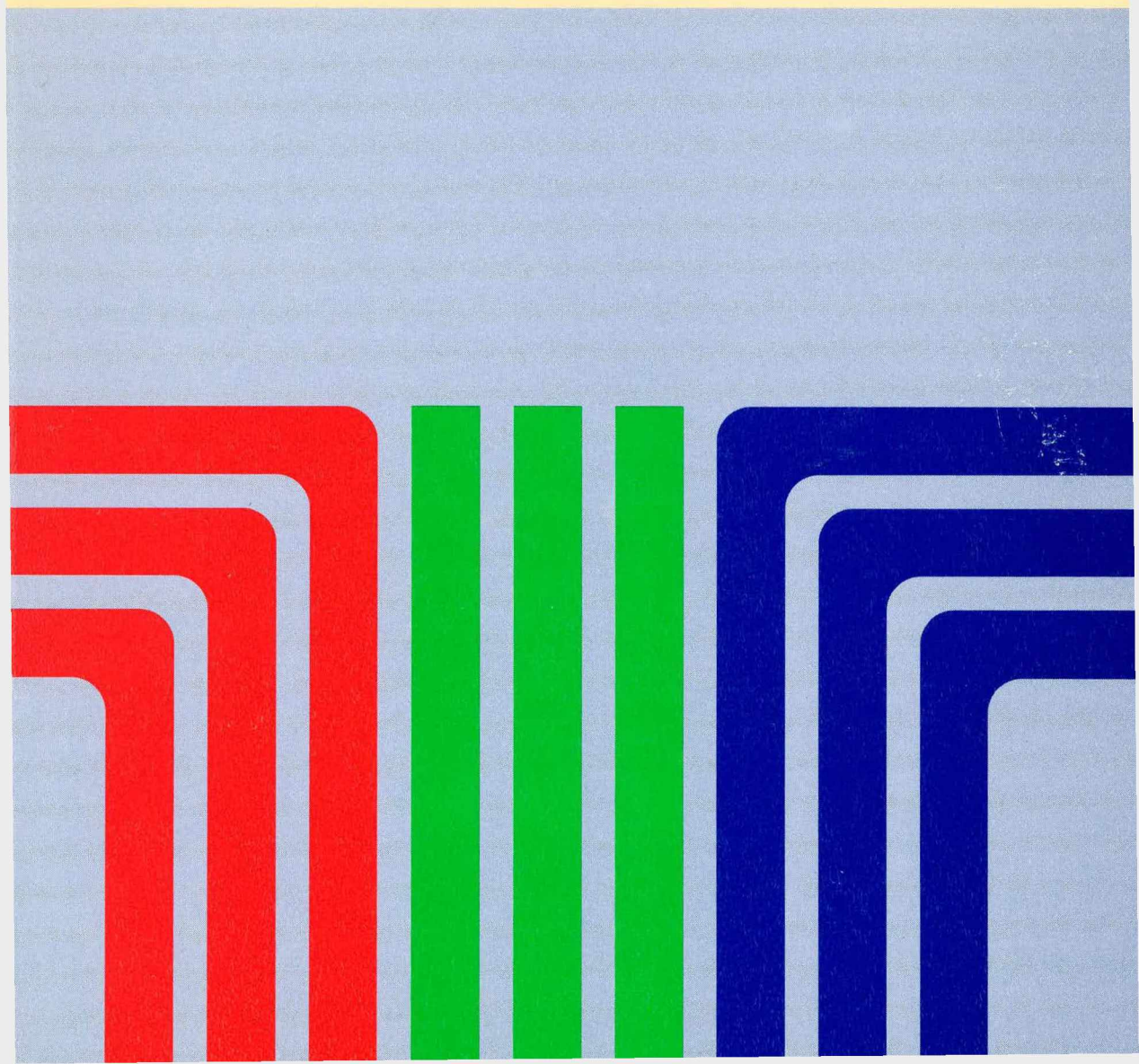




# Voting, parties and social change in Finland

Tuomo Martikainen – Risto Yrjönen





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# Preface

The citizens in a representative democracy play a fairly passive role, being required simply to show either their approval or their disapproval of the political administration at regular intervals. Trends which have taken place during the last couple of decades have indicated that even this minor role is becoming a privilege exercised by an ever-decreasing number of people and that a growing proportion of the public are turning their backs on politics.

The weakening of political engagement and loss of interest in politics are of course problematic, as they allow the political elite and political decisions to escape from public guidance and control. On the other hand, passivity and abstention constitute a factor which may play an important role in practical politics and the balance of power between the parties.

This investigation carried out by Professor Tuomo Martikainen and Risto Yrjönen, Lic.Soc.Sc., jointly with Statistics Finland (formerly, the Central Statistical Office of Finland) adopts a critical approach to such basic questions for a representative democracy, i.e. voting and the resulting changes in the balance of political power in Finland. Statistics Finland wish to extend their thanks to the authors for their fruitful cooperation.

The investigation is based on material provided by Statistics Finland, in which census data from 1985 were combined with data on voting taken from the registers of the parliamentary election of 1987. The material also contains long-term research data on party

support and structural changes in society analysed at the level of individual local government districts.

Particular thanks are also due to a number of other persons who contributed to this research. Lauri Tarkkonen read the section concerning the use and interpretation of logit models, while Pekka Martikainen was responsible for the practical implementation of the models. Liisa Kanerva and Harri Vuorenmaa from Statistics Finland processed the basic material for use in the investigation, and Liisa Kotilainen was responsible for lay-out and editing. The manuscript was translated into English by Antti Rönkkö and Malcolm Hicks.

A research group consisting of Erkki Pentimäki, Lauri Yli-Pekka, Risto Heinonen and Risto Lättilä from Statistics Finland contributed to the compilation and processing of the data on voting activity, and Eeva Heinonen was responsible for acquiring the data.

The current work continues the authors' earlier research in this field. Statistics Finland published an earlier investigation by Tuomo Martikainen in 1988, which discusses voting activity at the parliamentary election of 1987 based on a material comprising a total of 2.2 million voters, whereas the present investigation involves practically all those entitled to vote in Finland.

Helsinki, October 1991

Olavi E. Niitamo

Risto Lättilä

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# I Introduction

## Background and aim of the investigation

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The aim of this investigation is to examine the relation between the party system and social changes in Finland, particularly in the light of party support at elections, and the political activity of the public. Although the main focus will be on the situation in the 1980's, the development and changes which have taken place during the entire post-war period will also be examined. The framework for interpreting and evaluating the empirical results will be outlined briefly in this introductory section.

\* \* \*

It is generally believed that the results of elections and the balance of power between parties in political systems which are based on free elections are determined by the general public, who evaluate how successfully the parties and political leaders performed and carried out their tasks. Persons who are sensitive in adjusting their party support, i.e. 'shifting' voters, and changes in the relative fortunes of the parties are features of this model of 'participation', the latter being dependent on the extent to which the general public is content/discontent at the time of the election with the parties and candidates they supported at the previous election. It seems, however, that such a 'political market' model can only account for one side of the reality, as election results and the relative strengths of the parties are also affected by factors which maintain political stability and continuity and restrict the effects of temporary 'market fluctuations' from manifesting themselves in people's political decisions. In fact the interrelationships of parties and their relative strengths as they developed upon the establishment of universal franchise, particularly

in Western Europe, have survived outstandingly well throughout the decades, even though fairly pronounced fluctuations have occasionally occurred in the mutual positions of parties in terms of long-term stability. In many cases the party system has managed to regain its traditional combination despite the effect of a 'protest election'. Thus it seems that the long-term stability of political relations in a democracy such as Finland has allowed the competition and fluctuations occurring between parties in this respect to take place in a controlled manner. This emphasizes the practicability of democracy, in that change and stability have in a sense supported each other.

A number of factors have contributed to the stability of the balance of power between political parties. One decisive factor is that the parties themselves have managed to keep abreast with social development, thus ensuring continuous support and preventing people from needing to resort to new alternatives. It is evident that continuity is also maintained by the actual existence of a variety of parties, since the public often consider the established parties to constitute a system which stands for the major political alternatives and thus allows people an adequate opportunity to use the rights and liberties of political selection to which they are entitled. Thus the phrase "It's easy to choose when you are allowed to" seems to hold good. In addition, continuity is of course also maintained by the regulations governing political participation and organisation, which place limitations on the rise of new, small political groups to the status of official national parties allowed to participate in general elections.

The most important source of political continuity is that the voter's relation to a party becomes transformed in the course of time into a profound, psychologically reinforced identification, i.e. the ideological and operational aims of the party merge with his opinions and political ideals so as to determine his political world view. The person will then consider the party the best political alternative under all conditions and is likely to reject it only upon complete dissatisfaction with its actions.

The progress of political mobilisation and the process of creating parties in European political systems – including that of Finland – have followed the structural divisions in society. Religion, ethnic composition, the system of regions and the class and occupational divisions in particular, both independently and in various combinations, constituted the cornerstones of political thought and activities. The party system was organized and established in accordance with political groups which developed out of social classes and groups conforming to the basic divisions in society. The firm relationship of the goals and objective needs of such social groups to the party system and the ideologies of the parties has created conditions for the development of a strong party identification which has been transferred from one generation to another as a political tradition even when the original causes for such an identification no longer exist.

The fixed relation (alignment) prevailing in the connections between political participation and the factors affecting it has in general terms showed some signs of dissolution (dealignment) during the last twenty years or so. In many instances, even in Finland, the factors that contributed to the traditional political distinctions and those which created the major political fronts are disappearing and the balance of political power and grouping of the parties are becoming oriented towards entirely new social issues, values and needs. Thus the long-term political continuity is obviously undergoing a process of change.

The various situations in terms of political continuity and change can be looked at on

the basis of a simple typology which aims at distinguishing alternative combinations of structural change in society and changes in party support. The structure of society refers to social groups, classes and sectors which are grounded in the division of labour and thus constitute the basis for the political mobilisation of the parties and for the support they command.

Structural change in society	Relationship between political participation and social structure	Changes in political participation and party support	
		Minor	Major
Slow or minor	Loose	A1	C1
	Firm	A2	C2
Rapid or major	Loose	B1	D1
	Firm	B2	D2

Types A1 and A2 represent stable situations in which the party system and political participation are characterized by continuity and established relations with their background factors (alignment). Such a situation may also arise upon changes in political participation and the balance of power between parties, represented above by types D1 and D2, in which the structural change in society affects political participation either via established connections (D2) or by indirect means (D1). In its most elementary form, this means that changes in party support follow – in direct proportion – changes in the supporting groups, in which case political changes can be easily explained and regarded as 'natural'. Many investigations have overlooked the possibility of structural stability in political changes, which has led to underestimation of the role of traditional bonds and contrasts in political behaviour. This was emphasized by F.U. Pappi, for instance, who used empirical analyses to illustrate how class-based oppositions tend to be preserved in West German politics even upon changes in the structure of the parties and of society (Pappi 1973).

Types B1, B2, C1 and C2 stand for situations which involve dissolution of the previous traditional grounds for political participation and the evolution of new ones. In the C types, changes in political participation are not directly related to structural changes in society but may be accounted for by a time-lag in adjustment to such structural changes or by changes in the values and value systems of individuals and society.

As far as the B types are concerned, there is a strained relationship between political participation and social structure. The highest tension is found in type B2, in which a system of political participation which is closely bound to the structure of society remains stable despite marked fluctuations in the latter. This may be explained by the rapid breaking of the established bonds between politics and the society or a swift adjustment in the system of participation accompanied by the evolution of new political cleavages. As the connections between political participation and social groups become more open, as in type B1, the pressures of change imposed by the social structure may be transmitted into political participation through changes in the systems of social values and norms.

A close connection has prevailed between the organisation of political forces and the structure of groups and classes in Finnish society. The present party system, in its essential parts, conforms to that which originated at the early stages of political mobilisation. In the usage of the general public, in public opinion, in routine politics and in the political choices made by the people, the parties have come to be labelled as 'labour parties', 'rural parties' and 'non-socialist middle-class parties'. The major parties have been taken to represent the corresponding social groups for as long as such groups have existed in society, and, correspondingly, for as long as the people belonging to them have recognised their membership of a given group as natural. Social and political identification have reinforced each other, and the voters have easily been able to identify the 'correct party' on the basis of explicit party labels. This is reflected in research results which

have shown that people's own evaluations and perceptions of their social position are more closely connected with their political ideas and choices than are their actual positions in society.

The Finnish party system has been relatively stable by international standards since the Second World War, although there have been signs of increasing changes both in the balance of power between the parties and in people's levels of political activity. As the structural divisions in society and the traditional mobilisation bases of parties have simultaneously changed to a profound extent, Finland clearly represents type B2, in which the traditional ties that connected people to politics have largely become dissolved and entirely new grounds for these interconnections have to be found to ensure the stability of the system. In this sense the Finnish political system is at a critical turning point.

\* \* \*

Citizens are not directly involved in the actual enacting of decisions in a representative democracy, but adopt more the role of onlookers. The structural narrowness of this role inevitably gives rise to three questions regarding the relation between the public and politics, the answers to which will determine the stability of the political system. These are the questions of people's

- identification with political alternatives, ideologies and the parties representing these;
- motivation for participating in politics; and
- approval of the nature of current politics and the use being made of political power.

Identification is mainly a question of the extent to which the public are able to evaluate and interpret politics and the alternatives and practical solutions politics has to offer in view of their particular stage in life, their needs and aims. Motivation is in turn a question of how important people consider politics to be either for themselves

or for society in general and their possibilities for influencing it. The approval of a political system, the legitimation of politics, means that people regard the rules and principles of political activity as acceptable, justified and significant from the point of view of the values they consider important and of their goals. In practice, such approval and the underlying evaluations mainly have to do with the most prominent political manifestations, i.e. politicians and the political institutions – parliament, the government and the parties – and their behaviour. It is the solution of these three questions that will guarantee a stable political system. The most important of them is that of legitimation, which was regarded as a crucial precondition for such a system even by Max Weber. Although from the point of view of stability it is not essential what grounds approval of the system is based on, it is obvious that one essential question affecting the approval of a modern political system is its ability to generate decisions and measures which the people and the various social groups can perceive to be favourable for themselves and to meet their needs and aims. In addition to the effectiveness and productiveness of politics, the extent to which people and social groups feel they are able to influence affairs is also of importance.

