space has strongly divided residents in discussions produced in other ways.





As regards traffic planning, Helsinki has allocated resources to sustainable traffic planning by e.g. investing in public transport, especially in the development of rail traffic, and cycling. Promoting cycling as a mode of transport improves and extensively develops the comfort and vitality of the city and the functionality of the transport system. It must be noted that Helsinki has also made transport infrastructure decisions that increase climate emissions from traffic and reduce local air quality, such as the decision to build the Sörnäinen tunnel. In the future, these types of projects must be viewed more critically from the point of view of overall sustainability.

## Accessible Helsinki

The City of Helsinki has long carried out systematic work to improve accessibility. The City's updated Accessibility Policies 2022–2025 were adopted by the City Board in 2022.

The City continuously strives to improve the accessibility of its services. Helsinki has made the results of its accessibility development work freely available to all. For example, the accessibility guidelines for outdoor areas have been introduced nationwide. The [sujuva.info](https://www.sujuva.info) accessibility flashcards were perceived as good planning tools, especially due to their visual nature.

Commissioned by the Ministry of the Environment in 2024, the Universal Design in the Built Environment report describes in practical terms the principle of universal design in the planning and implementation

of the built environment. The report looks at universal design in residential neighbourhoods, housing, and public spaces and environments. The report presents concrete approaches, solutions and example sites. The City of Helsinki has clear processes that guide building projects to take accessibility into account.

The Esteettömyyden perusteet (Basics of Accessibility) online course, published in 2024, has been completed by 67 people. The Facilities Services of the Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division classified the training as mandatory for all Facilities Services staff.

## Reducing the carbon footprint of buildings

As part of the Carbon Neutral Helsinki work, several measures are being implemented to improve the energy efficiency of construction. City facilities and service buildings are designed and implemented with an E value of -30% of the national threshold value for the use class, while building modernisations are implemented in such a way that the E value is reduced to 34% of the building's original E value. For residential blocks of flats, a carbon footprint limit was introduced in 2023, guiding construction towards a lower carbon footprint. For non-residential buildings, an energy class of -20% of the national standard for the type of building is required in detailed planning. The new Building Act will set carbon footprint limits for more building types.

In 2023, all infrastructure projects commissioned by the City switched to low-carbon concrete that meets the class GWP.85 requirements as defined by the Concrete Association of Finland. During the preconstruction of the former Malmi Airport area, different solutions have been tested, with the aim of achieving a 50% reduction in emissions compared to so-called normal construction. One of the most significant measures has been the move away from the use of lime cement as a binder for soil stabilisation, which has also been implemented in all other foundation construction by the City.

The City's facilities and service buildings are constantly undergoing energy efficiency investments, and have also adopted energy management, which has shown good results in improving indoor air quality and energy efficiency. The aim is also to increase the use of low-emission materials in construction, and the most cost-effective ways to reduce emissions in the construction phase with these materials are being explored during 2024.

The energy advice service for housing companies has promoted energy efficiency and the uptake of renewable energy in existing private housing stock by providing free and impartial advice. As of 2021, the service has advised over 700 housing companies. In 2024, the service adopted a regional approach, focusing on promoting energy efficiency in areas where there are few projects but a high potential for energy efficiency.

Other key tools for the City to guide the planning of a carbon-neutral city include land-use planning, plot allocation conditions, land-use agreements and the use of existing City-owned building stock.

## **Environmental health contributes to comfort and well-being**

Environmental health in Helsinki is at a good level by international standards. Water quality at beaches is good, but can sometimes deteriorate due to run-off from heavy rainfall or the impact of wildlife. Chemical-related health risks are low, and the quality of tap water in Helsinki is excellent.

The main environmental health challenges are air quality and noise. Litter is also a major problem that not only has a negative impact on the environment and human health, but also reduces the comfort and attractiveness of urban areas. It also puts a strain on the City's finances, as the City's clean-up costs amount to over EUR 10 million per year. In order to reduce litter, the City has prepared the Litter Control Action Plan 2022–2025, and 24% of the actions had been implemented by the end of 2023.

In Helsinki, there are also many challenges related

to indoor air, including in the City's service buildings. The problems with indoor air are caused by, among other things, the repair backlog and the risky structures of old buildings. Helsinki has drawn up an indoor air programme for the years 2018–2028 to help tackle indoor air problems.

The air quality and noise environment in Helsinki are primarily degraded by road traffic. These challenges will increase in the future, especially as the urban structure becomes denser and new housing is built along busy roads. Air pollution concentrations and the noise situation are influenced in particular by traffic volumes and driving speed.

A plan combining the City's objectives and measures regarding air protection and noise abatement was adopted in spring 2024. The measures will reduce air pollution and high traffic noise, and their negative impacts on health and comfort.

The air quality in Helsinki has improved over the last few decades, and it is fairly good at an international level. However, street dust, emissions from fireplaces and traffic exhausts continue to cause harm to people's health and comfort. The new guideline values of the World Health Organization (WHO), based on the latest health information, are also widely exceeded in Helsinki.

Nitrogen dioxide concentrations from transport have fallen over the strategy period, thanks to advances in vehicle technology and the electrification of transport, and this trend is expected to continue. As the city becomes more densely built, these concentrations may still rise at times on busy, chasm-like streets.

However, the focus on air protection has shifted towards tackling emissions from street dust and domestic wood burning in particular. They will also continue to be a challenge in the future. The EU's binding limit values for air pollution will be significantly tightened in 2030 with the revised Ambient Air Quality Directive. Meeting the limit value for inhalable particulate matter in particular will be a challenge for Helsinki. In recent years, efforts to combat street dust have included improving street maintenance and promoting the use of friction tyres. However, new measures are needed and existing ones need to be stepped up.

