

European Parliament elections 2009, preliminary data

True Finns and Greens successful in the European Parliament elections 2009

The True Finns won one seat in the European Parliament and the party's leader Timo Soini was the biggest winner with over 130,000 votes. Support for the True Finns rose to 9.8 per cent, which is 9.3 percentage points higher than in the previous European Parliament elections. Because of the electoral alliance of the two parties, the success of the True Finns yielded a seat in the European Parliament also for the Christian Democrats, even though their share of votes cast remained at 4.2 per cent. The Greens were the other winner of these elections, alongside the True Finns. Support for the Greens rose by 2.0 per cent when compared with the 2004 European Parliament elections and the party earned another seat in the European Parliament.

The three major parties each lost one seat in the European Parliament. The National Coalition Party and the Centre Party both secured three seats. The Social Democrats were left with two seats. The National Coalition Party had the largest share of all votes cast, namely 23.2 per cent. Its share of votes cast fell by 0.5 percentage points from the previous European Parliament elections. The Centre Party got 19.0 per cent and the Social Democrats 17.5 per cent of all votes cast. Compared to the previous European Parliament elections, the Centre Party's share of all votes cast fell by 4.3 percentage points and that of the Social Democrats by 3.6 percentage points. Support for the Left Alliance fell by 3.2 percentage points and the party lost its only seat in the European Parliament. The Swedish People's Party got a 6.1 per cent share of all the votes cast and managed to keep its one seat.

The voting turnout in these European Parliament elections was 40.3 per cent, which is 0.8 percentage points down from the 2004 European Parliament elections. Voting was liveliest in the Helsinki electoral district, where voting turnout rose to 50.9 per cent. Voting was least active in the North Karelia electoral district (33.7 per cent). Of individual municipalities, the country's highest voting turnout was in Kauniainen (68.4 per cent) and the lowest in Hyrynsalmi (25.5 per cent).

This time Finland elected 13 representatives to the European Parliament instead of the earlier 14. Six of the elected representatives have no prior experience of the European Parliament.

Share of votes cast for the major parties in elections for the European Parliament in 2009, 2004, 1999 and 1996

Party	European Parliament elec. 2009	European Parliament elec. 2004	European Parliament elec. 1999	European Parliament elec. 1996
National Coalition Pty	23.2	23.7	25.3	20.2
Centre Pty of Finland	19.0	23.4	21.3	24.4
Social Democr. Pty	17.5	21.2	17.9	21.5
GREENS	12.4	10.4	13.4	7.6
True Finns	9.8	0.5	0.8	0.7
Swedish People's Pty	6.1	5.7	6.8	5.8
LEFT	5.9	9.1	9.1	10.5
Christian Democrats	4.2	4.3	2.4	2.8

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European Parliament elections, quality description

1. Relevance of statistical information

1.1 Summary of the information content of statistics

Statistics Finland produces official statistics from European Parliament elections containing main data on the candidates, elected MEPs, those entitled to vote, those who voted and support gained by the parties. Preliminary data have been published on the Internet starting from the first European Parliament elections held in Finland (1996); these statistics are updated by the figures of the confirmed result. Statistics Finland's statistics pages on European Parliament elections also include tables in databases, i.e. the StatFin online service, where from 2004 onwards data can be found by voting district as well.

1.2 Essential concepts

Holding of elections

The European Parliament elections are held every five years in all EU Member States. The European Parliament is the only international organ that the citizens elect by direct elections. National authorities are in charge of practical arrangements for the elections. In Finland the organiser is the Ministry of Justice that confirms the candidates and the election result. In Finland the European Parliament elections are held on Sunday, 7 June. Elections are held in accordance with the Election Act in force, more details on the Ministry of Justice's webpages www.vaalit.fi (=> Legislation) and www.finlex.fi, Election Act (714/1998).

Legislation

The elections for the Members of European Parliament (European Parliament elections) are held in each Member State in accordance with the national election legislation. In addition, the stipulations of the EU's election regulation (from 1976) are followed. By the amendment made to the election legislation in 1998, all the provisions concerning elections were collected under one act, the Election Act (714/1998), which came into force on 8 October 1998.

The main principles of holding elections

All elections in Finland are held following the principles below:

- **The elections are direct.** Electors (those entitled to vote) vote directly for the person they want to be elected.
- **The elections are proportional.** In proportional elections each party or other group gains seats in relation to the votes cast for it compared with the votes cast for other groups (not presidential elections).
- **The elections are secret.** Secrecy of the ballot means that neither the election authorities nor anyone else get to know for whom voters have cast their votes or whether they have returned an empty ballot.
- **The right to vote is universal and equal.** A universal franchise signifies that the right to vote only depends on requirements which citizens usually fulfil. An equal franchise means that every person entitled to vote has an equal right to influence the election results. In general elections everybody has one vote.
- **Voting is personal.** The right to vote may not be used through an agent.
- **Voting takes place in front of election authorities.**
- **The Finnish election system is a combination of voting for individuals and parties,** where a vote goes to both a party and a person (not presidential elections).