According to the democratic ideals of the western countries, peoples' political liberties and possibilities for contributing to the exercising of political power constitute a value in itself irrespective of the type of practical results achieved by these. As concluded by Lane and Ersson in their profound evaluation of the political systems of Western Europe, the stability of a system is decisively dependent on how balanced a position the people and social groups occupy in terms of their needs and possibilities with respect to political independence (autonomy) and political influence. Any increase in political control and regulation which reduces independence requires expansion of the means of political influence of individuals and groups, as a lack of correspondence in this respect will endanger the balance of the entire political system (Lane & Ersson 1991, 321–324).

There has been much talk recently about a crisis with respect to the above three factors which affect the relationship between politics and the public. This crisis arises from the fact that peoples' political motivation and identification, and particularly their acceptance of the political system, are at a lower level than the general ideals of stable political development and democracy would consider appropriate. Interpretations of the increase in political passivity and apathy in particular have pointed to these general factors affecting the relationship between politics and the public and the changes which have occurred in them. To speak about a crisis as such is usually fruitless and will easily lead to a notional dead end, should it eventually prove that the process referred to as a crisis does not endanger the practicability and balance of the system after all (e.g. v. Beyme 1985, 360–372). If it extends over a long period, a crisis is no longer a crisis in the sense of a state of affairs which in the long run would severely endanger the continuity of the system. Instead of evaluating the state of relations between the public and politics on various dimensions, it is thus more important to examine the mechanisms which determine the extent of peoples' motivation, political identification and their approval of politics at a given time.

The present investigation originates from the assumption that changes have taken place in the relation between politics and the public of a kind which hamper and disturb the maintenance of relations that are essential for the working of the political system and its adjustment to changing conditions. These changes will be looked at briefly in the following with special emphasis on factors of relevance for the political system of Finland.

Perhaps the most important changes in the position of politics in society from the point of view of the development of the relation between the public and politics, have to do with the scope of political control and the types of problems subjected to political regulation. It is evident that society in Finland and other corresponding societies have been placed under increased political control and regulation during the last few

decades irrespective of the criteria used for evaluation. Matters of significance for individual people and factors affecting people's lives are increasingly being based on political decisions and legislation, while the administration of social development has set requirements for political control which call for a comprehensive regulation of the basic processes operating in society. At least in Finland, political discussion is being dominated by questions and concepts which concern society as a whole rather than any specific area. Themes such as 'ensuring the competitive ability of companies on the international market', 'necessity of a profitability-based income and wage policy' and 'the Paasikivi-Kekkonen line in foreign policy' remain unaffected by ordinary political competition, as if they have gained an objective content and constitute guidelines which are binding on all political groups.

Such generalization and de-ideologization within politics has also been affected by the rapid breakdown of the traditional class and occupational structure of society and the low level of political organization among new groups. This may at least partly explain the decrease in the ideological and class-based appeal of the parties, which are increasingly adopting the role of general parties unwilling to point out any particular social groups whose interests they claim to stand for. The groups to which the parties openly appeal usually represent various stages of life, including students, young people, working people and pensioners. Practically everybody is involved in these groups at some point, which means that they are ideologically neutral and well suited as targets for general parties.

The growing tendency towards general parties also means that political disagreements and the formation of fronts on topical matters such as the environment develop more easily and in a more conspicuous manner inside the parties, which of course hampers their ideological differentiation. To counterbalance this development, political competition is becoming increasingly centred around persons, although this can, of course, also be explained by a number of other factors. Although politicians and

political leaders constitute important additional objects of appeal in politics, it seems that it is the persons themselves, without any specific political message, who have become instruments of professional political marketing, campaigns and product development.

The expansion of political control in society has subjected the political and administrative system to efficiency and productivity requirements which have contributed to a certain spread of technology into politics and increased the power of the administrative apparatus and the corporate interests bound up with it. This in turn has restricted the role of the representative bodies responsible for making decisions and has shifted political decisions, and the compatibility of ideas required to generate them, outside the publicly accountable parliamentary forum. Politics is reflected in public in the form of an increasingly specialised technocratic and bureaucratic form of debate which people often find difficult to understand or to associate with their problems and their ways of evaluating the solutions available.

What is essential in these changes from the point of view of political participation and political activities among the population is that the extension and complication of the substance of politics has inevitably complicated its appearance, i.e. the issues and language of politics, so that it is now difficult for an ordinary person to interpret politics and form his political standpoint on the basis of his needs and situation in life.

It is necessary in the present case to look at changes in the mobilisation base only from the point of view of social groups and the mechanisms which affect the political ideas and interpretations of individuals and groups.

Although there are a number of levels and problems in the analysis of the class and occupational structure of society which have been constantly subject to social research and discussion, it is unnecessary to go into these problems in any detail here. There are a multitude of theoretical and empirical observations on changes which have taken place in the class and group structure of

Finnish society that would be of use for the present investigation. On the other hand, it must be noted that this research is based on a regional and structural survey and mainly uses the classifications employed in official statistical analyses, which of course restricts the possibilities for providing nuanced class and group interpretations.

By comparison with many other industrialized societies, the class and group structure in Finland has undergone changes of exceptional speed and magnitude. There has been a simultaneous expansion in the working class and in the upper and lower middle classes during the post-war era, caused by a rapid, pronounced decrease in the number of people engaged in primary production.

These objective criteria as such are not realised in the form of social action, however, but call for individuals and groups to interpret their own position in the society. The quantitative changes in social classes also involve a number of qualitative changes that slow down and hamper the development and establishment of concepts that correspond to changes in class and group structure in society. The social 'location' of the expanding middle class is particularly open and unorganized, and the development which has taken place among the working class and farmers also requires changes in our subjective notions of social position. These factors will be looked at in more detail in connection with the empirical analyses, as the main focus here will be a more general one, i.e. upon mechanisms which create and maintain class and group interpretations and social identification, and upon changes in these.

The general opinion is that the structural change in society, urbanization and a working life and pattern of leisure-time activity which are progressively organising themselves into a set of formal (bureaucratic) entities have deprived the traditional arenas for social interaction and communication, i.e. the family, the living community and the working community, of their significance as focal points for the social life of a group or individual and the points which shape their outlook on the world.

Politics, political communication and the related creation of political ideas have constituted an essential part of group activities and identification. This has provided the basis from which individuals and groups have derived their political thinking and choices as an intimate part of their social activities. Privatization means that political thinking and activities are moving away from their social connections, as a result of which politics itself is left with more and more of the responsibility for proving its own importance through the results it can gain and for creating the grounds for its own acceptance.

To some degree, the motivation, identification and legitimation problems involved in public participation in politics are permanent features of a representative democracy, a topic on which lively and extensive discussion has recently been aroused in the field of political research by Jürgen Habermas, for example (Habermas 1975). Yet the factors which contribute to the extent and actual type of these problems at a given time vary with respect to political and social situations. Some features of social change which were of relevance when considering the points of departure of the present investigation and the questions to be answered in it were looked at in fairly general terms above. Two factors were selected on the basis of this as representing current matters which concern the relations between the public and politics in Finland. These were firstly the rapid and profound change in social structure and the overall regeneration of the social base of politics, and secondly the expansion and change in the social role of politics and the "fiscal power" controlled by it.

In the wake of changes in the social position of the public and the general role of politics, it is difficult for the public to relate to politics and political choices from the traditional points of departure, especially when the social mechanisms which maintain the continuity of tradition have weakened or entirely disappeared. In the light of this, the division of political participation into successive stages of development presented by Stein Rokkan can also be applied to Finland. According to Rokkan, the formal

realization of the political rights of the public, franchise in particular, is followed by a 'mobilisation stage' at which the media of political participation, i.e. political organizations and parties, become organized and gather people together to undertake political activities by 'teaching' them politics and its significance. This gradually gives way to a period during which the political participation of the public is organized within the framework of a fixed party system and the political alternatives created by it. Patterns of political participation establish their position within the political culture and traditions, which come to vary both in terms of region and social groups (Rokkan 1970, 35-40).

The outlines of political mobilisation among the public in Finland emerged rapidly as a result of universal franchise and the holding of elections, and the political divisions of the 1920's are still reflected in the social structure and regional distribution of party support. The period of established political participation cannot be regarded as having begun until after the Second World War, however, due to the non-democratic events of the 1930's. It was in the general election of 1945 that voting reached the level of established democracies in international terms for the first time, with a turnout of 74.9%, to be followed by 78.2% in 1948, while it had been less than 70% in the elections held in the 1930's. The people living in the marginal areas of the north in particular did not reach their present level of political activity or that of the southern regions until after the war.

In terms of voting turnout, the period of established political participation culminated in a figure of 85.1% at the general election of 1962. Looking at the situation since that time, it may be said that this period of participation has not proceeded without some backsliding, as indicated by the marked, regular drop in voting activity in general elections and the increasing number of changes in the balance of power between the parties. The elections of the 1970's and 1980's can in fact be seen as representing 'disengagement', the third stage suggested by Rokkan, in which some features of political participation suggest that the

established political motives are losing their significance and the people's political participation is being released from its fixed bonds.

Some permanent features of representative democracy and political group behaviour which are based on the above problems of motivation, identification and legitimation may be emphasized in political participation at the disengagement stage. As fixed modes of political thought and action and the traditions maintaining these become weaker, political activities and political choices may become increasingly governed by situationally-determined political fashions, political populism and related forms of behaviour of the mass movement type with restricted ideologies, often based on a single cause and an element of political opportunism. Such phenomena and behavioural features have been mentioned by a number of classic theories and predictions regarding the mass society which have examined the changes and breakdowns in behavioural restraints caused by modernisation and structural changes in society (Kornhauser 1968). It is unnecessary to associate the phenomena of the above stage with all the dramatic events suggested by the mass society theories, but what is characteristic here is fluctuation and unpredictability in political behaviour. The former of these is caused by an increase in the proportion of 'shifting voters', i.e. a decline in the numbers of those with a fixed party identification, and the latter by a weakening and obscuring of the connection between political behaviour and social position. It has been pointed out in several instances that these trends also occur in Finland (Pesonen & Sänkiaho 1979).

\* \* \*

The present investigation is concerned with the two sides of political participation in a general election: the activity and choices of the voters and the resulting balance of power between the parties. The aim is to examine how these two features of political participation are connected with social structures, changes in these, and the various dimensions set by them for the social positions of individuals.



The activity analysis, which focuses mainly on the general election of 1987, is based on an exceptionally extensive, individually collected material with complete coverage, i.e. it involves all those entitled to vote. Part of this analysis is concerned with the political choice of voters and it is based on material collected from all administrative districts in Finland except for Åland. Here the material comprises the results of all general elections from 1945 to 1987 together with statistics on the most crucial properties of the social structure of the administrative districts, mainly from the

period of the most intense structural change, between 1960 and 1980.

The voting activity of the public will be looked at in Chapter II and trends in support for the various parties outlined in Chapter III. These two themes will be combined in Chapter IV by examining the political development of Helsinki and the districts of which it is made up in the light of both of these sets of results. The most important findings will be presented in Chapter V, which also includes a brief evaluation of their general significance.

# II Social background to voting activity

The present chapter sets out from the idea that it is not sensible to look at voting as a separate individual phenomenon. Rather, it should be seen as reflecting an individual's way of thinking socially and, of course, his political outlook. Political orientations and activities, including voting, are thus not independent, separate fields in human life, but are logically connected with a general approach to life. This means that people interpret politics and related phenomena in the light of their situation in life. Voting is no exception in this respect: whatever the motives of the individual, his decision to vote should be taken as an indication of the way in which he interprets his position with respect to society and of the content he assigns to politics in the reality of his own life.

To illustrate the above idea, voting will be looked at in the light of groups of factors representing various stages of life, ways of thinking that develop at these and types of social orientation. Owing to the nature of the research material, the main focus will be on analysing the social determination of voting activity. The results will be reported within the following classification:

- Some international comparisons with the aid of which some of the results concerning Finland can at least partly be compared with situations elsewhere will be presented in Section 1 to provide a background for the present investigation. There will also be a brief account of empirical studies carried out in the United States on the causes of non-voting.
- Section 2 will discuss long-term trends of voting activity in Finland.

Sections 3 – 7 contain a detailed analysis of the social background to voting activity in the general election of 1987 (for more information on the material and methods of analysis, see p. 117).

- The aim of Section 3 is to indicate fluctuations in voting activity with respect to age and sex and changes between 1979 and 1987. This comparison was made possible by the fact that the Department for Youth Affairs in the Ministry of Education, the Centre for Public Education and the Department of Political Science at the University of Helsinki have together been investigating voting activity since 1968 based on samples containing approximately 170,000 individuals, i.e. just under 5% of all those entitled to vote, representing the various voting areas.
- Section 4 will discuss variations in voting activity with respect to profession and class. An attempt will be made to indicate how voting varies in terms of the main lines of division in political life and party support.
- Voting activity will be examined in Sections 5 – 6 with respect to various groups designated by levels of education and material affluence. The aim is to examine how voting correlates with the intellectual ability of an individual, as measured by level of education, and his material wealth, indicated by income and property.
- Section 7 is concerned with the effects of language, marriage and employment on voting.

# 1. International comparisons

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Voting and failure to vote have for long formed an object of extremely controversial interpretations. These have dealt with the effects of voting and non-voting on the functioning of democracy, i.e. the degree of activity or passivity a democratic system can endure and the level of political participation at which the public constitute a threat to the system. The idea of the dangers of activity which is foreign to the traditional theory of democracy arose from the fact that voting activity and support for fascism and national socialism increased simultaneously in the 1920's and 1930's. This contributed to the interpretation that a 'sufficient' amount of passivity may be necessary to keep undemocratic elements away from affecting decisions in society. The political unconcern of the public has also been regarded as providing a protective background for the politicians and affording them more freedom and political latitude in negotiations and decisions.

An attempt to reformulate the theory of democracy in the above manner to correspond in some way to the actual situation has met with little success, however (Bennett 1986). On the contrary, the attempt has been accused of elitism and a quest for a theoretical justification for passivity. This problem of interpretation can be ultimately traced back to a notion of the role of the public in decision-making. If the 'Schumpeterian' idea of democracy being merely a form of institutional arrangement, a method of reaching decisions (Schumpeter 1975), is approved, the public are left with a largely passive role, of contributing to the selection of decision-making bodies, while the actual decisions will be taken by the political leaders alone. This is of course not in line with the classic theory of democracy in which the engagement and participation of the public in politics is considered necessary from the point of view of both managing society's affairs and controlling the political leadership. In addition, there has also been a desire to emphasize participation as a precondition for intellectual and moral development. It is quite

obvious that it is only the classic theory which regards the decline in interest in politics and engagement in it as a threat. The above two approaches are in this sense difficult to combine.

