

# From Agenda to Action

Helsinki



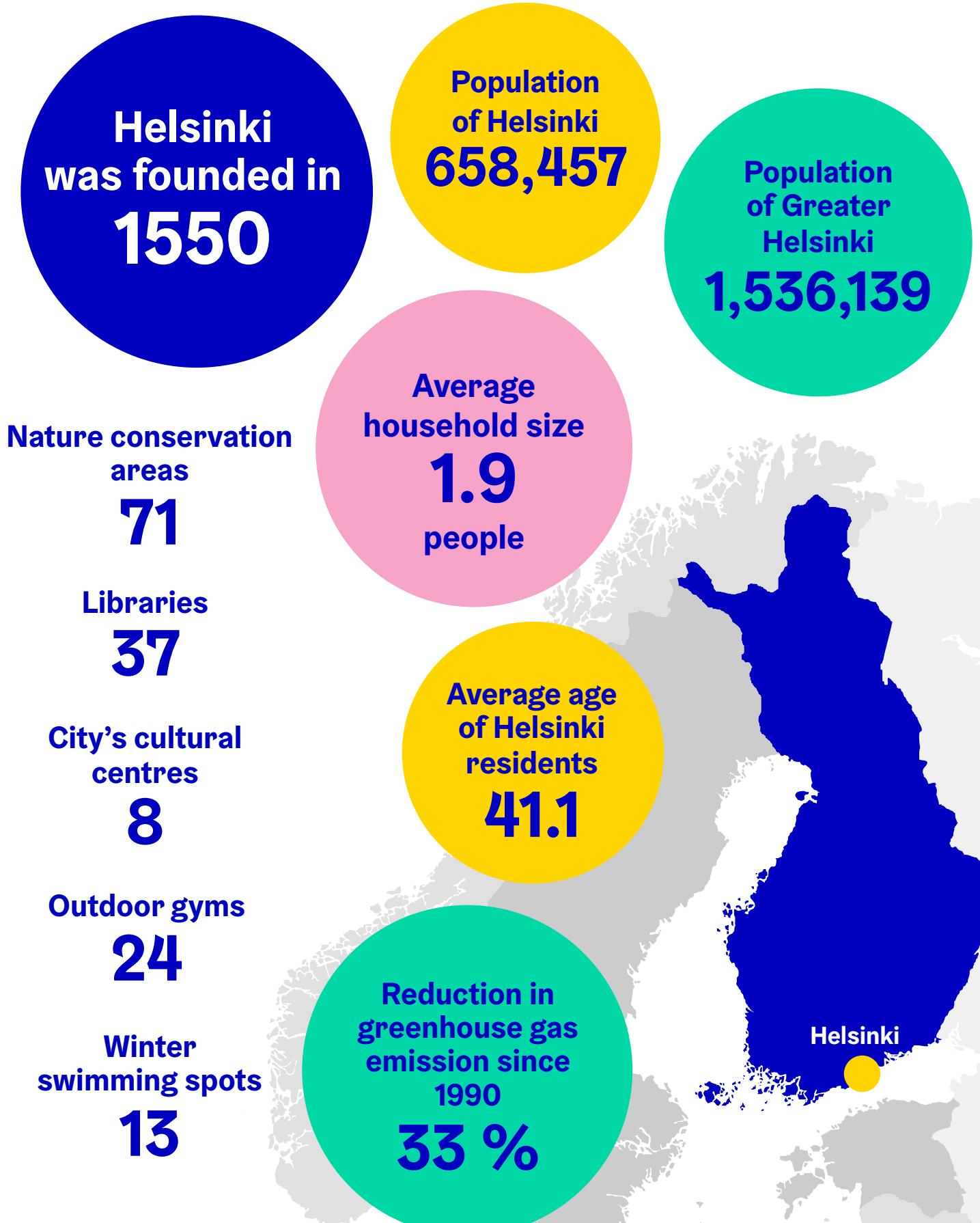
Implementation of the  
UN Sustainable Development Goals  
in Helsinki 2023



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# Helsinki in a nutshell



# Sustainable Helsinki



Cities shape a sustainable future. Helsinki wants to be a city at the forefront of sustainable development, now and in the future, and is strongly committed to sustainability – including social, ecological, economic and cultural sustainability.

For each of these, we want to take concrete action to demonstrate our will and ambition to do better.

Almost eight years ago, 193 countries in the UN General Assembly voted to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The purpose of this joint commitment has been to ensure the achievement of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The reporting of progress at a national level was identified as the main way to monitor global progress and performance. However, it soon became apparent that the potential for action to achieve the objectives at the national level was limited. Issues such as taxation and regulation are of course critical, but most of the SDGs require strong local implementation, without which the desired impact cannot be achieved.

In 2018, Helsinki became the second city in the world and the first in Europe to commit to assess and report on its progress towards the SDGs at the local level.

Today, our united front includes many cities around the world.

Helsinki has a long tradition in sustainable development and good measures. Many long-term solutions are already integrated into our basic services. Helsinki adopted its first local action plan for sustainable development as far back as 20 years ago. This is something to be proud of.

This is already the third report on the implementation of the SDGs for Helsinki. Of course, the review is just a tool to monitor and analyse our progress in relation to the global goals and our own strategy. The review will help us develop Helsinki's sustainable development indicators and knowledge-based management. At the same time, the report allows us to assess the effectiveness of our actions and identify any conflicting goals.

The world has seemed to be exceptionally unstable in recent years. First, the whole world was challenged in an unprecedented way by the COVID-19 pandemic, immediately followed in Europe by the brutal war waged by Russia in Ukraine. The war in Ukraine is threatening democracy across Europe. It is our duty to support Ukraine and Ukrainians, while defending Western democracy.

These events also show that unexpected and unforeseen changes can occur in our operating environment. Despite this, and indeed precisely because of this, we must continue to pursue and implement sustainable development measures with determination. The direction must be clear, even if we cannot foresee everything.

Yet concrete actions set an example. In Helsinki, we closed a large coal power plant this spring. The fact that we were able to move forward with the closure of a major coal power plant with determination, even in this global situation, is a strong demonstration of our will. This is just one example, but I think that it gives a good idea of the scale we are aiming for. The decision will reduce the city's overall emissions by around 20%. This is one way for cities to lead the global shift towards clean energy and reduce the dependence on fossil fuels.

During this strategy period, Helsinki has tightened its carbon neutrality goal by five years, setting a goal to be carbon neutral by 2030. We know this is an ambitious goal, but it is achievable if we have the courage to take strong and effective action at a local level.

Building a sustainable future is the most critical issue of our time. Sustainable cities and communities play a key role in promoting peace, prosperity and stability at the local level.

To tackle the climate crisis and safeguard biodiversity, we must be able to act quickly and effectively. A sustainable future is also fundamentally linked to ensuring wellbeing and social sustainability. Above all, we must nurture the wellbeing of our children and young people, and society as a whole, through concrete actions that give hope for the future.

Of particular concern in recent years have been differences in wellbeing between population groups and the mental wellbeing of children and young people. Therefore, special attention must be paid to combating regional segregation and promoting the wellbeing of children and young people.

It is important for cities around the world to be able to successfully implement sustainable solutions. Helsinki wants to be a trailblazer and pioneer.



We wanted to highlight cultural sustainability as a separate issue, as it often seems to be forgotten when talking about sustainability. After all, Helsinki has a long tradition of supporting culture, and our cultural services are of the highest quality by international standards.

At the core of cultural sustainability are creativity, cultural heritage, knowledge and diversity. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals will also require a cultural shift in many of the ways of thinking and acting that we have grown up with, that shape our lives and that we pass on to younger generations. Culture and art give us the tools and opportunities to deal with change and find creative ways to address the challenges that change brings.

Helsinki has also made culture one of its priorities in its City Strategy. We aptly state that art and culture are enablers of a good life. Helsinki wants to build the city's distinctiveness, make it more attractive to tourists, promote the inclusion of its residents, increase cultural understanding, reduce segregation and foster the residents' commitment to Helsinki. In this review, Helsinki has focused on three aspects of cultural sustainability: cultural services, design and cultural heritage.

The conclusions of the review show that Finland and Helsinki are pioneers in implementing sustainable development in many areas and we

perform well in international comparisons. At the same time, however, the review shows that much work remains to be done. It is increasingly clear that we need to do more and more to reconcile conflicting goals and take action to achieve our carbon neutrality target. However, I am glad that the majority of Helsinki residents feel that their quality of life and health is good. This is a good basis to build on.

We have also succeeded in making the promotion of cultural equality an important priority, improving neighbourhood comfort through the suburban regeneration model, and developing mental health service chains and training. We have also invested in supporting physical activity.

Helsinki wants to encourage cities around the world to embrace sustainability work and take concrete action. Cities have a duty to spur the national level and demand ambitious and unrelenting action by setting an example. The coming years and decade will determine the direction humanity takes. That is why we must act now, and we must act together. I believe that our common determination will also guide the strength of our cooperation. We still have a long way to go, but fortunately we are heading in the right direction.

**Juhana Vartiainen**

Mayor of Helsinki

# Third 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 and 2021. This is the City's third review and continues and deepens the assessment of the key themes, building on the development work based on the 2021 report. In 2023, the Voluntary Local Review is part of the mid-term review of the City Strategy.

## **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.

The report assesses Helsinki's development from the perspective of the SDGs, emphasising concrete actions and, at the same time, identifying themes for development. The report is an expert review, consisting of a concise description of various themes, indicators measuring progress and examples of the City's various activities in everyday life.

The report examines sustainable development from the point of view of ecological, social, cultural and economic sustainability. The report's breakdown remains more or less the same as in the 2021 review, but cultural sustainability has been added as a new thematic area. 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. The stories and examples collected in this third review focus on issues that contribute to the Leave No One Behind principle of Agenda 2030.



## **Identification of conflicts and boundary conditions**

Although the global goals of Agenda 2030 as an overall reference framework are also well suited to the promotion of sustainable development at the local level, many of the targets under the SDGs are not directly appropriate for the local level and especially not for an advanced and prosperous city such as Helsinki. Therefore, efforts have been made to open up and describe the global SDGs from the perspective of Helsinki's operations.

Helsinki's interpretation of the SDGs has sought to incorporate the core ideas of ecological planetary boundary conditions and a social foundation. Growth and wellbeing should be built in a way that does not jeopardise ecological sustainability or leave poorer countries behind. This challenge has also been highlighted in the Roadmap of the Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development, which identifies six areas requiring societal change where Finland must act in order to achieve all the Agenda 2030 goals and ensure the sustainable wellbeing of Finns within Earth's carrying capacity. In Helsinki, the aim has been to assess sustainable development within these boundary conditions and highlight the conflicts and synergies between them.

This is also about a sustainability transition, a change in the mindset and operating culture of the City organisation, which requires long-term action, goals and decision-making.

## **A changing operating environment**

Helsinki, like the rest of Europe, has been going through a period of uncertainty and crises. First the COVID-19 crisis and then, in 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the energy crisis and inflation. The COVID-19 crisis has affected the wellbeing of both young and senior citizen. The challenges affecting the wellbeing and growth environment of children and young people have increased; for example, there has been a marked rise in loneliness experienced by young people and anxiety among girls. The war in Europe is causing great concern and has increased the importance of safety issues and preparedness.

In terms of demographic development, Helsinki's pull has been strong in recent years. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced new uncertainties to population growth. Helsinki's neighbourhoods are diverse and pleasant, but at the same time there are clear social differences between them. Housing costs and space constraints may affect the attractiveness of Helsinki. Helsinki's population is also becoming more diverse. The diversity of languages and cultures and the number of older people in Helsinki are growing.

Since the pandemic, the employment situation has developed positively, but there are still more unemployed people than before the pandemic in 2019. Investments in research and development are on the rise. However, rising prices and interest rates are challenging people's finances and purchasing power. The City's finances and tax base have remained strong, but the future is uncertain. The renewal of the City Group, changes in working life and digitalisation are affecting the City's activities in many ways. The availability of labour is a challenge, particularly in early childhood education and the Social Services and Health Care Division.

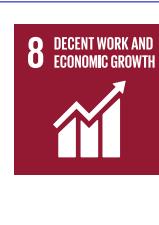
## Summary of the SDGs

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 to the different SDGs.

### Explanation of icons

- |  |   |  |   |
|--|---|--|---|
|  | The indicator has developed in a positive direction       |  | SDG achieved or close to being achieved     |
|  | No significant change in the development of the indicator |  | Challenges in achieving the SDG             |
|  | The meter has developed in a negative direction           |  | Significant challenges in achieving the SDG |

| SDG-Goals                    | Key indicators  | Relevant notes and goals for Helsinki  | Assessment |
|------------------------------|---|--|------------|
| 1 NO POVERTY                 | <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 homeless people</li> <li> Amount of household debt</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Helsinki aims to end homelessness by 2025.</li> <li>● Helsinki is investing in affordable housing and has developed a set of indicators for this purpose.</li> </ul>  |            |
| 2 ZERO HUNGER                |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Helsinki has increased cooperation to develop food aid activities and invested in nutrition counselling.</li> </ul>   |            |
| 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | <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 wellbeing (entire population and children)</li> <li> Share of people achieving the physical activity recommendations (%)</li> <li> Body mass index: Percentage of overweight children</li> <li> Body mass index: Percentage of overweight adults</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The City of Helsinki Welfare Plan 2022–2025 has six priorities for promoting wellbeing and health: mental wellbeing, hobbies and leisure, physical activity, healthy lifestyles, good community relations and a safe and beautiful city.</li> <li>● The majority of the adult population are happy and feel that their quality of life and health are good, but there are nevertheless differences in their experiences of quality of life, health and happiness depending on factors such as perceived income adequacy.</li> <li>● The mental wellbeing of children and young people, especially girls, has deteriorated according to various indicators.</li> <li>● The excess weight of residents is a concern, and measures have been taken in Helsinki to increase physical activity and nutrition counselling.</li> </ul> |            |
| 4 QUALITY EDUCATION          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> Share of people with a higher education degree (%)</li> <li> Share of early leavers from upper secondary education (%)</li> <li> Share of children in early childhood education (%)</li> <li> Share of foreign-language speakers among general upper secondary school graduates (%)</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Learning outcomes have deteriorated in Finland, and there is particular concern about the learning of boys with foreign backgrounds.</li> <li>● The Education Division has a sustainable future learning path. It enables learners of all ages to interact with sustainable development themes in their daycare and school life and upper secondary studies.</li> <li>● The labour shortage challenges the Education Division.</li> </ul>   |            |

| SDG   | Key indicators  | Relevant notes and goals for Helsinki  | Assessment  |
|---|---|--|---|
| <br><b>5 GENDER EQUALITY</b>                           |  Gender gap in unemployment<br> Gender gap in perceived quality of life<br> Gender gap in higher education graduates | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The City's equality and non-discrimination plans set up a framework and concrete measures to promote non-discrimination and gender equality.</li> <li>The gender gap in the wellbeing of children and young people has increased.</li> <li>Helsinki makes visible contributions to the non-discrimination of gender minorities (e.g. through Pride partnership).</li> </ul>                                       |    |
| <br><b>6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION</b>                |  Percentages of wastewater treatment (nitrogen and phosphorus)<br> Share of purified wastewater (%)   | <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> </ul>  |    |
| <br><b>7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY</b>              |  Renewable energy production and share (%)<br> Energy consumption per capita (kWh)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The production of renewable energy has increased, and the energy crisis has boosted energy-saving measures.</li> <li>The City-owned energy company Helen is making progress towards its carbon neutrality targets, and the use of coal in two power plants will cease between 2023 and 2025.</li> <li>High energy prices are affecting people's livelihoods.</li> </ul>   |    |
| <br><b>8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</b>         |  Youth unemployment rate<br> Long-term unemployment rate<br> Unemployment rate                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The employment rate has risen to a better level in Helsinki since the COVID-19 period.</li> <li>There is a shortage of labour in many sectors, and solving this problem has become one of the key strategic objectives, and work-based immigration has grown significantly.</li> </ul>  |  |
| <br><b>9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</b> |  Number of new enterprises or startups<br> Companies' willingness to recommend Helsinki as a location (share of recommendations)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The City invests in the growth and renewal of entrepreneurship and business in Helsinki by providing services for starting a business and strengthening the capacity of startups to grow in selected industries.</li> </ul>   |  |
| <br><b>10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES</b>                   |  Regional segregation index<br> Gini coefficient<br> NEET share (Not in Employment, Education or Training)     | <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>               |  |
| <br><b>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</b>     |  Share of sustainable modes of transport<br> Air quality<br> Inclusion indicator                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In Helsinki, planning and design promote factors such as sufficient housing production, efficient traffic, operational conditions of business life, availability of services and sparing use of natural resources.</li> <li>Helsinki aims to promote sustainable mobility, for example by increasing the modal share of cycling from 9% to 20% by 2030.</li> <li>Air quality in Helsinki has improved.</li> </ul> |  |

| SDG   | Key indicators   | Relevant notes and goals for Helsinki  | Assessment  |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION</b><br>   |  Municipal and household waste recycling rate   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consumption-based emissions are high in Helsinki.</li> <li>The transition to circular economy has been slow and requires active measures; the City of Helsinki's Roadmap for Circular and Sharing Economy is being updated.</li> </ul>  |    |
| <b>13 CLIMATE ACTION</b><br>                           |  Greenhouse gas emissions ( $\text{CO}_2\text{e}$ ) and change in emissions: Total emissions<br> Per capita $\text{CO}_2$ emissions  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helsinki is aiming for carbon neutrality by 2030 and is exploring the possibility of carbon negativity from 2040 onwards.</li> <li>Traffic emissions are the biggest challenge to reducing emissions locally.</li> <li>Greater effectiveness is being sought for climate change adaptation goals.</li> </ul>  |    |
| <b>14 LIFE BELOW WATER</b><br>                         |  Ecological status of surface waters 2019   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing pollutants in stormwater pose a risk to small water bodies and the coastal area.</li> <li>The state of coastal waters remains poor and has not developed as hoped.</li> </ul>  |    |
| <b>15 LIFE ON LAND</b><br>                            |  Number of nature conservation areas and their share of the total area (%)<br> Total surface area of forested and wooded areas or their relative share of the land area   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of nature conservation areas in Helsinki has increased by five areas per year in line with the objectives of the strategy, 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> </ul>   |  |
| <b>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS</b><br> |  Perceived safety<br> Turnout in municipal elections<br> Number of young people committing crimes (per 10,000 young people)<br> Crimes against life and health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of young people committing crimes and violence against women have increased.</li> <li>New means are being sought to improve the perception of safety and prevent radicalisation, particularly among young people.</li> <li>The City's Participation and Interaction Model was created to support the promotion of participation, and the model is being implemented in all of the City's divisions.</li> <li>Human rights issues and work-related exploitation have become more prominent, and efforts are being made to combat them in Helsinki's procurement.</li> </ul> |  |
| <b>17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</b><br>             |  Number of grants distributed   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helsinki has developed a new model for coordinating NGO cooperation.</li> <li>In 2022, almost EUR 50 million were allocated in grants.</li> <li>International cooperation and interest representation are actively carried out.</li> </ul>  |  |

# Summary

- Finland and Helsinki are pioneers in implementing sustainable development in many areas and perform well in international comparisons. However, per capita consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions and natural resource consumption are at a high and unsustainable level by global standards.
- A large proportion of Agenda 2030 objectives are implemented at a 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's areas for development still include concrete and measurable targets, only a few of which have been set so far, such as the emissions target. In particular, long-term goals and a vision for 2030 and 2050 are missing in many sustainability themes.
- The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals requires cultural change. Helsinki will change, which will also require a change in our mindset, operating methods and management structures. Change may become more rapid and less predictable, requiring a greater ability to adapt to change.
- The conflict between the city's growth and the objectives of protecting green spaces and the environment has become increasingly apparent and calls for reconciliation.
- The current climate actions will not achieve Helsinki's carbon neutrality targets, and there are challenges in the reduction of transport emissions in particular. With the currently existing actions, the emissions will be 1,098 ktCO<sub>2</sub>e in 2030, whereas carbon neutrality requires that the emissions are cut down to the level of 702 ktCO<sub>2</sub>e.
- Climate change adaptation and the safeguarding of biodiversity would also require swift and more strategic measures.
- Developing inequalities and segregation are among the biggest challenges to social sustainability, and addressing and preventing them requires action 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 and are happy. However, there is significant variation in the prevalence of morbidity and public diseases between the districts of Helsinki.
- The physical activity of Helsinki residents is too low compared to the recommendations, and the excess weight of residents has not been reduced.
- Mental wellbeing challenges and increased loneliness experienced by children and young people, as well as psychological strain among the adult population, are more common in Helsinki than in Finland as a whole.
- Safety and preparedness have been given more prominence in the review, with particular concerns about children and young people's experiences of safety and radicalisation, as well as violence in close relationships. Indicators show that the number of young people committing crimes and violence against women have increased, for example.

## Helsinki's top five successes:

- The sustainable development learning path has been integrated into early childhood education.
- The production of renewable energy has increased, and air quality has improved.
- The promotion of cultural equality has been made an important priority throughout the cultural sector.
- The suburban regeneration model improves the comfort and attractiveness of residential areas and enables high-quality complementary construction.
- Mental health service chains and training have been developed, and investments have been made to support physical activity and hobbies.

## Recommendations based on the results of the report:

1. Helsinki should set more longer-term sustainability targets that go beyond the council term, as well as progress indicators and target values for its sustainability indicators.
2. The understanding of sustainability issues and knowledge-based management must be developed at all levels, from strategic management to the provision of different services, for example by using the sustainability management tools of the six cities -network.
3. The links between the Sustainable Development Goals should be better identified, and the most relevant strategic actions should be identified for more effective implementation as part of key processes, such as economic, operational, land-use and construction planning.
4. Conflicting goals should be addressed more thoroughly, different impacts identified, and goals transparently reconciled, for example in relation to the growth of the city and the reconciliation of nature values.
5. Effective implementation of sustainability goals and active monitoring of their achievement must be strengthened, and long-term thinking must be increased. Attention must also be paid to the effectiveness of measures and indicators at a more operational level.
6. Helsinki should invest even more in promoting ecological sustainability and combating climate change and also pay attention to global impacts. Ecological impacts and planetary boundary conditions should be better integrated into the assessment and decision-making process.
7. There should be clearer coordination between the many ecological sustainability programmes, for example through updating environmental policy and enhancing environmental management.
8. Sustainable economy should be promoted in the long term by assessing lifecycle costs and investing in circular and sharing economy and preventive services.
9. Local nature and the pleasantness of urban space should be invested in, and their diverse impacts on people's health and wellbeing, the city's attractiveness and biodiversity should be better identified and valued.
10. A clearer integration of the equality and non-discrimination perspective into core functions, such as the different levels of economic and operational planning and the impact assessment of decisions, would be important.
11. 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.



