

The Finnish Election System

Overview



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1 General

1.1 Elections and legislation

In Finland, the following are elected through general elections:

- Parliament (200 Members of Parliament),
- the President of the Republic,
- councils of wellbeing services counties (21) (county councils),
- municipal councils¹ (293), and
- 14 Members of the European Parliament.

The foundation for the Finnish election legislation was laid at the beginning of the 20th century. The Parliament Act and the Election Act of the Grand Duchy of Finland were enacted in 1906, and the first parliamentary elections in accordance with these acts were conducted in 1907. The first act concerning municipal elections was issued in 1917, and the first municipal elections were held in 1918. The first President of the Republic of Finland was elected by Parliament in 1919, and an act on the presidential election by electors was enacted in 1922. The first presidential election by electors was conducted in 1925.

The next significant changes to electoral legislation were made in the late 1900s and early 2000s. Since 1994, the President has been elected directly by the people in a two-phase election. When Finland joined the European Union at the beginning of 1995, the Act on the Election of Finnish Representatives to the European Parliament was enacted, and the first elections to the European Parliament were held in Finland the following year. The legislation on the reform of healthcare, social welfare and rescue services entered into force in 2021, and the first county elections in line with this legislation were held in 2022. As of 2025, county elections will be conducted concurrently with municipal elections.

Currently, the following acts govern the elections and political parties in Finland:

- Constitution of Finland (731/1999; sections 14 and 24–28, for example),
- Local Government Act (410/2015; sections 15–17 and 20, for example),

¹ The municipalities of the Åland Islands (16) also hold municipal elections and concurrent legislative elections, but at a different time to that in Mainland Finland.

- Act on Wellbeing Services Counties (611/2021; sections 23–25 and 28, for example),
- Election Act (714/1998),
- Act on Political Parties (10/1969), and
- Act on a Candidate's Election Funding (273/2009).

1.2 Key principles for conducting elections

All Finnish elections are conducted in compliance with the following principles:

Elections are direct. Eligible voters vote directly for the persons (candidates) they want to see elected.

Elections are proportional. In proportional elections, each political party (or other group) gains seats in accordance with the number of votes cast for it in proportion to the number of votes cast for the other groups. For example, if a political party receives 20% of the votes, it will gain 20% of the seats. The Finnish election system is a combination of voting for individuals and voting for political parties. A single vote goes simultaneously both to a political party (or other grouping) and to a given person (candidate). However, the presidential election is not proportional but a direct election where the voters vote for a given individual.

Elections are secret. Election secrecy means that neither the election authorities nor anyone else get to know who the voters have voted for or whether they have returned an empty ballot.

The right to vote is universal and equal. *Universal right to vote* means that the right to vote depends only on such requirements that citizens usually meet. For example, the only two requirements in parliamentary elections are Finnish citizenship and the age of 18 years. *Equal right to vote* means that each eligible voter has an equal right to influence the election results, in other words that everyone has the same number of votes. In general elections, everyone has one vote.

Each voter must cast his or her vote personally. Voting by proxy is not allowed.

Voting must take place before election authorities. This aims to guarantee that elections are reliable, the voters may freely express their will, and election secrecy is maintained. The possibility for postal voting from abroad, introduced in 2019, constitutes an exception to this rule, but even those who vote by post must have two external witnesses present when they vote.

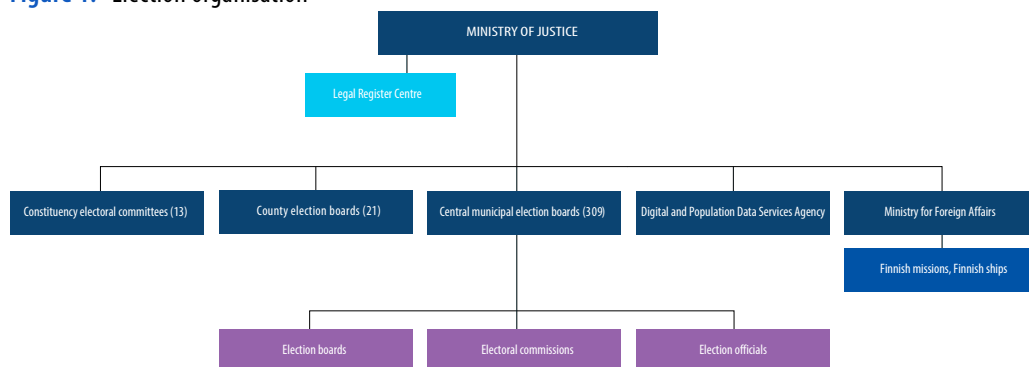
1.3 Election authorities

The highest election authority in Finland is the Ministry of Justice that bears the overall responsibility for conducting elections. Local election authorities are

- constituency electoral committees (13),
- county election board in each wellbeing services county (21),
- each municipality's (309) central election board, electoral committees (approximately 1,800 throughout Finland) and electoral commissions (approximately 500), as well as election officials at advance polling stations (approximately 1,000) and in home voting.

In addition to these, election authorities include the Digital and Population Data Services Agency, which is responsible for compiling the voting register, and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, which is responsible for organising advance voting abroad.

Figure 1. Election organisation



2 Parliamentary elections

2.1 General

Under the Constitution of Finland, the powers of the State in Finland are vested in the people, who are represented by Parliament. The Finnish Parliament is unicameral and consists of 200 Members of Parliament. The Members of Parliament are elected through elections every four years. Election day is the third Sunday of April. The latest parliamentary elections were held in 2019, and the next elections will be held in 2023.

The President of the Republic may, in response to a reasoned proposal by the Prime Minister and after having heard the parliamentary groups, and while Parliament is in session, order that Parliament be dissolved and extraordinary parliamentary elections be held. In such a case, election day is the first Sunday after 50–75 days from the date of announcement of the order. Parliament has been dissolved eight times during Finland's independence. The most recent time was in 1975.

2.2 Right to vote and candidate eligibility

Regardless of the place of residence, every Finnish citizen who reaches the age of 18 on election day at the latest is entitled to vote in parliamentary elections.

Every eligible voter who is not legally incompetent is also eligible to stand as a candidate. A professional soldier may not, however, be elected a Member of Parliament. In addition, certain high-ranking public officials such as the Chancellor of Justice and the Justices of the Supreme Court may not be Members of Parliament without resigning from their office.