Such controversy of interpretation also concerns the definition of voting and non-voting and their relation to background factors. This is due to a number of factors, one of which is that voting itself is a matter to which people assign various meanings. It has been indicated that the decision to vote cannot be regarded as originating from rational utilitarianism (Downs 1957, Riker & Ordeshook 1973), but can be accounted for in terms of symbolic, expressive side benefits gained by the individual, such as loyalty to a reference group, fulfilling one's civil duty, the need and desire to comply with social norms etc. A good example of this may be the established custom in Finland for the President to appear quite conspicuously in public as the first person to vote in an election.

Thus the general logic of Mangur Olson's 'collective action' also applies to voting (Olson 1965), i.e. that the benefits obtained by a 'free rider' are the same as those of a paying one. This means that an individual does not have to vote in order to enjoy the benefits that follow an election. It is also true that voting involves sacrifices such as costs arising from transport to the place of voting, having to refrain from some other activity, following political discussions, at least to some extent, and acquiring a sufficient amount of information to be able to select the right candidate. As the costs are always higher than the benefits in the rational sense of the matter, it is inevitable on the basis of the subjective perception of politics that voting can be comprehended and accounted for. If the costs seem high with respect to the estimated benefits, whatever these may be, an individual will decide not to vote. Correspondingly, the lower the costs and the higher the benefits, the easier it will be to vote. As many of the mechanisms maintaining emotional political

attachment, norm pressures and 'voting discipline', such as the weakened emotional attachment to politics by 'party identification', have been declining in significance, it has also become difficult to point out any symbolic or expressive 'side benefits' from voting. This undoubtedly constitutes one of the main factors in the failure to vote.

The voting percentages given for parliamentary elections in Table 1 indicate that the average voting activity in western democracies has been approximately 80% during the post-war era. As indicated by the most recent figures in Table 2, the earlier high voting activity of countries such as Sweden and West Germany has begun to decline markedly.

**Table 1:**  
Voting activity at parliamentary elections in some OECD countries: average percentage turnout between 1945 and 1989

Country	Voting percentage
Austria	92
New Zealand	89
Netherlands	88
Iceland	87
Sweden	86
West Germany	85
Denmark	85
Norway	81
Portugal	79
Finland	78*
France	76
United Kingdom	77
Canada	75
Ireland	73
Spain	72
Japan	72
Switzerland	59
United States	59

Source:

Lane & Ersson 1990, 460. Voting percentages are calculated in terms of accepted votes as a proportion of the number of persons entitled to vote.

\* excluding persons not resident in Finland: 79.6 %.

**Table 2:**  
Voting activity (%) at parliamentary elections in West Germany and Sweden and presidential elections in the United States by selected age groups

West Germany:	18-20 year	21-24 year	25-30 year	35-40 year	50-60 year
1987	77	73	76	84	89
1983	84	82	84	89	93
1972	85	84	88	92	95
Sweden:	18-21 year	22-30 year	31-40 year	51-60 year	
1988	80	80	87	90	
1985	85	87	91	91	
1982	86	88	94	92	
1979	87	90	93	94	
	20-22 year				
1973	92	94	93	95	
United States:	18-20 year	21-24 year	25-34 year	35-44 year	45-64 year
Presidential election					
1984	36	44	55	64	70
1972	48	51	60	66	71

Sources:

West Germany:

Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1980, 1988. The data are based on a 3.3% sample of those entitled to vote.

Sweden:

Statistisk årsbok för Sverige 1976 and 1982/1983; data based on interviews (N = 2800). For data from 1982, 1985 and 1988, see Holmberg and Gilljam 1987, page 72, and Gilljam and Holmberg 1990, page 194; data based on interviews (N = 2883, 1985). Voting was verified from electoral registers, after which the interview data were adjusted downwards by a coefficient of 0.979 for 1982, 0.957 for 1985 and 0.950 for 1988. The data from 1979 and 1973 were not adjusted.

United States

U.S. Bureau of Census: Statistical Abstract of the United States, Washington, D.C. 1987, Table No. 418. The data are based on an official interview survey (N = approximately 57000 households). The total interview percentage calculated from the material was approximately 7% higher in 1972 and 1984 than the actual voting percentage, which in turn is based on an estimate of the population entitled to vote. This means that all the figures obtained for the various age-groups in the above table are somewhat too high.

It is impossible here to compare fluctuations in voting activity between the various countries in terms of social characteristics, as no relevant material is available, but some comparisons can be made according to age which can also be used for evaluating the situation in Finland (Table 2). As far as voting activity in Sweden is concerned, data are also available on some background factors (Table 3).

**Table 3:**  
**Voting activity (%) in the Swedish parliamentary election of 1988 by selected background factors.**

	1988	Change 1988-1985
<b>Age</b>		
18-21 .....	80	-5.1
22-30 .....	80	-6.8
31-40 .....	87	-4.1
41-50 .....	88	-3.9
51-60 .....	90	-1.7
61-70 .....	89	-1.9
71-80 .....	86	-2.1
<b>Sex</b>		
Men .....	84	-5.1
Women .....	87	-2.6
<b>Education</b>		
Low .....	85	-2.8
Middle .....	85	-4.9
High .....	88	-4.1
<b>Occupation</b>		
Industrial workers .....	82	-5.7
Salaried employees:		
- lower .....	87	-3.6
- middle .....	89	-3.2
- upper .....	89	-4.2
Farmers .....	90	-0.3
Students .....	86	-2.2
<b>Field of occupation</b>		
Private sector .....	85	-4.6
Public sector .....	89	-1.9
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>86</b>	<b>-3.9</b>

Source:

Giljam and Holmberg 1990, 194. The data are based on an interview survey (N = 2845). The figures are adjusted using correction coefficients, which are the same for all population categories. This procedure improves the reliability of the results, though the latter aspect involves a possibility of error.

The most important observations to be made from the above tables are the following:

It is characteristic of the political culture in both Sweden and West Germany that people participate very actively in elections, with only minor differences between age groups, i.e. there is no essential difference even between young people and the rest of the population in this respect. Voting activity in these two countries has remained at a relatively high level and does not vary with social background or political fluctuations. There was a marked change as far as West Germany was concerned at the election of 1987, however, when voting activity dropped by as much as 5.7 percentage points, i.e. from 87.8% in the previous election to 82.1%, the greatest change occurring in the young age groups, amounting to as much as 9 percentage points among those aged 21-24 years. No explanation has been found for this change so far.

By comparison with West Germany, Sweden has a slightly higher level of political mobilisation, even though voting activity dropped by almost 4 percentage points between 1985 and 1988, i.e. from 89.9% to 86.0%, a change of corresponding magnitude also taking place at local and provincial elections. This decline in the internationally high voting activity figures for Sweden is mainly visible among men, young people and the lower social classes.

It is important to note, however, that the activity differences in Sweden are less dependent on age than in Finland and small with respect to education and profession. Differences caused by processes of change in society, which are mainly visible in the passivity of the population centres in Finland, are not found at all in Sweden. In fact the situation in the latter country is stable by comparison, with the exception that there was a marked drop in electoral turnout in the 1980's and differences reflecting social characteristics have consequently become more pronounced.

Although the United States is an exceptionally political culture by comparison with the above countries, voting activity has declined steadily at all elections since the

early 1960's and has reached a level described as 'chronic demobilisation'. In addition to age, activity also varies with education, race and geography. The difference between the groups representing the lowest and highest levels of education was approximately 36 percentage points at the presidential election of 1984 (42.9–79.1). It is also notable that voting activity declined most markedly in the young age groups during the period 197–84, as indicated in Table 2. These changes have given rise to considerable amounts of research and discussion.

The passivity problem in the United States is partly regarded as 'insoluble', due to the simultaneous observation of a marked increase in those personal background factors likely to promote active participation, such as an interest in politics, party identification, interest in political discussion and acceptance of politics, between the presidential elections of 1980 and 1984. Similarly, such a development would seem surprising in view of the marked rise in educational level among the electorate and the removal of many formal obstacles to voting during the preceding decades (Abramson & Aldrich 1982, 502–504, Teixeira 1987, 117–118). It is generally felt that public interest in politics has increased, though not always enough to surpass the voting threshold.

Research in the field seems to centre around finding the 'unknown counter-power' which in an unpredictable way reverses the preconditions for increasing activity created by the positive trends in certain background factors. The difficulty experienced in accounting for fluctuations in voting activity in general suggests that it is impossible to find any conceptually satisfactory way of providing a definition for voting as an 'activity' and an explainable form of behaviour. Changes in the meanings assigned by individuals to voting and politics also cause constant changes in their motives for voting which, of course, hampers any quantitative research which attempts to account for such fluctuations.

As indicated by an analysis of the generation of the 1960's, the most dramatic

decade in the recent history of the United States, the orientation of the voters socialized politically at that time can be understood to a great extent against the exceptional background of the era – the Vietnam war, student and youth demonstrations, police violence, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the rise of the citizens' rights movement etc. The period was marked by the disengagement of the masses of young people in particular from the prevailing politics and the means of participation offered by it. The political orientation adopted at that time has proved a permanent one and is regarded as being one reason for the low voting activity of today (Delli Carpini 1986, 190–193). This emphasizes the significant role of motivational factors, the plausibility of politics and confidence in it as background factors to voting. It also supports the idea of the permanence of the behavioural modes adopted at a critical habit-forming stage of life which cannot be altered even by socialization with age.

It was also indicated by an exhaustive American investigation that approximately 2/3 of the drop in activity in the presidential election and almost half of that in the congressional election can be accounted for by attitudinal factors associated both with the long-term weakening of party identification and with the public's increasing scepticism of the ability of the party system to respond to their needs. The latter implies in turn a scepticism on the part of an individual towards his possibilities for influencing the functioning of the political system and suspicion with regard to its desire and ability to look after his affairs (Abramson & Aldrich 1982). The authors of the investigation in fact point out that it will be difficult to increase voting activity in the United States unless the voter's attitudes towards the political system change. Similarly, it has also been indicated by an empirical investigation performed over a long time interval (Schneider 1984) that the increased discontent shown towards political institutions, particularly the parties and political leaders, since the mid-1960's, is a factor which has undoubtedly promoted passivity in voting.

It has been pointed out, on the other hand, that individuals' ideas of their own political competence have not decreased at all in the long run. The public's general ideas about the political system are by no means negative: the system as such is a good one, but it does not function well as the leaders responsible for it are incompetent and unreliable (Lipset & Schneider 1983, 401). Lipset and Schneider also point out that the restoration of confidence in politics requires more trustworthy leaders and the seeking of a solution to the problem of voting passivity through renewal of the content of politics and its procedural practices, as it is only in this way that plausibility can be restored.

Explanations for the low activity have also been sought in the structure of the political system. It has been claimed that the low voting turnout in the United States has to do with the degradation of the party system and its inability to act as a means to mobilize people and socialize them to participate in politics. On the other hand, the almost complete dominance of the prevailing value system and the lack of any 'real' competition in this respect has levelled out political life to concentrate excessively on economic affairs and various interest groups (Burnham 1980). Causes for this have also been found in the toughness of the electoral campaigns, the primary election system and the resulting longer duration of the election period (Delli Carpini 1986, 178).

Finland represents the middle level among the OECD countries in the long-term comparison of voting activity, but lies below the level of similar countries in terms of

social development, political system and affluence. It must be remembered that there has been a marked drop in voting activity in Finland since the peak years of 1962 and 1966. Finland is politically by far the most passive of the Scandinavian countries.

A comparison of voting in relation to age shows Finland to be located between the countries discussed in more detail above, as indicated later in Table 4. The young age groups in Finland are poor voters, a tendency which has continued for a long time even though there was some improvement towards the end of the 1970's. The presidential election of 1982 was a complete exception, however, the turnout being almost the maximum that could be expected under Finnish conditions. The situation in Finland could be described as still unstable and in a state of transition, in sharp contrast to Sweden, for example.

In addition to the decrease in voting activity, Finland is also characterized by a pattern of political participation which varies with age, place of residence, profession and social position. In addition to activity differences connected with social inequality and dissimilarities, differences arising from the rapid change in social structure have also developed, a process particularly evident in the rapidly growing residential areas of Southern Finland. In this respect, changes in political participation are connected with both social structure and its processes of change. This is most clearly evident in the figures indicating such development in Helsinki, to be discussed later in the present investigation.

## 2. Historical features

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Three groups of determinants can be found in an examination covering a number of decades which either together or individually help us to understand the major fluctuations in voting participation:

(1) Exceptional election situations are closely linked with major fluctuations in

voting activity. With only a few exceptions, the turnout has usually been high at an election following the dissolution of Parliament, and correspondingly any crisis – social, economic or political – that the public has had to go through, has clearly increased their eagerness to vote. An extremely exciting or exceptionally stimulating

political situation with a flavour of possible change in the balance of power has had a similar impact.

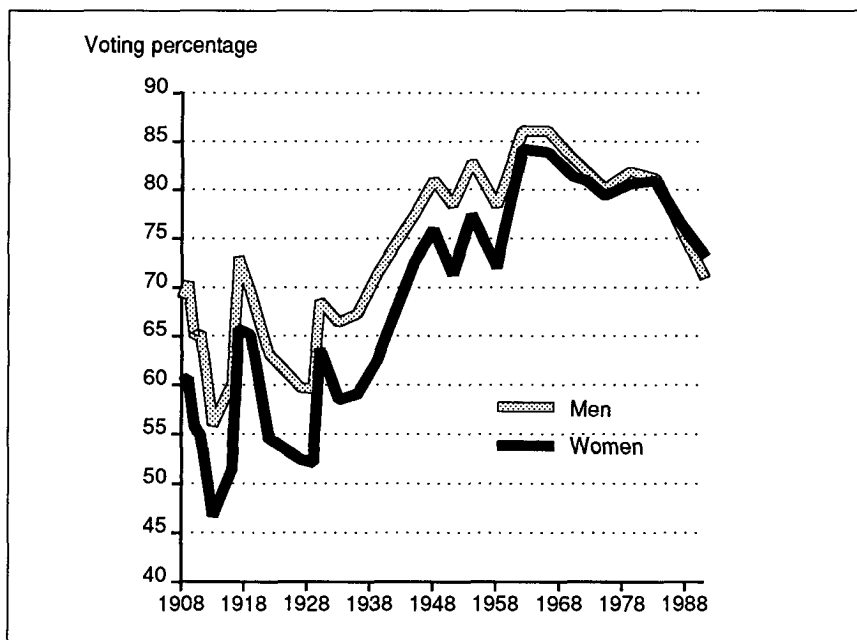
(2) The deep and fairly long-term recessions in voting activity seem to have been accompanied by an experience of deprivation, frustration and lack of political influence on the part of extensive sectors of the population. These effects were most apparent in Finland at the beginning of the century, during the period preceding independence, and in the early 1920's and 1930's, although recent developments can also be interpreted as representing a similar state of affairs.