Wood burning in fireplaces is a major source of fine particles and carcinogenic benzo(a)pyrene in residential areas with detached houses. One of the measures to reduce the harmful effects of domestic wood burning has been increased communications on clean wood burning methods, and this work will continue.

The most significant source of noise in Helsinki is road traffic, with around 39% of Helsinki residents living in areas affected by it. The proportion of people



## Green walls for a better sound environment

[Read more >](#)

living in noisy areas has increased slightly over the last decade. In addition to road traffic, continuous noise is caused by tram and rail traffic, and temporary noise is caused by construction and events, among other things. Strong continuous noise is harmful to health and wellbeing. It also reduces the quality and comfort of the environment.

Helsinki has established a wide range of tools to improve the City's sound environment. The most important are the tools used in land use and traffic planning. For example, in recent years, speed limits on streets have been reduced, cycling and walking conditions have been improved and bus services have been electrified.

The design of the sound environment in public areas can contribute to their comfort. In summer 2023, innovative green noise walls were successfully tested in two locations in the city centre. The green walls were used to create a pleasant, calm oasis in an environment where traffic noise is a nuisance.

In addition to reducing loud noise, it is important to protect the sound environment where it is good, peaceful and interesting. Quiet and peaceful areas are very important to city residents. There is a fair number of these kinds of revitalising environments, such as nature sites and parks, throughout the city. As the city becomes denser, it is important that residents have easy access to revitalising, quiet green spaces.

## Successes:

- Air quality at measuring points in Helsinki has improved.
- Green noise walls pilot.
- Air pollution from traffic exhaust has decreased.
- The Planet tool, a refined version of the HAVA tool, was introduced to calculate the carbon footprint of detailed and local master plans and guide them towards a lower carbon footprint.
- Progress has been made in tackling indoor air problems, and reports on indoor air issues have decreased.

## Areas for development :

- The electrification of transport will not eliminate street dust or noise emissions.
- Concentration of housing near busy traffic routes.
- Reconciling the growing city with the city-level climate goals will require very determined work in the future.
- We need to manage growth in such a way that we stay on target with our goals to strengthen biodiversity and ensure that the local environment is preserved in line with our objectives.
- The sustainable modal split of transport should be brought onto a more positive growth path, as the modal share of public transport has not reached its pre-pandemic level.

## Ohjelmat:

[Helsinki City Plan 2016 >](#)

# Housing and communities



The City Council approved the Implementation Programme on Housing and Related Land Use 2024 (the AM programme) in August 2024. The programme was prepared at a time of exceptional uncertainty in terms of housing construction and housing policy, where the role of large cities such as Helsinki in addressing housing issues was highlighted.

The vision of the AM programme is for Helsinki to grow in a socially sustainable way. Diverse and high-quality housing options are a vitality and attraction factor for the city, and every Helsinki resident has the opportunity for good housing. Helsinki provides functional living environments for families and develops neighbourhoods in a determined way without increasing regional segregation. Residential construction is carried out with respect for nature, recreational and cultural values. Social sustainability

and growth aspects are more prominent in the 2024 AM programme than in the previous programme drawn up four years ago.

## Affordable housing remains a challenge

As the COVID-19 pandemic subsided, the housing market and construction industry began to feel the effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Rising energy and building material prices pushed up housing and construction costs. At the same time, interest rates started to rise rapidly after a historically long zero interest-rate period. Inflation increased significantly and consumer confidence fell to a low level. Many households postponed their home purchase plans



due to the uncertain situation. Indeed, the busy housing market virtually came to an abrupt halt in the last quarter of 2022.

As economic growth slowed down and the housing market dried up, the construction industry faced a crisis also in Helsinki. In particular, the rise in interest rates reduced investor demand, and financing for non-subsidised construction projects became significantly more difficult to obtain. The high volume of newly finished housing, combined with low demand, has increased the stock of unsold new homes and empty rental properties. The situation has been particularly reflected in the number of building permits and new housing construction projects. Furthermore, the organisation of housing for Helsinki residents is challenged by the policies and implementation of the Government Programme (June 2023), such as the overall housing allowance reform, the introduction of income limits for rental housing supported by the state with long-term interest-subsidy loans, the end of investment subsidies for housing for special groups, and the end of interest-subsidy loans for new right-of-occupancy housing.

The AM programme is centred on providing neighbourhoods with a diverse housing stock in terms of occupancy and funding type. A diverse housing stock offers housing options to suit different life situations and needs, and helps prevent regional segregation and concentrations of disadvantaged people. A diverse housing stock also allows for continuity of housing paths within the area, ensuring long-term commitment to the neighbourhood. Helsinki will continue to ensure a diverse range of housing options in neighbourhoods through various means in the current AM programme period. The most significant new initiative in the 2024 AM programme is the piloting of the new rent-to-own model. This is a new model of housing, falling somewhere between owner-occupied and rental housing, and is aimed at partially the same target group as right-of-occupancy housing. Housing models between owner-occupied and rental housing are of great importance not only for residents, but also for the neighbourhoods whose housing and population structure they diversify.

Helsinki is committed to reducing homelessness and has set a target in its City Strategy to eradicate homelessness by 2025. Indeed, the number of unhoused people has fallen steadily over the last ten years thanks to the measures taken to reduce homelessness. Through housing counselling, the City of Helsinki has been able to contribute effectively to the prevention of homelessness. Homelessness has also been reduced through the provision of both supported and independent rental housing for unhoused people. There has also been a large supply of rental housing on the housing market in recent

years, and rents have not risen significantly, making it easier to find housing. It is important to continue to support the client after they have obtained housing, for example through housing counselling and adult social work, to ensure the continuation of their housing. Despite good progress, determined action is still needed to reduce homelessness.