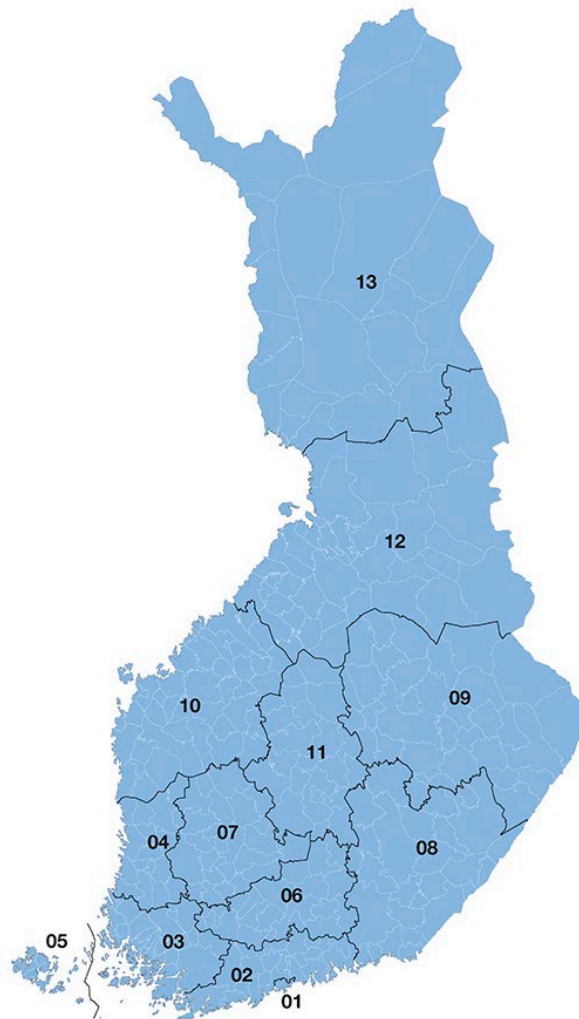
2.3 Electoral districts

For the purposes of parliamentary elections, the country is divided into 13 electoral districts in accordance with the division into regions. A number of representatives proportional to the number of Finnish citizens residing in the electoral district six months before the elections is elected in each electoral district. However, one representative is always elected in the electoral district of Åland. Well before the elections, the Government issues a decision on the division of parliamentary seats between the electoral districts

based on the information extracted from the Population Information System. In the parliamentary elections of 2023, the seats were divided as follows:

Figure 2. Map of electoral districts

- 01 Electoral district of Helsinki (23 seats)
- 02 Electoral district of Uusimaa (37)
- 03 Electoral district of Southwest Finland (17)
- 04 Electoral district of Satakunta (8)
- 05 Electoral district of Åland (1)
- 06 Electoral district of Häme (14)
- 07 Electoral district of Pirkanmaa (20)
- 08 Electoral district of Southeast Finland (15)
- 09 Electoral district of Savo-Karelia (15)
- 10 Electoral district of Vaasa (16)
- 11 Electoral district of Central Finland (10)
- 12 Electoral district of Oulu (18)
- 13 Electoral district of Lapland (6)



2.4 Nomination of candidates

In parliamentary elections, candidates may be nominated by

1. political parties that have been entered in the Party Register maintained by the Ministry of Justice (see Annex 1), and
2. constituency associations established by eligible voters.

Each **political party** may nominate at most 14 candidates in each electoral district or, if more than 14 Members of Parliament are to be elected in the electoral district in question, at most the number of Members to be elected. Political parties may form **electoral alliances**. However, the maximum number of candidates that an electoral alliance can nominate is the same as the maximum number of candidates that a single party can nominate.

A **constituency association** for the nomination of one candidate may be established by a minimum of 100 people entitled to vote in the electoral district in question. Constituency associations may form **joint lists** containing at most 14 candidates or, if more than 14 Members of Parliament are elected in the electoral district, at most the number of Members to be elected.

Political parties and constituency associations must submit their list of candidates (candidate application) to the constituency electoral committee of the electoral district where they intend to nominate candidates by 16.00 on the 40th day before election day at the latest. Notifications of electoral alliances and joint lists must be submitted to the constituency electoral committee by the same deadline.

The constituency electoral committees check the lists of candidates, especially whether the candidates are eligible, and confirm the nomination of candidates on the 31st day before election day. The constituency electoral committees compile a **master list of candidates**, in which the candidates of all political parties and constituency associations are listed in an order drawn by lot. The master list includes the number (beginning with number 2), name, municipality of residence, and title, profession or position of each candidate. The master list of candidates is displayed in the voting booths, for example.

2.5 Compilation of voting register

The Digital and Population Data Services Agency compiles an electronic register of eligible voters (voting register) no later than on the 46th day before election day. Information on the eligible voters (name, personal identity code, electoral district, municipality of residence, and polling station, for example), as stated in the Population Information System on the 51st day before election day, is entered in the voting register.

The voting register is publicly displayed at locations specified by the Digital and Population Data Services Agency starting on the 41st day before election day. In addition, every eligible voter included in the voting register is sent a notice of his or her right to vote (polling card) no later than 24 days before election day. The card indicates the date of the election, the period for advance voting, the advance polling stations within the voter's

electoral district, the address of the voter's election day polling station, and the contact information of the election authorities. Electoral rolls, to be used in the election day polling stations, are later printed out from the voting register.

Requests for an administrative review of the electoral roll must be submitted to the Digital and Population Data Services Agency no later than on the 16th day before the election day. A person may request an administrative review, for example, if he or she considers that he or she has been unlawfully left out of the voting register or that the information included in the register is incorrect. The Digital and Population Data Services Agency decides on requests for an administrative review on the 13th day before election day at the latest. A person who is dissatisfied with the decision of the Digital and Population Data Services Agency may request a judicial review of it, by appeal, at a regional administrative court within seven days from the service of the decision. The decision of the administrative court is not subject to appeal.²

The voting register becomes legally valid at noon on the 12th day before election day. The legally valid voting register must be adhered to without alterations, meaning that no one can neither be erased from nor added to the register and the information included in the register cannot be changed after this deadline. The only exceptions to this are cases where an administrative court or the Supreme Administrative Court issues its decision on appeal only after the register has already become legally valid. In such a case, a person who has been added to the voting register by decision of the administrative court may vote in the elections, but he or she must take the decision to the polling station and present it to the election authorities.

2.6 Voting

An eligible voter may vote either 1) in advance during the advance voting period or 2) on election day. Alternatively, an eligible voter residing or staying abroad during the elections may cast his or her vote by post from abroad.

² An appeal to the Supreme Administrative Court is, however, possible through the so-called means of extraordinary appeal, in other words by filing a complaint or an application for the annulment of the administrative decision or for the restoration of lapsed time. However, these means are used extremely rarely.