(3) The actual degradation of political institutions and their inability to operate in accordance with the public's expectations is undoubtedly connected with low voting activity, as indicated by long-term investigations. A good example of this is the early part of the century up to independence, when the instruments of democratic participation, i.e. elections, parties and political

communication functioned well but the highest legislative instances acted entirely autocratically, the functioning of Parliament was paralysed, and the various levels of the political system had very little contact with each other. Correspondingly, some strange, undemocratic practices caused politics to decay in the 1920's and 1930's, reducing and even extinguishing the interest of extensive sectors of the people in politics.

Numerous recent investigations and examinations suggest that similar causes also lie behind the recent fairly general anti-political atmosphere. The difference lies in the fact that where they had a drastic, marked effect on voting earlier, particularly at the beginning of the century, the range of fluctuation today is fairly small.

To support the claims made above, it is necessary to provide a more detailed account of the history of voting activity in Finland, as indicated in Fig. 1.\*



**Figure 1:** Voting activity of men and women at parliamentary elections between 1908 and 1991

\* For further details of Finnish elections in 1907-1962 and the political situations preceding them, see Suomen Kansanedustuslaitoksen historia (History of Popular Representation in Finland), Part IX, Helsinki 1971 (see also parts V and VII)



## Formation stage of voting

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The turnout at the election of 1907, the first under conditions of universal suffrage, was 70.7%, dropping by over 5 percentage points at the next election and reaching a record low of 51.1% at the election of 1913. This was attributable to general political changes, i.e. the prestige and functioning of political institutions collapsed as a result of repeated dissolutions of Parliament and other external political pressure. It has been claimed that voting was reduced by the frustration felt by right-wing supporters, whereas working people maintained their enthusiasm better, thanks to their efficiently operating party and social integration.

Voting figures began to rise immediately, however, once the Tsarist administration began to loosen its grip on Finland. The avid participation of the working population in the election of 1916, in which the Social Democratic Party (SDP) received 47.3% of the votes, improved the turnout to 55.5%. The impressive role played by parliament in 1917 and the activation of the right wing to overcome the supremacy of the Social Democrats then increased voting activity to a peak of 69.2%, which was not exceeded until the post-war election of 1945.

There was a steady drop in voting activity once the country had gained its independence, continuing to the late 1920's, in spite of the fact that the electoral campaigns were tough and intense. Their most important topic at first was the Constitution, and later the various crises of parliamentarism and anti-communist movements.

There are a number of explanations for the development that took place in the 1920's (for further details, see Suomen Kansanedustuslaitoksen historia, Part VII). The side defeated in the Civil War was at first disillusioned with Parliament and frustrated with both it and representative democracy in general, in addition to which there was much internal dissension among working people, which reduced their political strength and their participation in the election. Correspondingly, the Agrarian Party caused dispersion among the non-

socialists, its radical left wing even boycotting the election of 1919. The political situation changed almost completely, in addition to which political activities often adopted illegal forms. The abolition of the Communist Party in 1923 caused a marked drop in voting activity. Thus the degradation of political life and the decline in voting activity seemed to go hand in hand.

Voting activity rose momentarily to 66% at the election of 1930, partly in response to the dissolution of Parliament and partly on account of the tense electoral situation which had developed as a result of the vigorous anti-communist movement. There was a marked drop in participation at the next election (62.2%), however, accompanied by the collapse of the extreme right (IKL). This was followed by a systematic increase in voting activity, although it remained at 66.6% in 1939, the last election before the war.

## Period of stabilization

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The election of 1945 was marked by a rise in participation to 74.9% and especially by a rise of 10 percentage points among women. It was not until the elections of the 1940's that voting activity in the northern marginal areas rose permanently to the same level as in the rest of the country. Thus the long, heterogeneous formation phase had come to an end and political participation had become stabilized.

The revival of voting activity after the Second World War may be attributed to a variety of factors. Firstly, legalisation of the extreme left and participation of the Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL) in the election of 1945 served to activate the working population, and secondly the political communication and election propaganda of the parties adopted new, more efficient forms. Furthermore, the fact that six years had elapsed since the previous election may also have contributed to the increased interest in voting. Finally, a considerable proportion of the population were frustrated by the wars and undoubtedly desired a change of political power.

The political situation, with its wildcat strikes and rumours of a coup, was still very tense before the election of 1948, which further increased political participation and led to a turnout of 78.2%. This figure fell by almost 4 percentage points in 1951, however, followed by a marked rise at the dissolution election of 1954 (79.9%). The stabilization period reached its peak at the "note crisis election" of 1962, again following the dissolution of Parliament (85.1%). The dramatic nature of the election, which can even be regarded as having had a distinct foreign-policy flavour due to the atmosphere of "saving the nation", was further increased by the President's journey to Siberia.

The active election of 1966, with a turnout of 84.9%, brought the Social Democratic Party to power and marked the end of a period of stabilized, active political participation, by which stage the difference in voting activity between men and women had dropped to a mere 2 percentage points. Apart from the presidential election of 1982, political development from 1966 up to the present day has been characterised by a decline in political interest.

### Period of declining voting activity: disengagement from politics

The fact that voting activity has gradually declined from one election to the next since

the peak of 1966 is an obvious indicator of the problematic relations between the public and politics. What it indicates in particular is that the ability of the parties to activate voters has gradually decreased, as the turnout did not increase even at the elections of 1972 (81.4%) and 1975 (79.7%) both of which followed the dissolution of parliament. There was admittedly a slight rise in participation in 1979 (81.2%), but even this occurred mainly as a result of a voting campaign directed at young people, as indicated in Table 4.

The decline in voting activity came to a momentary halt at the election of 1983, where it was 81.0%, even though it was still markedly lower than 20 years earlier. There was also a considerable difference between men and women in that the voting activity of the former had declined markedly more than that of the latter. This has led to the disappearance of sex differences in political participation.

Historically, the present decline in voting activity is not a new phenomenon, as rising and falling trends have traditionally been characteristic of the political culture in Finland. On the other hand, such a pronounced swing indicates that political participation is still unstabilized by comparison with Sweden and West Germany, for example. Finland is characterized by low political activity on the part of young people in particular, as is evident from Table 4.

**Table 4:**  
Voting activity (%) in Finland in 1968–1982 by age and sex

Election	Age											
	18*		19–23*		24–30		31–40		41–65		65–	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Municipal elections*												
1968 .....	68	62	66	62	72	70	81	80	85	82	80	74
Parliamentary election												
1975 .....	70	69	68	67	75	76	84	84	88	87	83	74
Parliamentary election												
1979 .....	75	76	73	73	78	79	85	86	89	88	81	74
Municipal elections												
1980 .....	69	67	66	68	72	75	79	81	85	85	80	74
Presidential election												
1982 .....	80	82	79	82	84	88	88	91	91	92	83	77

The data are based on samples from voting districts, including approximately 170,000 voters (Martikainen & Yrjönen 1984, 19).

\* 1968: age 20 years; age 21–23 years

The information provided in Table 4 gives rise to the following comments:

- There are fairly marked activity differences between the age groups, amounting to over 20 percentage points at the general election of 1975, for instance.
- Political participation in Finland is unstabilized by comparison with countries of high political activity such as Sweden and Germany. Particularly obvious is the instability among young people, as they have not achieved the general activity level at any of the 'ordinary' elections held during the period examined.
- The political participation of young people has been gradually increasing during the last 15 years, although admittedly they were subjected to a special national campaign at the election of 1979 which quite clearly increased their voting activity.
- The differences between the age groups were reduced at the presidential election of 1982, which was marked by exceptionally active general participation, including young people. Similarly, a number of other factors contributing to the level of participation, such as place of residence, social group and sex declined in significance. The exceptional nature of the election, its unique flavour of a true 'election by the people', the appeals to outvote the 'dark horses', the extent of party manoeuvring and the position of the leading candidate Mauno Koivisto above the traditional party dividing lines removed the restraints which had affected participation in earlier elections. The high turnout at the presidential election (86.8%) indicated that although a voting capacity exists, it cannot be activated by the party framework and the party system alone but must presumably be triggered from outside ordinary party politics.

The situation that prevailed in the presidential election of 1982 did not remain permanent, as voting activity dropped to 81% in the general election of 1983, the level of the previous general election. A detail worth noticing here is that only the voting activity of men dropped whereas that of women increased slightly. This return to normal means that political participation again varied by age, geographical location, place of residence and social position. The municipal elections of 1984 were obviously a sign of a major change, the low turnout of 74% indicating that the relation between the public and politics had developed into a large-scale problem as nearly a million citizens refrained from voting. Criticism of politics and political leaders had become an essential part of political discussion and the atmosphere in the field of current affairs. This criticism and discontent was especially poignant in the population centres in which the voting percentage was 71.5% with Helsinki showing the way with barely more than 66% (Helsinki will be discussed in more detail later).

The exceptional lack of involvement at the 1984 municipal elections was not a momentary phenomenon, however, as the turnout at the following municipal elections in 1988 fell again to slightly below 70% in the entire country (69.9%) and 62.9% in Helsinki. A corresponding trend was also evident in the parliamentary election of 1987, in which the poll dropped by 4.6 percentage points from the previous election to a level of 76% which corresponds to the modest average of the 1940's. The lowest figure so far was seen at the latest parliamentary election in 1991, when the turnout fell to 72%, a drop of more than 4 percentage points.

### 3. General picture of voting activity and its changes in 1979–1987

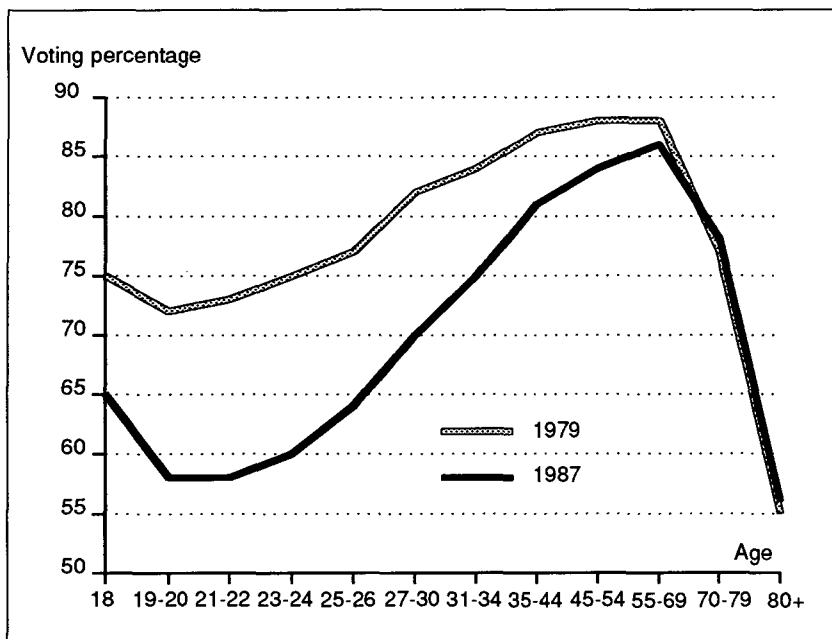
As indicated by Table 5, an obvious change took place in voting activity during this period. The figures for young people in particular are striking, their deviation from the other groups having become more pronounced by comparison with the election of 1979. The most marked drop occurred in young people of working age, the difference in the participation of the groups aged immediately under and over 23 years between the two elections being nearly 15 percentage points. In addition, the results of the 1987 election suggest that voting passivity had extended to higher age groups of young working people. The voting percentages in these elections were 81.0% (1979) and 76.4% (1987), the difference being explained by this passivity among young people. The magnitude of the failure to vote is indicated further by the final column of Table 5, which presents the actual numbers of non-voters.

As further indicated by Table 5, the voting activity of the young age groups did not increase with age during the eight years between the elections, but either remained stable or decreased. The figure for the age group 19–22 years at the election of 1979, for example, was 72%, while in 1987, when these same voters represented the age group 27–30 years, their voting activity was 71%. A similar situation is also found with the age group 23–26 years in 1979, as the voting percentage of the group aged 31–34 years in 1987 was 75%. This means that the 1980's has provided a poor starting point for the political socialisation of young people, at least from the point of view of traditional politics. The 18–26 year age cohort from the beginning of the 1980's has barely been able to maintain its activity level during the decade, while the political mobilisation of voters of age 18–26 years was 12–14 percentage points lower at the election of

**Table 5:**  
Voting activity (%) by age and sex at the parliamentary elections of 1979 and 1987, together with the number of non-voters in 1987 (rounded figures)

Age	Election year				Size of age-group voting in 1987	Number of non-voters in 1987	
	1979		1987				
	M	F	M	F			%
18	75	76	62	66	70 100	64	24 900
19–20	72	72	55	61	146 100	58	62 100
21–22	73	72	57	60	149 000	59	62 400
23–24	75	75	59	63	151 700	61	60 500
25–26	76	78	63	67	150 300	65	53 700
27–30	81	82	69	72	305 000	70	91 200
31–34	83	84	74	77	322 500	76	79 300
35–44	87	88	80	82	778 700	81	149 500
45–54	88	89	85	85	557 900	85	88 100
55–69	89	86	87	86	712 400	86	97 600
70–79	80	74	82	75	309 800	78	68 500
80+	63	47	67	51	119 200	56	52 100
Total	82	81	76	77	3 772 700	76	889 900

\* The data on the election of 1979 are based on a sample of 185 voting districts which contained approximately 170 000 persons entitled to vote (Martikainen & Yrjönen 1980). The data on the election of 1987 cover all those entitled to vote (N=3.75 million).



**Figure 2:**  
Voting activity by age in 1979 and 1987

1987 than that of the corresponding age group in 1979. The rise in political interest usually connected with age and the transition from one stage of life to another is not detectable here in the young age groups, at least not in the form of any increase in voting activity.