## **Suburban regeneration firmly established as an operating model**

Suburban regeneration is an operating model launched in the 2020–2023 AM programme period, which aims to promote the vitality and pleasantness of the suburban regeneration areas through urban development. Suburban regeneration is carried out in cooperation with local residents and operators, taking into account the specific characteristics of the area. Suburban regeneration is about long-term area development and the positive special treatment of designated areas in line with the City Strategy. Some of the effects of suburban regeneration are felt quickly in the areas, for example in the form of improved services, but the most significant effects will only be felt in the areas after several years. This is why the long-term target year for suburban regeneration is 2035. In the 2024–2027 AM programme period, Kannelmäki–Malminkartano, Malmi, Mellunkylä and Meri-Rastila will continue as suburban regeneration areas. This is because achieving clear change in the areas requires systematic development and significant investment, and the processes of regenerating the environment take a long time.

In the early years, the City has made investments in the suburban regeneration areas and has renovated facilities such as playgrounds and local sports facilities. Furthermore, cooperation within the City has been improved and new cross-administrative models have been developed, for example in housing construction, school services and area networks for children's and youth services. To strengthen resident participation, the City has organised residents' coffee dialogues in the suburban regeneration areas, where the development needs of the areas have been discussed based on themes set out by the residents. Suburban regeneration has become a well-established, City-wide operating model to which all divisions are committed. In 2022, the City drew up a comprehensive action and investment plan on the projects to be implemented in the suburban regeneration areas between 2022 and 2025, based on the budget. The project portfolio contains the key measures of all divisions and addresses the objectives set for suburban regeneration. The portfolio also includes the overall plans for all of the subur-

ban regeneration areas, describing the direction of their long-term development. The project portfolio is supplemented each year, as the City allocates new measures to the areas. At the same time, the effectiveness of the measures and plans is assessed.

During the 2024 AM programme period, the City will continue the suburban regeneration with determination. In 2024, the City appointed project directors responsible for the City-wide development of services in the suburban regeneration areas. In the coming years, suburban regeneration will focus on responding to the needs of the areas flexibly in cross-administrative cooperation and creating visible changes to improve the comfort of residents.

### Successes:

- The City adopted the 2024 AM programme, which means that there is a shared will in terms of housing policy, especially in terms of ensuring socially sustainable growth.
- Suburban regeneration is firmly established as an operating model, and commitment to it has been strengthened within the City organisation.
- The City has decided to pilot a rent-to-own model, which will contribute to addressing the changed operating environment in housing.

### Areas for development:

- The suburban regeneration work will continue, and operating methods will be developed to increase effectiveness. Achieving visible change requires targeting resources and responding flexibly to the needs of the areas.
- New housing policy tools are being identified in the changed environment to curb neighbourhood segregation and housing costs.

### Programmes and websites:

[Implementation Programme on Housing and Related Land Use](#) >

[Suburban regeneration](#) >

[Urban development](#) >

### Suburban regeneration areas

The suburban regeneration areas are a new way for Helsinki to develop its neighbourhoods and prevent their segregation. The objective is to create new vitality in existing neighbourhoods by investing in renovation and new construction. The selected residential areas are Malmi, Kannelmäki–Malminkartano, Mellunkylä and Meri-Rastila.

[Read more](#) >



# Responsible procurement and circular economy



Helsinki's annual procurement volume is approximately five billion euros, making the City the largest operator engaging in public procurement in Finland. Helsinki is committed to promoting environmental, social and economic responsibility in its procurement, and the City has a comprehensive network of responsible procurement.

In accordance with the City's environmental protection objectives, environmental impact assessment must be carried out in all procurements exceeding the national threshold value. The City's major divisions and enterprises used environmental criteria in an average of 70% of their procurements above the threshold in 2023. These figures have risen significantly from previous years, partly reflecting the growing importance and expertise of the issue and partly the improved monitoring of the use of criteria by the procurement units.

Helsinki is strongly committed to promoting responsible procurement. In particular, environmental requirements are well implemented, and the situation regarding social responsibility requirements is constantly improving. Requirement monitoring and auditing practices in particular require systematisation, resources and new skills.

Monitoring and impact assessment also require development to provide better information on the implementation of the responsibility targets. The aim is to obtain better information on both the use of responsibility criteria in procurement and their effectiveness.

In summer 2023, the City Board approved the update of the City of Helsinki's Roadmap for Circular and Sharing Economy into an action plan. The priorities of the action plan are construction, procurement, and environmental awareness and sustainable consumption. For each priority, the action plan sets circular economy targets up to 2035. To achieve the targets, the action plan includes 23 actions, the progress of which will be monitored through the public Kiertotalousvahti (Circular Economy Watch) service.

The Urban Environment Division is implementing various circular economy pilot projects, focusing on the reuse of building components and movable property, among other things. In the longer term, the aim is to use the knowledge gained from the pilots to increase the circular economy requirements for the design and implementation of service and residential buildings. In infrastructure construction, a policy is in place for the reuse of leftover soil and paving materials from construction sites, as well as self-produced recycled substrates.

The City of Helsinki is participating in the PlastLIFE project, coordinated by the Finnish Environment Institute, which is implementing Finland's national Plastics Roadmap. The Helsinki sub-project focuses on the use of plastics in the construction of the City's infrastructure, green spaces and sports facilities. In 2023, the project included a study on the plastic flows in the City's street and park construction, and a series of studies and a pilot procurement on the recycling of disused artificial turf, among other things.

The City has worked to raise awareness of circular and sharing economy services in the Helsinki area. The City carried out communications on circular economy services included in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area Service Map in 2023 and will continue these efforts. The City has twice organised a circular economy event for residents, sharing tips on more sustainable lifestyles, such as reducing food waste and borrowing and renting goods. Furthermore, Environmental Services launched a project in 2024, funded by the City Executive Office's integration support appropriation, which aims to increase the knowledge and skills of Helsinki residents, especially those with foreign backgrounds, regarding sustainable everyday choices.

