



Finland

Republic of Finland

Europe

Geography

Area 338,145 sq km. This northern country is 70% forest, 10% lake, 8% arable land.

Population	Ann Gr	Density
2010	5,345,826	0.38%
2020	5,495,753	0.24%
2030	5,543,810	0.04%

Capital Helsinki 1,116,608. **Urbanites** 63.9%. **Pop under 15yrs** 17%. **Life expectancy** 79.5 yrs.

Peoples

Finno-Ugric 97.6%. Finns 97.6%, of which 5.5% are Swedish-speaking, largely in SW and on Åland Islands in the Gulf of Bothnia; Saami(3) 0.05%.

Other European 0.9%. Russian 0.5%.

Other 1.5%. Immigrant groups, mainly from Middle East and East Asia.

Literacy 100%. **Official languages** Finnish, Swedish, Saami, sign language. **All languages** 23.

Indigenous languages 12. **Languages with Scriptures** 4Bi 1NT 6por 4w.i.p.

Economy

Specialized and primarily high-tech, export-oriented economy, supported by the traditional economy based largely on wood products. Solid economic growth since the late 1990s, but unemployment (especially of minorities) remains a concern.

HDI Rank 12th/182. **Public debt** 33.7% of GDP. **Income/person** \$51,588 (109% of USA).

Politics

Ruled by Sweden for 700 years, then by Russia for a further 100. Independent in 1917. A stable multiparty democracy. Member of EU.

Religion

Freedom of religion, but Evangelical Lutheran and Finnish (Greek) Orthodox Churches are recognized as national churches.

Religions	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Christian	83.75	4,477,129	0.0%
Non-religious	15.54	830,741	2.4%
Muslim	0.56	29,937	5.8%
Other	0.11	5,880	2.3%
Jewish	0.02	1,069	0.4%
Hindu	0.01	535	0.4%
Baha'i	0.01	535	0.4%

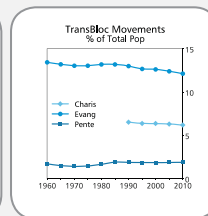
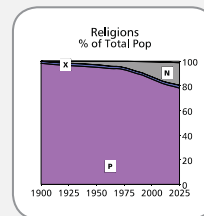
Christians	Denoms	Pop %	Affiliates	Ann Gr
Protestant	34	83.25	4,450,000	-0.2%
Independent	11	0.03	2,000	2.6%
Anglican	1	<0.01	<200	-1.0%
Catholic	1	0.18	10,000	3.5%
Orthodox	3	1.11	60,000	0.6%
Marginal	8	0.56	30,000	-1.4%
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>		-1.38	-74,000	0.0%

Churches	MegaBloc	Congs	Members	Affiliates
Evang Lutheran Ch	P	1,348	1,685,547	4,315,000
Finnish Pentecostal Ch	P	223	52,000	96,200
Greek Orth (Finnish)	O	127	39,860	57,000
Jehovah's Witnesses	M	300	17,500	24,500
Evangelical Free Ch	P	102	14,800	19,240
Catholic Church	C	15	6,643	9,500
Seventh-day Adventist	P	70	3,800	5,054
Latter-day Saints(Mormon)	M	30	2,849	4,530
Free Russian Orthodox	O	3	1,840	2,300
Pentecostal Friends	P	1	120	200
Other denominations[47]		275	11,614	18,033
<i>Doubly affiliated</i>				-73,800
Total Christians[58]		2,494	1,836,573	4,477,757

TransBloc	Pop %	Population	Ann Gr
Evangelicals			
Evangelicals	12.1	648,682	-0.1%
Renewalists			
Charismatics	6.2	331,145	0.1%
Pentecostals	1.9	100,796	0.5%

Missionaries from Finland

P,I,A 908 long-term in about 70 countries; 8 serving cross-culturally in Finland.



Answers to Prayer

- 1 Finland's strong Christian tradition and geographical location** give it a strategic role in reaching the many peoples in the former Soviet Union. Of particular importance is the impact of ministry-oriented Finnish believers on the Finno-Ugric peoples of Russia's interior, their distant ethnic cousins.
- 2 The nation is one of the most affluent and peaceful on earth.** It consistently ranks at or near the top of the table in global surveys that measure civil liberties, education, peace, income, stability and environmental issues. While this is a point for thanksgiving, pray also that this would be a platform for generous giving and committed ministry and outreach.
- 3 The legacy of missionary sending remains strong,** even as the Church faces the challenge of stagnation and decline. Finns and their churches are effective at sending out missionaries, especially to the unevangelized world.