Thus it seems that young voters maintain their original behaviour for quite a long time and that first-time voters are replaced by ones who are even more passive in this respect. It may therefore be concluded that the generation socialised into politics in the 1980's is characterized by indecisiveness and questioning of the traditional forms of representative democracy and its mode of operation. Giving up voting supports the idea of the development of such a dealignment process, as also suggested earlier in the present investigation. It should also be noted that the process now extends to even older age groups, i.e. it is not only the youngest voters who experience indecisiveness. In addition, it has been found that it is difficult to perceive any

novel, independent alternative form of political activity and political thought lying behind the failure to vote, for one cannot conclude that the political thought and opinions of young people are indicators of any independent way of analysing the political reality of society which departs dramatically from the 'old' political way of thinking (Jääsaari & Martikainen 1991).

An interesting detail which occurred repeatedly in all the elections examined earlier is the voting activity of first-time voters, which exceeds that of other young people. This may be accounted for by the novelty factor and the high number of students and school pupils among the 18-year olds, since they are generally more active voters than working young people of the same age. It should also be noted that the activity of young people at the election of 1979 can at least partly be explained by the efficient campaign to which they were subjected and that it was markedly higher in that year than at the election of 1975 (Martikainen & Yrjönen 1980, 41-46).

**Table 6:**  
**Voting activity (%) of the most passive and most active age groups in each electoral district by sex**

Electoral district	Age-groups					
	19–20 years		55–62 years		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Helsinki . . . . .	52	56	84	85	74	75
Uusimaa . . . . .	52	59	87	86	75	76
Turku, southern . . . . .	57	65	88	87	78	78
Turku, northern . . . . .	59	67	89	88	79	79
Häme, southern . . . . .	55	61	87	86	76	77
Häme, northern . . . . .	54	61	88	86	77	77
Central Finland . . . . .	54	61	87	87	77	78
Kuopio . . . . .	51	55	88	86	75	75
Mikkeli . . . . .	51	57	85	85	74	74
Northern Karelia . . . . .	50	54	86	84	74	74
Kymi . . . . .	53	61	87	87	76	77
Vaasa . . . . .	63	70	90	89	82	82
Oulu . . . . .	55	59	88	87	76	76
Lapland . . . . .	56	60	91	89	79	79
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>77</b>

A further significant observation was the gradual disappearance of the differences between the sexes and reversal of the earlier pattern. The increase in the interest shown by women to exceed that of men marks the end of a trend which has been advancing slowly but inevitably in this direction for the past 80 years. The difference in favour of women is currently as much as approximately 1 percentage point in cities, and varies from 2 to 5 percentage points in the younger age groups. The above figures were obtained for the entire population, but if the intention is to examine only the working population, i.e. excluding students, pensioners, the unemployed and others not belonging to the labour force, the difference between the sexes becomes even more pronounced, with the voting activity of women being 2 percentage points higher than that of men (79.4 vs 77.5).

Dealignment from politics thus has an obvious sex-related character, an observation which gains additional weight when we recall that the voting activity of men was approximately 10 percentage points higher than that of women at the turn of the century. Considerable regional variation is also found in this pattern, however, as indicated by Table 6, which shows the behaviour of the most passive and the most active age group in each electoral district.

What is noticeable in the above table is that the activity of young people is markedly higher on the western coast of Finland than in the other regions, and that the activity of young women almost corresponds to the average voting activity percentage in the country. These results may reflect a regional feature typical of the Finnish culture: namely that the tradition of participation is strongly and deeply rooted in Western Finland and Ostrobothnia in particular, whereas the high voting activity figures obtained for young people in earlier investigations in the northernmost electoral districts of Oulu and Lapland, for example, have dropped markedly, indicating that the tradition of political participation has evidently begun to yield in the latter areas. Eastern Finland, in turn, has always been the most passive region in terms of voting, the electoral districts of Mikkeli, Kuopio and Northern Karelia resembling each other in this respect. The voting activity of young people in the districts of Kymi and Central Finland is 4–5 percentage points higher.

It can be concluded from the above that the tradition of political participation plays a major role in some regions, but the processes of social change have otherwise already reduced the efficiency of socialization markedly. In fact, social changes have to a large extent reversed the

direction of regional differences. At the early formation stage in political mobilisation, political activity was particularly high in the population centres, from which it gradually spread to peripheral areas and reached a 'normal' level. Some exceptions notwithstanding, marginal areas have now been better able to maintain the mode of behaviour adopted earlier, while the central and growing areas have been leading the way towards a downward trend.

Perhaps the most coherent picture of the above trend is provided by the following table, albeit from an entirely different point of view, in which differences between the age groups in terms of voting activity are presented separately for rural districts and cities:

The differences obtained between the cities and rural districts are quite distinctive, particularly in those age-groups with the most marked general drop in activity. Thus political mass mobilisation is much more efficient in rural areas, while political disengagement is evident in the population centres, where changes in the social structure and way of life, tastes and fashions have more effectively interfered with the preconditions for political socialisation. This means that the difference between the most active male group (59–69 years) and the most passive one (19–20 years) in the cities was more than 33 percentage points. It is also true that the most marked political

**Table 7:**  
Voting activity (%) by age and place of residence

Age	Cities	Rural districts	Total	Difference (city-rural)
18	63	66	64	-3
19–20	56	60	58	-4
21–22	56	62	59	-6
23–24	58	65	61	-7
25–26	63	69	65	-6
27–30	68	74	70	-6
31–34	74	79	76	-5
35–44	80	83	81	-3
45–54	84	86	85	-2
55–62	86	88	87	-2
63–69	86	86	86	0
70–79	78	77	78	+1
80+	57	53	56	+4
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>+4</b>

discontent appears in the population centres, due to the fact that politics has been unable to solve the most urgent problems of urban people, and particularly those of young adults, such as expensive housing. Non-voting in population centres is thus an outcome of people's frustration with practical politics. At the same time, it has become apparent that questions of style in politics and discontent with politicians are likewise background factors affecting failure to vote (Jääsaari & Martikainen 1991).

**Table 8:**  
Effect of selected background factors on voting. Voting percentages and coefficients for bivariate and multivariate logit models (odds ratios): entire material

	Voting %	Bivariate model	Multivariate model*	
			+age	+others
<b>Age</b>				
18–24	60	1.00	-	1.00
25–29	68	1.41	-	1.43
30–34	75	2.05	-	2.08
35–54	83	3.20	-	3.23
55–69	87	4.31	-	4.28
70+	72	1.70	-	1.66
<b>Sex</b>				
Men	76	1.00	1.00	1.00
Women	77	1.02	1.02	1.03
<b>Region</b>				
Southern Finland	76	1.00	1.00	1.00
Eastern Finland	76	0.98	0.98	0.98
Western Finland	81	1.32	1.34	1.28
Northern Finland	77	1.06	1.11	1.09
<b>Place of residence</b>				
City	76	1.00	1.00	1.00
Rural district	79	1.18	1.18	1.17

\* The first column indicates voting percentage, the second the probability of voting compared to the reference class (first category of the variable), and the third and fourth ones the change in the connection between the tabulated variable and voting when all the other tabulated variables are included in the model.

Electoral districts of Southern Finland: Helsinki, Uusimaa, Turku (southern), Häme (southern and northern); Eastern Finland: Mikkeli, Northern Karelia, Kuopio, Kymi, Central Finland; Western Finland: Turku (northern), Vaasa; Northern Finland: Oulu, Lapland.

Finally, the above evaluation can be summed up in the terms of Table 8 (cf. Material and Methods, p. 97) which indicates the connections of age, sex, region and place of residence with voting in the light of the results obtained from the logistic regression analysis. The aim of the analysis was to determine to what extent the parameters used are independent of each other or to what degree the connection found in a two-dimensional analysis such as that between age and voting is maintained once other related factors are taken into consideration. The following conclusions can be drawn from the coefficients:

Firstly, what is most significant with respect to an overall view of political mobilisation is the dominating position of age. As indicated by the second column in Table 8, the likelihood of voting in the most active age group is four times higher than that in

the age group 18–25 years (or the ‘risk’ of not voting four times less). Also, the differences between the age groups are preserved in a model which includes all variables, which indicates that the relationship between age and voting is not interfered with by the other variables at any rate.

Secondly, the relationships of geographical area and place of residence to voting are also quite independent and the differences between the various variable categories are preserved fairly unchanged in the models which include all the factors. It should be noted, however, that the difference between Western Finland and the other regions is reduced slightly. As the difference is small, it is justifiable to conclude that the activity differences connected with a given area and place of residence seem to be among the basic factors in political mobilisation in Finland.

## 4. Class and occupational background to voting activity

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Class and occupational divisions have always constituted the primary basis of political organization in Finland. The emergence and grouping of the party system and foci of political power traditionally followed these divisions. In this respect, the parties had assigned themselves ‘quotas’ among the electorate to the extent that each party had a clearly identifiable group of supporters. As long as the linkage between the voters and politics in terms of class and occupation was fixed, the party system, and in fact politics in general, was stable and predictable, and consequently political socialisation of the public functioned efficiently. In other words, it is obvious that the intensity of the political activity among the people and their ability to understand politics is highly dependent on the extent to which they are able to internalize the general principles of political life and identify with the available political alternatives. In short, the close identification of voters with the class and occupational

structure of society and the precisely defined location of the party system ‘above’ this gave ‘sense’ to politics and guaranteed effective mass mobilisation.

In the above sense, the preconditions for effective political socialisation have changed profoundly in the last few years. The bonds of class and occupation which used to link the public to politics have vanished, or at least become obscured, as a result of changes in society, and the resulting structure no longer corresponds to the party system. This in turn has reduced the practicability of political socialisation. It is inevitable that such a trend should give rise to a certain irresolution and be reflected in the form of a decline in voting activity among young people in particular and also in those groups in which the major change in social structure accelerated by migration from rural to urban areas has caused a gradual weakening of political traditions and confusion of ‘old’ traditions with ‘new’



situations in life. Certain groups, e.g. farmers, have survived fairly well in this respect, whereas others such as the working-class population have suffered more from the changes in social structure. In addition, these changes have also given rise to another, entirely new group, the middle class, with an anonymous subjective class identification and a certain political 'facelessness', so that neither its true orientation nor the basis for this is sufficiently well known at the moment.

The question of what is the exact level of political mobilisation in the groups representing the various classes and occupations is an exceptionally fascinating one. Some information can be gained from the fairly versatile classifications already available, which provide adequate answers to the general questions posed above. The examination below will be divided into three parts, voting activity being compared firstly with a classification by the voter's economic

participation, secondly with an occupational classification and thirdly with socioeconomic position.

### Position of the individual in the labour market

A suitable starting point for discussion of this subject is provided by Fig. 3, in which voting activity is presented by the economic participation of the voters. The results serve well to indicate at an extremely general level the manner in which the bond between the individual and politics alters at the various stages of life. There are two factors of relevance in Fig. 3. Firstly, the general voting percentage for students was 70%, the voting activity of those aged 18-24 years being 68%, i.e. 16 percentage points higher than that of young people of the same age who were already at work, 52%. The results undoubtedly reflect differences in both the stage of life and educational background.

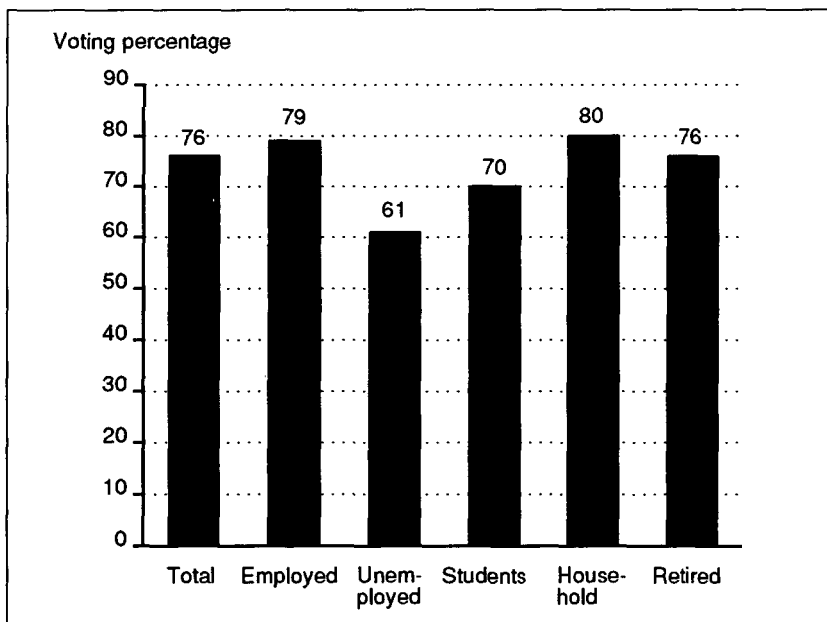


Figure 3: Voting activity by economic participation

**Table 9:**  
**Voting activity among the employed and**  
**unemployed population and students (%),**  
**by electoral districts**

Electoral district	Em- ployed	Un- employed	Students	Total
Helsinki . . . . .	75	54	73	74
Uusimaa . . . . .	77	54	71	75
Turku, southern	81	61	74	78
Turku, northern .	83	66	73	79
Häme, southern	79	58	70	76
Häme, northern	79	61	71	77
Central Finland .	81	62	69	77
Mikkeli . . . . .	78	57	65	74
Northern Karelia	78	57	63	74
Kuopio . . . . .	78	59	63	75
Kymi . . . . .	80	59	68	77
Vaasa . . . . .	85	67	75	82
Oulu . . . . .	79	62	67	76
Lapland . . . . .	82	69	67	79
<b>Cities, total . . .</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Rural municipi- palities, total . .</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>Whole country, total . . . . .</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>76</b>

Secondly, the most salient feature is the low voting percentage among those who have been unemployed at some stage (61%). The finding supports the above assumption that an individual's interpretation of society is reflected in his voting behaviour. Dismissal from the working community will also mean dismissal from politics, as will be discussed in more detail later. In the meantime, the difference in voting activity between the employed and unemployed will be examined in more detail here from the point of view of regional differences.

South-western and Western Finland stand out from the other regions in Table 9, just as they did in the regional comparison presented earlier. The rural districts of Lapland constitute an exception, as the voting percentage among the unemployed there almost corresponds to the average for the whole country. It seems that employment has always been a periodic matter in Lapland and unemployment is thus not considered such a deviant state of affairs as it is elsewhere in the country.

## Occupational differences in voting

It is necessary first to emphasize the problems attached to an analysis based on classification by occupation. This is because each category includes all those employed in the field concerned, i.e. the groups are internally quite heterogeneous. Correspondingly, some large sectors consist of a number of fields – so that services, for example, include not only public administration, but also other social services and household services.