A comprehensive transition to a circular economy requires strong integration of the theme into all City activities and City-level leadership and commitment.

## Progress has been made in reducing harmful substances and combating labour exploitation

The City of Helsinki still has work to do in acknowledging global responsibility and human rights and in promoting the circular economy and nature-based solutions. Better progress has been made in addressing environmental and climate perspectives and employment through procurement.

The NonHazCity 3 project has developed the consideration of harmful substances in construction projects. In addition to this, criteria to reduce harmful substances have been developed for procurement in early childhood education.

Helsinki requires its partners to engage in activities that respect the employee's human rights and basic labour rights. The City has introduced a City-wide Code of Conduct for procurement, in addition to which an internal guideline on the prevention of labour exploitation in the City's service procurement has been drawn up. Special attention is paid to procurements where, on the basis of a risk analysis, it can be expected that there are risks related to social responsibility due to long supply chains, the large degree of human labour involved or the conditions of the country of production. Helsinki promotes the employment of those in a weaker position in the labour market by using employment clauses in its procurement.

### Successes:

- The proportion of low-carbon procurement in the City's total procurement has increased.
- Competence in responsible procurement has improved, and procurement units have increased their capacity to take sustainability issues into account in procurement.
- Helsinki's ability to manage harmful substances in procurement has increased.
- Procurement units are trained to combat labour exploitation.
- The Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development, the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the National Nutrition Council and Ecolabel Finland awarded the City of Helsinki for its two Green Deals in 2023.

- In active cooperation with the market in the Plast-LIFE project, the City has found circular economy solutions for the treatment of the City's disused artificial turf.
- The City's building regulations, updated in 2023, stipulate that when buildings are demolished, any usable parts of the buildings must be identified and their reuse promoted.
- The circular economy events organised by the City have been perceived as successful and important, and cooperation between different divisions has been smooth.

### Areas for development:

- Verification of responsibility requirements, monitoring during the contract period and auditing practices need to be improved.
- Monitoring and reporting on responsible procurement at the organisational level is not sufficiently comprehensive and accurate.
- National resources to promote responsible procurement were dramatically reduced and the KEINO competence centre ceased its operations.
- Further efforts and new approaches are needed to improve the visibility of circular and sharing economy services and increase the understanding and participation of residents in sustainable choices.
- The promotion of circularity is still in the hands of individual services and people in the City organisation. City-level understanding of the systemic transformation is lacking.

### Programmes:

[Procurement Strategy PDF](#) >

[City of Helsinki's Environmental Protection Targets 2040](#) >

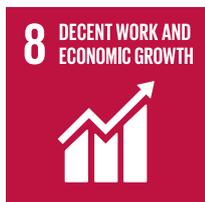


## Alliance rail project from Kalasatama to Pasila

Completed in 2024, the Kalasatama–Pasila alliance rail project addressed the issue of natural resource consumption and emissions in several ways. Almost 70% of the soil masses and other recyclable structures identified were reused. The machinery and vehicles were powered by renewable HVO diesel, reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions on site by 90%. The project used low-emission concrete for certain structures,

which reduced CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 40% compared to conventional concrete. The sustainability themes of the project were based on the BREEAM Infrastructure certification. This allowed the project to receive the full amount of green funding granted for high-quality sustainability work, the first project in Finland to achieve this.

# Sustainable tourism, events and city marketing



Ensuring sustainable growth is the City's most important task. This is strongly linked to SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth, which also highlights the promotion of sustainable tourism. The tourism and event industry is a key part of Helsinki's vitality as the capital. Sustainability has also been put at the forefront of the development of tourism, events and city marketing in Helsinki.

## Tourism

According to Helsinki's City Strategy, the aim is to make Helsinki the world's smartest and most sustainable travel destination. Helsinki's Tourism and

Events Programme 2022–2026, completed in spring 2022, sets out the detailed objectives, measures and indicators to achieve this goal.

Helsinki is part of the Global Destination Sustainability Index, which measures the sustainability of travel and event destinations across a wide range of factors. Helsinki aims to be the index's top destination by the end of 2025. Helsinki ranked sixteenth in 2021, twelfth in 2022 and fourth in 2023. In 2024, Helsinki reached the top of the index. The overall index score has increased by a remarkable 19.9 points between 2021 and 2024 (72.5/100 in 2021, 92.4/100 in 2024).

Helsinki is part of the Carbon Neutral Experience 2.0 project, which aims to make tourism in Uusimaa



as low-carbon as possible. Helsinki is also involved in the project 'Congresses and Corporate Events as Drivers of Innovation and Sustainability in the Helsinki Capital Region', which aims to create a sustainable meeting and congress product in cooperation with the industry.

Helsinki has also signed the UN's Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism, drawn up a climate roadmap for tourism and calculated the carbon footprint of tourism in Helsinki. In addition to this, Helsinki has carried out an analysis of the current state of inclusivity in tourism and prepared an inclusive tourism action plan.

Helsinki is investing heavily in the national Sustainable Travel Finland (STF) programme for travel destinations and companies. The City has promoted the certification of companies in this programme and aims to make Helsinki an STF destination by the end of 2025. The programme takes into account all areas of sustainability. The programme also includes the calculation of companies' carbon footprints, among other things. The goal is to have around 100 companies in Helsinki that have completed the STF programme by the end of 2025. In October 2024, 75 companies had an STF label.

Since 2019, the Think Sustainably service has helped local residents and visitors choose a more sustainable lifestyle in Helsinki and enjoy the City's responsible services. Companies included in the service have passed the criteria, for which they have been awarded the green Think Sustainably label. They can display the label on their MyHelsinki.fi page and their own channels.