# 20 years of sustainable development in Helsinki

Helsinki has a long tradition in promoting sustainable development. More than 20 years ago, in June 2002, the Helsinki City Council adopted the first local sustainable development agenda. The work on the local agenda was preceded by the adoption of sustainable development as one of the City's strategic priorities, followed by the preparation of the local agenda, which was a broad and participatory process. For example, it included citizens' forums attended by around 4,000 city residents, a major achievement in the pre-digital era. As part of the work on the local agenda, comprehensive core indicators for sustainable development were also developed and regularly monitored.

## The seven overall goals of the local agenda in 2002 were the following:

- 1. Reduction of greenhouse gas emissions**  
Reduction of the greenhouse gas emissions that are speeding up global climate change, in accordance with the UN Convention on Climate Change and observing the national targets set by the Government.
- 2. Protecting and fostering biodiversity in Helsinki**  
Preservation of the biodiversity of Helsinki in accordance with the principles of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity.
- 3. Strengthening the City's competitiveness and business structure in order to safeguard stable economic development**
- 4. Inclusion of lifecycle thinking in the City's physical planning, procurements and construction**  
One special task area is the implementation of the neighbourhood rehabilitation projects in accordance with sustainability objectives by supporting the participation of the residents and by developing ecologically sustainable construction methods.

- 5. Increasing interaction and citizens' participation and strengthening partnership**
- 6. Prevention of exclusion and social segregation**  
One special task area is the safeguarding of the participation and healthy development of children and youth.
- 7. Fostering cultural diversity and the built environment**

Many of these goals have seen positive progress, but the goals of the local agenda of 20 years ago are still very relevant. On the one hand, this reflects the pioneering and sometimes ahead-of-its-time work on sustainable development that Helsinki already carried out 20 years ago, and on the other hand, it shows that many sustainability themes are very long-term and require continuous development.

# Strategic sustainability management

The Helsinki City Strategy for 2021–2025 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 strategy also states that the development of Helsinki will be guided and evaluated in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

**"We are proud to continue to evaluate and guide the development of Helsinki in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals."**

Helsinki City Strategy 2021–2025

The third Voluntary Local Review is part of the mid-term review of the City Strategy, which is carried out during spring 2023. It has been decided that the Voluntary Local Review will be carried out every two years, in the middle and at the end of the strategy period.

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.



## Priorities of the Helsinki City Strategy and SDGs

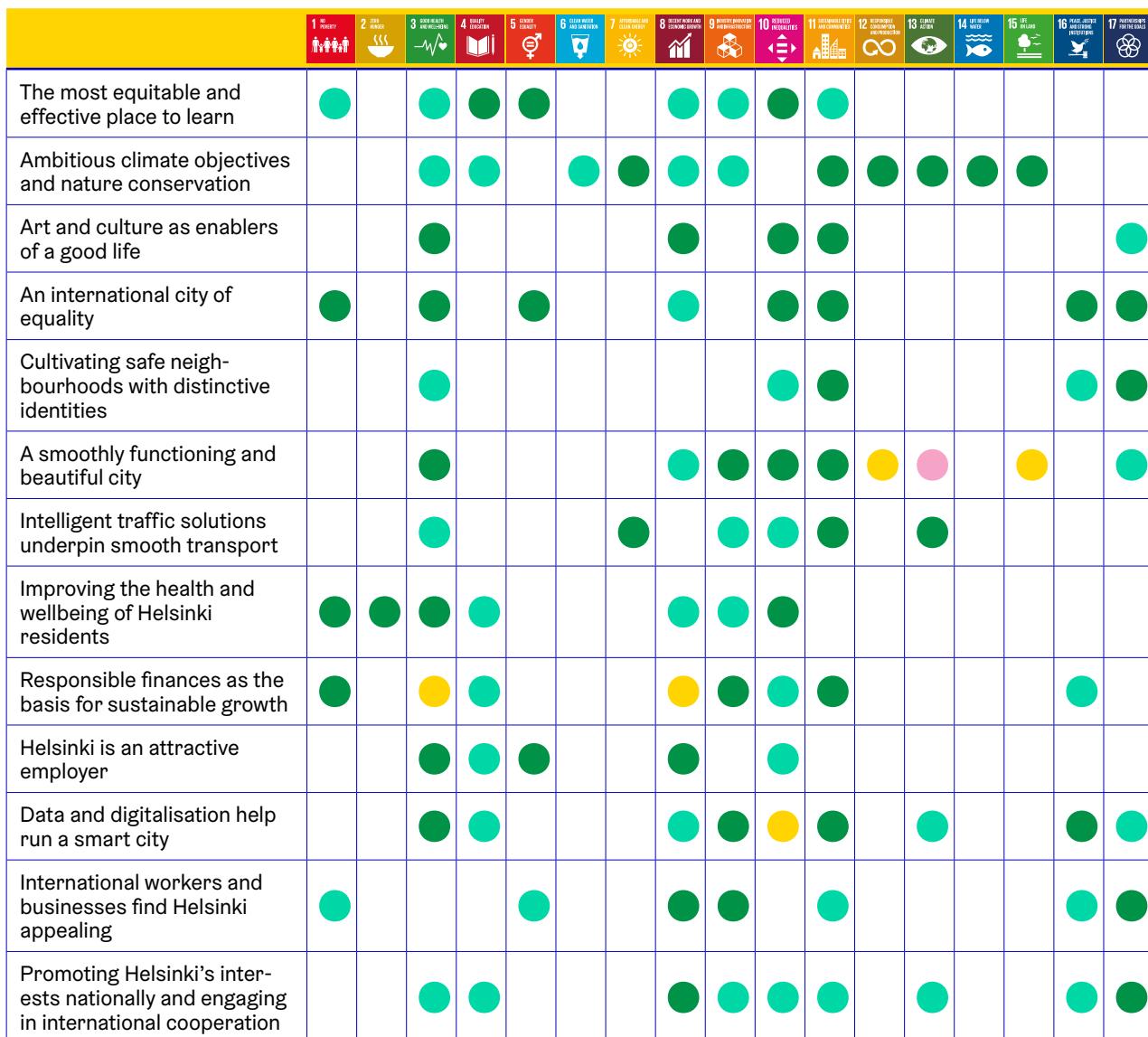
● Direct positive

● Indirect positive

● Direct negative

● Indirect negative

● Conflicting



At the moment, different sustainability themes are managed through programmes or strategies coordinated at the City level, or the four strategic programme groups focusing on sustainable economy, ambitious climate responsibility, a comfortable city and the prevention of segregation.

## Tools for sustainability management

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 two years, the City of Helsinki has also examined its strategic programmes and economic and operational planning from the perspective of sustainable development.

During the review period, Helsinki has introduced a more systematic way of examining its key objectives and City-level programmes within

the sustainable development framework and in relation to individual SDGs. The analysis helps open up the links between the objectives of each programme 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 the City of Helsinki Welfare Plan 2022–2025, Economic Policy Priorities, the Tourism and Events Programme 2022–2026 and the Carbon Neutral Helsinki 2030 Action Plan, among others.

The table below shows some of Helsinki's key guiding programmes and plans and how they relate to the SDGs. Looking at both the strategic priorities and the programmes, SDGs 3 (Good health and well-being), 4 (Quality education), 8 (Decent work and economic growth), 10 (Reduced inequalities), 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) and 13 (Climate action) stand out as the main areas of focus for the City of Helsinki.

## Programmes and SDGs

| City-level programme / SDG                                 | 1 NO POVERTY | 2 ZERO HUNGER | 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING | 4 QUALITY EDUCATION | 5 GENDER EQUALITY | 6 CLEAN WATER AND CLEAN ENERGY | 7 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | 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 PARTNERSHIPS | 17 PARTNERSHIP FOR THE SDGS |
|--|--------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|---|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Welfare Plan   | ●            | ●             | ●                            | ●                   |                   |                                |   | ●                                 |  | ●                       | ●                                     | ●   |                   |                     |                 |                                   |                             |
| Implementation Programme on Housing and Related Land Use   | ●            |               | ●                            |                     | ●                 |                                |   | ●                                 | ●  | ●                       | ●                                     | ●   |                   |                     |                 |                                   |                             |
| Carbon Neutral Helsinki 2030                               |              |               | ●                            |                     |                   | ●                              | ●   | ●                                 | ●  | ●                       | ●                                     | ●   | ●                 |                     |                 | ●                                 |                             |
| Equality and non-discrimination plans                      |              | ●             | ●                            | ●                   | ●                 |                                |   |                                   | ●  | ●                       | ●                                     |   |                   | ●                   | ●               | ●                                 |                             |
| Procurement Strategy                                       |              |               |                              |                     |                   |                                | ●   | ●                                 | ●  | ●                       | ●                                     | ●   | ●                 | ●                   | ●               | ●                                 |                             |
| Economic Policy Priorities                                 | ●            |               | ●                            | ●                   | ●                 |                                |   | ●                                 | ●  | ●                       | ●                                     | ●   | ●                 | ●                   | ●               |                                   | ●                           |
| Biodiversity Action Plan and Nature Conservation Programme |              |               | ●                            | ●                   |                   | ●                              | ●   |                                   |  |                         | ●                                     | ●   | ●                 | ●                   | ●               |                                   | ●                           |
| Tourism and Events Programme 2022–2026                     |              | ●             | ●                            | ●                   | ●                 |                                |   |                                   | ●  | ●                       | ●                                     | ●   | ●                 | ●                   | ●               |                                   | ●                           |

The City of Helsinki's indicators for assessing the progress of sustainable development have been revised for this review. Helsinki is involved in the national sustainable development indicator project led by the Finnish Environment Institute to develop more comprehensive indicators for ecological, social and economic sustainability. The indicators selected for the report contribute to enabling a national comparison of the state of sustainable development and provide more up-to-date information on the current state of development.

A better SDG-based knowledge base has also been built to support the work of sustainability experts during 2022. The knowledge base brings together programmes and objectives that guide the City and links e.g. the City's budgetary objectives to the SDGs. While the budgetary objectives of the City's divisions and enterprises and their indicators have been examined from the SDG perspective, groundwork has also been done on sustainable development budgeting. In 2023, Helsinki will become even more committed to developing phenomenon-based economic planning and will participate in the national sustainable development budgeting project.

In the strategic sustainability management network of Finland's six largest cities, Helsinki has participated in the development of systemic models and concrete management tools for sustainability management. For example, the network developed the SDG Sensemaking Tool, the basis of which was used in the workshops of the management of the Urban Environment Division in autumn 2022.

## **Sustainable development as part of the City's everyday activities**

Helsinki has wanted to make sustainability a part of the everyday routines of its employees and services. Helsinki also promotes the SDGs through its many statutory tasks, such as education, health and social services, city planning and land use, and environmental protection.

There are also various networks, committees and working groups operating within the City that promote sustainability themes, such as the sustainable development working group, human rights network, environment and climate network and the HYTE coordination group.

There are also various networks, committees and working groups operating within the City that promote sustainability themes, such as the sustainable development working group, human rights network, environment and climate network and the health and welfare promotion coordination group.

The City's divisions and enterprises are active in promoting the sustainability aspects; in particular, ecological sustainability has been systematically promoted in the divisions and enterprises. Of the City's enterprises, Palvelukeskus Helsinki has its own sustainability programme based on the SDGs. Of the divisions, the Urban Environment Division has started work to develop sustainability work in the division. Other divisions and enterprises have e.g. environmental programmes and objectives related to responsible procurement. The City Executive Office's communications department has overall responsibility for communications relating to sustainable development and the SDGs.

Sustainable development is visible to residents in many ways through the City's services. In education services, for example, sustainability thinking has been integrated into teaching, and libraries and youth services are actively working to raise awareness and promote circular economy, among other things.

Staff skills and attitudes are very important for promoting sustainability issues. Understanding and knowledge-based management must be developed throughout the system from management to the implementation of services. The ethical principles of the City guide the activities of the City's personnel and trustees. The ethical principles are the core of responsible operations, healthy workplace culture and workplace wellbeing. Following these principles ensures that the City is a good place to work and our operations comply with laws, regulations, guidelines and standards. Furthermore, an extensive training package on the different themes of sustainable development was produced for the staff of the City of Helsinki in 2022, available to all City employees. The City also has eco-support activities and related training. Across the organisation, 1,389 eco-supporters work to support the promotion of environmental issues. Sustainable development themes have also been discussed in training and orientation sessions for personnel and supervisors.

Various development projects are also a key way for the City to promote sustainable development and new innovations, with 25 of the 32 projects running in 2022 promoting social or ecological sustainability and the rest promoting employment and digitalisation.

The subsidiaries of the Helsinki City Group are also active in promoting sustainable development. The largest companies have responsibility programmes and reporting based on the SDGs. As part of the City's work on sustainable development, the responsibility aspects of group governance have been discussed and joint workshops on responsibility themes have been organised with the subsidiaries.

Efforts have also been made to promote the participation and awareness of residents and stakeholders. Active communication and various events have been organised, including a Human Rights Day seminar on sustainable development and a city based on human rights 2022, and three Timeout dialogues on sustainable development themes. The mayor, together with the United Nations University World Institute for Development Economics Research, UNU-WIDER, organised a three-part SDG Discussion Forum on topical sustainability themes on economic, learning and ecological sustainability issues in 2022–2023.

## Cities as pioneers in sustainable development

Finland is a forerunner in the work on sustainable development and has also been recognised for it. Helsinki has actively participated in cooperation promoting sustainable development at the national and international level. Helsinki works closely with the Prime Minister's Office, the Sustainable City programme of the Ministry of the Environment and Finland's six largest cities and the Association of Local and Regional Authorities to promote the strategic management of sustainable development. In autumn 2021, a joint strategic SDG management network project was launched for the six largest cities in Finland, which 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, UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities Initiative and the projects of Bloomberg Philanthropies. Helsinki also actively participates in the WHO Healthy Cities Network. In particular, the work internationally promotes the targets of SDG 3 (Good health and well-being).

Helsinki has also highlighted the SDG work in the networks it coordinates and its business and partnership cooperation. More than a thousand 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.

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. Helsinki has directly and through UN operators supported and shared its own work with other cities around the world. Helsinki also hosted an international two-day workshop on the promotion and assessment of the SDGs at the local level in autumn 2022, together with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA).

Helsinki's SDG work has contributed to the emergence and deepening of many strategic international partnerships. Helsinki has, in a completely new way, managed to enter into cooperation with UN institutions (e.g. UN-Habitat and UN DESA) and to represent cities and promote urban goals in these forums.



# Environment

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



13 CLIMATE ACTION



14 LIFE BELOW WATER



15 LIFE ON LAND



As a city with high consumption and living standards, Helsinki faces a major challenge in terms of ecological sustainability. On a global scale, the ecological footprint of Helsinki residents is considerable, and our consumption levels exceed the limits of the Earth's carrying capacity. Helsinki's consumption-based emissions are estimated to be more than double the emissions measured. On the other hand, the state of the environment in Helsinki has improved according to many indicators, and environmental protection and services like waste management and water supply are at a good level.

The aim of the City Strategy adopted in autumn 2021 is for sustainable growth to be in balance with the prevailing ecological limitations. The City plays a key role in ensuring ecological sustainability, as it is responsible for many related activities, such as local climate and environmental protection measures, maintenance of green and recreational areas, urban planning, infrastructure maintenance and construction, energy production through a subsidiary, and waste and wastewater treatment together with other municipalities in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area.

In particular, the loads on water bodies, climate and soil have decreased in Helsinki in recent years. As the city grows, the biggest challenges for the future relate to reducing the environmental impacts of transport and construction and promoting sustainable consumption. The circular economy needs to be more strongly integrated into key processes to improve emissions and resource efficiency. The transition to a circular economy also requires significant investments. Participation, knowledge and research are needed to help solve these challenges.

## Programmes and studies:

[City of Helsinki Environmental Report 2021 >](#)

[Helsinki's environmental attitudes survey 2022](#)

[\(in Finnish\) >](#)

# Climate

7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



13 CLIMATE ACTION



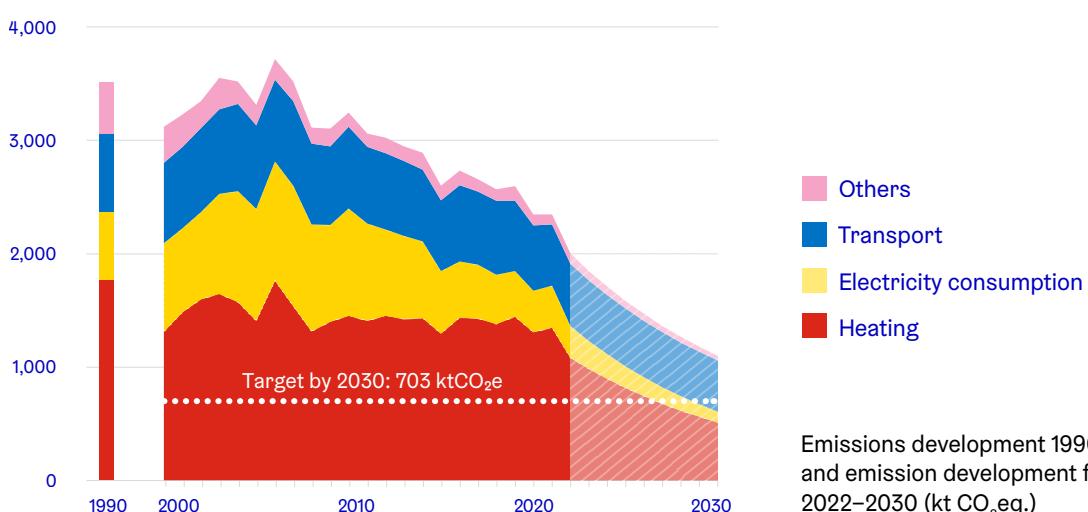
The City of Helsinki's carbon neutrality target was brought forward to 2030 in the City Strategy, and the Carbon Neutral Helsinki Action Plan was updated to reflect this. Due to the very limited timeframe, effectiveness has been put at the heart of the programme and efforts have been made to set effective measures that directly and rapidly reduce emissions. In Helsinki, the most significant sources of direct emissions are heating, transport and electricity. The action plan focuses in particular on emissions reductions in these sectors. Furthermore, indirect Scope 3 emissions are being taken into consideration in a more target-oriented manner. As for these indirect emissions, the focus is on construction emissions, based on impact and the City's strategy policies, as these are emissions that the City can also influence through its own actions.

From 1990 to 2021, the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in Helsinki decreased by 33%. The main reasons for the reduction in emissions in the long term are the replacement of coal with natural gas in energy production, improved energy efficiency of the building stock and increased renewable energy. Helen Ltd will completely phase out the use of coal as part of its carbon neutrality target for 2030.

The use of coal will cease at the Hanasaari and Salmisaari power plants between 2023 and 2025, which will significantly reduce emissions from heating. In the future, heat will be produced by using heat pumps, waste heat, electric boilers and sustainable bioenergy. Energy storage also plays an important role. Electricity will mainly be produced by nuclear, wind and solar power. In transport, the target is to reduce emissions by 69% from the 2005 level by 2030. Transport emissions have decreased slowly, and it is predicted that the target will not be reached. For this reason, new measures for transport that would be required to meet the target have been identified and will be further prepared during 2023.

Helsinki has also begun to define the boundary conditions of a limited and changing world for the planning of a carbon-negative city. Achieving the carbon negativity target requires that the number of carbon sinks can be increased and emissions can be pushed down. In order to achieve this, changes are also required in the current way of planning the city because the carbon-negative city of the future is already being planned and some of the chains of influence will take time.

## Emissions development by sector (kt CO<sub>2</sub> eq.)



Source: HSY

HSY is the primary operator that carries out consumption-related influencing and communication directed at residents, based on the City's strategic steering. Climate work is also visible in the subsidiaries. In accordance with the ownership strategies, most of the City's subsidiaries have prepared or are in the process of preparing carbon neutrality plans, through which they can contribute to the City's carbon neutrality objectives.

## Towards a Helsinki prepared for extreme weather phenomena

Climate change requires adaptation to its effects. Helsinki strives to prepare for extreme weather phenomena and their indirect effects, which requires preparation for increased periods of heat and drought as well as heavy rainfall and even rising water levels in the coming decades. This means that preparedness must be taken into account in urban planning and new construction and renovation projects. To adapt to climate change, the City is adding more trees and greenery, meadows that can withstand scorching conditions and green structures that control stormwater, such as parks and green roofs. A well-functioning green structure enables stormwater management, the minimisation of flood risks and the reduction of the urban heat island effect. The ability of the most vulnerable population groups to adapt to climate change is ensured through the necessary measures, for example in hospitals, institutions and older people's housing services.

In recent years, adaptation measures have focused on the development and implementation of natural stormwater management methods, the strengthening of the green structure, the promotion of the use of the green factor in town planning and the development of the tool, the improvement of summer cooling in City-owned properties such as schools and nursing homes, as well as the improvement of climate-resilient renovation and climate change risk management. The adaptation work has been rather fragmented, which is why an overall plan will be drawn up for it. The first step is to draw up a plan for heavy rainfall, followed by a hot weather plan and the mitigation of the negative effects of crisis and risk situations. The adaptation work is particularly challenged by the speed of climate change, but also by the City's growth targets, which requires coordination of objectives and measures.

## Successes:

- The carbon neutrality target was brought forward from 2035 to 2030.
- The effectiveness of climate work has been significantly increased.
- The Energy Renaissance Team has promoted the energy efficiency of housing companies.
- Hanasaari coal power plant was closed in 2023.