Bearing in mind the above provisions, Table 10 provides an interesting insight into the question of how the nature of various occupations is connected with interest in political participation. The differences are quite distinct and at least the following conclusions can be drawn from them:

Firstly, the voting activity of those employed in agriculture and forestry (88%) far exceeds that of all the other classes. This may be attributable to the fact that in Finland those employed in agriculture in particular have for decades quite indisputably identified themselves with only one party, i.e. politics and political selection have become fairly unproblematic. Secondly, politics and political decisions have always had a direct and immediate impact on agriculture and forestry, and are realized in a concrete manner in people's lives and incomes. In addition, agricultural communities are characterized by a lively spectrum of 'grass-roots' activities, a fact which has been observed without exception to be effective in activating individuals and reviving local political activities (Lipset 1968).

Voting activity in the service sector (82%) is also markedly above the average (76%) despite the fact that the group is relatively heterogeneous in terms of the occupations, types of work and education of its members. The incomes of most of the people employed in the service sector are directly dependent on the public sector, i.e. either the state or local authorities, and the voting activity of these people is in fact markedly higher than among those employed in the private service sector, approximately 84%

**Table 10:**  
**Voting activity (%) by field of activity and age**

Field of activity	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-54	55-69	Total
Forestry and agriculture .....	71	82	85	90	92	88
Industry .....	51	66	75	83	88	77
Construction .....	50	60	70	78	87	72
Commerce, catering and accommodation ....	52	64	73	81	89	75
Transport, warehousing and communications .	55	65	74	82	89	77
Financing, insurance and real estate .....	58	73	80	86	91	81
Services .....	58	73	81	88	91	82
- teaching .....	65	79	86	91	94	88
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>76</b>

vs. 72%. Voting figures for teachers are exceptionally high, i.e. 88%, and the higher interest in politics attributable to the more prominent position of the public sector is undoubtedly reflected in these figures.

The voting percentage for those employed in the industrial sector, 77%, is above the average, whereas that for the building trade is by far the lowest (72%). Interest in politics is next lowest in the commerce, catering and accommodation branches (75%), the average obtained for the first of these being at least partly attributable to the relatively high proportion of young people in the field.

It can be inferred from Table 10 that the differences between the averages for the various industries are attributable to young people in general and those of working age, and their proportion within each branch. It is only in agriculture, forestry and to some extent teaching that political socialisation is efficient throughout the age range. Apart from some individual industries, low voting activity in the age group 18-24 years seems to have become a rule.

### Socioeconomic position and voting

The classification of the population by socioeconomic position comes closer to the notion of 'social class' than any other statistical measure, being based on qualifications, position held, age, occupation and type of place of work, in addition to which it indirectly reflects differences in education, income, control over life and stage of life.

From the point of view of practical politics, this approaches the basic classification used as an organizational basis for the operation of the parties in Finland and for other political constructs such as interest groups. The level of political mobilisation of these groups is undoubtedly an interesting question.

A good general idea of this is provided by Table 11, in which voting percentages are also given as absolute figures to illustrate the impact which abstention within some groups, notably workers, pensioners and lower salaried staff, has on practical politics.

As the results are quite unambiguous, it is necessary to comment on them in broad terms only. Firstly, the high activity among

**Table 11:**  
**Voting activity (%) by socioeconomic status, sizes of socioeconomic groups and numbers (rounded) of non-voters**

Socioeconomic status	Voting activity	Size of population	Number of non-voters
Employers .....	86	65,000	9,000
Self-employed: ...	87	239,000	32,000
- farmers .....	92	155,000	13,000
<i>Upper salaried staff: .....</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>313,000</i>	<i>31,000</i>
- teachers .....	93	73,000	5,000
Lower salaried staff	81	763,000	153,000
Workers .....	72	957,000	278,000
Pensioners .....	76	908,000	214,000
Students and school pupils .....	70	260,000	76,000
Unemployed .....	61	140,000	54,000
Others .....	60	128,000	52,000
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>3,773,000</b>	<b>890,000</b>

**Table 12:**  
**Voting activity (%) by socioeconomic status and field of activity**

Field of activity	Socioeconomic status:		
	Workers	Lower salaried	Upper staff
Forestry and agriculture	77	89	92
Industry .....	73	83	89
Construction .....	69	82	88
Commerce .....	65	76	88
Communications .....	72	82	89
Finance .....	69	81	89
Services .....	74	82	92
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>90</b>

farmers (92%) again underlines the effect of the political and social uniformity prevailing in the agrarian environment on the intensity of political participation. Socialisation is effective in a 'political culture' of this kind and the usefulness of voting is hardly questioned: politics has a prominent, concrete position and is an essential part of daily life. This is obviously not the case with most groups employed in industry or the service sector.

Whatever the individual causes, the low voting percentage among the working population (72%) may reflect above all a lack of efficiency and/or conflict of interests in political socialisation, 'disengagement' from politics and criticism of it for one reason or another. In contrast to the two groups of salaried staff, voting among the workers is also characterized by differences between the various branches of industry.

It can also be observed from Table 12 that the assignment of political 'quotas' among employees has met with less success in the field of commerce than elsewhere, and that this applies to the lower salaried staff as well. With their voting activity of 81%, these are located exactly between the upper salaried staff and the workers. They also constitute an extensive, continuously expanding class which has grown as a result of structural changes and has a political identity which is the least clearly defined or stable of all these groups. The assignment of political 'quotas' has apparently proceeded

quite far even inside this large group, except for the commercial sphere, as its political activity is well above the average. The activity of the upper salaried staff may be said to conform to expectations, being high, with hardly any variation from one branch of the economy to another.

There is a distinct turning point in voting activity among the retired population with age, in that the figure for persons aged over 70 years is 72% and that for the age-group 55-69 years 84%, both groups containing approximately 400,000 individuals. It must be concluded, however, that the activity of the 55-69-year-olds is markedly lower than that of the corresponding age-group in any other socioeconomic classification. This may not quite correspond to the assumptions presented concerning the degree of interest shown by pensioners in elections.

Considerable differences are generally found between socioeconomic classes, particularly in the youngest age group and among young people of working age, as indicated in Table 13. The low voting percentages of young working people is especially striking: 50% for age 18-24 years and 61% for age 25-29 years, figures that are approximately 30 percentage points below those obtained for farmers, 20 percentage points below those for upper salaried staff and 10 percentage points below those for lower salaried staff. The older the age-group, the smaller the differences between the socioeconomic classes. It can be concluded that political mobilisation in Finnish society is distinctly determined along the lines of social stratification.

It is also notable that political socialisation seems to last a considerable time, as the culmination of political activity is achieved in fairly old age-groups. The farmers are obviously an exception, as their voting percentage is high throughout the age-groups. The youngest age-group of upper salaried staff (18-24: 69%) deviates very markedly from the general level, but the following age-group (25-29: 82%) is quite close to the average for the entire group (90%). The lower salaried staff and workers also deviate from the scheme, the latter even more markedly than the former. The almost

**Table 13:**  
**Voting activity (%) by age and socioeconomic status: employed population**

Socioeconomic status	Age-groups					Total
	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-54	55-69*	
Employers .....	66	75	80	87	93	86
Farmers .....	80	89	91	93	93	92
Upper salaried staff: .....	69	82	87	92	96	90
- private sector .....	66	80	85	91	95	88
- public sector: .....	72	85	90	94	96	92
- management .....	70	80	92	96	98	95
- planning, etc. ....	72	85	90	94	95	92
- teaching .....	77	86	91	95	97	93
Lower salaried staff: .....	60	72	80	86	91	81
- private sector .....	59	71	78	85	91	79
- public sector: .....	63	75	82	88	92	83
- managerial duties .....	65	78	85	91	93	89
- middle level .....	65	77	84	89	92	85
- routine duties .....	62	73	80	86	91	80
Workers: .....	50	61	70	79	86	72
- forestry and agriculture .....	62	70	73	80	86	75
- industrial .....	50	62	72	80	89	73
- other manufacturing .....	49	60	71	79	86	71
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>76</b>

\* The number of those past the official retirement age is relatively small in the age-group, as the category contains only those regarded as employed.

complete political mobilisation of the upper salaried staff among the active working population over 55 years (96%) is also surprising, although the level of mobilisation among the lower salaried staff of corresponding age is also high (91%).

An entirely novel finding is the difference between persons employed by the public and private sectors, the voting percentage being 4 percentage points higher among upper salaried staff employed in the public sector (92%) than among those in the private sector, with a corresponding difference among the lower salaried staff (83% vs 79%). This difference is greatest in the youngest age group of upper salaried staff. Differences of this kind have also been observed elsewhere. An attempt has been made to account for such discrepancies by referring to the greater 'political awareness' of those employed in the public sector, their better acquaintance with public activities, and a greater level of interest derived from their better mastery of public affairs and greater dependence on the results of the election (Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980, 94-101). These are mere assumptions, however, which have not been verified

empirically. It should also be noted that the difference between the two sectors decreases with age, being practically non-existent in the 55-69-year age-group.

### Specification of 'class factors'

As seen in the above, differences in political mobilisation clearly follow the socio-economic classification. In this respect, the parties have managed to fix their 'quotas' among the members of the different socioeconomic classes to very varying degrees. Such political categorization has been least successful among the working people, a considerable proportion of whom lie outside the party system. As everyday political practices and decisions reinforce the role of the socioeconomic classification, at least for the time being, the 'class differences' in political mobilisation are undoubtedly one of the basic factors governing the political reality in Finland. Questions can nevertheless be raised regarding the nature of the additional features of socioeconomic position which can be of assistance in an attempt to account for the considerable activity differences between

the various classes. The definition of socioeconomic position in itself includes education, and in practice high socioeconomic status normally implies a high income level and advanced age. It is thus interesting to observe how the 'class differences' in political mobilisation are reinforced or weakened when an attempt is made to take into account simultaneously the effect of age, education, income and wealth in the analysis. These factors are in practice additional features of socioeconomic position and have also been found to be clearly related to voting activity.

Table 14 (logit models) provides a good starting point for answering the above question. The most significant observations are stated in the following (see p. 97, Material and Methods):

- The exceptional nature of the worker group is also evident in a bivariate examination (second column). The group of employers constitutes a 'reference group' with which the others are compared in the table. The 'risk' of not voting is approximately 2.5 times higher among the workers than among the employers and 3.6 times higher than among the upper salaried staff.
- The inclusion of age in the analysis (third column) further emphasizes the difference between the upper salaried staff and the others, suggesting that the age distribution associated with socioeconomic position is such that the 'actual' differences between socioeconomic status and voting remain partly obscured unless age is included in the analysis at the same time. This may be attributable to the fact that the upper salaried staff includes relatively more older people with a high voting activity. This reduces the differences between the lower salaried staff and employee groups and the reference group (and also others) to some extent. Thus the lower activity shown by the workers and lower salaried staff must partly be attributable to age, as these groups contain a high number of young people, whose voting activity is low in general.

**Table 14:**  
Effect of selected background variables on voting. Voting percentages and logit-model coefficients (odds ratios) in bivariate and multivariate models: employed population

	Voting %	Bivariate model	Multivariate model +age +edu- +others cation		
<b>Age</b>					
18-24 .....	56	1.00	-	1.00	1.00
25-34 .....	69	1.79	-	1.64	1.53
35-44 .....	77	2.76	-	2.55	2.12
45-54 .....	85	4.47	-	4.72	3.42
55-69 .....	90	7.56	-	9.08	6.17
70+ .....	90	7.40	-	9.21	4.45
<b>Socioeconomic position</b>					
Employers .....	87	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Entrepreneurs ...	88	1.13	1.14	1.22	1.25
Upper salaried staff .....	91	1.49	1.70	1.00	1.00
Lower salaried staff .....	81	0.67	0.89	0.82	0.86
Workers .....	72	0.41	0.55	0.60	0.64
Unknown .....	69	0.35	0.45	0.49	0.54
<b>Educational level</b>					
Comprehensive school .....	78	1.00	1.00	-	1.00
Lower intermediate grade ...	76	0.91	1.37	-	1.31
Higher intermediate grade ...	83	1.38	2.21	-	1.82
Lowest upper grade .....	90	2.72	3.05	-	2.20
Lower university degree .....	92	3.39	3.65	-	2.63
Higher university degree .....	93	3.89	4.24	-	2.84
<b>Income level</b>					
10-19 999 .....	75	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
20-39 999 .....	72	0.87	0.93	0.90	1.02
40-59 999 .....	75	0.99	0.91	0.91	1.14
60-79 999 .....	80	1.36	1.05	0.99	1.27
80-119 999 .....	85	1.95	1.36	1.10	1.38
120+ .....	91	3.44	2.15	1.25	1.36
Unknown .....	70	0.79	0.60	0.58	0.59
<b>Ownership</b>					
Ownership of dwelling .....	84	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Does not own dwelling .....	67	0.40	0.49	0.50	0.52

\* The first column indicates voting percentage, the second the abstention risk as compared to the reference group (first category of the variable), the third the change caused by the introduction of age and the fourth the change caused by age and education, and the fifth the change in the relationship between the given variable and voting when all the other variables in the table are taken into consideration in the model.

- The 'class differences' in political mobilisation are reduced markedly when education is taken into consideration together with age, indicating that education is a significant factor contributing to these differences. A smoothing out of the distribution of education across the socioeconomic classes would bring the upper salaried staff down to the level of the employers and the lower salaried staff up relatively close to the upper ones, and also reduce the 'risk' of not voting among the workers relative to the reference group to 'only' 1.6. The inclusion of income and ownership together with education does not significantly change the coefficients of the model (last column). It must be noted that although the above differences are reduced markedly, they do not disappear completely.
- Age was found to occupy a dominant position in political mobilisation independently of other demographic factors, as indicated in Table 8. This observation can now be specified in greater detail from two new points of view. Firstly, the effect of age on voting is emphasized greatly when the employed population is examined, i.e. excluding the large, fairly active group of students. Secondly, the inclusion of education in the above model further emphasizes the differences between the age-groups. Once income and ownership of property are added to education, the differences between the age-groups are reduced progressively more the older is the age-group concerned. This indicates in fact that the activating 'surplus value' of income and property increases with age. As also clearly indicated in Table 14, age nevertheless constitutes a basic pillar of political mobilisation in Finland, for income, education and social status alone or in combination cannot counteract the activity differences which it brings about. As a purely cross-sectional interpretation of socialisation, the results suggest that voting is still closely connected with stage in life (life cycle), but it must be borne in mind, as stated earlier, that the voting activity of young age cohorts decreased rather than increased in the 1980's. In this respect the situation seems to be undergoing a change and voting will not necessarily be an automatic qualifier of age in the future.
- To sum up, the crucial background factor for the differences in political mobilisation implied by socioeconomic status is education, although it does not alone provide an exhaustive explanation for the activity differences, which must at least in part be caused by factors unrelated to education, material possessions or other components of welfare.