As the EU's Directive on Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition and the Green Claims Directive progress, it has been decided that the service cannot continue in its current form. The service does not include a formal audit process, which will be required by the new EU legislation. For this reason, the service in its current form will end in January 2025 in connection with the redesign of the MyHelsinki.fi website.

## Events

Sustainability plays a major role in the development of events, the selection of Helsinki's partner events and the measures taken to make use of paid partnerships. Helsinki offers two concrete tools for event organisers: the Event Carbon Footprint Calculator and the Compass for Social Responsibility. The Helsinki nighttime noise guidelines for 2023–2025 take into account the results of the 2022 resident survey and the views of event operators. Feedback from event noise has decreased after the introduction of the

guidelines. Events with an EcoCompass certificate receive a 30% discount on land use. Furthermore, the City has started extensive work to improve the infrastructure of event sites in Helsinki.

The City has created a dedicated sustainability section on the hel.fi pages for event organisers. The permits and notifications required from event organisers are structured to guide towards responsible event organisation (e.g. waste management, noise, temporary traffic arrangements).

Event visitor surveys systematically collect data on the carbon footprint of event visitors and the social sustainability of events. At the end of 2024, a survey on sustainability will be sent to partner events.

## International city marketing

Sustainability is one of the cornerstones of the Helsinki brand, and it is reflected in all of the City's activities. It is actively highlighted in all communications and marketing. The value proposition of the Helsinki brand is 'It's a good life' – the brand is built around social sustainability. Sustainability is also widely taken into account in brand management: for example, the 2023 update on the guidelines of visual storytelling puts an emphasis on norm-aware visual storytelling and visual accessibility.

International city marketing highlights sustainability, equality and nature as Helsinki's strengths, including through the Helsinki Sustainable City 360° video series published in 2021. The Sustainable Helsinki website brings together information about Helsinki's sustainability work. During 2023, Helsinki invested in building the international key messages for Helsinki's green transition, and as a result of Helsinki Partners' PR work, around 60 articles on sustainability were published in the international media in 2023 and 2024.

Responsibility is also one of the permanent cornerstones of the MyHelsinki.fi online service. The different dimensions of responsibility are taken into account in the day-to-day content production and curation work throughout the process, both in terms of content provider prioritisation and image choices. Most of the editorial articles of MyHelsinki.fi also include a responsibility aspect; there are over 100 articles with a strong emphasis on some dimension of responsibility.

In the new MyHelsinki 2.0 online service, which will be launched in early 2025, responsibility will be a central theme. It will be integrated into all of the content, taking into account the different aspects of responsibility. We will provide information on responsible actions by both the City and businesses, including highlighting sustainability-certified companies



(e.g. STF) in our communications. At the heart of the communications, however, is the idea that responsibility is a journey; no individual or organisation is perfect in terms of responsibility – there is always room for small or large steps towards more responsible activities.

Helsinki is known for its sustainability. In an analysis of Helsinki’s international reputation carried out in collaboration with The Business of Cities, sustainability emerges as one of Helsinki’s strengths time after time. In the latest survey in 2023, Helsinki received an excellent score for sustainability, which shows that Helsinki’s long-term work on sustainability has been noticed.

### Successes:

- Helsinki’s placement and index score in the Global Destination Sustainability Index rose significantly.
- A significant number of companies have joined the Sustainable Travel Finland programme and completed environmental certification.
- Sustainability has become part of the international brand of Helsinki.

### Areas for development:

- Carbon footprint calculation for companies in the tourism and event industries is an important but also challenging task. Significant investments are required in the development of both tools and the skills of the entire ecosystem to develop the calculation to the desired level.
- Preparation for the impacts of climate change is still in its infancy and will require investment.
- The development of communication on sustainable activities and the productisation and promotion of sustainable tourism and event products require additional investments.
- The development of inclusive tourism and events has begun, but significant investments are still needed to make Helsinki truly diverse and inclusive.

### Programmes, studies and websites:

[Helsinki Tourism and Events Programme 2022–2026 PDF](#) >

[Sustainable tourism development in Helsinki](#) >

# Appendices

## Indicator table 2025

The sustainability indicators are reviewed from 2017 onwards, so that the development of each indicator can be monitored comparably between Helsinki's 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2025 local reviews.

-  SDG achieved or close to being achieved
-  Challenges in achieving the SDG
-  Significant challenges in achieving the SDG



### SDG 1 – No poverty

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Share of households receiving a general housing allowance	THL, Sotkanet	19.4%	20.9%	20.1%	19.4%	20.5%	
Share of children living in low-income households	Statistics Finland, total statistics on income distribution	12.7%	10.8%	12.6%	12.5%		
Share of people with low income	Statistics Finland, total statistics on income distribution	12.0%	11.5%	12.4%	12.7%		
Median money income per consumption unit, deflated	Statistics Finland, total statistics on income distribution	€29,988	€29,792	€30,030	€29,023		
Share of people aged 25–64 receiving long-term social assistance	THL, Sotkanet	3.4%	3.5%	3.5%	3.2%	3.2%	
Number of long-term unhoused people	City of Helsinki Social Services, Health Care and Rescue Services Division's homelessness statistics	1,678	1,534	1,209	896	739	
Amount of household debt	Statistics Finland	€61,554	€65,590	€69,456	€66,165		