## Areas for development:

- More solutions to replace fossil fuels are needed in energy production.
- New measures to reduce emissions must be introduced in transport.
- Climate change adaptation and city growth require reconciliation.

## Programmes:

[Carbon Neutral Helsinki Action Plan PDF >](#)

[Supporting Strategy with Action Plans: Guide for the Preparation of an Emissions Reduction Action Plan PDF >](#)

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

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



## Carbon Neutral Helsinki 2030

Carbon Neutral Helsinki 2030 is the City's emissions reduction action plan, updated in autumn 2022. Through the action plan, the City aims to reduce its direct emissions by 80% compared to 1990 and offset the remaining 20%. In the 2040 zero-carbon target, the remaining 20% will have

been reduced to a level where carbon sinks within the city limits can compensate for the remaining emissions.

[Read more >](#)

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## Energy experts

The City of Helsinki offers the help and support of its energy experts to housing companies looking to make effective, energy-efficient and financially viable energy renovations.

[Read more >](#)



# Nature and biodiversity

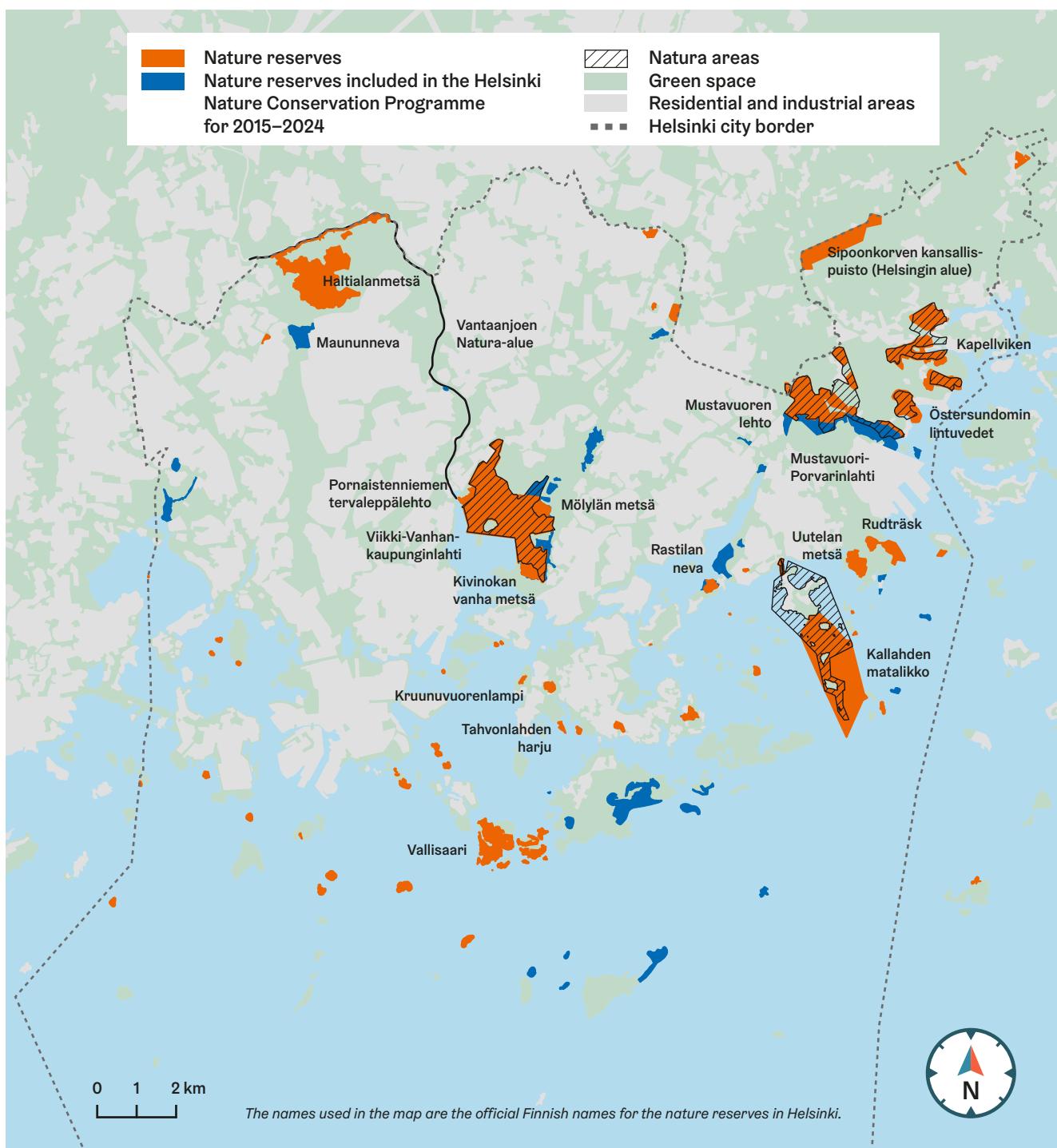


Helsinki is a green city by the sea. Green areas cover more than a third of the city's land area, and two-thirds of the entire city area is sea. Helsinki's nature is essentially versatile: forests, meadows, wetlands, beaches, islands, creeks and parks. The network of green and recreational areas is web-like but discontinuous due to wide traffic routes. There are still many quite natural habitats in the forests and on the shores of Helsinki. Furthermore, human influence has promoted species diversity in parks, yards and gardens.

However, the city is changing and growing rapidly. In particular, construction and climate change pose the biggest challenges for biodiversity. The City Strategy 2021–2025 states that no zoning will be planned in Helsinki's most treasured nature areas and the aim is to establish five new protected areas each year. At the end of 2022, nature reserves accounted for 4.0% of the land area and 1.0% of the water area.



## Nature conservation areas in Helsinki



In 2021, the long-prepared City of Helsinki Biodiversity Action Plan 2021–2028 was adopted with the aim of ensuring that biodiversity is taken into account in all of the City's operations. By the end of 2022, two-thirds of the plan's 95 measures were in progress.

At the moment, the City does not have a comprehensive picture of the development of biodiversity in Helsinki. At a general level, it is known that the number and spread of flying squirrels has increased and the total number of bird species has increased, for example. To obtain more detailed information, the City drew up a nature monitoring plan in 2022 with a wide range of land, habitat and species monitoring. This systematic monitoring will provide the wide range of information on the state of nature needed to support future decision-making. The monitoring started in 2022, and the appropriation received for 2023 enables the monitoring to be carried out in accordance with the plan.

The City seeks to strengthen its ecological networks. The knowledge base on ecological networks has been expanded, including the meadow network development survey completed in 2021 and the blue network survey about to be completed. The updated species planning guidelines included in the urban flora guide paid attention to insects' and birds' requirements on habitats and nutrition. The section on plants in the Helsinki Design Manual was also updated to account for diversity. The City's forestry policies will be updated in line with the City Strategy, which sets the objectives of increasing planned diversity in forests and forested areas and allowing forests to age naturally. The update also prepares for climate change and the effects of the city's growth on forests' ability to cope.

Urban planning and the development of the built environment also take greater account of biodiversity and adaptation to climate change

through means such as a plot-specific green factor and the development of a regional green factor. In addition to nature conservation, the development of the built environment from the point of view of nature has gained in importance in recent years. In the Urban Environment Division, the reconciliation of the city's growth with nature values has been identified as a key theme for the strategy period and has been actively discussed with both senior officials and political leaders during the spring of 2023. Concrete measures have also already been taken; for example, a new set of criteria for assessing the nature values of urban forests has been developed in cooperation in the planning of Ramsinranta in Vuosaari, the principles of forestry have been updated in cooperation with stakeholders, and efforts have been made to develop comprehensive metering.

## **Residents of Helsinki appreciate their local nature**

The residents of Helsinki value the city's nature and long for a connection with it. Forested areas in particular are highly valued, and residents consider nature conservation and the enhancement of biodiversity to be important guiding values. The importance of the local environment, making it greener and diversifying its vegetation are also highlighted in the City's participatory budgeting projects. The City Strategy states that the City will continue to ensure that every Helsinki resident lives in close proximity to nature.

In some places, nature areas are under heavy use. Due to the large number of visitors, service structures, such as guided trails and cosy rest areas, are needed in nature. The City has begun the preparation of its first nature service policy aimed at safeguarding the diversity of Helsinki's nature areas and providing residents and visitors with good opportunities to enjoy nature.

## **Successes:**

- The City Strategy is ambitious in terms of safeguarding biodiversity, and the work to reconcile the city's growth with nature values has begun.
- The appropriation received for the nature conservation and monitoring work enables the monitoring to be carried out in accordance with the plan.
- The strengthening of ecological networks and the expansion of the knowledge base related to these networks.

## **Areas for development:**

- More concrete tools are needed to reconcile the city's growth with the preservation of nature values.
- Insufficient resources for combating invasive species.
- Biodiversity metrics and indicators require further development.

## **Programmes:**

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

### **LUMO-vahti**

LUMO-vahti is the indicator website of the City of Helsinki Biodiversity Action Plan (LUMO programme). The website presents the measures to be taken to achieve the 11 objectives of the LUMO programme, as well as the programme monitoring indicators to be developed in 2023.

[Read more \(in Finnish\) >](#)

# Water ecosystems



SDG 6, Clean water and sanitation, is one of the goals that Helsinki has achieved to a large extent. In Helsinki, clean drinking water and efficient wastewater management are available to everyone. In addition to this, wastewater treatment is world-class. SDG 14, Life below water, is particularly related to the Baltic Sea in Helsinki. It is one of the most sensitive and polluted seas in the world and particularly affected by eutrophication.

Helsinki's water areas comprise large sea areas and freshwater areas, which include the Vantaa River, streams, ditches, ponds and springs. Helsinki's archipelago of 300 islands stretches from the sheltered inner archipelago to the open sea. The water quality and the ecological status of small bodies of water and sea areas are affected by nutrients and harmful substances, litter, water traffic, treated wastewater and the condition of the open sea in the Gulf of Finland.

Even though the nutrient load in coastal waters has decreased in recent decades, thanks to developments such as advanced wastewater treatment technology and the centralisation of treatment plants, the coastal ecosystem has not yet recovered and eutrophication remains a key problem in the sea area off the coast of Helsinki. Over the long term, concentrations of total phosphorus and chlorophyll a, an indicator of the amount of algae, have continued to grow, and the total nitrogen concentrations fluctuate around the long-term average. The increase in the turbidity of surface waters has stopped at the 2010 level, and the turbidity of the waters near the seabed has decreased. However, the oxygen level of water near the seabed is continuing to decrease in Helsinki coastal waters, partially due to the rising average temperature of the coastal waters.

The eutrophication of the sea areas in Helsinki is caused by the nutrient load from the catchment area and the special characteristics of coastal waters and bays. Despite the decreased nutrient load, the phosphorus concentration in the middle and outer archipelagos has grown since the start of the 21st century. To reduce the load on the sea area, the Metropolitan Area must implement targeted actions in the local catchment areas.

The aim is to improve the state of the Baltic Sea not only through the development of the City's own activities but also through the Baltic Sea Challenge.

The Baltic Sea Challenge is a joint water protection effort of the cities of Helsinki and Turku, which includes a joint Baltic Sea Action Plan and a broad international network open to all. The Baltic Sea Challenge's network members have voluntarily committed themselves to the protection of the Baltic Sea by drawing up their own Baltic Sea Action Plans.

One of the objectives of Helsinki's blue network work in 2021–2022 was to provide information on water ecology in a more accessible format. In connection with the blue network work, new creek channels were discovered and creeks' qualitative class and water body status were specified. As a measure to improve the condition of small bodies of water, a new guide was also prepared for the qualitative and quantitative treatment of construction site water.

## Successes:

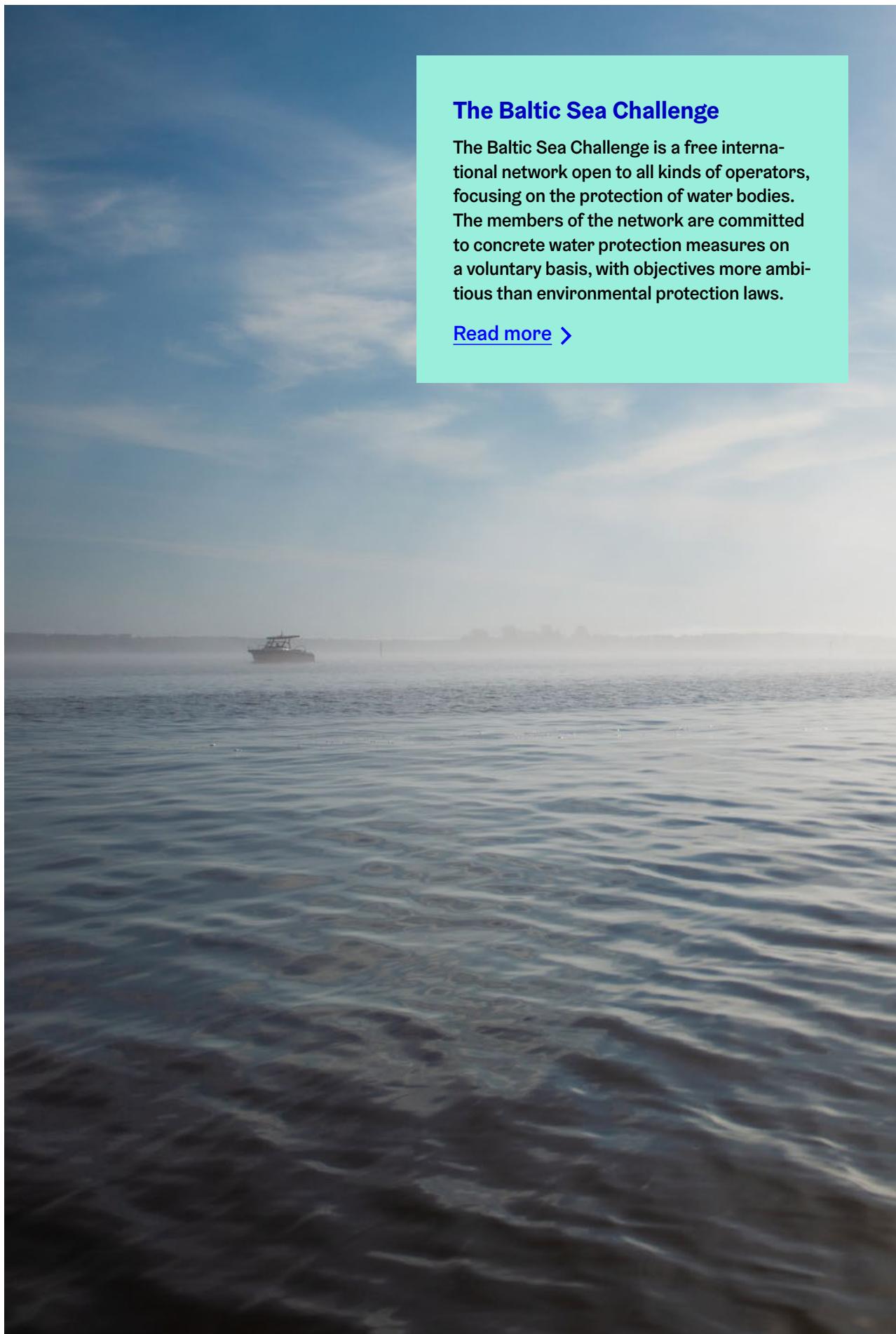
- Wastewater treatment in the Helsinki region is world-class and covers the wastewater of 1.3 million residents.
- Comprehensive data on underwater biodiversity in the marine area of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area has been collected between 2021 and 2022, and underwater marine nature areas of local ecological significance have been identified.
- Coastal water monitoring is comprehensive and of high quality.

## Areas for development:

- Monitoring of the status of currents and small bodies of water.
- Qualitative management of stormwater.
- Restoration of lost habitats.
- Control of human pressure.
- Establishment of underwater nature conservation areas.

## Programmes:

[The Baltic Sea Challenge Action Plan  
2019–2023 PDF >](#)



### The Baltic Sea Challenge

The Baltic Sea Challenge is a free international network open to all kinds of operators, focusing on the protection of water bodies. The members of the network are committed to concrete water protection measures on a voluntary basis, with objectives more ambitious than environmental protection laws.

[Read more >](#)

# People



Social sustainability and wellbeing are at the heart of the City's activities and are directly related to the basic services provided by Helsinki. 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 services related to people's wellbeing, 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. The years marked by the COVID-19 crisis and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine have put pressure on social wellbeing and caused concerns about people's daily lives and livelihoods.

# Health and welfare

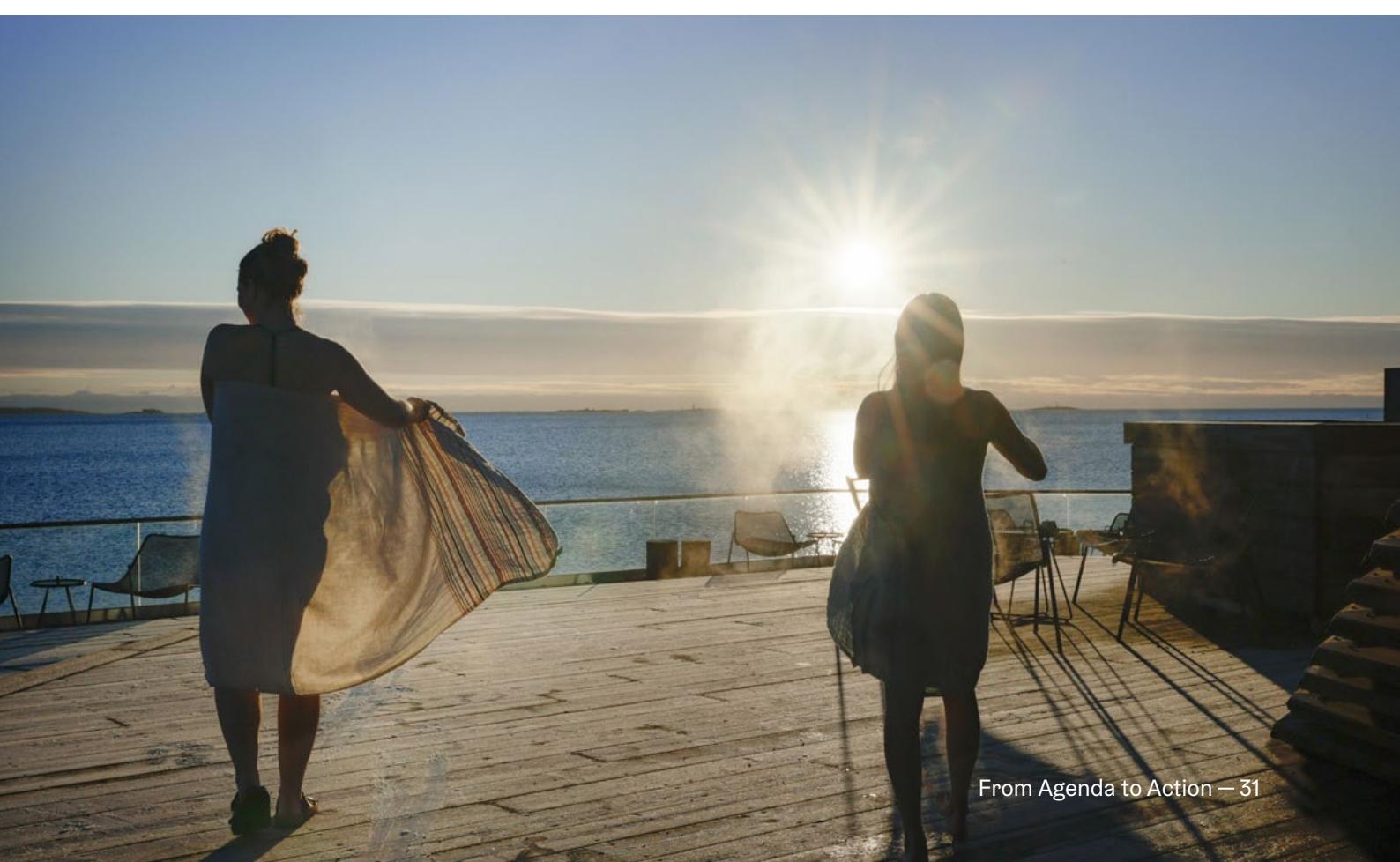
## 3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Health and welfare promotion (HYTE) involves preventive support and activities carried out jointly by all of the City's operators, based on sustainable development, to boost the resources of different population groups. Health and welfare promotion is one of Helsinki's key actions to promote social sustainability. The main objective is to reduce disparities in health and welfare. The work influences the comfort of life of the city's residents, improves their perceived well-being, quality of life and health and ensures that their everyday environments support a good and physically active life. The systematic promotion of health and welfare creates better opportunities for agency, hope, security and a better future. Based on research and experience, the work has identified the challenges in the wellbeing of the city's residents that require additional investment.

During the current council term, the city residents' mental wellbeing, healthy lifestyles and everyday physical activity, as well as opportunities for meaningful recreation and leisure, will be strengthened. By investing in the regional strengthening of good community relations, the inclusion and safety of residents in their own neighbourhoods is expected to improve. Furthermore, several projects are underway to help residents enjoy their daily lives in a safe and beautiful city.

As part of the implementation of the work on health and welfare promotion, the City Council adopted the City of Helsinki Welfare Plan in November 2022, the contents of which promote the objectives of social sustainability by addressing wellbeing challenges identified on the basis of research data.



## **City residents face diverse wellbeing challenges**

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. Mental wellbeing challenges experienced by children and young people and psychological strain among the adult population are more common in Helsinki than in the country as a whole. Around one in ten people aged 75 and over feel depressed or mentally strained and 14 per cent feel lonely. The level of anxiety experienced by girls in particular has also increased in recent years, as has the loneliness experienced by young people. Regular hobbies and recreational opportunities foster wellbeing in many ways. According to a recent study, children in Helsinki with a weekly hobby experience less loneliness, school stress, sleep difficulties, mood swings and school bullying than others.

The majority of the adult population are happy and feel that their quality of life and health are good, but there are nevertheless differences in their 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 wellbeing. 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 find it easy or quite easy to make a living are physically more active than the other population groups.