## 5. Education and voting

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As stated earlier in the current investigation, education is an essential basic mechanism of political socialisation. Education is almost invariably a significant factor when evaluating the engagement of individuals in politics and society irrespective of the viewpoint adopted. Educational differences are reflected in peoples' ideas of actual political phenomena, political attitudes, party selection and the intensity of political activity. As indicated by interview surveys in Finland (Martikainen & Yrjönen 1984; Jääsaari & Martikainen 1991), the most obvious orientations towards politics at

lower educational levels are the various disengagement roles combined with uncritical and emotional rejection of politics and implicit reliance on self-evident political alternatives and contentions. Adoption of the role of a 'citizen' as understood within the liberal notion of democracy seems to be easier the higher one's level of education is. This is regarded as being attributable to a cluster of interrelated emotional factors centred upon the duties of a citizen and factors concerned with the individual's intellectual and convictional mastery of political matters which affect voting and

which seem to be dependent on the degree of education (Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980, 17–22).

Investigations carried out in this field have pointed to a strong statistical connection between level of education and voting activity. Education is a factor which inevitably increases the likelihood of voting. Thus the activity difference between the least educated sector of the population (less than 5 years of schooling) and those with the highest level of education in the United States was 53 percentage points in 1972, 38% vs. 91% (Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980, 17). As the proportion of highly educated persons in the population increased in the 1970's and 1980's, the educational factor did much to restrain the downward trend in voting activity, and it has been estimated that without this effect voting activity would have dropped in the United States by an additional 4 percentage points at the aggregate level (Schaffer 1981, 79).

The effect of education is also obvious when considering the other common socio-demographic factors (Teixeira 1987, 49–61).

The investigation carried out in the United States has indicated, however, that the high correlation between income and voting assumes a different form once the effect of education is taken into consideration. Firstly, the effect of education on voting is much greater than that of income, secondly, income level mainly affects the voting of individuals who have no academic degree, and thirdly, exceeding the average income level does not affect the voting activity of those with an academic degree, a similar tendency being observed in a slightly higher income category among persons of lower educational level (Wolfinger and Rosenstone 1980, 24–25). Thus, once a given income level is exceeded, money no longer affects voting activity. The effect of income on voting is in this respect more or less the same at all occupational levels.

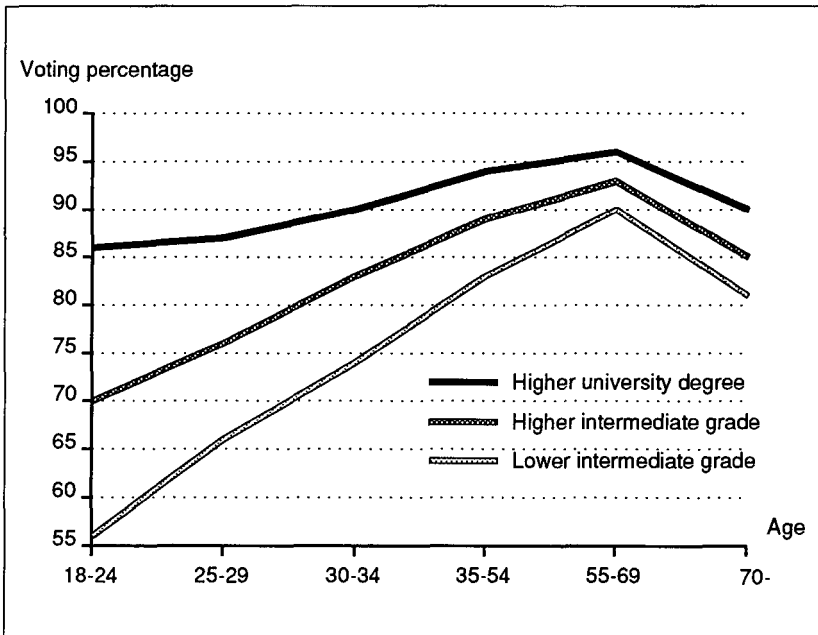


Figure 4: Voting activity by age and level of education



**Table 15:**  
**Voting activity (%) by age and level of education**

Level of education	Age						Total
	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-54	55-69	70+	
1. Comprehensive school .....	56	54	65	78	85	69	74
2. Lower intermediate grade .....	56	66	74	83	90	81	75
3. Higher intermediate grade .....	70	76	83	89	93	85	81
4. Lowest upper grade .....	74	80	86	92	95	85	90
5. Lower university degree .....	77	83	89	93	95	89	91
6. Higher university degree .....	86	87	90	94	96	90	92
Total .....	60	68	75	83	86	72	76

\* Definitions:

1. Comprehensive school (or junior or middle school under the former system) but no further schooling
2. Lower intermediate grade (approximately 10-11 years of schooling): comprehensive school plus two years of vocational training
3. Higher intermediate grade (approximately 12 years of schooling: comprehensive and upper secondary school or three years of vocational training)
4. Lowest upper grade (approximately 13-14 years of schooling): e.g. qualified engineer or social worker
5. Lower university degree (approximately 15 years of schooling): e.g. junior school teacher, first degree in business studies, humanities, natural sciences, etc.
6. Higher university degree (at least 16 years of schooling): qualified doctor, Candidate in Philosophy, Candidate in Social Sciences, graduate forester, etc.

Persons with more advanced academic degrees (licentiate or doctorate) are not included in this table as instances of these are so rare in the age range 18-29 years.

It is useful first of all to discuss the results of Table 15 by age groups, which illustrates best the 'pure' effect of education:

1. The effect of education proceeds in three stages in the age group 18-24 years: the lowest two levels of education, comprehensive school and the lower intermediate grade, are identical in terms of voting activity (56%), the following three levels, of which the upper two usually involve matriculation from the upper secondary school, constitute a relatively stable group which deviates markedly from the former (70-74%), while the highest level of education in turn differs considerably from both of the above levels (86%).

2. The age group 25-29 years stands out markedly from the previous one, and all the levels of education differ from each other, the lowest and the highest by as much as 33%.

3. The age group 30-34 years resembles the previous one with the exception that voting activity increases with age at each level. The differences between the higher levels begin to disappear with more advanced age, and the older the age group, the less educational differences seem to be connected with differences in voting activity in the first place. This means, of course, that

voting must be 'learned' through some other socialisation factors in the older age groups, while increased education will undoubtedly be accompanied by a given rise in voting activity in the young age groups.

4. The above trends continue in the age ranges 35-54 years and 55-69 years, and it is only those with comprehensive school education in the latter group who stand out from the others (85% vs 90-96%). It is also logical in the light of the above that there should be a sudden drop of 14 percentage points (85-69%) in the voting activity of individuals with a comprehensive school education when proceeding from the age group 55-69 years to 70+ years, the difference between the lowest level and the highest levels of education being again evident.

The above indicates explicitly the close relationship between education and interest in voting, which is particularly notable among the young age groups. It should again be borne in mind that the voting percentage of the two lowest levels of education in age group 18-24 years was 55%. In view of the fact that 70 young people out of 100 have a comprehensive school education alone or with a vocational training of lower intermediate grade, less than 30 out of 100 a training of higher

intermediate grade and only about one out of 200 a higher educational level, the activating 'surplus value' of education can be concluded as only being available to a relatively narrow elite group. It is also necessary to point out that the most marked activity difference in the age group 18–24 is between the higher intermediate grade (70%) and lower intermediate grade or comprehensive school level (56%). This outcome may reflect the difference between two 'school cultures', upper secondary school and vocational school, and to some extent their modes of political socialisation, which seem to pull in different directions.

The latter difference is further emphasized when the association between voting and education is examined separately for cities and rural districts (Table 16).

The most significant observations are obvious from Table 16. The voting activity of persons aged 18–24 years with a vocational school education and urban residence is even lower than that of those with comprehensive school education only, which further emphasizes the difference between them and individuals at the upper secondary school or college level. Secondly, the differences between the cities and rural districts are pronounced and similar in all age groups apart from those aged 18–24 years who have an upper secondary school or college education. Together with the findings discussed earlier, this points to the existence of at least one major anti-political group: young people living in population centres without any vocational education or those with a two-year vocational school education only. In view of the fact that

voting activity in these age groups dropped by approximately 15 percentage points between 1979 and 1987, it may be said that the parties have almost completely failed the recruit them, whatever the causes for this may have been. There is a considerable difference between individuals at the vocational school or lower level and those at the upper secondary school or college level, amounting to almost 20 percentage points among the age group 18–24 years in the population centres.

The independent role of education as a factor increasing political participation has been frequently referred to in the present investigation. This interpretation can now be examined in greater detail by means of Table 14 (logit analysis, p. 37), which enables the simultaneous evaluation of a number of factors operating in parallel to education. The results can be summed up as follows:

- Differences between educational groups are obvious at the bivariate level (second column). The odds on voting (in a betting sense) increase systematically with education, being almost four times higher among persons with a university degree than among those with only comprehensive school education (reference group).
- When age is added to the model (third column), the differences between the educational groups become even more pronounced, and that between the higher intermediate grade (persons with at least upper secondary education, plus university students) and the reference group in particular increases markedly. Similarly,

**Table 16:**  
Voting activity in the young age groups (%) by education (selected levels) and place of residence

Education	Age							
	18–24		25–29		30–34		Total	
	City	Rural area	City	Rural area	City	Rural area	City	Rural area
Comprehensive school . . . . .	53	59	50	62	61	72	72	77
Lower intermediate grade (vocational school) . . . . .	52	61	61	72	70	79	72	78
Higher intermediate grade (matriculation examination or college) . . . . .	69	72	74	80	81	86	80	82
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>79</b>

the coefficient for the lower intermediate grade now has the 'correct' sign, indicating that the 'real' connection between education and voting is not revealed completely unless the age factor is taken into consideration, as a result of which education and age must be included in the model simultaneously.

- When socioeconomic position, income and property ownership are entered in the model in addition to age (fifth column), all the coefficients apart from that for the lower intermediate grade are reduced. Thus the differences between the educational groups and the reference group (comprehensive school) are reduced considerably, although they still remain significant. The 'odds on voting' among those with a higher university degree, for instance, are 2.8 times greater than for those with only a comprehensive school education. This result shows that the rise in social position, higher income and increased wealth which are often connected with a high educational level

and its improvement cannot be regarded as background factors accounting for the correlation between education and voting. In other words, education has a strong effect on voting.

It must be noted, however, that income, property ownership and social status accentuate considerably the activity differences between the educational groups, and that this effect becomes more visible the higher one moves up the educational ladder. This is most evident among persons with a higher university degree: when the effect of income, property and social position is controlled, the 'odds on their voting', which used to be 4.2:1 relative to individuals with a comprehensive school education, are reduced to 2.8:1. Thus material welfare undoubtedly emphasizes differences in education, but does not have a crucial causal effect on these. The results in Table 14 verify the interpretation of education as playing a primary role in political mobilisation in Finland.

## 6. Material welfare and voting activity

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Income and property are background factors which undoubtedly determine people's political ideas, comments and choices. According to the most common interpretation supported by worldwide surveys carried out over a number of decades, political passivity is regarded as a feature inevitably connected with the 'portrait of the underdog' as defined by Genevieve Knupfer over 40 years ago (Knupfer 1953). There has been a tendency to consider abstention a feature of apathy and an apathetic personality resulting from living under miserable conditions, which is supported by the frequent co-occurrence of political passivity and poor circumstances in life. The idea of abstention being caused by apathy cannot be regarded as a currently valid one, however, as abstention is more and more becoming a deliberate choice.

An attempt has also been made to account for the high correlation between the 'well-off' and voting, the following causes being presented by Wolfinger and Rosenstone (1980, 20–21):

- (1) Irrespective of their educational background, the well-off are most likely to acquire abilities in their profession which are of use in active engagement in politics and voting.
- (2) The effect of income level on the selection of place of residence and possibly hobbies is more pronounced than that of education and profession, for example, which gives rise to certain pressures concerning political participation and voting.
- (3) The well-off have a higher 'stake' in politics than others, which guarantees good motivation for political participation.

**Table 17:**  
**Voting activity (%) by age and taxable income**

Taxable income (state taxation: FIM)	Age						Total
	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-54	55-69	70+	
-19999	64	66	68	74	82	59	69
2-29999	57	64	65	72	81	68	70
3-39999	55	66	71	78	86	77	75
4-59999	54	67	74	80	89	82	76
6-79999	55	69	77	84	90	85	81
8-99999	56	71	80	86	92	88	85
10-119999	54	75	83	89	94	90	88
12-149999	64	77	84	91	95	90	90
150000+	59	79	86	92	96	91	92
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>76</b>

The uppermost line in Table 17 denotes people whose annual taxable income was less than 20 000 marks in 1985, such as most students, the second group those with an income of 20 000-29 999 marks etc. The fact that the figures apply to 1985 taxation means that the income was earned more than a year prior to the election date used to define the age groups.

The most significant findings may be summed up as follows:

- As far as the entire material is concerned, income correlates closely with voting activity, the difference between the lowest and highest income classes being

23 percentage points (69% vs 92%). In addition, possession of a large annual income (over FIM 150 000) eliminates all the differences traditionally connected with geographical area, as indicated by Table 18.

- It can be further inferred from Table 17 that in practice there is hardly any correlation between income and voting in the age group 18-24 years (the lowest income class contains students, whose activity was found earlier to be higher than that of other young people). This is an interesting detail which supports the notion that young people's voting decisions can at least partly be accounted for by factors which do not follow the lines of thinking of the rest of the people.
- There is only a weak correlation between income and voting up to almost 100 000 FIM in the age group 25-29 years.
- The voting activity of the age group 30-34 years increases consistently with income, as is also true for the 35-54 and 55-69 year age groups with the exception that the difference between the lowest and highest income classes narrows with age.
- The age group 70+ years differs from the others in the exceptionally wide range of voting percentages between the extreme ends of the income scale (59% vs 91%).