## SDG 3 – Good health and well-being

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Suicide mortality rate number per 100,000 average population	Statistics Finland	10	11.6	12.9	11.3		☹️
Body mass index, share of overweight people: basic education grades 8 and 9	THL / SHP study	13.2%		13.8%		12.8%	😊
Body mass index, share of overweight people: vocational institution	THL / SHP study	21.1%		24.2%		22.8%	☹️
Body mass index, share of overweight people: general upper secondary school years 1 and 2	THL / SHP study	13.6%		14.2%		13.8%	☹️
Body mass index, share of overweight people: 20 and older	THL/FinSote		17.4%			17.6%	☹️
Life expectancy	Statistics Finland	81.9 y	81.6 y	81.6 y	81.1 y	81.7 y	☹️
Share of people who feel that their quality of life is good on average	THL / FinSote 2018 & 2020 / Healthy Finland 2023		60.5%			56.2%	☹️
Share of people who feel that their health is average or below average	THL / FinSote 2018 & 2020 / Healthy Finland 2023		31.1%			29.5%	☹️
Moderate or severe anxiety: basic education grades 8 and 9	THL / SHP study	15.7%		21.8%		22.5%	☹️
Moderate or severe anxiety: vocational institution	THL / SHP study	12.9%		21.2%		23.5%	☹️
Moderate or severe anxiety: general upper secondary school years 1 and 2	THL / SHP study	17.2%		25.1%		24.4%	☹️
Depression symptoms in the past two weeks: basic education grades 8 and 9	THL / SHP study	19%		26.2%		25.7%	☹️
Depression symptoms in the past two weeks: vocational institution	THL / SHP study	17.7%		24.4%		28.1%	☹️

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Depression symptoms in the past two weeks: general upper secondary school years 1 and 2	THL / SHP study	21.5%		28.6%		26.9%	☹️
Mood-related problems: basic education grades 4 and 5	THL / SHP study	16%		23.2%		23.7%	☹️
Currently satisfied with life: basic education grades 4 and 5	THL / SHP study	89.4%		84.4%		86%	☹️
Currently satisfied with life: basic education grades 8 and 9	THL / SHP study	73.7%		65%		66%	☹️
Currently satisfied with life: vocational institution	THL / SHP study	74.8%		61.3%		56%	☹️
Currently satisfied with life: general upper secondary school years 1 and 2	THL / SHP study	72.2%		65%		66%	☹️
Share of lonely people: basic education grades 4 and 5	THL / SHP study	3.8%		4.0%		3.6%	😐
Share of lonely people: basic education grades 8 and 9	THL / SHP study	12%		17.5%		15%	☹️
Share of lonely people: vocational institution	THL / SHP study	12%		22.8%		21.7%	☹️
Share of lonely people: general upper secondary school years 1 and 2	THL / SHP study	13.6%		20.0%		16.6%	☹️
Share of people with a hobby: basic education grades 4 and 5	THL / SHP study	90.9%		87.7%		91.8%	😊
Share of people with a hobby: basic education grades 8 and 9	THL / SHP study	96.2%		96.2%		95.6%	😐
People who consume alcohol to the point of drunkenness at least 1–2 times per month: basic education grades 8 and 9	THL / SHP study	9.1%		7.9%		8.6%	😐
People who consume alcohol to the point of drunkenness at least 1–2 times per month: vocational institution	THL / SHP study	26.4%		19.3%		17.9%	😊
People who consume alcohol to the point of drunkenness at least 1–2 times per month: general upper secondary school years 1 and 2	THL / SHP study	22.3%		18.2%		19.3%	😐
People who use snus daily: basic education grades 8 and 9	THL / SHP study	3.4%		2.2%		1.9%	😊

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
People who use snus daily: vocational institution	THL / SHP study	12.4%		7%		6.1%	😊
People who use snus daily: general upper secondary school years 1 and 2	THL / SHP study	3.5%		2.2%		2%	😊
People who smoke every day: basic education grades 8 and 9	THL / SHP study	3.7%		3.5%		3.8%	😐
People who smoke every day: vocational institution	THL / SHP study	13.6%		11.1%		10.6%	😊
People who smoke every day: general upper secondary school years 1 and 2	THL / SHP study	3.5%		3.1%		3.9%	😐
People who have tried cannabis at least twice: basic education grades 8 and 9	THL / SHP study	10%		7.5%		7%	😊
People who have tried cannabis at least twice: vocational institution	THL / SHP study	25.6%		20.5%		18%	😊
People who have tried cannabis at least twice: general upper secondary school years 1 and 2	THL / SHP study	18.4%		16.5%		15.8%	😊
Share of people who meet the requirements for a healthy amount of physical activity	THL / FinSote 2020, Well-being Survey for the Helsinki Metropolitan Area (2021), THL / Healthy Finland 2023		43.5%	38.0%		48.3%	😊
Share of residents exposed to road traffic noise (over 55 dB LAeq7-22)	City of Helsinki	37% (2017)			39%		😞



## SDG 4 – Quality education

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Share of people with only basic education	Statistics Finland	16.3%	16.2%	16.4%	17%	16.8%	
Share of people with at least a master's degree	Statistics Finland	26.9%	27.7%	28.1%	28.3%	29%	
Share of early leavers from upper secondary education, dropped out of vocational education without continuing in any other education	Statistics Finland	9.7%	14.7%	13.7%	11.9%		
Share of early leavers from upper secondary education, dropped out of general upper education without continuing in any other education	Statistics Finland	2.2%	2.1%	3.4%	1.9%		
Share of those who chose a school in their own school admission area, 1st grade, Finnish-language basic education	City of Helsinki, Education Division				89%	90%	
Share of those who chose a school in their own school admission area, 7th grade, Finnish-language basic education	City of Helsinki, Education Division				71%	77%	
Share of children in early childhood education	City of Helsinki, Education Division	79.2%	80.4%	81.6%	82.3%	83.5%	
Share of foreign-language speakers among general upper secondary school graduates	Vipunen – Education Statistics Finland	13.4%	14.1%	14.9%	16.3%	15.4%	
People who are bullied at school at least once a week: basic education grades 4 and 5	THL / SHP study	7.7%		8.4%		9.8%	

