

ESCE

Electoral System Change in Europe since 1945



Electoral System Change in Europe since 1945: Finland

Authored by: Elwin Reimink

Compiled with the assistance of: Tapio Raunio

With thanks to:



University of
Reading





Section 1: Overview of Finnish Electoral System Changes since 1945

Finland uses a proportional electoral system with fully open lists. Voters cast a vote for one candidate. This system has not changed in its fundamentals since 1906. One notable reform, passed in 1954, had the effect of removing a layer of vote pooling across candidates.

Section 2: Relevant Electoral System changes in Finland since 1945

Table 1. Summary of Finnish Electoral Laws and Amendments since 1945

Law	Amendment	Date of enactment	Location	Relevant for the research
Laki edustajanvaaleista (Act on Parliamentary Elections) 66/1935		31.1.1935	<i>Valtiopäiväasiakirjat</i> , Sidotut asiakirjat: A.III:2 (1934vp)	Laki edustajanvaaleista (Act on Parliamentary Elections) 66/1935
Laki kansanedustajain vaaleista (Act on Parliamentary Elections) 167/1952		18.4.1952	<i>Valtiopäiväasiakirjat</i> , Sidotut asiakirjat: A.I (1951vp)	Laki kansanedustajain vaaleista (Act on Parliamentary Elections) 167/1952
Laki kansanedustajain vaaleista (Act on Parliamentary Elections) 336/1955		30.6.1955	<i>Valtiopäiväasiakirjat</i> , 24.5.1955 Sidotut asiakirjat: A.I	Laki kansanedustajain vaaleista (Act on Parliamentary Elections) 336/1955
Laki kansanedustajain vaaleista (Act on Parliamentary Elections) 391/1969		13.6.1969	http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/alkup/1969/196903 91	Laki kansanedustajain vaaleista (Act on Parliamentary Elections) 391/1969
	Laki kansanedustajain	16.5.1975		



	n vaaleista annetun lain muuttamisesta (Act on Amending the Act on Parliamentary Elections) 319/1975			
Vaalilaki (Election Act) 714/1998		2.10.1998	Finnish: http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1998/19980714	Vaalilaki (Election Act) 714/1998
			English: http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/kaannokset/1998/en19980714.pdf	

Section 3: Details of previous electoral systems and electoral system changes.

3.1 The 1945 Electoral System

The electoral law in force in 1945 and during the first post-war elections of 1948 was introduced in 1935. Basically, it constituted a single tier of 14 multimember districts plus a single-member district encompassing the Åland archipelago in the Gulf of Bothnia. This mechanism has stayed in force uninterrupted to the present day, bar some alterations in ballot structure, primaries and a few minor technicalities.

Assembly size. Fixed at 200 seats.

Districts and district magnitude. 1 seat is circumvented for allocation to the Åland archipelago; the other 199 seats are distributed through Hare quota to the 14 multimember districts (in 1954: 15 multimember districts). Note that the total number of citizens, as opposed to the number of eligible voters, is applied as the baseline for the seat distribution to the districts.



Nature of votes that can be cast. A voter has two options: either vote for a two-candidate list (filed by an electoral association of at least fifty voters), or vote for a write-in candidate. The voter has only one vote and cannot alter the order of the disposable lists.

Party threshold. No party threshold was imposed.

Allocation of seats to parties at the lower tier. Electoral associations (which file the lists) can choose to form electoral unions. These electoral unions can consist of an unlimited amount of lists, as long as the total number of candidates within the electoral union does not exceed the total amount of seats that is to be distributed in the district where the union is in force. The combined lists of electoral unions behave as if they form one list. Then, D'Hondt is applied to distribute the number of available seats among the lists and the combinations of lists.

Allocation of seats to parties at the upper tier. Not applicable.

Allocation of seats to candidates. The two-person lists are completely closed.

Table 2: Allocation of seats at district level in 1948, 1951 and 1954

Electoral district	District magnitude		
	1948	1951	1954
Uusimaa	31	33	15
Helsinki			19
Varsinais-Suomen	14	17	16
Satakunnan	13	15	14
Hämeen	11	14	14
Pirkanmaan	12	13	13
Kymen	32	15	15
Etelä-Savon	11	12	12
Pohjois-Savon	11	13	13
Pohjois-Karjalan	10	11	11
Vaasan läänin itäinen	11	12	12
Vaasan läänin eteläinen	10	10	10
Vaasan läänin pohjoinen	8	8	8
Oulun	17	18	18
Lapin	8	8	9
Åland	1	1	1

3.2 The 1954/55 Electoral Reform

The basic mechanism of the 1935 system was maintained; only the ballot structure was amended.

Assembly size. [Short description].



Nature of votes that can be cast. In every district, electoral associations can nominate candidates for election; these candidates form one-person lists. Again, these lists can form electoral unions. Voters have the option to vote for the one-candidate lists, or cast a vote for a write-in candidate.