Right to vote and eligibility

Entitled to vote in European Parliament elections held in Finland are:

1. Regardless of domicile every Finnish citizen who has reached the age of 18 not later than on the day of the election, and
2. Every citizen of another Member State of the European Union who has reached the age of 18 not later than on the day of the election and whose municipality of residence, as defined by law, is in Finland on the 51st

day before election day, unless he/she has lost the right to vote in the Member State whose citizen he/she is. A prerequisite to the right to vote is, however, that the person enrolls with the voting register in Finland.

A person entitled to vote may only vote in one Member State in the same European elections, either in his/her home state or in his/her country of residence.

A Finnish citizen, who has registered as a voter in another Member State, is not entitled to vote in the European Parliament elections in Finland.

Persons with a right to vote can vote either 1) during the advance voting period, or 2) on the election day on Sunday.

Eligibility

The provisions on eligibility are the same as in parliamentary elections. Thus eligible is

1. every Finnish citizen entitled to vote and not legally incompetent, and
2. every citizen of a Member State of the EU who is entitled to vote and who has registered with and been entered into the voting register in Finland, and who has not lost the right to enter as a candidate in elections in his/her home state

However, a member of the European Parliament cannot be:

1. A member of the Council of State;
2. A member of the European Commission;
3. A Judge, Advocate-General or Registrar of the European Court of Justice or of the Court of First Instance;
4. A member of the executive board of the European Central Bank;
5. A member of the European Court of Auditors;
6. The European Ombudsman;
7. A member of the Economic or Social Committees for the European Community or the European Atomic Energy Community;
8. A member of the Committee of Regions;
9. A member of a Committee or another body responsible for the permanent administration or finances of the Community as is provided in the Treaties regarding the European Community and the European Atomic Energy Community;
10. A member of the Board of Directors and Board of Governors of the European Investment Bank and a member of staff of the European Investment Bank;
11. An official or a staff member working in the service of a body or a specialist organisation of the European Community;
12. A person who is in a post or a position that impedes membership of a Parliament as is provided in the Constitution.

Nomination of candidates

Candidates in European elections may be nominated

1. by parties entered into the party register, and
2. by voters' associations established by people entitled to vote.

The candidates enter as candidates in the entire country. Each party may nominate not more than 20 candidates. Parties may form electoral alliances. However, the maximum number of candidates for parties forming an electoral alliance may be the same as for an individual party, i.e. 20. All candidates are nominated for the whole country. A voters' association for the nomination of one candidate may be established by at least 2,000 people entitled to vote. Voters' associations may form a joint list that can have at most 20 candidates.

The Electoral District Committee of Helsinki compiles a combined list of the candidates in which the candidates of all parties, voters' associations and joint lists are enumerated in an order drawn by lot. The combined list contains the following information on the candidates: number (beginning with number 2), name, municipality of domicile, and title, profession or position.

Seats

The parliamentary seats are divided so that the Member States small in population have in relative terms more seats than large Member States. In the 2009 elections a total of 736 members will be elected to the European Parliament, of whom 13 will be elected from Finland.

Parliamentary seats are divided between the parties, electoral alliances and voters' associations by the number of votes gained by them in the whole country following the d'Hondt method. The party, electoral alliance or joint list receives as its first comparative index the total number of votes cast for the party, electoral alliance or joint list concerned. The candidate with the highest number of votes cast in the group then gets as a comparative index the total number of votes cast for the group, the second one half of the number of votes and the third one third and so on.

Changes in constituencies and municipalities and consolidations of municipalities

Changes in constituencies and municipalities and consolidations of municipalities concerning elections of different years are presented in the StatFin service and in the conventional European Parliament elections paper publication.

Municipalities are placed into constituencies according to the constituency division in force. The valid statistical grouping of municipalities is used in the statistics (Statistics Finland, Municipalities and Regional Divisions Based on Municipalities). In the statistical grouping of municipalities, municipalities are divided by the proportion of the population living in urban settlements and by the population of the largest urban settlement into urban, semi-urban and rural municipalities. The classification is based on the definition of urban settlements made every five years in connection with population censuses and on the data thus obtained about the population living in urban settlements.

1. Urban municipalities are those municipalities in which at least 90 per cent of the population lives in urban settlements, or in which the population of the largest urban settlement is at least 15,000.
2. Semi-urban municipalities are those municipalities in which at least 60 per cent but less than 90 per cent of the population lives in urban settlements, or in which the population of the largest urban settlement is at least 4,000 but less than 15,000.
3. Rural municipalities are those municipalities in which less than 60 per cent of the population lives in urban settlements, and in which the population of the largest urban settlement is less than 15,000, as well as those municipalities in which at least 60 per cent but less than 90 per cent of the population lives in urban settlements, and in which the population of the largest urban settlement is less than 4,000.