2.6.1 Voting in advance

The advance voting period begins on the Wednesday that is 11 days before election day and ends abroad on the Saturday that is eight days before election day and in Finland on the Tuesday that is five days before election day.

General advance polling stations in Finland are the municipal offices and other places designated for the purpose by the local executive. Abroad, Finnish diplomatic missions and their offices specified by government decree serve as general advance polling stations. There is at least one general advance polling station in every municipality in Finland, unless there are special reasons for deciding otherwise. Each eligible voter may vote at any general advance polling station, irrespective of the municipality in which he or she resides.

Special advance polling stations in Finland are located in hospitals, prisons, garrisons and certain other institutions. Only people who are being treated or incarcerated in these institutions or performing military service or voluntary military service may vote at these polling stations.

In addition, eligible voters whose ability to move or function is limited to the degree that they are unable to go to an advance polling station or election day polling station without undue hardship may vote **in advance in their home in Finland**. This means that an election official comes to their home to receive their vote. The informal caregiver of a person entitled to vote at home, living in the same household, also has the right to vote in this context.

The crew of a Finnish ship that is abroad during the elections may vote in advance on board the ship. Advance voting **on board a ship** can be commenced as early as 18 days before election day.

Advance voting procedure

After arriving at an advance polling station, a voter must first present his or her identity card to an election official, who then gives him or her a ballot. The voter goes to a voting booth and writes the number of the candidate he or she wants to vote for on the ballot. The voter may only vote for a person who is standing as a candidate in the electoral district where the voter is entitled to vote (i.e. his or her municipality of residence or population registration). The master lists of candidates of all electoral districts, listing all candidates in the entire country and their numbers, are available at each advance polling station. Only the master list of candidates of the electoral district where the polling station is located is, however, displayed in the voting booth.

After marking the ballot, the voter folds the ballot so that the number cannot be seen and presents it to an election official, who stamps it. After this the voter seals the ballot in the brown ballot envelope and signs a covering letter. Finally, the election official seals the ballot envelope (with the ballot inside) and the covering letter in a covering envelope, which is posted to the central election committee of the municipality of the voter.

Covering envelopes are inspected at the central municipal election board. To guarantee election secrecy, the accepted covering letters are separated from the ballot envelopes. The ballot envelopes (which are not opened at this stage) are gathered together and sent to the constituency electoral committee, where they will be counted later.

2.6.2 Voting on election day

On election day, all polling stations are open from 9.00 to 20.00. There is at least one polling station in every municipality, and the total number is approximately 1800. On election day, eligible voters may cast their vote only at the polling station stated in the voting register and on the polling card sent to them before the elections.

An election board consisting of five members is responsible for organising the voting at each polling station. The election board is quorate with at least three members.

Election day voting procedure

After arriving at a polling station, a voter must first present his or her identity card to a member of the election board, who checks in the electoral roll that the voter is entitled to vote and that he or she has not already voted in advance. After this, the board member gives a ballot to the voter, who then goes to a voting booth and writes the number of the candidate he or she wants to vote for on the ballot. A master list of candidates, listing all candidates in the electoral district and their numbers, is displayed at the voting booth and also elsewhere at the polling station.

After marking the ballot, the voter folds the ballot so that the number cannot be seen and presents it to the member of the election board responsible for the ballot box, who stamps it. Finally, the voter drops the stamped ballot into the ballot box.

2.6.3 Postal voting

Instead of voting in advance or on election day, an eligible voter residing or staying abroad during the elections may vote by post from abroad. For this purpose, the eligible

voter must order postal voting documents (including a ballot, ballot envelope and voting instructions, for example) from Finland. The postal voting documents can be ordered three months before election day at the earliest.

After receiving the documents, the eligible voter may vote anywhere abroad, for example in his or her own home. The voter must, however, have two witnesses present when the voting takes place. The witnesses must sign an attestation on the covering letter stating that election secrecy has been preserved and electoral freedom respected during the voting. The voter marks the ballot and seals it in the ballot envelope, fills in the covering letter and seals both the letter and the ballot envelope in the covering envelope. Finally, the voter sends the covering envelope to the central municipal election board of his or her municipality of residence or population registration in Finland. The voter himself or herself is responsible for sending the envelope early enough to ensure that it arrives in Finland on the Friday preceding election day at the latest.

2.7 Calculation of election results

2.7.1 Counting of advance votes

The constituency electoral committees begin counting the advance votes³ on election day on Sunday at 10.00. The brown ballot envelopes sent by the central municipal election boards are then opened and the ballots in them are counted. The goal is to have the advance votes counted so that the results of the advance voting are ready by 20.00 on election day. Before this, the constituency electoral committees are not allowed to reveal anything on how the counting is progressing.

2.7.2 Counting of votes cast on election day

Once the polling stations close at 20.00, the election boards begin a preliminary count of the votes cast on election day. The election board opens the ballot box, counts the ballots inside of it, and enters the number of votes cast for each candidate in an election record. Immediately after this, the election board informs the central municipal election board of the number of votes received by each candidate, in other words the election results in the voting district in question. The central municipal election board then enters the results in the centralised calculation system that is part of the Election Information System of the

3 Postal votes are counted together with advance votes.

Ministry of Justice. Finally, the election board seals the ballots in a parcel and delivers it to the constituency electoral committee immediately.

Preliminary election results are already known on the evening of election day. Once the polling stations close at 20.00, the results of the advance voting are published. Thereafter, preliminary calculations of election boards are entered in the Election Information System as soon as they are ready. The preliminary results of the elections are usually ready around 23.00.

2.7.3 Recount of votes and confirmation of election results

The constituency electoral committees begin a recount of votes on the Monday following election day. The results of the recount must be ready no later than the next Wednesday, when the constituency electoral committees confirm the final election results in the electoral districts and issue credentials to the newly elected Members of Parliament.