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. There are differences in residents' concerns about safety between various parts of Helsinki. In areas where experiences of insecurity are more prevalent, there are particular concerns about people's misbehaviour, street violence, crime, drug use and dealing as well as conflicts between different language and cultural groups. On average, the participation of Helsinki residents is at a strong

level, but there are also clear differences in participation between population groups and by neighbourhood. Children and young people's experiences of inclusion have deteriorated and the gender gap in wellbeing has increased.

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, wellbeing 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.

There is strong evidence of the positive effects of culture on wellbeing, health, social interaction and other resources. Participation in art activities as an experiencer or creator can prevent numerous mental and physical illnesses, as well as treat and help cope with a range of acute and chronic illnesses. Making and experiencing art strengthens the skills to navigate in a changing world: curiosity, compassion, interaction skills, the ability to see things differently and the courage to seek new directions.

## **Addressing wellbeing challenges through City-wide development work**

The mental wellbeing of the city's residents is strengthened by developing different forms of early support, such as better identification of mental health problems in children and young people, including through the Common Approach (CA) model, children's emotional and interaction skills, youth work in schools, communalities and peer support.

The recreational activities of children and young people in particular are being strengthened. The Finnish model for leisure activities in Helsinki offers free hobbies in all comprehensive schools in Helsinki. The activities have been made permanent and included in the Youth Act. The model aims to reach especially those children and young people who do not have hobbies. The Culture Kids activities are continued by including a new age group every year. For older people, cultural instructor activities and companion activities are developed. Volunteering and peer activities and cooperation with organisations is developed extensively.

Physical activity is promoted through cooperation between divisions, targeting the least active population groups and raising awareness of opportunities for physical activity and exercise for all residents. Physical activity is promoted in every early childhood education unit, comprehensive school and upper secondary school. Methods and tools for bringing up physical activity are developed extensively in health and social services. The workplace and mental wellbeing of City employees is strengthened by increasing opportunities for physical activity. The status of physical activity is strengthened in the care culture of hospital, rehabilitation and nursing services by means of a mobility agreement. The exercise and physical activity of older people is promoted in cooperation between the City's operators, organisations and companies.

The implementation of healthy lifestyles is promoted through means such as nutrition training for professionals and the use of digital tools. Wellbeing cafés are organised for children and young people, and the use of the Finger operating model for older people is strengthened. Development related to memory-friendliness is also being strengthened during the council term. Substance abuse prevention methods are strengthened through measures targeted at different population groups, and the service chain for substance abuse and addiction in families with children is developed.

Good community relations are promoted by increasing interaction between individuals and influencing people's sense of security and attitudes. The pluralism of residents and their equal opportunities for participation and influence have been strengthened, anti-polarising approaches have been introduced in youth work, and City employees have been trained in the use of dialogical, constructive discussion methods, which have been used in the discussion of controversial issues or those that are of concern to a wide audience, such as changes in services. In Helsinki's participatory budgeting OmaStadi, the participation of population groups identified as underrepresented in previous rounds is promoted at all stages of the process, equality is supported and multi-channel communication is strengthened, taking into account different population groups and city districts. The children's rights perspective is addressed through UNICEF's Child Friendly Cities work.

Residents' daily environments are influenced by identifying and addressing safety challenges in different neighbourhoods. Planning guidelines for the walking environment and the improvement of the safety of pedestrian crossings promote safe mobility in urban areas. The Percentage for Art principle gives city residents the opportunity to experience and encounter art in their neighbourhoods. Furthermore, the City addresses the increasing violence in close relationships and local factors that undermine safety, and raises awareness among residents about the safety of their homes and neighbourhoods.





### **Successes:**

- The majority of Helsinki residents feel that their quality of life and health is good and are happy.
- Service chain work has been launched in mental health services for children and young people, in substance abuse and mental health work for older people, and with families experiencing violence in close relationships.
- Common Approach training for mental wellbeing has been launched in the divisions. In addition to this, several other training programmes for mental wellbeing skills are underway.
- The Finnish model for leisure activities has been established and offers free hobbies in all comprehensive schools in Helsinki. Hobby groups currently reach around 30% of the target group.
- More than 7,000 upper secondary level students have been reached through the Liikuntacoach activities.
- There is a growing understanding of the importance of daily physical activity. Hundreds of thousands of Helsinki residents have been reached through campaigns, events, websites and materials.

### **Areas for development:**

- With the exception of young children, the average Helsinki resident engages in too little physical activity and is too sedentary for their health, compared to national recommendations for physical activity.
- There are differences in quality of life, health and happiness depending on perceived income adequacy.

- Mental wellbeing challenges and increased loneliness experienced by children and young people, as well as psychological strain among the adult population, are more common in Helsinki than in the country as a whole, and there are still challenges in the development of early support.
- There is significant variation in the prevalence of morbidity and public diseases between the districts of Helsinki. Digital self-care services for the city's residents need to be improved to better reach the residents.
- Children and young people's experiences of inclusion have deteriorated and the gender gap in wellbeing has increased.
- Despite the numerous measures taken, excess weight and obesity have not decreased in Helsinki. Excess weight is a significant challenge in terms of public health.
- There are projects, experiments and good practices, but there are challenges in getting them established.

### **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 of the City of  
Helsinki Welfare Plan >](#)

# Physical activity of older people at the centre of the City's wellbeing work 2021–2023

Physical activity is particularly important for maintaining health and functional capacity as we age. However, studies show that the majority of older people do not engage in enough physical activity for their health. 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.

In 2021, the physical activity of older people was made a common budgetary objective for the City's health and welfare promotion, and this City-wide objective continued in 2022 and 2023. All of the City's divisions play a role in promoting older people's physical activity. The objective of the cooperation is to remove obstacles to the everyday physical activity of older people, the most important of which are the accessibility of the environment, accessibility of services and mobility challenges, but also loneliness and lack of social support. A significant proportion of older people cannot easily find information on existing services to support their wellbeing.

Since 2021, dozens of measures have been taken in the divisions to promote older people's physical activity. Concrete examples of these measures in the Urban Environment Division include an increase in the number of street and park benches by more than 400, improved conditions for walking and cycling and enhanced winter maintenance.

In the Social Services and Health Care Division, the use of the mobility agreement has expanded to

all hospital, care and rehabilitation services, with the total utilisation rate exceeding 70%. Bringing up physical activity and advice on physical activity have been increased in Senior Info, and remote services that promote physical activity have been produced extensively in the Social Services and Health Care Division and the Culture and Leisure Division. Dance and exercise courses for older people have been organised at the adult education centres Työväenopisto and Arbis, and their number will be increased in 2023.

In 2021 and 2022, a total of 3.4 million euros was distributed to dozens of organisations and associations to promote physical activity and culture to older people in Helsinki. The 'Anna arjen liikuttaa' communication campaign in 2021 reached an estimated 100,000 Helsinki residents.

Libraries have been supplied with 30 senior exercise equipment bags available for loan, and several dozen peer instructors in physical activity for older people have been trained. Instructed physical activity for older people has been developed in cooperation with Sports Services, service centres, Työväenopisto and Urheiluhallit Oy since 2021.

The City's 'Culture and leisure for the elderly' web pages published in early 2023 facilitate access to information on the various leisure services.

It is necessary to continue working to improve older people's opportunities for physical activity across the City's divisions.



# Learning

4

QUALITY  
EDUCATION



Helsinki wants to be the world's most effective place to learn. The City offers high-quality and attractive early childhood education and basic education services close to the residents. The ever-growing Helsinki requires active measures and investments to ensure open, equal and high-quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. Therefore, learning as a theme is also strongly linked to SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities) and SDG 5 (Gender equality) in addition to SDG 4 (Quality education).

Helsinki promotes equality in education in all of its neighbourhoods. The aim is to ensure a smooth path from early childhood education to upper secondary education. The availability of qualified staff is essential to ensure the equal quality of education. In order to reduce inequality, needs-based funding is allocated to daycare centres and schools operating in more challenging areas. In Helsinki, the wellbeing and learning of children and young people is supported not only by teaching staff but also by school coaches, multilingual instructors and KouluPT counsellors, who offer a low-threshold exercise counselling service.

In teaching, the aim is that pupils receive the necessary support in their local school and study with other pupils in their neighbourhood. The City offers educational opportunities for all young people in Helsinki and vocational skills for the needs of working life. The entire city is used as a learning environment. Daycare groups and school classes make study trips to art, culture, working life and experience destinations. The City offers free public transport for the groups.

Equality and non-discrimination is a central theme in the organisation of early childhood education and teaching. The obligation to implement unit-specific operational equality and non-discrimination planning will be extended nationally to include early childhood education. In Helsinki, unit-specific planning is already being carried out in early childhood education. In addition to this, e.g. in the second round of Helsinki's participatory budgeting OmaStadi, people voted for the organisation of LGBTQ+ workshops for 6th–9th graders in every school in Helsinki. The workshops will be carried out in 2023 with Seta ry, focusing on diversity and everyone's right to be themselves.

Sustainable development has been taken into account throughout the City of Helsinki's early childhood education plans and curricula in accordance with the mainstreaming principle. In the Education Division, a sustainable future learning path was developed during the school year 2020–2021. It enables learners of all ages to interact with sustainable development themes in their daycare and school life and upper secondary studies. The learning path is based on the value base of eco-social education and innovative or transformative learning. SDG 4, Quality education, is one of the goals that is already achieved quite well in Helsinki.



The learning path starts with early childhood education, which introduces a sustainable lifestyle with the help of seven foxes. The KETTU (FOX) model combines climate and environmental education, future literacy and creative learning. For example, the nature relationship is strengthened with the Outdoor Fox, different futures are created with the Artist Fox, and circular economy is studied with the Inventor Fox. The model was developed together with children, because growing into participation and influence is a key starting point for learners of all ages. In basic education, 'Future Mornings' have been developed together with the pupils, and staff are trained in their implementation.

The learning path continues in both general upper secondary school and vocational education. In cooperation with the staff and students of general upper secondary schools, a cross-curricular climate course was developed under the name Carbon-neutral Helsinki. The name of the course comes from the Carbon Neutral Helsinki 2030 Action Plan. The course became compulsory for all first-year general upper secondary school students in August 2021.

Helsinki Vocational College has launched the Professionals of a Sustainable Future programme, which examines and tests how sustainable development can be strengthened in all study programmes. The vocational college offers training for more than 50 different professions. For example, those graduating as restaurant professionals can influence the

carbon and water footprint of thousands of people when designing menus, and construction professionals can promote sustainable and energy-efficient solutions.

In addition to teaching, sustainable development is also promoted in the other activities of daycare centres, schools and educational institutions. In all units of the Education Division, eco-supporters have been appointed who, in addition to their other duties, promote environmentally sustainable practices and raise environmental awareness. School lunch menus have reduced dishes containing red meat and increased the amount of vegetables. A joint 'Responsible Food Group' has been established with food service providers to develop responsible food solutions. Environmental criteria are always taken into account in the design and construction of new daycare centre and school buildings.

In addition to basic and upper secondary education, the City offers diverse learning opportunities for learners of all ages through adult education centres and libraries, for example. The City also organises environmental education activities. The nature centres and nature schools of the Helsinki Metropolitan Area organise courses for teachers, daycare personnel, educators and residents. Harakka Island in Helsinki, in front of Kaivopuisto, and the nature school there provide a wonderful setting for education on nature and the Baltic Sea to support educators.

## **Successes:**

- Through the KETTU model, 1,100 early childhood education professionals participated in sustainable development training in 2022. More than 25,000 Helsinki children participated in the KETTU activities in 2022.
- The participation rate in early childhood education was 82.2% in 2022. The participation rate increased by two percentage points in 2020–2022. The participation rate increased in children under the age of 3.
- The early childhood education participation rate of foreign-language speakers was 77.3% in 2022. The participation rate increased by four percentage points in 2020–2022.
- Early childhood education has introduced a fixed-term regional equality supplement for the remuneration of staff in daycare centres located in areas with challenging operating environments. The aim is to prevent regional inequalities in early childhood education and strengthen daycare staff attraction and retention.
- The model and indicators for the needs-based funding of early childhood and basic education have been updated. In the new model, the needs-based funding is better targeted at the units that need support.

## **Areas for development:**

- There are challenges related to staff availability, especially in early childhood education.
- Mental health problems among young people have increased; poor social wellbeing is reflected, for example, in an increased number of clients in student welfare services.



# Non-discrimination and gender equality

5 GENDER EQUALITY



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



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. Gender equality should be mainstreamed in all of the City's activities.

In February 2022, the City Board approved the equality and non-discrimination plan for services for the period 2022–2025. The aim of the plan is to prevent discrimination and promote equality in the City's services and activities, thereby strengthening the realisation of the rights of city residents with diverse backgrounds and characteristics in everyday life. The four guiding principles of the plan are intersectionality, norm awareness, participation and

accessibility. The plan contains almost 100 measures in total, three of which are City-wide and the rest are specific to the City Executive Office or individual divisions or enterprises. The progress on the measures is being monitored on a regular basis.

At the City level, the promotion of non-discrimination and gender equality in services has been supported through measures such as active communication, training, events and new materials, including a guide to norm-aware communication, a guide to the drafting of safer space principles and a guide to the preliminary assessment of gender and non-discrimination impacts for decision-makers. The City has been one of Helsinki Pride's main partners in 2020–2022 and will be again in 2023. In summer 2021, the City Hall was Pride House, the main venue for Helsinki Pride.



As service providers, the city divisions play a key role in the implementation of equality and non-discrimination in City services. A separate coordination group on equality and non-discrimination issues has been set up in the Urban Environment Division and the Social Services and Health Care Division to strengthen the internal flow of information on this theme. In 2021, a sub-project of the EU's Drivers of Equality project, coordinated by the Ministry of Justice, was carried out in cooperation between the City Executive Office and the Urban Environment Division to develop a tool to take non-discrimination and gender equality into account in city planning.

## 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 2022–2025 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. Information events and training on the staff equality and non-discrimination plan and its priorities and measures were organised for the City's employees. 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. The diversity clause used in job advertisements was specified. The purpose of the clause is to encourage applicants from as diverse backgrounds as possible to apply for the City's jobs.

The City has launched safer space principles, and work communities have virtual group discussions on equality and non-discrimination and diverse recruitment. At the beginning of June 2022, a We Walk With Pride event was organised for the City's employees to tune in to the Pride atmosphere. The staff had the opportunity to participate in a training session on LGBTQ+ vocabulary and LGBTQ+-sensitive customer encounters and a panel discussion on the implementation of equality and non-discrimination in working life and the consideration of gender and sexual diversity in the City's work communities.

A discussion event was also organised for staff, where experts and management discussed the importance of a diverse work community.

## Successes:

- City-wide equality and non-discrimination plans 2022–2025 have been prepared.
- The promotion of non-discrimination and gender equality has been strengthened at the group level, for example in public enterprises.
- City-wide coordination of Roma affairs has been strengthened.
- Minorities within minorities have been highlighted in the themes of public events: racialised LGBTQ+ people in 2021, older and disabled LGBTQ+ people in 2022.
- The Helsinki Pride Community granted the City the 'Ylpeys muuttaa maailmaa' recognition for its outstanding work in promoting equal and non-discriminatory encounters of sexual and gender minorities in 2021.
- The aspects of non-discrimination and gender equality have been strengthened as part of the work on sustainable development.

## Areas for development:

- A lack of indicators to verify the realisation of non-discrimination and gender equality and a lack of a clear set of indicators to assess the effectiveness of equality and non-discrimination work.
- The transfer of materials produced in projects and basic work to systematic and continuous use throughout the City organisation.
- The lowering of the threshold for reporting discrimination and harassment and the development of a uniform approach to the processing and monitoring of reports.

## Programmes:

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

# Reducing inequalities and segregation

10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



In global terms, Helsinki is at a good level in many inequality-related issues when looking at SDG 10, Reduced inequalities. Nevertheless, inequalities and social exclusion are among the most serious problems in Helsinki. They are also persistent and long-term problems, even though many City programmes and objectives have been trying to reduce them for years.

The number of Finns at risk of poverty or social exclusion has increased during the COVID-19 crisis. 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 aims to halve homelessness by 2023 and end it altogether by 2025. The City has drawn up an action plan to prevent and reduce homelessness in 2020–2022.

The number of homeless people has decreased compared to the situation in 2019. Homelessness among single Helsinki residents has decreased by 28% and among families and couples by 32%. In January 2023, there were 470 long-term homeless people living in Helsinki. The number of long-term homeless people has also decreased.

The number of undocumented people in Helsinki is difficult to estimate. Undocumented people are

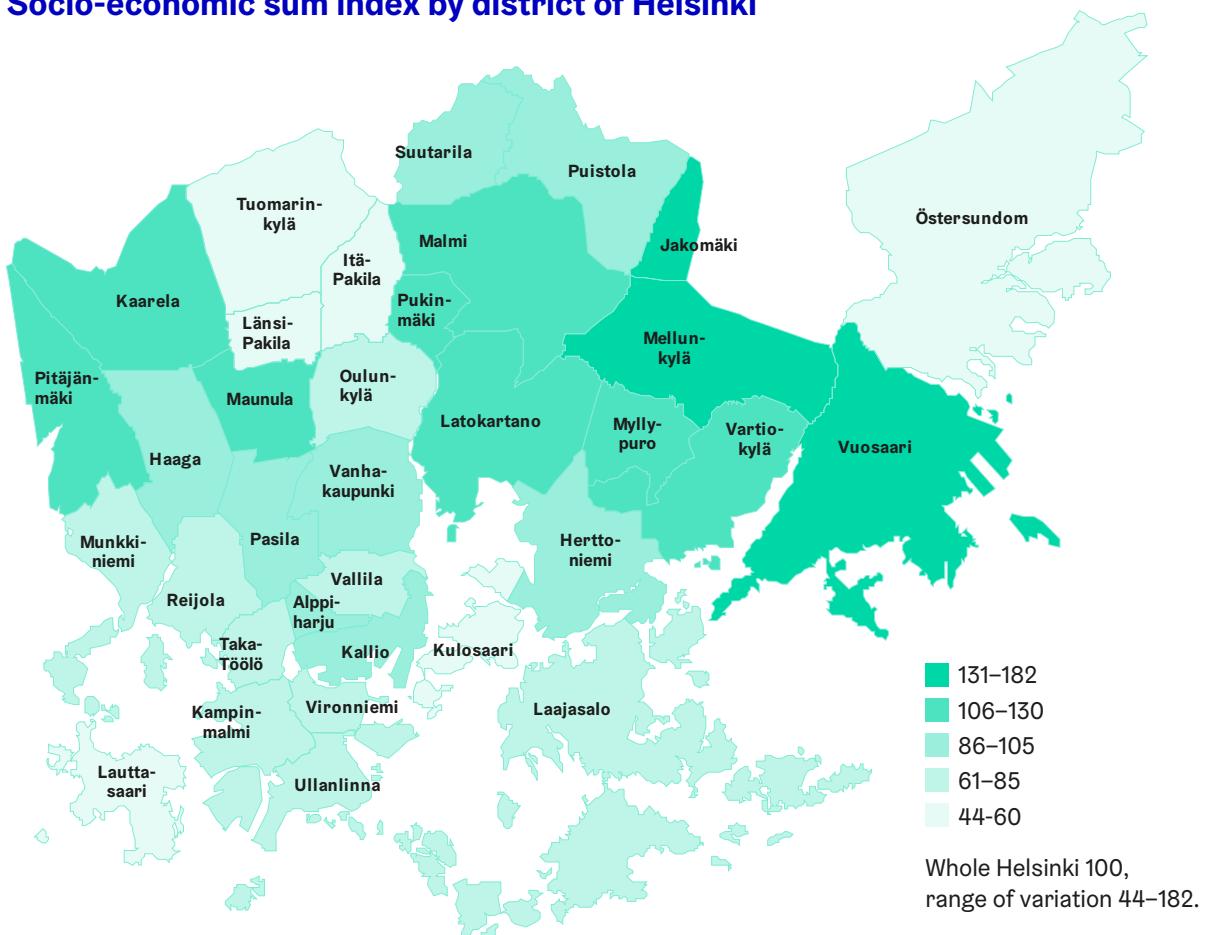
a diverse group but, in practice, an undocumented person is someone who resides in Finland without a residence permit. The everyday lives of undocumented and homeless people are marked by constant uncertainty about their future. Homeless and undocumented people are in a vulnerable position and also at 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 differences in the types of pupils and children in 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



Data sources: Greater Helsinki's Aluesarjat statistical database, Statistics Finland. Updated in January 2023. The index combines data on the level of education, unemployment rate and income in the region. Both these three variables and their sum are presented in relation to the city average (entire city = 100). The income data is from 2019. Proportion of population in the bottom quintile, income per consumption unit. The unemployment rate is from 31 December 2020. The education data is from 31 December 2021. Proportion of working-age population (25–64 years) without qualifications after basic education. The higher the index value, the more disadvantaged the district.

## Children and young people an important target group in preventing social exclusion 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 each pupil between grades 3 and 9 can choose one. 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 interactional skills, and the topic is regularly explored with pupils. School coaches and multilingual instructors offer pupils low-threshold support and guidance. The City of Helsinki's schools have employed 19 school coaches, and the establishment of the model has been prepared for the 2023–2024 school year.

Helsinki is currently taking part in the extensive, national SKY and Right to Learn projects aimed at strengthening learners' wellbeing and ensuring the necessary support for learning. The starting point of the Right to Learn project is to ensure that every child and young person receives the necessary support in a systematic, multiprofessional and timely manner.