Note that the change from up-to-two-member lists to one-member lists (within overall party lists) was first enacted in a special law applying only to the 1954 election and then made permanent in the 1955 electoral law (Törnudd 1968: 57). As Törnudd (1968: 84) observes of this change:

“before one-person lists were made compulsory in 1954, the party organizations could still manipulate the outcome to some extent, usually by placing some particular candidate or candidates on several lists together with popular vote-getters. In this way, the election of at least one or two particular candidates could be ensured beforehand, although it was not possible to determine in advance the final order of all candidates. Under the present rules, the maximum power left with the district party organization is the power to decide who shall be a candidate.”

Allocation of seats to candidates. Not applicable anymore.

No other change.

Table 3: Allocation of seats at district [and provincial] level in 1958, 1962 and 1966

Electoral district	District magnitude		
	1958	1962	1966
Helsinki	19	20	21
Usamaa	16	17	18
Varsinais-Suomen	16	16	16
Satakunnan	14	14	13
Hämeen	14	14	14
Pirkanmaan	13	12	12
Kymen	15	15	15
Etelä-Savon	12	11	10
Pohjois-Savon	12	12	12
Pohjois-Karjalan	11	10	9
Vaasa		20	20
Vaasan läänin itäinen	12		
Vaasan läänin eteläinen	10		
Vaasan läänin pohjoinen	8		
Keski-Suomen		11	11
Oulun	18	18	18
Lapin	9	9	10
Åland	1	1	1



3.3 The 1969 Electoral Reform.

The reform of 1969 was probably the most comprehensive post-war review of the electoral system. This reform is somewhat double-edged: while the ballot structure is fundamentally altered, the actual mechanism of the system remains roughly the same. Together with the ballot reform, parties were recognized in electoral law (substituting ‘electoral associations’), and some provisions were included to ensure democratic intra-party primaries. Both reforms, however, do not fall within the scope of this descriptive.

Nature of votes that can be cast. Both registered parties and loose associations of voters can file election lists in districts (in practice, in nearly all cases, only registered parties go on to succeed in actually obtaining seats; Sundberg, 2002). Parties are subject to relatively strict rules regarding intra-party primaries, and can file lists with no more candidates than seats up for election in the district (after 1975, some exceptions were made for small districts). Voters cannot cast list votes, and can choose any one, but only one, candidate (with the option of a write-in candidate).

Allocation of seats to candidates. Within every lists (or combination of connected lists), seats are granted in order of the number of votes cast for candidates (a completely open list system). Within combinations of lists, this rule is maintained without any regard to the proportion of votes cast for the separate lists, potentially leading to parties with a small share of the vote grabbing up disproportionately many seats within the electoral combination.

No other change.

Table 4: Allocation of seats at district [and provincial] level from 1970 to 1987

Electoral district	District magnitude					
	1970	1972	1975	1979	1983	1987
Helsinki	22	22	21	20	20	20
Usamaa	20	21	24	26	27	29
Varsinais-Suomen	16	16	16	17	17	17
Satakunnan	13	13	13	13	13	12
Hämeen	14	15	15	15	15	15
Pirkanmaan	13	13	13	13	13	13
Kymen	15	15	15	15	14	14
Etelä-Savon	10	10	9	9	9	8
Pohjois-Savon	11	11	11	11	10	10
Pohjois-Karjalan	8	8	8	7	7	7
Vaasa	19	18	18	18	18	18
Keski-Suomen	11	10	10	10	10	10
Oulun	18	18	17	17	18	18
Lapin	9	9	9	8	8	8
Åland	1	1	1	1	1	1

For details on later years, see the appendix



References

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Appendix

Table 5: Allocation of seats at district [and provincial] level from 1983 to 1995

Name of the district	1983	1987	1991	1995
Uusimaa	20	20	20	19
Helsinki	27	29	30	31
Varsinais-Suomen	17	17	17	17
Satakunnan	13	12	12	12
Hämeen	15	15	13	13
Pirkanmaan	13	13	15	15
Kymen	14	14	13	13
Etelä-Savon	9	8	8	8
Pohjois-Savon	10	10	10	10
Pohjois-Karjalan	7	7	7	7
Vaasa	18	18	18	18
Vaasan läänin itäinen				



Vaasan läänin eteläinen				
Vaasan läänin pohjoinen				
Keski-Suomen	10	10	10	10
Oulun	18	18	18	18
Lapin	8	8	8	8
Åland	1	1	1	1

Table 6: Allocation of seats at district [and provincial] level from 1999 to 2011

Name of the district	1999	2003	2007	2011
Uusimaa	20	21	21	21
Helsinki	32	33	34	35
Varsinais-Suomen	17	17	17	17
Satakunnan	10	9	9	9
Hämeen	13	14	14	14
Pirkanmaan	16	18	18	18
Kymen	13	12	12	12
Etelä-Savon	8	6	6	6
Pohjois-Savon	10	10	10	9
Pohjois-Karjalan	7	7	6	6
Vaasa	17	17	17	17
Vaasan läänin itäinen				
Vaasan läänin eteläinen				
Vaasan läänin pohjoinen				
Keski-Suomen	10	10	10	10
Oulun	18	18	18	18
Lapin	8	7	7	7
Åland	1	1	1	1