2.7.4 Determination of election results

The method used for determining election results is the D'Hondt method. *In the first stage*, the total number of votes received by each group, in other words

- each political party that does not belong to an electoral alliance,
- each electoral alliance,
- each joint list, and
- each constituency association that does not belong to a joint list,

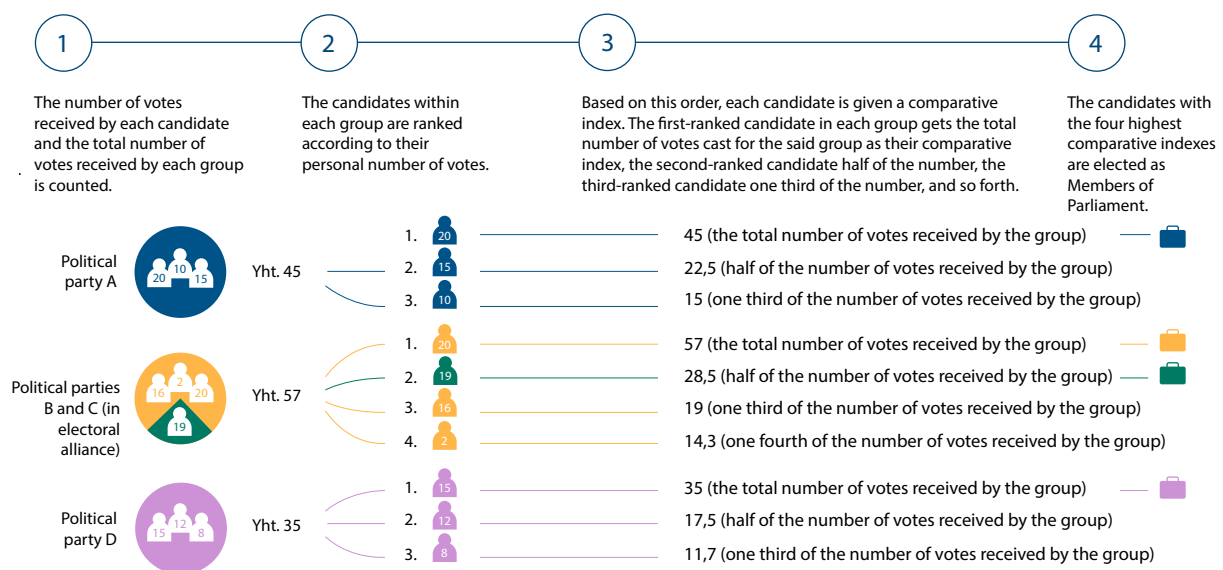
are counted. Political parties that have formed an electoral alliance are thus treated as a single group, as are constituency associations belonging to a joint list.

In the second stage, the candidates in each group are ranked in accordance with the number of votes they have received.

In the third stage, each candidate is given a comparative index so that the first-ranked candidate receives as his or her comparative index the total number of votes cast for the group, the second candidate half of the number, the third candidate one third of the number, the fourth candidate one quarter of the number and so forth.

In the final stage, the names of all candidates in an electoral district are listed in the order of their comparative indexes. As many candidates are chosen from the beginning of this list as are to be elected in the electoral district (see Section 2.3).

Figure 3. An example of how election results are determined: Four (4) Members of Parliament are elected in the electoral district. Four (4) political parties nominate candidates: A, B, C and D, of which B and C form an electoral alliance.



3 Presidential election

3.1 General

Under the Constitution of Finland, the President of the Republic is elected by a direct vote for a term of six years. The President must be a native-born Finnish citizen. The same person may be elected President for a maximum of two consecutive terms of office.

The President is elected by a direct vote. The election may consist of two rounds, if necessary. Election day is the fourth Sunday of January. If one of the candidates receives more than half of the (approved) votes cast in the election, he or she is elected President. If none of the candidates receives more than half of the votes cast, a second election between the two candidates who received most votes in the first election is held on the second Sunday after the first election. The candidate who receives most votes in the second election is elected President. If only one candidate is nominated, he or she is appointed President without an election. The President assumes office on the first day of the month following the election.

The following Presidents were elected by a direct vote:

- Martti Ahtisaari (two elections) in 1994,
- Tarja Halonen in 2000 and 2006 (two elections both times), and
- Sauli Niinistö in 2012 (two elections) and 2018 (one election).

Before that, the President was elected

- in an election conducted by Parliament in 1919 (K.J. Ståhlberg was elected) and in 1946 (J.K. Paasikivi),
- by electors chosen by voters in 1925 (Lauri Kr. Relander), in 1931 (P.E. Svinhufvud), in 1937 (Kyösti Kallio), in 1950 (J.K. Paasikivi), in 1956, 1962, 1968 and 1978 (Urho Kekkonen), and in 1982 (Mauno Koivisto),
- by the electors of 1937 in 1940 and 1943 (Risto Ryti);
- by an exceptive act in 1944 (C.G.E Mannerheim for a term of six years) and in 1974 (Urho Kekkonen for a term of four years); and
- through a combination of direct vote and electors in 1988 (Mauno Koivisto).

The next presidential election will be held in 2024.

3.2 Nomination of presidential candidates

Presidential candidates may be nominated by

1. registered political parties that in the previous parliamentary elections had at least one Member of Parliament elected from their list of candidates, and
2. constituency associations established by a minimum of 20,000 eligible voters.

Each party chooses its candidate in accordance with its rules and regulations.

The candidates stand as candidates in the entire country. Political parties and constituency associations must submit their candidate application to the constituency electoral committee of Helsinki by 16.00 on the 47th day before election day at the latest. The constituency electoral committee checks the applications and confirms the nomination of candidates on the 38th day before election day by compiling a list of presidential candidates, in which all candidates are listed in an order drawn by lot. The list includes the number (beginning with number 2), name, municipality of residence, and title, profession or position of each candidate. The list of presidential candidates is displayed in the voting booths, for example.

3.3 Right to vote, compilation of voting register, and voting

Regardless of the place of residence, every Finnish citizen who reaches the age of 18 on election day at the latest is entitled to vote in presidential elections. The voting register for presidential election, which is the same in the first and in the possible second round of the election, is compiled in the same manner as in parliamentary elections (see Section 2.5).

The voting is also conducted in the same manner as in parliamentary elections (see Section 2.6). A seven-day advance voting period precedes both the first and the second round of the election. On board a Finnish ship that is abroad, advance voting in the first round of the election may be started one week before the general advance voting period. In the possible second round of the election, the advance voting period is the same as the general advance voting period.

3.4 Calculation of election results

In the presidential election, the candidates are ranked in accordance with the number of votes they have received. If two candidates have received the same number of votes, the order is drawn by lot. In other respects, the vote count proceeds in the same manner as in parliamentary elections (see Section 2.7).

After both rounds of the election, the constituency electoral committee of Helsinki confirms the final number of votes received by each candidate in the entire country and reports them to the Ministry of Justice.

If one of the candidates has received more than half of the votes cast in the first round, the Government declares, upon proposal of the Ministry of Justice, that this candidate has been elected President.