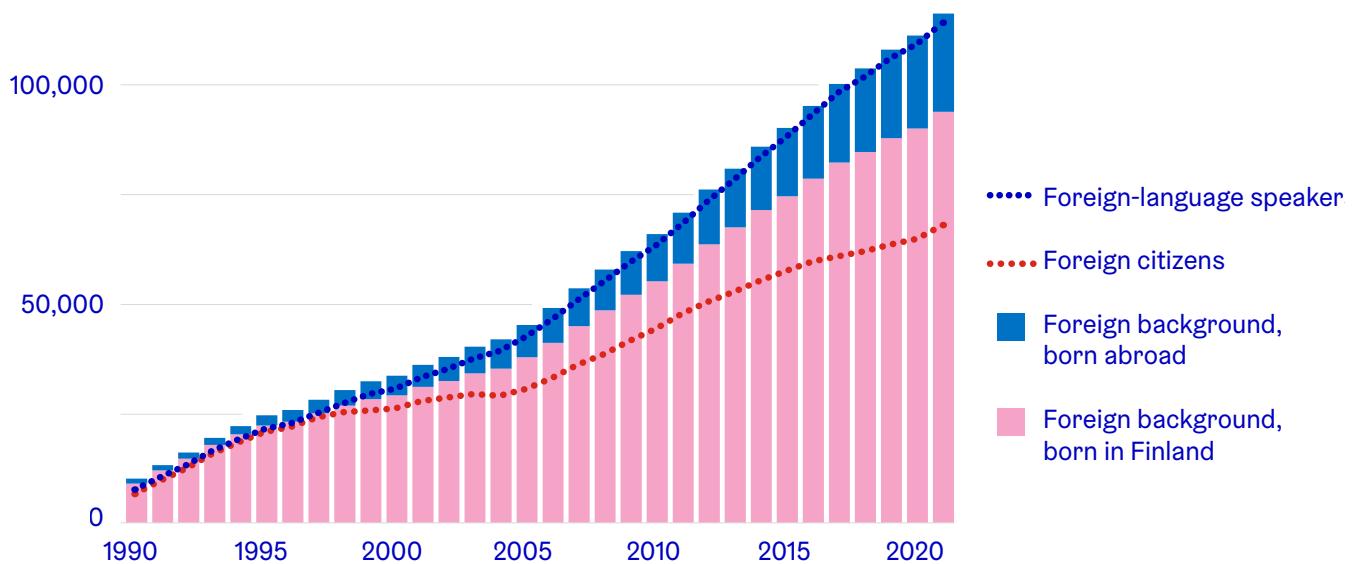
## Integration plays an important role in reducing inequalities

At the end of 2021, the population of Helsinki included 116,000 people with a foreign background. Of these people, 93,527 were born abroad. People with a foreign background accounted for 18% 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 2020, people with a foreign background born abroad represented 13% of the city's working population and 27% of the city's unemployed population. The unemployment rate of immigrants was 25%.

The poor employment situation affects financial resources and thereby the wellbeing of individuals and families. Integration is a multidimensional

phenomenon and includes aspects related to language and culture acquisition, the building of social relations and networks, inclusion 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, the second-generation immigrants born in Finland. A great deal of work has been done to promote integration, but most of it has been project-based. For example, people who have moved to Finland for work and mothers caring for their children at home have been difficult to reach.

## People with a foreign background, foreign speakers and foreign citizens in Helsinki at the end of the year 1990–2021



Data sources: Statistics Finland



### **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 social exclusion must be further developed.
- The COVID-19 crisis has further increased the risk of social exclusion of young people and has weakened the position of socially excluded and homeless people.
- 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

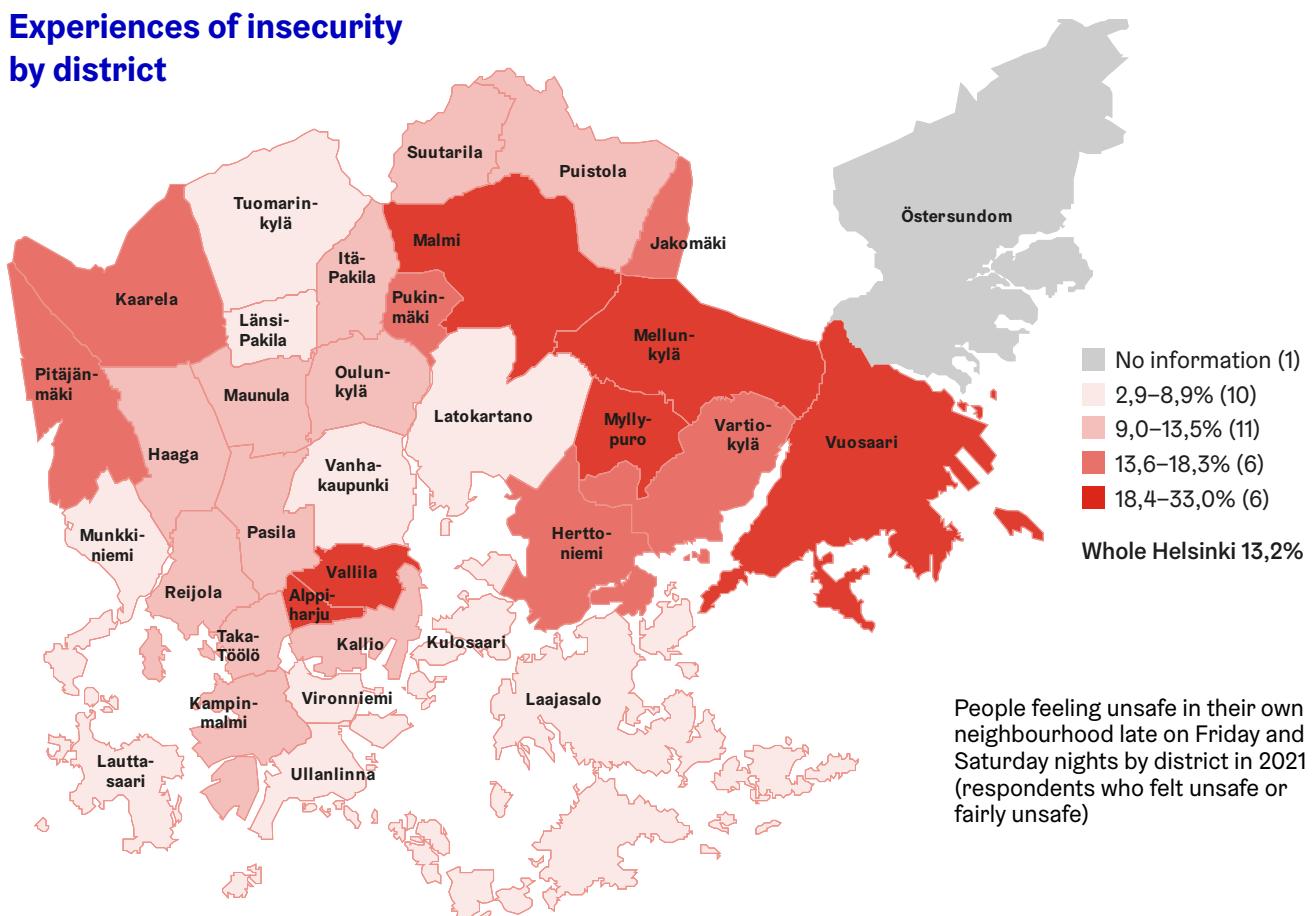
16 PEACE, JUSTICE  
AND STRONG  
INSTITUTIONS



According to the latest Helsinki Safety Survey conducted in 2021, 89% of residents consider Helsinki to be safe. The number of people who consider Helsinki to be safe has decreased by 3 percentage points since 2018. In 2021, changes in the mobility of urban residents caused by the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on the statistics: for example, in the autumn of 2021, the number of people using the city centre was 30–50% lower than before the pandemic, depending on the week. In terms of crime, Helsinki is still a very safe city by Nordic standards. The total number of all crimes has mostly been on a downward trend since 1990, both nationally and in Helsinki. However, the number of crimes against life and health has been on an upward trend. According to preliminary information, in 2022 crimes against life and health increased by 8.5% in Helsinki compared to the previous year. Around 95% of crimes against life and health are assault offences.

The differences in perceived safety between neighbourhoods have not diminished. Experiences of insecurity are concentrated in areas that score poorly on socio-economic indicators, and there are also gender differences in perceived safety. There are significant differences between the neighbourhoods of Helsinki in how safe their residents perceive their area to be. In some areas, around one in three people feel unsafe in their neighbourhood late on Friday and Saturday nights, while only three per cent of respondents in the areas perceived to be safest report this. Even though the differences in experiences of insecurity between neighbourhoods are significant, they have remained fairly similar compared to previous surveys. In most areas, the situation has remained very stable, and only in rare areas has insecurity either increased or decreased significantly.

## Experiences of insecurity by district



When asked about their own neighbourhood, Helsinki residents are most concerned about the loss of green spaces, vandalism and social exclusion. According to the latest Safety Survey, there is more concern about signs of social disorder in the neighbourhood than in the mid-2010s. Vandalism, the loss of green spaces and social exclusion were the most common causes of concern.

According to the analysis of the urban safety environment in Helsinki, the themes that cause the most concern are the decreased wellbeing of young people and its effects, and the increase in substance abuse. These themes are also at the heart of the safety work carried out by the City.

## 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 the 2022 assessment, the divisions, enterprises and largest subsidiaries were asked to identify the three most significant risks for the City Group and one emerging risk or weak signal from the operating environment that could become significant in the future. In addition to this, as a new experiment in this assessment round, the City's staff were also asked to comment on the Group's significant risks and emerging risks / weak signals in the City's intranet. The survey was taken by 108 employees.

## Risks and SDGs

| 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                                 | <br>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS |  | -  |  |
| Disruptions in the price and availability of energy          | Price and availability of energy   | <br>7 AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY             | <br>1 NO POVERTY                              | <br>9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE |  |
| Major ICT disruption   | Digitalisation, information security threats, accessibility of information                   | <br>9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE | <br>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS |  |  |
| Risks related to the availability and coping of personnel    | Availability of personnel, occupational wellbeing, reduced ability to work                   | <br>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES     | <br>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS |  |  |
| Failure of climate crisis prevention and adaptation measures | Climate crisis, extreme weather phenomena, adaptation, long-term consequences                | <br>13 CLIMATE ACTION                         | <br>15 LIFE ON LAND                           | <br>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES     | <br>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING          |
| Social exclusion and increased segregation                   | Regional segregation, deprivation, wellbeing of residents, transgenerational marginalisation | <br>10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES                   | <br>3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING              | <br>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS | <br>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES |
| Failure of major change projects                             | Organisational and policy changes, system projects   | <br>16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS |  | <br>11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES     |  |

## **Violence in close relationships**

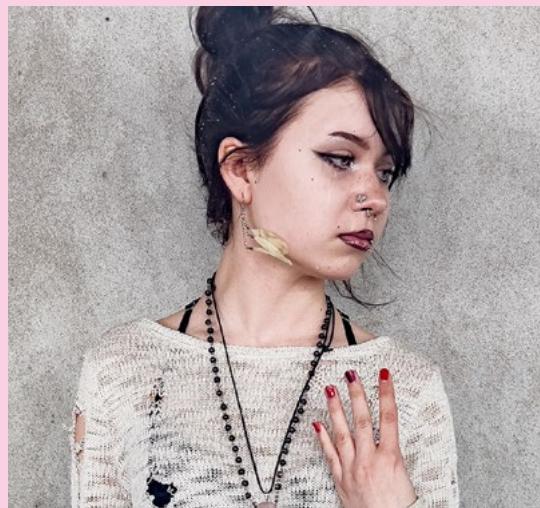
Helsinki recruited a coordinator for the prevention of violence in close relationships for a fixed-term position in 2022–2023 to promote the prevention of violence in close relationships and improve wellbeing and safety. The coordinator prepares an action plan for the prevention of violence in close relationships for the City in cooperation with the working group on the prevention of violence in close relationships. In addition to City operators, the working group includes organisations, THL, the Helsinki Police Department, HUS and the prosecuting authority. The working group maintains a situational picture of violence in close relationships in Helsinki and Finland and has provided staff with training on the subject, taking into account the gendered nature of violence in close relationships and particularly vulnerable population groups.

The working group has carried out the ‘You can be hurt even by a loved one’ campaign, aiming to raise children and young people’s awareness of violence in close relationships and increase the skills of the Education Division’s staff to identify and intervene in cases of violence in close relationships.

### **‘You can be hurt even by a loved one’ campaign**

The target group of the campaign to prevent violence in close relationships in 2022–2023 is children and young people, and the theme of the campaign is children’s right to integrity. The campaign was produced by the City of Helsinki in close cooperation with organisations and other operators in the field.

[Read more >](#)



In Helsinki, the amount of violence in close relationships experienced by children and young people in particular increased during the pandemic, and this needed to be addressed. Mental violence experienced by young girls in Helsinki had increased by 10% between the previous School Health Promotion Studies. Several measures for the prevention of violence in close relationships have been targeted at children and young people as part of the Future Health and Social Services Centre project. According to the Helsinki Metropolitan Area Wellbeing Questionnaire 2021, 3.2% of adult women and 2.5% of men in Helsinki had experienced violence in a close relationship or the threat of it, and 2.6% of women and 2.1% of men had experienced intimate partner violence or the threat of it in the previous year.

The number of calls to the Nollalinja helpline for victims of violence in close relationships increased by 31%, and the number of people seeking help from Victim Support Finland increased by 25%. The ‘Mehut loppu’ campaign in 2021 sought to reach both victims and perpetrators of violence in close relationships. The City carried out the campaign in cooperation with organisations, THL, the Helsinki Police Department and HUS.

### **Successes:**

- Despite the exceptional year 2021, the safety situation in Helsinki has remained unchanged for both men and women.
- Finland and Helsinki are known for the concept of overall safety, and the City aims to promote this perspective.

### **Areas for development:**

- Violence in close relationships remains a problem, especially violence against women, and the COVID-19 crisis seems to increase violence in homes.
- There are differences in perceived safety, both between genders and between residential areas. Violence against women in close relationships must be reduced.

### **Programmes and studies:**

[City of Helsinki Safety Plan summary PDF >](#)

[Results of the Helsinki Safety Survey in Kvartti, Helsinki quarterly \(in Finnish\) >](#)

[Helsinki Safety Survey 2018 \(in Finnish, preface and summary in English\) PDF >](#)

# Participation



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. 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. The city-level participation and interaction model describes the structures, goals and key areas of participation work. The participation objectives are implemented in ten themes: regional participation especially through the borough liaison and business liaison activities, processing and utilising initiatives and feedback, open data, promoting digital inclusion, opening up the use of the City's premises, participatory budgeting, divisions' participation work, volunteering, and aspects presented by governing bodies (Youth Council, Council on Disability and Elderly Citizens Council). In addition to this, the City's four divisions' participation plans compile the goals and procedures for strengthening residents' participation in developing services.

In 2021, the City assessed the implementation of the participation model during the strategy period 2017–2021. The assessment states that the participation and interaction model has clarified the City's participation work and the work is more

systematic and more managed. During the strategy period, Helsinki has developed a variety of participation methods, which are being used extensively in service development and decision-making preparations alike. Helsinki has even gained international recognition for its development of digital participation.

## Digital participation

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 objective of digital participation services is to improve the transparency of preparations and the effectiveness of participation. Digital participation platforms and feedback systems provide the City with data that can be used to develop the City's services. The City has started development work with the aim of producing a roadmap for the development of digital participation. It aims to promote and support the use of digital participation platforms in the city.

Participation on digital platforms requires sufficient skills and suitable devices, to which not all residents 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 raise awareness of free digital support, strengthen the skills of digital instructors and grow the network of digital instructors. These objectives have been achieved by reforming City-level coordination and networks of digital support in cooperation between the divisions and organisations, by raising awareness of digital support through various communication tools and by providing regular training for digital support experts.

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has also been seen in the City's participation work. A wide variety of digital methods have been created for interaction with residents, and hybrid events have been held in accordance with relevant restrictions.

## Mediation in criminal and civil cases

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.

In 2022, 669 mediation initiatives were submitted by 16 December 2022. The initiatives included 1,056 different criminal and civil cases, and 1,579 parties were involved in the initiatives. Minors account for about one third of the parties. During the COVID-19 period, the number of crimes reported to the police in Helsinki has decreased and this, in addition to the general effects and constraints of the pandemic, has affected the number of initiatives submitted to mediation.

## Regional participation

Helsinki supports the regional participation of the city's residents. 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 and promoting forums that enable interaction. They also promote experiments in participatory approaches and multilingual and multi-channel communication on residents' participation and influencing opportunities.

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 2021, the city's residents have had the opportunity to brainstorm and decide how the City will spend more than 13 million euros. Participatory budgeting has resulted in 119 projects across the city. During 2022, the participatory budgeting process was reformed in broad cooperation with the City's divisions and residents. The aim of the reform was to make participation and implementation simpler and the overall duration shorter.

### OmaStadi

OmaStadi is the participatory budgeting programme of the City of Helsinki. In 2021, the city allocated 8.8 million euros to finance development projects proposed by city residents. The targets were brainstormed together with residents into proposals, from which the residents could vote on the ones to be funded.

[Read more >](#)



# OmaStadi

Implemented proposals 2021 divided according to the sustainable development goals they implement



SDG 11  
Sustainable Cities  
and Communities  
**4,137,000€**



SDG 3  
Good Health  
and Well-being  
**3,606,000€**



SDG 5  
Gender Equality  
**100,000€**



SDG 15  
Life on Land  
**680,000€**



SDG 14  
Life Below Water  
**75,000€**

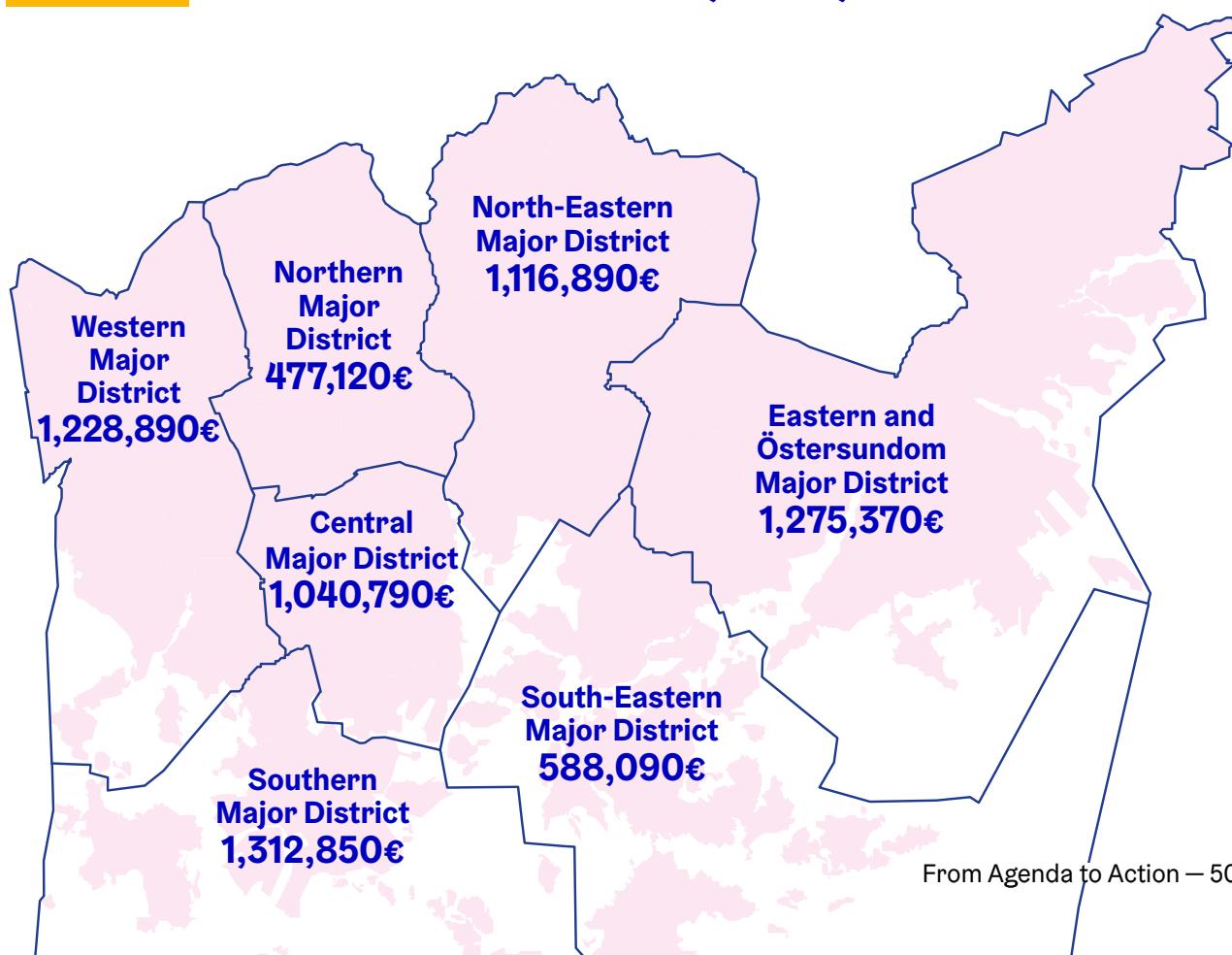


SDG 4  
Quality Education  
**53,000€**



SDG 7  
Affordable and  
Clean Energy  
**35,000€**

**Whole Helsinki  
1,760,000€**



## **Statutory councils**

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. During the past term, the Elderly Citizens Council and the Council on Disability have organised visits to meetings by officials and decision-makers, strengthened cooperation between the councils in drawing up opinions and statements, and improved cooperation by organising meetings with relevant organisations and other municipalities' councils to strengthen the participation and access to information of older people and people with disabilities.

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 Youth Council has the right to speak and be present at the meetings of the City's committees.

## **Development of work with NGOs**

The City supports Helsinki-based organisations, communities and resident groups with around 70 million euros per year. Helsinki is a platform for free civic activities that focus on working together and initiatives from organisations. 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. Structures for regular cooperation with organisations have been prepared in 2022. In spring 2023, a City-level steering group for NGO and grant activities will be launched to prepare and coordinate the implementation and interaction of the overall model for NGO cooperation. The participation and influence of organisations will be strengthened in Helsinki by establishing an NGO Advisory Board bringing together Helsinki-based organisations, trustees and experts from the City's central administration and divisions. The NGO Advisory Board will be launched in spring 2023.

## **Other work on the development of participation**

Helsinki supports the daily lives of its residents by providing various advisory services. The City has decided to focus on the development of closer co-operation between the different advisory networks and increasing the competence of those involved in advisory work, both within the city and in the wider Uusimaa region.

In 2020, Helsinki carried out a democracy trial aimed at providing Russian-speaking residents with information on the different ways of participating and supporting their participation. The experiment trained agents for change, organised participatory budgeting workshops and produced materials.