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
People who are bullied at school at least once a week: basic education grades 8 and 9	THL / SHP study	5.2%		5.4%		7.9%	
People who are bullied at school at least once a week: vocational institution	THL / SHP study	1.9%		2.2%		5%	
People who are bullied at school at least once a week: general upper secondary school years 1 and 2	THL / SHP study	1.1%		1.3%		2.2%	
Share of 16-year-olds in compulsory education in the age group	Vipunen – Education Statistics Finland			97.4%	98.2%	98.2%	



## SDG 5 – Gender equality

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Gender gap in unemployment, men	Statistics Finland	10.2%	15.7%	12.3%	11.3%	12.7%	☹️
Gender gap in unemployment, women	Statistics Finland	7.8%	12.6%	9.6%	9%	9.8%	☹️
Difference in unemployment rates between women and men	Statistics Finland	1.3 percentage points	1.2 percentage points	1.3 percentage points	1.3 percentage points	2.9 percentage points	☹️
Gender pay gap (in Uusimaa), in total	Statistics Finland	€3,832	€4,060	€4,152	€4,274		😊
Gender pay gap (in Uusimaa), men	Statistics Finland	€4,186	€4,464	€4,570	€4,684		😊
Gender pay gap (in Uusimaa), women	Statistics Finland	€3,480	€3,664	€3,751	€3,884		😊
Pay gap between women and men, the percentage of women's wages compared to men's wages	Statistics Finland	83.1%	82.1%	82.1%	82.9%		😊
Gender gap in perceived quality of life, in total	THL / FinSote 2018 & 2020 / Healthy Finland 2023		60.5%			56.2%	☹️
Gender gap in perceived quality of life, men	THL / FinSote 2018 & 2020 / Healthy Finland 2023		61.5%			58%	😊
Gender gap in perceived quality of life, women	THL / FinSote 2018 & 2020 / Healthy Finland 2023		59.7%			54.7%	☹️
Difference between men and women in perceived quality of life	THL / FinSote 2018 & 2020 / Healthy Finland 2023		0.97 percentage points			0.94 percentage points	😊
Gender gap in the level of education, share of people with a master's degree or higher, men	Statistics Finland	24%	24.6%	24.8%	24.7%		😊

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Gender gap in the level of education, share of people with a master's degree or higher, women	Statistics Finland	29.7%	30.7%	31.3%	31.7%		
Gender gap in the level of education, difference between men and women in the share of people with a master's degree or higher	Statistics Finland	5.7 percentage points	6.1 percentage points	6.5 percentage points	7 percentage points		
Gender gap in the level of education, share of women in the City Council	City of Helsinki	48% women	49% women	49% women	56% women	56% women	



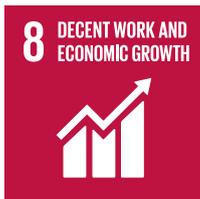
## SDG 6 – Clean water and sanitation

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Wastewater treatment percentages, nitrogen	HSY	90%	91%	91%	89%	91%	
Wastewater treatment percentages, phosphorus	HSY	97%	97%	97%	97%	97%	
Quality of bathing water (Quality rating poor–excellent)	City of Helsinki	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	



## SDG 7 – Affordable and clean energy

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Share of renewable energy in energy production	Helen Ltd	12%	14%	16%	21%	26%	
Energy consumption per capita	HSY	21,242 kWh	20,510 kWh	21,077 kWh	20,651 kWh	19,628 kWh	



## SDG 8 – Decent work and economic growth

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Youth unemployment rate	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Employment Service Statistics	6.6%	13.5%	9.1%	8.1%		
Long-term unemployment (number of people)	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Employment Service Statistics	10,488	15,348	19,597	15,392		
Employment rate	Statistics Finland, Labour Force Survey	77%	76.1%	77.3%	79.3%	78.5%	
Unemployment rate	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Employment Service Statistics	9.2%	14.6%	11.2%	10.4%	11.6%	



## SDG 9 – Industry, innovation and infrastructure

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Starting businesses	Statistics Finland	7,567 businesses	7,697 businesses	7,852 businesses	7,538 businesses	7,811 businesses	
Closing businesses	Statistics Finland	3,830 businesses	4,651 businesses	5,093 businesses	5,075 businesses	5,657 businesses	
Companies' willingness to recommend Helsinki as a location (share of recommendations, scale from -100 to 100)	City of Helsinki, Economic Development, business survey		9			1	



## SDG 10 – Reduced inequalities

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Gini coefficient (scale from -100 to 100)	Statistics Finland, total statistics on income distribution	33.5	33.9	36.2	35.7		
NEET share (Not in Employment, Education or Training), 16–19-year-olds	Statistics Finland	6.6%	5.6%	4.9%	5.6%		
NEET share (Not in Employment, Education or Training), 20–24-year-olds	Statistics Finland	5.6%	6.0%	5.9%	6%		
NEET share (Not in Employment, Education or Training), 25–29-year-olds	Statistics Finland	5.1%	5.8%	5.5%	5.6%		
NEET share (Not in Employment, Education or Training), 16–29-year-olds	Statistics Finland	5.5%	5.8%	5.5%	5.7%		
Regional segregation by ethnic background	Statistics Finland and the City of Helsinki	28.6%	29.0%	29.2%	29.5%	30%	
Regional segregation by educational background	Statistics Finland and the City of Helsinki	34.7%	35.3%	34.9%	34.6%	34.8%	
Regional segregation by income level	Statistics Finland and the City of Helsinki	38.1%	36.8%	37.8%	37.5%		