If none of the candidates has received more than half of the votes in the first round, the Ministry of Justice declares that a second round will be conducted between the two candidates who received most votes in the first round in two weeks from the date of the first election. The constituency electoral committee of Helsinki draws up a list of candidates for the second election, where both candidates are included with the same candidate numbers and other information as in the first election.

After the second round, the Government declares which one of the candidates has received most votes and has thus been elected President.

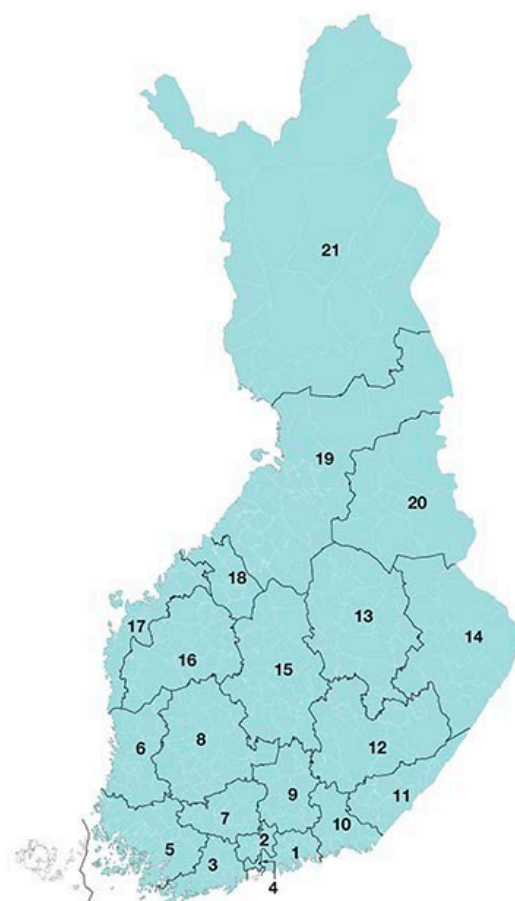
4 County and municipal elections

4.1 General

The **county elections** elect councillors (county councillors) for the councils of wellbeing services counties. There are 21 county councils in Mainland Finland.⁴

Figure 4. Wellbeing services counties

1. The wellbeing services county of East Uusimaa
2. The wellbeing services county of Central Uusimaa
3. The wellbeing services county of West Uusimaa
4. The wellbeing services county of Vantaa and Kerava
5. The wellbeing services county of Southwest Finland
6. The wellbeing services county of Satakunta
7. The wellbeing services county of Kanta-Häme
8. The wellbeing services county of Pirkanmaa
9. The wellbeing services county of Päijät-Häme
10. The wellbeing services county of Kymenlaakso
11. The wellbeing services county of South Karelia
12. The wellbeing services county of South Savo
13. The wellbeing services county of North Savo
14. The wellbeing services county of North Karelia
15. The wellbeing services county of Central Finland
16. The wellbeing services county of South Ostrobothnia
17. The wellbeing services county of Ostrobothnia
18. The wellbeing services county of Central Ostrobothnia
19. The wellbeing services county of North Ostrobothnia
20. The wellbeing services county of Kainuu
21. The wellbeing services county of Lapland



⁴ The City of Helsinki is not a wellbeing services county or part of a wellbeing services county, so county elections are not conducted in Helsinki. The duties of the county council are managed by the Helsinki City Council.

In **municipal elections**⁵, councillors are elected to the municipal councils of all Finnish municipalities. At the beginning of 2023, there were 293 municipalities in Mainland Finland.⁶

County elections and municipal elections are conducted concurrently every four years on the third Sunday of April, the first time being in 2025. For this reason, the elections are called county and municipal elections. Previously, Finland conducted separate municipal elections in 1918–2021 and a separate first county election in 2022.

4.2 Number of councillors elected

The number of **county councillors elected for the wellbeing services county** is decided by the county council. According to section 24 of the Act on Wellbeing Services Counties (611/2021), a specific minimum number of councillors must be elected in each wellbeing services county based on the population of the wellbeing services county, as follows:

Population	Minimum number of county councillors
at most 200 000	59
200 001–400 000	69
400 001–600 000	79
over 600 000	89

Correspondingly, the number of **councillors elected in each municipality** is decided by the municipal council. Under section 16 of the Local Government Act (410/2015), a specific minimum number of councillors must be elected in each municipality, based on the population of the municipality, as follows:

⁵ Until 2015, the elections were called municipal elections.

⁶ In the municipalities of Åland (16), legislative and municipal elections are also held every four years, but not at the same time as elsewhere in Finland. The next legislative and municipal elections in Åland will be in October 2023. The legislative and municipal elections in Åland are governed by Åland's own legislation.

Population	Minimum number of councillors
at most 5000	13
5 001–20 000	27
20 001–50 000	43
50 001–100 000	51
100 001–250 000	59
250 001–500 000	67
More than 500 000	79

4.3 Right to vote and candidate eligibility

The right to vote in county elections and municipal elections is determined on the same grounds. A person entitled to vote automatically has a right to vote in both elections.

In municipal elections, a person entitled to vote is one who reaches the age of 18 years on election day at the latest and who

1. is a citizen of Finland or another Member State of the European Union or of Iceland or Norway and whose
 - municipality of residence, as referred to in the Municipality of Residence Act, is the municipality in question (municipal elections)/
 - municipality of residence is part of the wellbeing services county (county elections)
 on the 51st day before election day;
2. is a citizen of a country other than those specified in the first paragraph, whose
 - municipality of residence, as referred to in the Municipality of Residence Act, is the municipality in question (municipal elections)/
 - municipality of residence is part of the wellbeing services county (county elections)
 on the 51st day before election day and who at that time has had a municipality of residence in Finland for at least two consecutive years; and

3. is employed by the EU or an international organisation operating in Finland and whose place of residence is in the municipality in question (municipal elections) and the municipality is part of the wellbeing services county (county elections) on the 51st day before election day, provided that his or her personal data have been entered in the Population Information System at his or her request and that he or she has informed the Digital and Population Data Services Agency in writing no later than on the 52nd day before election day that he or she wishes to exercise his or her right to vote in the county and municipal elections. The same right applies to the person's family members.

Eligible to stand as a candidate in county elections is a person

1. whose municipality of residence is part of the wellbeing services county in question,
 2. who has the right to vote in the county elections in some wellbeing services county, and
 3. who is not legally incompetent.
- Provisions on the restrictions on candidate eligibility are laid down in section 77 of the Act on Wellbeing Services Counties.

Correspondingly, a person eligible to stand as a candidate in municipal elections is a one,

1. whose municipality of residence is the municipality in question,
 2. who is entitled to vote in municipal elections in some municipality, and
 3. who is not legally incompetent.
- Provisions on the restrictions on candidate eligibility are laid down in section 34 of the Local Government Act.