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Challenges for Prayer

- 1 Humanism, secularism and materialism have strangleholds** on most Finns. While the majority (90%) look favourably upon the Church's social work, only 8% of Finns attend any kind of religious service monthly or more, and only 3% of Lutherans attend weekly. Spirituality has more or less become privatized. Christians may number 84% of the population, but society is effectively a secular one. The last revival occurred during the 1960s. Interest in spiritual things offers some hope, but Islam and fringe religious movements are currently the fastest growing. Pray for a spiritual breakthrough that will cause people to seek the Lord.
- 2 The Lutheran Church retains a stronger evangelical tradition** than most state churches, partly a heritage of the revival movements of the past that have influenced its spirituality. The large majority still claim affiliation with Lutheranism, but much of it is a nominal or social attachment. Only around 12% of Lutherans would be regarded as evangelical. The wider Lutheran Church faces several challenges:
 - a) Liberalism.** To a large degree, the teachings and direction of the Church are shifting from traditional biblical values to a much broader morality. This is the source of much controversy, since the prophetic role of the Church in society is blunted.
 - b) Independent and lay movements within the national Church framework.** There are many such groups, a large number from a revivalist background. It is in these that most committed Lutherans find their fellowship and platform for evangelism. They may face increasing restrictions in their evangelical preaching and teaching from a liberal Lutheran hierarchy, but these groups are a very important element of Finland's spiritual life. Pray for their continued freedom to function and lead in many aspects of spiritual life.
 - c) Younger leadership.** Increasingly, aging church populations find themselves out of touch with a younger generation. A more vibrant spirituality must replace traditional religious and cultural forms. Sadly, a growing number of younger, more evangelical Lutherans are frozen out of leadership positions precisely because their faith is too dynamic! Pray that these vibrant younger evangelicals might not lose heart, and pray that God will open doors for them to have a great revitalizing effect on the national Church.
 - d) Future tensions.** As with many mainline groups elsewhere, a major fault line is appearing in Finnish Lutheranism between the liberal element and a more evangelical, conservative element. How this plays out, and who is perceived as causing the conclusive schism, will profoundly shape both the Lutheran Church and Finnish perceptions of Christianity. Some of the more conservative groups and fellowships have already split off and formed new denominations along what they believe to be more biblically faithful teaching.
- 3 The Free Churches,** both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal, are relatively small but spiritually vigorous; charismatic renewal has had a marked impact. These churches are not growing, but they are holding their own in a wide context of decline. These groups are enjoying a greater unity than in years past. Pray for this to continue, for cooperation in evangelism and missions among these various bodies, and between the Free Churches and Lutherans.

4 **A new paradigm for the Church is required** if it is to grow in Finland. An ultra-modern country such as Finland probably needs some structural reformation in the Church and some new expressions of faith. This is particularly true for the next generation, who are less traditional and more pragmatic about Christian spirituality. Specific issues:

- a) **The many rootless believers** who “church-hop” and lack commitment to one fellowship. And many disillusioned believers with genuine faith don’t engage in any fellowship at all. Pray that the Spirit would convict them to integrate more fully into His body.
- b) **The widespread growth of house groups.** Some of these groups are planted by Lutheran revival movements, some by other denominations and some are independent of churches altogether. Pray for ways for these groups to integrate themselves into the larger faith scene and to have a profound spiritual impact on the unchurched.

5 **Ministry to young people** is still valuable. A high proportion of Finnish young people attend confirmation camps; this is an opportunity for them to come to a living faith in Christ. Pray for believing and godly camp leaders. Pray for the student ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran Student Mission (**IFES**, in 15 of 20 university cities), LEAF and **CCCI**. Interest and responsiveness are not problems in Finland: good follow-up and discipleship are.

6 **The heritage of sending missionaries is under threat.** The strength of mission sending has largely been through parachurch agencies or independent movements within the larger Lutheran framework. The churches need to catch a missions vision and become more involved in the sending process, rather than relying totally on agencies. But an over-centralization of mission-sending structures, under the rubric of the Lutheran Church, could drastically stunt missions as it could effectively isolate mission sending from the congregations altogether. The disconnectedness of many Finns from local churches doesn’t help the situation. Specific mission-mobilizing events have helped bring together different agencies and raise the profile of missions. Pray for more workers as well as more supporters.

7 **Particularly needy sectors of society** include:

- a) **Immigrant minority groups.** Although Finland has one of Europe’s lower immigration rates, there are still many minority groups to reach. The number of foreign university students is growing; many of these are from other faiths. Very few churches are actively reaching out to unreached immigrant groups. Pray that foreigners in Finland might have the chance to encounter Jesus in a real and attractive way. Praise God that, at the same time, much of the immigrant population is from a Christian background bringing a vibrant church life to their newfound host country.
- b) **Indigenous minorities** are small in number but unique in culture. The Saami people of Lapland are Europe’s last truly nomadic people group, and number over 100,000 across the Nordic countries. They are nominally Lutheran, but with an underlying animistic worldview. Pray for the ministries working with them. Pray also for a flourishing of culturally relevant expressions of Christian faith in their midst.
- c) **Men’s ministry is a real need** in Finland. Discipling men is difficult in a highly passive and private culture. Pray for ministries that will be able to call Finns into relationships that involve pastoring, mentoring and accountability.