The City has clarified its communication on various opportunities for participation in 2022 by compiling information in one place on the osallistu.hel.fi website. The website provides information on participation, opportunities to participate in the City's development and decision-making process and support for working together.

In 2023, the City of Helsinki will organise dialogical resident discussions across the city. They aim to promote discussion and influence on regional phenomena important to the city's residents in cooperation with different operators. In addition to this, the resident discussions also accelerate the independent development and local activities of the regions, while also improving understanding and dialogue between the residents. The new approach provides the city's residents with initiative and agency in a socially sustainable manner, creating a new structure and implementation method of resident discussions in Helsinki.

## **Successes:**

- The participation and interaction model has clarified the City's participation work, and it is more systematic and more managed.
- The City established the NGO Advisory Board in spring 2023, and the City's new model for NGO cooperation has provided a clear structure for interaction.
- During the strategy period, Helsinki has developed a variety of participation methods, which are being used extensively in service development and decision-making preparations alike.
- Helsinki has even gained international recognition for its development of digital participation.
- Participatory budgeting has increased residents' interest in participating in and influencing city affairs, and turnout has been relatively high by international standards.

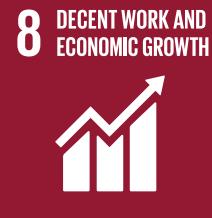
## **Areas for development:**

- Participation and interaction in all of the City's operations need to be strengthened by promoting an open operating culture and interactive practices, as well as utilising feedback from residents and businesses.
- Multi-channel opportunities for participation need to be developed, combining digital and face-to-face methods of participation.
- Equal opportunities for resident participation and the participation of all population groups in urban development need to be strengthened.
- Multi-channel, diverse and multilingual communications and opportunities for participation and influence need to be promoted, taking into account differences between neighbourhoods.
- The resident and shared use of the City's facilities need to be developed to better meet the needs of residents.

**Website:** [OmaStadi >](#)



# Culture



UNESCO's Hangzhou Congress in 2013 placed creativity, cultural heritage, knowledge and diversity at the heart of cultural sustainability: these values are inextricably linked to human development and freedoms. Based on this, Helsinki wants to give its residents the opportunity to live a life that they have reason to believe is worth living. We want to make cultural sustainability a new perspective in this sustainable development report.

The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals requires cultural change. It will require a shift in many of the ways of thinking and acting that we have grown up with, that shape our lives and that we pass on to younger generations. In order to be able to build an ecologically, socially and economically sustainable city, we need to recognise and understand our culture – the beliefs, institutions and morals that shape our actions – in a more informed way.

Changes in the environment and culture and their effects can be most clearly seen through art and science. Art also allows us to address change in a holistic manner while finding creative ways to solve the challenges it brings. It is important that the City supports artistic freedom and pluralism and is open to the discussion that takes place through art. Art and culture are resources for the development of the city.

We build our perception of ourselves and our community on the basis of both our intangible and tangible cultural heritage. Cultural heritage and the built cultural environment that is interwoven with it provide the basis for art and culture. The present is the cultural heritage of the future. Helsinki is growing and becoming more culturally diverse, and at

the same time the age structure has changed, with an increasing proportion of older people. We need increasingly culturally responsible action to deal with change in a way that enriches our culture and strengthens our creativity and resilience, rather than causing polarisation and conflict.

In this diversifying operating environment, it is good to remember that a clear awareness of one's own cultural identity is linked to a good self-esteem and a sense of satisfaction. A strong ethnic identity does not mean that minorities become insular. Instead, it has been found to correlate positively with employment, education and moderate political views. Building a strong and accepting cultural identity begins already in early childhood. Helsinki aims to promote responsible cultural education and enable all Helsinki residents to form a connection with culture and art.

Everyone should have the right to know and be proud of their own cultural background and practise their own culture. In order to achieve this in practice, this right requires awareness of cultural needs, such as languages, traditions and customs, in the fields of education, leisure, urban environment and health and social services.

In this report, we examine the cultural sustainability of Helsinki from the perspective of the City's cultural services, cultural heritage and design. The selected perspectives are not an exhaustive list of cultural sustainability phenomena and actions affecting Helsinki – however, they give an idea of how and where Helsinki works for a more culturally sustainable city.

# Art and culture

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the City of Helsinki's own cultural institutions reached approximately 1.43 million visitors per year (about 2.5 visits/resident). Services provided by the City were estimated to account for around 25% of the total cultural sector service production in Helsinki. The City's eight cultural centres hosted around 2,000 events a year, the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra performed around 50 symphony concerts and the six museums of Helsinki City Museum and Helsinki Art Museum hosted 23–25 exhibitions a year. The City of Helsinki distributes around 17 million euros annually to support the organisation of arts and culture activities, including basic education in art. The criteria for awarding these grants include the consideration of equality, non-discrimination and ecological aspects in the organisation of the activities.

The restrictions on gatherings caused by the pandemic had a severe impact on cultural events, which in practice could only be held intermittently and with reduced attendance in 2020–2021 and early 2022. The cultural sector is recovering from the break slowly, and in 2023 many areas of culture are focusing on strengthening general confidence in the future and operational structures, and restoring public confidence to pre-pandemic levels. In 2021–2022, the City invested significantly in the revitalisation of the cultural sector.

The City of Helsinki has identified the promotion of cultural equality as a priority for the wellbeing of the city's residents. In 2021–2023, measures have been planned and implemented with a special focus on cultural diversity and inclusiveness, children and older people, and Helsinki residents in a vulnerable position. The City's extensive library institution, which serves all Helsinki residents in a diverse manner, is an excellent promoter of cultural sustainability.

## Promotion of cultural equality

The promotion of cultural equality is guided by the principles of inclusiveness and diversity, which include both people's diverse backgrounds and functional impairments. In planning arts and culture activities, it has been recognised that it is not possible to cater precisely to the needs of all special groups at the same time; instead, the essential thing is to find practices that do not exclude anyone. Practices that increase inclusiveness are sought first and foremost through the promotion of the agency and participation of special groups. 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 activities. The City of Helsinki also pays attention to the promotion of the Swedish language and bilingual culture, as well as regional equality. Cultural means are used to strengthen the identity of the different areas of Helsinki.

## Focus on children and older people

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 organises activities such as the 5x2 art education for all of the City's primary schools, introducing around 6,200 children each year to artistic activities under the guidance of professional artists.

All Helsinki residents born in and 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 32 arts and culture operators. At the beginning of 2023, around 11,500 families had already joined. The participating operators work together on ways of implementing culturally responsible art and cultural education.

Accessible special programming for older people is produced in a coordinated manner by health and social services and the City's cultural operators. Notable examples include the cooperation of Helsinki City Museum and Helsinki Art Museum HAM with service centres, Age-friendly Orchestra activities and Helsinki Art Museum HAM's senior panel. The cultural equality of older people is also supported through grants. In 2023, the Culture and Leisure Division will allocate a total of 2 million euros to promote the physical activity and cultural activities of older people. The supported projects will strengthen the participation and active agency of older people.

## Reaching vulnerable residents

In LiiKu support, developed in multidisciplinary cooperation, health and social services professionals guide and support their clients to participate in exercise and cultural events that interest them and engage in independent recreational pursuits.

Participatory local cultural work (the Helsinki Model) strengthens the communal, comfort and positive profile of neighbourhoods and enables residents to have experiences of inclusion that support empowerment and the expression of their own voice and creativity.

## Libraries as drivers of cultural sustainability

The library institution is a strong driver of cultural sustainability both in Helsinki and elsewhere in Finland. 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.



## **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.

## **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.

### **Culture Kids**

Culture Kids is a service for families with children living in Helsinki. Each child born in Helsinki from 2020 onwards has their own cultural sponsor. The Culture Kids are invited to free-of-charge cultural events twice a year until they start school. By the end of 2022, more than 11,000 Culture Kids have been registered and 32 arts and culture operators have become sponsors. Sponsors to children born in 2023 include operators such as the Museum of Finnish Architecture, the National Museum of Finland and Helsinki City Museum, and more than 600 free events suitable for children at different stages of development will be organised in 2023.

[Read more >](#)



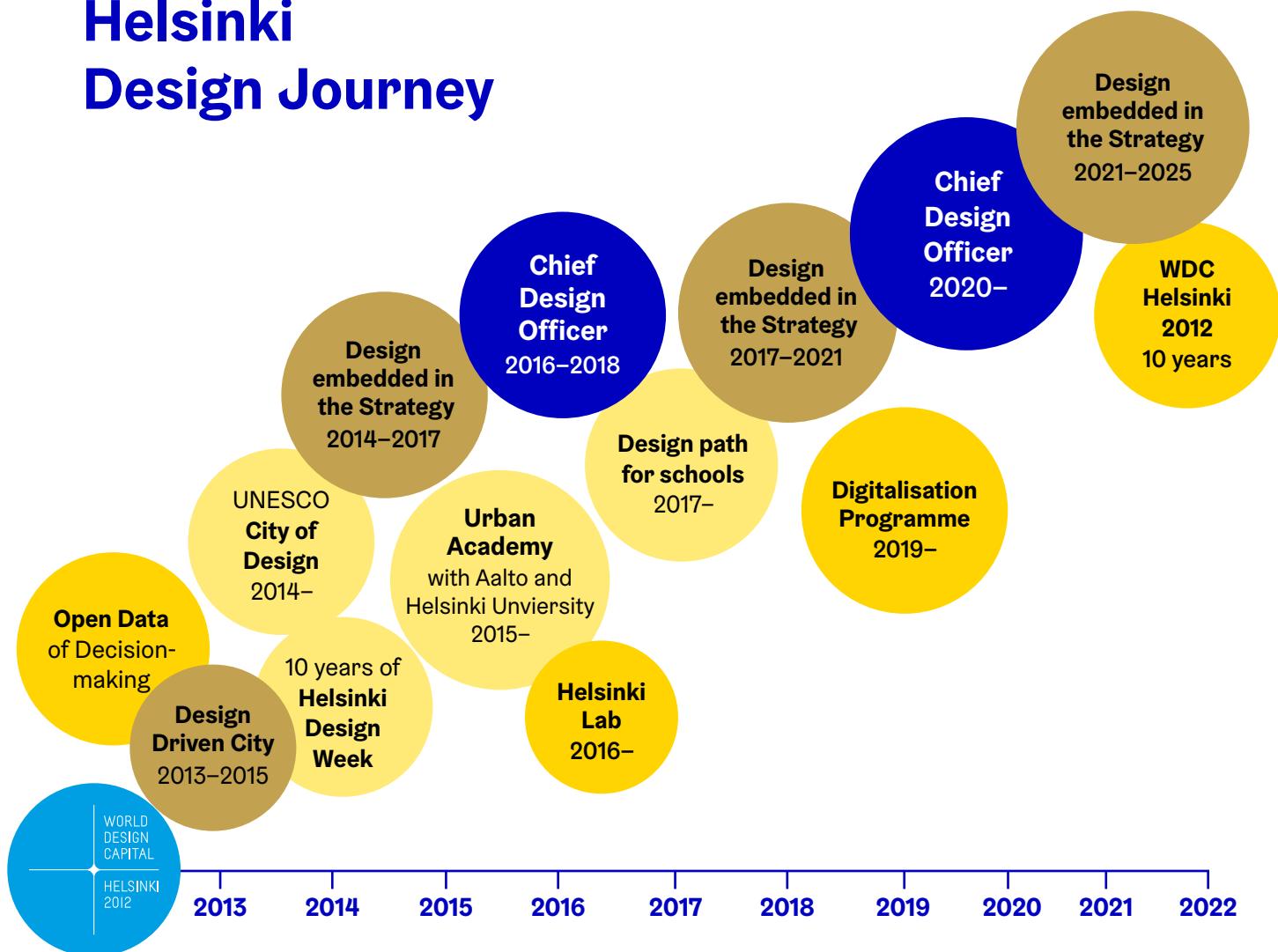
# Design

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 served as 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 ten-year design journey, 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 Design Journey



Helsinki is one of the world's first cities to appoint a Chief Design Officer. In 2020, the City appointed a 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. The Chief Design Officer is supported by Helsinki Lab, the City's internal design team, and the City's internal design network of more than 200 experts. Helsinki implements design projects in close cooperation with design agencies. Helsinki has a framework agreement on service design, which covered a total of 3.6 million euros in design procurements in 2021. The volume of design procurements in Helsinki has increased ninefold over the past six years.

During the strategy period 2021–2025, design is 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 policy 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:

- Design thinking at Central Library Oodi.
- Strategic design project for older people's physical activity.
- 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.

## Studies and websites:

[Design Helsinki website >](#)

[UNESCO Creative Cities Network – Helsinki](#)

[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. 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 and the maintenance and renewal of cultural heritage and supports art and cultural activities, which are the cultural heritage of tomorrow. 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. In turn, HAM Helsinki Art Museum fosters, presents and develops art heritage.

The City Archives manage and store the City's archive collection. 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. 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.

## Cultural Environment Programme

The Cultural Environment Programme 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, the importance of working together 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 will be submitted to the City Board for approval in spring 2023. The Cultural Environment Programme focuses in particular on the preservation of cultural environments and the reconciliation of the City's other objectives, as well as on supporting residents' independent activities in various cultural environments. 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 production and upholding of cultural heritage and the preservation of cultural environments has significant welfare effects. Participatory forms of work are therefore utilised in all cultural heritage work. 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. In 2021–2022, people in mental health rehabilitation were involved in exhibition production, and an exhibition entitled Hoes – Voices in Sex Work was opened in November 2022, with the materials and script based on the sex worker community's own heritage work.
- The Cultural Environment Programme has been drawn up 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 few resources.

## **Programmes and studies:**

[Art and Culture in Helsinki 2030:](#)

[The committee's vision for the city and its citizens, March 2020 PDF >](#)

[Helsinki City Museum: Afrosuomalaisuutta tallentamassa \(article in Finnish about a children's workshop on being Afro-Finnish\) >](#)





## Being Black – Afro Finns' Experiences exhibition

Being Black is an exhibition of the Helsinki Afro-Finnish community and Helsinki City Museum, opened in April 2023. The exhibition provides perspectives on family, friendship, ideals of beauty and activism and shows how Afro-Finnish people are part of Helsinki and the Helsinki identity.

[Read more >](#)

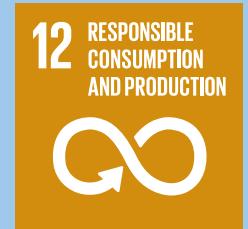
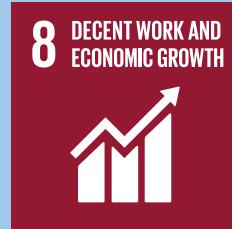


## History Helsinki online service

In 2022, the City of Helsinki's History Committee, which operates under the City Executive Office's Information Management Unit, launched the History Helsinki online service, which distributes history and cultural heritage materials related to Helsinki and information derived from them.

[Read more >](#)

# 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.

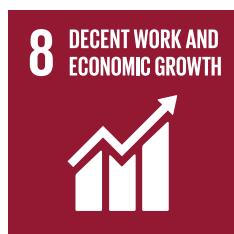
Helsinki's local government finances remain strong, although rising expenditure is threatening the balance. The changing age structure and growing need for investments increase expenses. Growing tax revenue and land property income support future development. The pressure created by the ageing of the 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 exceptional 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. Rapid inflation has undermined the purchasing power of households and the confidence of consumers and entrepreneurs in the economy, portending a decline in demand, company performance and employment rates. It is expected that the economy will resume slow growth in 2024.

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. 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 di-

rectly reflected in the development of the tax base. Measures to improve employment and increase the efficiency of health and social service production 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.

In 2022, after recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, the employment rate in Helsinki rose to a record high of 76.0%. The employment rate was 1.9 percentage points higher than in 2021. The number of hours worked fell dramatically in 2020 as a result of the pandemic, but recovered in 2021 and has continued to grow in 2022. Hours worked by Helsinki residents increased by 3.3% from the previous year. The increase in employment and the number of hours worked had a positive impact on the City's tax revenue.

## Unemployment rate

|                                | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  | 2021  | 2022  |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| <b>Unemployment rate</b>       | 9,3%  | 9,2%  | 14,6% | 11,2% | 10,4% |
| <b>Youth unemployment rate</b> | 6,7%  | 6,6%  | 13,5% | 9,1%  | 8,1%  |
| <b>Men, Helsinki</b>           | 10,3% | 10,2% | 15,7% | 12,3% |       |
| <b>Women, Helsinki</b>         | 7,9%  | 7,8%  | 12,6% | 9,6%  |       |

Source: Statistics Finland

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, part-time work has increased relatively more than full-time work. The number of part-time contracts as a share of all employment increased moderately. In 2022, part-time employment accounted for 19% of all employment in Helsinki.

The unemployment rate in Helsinki was 10.4% in December 2022. At the end of 2022, Helsinki had 36,600 unemployed jobseekers, which was 2,800 (7%) less than the year before. The pandemic caused a significant peak in unemployment in 2020. At its highest, the unemployment rate in Helsinki was 18.6% (May 2020). Even though the employment situation improved considerably in 2021 and 2022, there were still 4,900 more unemployed people at the end of 2022 than in 2019 before the start of the pandemic. At the end of 2022, the number of job vacancies declined after a strong increase.

As a result of the pandemic, youth and long-term unemployment increased sharply. During 2022, unemployment has decreased in both groups, but remains higher than before the pandemic. Long-term unemployment may lead to health and well-being challenges if prolonged. Employment becomes more difficult when unemployment is prolonged. Foreign-language speakers account for 32% of all unemployed people.

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.

Helsinki is participating in the local government pilot on employment launched at the beginning of 2021. In the pilot, the City of Helsinki is responsible for employment services for the following customer groups: unemployed people who do not qualify for earnings-related allowance, people aged under 30, foreign-language speakers and immigrants. The local government pilot paves the way for the TE services reform 2024, which will transfer the responsibility for organising employment and economic development services (TE services) from the state to municipalities from 2025 onwards. The City of Helsinki is preparing for this change with the aim of creating an effective model of employment in Helsinki that takes into account the needs of local residents and employers.

During 2022, the key indicators of the local government pilot on employment regarding the smooth running of services have developed positively. At the end of January 2023, more than half of the customers had a valid employment plan, compared to around 39% one year earlier. The number of customers in services supporting employment has increased. The City has also developed digital solutions and performance-based procurement for employment services. As an employer, the City itself also actively uses employment support instruments, such as work try-outs, pay subsidies and apprenticeships.

### **Successes:**

- The employment rate has risen since the pandemic, and unemployment has declined steadily.
- The local government pilot on employment supports the City's preparation for the TE services reform 2024.
- The use of the employment clause has been developed.

### **Areas for development:**

- The long-term unemployment rate is higher than during the pandemic. Effective measures should be found to reduce long-term unemployment.
- The employment of foreign-language speakers requires support.

### **Programmes and publications:**

[City of Helsinki Financial Statements 2022](#)  
[\(in Finnish\) PDF >](#)

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

# Industry and innovation

**8** DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



**9** INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



**11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



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 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.

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 strength-

ening 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 and strengthening the capacity of startups to grow in selected industries. Entrepreneurship opportunities are widely introduced to different population groups. The City develops its employment services by utilising the resources of the entire City organisation with the aim of strengthening the likelihood of Helsinki residents to find employment. Helsinki's attractiveness as a city of sustainable tourism, culture and events is also being developed.



During the current strategy period, particular attention is paid to the development of the vitality of the city centre and making Helsinki an increasingly attractive destination for international talent, business and investment. Helsinki has therefore prepared an action plan to strengthen immigration based on work, study and entrepreneurship. The City's economic policy objective 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.

Helsinki plays an important role in the business activities of Finland as a whole. Helsinki is an important area of business activity that offers the opportunity to innovate, develop new things and make profitable and stable business. For example, Uusimaa accounted for nearly 50% of all research and development expenditure in Finland in 2021. Uusimaa's research and development expenditure is strongly concentrated in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area. Uusimaa's research and development expenditure has increased by around 29% between 2016 and 2021. This growth has been strongest in the business sector. 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.

Helsinki's industrial structure is highly service-intensive. During the pandemic, this service-intensive nature was partly a weakness, as the various restrictions and the decrease in demand hit tourism and restaurant activities important to the city, as well as services such as culture and entertainment, causing a significant increase in unemployment. Meanwhile, other industries, such as information and communications, continued to grow strongly throughout the pandemic. The region's business has recovered very well from the pandemic, but tourism to Helsinki, for example, has not yet recovered to pre-pandemic levels. This is also affected by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which may have an impact on the city's position as a tourist destination in the longer term. It is still not possible to assess all the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic accurately. For example, how will the increasing remote work affect the development and role of the Helsinki city centre as one of the many urban centres in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area?

## The economic structure of Helsinki and Finland in 2021

| <b>Helsinki</b>           | <b>Number of companies</b> | <b>Number of personnel</b> | <b>Turnover</b> |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Primary production</b> | 2,2%                       | 0,0%                       | 0,0%            |
| <b>Processing</b>         | 9,1%                       | 14,9%                      | 33,6%           |
| <b>Services</b>           | 88,6%                      | 84,7%                      | 65,9%           |

| <b>Helsinki</b>           | <b>Number of companies</b> | <b>Number of personnel</b> | <b>Turnover</b> |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>Primary production</b> | 20,5%                      | 3,1%                       | 0,6%            |
| <b>Processing</b>         | 17,2%                      | 32,4%                      | 40,6%           |
| <b>Services</b>           | 61,9%                      | 63,8%                      | 58,0%           |

Source: Statistics Finland, Structural business and financial statement statistics

## Innovative pilot activities for the development of a smart and sustainable city

The City's Economic Development Department has established testbed activities. The Testbed Helsinki website brings together examples of the City's innovation cooperation and serves as a platform and communications channel to companies and for publishing innovation challenges. Companies can use the form available on the website to submit pilot proposals for the development of their business in cooperation with the City and other possible stakeholders. The challenge and pilot competitions are used to find the best solutions, and innovation development is carried out in areas such as smart transport, health and welfare promotion, learning environments and a comprehensive range of topics related to the physical and digital urban environment, such as energy efficiency or the planning and implementation of the addition of 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. The pilots selected are financed from the budget of the Economic Development Department either fully or partly in cooperation with operators such as the divisions' substance units or operators of the City Group, which provides flexibility in the planning and implementation of the pilots to achieve the objectives. In some cases, companies also participate in co-financing the pilots themselves.