4.4 Nomination of candidates

Nomination of candidates is done separately for county elections and for municipal elections. The same person may stand as a candidate for both county elections and municipal elections. Candidate applications are processed and the nomination of candidates are confirmed in county elections by the county election board of each wellbeing services county and by the central municipal election board in municipal elections.

Nomination of candidates in county elections

Candidates in county elections may be nominated by

1. political parties entered in the Party Register, and
2. constituency associations established by eligible voters.

Each **political party** may nominate a maximum number of candidates equalling the number of councillors to be elected in the wellbeing services county (see Section 4.2) multiplied by 1.25. For example, if the number of councillors to be elected in the wellbeing services county is 59, a party may nominate at most 73 candidates. Political parties may form **electoral alliances**. However, the maximum number of candidates that an electoral alliance can nominate is the same as the maximum number of candidates that a single party can nominate.

A **constituency association** for the nomination of one candidate may be established by a minimum of 50 people entitled to vote in the wellbeing services county in question. Constituency associations may form **joint lists** with a maximum number of candidates equalling the number of councillors to be elected (see Section 4.2) multiplied by 1.25.

Political parties and constituency associations must submit their list of candidates (candidate application) to the county election board by 16.00 on the 40th day before election day at the latest. The same deadline applies to submitting notifications of electoral alliances and joint lists to the county election board.

The county election board checks the lists of candidates, especially whether the candidates are eligible, and confirms the nomination of candidates on the 31st day before election day. The county election board compiles a **master list of candidates**, in which the candidates of all parties, constituency associations and joint lists are listed in an order drawn by lot. The master list includes the number (beginning with number 2), name, municipality of residence, and title, profession or position of each candidate. The master list of candidates is displayed in the voting booths, for example.

Nomination of candidates in municipal elections

In municipal elections, candidates may be nominated by

1. political parties entered in the Party Register, and
2. constituency associations established by eligible voters.

Each **political party** may nominate a maximum number of candidates equalling the number of councillors to be elected in the municipality (see Section 4.2) multiplied by 1.5. For example, if the number of councillors to be elected in the municipality is 27, a party may nominate at most 40 candidates. Political parties may form **electoral alliances**. However, the maximum number of candidates that an electoral alliance can nominate is the same as the maximum number of candidates that a single party can nominate.

A **constituency association** for the nomination of one candidate may be established by a minimum of ten persons⁷ who are entitled to vote in the municipality in question. Constituency associations may form **joint lists** with a maximum number of candidates equalling the number of councillors to be elected in the municipality (see Section 4.2) multiplied by 1.5.

Political parties and constituency associations must submit their list of candidates (candidate application) to the central municipal election board by 16.00 on the 40th day before election day at the latest. The same deadline applies to submitting notifications of electoral alliances and joint lists to the central municipal election board.

The central municipal election board checks the lists of candidates, especially whether the candidates are eligible, and confirms the nomination of candidates on the 31st day before election day. The central municipal election board compiles a **master list of candidates**, in which the candidates of all parties, constituency associations and joint lists are listed in an order drawn by lot. The master list includes the number (beginning with number 2), name, and title, profession or position of each candidate. The master list of candidates is displayed in the voting booths, for example.

4.5 Compilation of voting register, voting, and calculation of election results

The voting register for county and municipal elections is compiled in the same manner as in parliamentary elections (see Section 2.5). County and municipal elections have a single joint voting register, and each eligible voter is stated in the voting register to have a right to vote in both elections.

⁷ In a municipality with at most 1,500 residents, a constituency association may be established by a minimum of three eligible voters, and in a municipality with 1,501–2,000 residents, a constituency association may be established by a minimum of five eligible voters.

Well before county and municipal elections, the Digital and Population Data Services Agency sends citizens of other countries residing in Finland a letter informing them of their right to vote and stand as a candidate and of the procedures to follow if they wish to exercise these rights.

Voting in county and municipal elections takes place mainly in the same manner as in parliamentary elections (see Section 2.6), with the exception that

- an eligible voter may either cast his or her votes in both elections at the same time or choose to cast his or her votes on different occasions (for example, in advance in the municipal election and on election day in the county election),
- the ballot and master list of candidates are printed in turquoise. In municipal elections, the ballot and master list are traditionally printed on white paper.

Voting and calculation of election results mainly take place in the same manner as in parliamentary elections (see Section 2.7), with the exception that the central municipal election board is responsible for counting the advance votes and recounting the votes in both county and municipal elections. The result of county elections is confirmed by each county election board after receiving notice of the final numbers votes from all central election boards of the wellbeing services county in question. The result of municipal elections is confirmed by the central election board of each municipality.

5 Elections to the European Parliament

5.1 General

The European Parliament is composed of up to 751 Members elected in all Member States of the European Union in proportion to their population. Each Member State can have a maximum of 96 and a minimum of six seats in the European Parliament. Since 2020, the Parliament has had 705 members, and 14 members are elected from Finland.

Elections to the European Parliament (European elections) are conducted in the Member States in accordance with the national election legislation of each state. In addition, the provisions of the EU electoral law (issued in 1976, last amended in 2002) are followed.

Elections are held every fifth year in all Member States at the same time. The latest European elections were held in 2019, and the next elections will be held in 2024.

The Council of the European Union decided that the first elections in 1979 were to be held in every Member State in early June during a four-day period beginning on Thursday and ending on Sunday. Under the electoral law of the EU, the following elections were to be held during the same period, so elections have usually been conducted in early June. The Council of the European Union may, however, unanimously decide to change the time of the elections so that they are held at most two months earlier or one month later than the time specified above. This happened most recently in 2019, when the elections were held on the fourth Sunday of May. In Finland, election day is the Sunday falling within the above mentioned period.

5.2 Right to vote and candidate eligibility

In elections to the European Parliament to be held in Finland, a person entitled to vote is one who reaches the age of 18 years on election day at the latest and

1. who is a Finnish citizen, irrespective of his or her place of residence, or
 2. who is a citizen of another EU Member State and has notified the Digital and Population Data Services Agency of his or her willingness to be entered in the voting register in Finland on the 80th day before election day at the latest,
- and

- a. who has a municipality of residence in Finland on the 51st day before election day, or
- b. who is employed by the EU or an international organisation operating in Finland, or is a family member of such a person and resides in Finland, and who has not lost his or her right to vote in his or her country of origin due to a court decision in a civil or criminal matter.