Classifications used

Names of constituencies in European Parliament elections in 2009 are:

1. Helsinki constituency
2. Uusimaa constituency
3. Varsinais-Suomi constituency
4. Satakunta constituency
5. Åland constituency
6. Häme constituency
7. Pirkanmaa constituency
8. Kymi constituency
9. South Savo constituency
10. North Savo constituency
11. North Karelia constituency
12. Vaasa constituency
13. Central Finland constituency
14. Oulu constituency
15. Lapland constituency

In the European Parliament elections Finland forms one constituency. The candidates stand as candidates in the whole country and the voters may vote for any candidate. However, the votes cast in the European Parliament elections are initially counted by national constituency and the election committee of the constituency of Helsinki combines the results of all constituencies into a result for the whole country.

Statistics Finland's classification of municipalities. Constituency, municipality group, municipality, voting district, party (included in the Party Register), age of candidates and elected MEPs, nationality and country of residence.

Data collection methods and data sources

Statistics Finland receives basic election data from the Ministry of Justice's election data system, the technical implementation of which it has assigned to Tieto.

1.3 Acts, decrees and recommendations

The function of Statistics Finland is to compile statistics describing conditions in society (Statistics Finland Act of 24 January 1992/48). These also include election statistics. Statistics Finland's Rules of Procedure define the Population Statistics department as the producer of election statistics (Statistics Finland's Rules of Procedure, TK-00-1756-01).

2. Methodological description of survey

The statistics are based on census data. The basic data of the statistics are based on the Ministry of Justice's election information system consisting of six subsystems. They are:

1. Basic data, including data on constituencies, municipalities, voting districts and election authorities;
2. Data on polling stations (polling station register), including data on general advance polling stations and polling stations on the election day;
3. Franchise data (voting register) for which data on every person entitled to vote are collected by the Population Register Centre on the 46th day before the election day. The voting register includes of all entitled to vote the data (e.g. name, personal identity code, constituency, municipality of domicile and polling station) included in the Population Information System on the 51st day prior to the election day. The voting register gains legal force on the 12th day before the election day at 12 noon;
4. Data on candidates (candidate register) in which the following data on each candidate in the elections are entered: name, candidate number, profession, municipality of residence, party/voters' association that has nominated the candidate, and personal identity code;
5. A centralised calculation system to which the electoral district committees and the central election committees submit their results of the elections;
6. Statistics and information service by means of which the results of the elections and other statistical data are transmitted to the media and to Statistics Finland..

Statistics Finland's election data system comprises four election data files: regional file, party file, candidate file and candidate register.

3. Correctness and accuracy of data

The basic data of the statistics are based on the Ministry of Justice's election information system and data supplied by the election authorities, which can be considered reliable.

4. Correctness and accuracy of data

The confirmed data always differ somewhat from the figures of the preliminary statistics. The 'preliminary results' after the election night serve users before the confirmed result is obtained.

The results change once the result is confirmed in all respects: by voting district, municipality, constituency, party and number of votes gained by candidates, whereby even their mutual order may change.

5. Accessibility and transparency/clarity of data

The first data, or preliminary statistics are published on the Internet, in the StatFin online service and on the statistics pages on European Parliament elections as soon as possible starting from the election night. Election data by municipality and voting district (from 2004) and the numbers of votes gained by elected MEPs (on the constituency level) are entered in the StatFin service.

On the European Parliament elections pages releases and tables concerning the election in question are published in three languages (Finnish, Swedish and English). The second data, or the final data are supplied to Statistics Finland after the election result is confirmed. After the confirmation of the election result, the confirmed data corresponding to the preliminary statistics are released on the statistics pages on European Parliament elections and the StatFin databases are updated.

Later on, a conventional paper publication, or corresponding statistical tables, are also produced on the European Parliament elections.

6. Comparability of statistics

The new statistical grouping of municipalities (urban, semi-urban and rural) was introduced starting from 1999. Prior to that, municipalities were grouped as follows: towns and other municipalities. Changes in constituencies and municipalities between the elections have been taken into account in statistics that have comparative data with the results of the previous elections.

Election results are presented on the statistics pages on European Parliament elections starting from the first European Parliament elections in 1996. Preliminary statistics on European Parliament elections are released on the statistics pages on the Internet. In addition, the StatFin online service has a time series on European Parliament elections starting from 1996 (NB From 2004 also data by voting district). The paper publication European Parliament elections (see Chapter 5) contains as recurrent the so-called basic tables on voting turnout and on the election result by municipality for the election year that has comparative data from the previous elections. Publications of different years contain information on possible changes compared with the previous elections, such as changes in constituencies and municipalities.

7. Coherence and consistency/uniformity and documentation

The Ministry of Justice publishes information about the results of different elections and the national candidate register on its webpages (www.vaalit.fi). The statistics published by the Ministry of Justice differ with regard to advance voters from those issued by Statistics Finland, because they are defined on different grounds:

- the Ministry of Justice counts the number of advance voters from the number of those entitled to vote, whereas
- Statistics Finland counts the number of advance voters from the number of all who voted.

The classifications used in the statistics can be found on Statistics Finland's homepages.

Suomen virallinen tilasto
Finlands officiella statistik
Official Statistics of Finland

Elections 2009

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