Pilots and planning are also carried out in cooperation within the City and with Forum Virium Helsinki, an innovation company owned by the City. In research, development and innovation for sustainable urban development, stakeholder cooperation has also taken on a more prominent role in strategic university cooperation and business incubator activities, for example.

In Helsinki, the themes of innovative activities in the Kalasatama area, among other smart urban development testing environments, have become increasingly focused on sustainable development. This is also the case in the new testing environments in the suburban regeneration and urban development areas in Eastern, Central and Western Helsinki. Projects and national and EU-wide programmes are carried out with companies to develop participatory services that take into account local characteristics.

Multidisciplinary activities strengthen cooperation across the City's divisions, and the building and transformation of areas bring together the activities of the City organisation and partners, thereby strengthening the business base and, in particular, the substance expertise of the Urban Environment Division. This creates a sustainable and innovative Helsinki for its residents.

During 2022, the Urban Environment Division set up an Innovator Network, which was well received and has attracted a wide range of representatives from the different units of the division. The network also invited and engaged people working closely with the Urban Environment Division on innovation from the City Group's subsidiaries, among others. The network draws on the division's broad knowledge base to assess needs and make suggestions for pilots, which can be offered for innovation challenges for companies. In urban environments, particular interest, development needs and new business potential are currently focused, in particular, on the digitalisation of the environment, satellite and drone solutions, green infrastructure and climate change adaptation, property management, and improvement of environmental efficiency and the circular economy.

Since 2021, the circular economy cluster of urban construction has significantly promoted the theme's cooperation and business development potential, especially in 2022. The cluster includes a wide range of companies whose core business concerns the property and construction sector. The City's cluster work is also progressive on national and EU-level decision-making issues and is running a number of pilots to promote green growth and digitalisation. University cooperation and activities such as joint project planning and business incubator activities to improve sustainable urban environments offer an increasing number of new companies opportunities to bring their solutions to the fore in pilots and even on larger-scale projects. The activities generate more RDI (research, development and innovation) and student-driven entrepreneurship and jobs. Sustainability and positive social impact are growing phenomena and drivers in Helsinki's growth company ecosystem.

## **Successes:**

- The strengthening of innovative and sustainable testing activities and the building of networks for the establishment of activities within the City organisation and with the City Group's operators, as well as in cooperation with business incubators and universities. Examples include the establishment of the Urban Environment Division's Innovator Network and the UrbanTech Helsinki cooperation.
- The expansion of Forum Virium and Kalasatama's smart urban development themes and participation work in the suburban regeneration and urban development areas together with the divisions, and the expansion of cooperation with external stakeholders and EU-level project activities, such as the New European Bauhaus project.
- The implementation of the City of Helsinki's cluster programme for circular economy in construction and the extensive extension of cooperation to the business sector (around 100 companies involved in related activities), RDI sector operators, and City Group operators and subsidiaries.

## **Areas for development:**

- Efforts have been made to expand cooperation on innovative and sustainable procurement with the City Group's operators and in international project cooperation, including through the ICLEI and Eurocities networks. So far, this has been carried out on a rather small scale, but it is important to extend the use of different procurement models to a larger scale.

## **Programmes and websites:**

[City of Helsinki Economic Policy Priorities](#)

[2022–2025 PDF >](#)

[Economic policy priorities of the City Strategy >](#)

[Testbed Helsinki website >](#)



## **Circular economy cluster**

The City's circular economy cluster programme promotes both circular innovation and business and the City's climate objectives. The cluster programme focuses particularly on promoting circular economy in construction, as the City has a major role as a developer, builder and client.

[Read more >](#)

# Digitalisation

Through digitalisation, the City develops services that make life and activities in Helsinki smoother for residents, businesses, communities, tourists, City employees and decision-makers.

Helsinki's ambitious digitalisation programme launched in 2019 enables the City to improve its services and modernise its activities in many ways. The changes relate not only to new technologies but also to the culture of development, organisation, leadership and staff competence. In the new City Strategy, digitalisation and knowledge-based management have been highlighted as one of the priorities.

Helsinki wants to be more customer-oriented and agile in its activities and to use data in its services and decisions. Digitalisation can contribute to the SDGs in many ways and offer new solutions and opportunities for people to participate.

Accessibility is also an important aspect.

Accessible digital services are easy to use for all users, including the elderly and people with various disabilities. Once accessibility is taken into account, as many people as possible can use digital services independently.

In terms of the accessibility of digital services, Helsinki aims to reach at least the AA level specified in the WCAG guidelines. After the transitional period, an accessibility statement will be available in each of the City's digital services. The statement describes how well the website or application meets the accessibility requirements and how accessibility feedback can be provided to the City or supervisory authority.

## Investment in accessibility

Digitalisation may also increase inequalities. Digital exclusion has been identified as a growing problem. Social exclusion and lack of participation can befall people of all ages. The COVID-19 pandemic strongly highlighted the risk of digital exclusion for older people in particular. Helsinki has invested heavily in increasing digital skills and improving the quality of digital services, so that everyone has equal access to them. However, more efforts are needed, especially for the elderly, and attention must also be paid to the availability of equipment for all age groups.

# Housing and communities



Vibrant neighbourhoods offer the opportunity for a good and active life, based on safe and pleasant housing and urban space. Good planning and smooth mobility ensure a well-functioning daily life. An inspiring, high-quality and diverse cultural life is a key part of the city's vitality and comfort and essential for wellbeing. Culture and arts play an important role in promoting community spirit, increasing mental wellbeing and providing experiences of participation. During the previous council term, Helsinki approved a vision for arts and culture that extends to 2030.

## Reasonably priced housing is still a way off

In Helsinki, SDG 11 (Sustainable cities and communities) is being met in many respects: for example, Helsinki's subsidised ARA housing is among the most affordable in Finland and the housing situation for the most disadvantaged is good by international standards. However, particular attention should be paid to facilitating reasonably priced housing, preventing segregation and providing opportunities for residents to participate.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a negative impact on population growth in Helsinki, but it is predicted that growth will recover in the next few years. With the growing population, there is a high demand for housing in Helsinki, and therefore housing prices in Helsinki are still higher than in the rest of the country. This is a challenge for the realisation of reasonably priced housing. A set of indicators that measure the proportions of income and housing expenses in different types of households is being developed to analyse the actual availability of reasonably priced housing. The rise in housing prices is being curbed by measures such as building new housing in the city. In recent years, more homes have been built in Helsinki than in decades; for example, in 2021 the city reached the annual target of 7,000 new homes. In 2022, housing construction showed a levelling off from the peak figures of the previous years.

The development of residential areas will continue through both the construction of new areas and the development and infill of existing ones. Housing construction is strong in Kalasatama, Jätkäsaari, Kruunuvuorenranta and Pasila.

## Distinctive, vibrant and interesting residential areas

With the Helsinki City Strategy, the importance and value of complementary construction in old areas alongside completely new residential areas has increased in recent years. The positive change increases wellbeing and creates sustainable growth.

Helsinki is a pioneer in sustainable urban development. Sustainable urban development in Helsinki means an energy-efficient, dense city that is built around rail connections in a climate-wise manner and utilising the circular economy. It also means a socially sustainable city where the segregation of residential areas is halted by active urban renewal.

Helsinki has launched a cross-sectoral suburban regeneration model, with Malminkartano–Kannelmäki, Malmi, Meri-Rastila and Mellunkylä as the implementation sites. In these areas, a significant part of the built environment has reached a stage in its lifecycle where renewal is called for. The selection of the areas was influenced by their location along good rail connections.

The aim of the suburban regeneration model is to improve the comfort and attractiveness of the residential areas comprehensively across division boundaries and enable high-quality complementary construction. The aim is also to make existing residents more comfortable in their neighbourhoods, while making the areas more attractive to new residents. Another aim is to both maintain and create unique, lively and attractive residential areas that offer a wide range of opportunities for housing and recreation. Suburban regeneration is a tool by which Helsinki aims to achieve this strategic goal and thereby enable the equality and wellbeing of the city districts.

## **Successes:**

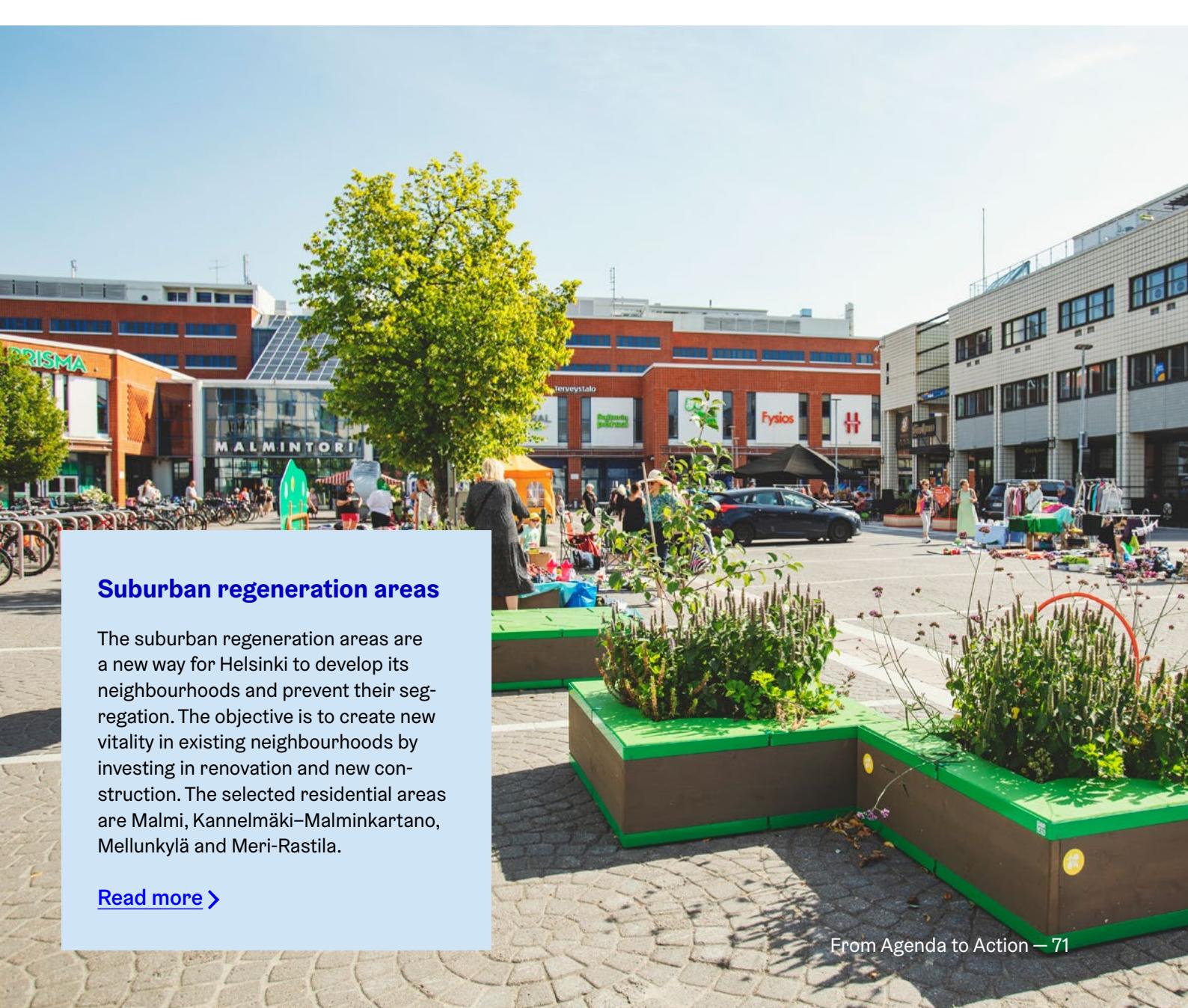
- Helsinki has generally been reasonably successful in tackling the development of segregation.
- The experiences of the suburban regeneration model have been positive.

## **Areas for development:**

- The growth of the city threatens local green areas that residents consider important.
- Housing costs are high in Helsinki.
- Segregation can be observed between neighbourhoods, and ethnic segregation has increased over the past decade.

## **Programmes and websites:**

- [Implementation Programme on Housing and Related Land Use >](#)
- [Urban development >](#)
- [Suburban regeneration >](#)
- [Re-thinking Urban Housing programme >](#)



### **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 >](#)

# Sustainable urban structure

9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



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 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.

During 2022, four local master plan projects were launched in Helsinki to define future land use in areas not covered by the 2016 City Plan. These areas are the surroundings of Länsiväylä, the Lahdenväylä–Viikinranta area, Vartiosaari and Östersundom. The first phase of the work on the local master plans is a scenario analysis of the future development of the areas, on the basis of which a selection will be made as a basis for the actual plan. The strategic orientation of the projects is supported by a comprehensive and wide-ranging sustainability assessment, in which climate impact assessment is one of the key elements.

Measures have been taken to improve the lifecycle sustainability of the built environment. A methodology for calculating lifecycle climate emissions has been actively developed as part of the impact assessment of detailed planning in particular. The assessment is carried out in connection with the most significant detailed plans, and the results are attached to the plan material. Going forward, the question to be addressed is the target level of lifecycle emissions and how this level will be determined in line with the wider emission reduction targets.

## 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 increases cost pressures on the maintenance of existing urban structure. Temperatures fluctuating below and above zero and increased winter precipitation are already causing erosion and unforeseen repairs, which are more expensive. On the other hand, the tightening budget allocates less and less money to the sustainable lifecycle management of infrastructure. This, combined with the growing volume of the urban environment, poses real challenges in 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. Green space and street asset management plans are being prepared to improve the situation; 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 very 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 2019–2021, 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.

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, people with an immigrant background and residents of areas with a weaker social status, among others. In 2020, the communications unit of the Urban Environment Division had a project aimed at lowering the threshold

for the participation of immigrants. Plain-language communications were developed with organisations, and a video was produced on the social media channels, explaining in plain language what participation is and how to participate in the discussion on the city. In some urban planning projects, specific measures, such as interviews or workshops, are taken to involve less active groups. Greater and more frequent efforts should be made in this area.

There are many ways to take part in urban planning. There are around 50 online surveys on urban planning topics every year. The pandemic moved some events online, such as the resident events on urban development that bring together all current projects in a wider area. The online events have attracted large audiences, and the recordings in particular have attracted many views. At best, the events have had more than 500 simultaneous participants, and the views of the recordings have been many times higher. The average age of participants has been younger for online events than for in-person events.

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. Helsinki came second in the European Union's Access City Award competition in 2015 and 2022. The award was based on the City's comprehensive approach that allows all City functions to be involved in accessibility work.

The City also continuously strives to improve the accessibility of its services. Examples cited in the competition application included Central Library Oodi, which has been designed with special attention to the needs of people with mobility and functional impairments, the accessible boardwalk of Lammassaari, and an application developed for the Helsinki Service Map, which shows information about the accessibility of the City's service locations. Public transport in Helsinki has also been well developed. Helsinki has also made the results of its accessibility development work freely available to all. For example, the accessibility guidelines for outdoor areas have been introduced nationwide.

## Improved energy efficiency in construction

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. In plot allocation conditions and detailed planning, blocks of flats (use class 2) are required to have energy class A, in addition to which detailed planning requires non-residential buildings to have an energy class that is -20% of the national norm set for that type of building.



The main heating system selected for the City's facilities and service buildings will be a heat pump system if its repayment period is under 15 years and its implementation is technically feasible. In 2023, all infrastructure projects commissioned by the City will switch to low-carbon concrete that meets the class GWP.85 requirements as defined by the Concrete Association of Finland. The class required of low-emission concrete will be reviewed and updated annually, at the minimum. Emissions from the preconstruction of the former Malmi Airport area are planned to be reduced by 50% by replacing the binder used for stabilisation with an available recycled binder.

The tendering process for the energy solutions of City-owned properties will be developed: the aim is to open up the implementation of heating solutions in the City's own large building complexes and areal development sites to competition. The current process does not support the business development objectives or ensure the realisation of best heating solutions in the City's own properties.

In addition to regional energy systems, the City's main instruments for planning a carbon-neutral city include zoning, plot allocation conditions and land use agreements. The City's plot reservation conditions were tightened in 2019, making them the strictest in Finland.

## Environmental health supports people's comfort and wellbeing

Helsinki's environmental health is at a good level on a global scale. Water quality at Helsinki's beaches is generally good, but it can occasionally deteriorate due to factors such as leaching caused by heavy rainfall and the impact of wildlife. The health risks associated with chemicals are also minor, and the quality of Helsinki's water supply is excellent.

The main health risks are caused by air quality and noise. Littering is also a problem in Helsinki, harming not only people's health but also the environment. It reduces the comfort and attractiveness of urban areas and negatively affects the cityscape. In addition to this, littering causes the City of Helsinki more than 11 million euros in clean-up costs each year. In order to reduce litter, the City has prepared the Litter Management Action Plan 2022–2025.

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 in Helsinki has improved over the last few decades, and it is fairly good at an international level. However, exhaust emissions from traffic, street dust and emissions from burning wood in domestic fireplaces continue to be harmful to people's health and comfort. In autumn 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO) published new threshold values for air pollution based on the latest health research. These threshold values are significantly lower than before, and they are largely exceeded even in Helsinki, especially in terms of nitrogen dioxide, inhalable particles and fine particulate matter.

In recent years, the annual EU limits for nitrogen dioxide have not been exceeded in Helsinki. The exhaust gas emissions from traffic have decreased thanks to advanced vehicle technology and electrification. Replacing buses with lower-emission ones has played a key role. However, the nitrogen dioxide concentrations may rise at times on busy and chasm-like streets. In addition to direct exhaust emissions, traffic also produces street dust. The limit values for street dust, i.e. inhalable particles, have not been exceeded in Helsinki in recent years, but the risk of exceeding them still remains. The dust volumes in the spring are also significantly affected by the weather conditions and snow volumes in the spring and winter. In autumn 2022, a three-year ban on studded tyres began on Lönnrotinkatu, the aim of which is to improve air quality and reduce traffic noise in the area.

Environmental noise is a significant factor reducing the quality and comfort of the living environment in Helsinki. Strong continuous noise is harmful to health and wellbeing. Road traffic is the primary source of harmful noise. According to the noise study conducted in 2022, approximately 39% of Helsinki's residents live in areas where road and street traffic noise levels exceed the daytime reference value level of 55 dB. The number of people exposed has risen by two percentage points since the last survey in 2017. This is mainly explained by the increase in housing in noisy areas near traffic routes and the inclusion of new street sections in the study. The noise abatement efforts by the City of Helsinki are directed by the Noise Abatement Action Plan, which is currently being updated. Noise problems are prevented by land use and traffic planning, and this becomes more important as urban density increases. It is also important to have easily accessible and revitalising green spaces with a peaceful soundscape in different parts of the city.

## **Successes:**

- The HAVA 2.0 tool was introduced to calculate and control the carbon footprint of the urban structure.
- Progress has been made in tackling indoor air problems, and reports on indoor air issues have decreased.
- Air quality at measuring points in Helsinki has improved.

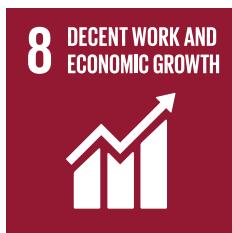
## **Areas for development:**

- 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 shares of public transport and cycling have declined.
- Noise, air pollution and dust reduce comfort and threaten health.
- The low participation of less active groups in urban planning is one of the biggest challenges in the interaction process.

## **Programmes:**

[Helsinki City Plan 2016](#) >

# Responsible procurement and circular economy



Responsible procurement reduces negative impacts on people and the environment and promotes positive impacts. The City can also support the creation of responsible markets by leading the way in the development and implementation of new solutions that are energy- and material-efficient and promote the circular economy and the preservation of biodiversity.

Responsible procurement lays the foundation for a responsible capital city. Helsinki's annual procurement volume is approximately four 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 policy, environmental impact assessment must be carried out in all procurements exceeding the national threshold value. The promotion of responsible procurement is implemented in particular through the Procurement Strategy, according to which the City's procurements must be effective, responsible and climate-smart. Responsibility and impact are pursued in parallel with market interaction, innovation, procurement management and the promotion of procurement skills.

Although Helsinki is very committed to promoting responsible procurement at the upper level, there is still work to be done in the implementation of the objectives. The challenge has been to systematically link the responsibility criteria to the procurement processes, which would require better procurement management, training and awareness-raising. The City's criteria bank supports this by including successful examples of responsibility criteria used in procurement.

Monitoring and impact assessment are also developed 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 2020, the City prepared the Roadmap for Circular and Sharing Economy, the time span and goals of which extend to 2035. The roadmap is currently being updated. So far, circularity has been successfully promoted mainly in construction, particularly in infrastructure construction by using recycled materials and earth masses. The central role of land use planning in the circular economy has been recognised, and many types of development and cooperation are being carried out in this area. Circular economy has been incorporated into land use plans as regulations, among other things. In addition to this, the City launched a three-year circular economy cluster programme in autumn 2021, the goal of which is to promote circular economy in the construction sector by developing solutions and new innovations for concrete planning and construction sites. Helsinki has also invested in reducing food waste. For example, Stadin safka, which is involved in food waste logistics and food aid development, utilises food waste from the food industry, wholesalers and grocery shops to strengthen people's wellbeing and participation in the field of food aid. In 2022, Stadin safka saved about 925,000 kilograms of food from ending up as waste.

The recycling rate in the Helsinki region has not increased much in recent years, although it is 37% above the national level. A comprehensive transition to a circular economy requires additional resources and, above all, city-level leadership and commitment.

## Investing in procurement that is low-carbon and reduces harmful substances

In particular, there is still work to be done 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.

Helsinki has begun to take climate impacts into account in its procurement through the six-year Canemure project. The utilisation of carbon footprint data and calculation has achieved better consideration of climate impacts in procurements. Helsinki is also participating in the international ChemClimCircle and NonHazCity 3 projects with goals such as reducing the prevalence of harmful substances in the urban environment through procurement.