An eligible voter may only vote in one Member State in the same European elections, either in the state of which he or she is a citizen (country of origin) or in the state where he or she resides (country of residence).

Correspondingly, a Finnish citizen who has within the statutory time limit registered to vote in the European elections of another Member State is not entitled to vote in the European elections in Finland.

The provisions governing candidate eligibility in parliamentary elections apply to candidate eligibility in European elections to be held in Finland. Thus, each eligible voter who is not legally incompetent is eligible to stand as a candidate. However, a citizen of another EU Member State is not eligible to stand as a candidate if he or she has lost candidate eligibility in European elections in his or her country of origin. Section 164, subsection 2 of the Election Act specifies the offices and positions, the holder of which cannot act as a Member of the European Parliament without resigning from office.

5.3 Nomination of candidates

Candidates in European elections may be nominated by

- 1. political parties entered in the Party Register, and
- 2. constituency associations established by eligible voters.

The nominated candidates stand as candidates in the entire country. Each **political party** may nominate at most 20 candidates. Political parties may form **electoral alliances**. However, the maximum number of candidates that an electoral alliance can nominate is the same as the maximum number of candidates that a single party can nominate (20). A **constituency association** for the nomination of one candidate may be established by a minimum of 2,000 eligible voters. Constituency associations may form **joint lists**, each of which can contain a maximum of 20 candidates.

Political parties and constituency associations must submit their list of candidates (candidate application) to the constituency electoral committee of Helsinki by 16.00 on

the 40th day before election day at the latest. Notifications of electoral alliances and joint lists must be submitted to the constituency electoral committee by the same deadline.

The constituency electoral committee of Helsinki checks the lists of candidates, especially whether the candidates are eligible, and confirms the nomination of candidates on the 31st day before election day. The constituency electoral committee compiles a **master list of candidates**, in which the candidates of all parties, constituency associations and joint lists are listed in an order drawn by lot. The master list includes the number (beginning with number 2), name, municipality of residence, and title, profession or position of each candidate. The master list of candidates is displayed in the voting booths, for example.

5.4 Compilation of voting register, voting, and calculation of election results

The voting register for European elections is compiled in the same manner as in parliamentary elections (see Section 2.5).

Well before the elections, the Digital and Population Data Services Agency sends citizens of other member states residing in Finland a letter informing them of their right to vote and stand as a candidate and of the procedures to follow if they wish to exercise these rights. If a citizen of another EU Member State residing in Finland wishes to vote in European elections in Finland, he or she must register to vote here on the 80th day before election day at the latest. After that, the Digital and Population Data Services Agency informs the authorities in the country of origin of the person that he or she can be removed from the electoral roll of that country.

Voting and calculation of election results take place in the same manner as in parliamentary elections (see Sections 2.6 and 2.7), with the exception that, in European elections, it is the constituency electoral committee of Helsinki that is responsible for confirming the election results in the entire country.

6 Appeal against election results

Decisions concerning the confirmation of the results of the first and second round of a presidential election are not subject to appeal. In other elections, these decisions may, however, be appealed to an administrative court within 14 days of the publication of the election results.

An appeal may be lodged

1. on the grounds that a decision is unlawful by
 - a person whose interests or rights are violated by the decision,
 - a candidate, and
 - a political party or a joint list that took part in the elections; and
2. on the grounds that the elections were conducted in an incorrect order by
 - an eligible voter and
 - in county elections, a domiciled person or other stakeholder of the well-being services county in question and in municipal elections, a member of the municipality in question.

If a decision or a measure of an election authority has been unlawful and it is evident that this may have affected the election results, the results must be rectified or, if this is not possible, new elections must be ordered to be held in the electoral district concerned (parliamentary elections), in the county concerned (county elections), in the municipality concerned (municipal elections), or in the entire country (European elections).

An appeal against the decision of the administrative court may be lodged with the Supreme Administrative Court.

New parliamentary elections or European elections have never had to be held, but new municipal elections have been conducted a few times over the years, since 1960 in a total of six municipalities: in 1972 (1), 1980 (1), 1996 (1), and 2008 (3).

7 Political parties

7.1 General

A political party means an association that has been entered in the Party Register maintained by the Ministry of Justice and in the Register of Associations. Political parties are non-profit associations whose main purpose is to influence state matters. One usually becomes a member of a political party through joining its local association.

Political parties have existed in Finland for a hundred years. Until 1969, the position of political parties was unofficial. The Act on Political Parties (10/1969) enacted that year changed their status.

7.2 Establishing a political party

In order for a newly established political party to be entered in the Party Register, the party must draw up rules and regulations for itself and a party programme that defines the goals for the party's activities. Only an association registered in the Register of Associations maintained by the Finnish Patent and Registration Office may be entered in the Party Register. Only the central organisation of a political party is entered in the Party Register. District, regional and municipal organisations and local associations of a political party are usually also registered associations, but they are not entered in the Party Register. Entering an association in the Party Register as a political party is free of charge.

The main purpose of an association that can be entered in the Party Register must be to influence state matters. The rules and regulations of the association must guarantee that democratic principles are abided by in the decision-making and activities of the association. Another prerequisite for the registration of a party is that the association must have drafted a party programme that serves the purpose of the political party laid down in the rules and regulations and specifies the goals and principles to be followed in its national activities. In addition, a party must have at least 5,000 support cards of supporters of the party signed by citizens entitled to vote in parliamentary elections, European elections or municipal elections. The support cards can be collected either on paper forms in accordance with the formula approved by the Ministry of Justice or electronically in the puolerekisteri.fi service using strong authentication.

If the rules or programme of a political party that is entered in the Party Register are amended, the Ministry of Justice must be notified of this. An amendment enters into force only after it has been recorded in the Party Register.

Only a party entered in the Party Register may use the abbreviation r.p. (rekisteröity puolue, registered party) with its name, and it may no longer use the abbreviation r.y. which signifies a registered association (rekisteröity yhdistys).

If a political party fails to gain a parliamentary seat or receive at least two per cent of the total number of votes cast in the entire country in two consecutive parliamentary elections, or if it ceases to be a registered association, it is removed from the Party Register. A party may also be removed from the register upon its own application.

Currently, there are 24 political parties in the Party Register (see Annex 1).

7.3 Funding of political parties

The State supports the activities of political parties by granting them party subsidies in accordance with the Act on Political Parties. Party subsidies are allocated to the political parties with parliamentary seats in proportion to the number of seats. The Government grants party subsidies annually.

Parties may also accept other contributions as provided in the Act on Political Parties.