## SDG 11 – Sustainable cities and communities

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Annual average amount of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) at the Kallio measurement station	HSY	5.5 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	5 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	5.8 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	5.1 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	4.9 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	
Annual average amount of inhalable particles (PM10) at the Kallio measurement station	HSY	11.0 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	9 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	10 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	9 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	9 µg/m <sup>3</sup>	
Inclusion index	Helsinki Metropolitan Area Well-being Questionnaire 2021			74.8			
Participatory budgeting budget	City of Helsinki, City Executive Office	€4.4 million		€8.8 million		€8.8 million	
Share of sustainable modes of transport	City of Helsinki, Urban Environment Division (Transport Behaviour)	77.6%	79.7%	77.9%	79%	79%	
Walking		38.7%	51.6%	46.4%	47%	44%	
Cycling		9.4%	11.3%	8.7%	9%	11%	
Public transport		29.5%	16.8%	22.8%	23%	24%	
Number of traffic accidents per 100,000 inhabitants	City of Helsinki, traffic accident register	53 per 100,000 inhabitants	45 per 100,000 inhabitants	42 per 100,000 inhabitants	36 per 100,000 inhabitants	41 per 100,000 inhabitants	
Satisfaction with Helsinki as a cycling city (Quality rating dissatisfied–satisfied (1–4))	City of Helsinki		Fairly satisfied		Fairly satisfied		



## SDG 12 – Responsible consumption and production

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Household waste recycling rate	HSY	46.4%	45.36%	46.72%	47%		😊
Municipal waste recycling rate	HSY	51.98%	49.52%	52.9%	49%		😐
Consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions	Model for calculating consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions by Sitowise and Natural Resources Institute Finland		9.04 tCO <sub>2</sub> e/resident		8.84 tCO <sub>2</sub> e/resident		😐



## SDG 13 – Climate action

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Greenhouse gas emissions	HSY	2,598 ktCO <sub>2</sub> e	2,344 ktCO <sub>2</sub> e	2,346 ktCO <sub>2</sub> e	2,634 ktCO <sub>2</sub> e	1,947 ktCO <sub>2</sub> e	😊
Per capita CO <sub>2</sub> emissions	HSY	4.0 tCO <sub>2</sub> e	3.6 tCO <sub>2</sub> e	3.6 tCO <sub>2</sub> e	4 tCO <sub>2</sub> e	2.9 tCO <sub>2</sub> e	😊
Permeable areas as a percentage of total land area	HSY		61%		64%		😐



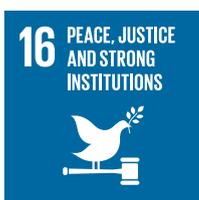
## SDG 14 – Life below water

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Ecological status of surface waters 2019	Syke	Moderate/ poor					☹️
Phosphorus load to the sea from the Viikinmäki wastewater treatment plant	HSY	20 t/y	21 t/y	18 t/y	22 t/y	19 t/y	☹️
Nitrogen load to the sea from the Viikinmäki wastewater treatment plant	HSY	530 t/y	478 t/y	470 t/y	605 t/y	499 t/y	☹️



## SDG 15 – Life on land

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Old-growth forests as a percentage of land area	Natural Resources Institute Finland (Luke), National Forest Inventory	7.86%		11.1%			😊
Nature reserves as a percentage of land area	City of Helsinki Environmental Report	2.2%	3.2%	3.8%	4.0%	4.4%	😊
Nature areas as a percentage of land area	City of Helsinki, Environmental Services				39%		



## SDG 16 – Peace, justice and strong institutions

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Perceived safety	City of Helsinki, Safety Survey			75.6%			
Turnout in municipal elections 2012 > 2017 > 2021	Statistics Finland	61.8% (2017)		61.7%			
Crimes against life and health, under 15-year-olds (number)	Statistics Finland	244	170	365	464	478	
Crimes against life and health, 15–17-year-olds (number)	Statistics Finland	147	157	240	232	277	
Crimes against life and health, total (number)	Statistics Finland	3,540	3,708	4,030	4,151	4,702	
Violence against women, victims (number)	Statistics Finland	2,249	2,321	2,574	2,580	2,784	
Violence in close relationships against women, victims (number)	Statistics Finland	1,008	1,191	1,029	1,017	1,021	



## SDG 17 – Partnerships for the goals

Indicator	Source	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Development trend 2017–2023
Amount distributed to organisations as grants	City of Helsinki	€37,399,200	€42,300,200	€44,579,200	€48,900,200	€46,784,200	

# Review implementation

The structure of the 2025 review remains unchanged from the 2023 review: the report examines sustainable development from the point of view of ecological, social, cultural and economic sustainability. The themes and indicators have also remained largely unchanged to allow for longer-term comparative and trajectory analysis, but some new indicators have also been introduced. Some actions taken by the City during the period under review have been highlighted as examples of sustainability work.

The City of Helsinki's sustainable development assessment work is coordinated by a City-level working group on sustainable development, with representatives from all of the City's divisions and enterprises, as well as other key experts. The working group contributed to the report through data collection, writing, setting indicators and commenting on the report. The compilation of the report was led by the Strategy Department. In addition to the working group, several other experts from the City organisation participated in writing and commenting on the report.

The conceptual and theoretical framework of the review is based on the UN 2030 Agenda framework. The Helsinki situational picture assessments, suggestions for measures and indicators are based on the City's key theme reports, programmes and situational picture analyses. The indicators, statistics and key figures are based on statistics and key figures produced and maintained by Helsinki's Urban Research and Statistics Unit, Statistics Finland, Helsinki Region Environmental Services (HSY), Helsinki Police Department, Finnish Environment Institute (Syke) and Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), among others.

After the 2019 sustainable development report, the City of Helsinki decided to produce a new sustainability review every two years, in the middle and at the end of the strategy period. The 2025 review is part of the final review of the strategy period. The SDG indicators were compared and developed in relation to the City's other key operating environment and development indicators during the review process.

## **From Agenda to Action – Implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Helsinki 2025**

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