Helsinki has also signed Green Deal agreements for emission-free construction sites and the reduction of harmful substances in procurement in early childhood education. The Green Deal is a voluntary agreement between the state and the public sector or business sector to reduce emissions and harmful substances.

## **Strengthening social responsibility in procurement**

Through its procurements, Helsinki also aims to promote social responsibility, i.e. the enforcement of human rights and basic labour rights. The promotion of social responsibility in our procurements means that we take the impact of each procurement into account at a local, national and global level. Social responsibility issues are very challenging and complex, requiring long-term commitment and extensive cooperation between service providers, contractors, labour organisations and supervisory authorities. Helsinki has recognised that there is still a great deal of work to be done and a need to develop expertise in the area of social responsibility, and the Procurement Strategy has also set targets for this. It is important that City staff, both those responsible for procurement and those working on services, are aware of the risks associated with labour exploitation.

Helsinki requires its partners to engage in activities that respect the employee's human rights and basic labour rights. A City-wide Code of Conduct for procurement is being introduced, 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.

Helsinki has been a Fairtrade City since 2013. The title Fairtrade City is awarded to a city that commits to promoting fair trade and making ethical choices in its procurements.



## **Successes:**

- In addition to the development of low-carbon procurement, Helsinki is increasing its expertise in reducing harmful substances through procurement.
- The video series on responsible procurement illustrates how Helsinki's responsibility goals are reflected in the City's procurements.
- The City has received funding for several projects promoting circularity.
- The draft update of the City's Building Regulations aims to promote the reuse of demolition materials.
- Responsibility is taken into account in the procurement process better than before.

### **Stadin safka**

Stadin safka, which is involved in food waste logistics and food aid development, utilises food waste from the food industry, wholesalers and grocery shops to strengthen people's wellbeing and participation in the field of food aid. In 2022, Stadin safka saved about 925,000 kilograms of food from ending up as waste.

[Read more >](#)

## **Areas for development:**

- Resources and skills are needed for the promotion and guidance of social responsibility, such as the practical implementation of the prevention of labour exploitation.
- The implementation of the systematic monitoring of responsibility criteria and the promotion of effectiveness monitoring require development.
- The circular economy has not been sufficiently promoted in land use planning and plot allocation.
- Further efforts 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.

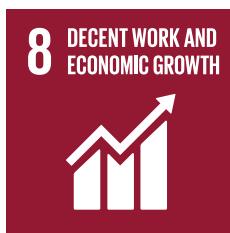
## **Programmes:**

[Roadmap for Circular and Sharing Economy PDF >](#)

[Procurement Strategy PDF >](#)



# 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.

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. In 2022, Helsinki was ranked twelfth, compared to sixteenth in 2021. At the same time, Helsinki's total index score increased by approximately 10 points (72.5/100 in 2021, 82.8/100 in 2022).

Helsinki's Think Sustainably service helps residents and visitors to Helsinki choose more sustainable restaurants, places to visit, shops, accommodation and events, and provides companies with concrete tools to make their sustainability work visible and develop it. The criteria serving as the cornerstone of the service were revised during 2021 to better address social and cultural sustainability. The criteria for ecological sustainability were also updated to better meet the requirements of the times and encourage companies to adopt more responsible practices. Following Helsinki's example, the service has been introduced in Finland by Visit Tampere Ltd, which is responsible for tourism marketing and development in the city of Tampere. The scalability of the service is also promoted internationally.

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.

Helsinki coordinates the extensive Sustainable Growth for Tourism project, which aims to promote sustainability and carbon footprint calculation in the tourism and event industries, among other things. Helsinki is also involved in the Carbon Neutral Experience project, which includes measures such as a destination-level calculation of the carbon footprint of tourism. Helsinki has also signed the UN's Glasgow Declaration on Climate Action in Tourism.

Helsinki's brand and marketing strategy places sustainability at the heart of the entire brand concept. International city marketing highlights sustainability, equality and nature as Helsinki strengths, including through the Helsinki Sustainable City 360° video series published in 2021. 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.

Helsinki monitors its brand through the Benchmarking Helsinki's Brand in a Global Context study conducted with The Business of Cities. During the last cycle, the Helsinki brand incorporated a 'leadership on sustainability' element. This shows that Helsinki's work for sustainability has also been recognised internationally.

## **Successes:**

- Helsinki's placement and index score in the Global Destination Sustainability Index rose significantly.
- A significant number of companies have joined the Think Sustainably service and 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.
- 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 >](#)

[Benchmarking Helsinki's Brand in a Global Context PDF >](#)

[Sustainable Helsinki website >](#)



# Appendices

## Helsinki's indicators of sustainable development

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



### SDG 1 – No Poverty

| Indicator  | Source  | 2018    | 2019    | 2020    | 2021    | 2022 | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|--|---|---------|---------|---------|---------|------|-----------------------------|
| Share of households receiving housing allowance (%)                  | Kela  | 19.4%   | 19.4%   | 20.9%   | 20.1%   | –    | 😐                           |
| Share of children living in low-income households (%)                | Statistics Finland, total statistics on income distribution | 12.4%   | 12.7%   | 10.8%   | 12.6%   | –    | 😐                           |
| Share of people with low income (%)                                  | Statistics Finland, total statistics on income distribution | 11.7%   | 12.0%   | 11.5%   | 12.4%   | –    | 😐                           |
| Share of people aged 25–64 receiving long-term social assistance (%) | Kela  | 4.0%    | 3.4%    | 3.5%    | 3.5%    | –    | 😊                           |
| Number of long-term homeless people                                  | ARA   | –       | 602     | 601     | 518     | 450  | 😊                           |
| Amount of household debt   | Statistics Finland  | 54,597€ | 57,461€ | 61,229€ | 64,838€ | –    | 😢                           |



## SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-being

| Indicator   | Source                     | 2018   | 2019   | 2020   | 2021   | 2022 | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|---|----------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|-----------------------------|
| Body mass index – Percentage of overweight children (8th–9th-graders)   | THL/FinSote                | –      | 13.2%  | –      | 13.8%  | –    |                             |
| Body mass index – Percentage of overweight people aged 20 and older   | THL/FinSote                | 15.7%  | –      | 17.4%  | –      | –    |                             |
| Life expectancy   | Statistics Finland         | 81.6v. | 81.9v. | 81.6v. | 81.6v. | –    |                             |
| Perceived quality of life – Share of people who feel that their quality of life is good on average (%)                      | THL/FinSote                | 61%    | –      | –      | 59%    | –    |                             |
| Perceived health – Share of people who feel that their health is average or below average (%)                               | THL/FinSote                | 30%    | –      | –      | 30%    | –    |                             |
| Moderate or severe anxiety (8th–9th-graders)  | THL / SHP study (children) | –      | 14%    | –      | 22%    | –    |                             |
| Morbidity index, Index, whole of Finland = 100  | Kela                       | 88     | 87     | –      | –      | –    |                             |
| Share of lonely lower secondary school pupils   | THL / SHP study (children) | –      | 12%    | –      | 17.5%  | –    |                             |
| Children and young people with a hobby (%) – 8th–9th-graders  | THL / SHP study            | –      | 96%    | –      | 96%    | –    |                             |
| Worrying use of intoxicants or tobacco and nicotine products or gambling – 8th–9th-graders drunk at least 1–2 times a month | THL / SHP study            | –      | 3.5%   | –      | 2.2%   | –    |                             |
| Share of people who meet the requirements for a healthy amount of physical activity (%)                                     | THL/FinSote                | –      | –      | 43.5%  | 38.0%  | –    |                             |
| Share of residents exposed to road traffic noise (over 55 dB LAeq7-22)  | City of Helsinki           | –      | –      | –      | –      | 39%  |                             |



## SDG 4 – Quality Education

| Indicator   | Source                                 | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  | 2021  | 2022  | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|---|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------------------|
| Share of people with a higher education degree (%)  | Statistics Finland                     | 26.3% | 26.9% | 27.7% | 28.1% | –     |                             |
| Share of early leavers from upper secondary education (%) – dropped out of vocational education without continuing in any other education | Statistics Finland                     | 9.2%  | 9.7%  | 14.7% | –     | –     |                             |
| Proportion of families who chose their local school (%) – 1st grade. Finnish-language basic education                                     | City of Helsinki. Education Division   | 93%   | 90%   | 92%   | 85%   | –     |                             |
| Share of children in early childhood education (%)  | City of Helsinki. Education Division   | 76.8% | 79.2% | 80.4% | 81.6% | –     |                             |
| Share of foreign-language speakers among general upper secondary school graduates (%)   | Statistics Finland                     | 11.9% | 13.4% | 14.1% | 14.9% | –     |                             |
| Share of people with only basic education (%)   | Statistics Finland                     | 16.4% | 16.3% | 16.2% | 16.4% | –     |                             |
| Bullied at least once a week. % – 8th–9th-graders   | THL / SHP study                        | –     | 5.2%  | –     | 5.4%  | –     |                             |
| Share of 16-year-olds in compulsory education in the age group. %   | Vipunen – Education Statistics Finland | –     | –     | –     | 97.4% | 98.2% |                             |



## SDG 5 – Gender Equality

| Indicator   | Source             | 2018  | 2019  | 2020   | 2021  | 2022   | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|---|--------------------|-------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-----------------------------|
| Gender gap in unemployment*   | Statistics Finland | 1.3   | 1.3   | 1.2    | 1.3   | –      |                             |
| Gender pay gap**  | Statistics Finland | 83.9% | 84.1% | 84.2%  | 84.3% | –      |                             |
| Gender gap in perceived quality of life***  | THL/FinSote        | 1.09  | –     | –      | 1.05  | –      |                             |
| Share of people with a higher education degree, gender gap (more women)****               | Statistics Finland | 100   | 101   | 102    | 103   | –      |                             |
| Women in City management positions: City Council, City Board, City management groups***** | City of Helsinki   | –     | –     | 49.40% | –     | 54.50% |                             |

\*Unit: Men's unemployment rate vs. women's unemployment rate, percentage point difference

\*\*Unit: %, women's average income vs. men's average income

\*\*\* Unit: Index difference

\*\*\*\*Unit: Index, year 2018 = 100

\*\*\*\*\*Unit: %, percentage of women



## SDG 6 – Clean Water and Sanitation

| Indicator                                     | Source   | 2018      | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|---|----------|-----------|------|------|------|------|-----------------------------|
| Wastewater treatment percentages – nitrogen   | HSY      | 91%       | 90%  | 91%  | 91%  | –    |                             |
| Wastewater treatment percentages – phosphorus | HSY      | 97%       | 97%  | 97%  | 97%  | –    |                             |
| Quality of bathing water*                     | HSY, THL | Excellent | Good | Good | Good | Good |                             |

\*Unit: Quality rating poor–excellent



## SDG 7 – Affordable and Clean Energy

| Indicator  | Source | 2018      | 2019      | 2020      | 2021      | 2022 | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|--|--------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------|-----------------------------|
| Share of renewable energy in energy production (%) | HSY    | 12%       | 12%       | 14%       | 16%       | 21%  |                             |
| Energy consumption per capita (kWh)                | HSY    | 21,706kWh | 21,471kWh | 20,827kWh | 21,179kWh | –    |                             |

## 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



## SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth

| Indicator               | Source   | 2018   | 2019   | 2020   | 2021   | 2022   | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|-------------------------|--|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-----------------------------|
| Youth unemployment rate | Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. Employment Service Statistics | 6.7%   | 6.6%   | 13.5%  | 9.1%   | 8.1%   |                             |
| Long-term unemployment  | Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. Employment Service Statistics | 10,613 | 10,488 | 15,348 | 19,597 | 15,392 |                             |
| Employment rate         | Statistics Finland. Labour Force Survey                                    | 74.0%  | 74.7%  | 73.4%  | 74.1%  | -      |                             |
| Unemployment rate       | Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. Employment Service Statistics | 9.3%   | 9.2%   | 14.6%  | 11.2%  | 10.4%  |                             |

## 9 INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



## SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure

| Indicator   | Source   | 2018       | 2019       | 2020       | 2021      | 2022        | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|---|--|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Number of new enterprises or startups (to be specified)                               | Statistics Finland   | 6,792 pcs. | 7,567 pcs. | 7,698 pcs. | 7,53 pcs. | 5,758 pcs.l |                             |
| Companies' willingness to recommend Helsinki as a location (share of recommendations) | City of Helsinki, Economic Development Department, telephone survey data of Helsinki-based companies | 16%        | -          | 9%         | -         | -           |                             |



## SDG 10 – Reduced Inequality

| Indicator  | Source  | 2018  | 2019  | 2020  | 2021  | 2022 | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|--|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|-----------------------------|
| Gini coefficient (index of relative income inequality)*                | Statistics Finland, total statistics on income distribution | 34.2  | 33.5  | 33.9  | 36.2  | –    |                             |
| NEET share (Not in Employment, Education or Training), 20–24-year-olds | Statistics Finland  | 5.5%  | 5.6%  | 6.0%  | –     | –    |                             |
| Regional segregation by educational background                         | Statistics Finland and the City of Helsinki                 | 35.7% | 34.7% | 35.3% | 34.9% | –    |                             |
| Regional segregation by ethnic background                              | Statistics Finland and the City of Helsinki                 | 28.4% | 28.6% | 29.0% | 29.2% | –    |                             |

\*Unit: 0–100 scale



## SDG 11 – Sustainable Cities and Communities

| Indicator   | Source   | 2018                 | 2019      | 2020                 | 2021     | 2022                 | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|---|--|----------------------|-----------|----------------------|----------|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| Annual average of fine particulate matter (PM2.5) at the Kallio measurement station   | HSY  | 6.6µg/m³             | 5.5µg/m³  | 5µg/m³               | 5.8µg/m³ | 5.1µg/m³             |                             |
| Annual average amount of inhalable particles (PM10) at the Kallio measurement station | HSY  | 12µg/m³              | 11.0µg/m³ | 9µg/m³               | 10µg/m³  | 9µg/m³               |                             |
| Inclusion index   | Helsinki Metropolitan Area Wellbeing Questionnaire 2021            | -                    | -         | -                    | 74.8     | -                    |                             |
| Share of sustainable modes of transport   | City of Helsinki. Urban Environment Division (Transport Behaviour) | 79.5%                | 77.6%     | 79.70%               | 77.9%    | 79%                  |                             |
| Number of traffic accidents per 100.000 inhabitants                                   | City of Helsinki. traffic accident register                        | 0.56                 | 0.53      | 0.45                 | 0.42     | -                    |                             |
| Satisfaction with Helsinki as a cycling city*   | City of Helsinki   | Relatively satisfied | -         | Relatively satisfied | -        | Relatively satisfied |                             |

\*Unit: Quality rating Dissatisfied–Satisfied (1–4)

**12** RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



## SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production

| Indicator                      | Source | 2018   | 2019   | 2020   | 2021   | 2022 | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|--------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|------|-----------------------------|
| Household waste recycling rate | HSY    | 44,68% | 46,4%  | 45,36% | 46,72% | –    |                             |
| Municipal waste recycling rate | HSY    | 50,49% | 51,98% | 49,52% | 52,9%  | –    |                             |

**13** CLIMATE ACTION



## SDG 13 – Climate Action

| Indicator                            | Source | 2018                     | 2019                     | 2020                     | 2021                     | 2022 | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|------|-----------------------------|
| Greenhouse gas emissions             | HSY    | 2,567 tCO <sub>2</sub> e | 2,597 tCO <sub>2</sub> e | 2,345 tCO <sub>2</sub> e | 2,345 tCO <sub>2</sub> e | –    |                             |
| Per capita CO <sub>2</sub> emissions | HSY    | 4.0 tCO <sub>2</sub> e   | 4.0 tCO <sub>2</sub> e   | 3.6 tCO <sub>2</sub> e   | 3.6 tCO <sub>2</sub> e   | –    |                             |



## SDG 14 – Life Below Water

| Indicator   | Source | 2018      | 2019          | 2020      | 2021      | 2022 | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|---|--------|-----------|---------------|-----------|-----------|------|-----------------------------|
| Ecological condition of surface waters 2019                               | SYKE   | –         | moderate/poor | –         | –         | –    |                             |
| Nitrogen load to the sea from the Viikinmäki wastewater treatment plant   | HSY    | 15t/year  | 20t/year      | 21t/year  | 18t/year  | –    |                             |
| Phosphorus load to the sea from the Viikinmäki wastewater treatment plant | HSY    | 454t/year | 530t/year     | 478t/year | 470t/year | –    |                             |



## SDG 15 – Life on Land

| Indicator  | Source                          | 2018 | 2019   | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|--|---------------------------------|------|--------|------|------|------|-----------------------------|
| Total surface area of forested and wooded areas or their relative share of the land area | Luke, National Forest Inventory | –    | 32.47% | –    | –    | –    |                             |
| Number of nature conservation areas and their share of the total area (%)                | City of Helsinki                | 2.2% | 2.2%   | 3.2% | 3.8% | 4.0% |                             |



## SDG 16 – Peace and Justice Strong Institutions

| Indicator   | Source   | 2018         | 2019         | 2020  | 2021  | 2022 | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|---|--|--------------|--------------|-------|-------|------|-----------------------------|
| Perceived safety  | City of Helsinki, Safety Survey                                  | 79.8%        | –            | –     | 75.6% | –    |                             |
| Turnout in municipal elections  | Statistics Finland   | 57.4% (2012) | 61.8% (2017) | –     | 61.7% | –    |                             |
| Number of young people committing crimes (per 10,000 young people), 15–17-year-olds | Helsinki Police Department                                       | 424          | 476          | 528   | –     | –    |                             |
| Crimes against life and health*   | Statistics Finland, statistics on offences and coercive measures | 5,944        | 5,793        | 6,019 | 6,067 | –    |                             |
| Violence against women**  | Statistics Finland   | 2,310        | 2,249        | 2,321 | 2,574 | –    |                             |
| Violence in close relationships**   | Statistics Finland   | 1,183        | 1,016        | 1,194 | 1,030 | –    |                             |

\*Unit: Offences known to the authorities (number)

\*\*Unit: Victims (number)



## SDG 17 – Partnerships to achieve the Goal

| Indicator  | Source           | 2018 | 2019        | 2020        | 2021        | 2022        | Development trend 2017–2022 |
|--|------------------|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| Amount distributed to organisations as grants, € | City of Helsinki | –    | 37,399,200€ | 42,300,200€ | 44,579,200€ | 48,900,200€ |                             |

# Review implementation

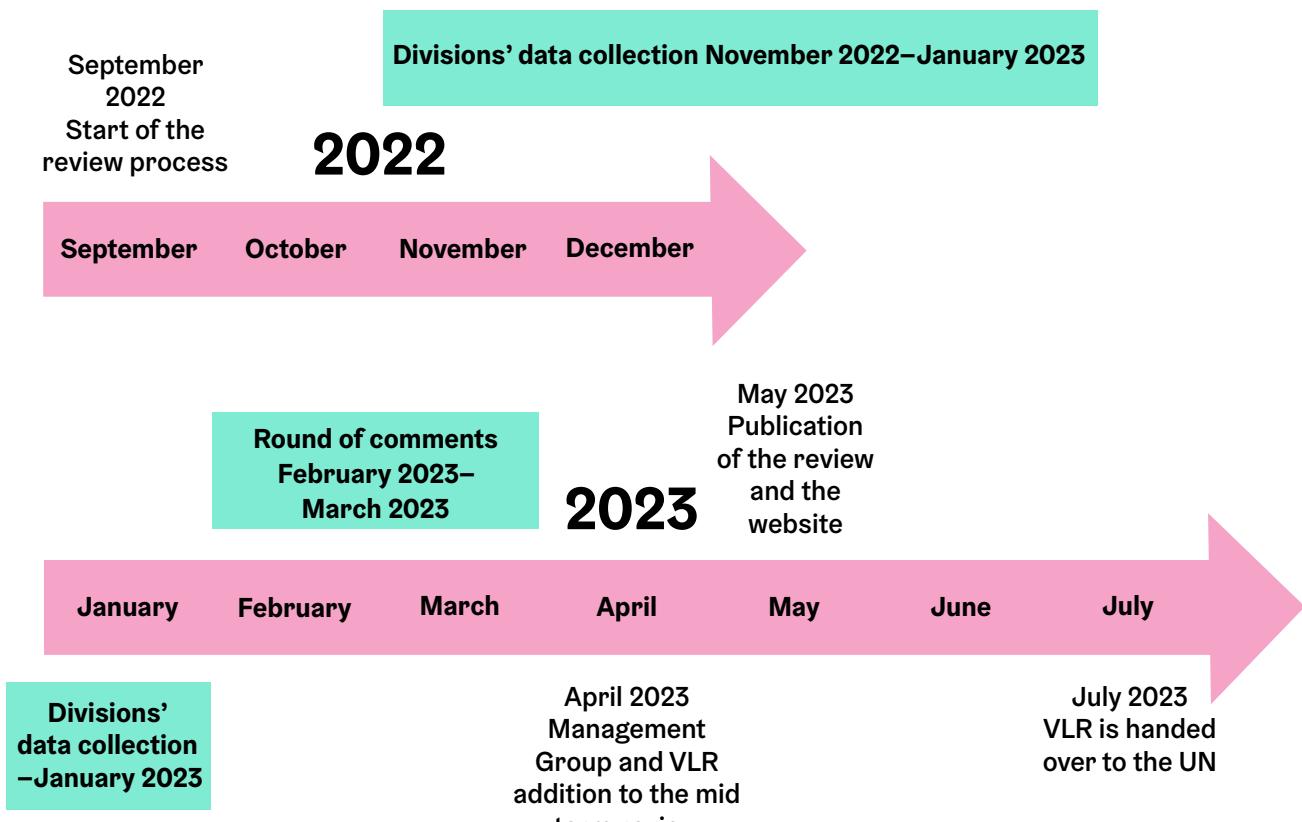
The sustainable development assessment work was coordinated by a City-level working group on sustainable development, with representatives from all of the City's divisions and enterprises, as well as other key experts. The working group contributed to the report through data collection, writing, setting 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 2023 review is part of the mid-term 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.

## Voluntary local review 2023



## **From Agenda to Action – Implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in Helsinki 2023**

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