Political parties have an obligation to keep accounting records in accordance with the Accounting Act. For the purposes of monitoring the accounting and use of funds by political parties, all parties must submit their financial statement documents to the National Audit Office of Finland within three months of the approval of the financial statements. The National Audit Office monitors the use of party subsidies, the use of other contributions the parties receive, and the use of other funds by the parties.

8 Candidate's election funding

The Act on a Candidate's Election Funding (273/2009) lays down provisions on a candidate's election funding and its disclosure in parliamentary elections, presidential elections, county and municipal elections and European elections.

According to the Act, election funding means the funding raised to cover the costs of the candidate's election campaign incurred over a period starting no earlier than six months before election day and ending no later than two weeks after election day irrespective of when such costs are paid.

An election funding disclosure must be filed by

1. a Member of Parliament elected in parliamentary elections and a Deputy Member of Parliament appointed upon confirmation of the election results,
2. a political party that nominated a candidate in a presidential election and the polling representative of a constituency association that nominated a presidential candidate or his or her deputy, and
3. a county councillor and a deputy county councillor elected in county elections or a councillor and a deputy councillor elected in municipal elections.
4. a Member of the European Parliament elected in the European elections and a Deputy Member appointed upon confirmation of the election results as well as the next-ranked candidate following the Deputy Member on the list of the political party,

An election funding disclosure must state the total sum of the election campaign costs and contain an itemised list of the costs, state the total sum of the election funding and contain an itemised list of the funding, and contain any other information on election funding and campaign costs that the discloser deems appropriate. A person obliged to disclose funding who has stood as a candidate in both county and municipal elections must submit a single election funding disclosure covering both elections.

If the value of an individual campaign contribution exceeds EUR 800 in municipal elections and EUR 1,500 in other elections, the value and the name of the donor must be

disclosed separately. The name of a private individual may not be disclosed without his or her express consent if the amount donated is lower than the amount specified above.

An election funding disclosure must be filed with the National Audit Office of Finland within two months of the confirmation of the election results. A disclosure can be filed by using a form approved by the National Audit Office. The National Audit Office monitors compliance with the disclosure obligation.

A candidate and, in presidential elections, a political party and constituency association nominating a candidate may also file a voluntary advance disclosure with the National Audit Office before election day. An advance disclosure, containing an estimate of the election funding and costs of the election campaign, can be filed as soon as the master list of candidates or the list of presidential candidates has been confirmed.

9 Election Information System

Data processing in connection with elections has been systematically developed in Finland since 1990. The objective has been to improve the election preparedness and security, to diversify and speed up the election information service, and to achieve resource savings. As a result of the development work, an **Election Information System** consisting of five subsystems has been in use since 1996. The sub-systems are:

1. **Basic data and polling station register**, which includes data on the electoral districts, wellbeing services counties, municipalities, voting districts, election authorities, and polling stations, for example.
2. **Candidate register**, in which the following data on each person standing as a candidate in a given election is entered: name, candidate number, profession, municipality of residence, political party/constituency association that has nominated the candidate, age on election day, and personal identity code. The Party Register is part of the candidate register.
3. **Voting register**, which contains data on every eligible voter. The data are extracted from the Population Information System. A separate voting register is compiled for each election. The voting register is used at the advance polling stations, and information about voting is entered in the register once an eligible voter has voted in advance. After the advance voting has been completed, electoral rolls are printed out from the voting register for each election day polling station. The voting register can, however, also be used at an election day polling station instead of or in addition to an electoral roll. After the elections, the information contained in the voting register is deleted.
4. **Centralised calculation system**, in which the constituency electoral committees, county election boards and central municipal election boards enter the results of the vote count as soon as they have been completed.
5. **System for transmitting election results**, through which information on election results and other statistical information is transmitted to the media and Statistics Finland.

The Election Information System also includes a steering system, a user rights management system, a code system and an archive.

The Election Information System is owned by the Ministry of Justice and administered by the Legal Register Centre (ORK). The system is operated on equipment administered centrally by the Government Centre for Information and Communication Technologies (VALTORI) and a private IT company acting as its subcontractor. The Ministry of Justice and the Legal Register Centre develop the Election Information System continuously, taking into account general developments in information technology.

10 Further information

About elections and political parties in general: www.electionsfinland.fi

About oversight of election campaign and political party financing:
www.vaalirahoitusvalvonta.fi

About the Ministry of Justice: www.om.fi

Annex. Registered political parties

The political parties with parliamentary seats are listed in the following table in the order of the size of the party, and the parties without seats are listed in the order of registration.

Political party and its website	Seats gained in the 2019 parliamentary elections	Party established/registered in the Party Register
The Social Democratic Party of Finland www.sdp.fi	40	1899 / 1969
The Finns Party www.perussuomalaiset.fi	39	1995 / 1995
The National Coalition Party www.kokoomus.fi	38	1918 / 1969
The Centre Party of Finland www.keskusta.fi	31	1906 / 1969
The Greens www.vihreat.fi	20	1988 / 1988
The Left Alliance www.vasemmistoliitto.fi	16	1990 / 1990
The Swedish People's Party of Finland www.sfp.fi	9+1 ⁸	1906 / 1969
Christian Democrats in Finland www.kd.fi	5	1958 / 1970
Movement Now www.liikenyty.fi	1	2018 / 2019
The Liberal Party – Freedom to Choose www.liberaalipuolue.fi	-	2016 / 2016
The Pirate Party of Finland www.piraattipuolue.fi	-	2008 / 2016 (2009)

8 Åland's representative

Political party and its website	Seats gained in the 2019 parliamentary elections	Party established/registered in the Party Register
The Animal Justice Party of Finland www.eop.fi	-	2016 / 2016
The Citizens' Party www.kansalaispuolue.net	-	2016 / 2016
The Feminist Party www.feministinenpuolue.fi	-	2017 / 2017
The Independence Party www.kansalaisliitto.fi	-	1994 / 2017 (1994)
The Finnish Reform Movement www.korjausliike.fi	-	2017 / 2017
Finnish Nation First www.suomenkansaensin.fi	-	2018 / 2018
Seven Star Movement	-	2018 / 2018
Communist Party of Finland www.skp.fi	-	1997 / 2021 (1997)
The Open Party www.avoinpuolue.fi		2021 / 2021
The Crystal Party www.kristallipuolue.fi		2021 / 2021
Power Belongs to the People www.valtakuuluukansalle.fi		2021 / 2021
Freedom Alliance www.vapaudenliitto.fi		2022 / 2022
The Blue-and-Black Movement www.sinimustaliike.fi		2022 / 2022

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