**Table 18:**  
**Voting activity of persons with high incomes (over FIM 150 000) by electoral districts: middle-aged and elderly age groups**

Electoral district	35-54	55-69	Total
Helsinki	92	96	74
Uusimaa	92	96	75
Turku, southern	94	98	78
Turku, northern	95	97	79
Häme, southern	93	96	76
Häme, northern	93	95	77
Kymi	93	98	77
Mikkeli	93	98	74
Northern Karelia	94	97	74
Kuopio	91	97	75
Central Finland	94	95	77
Vaasa	96	99	82
Oulu	93	95	76
Lapland	92	94	79
<b>Total</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>76</b>

**Table 19:**  
**Voting activity (%) by age and selected household income deciles**

Income decile	Age						Total
	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-54	55-69	70+	
Lowest decile .....	54	61	67	74	78	55	67
Sixth decile .....	60	68	77	85	89	79	79
Highest decile .....	74	74	80	87	94	89	86
<b>Total</b> .....	<b>60</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>76</b>

To sum up, the relationship between income and voting is strikingly prominent in the entire material apart from the young people, for whom the relationship is a weak one, and the elderly, for whom it is exceptionally strong. The former reflects the deviance of young adults' political orientation from traditional lines of thinking, while the latter indicates the emergence of passivity among the elderly, possibly caused by their being 'badly-off'. This conclusion can be filled out with one further interesting detail by comparing voting activity with income per household member, i.e. the total taxable income of all persons living together in the same dwelling in 1985 divided by their number, as indicated in Table 19. The households were firstly arranged in ascending order by income and then divided into ten classes of equal size, i.e. each containing 10% of the households.

Thus the 'portrait of the underdog' is even more evident in Table 19, in that the voting activity of the lowest income decile of those aged 70 years and over is 55% and that of the highest one 89%, i.e. there is a difference of 34 percentage points. The age group 18-24 years is also interesting, as the table indicates a drop to 54% in the lowest income class, while the figure for the cities alone (not shown in the table) is 50%. In contrast to this, the voting activity of young people reaches 74% in the highest income class. As it is only extremely few young people or young couples who manage to reach the highest income decile independently, the figures only apply to those still living at home with wealthy parents. The results undoubtedly reflect the efficiency of the political socialisation effect imposed on these young persons by their wealthy homes, since the income level of the family accounts for voting behaviour

better than the individual's own income. Equal attention must also be paid to the reverse side of the phenomenon, however: belonging to the lowest income decile seems to imply conditions in which people are least motivated to participate in politics.

The above tables and related observations are based on the simultaneous examination of two factors, e.g. voting and income, but it is also possible here to use the multivariate models presented in Table 14 (p. 37, logistic regression analysis) to determine whether the connection between income, property and voting is preserved when age, education and socioeconomic position are included in the model. The results are interesting, and can be presented in the following way:

- As indicated in the second column of Table 14 (p. 37, bivariate level) which describes the relationship between income and voting in terms of an odds-ratio, the likelihood of voting increases markedly with income. The coefficients for the various income classes suggest that the first of these classes, that with which the others are compared in the logit analysis, does not behave in a consistent manner, i.e. that the people defined as belonging to the lowest income class do not in fact have the lowest incomes. The odds on voting in the highest income class are 3.4:1 when compared with this reference class, but would be 3.9:1 if the second lowest class were used for reference. In any case, there is a marked rise in the magnitude of the coefficients.
- When education is accompanied by age in the model (Table 14, third column), the coefficients attached to the income classes decline markedly. This suggests

that the high voting activity of the highest income class is partly attributable to the fact that, on the average, high income groups are heavy with older persons who in many cases tend to vote more actively. In this respect age differences partly account for the activity differences between the income groups.

- The inclusion of education in the model in addition to age, as indicated in the fourth column of Table 14, eliminates almost completely the differences between the income groups. This means that the independent effect of income on voting disappears and the activity differ-

ences between the income groups are in fact the result of a combination of age and education. In other words, if the income groups were similar in terms of age and education, there would be no appreciable differences in activity. In addition to the above factors, socioeconomic status and ownership of property are included in the fifth column of Table 14 (p. 37). The differences between the income groups are also rational ones in this model, with a 'correct' direction of the coefficients, which suggests that the model describes the relation between income and voting in an accurate and comprehensive manner.

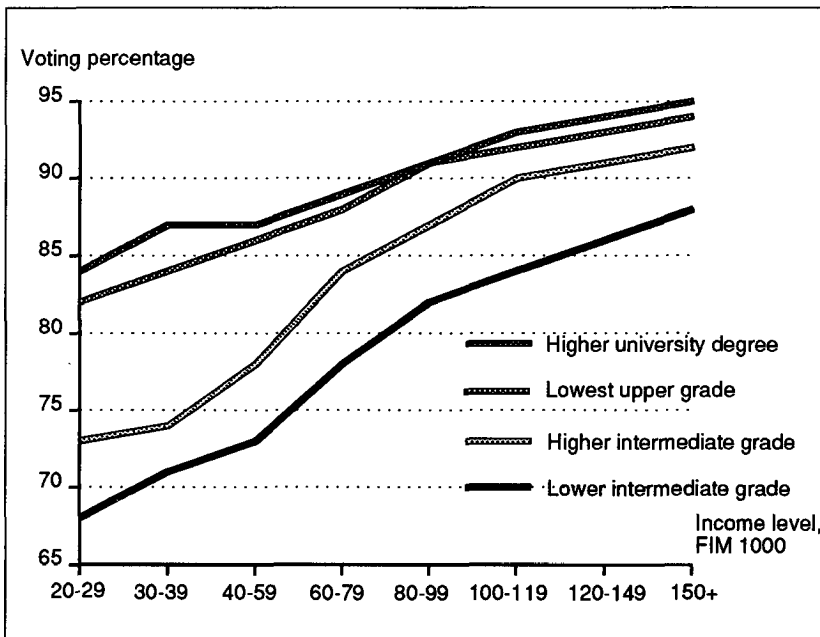


Figure 5: Voting activity by education and income

Table 20: Voting activity (%) by education and income

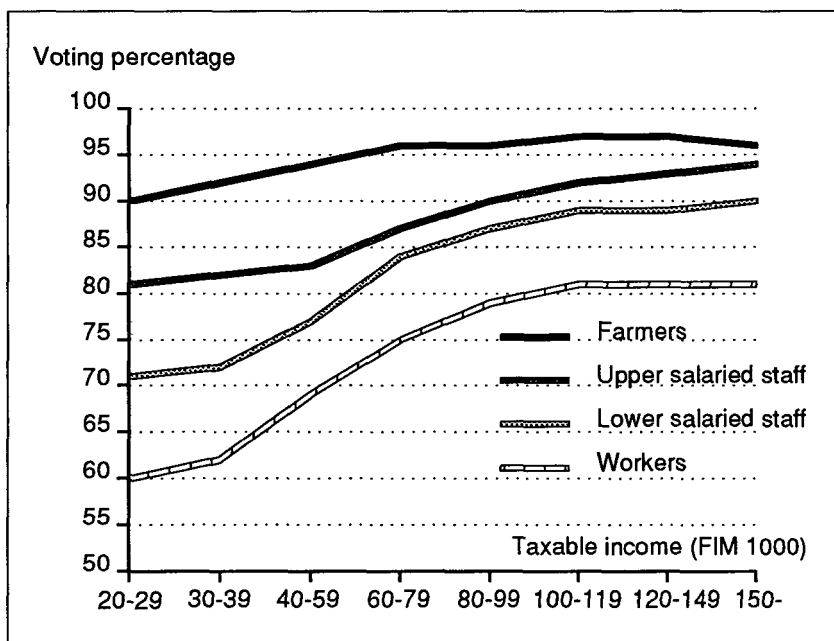
	Income level, thousands of FIM/year								Total
	20-29	30-39	40-59	60-79	80-99	100-119	120-149	150+	
Comprehensive school . . . . .	70	77	77	80	82	83	84	85	75
Lower intermediate grade . . . . .	68	71	73	78	82	84	86	88	75
Higher intermediate grade . . . . .	73	74	78	84	87	90	91	92	81
Lowest upper grade . . . . .	82	84	86	88	91	92	93	94	90
Highest university degree . . . . .	84	87	87	89	91	93	94	95	93
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>76</b>

As noted earlier, research carried out in the United States has also shown that the high correlation between income and voting assumes a different form once the effect of education is taken into consideration. In the first place, the effect of education on voting is much greater than that of income, and income level, for instance, mainly affects the voting of individuals who have no academic degree. Thus once a given income level is exceeded, money no longer affects voting activity. It is only poverty and abstention which are closely related to each other (Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980, 24-25).

In addition to the above, the connection between voting activity and income in Finland (Table 20) is much greater among the lower educational groups than among persons with a university degree, for example. Correspondingly, the relationship between income and voting varies by socioeconomic groups (Table 21), as indicated by the practically non-existent effect of income on the voting activity of farmers, whereas that of lower salaried staff and workers is markedly connected with income, their activity increasing consistently up to the average income level, although income no longer plays an appreciable role

**Table 21:**  
Voting activity (%) by socioeconomic status and income

	Income level, thousand FIM/year								Total
	20-29	30-39	40-59	60-79	80-99	100-119	120-149	150+	
Employers .....	83	85	85	85	88	87	89	91	86
Self-employed .....	87	88	90	90	90	89	89	89	87
- farmers .....	90	92	94	96	96	97	97	96	92
Upper salaried staff .....	81	82	83	87	90	92	93	94	90
Lower salaried staff .....	71	72	77	84	87	89	89	90	81
Workers .....	60	62	69	75	79	81	81	81	72
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>76</b>



**Figure 6:**  
Voting activity by socioeconomic position and income

once this level has been achieved. The above relationship may be attributable to the fact that workers and lower salaried staff of a higher income class may also be more highly educated, in which case the results reflect the effect of education (cf. the interpretation of education presented in the above logit model).

## Property and voting activity

The relation between material welfare and political activity can also be looked at from the point of view of the ownership of property. Although income and property are closely linked with each other in practice, they may be seen to differ considerably in the intensity of the involvement of their possessors in politics and society, at least in principle. Property of all things connects an individual with the realities of society, which could be assumed to act as an incentive to vote. Table 22 provides at least a preliminary answer to this question.

The above results are similar to those presented in the table concerning the correlation between income and voting, providing additional information on the age group 18–24 years in particular. The voting behaviour of those who own their own dwelling is entirely different from that of individuals living in rented accommodation, the latter having an extremely low voting percentage of 48%.

**Table 22:**  
Voting activity (%) by basis of ownership of dwelling in selected age groups

Ownership of dwelling	Age				Total
	18–24	25–29	35–54	55–69	
Own house .....	66	74	87	89	82
Own share in block of houses or flats .....	63	73	85	89	81
Rented house or flat .....	48	61	69	78	65
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>76</b>

As indicated above, however, the connection between income and voting can be accounted for largely by age and education. It is thus necessary to ask to what extent the connection between property ownership and voting can be accounted for by education, age, socioeconomic position or income. An answer to this question can again be found in Table 14 (p. 37), in which the interpretation obtained for property ownership is totally different from that for income. (As the material concerns only employed people, the percentages in the first column of Table 14 differ slightly from those given in Table 17, which are based on the entire material).

Firstly, the likelihood of voting among owner-occupiers is 2.5 times higher than that among those who do not own their own house or flat. When age is included in the model, the coefficient for the non-owners increases slightly (i.e. the difference between ownership and non-ownership is reduced) which indicates that age also plays a certain role in the relationship between property and voting. Inclusion of education in the model alongside age does not alter the coefficient at all, nor does it affect the relationship between property and voting.

Correspondingly, when socioeconomic position and income are also included in the model, the relation between property and voting still remains unchanged. This interesting finding indicates that the effect of home ownership on an individual's political engagement cannot be attributed to any of its 'related concepts', such as income, education or 'class'. It is apparent that the ownership of property, particularly of a house or apartment in Finland, binds people to political realities both emotionally and from the point of view of having a 'stake' in politics. This means that property is an independent basic factor in political mobilisation alongside income, and undoubtedly one of the background factors to voting activity.



## 7. Unemployment, marital status and language as background factors in voting activity

It is useful to look again at the principle governing the interpretation of the present survey, according to which politics in general and voting in particular should not be looked on as a discrete, independent field of human life but rather as a coherent part of the individual's whole approach to life. Voting is an indicator of the way in which a person interprets his position with respect to society and the role he has decided to allot to politics in his own life. It is sometimes difficult to find any political factor which would account for such a decision, and people are often incapable of giving a single cause for voting or abstaining.

Voting is connected in the following with three particular circumstances in life, unemployment, marriage and minority position (Swedish-speaking minority), in which political socialisation can modify a person's attitude to politics and voting.

### Unemployment and voting

Results obtained for the association between voting and unemployment have been quite controversial. It has been concluded in some surveys in the United States (for further details, see Rosenstone 1982) that unemployment has no effect on voting. This conclusion is based on the inference that a high number of general background factors leading to electoral passivity are supposedly represented in the socio-demographic makeup of the unemployed (poverty, migration, etc.) which account exhaustively for the relation found between unemployment and voting. In other words unemployment itself does not have any independent effect whatsoever. In opposition to this, however, better justified results have been obtained which indicate that unemployment has a significant effect on voting even when other relevant background factors are kept constant (Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980, 29;

Rosenstone 1982, 34). Most explanations emphasize the psychological problems caused by unemployment, such as loss of dignity and self-confidence, and the introspection and isolation caused by the breakdown of social relations.

Voting activity is presented in the following by age and the duration of unemployment.

The results of the table are clear for all to see. Short-term unemployment is likely to be experienced as a temporary nuisance which does not have any significant effect on voting, whereas a longer period consistently reduces voting activity. The results differ from the survey carried out in the United States in that firstly, the effect was greatest at the beginning of the unemployment period in the United States, and secondly, the passivizing effect of unemployment decreased slowly and reached saturation point once the person had been out of work for four months, after which it

**Table 23:**  
Voting activity (%) by selected age groups and duration of unemployment

Duration of unemployment in months	Age			
	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-54
1 month . . . . .	57	67	73	81
2 months . . . . .	55	64	72	78
3 months . . . . .	52	62	69	76
4 months . . . . .	51	62	67	75
5 months . . . . .	49	60	68	75
6 months . . . . .	47	58	63	74
7 months . . . . .	45	56	63	73
8 months . . . . .	43	55	64	74
9 months . . . . .	43	54	62	71
10 months . . . . .	40	54	61	70
11 months . . . . .	38	54	58	70
12 months . . . . .	36	47	53	63
<b>Total . . . . .</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>74</b>
Voting percentage, entire material . . . .	60	68	75	83

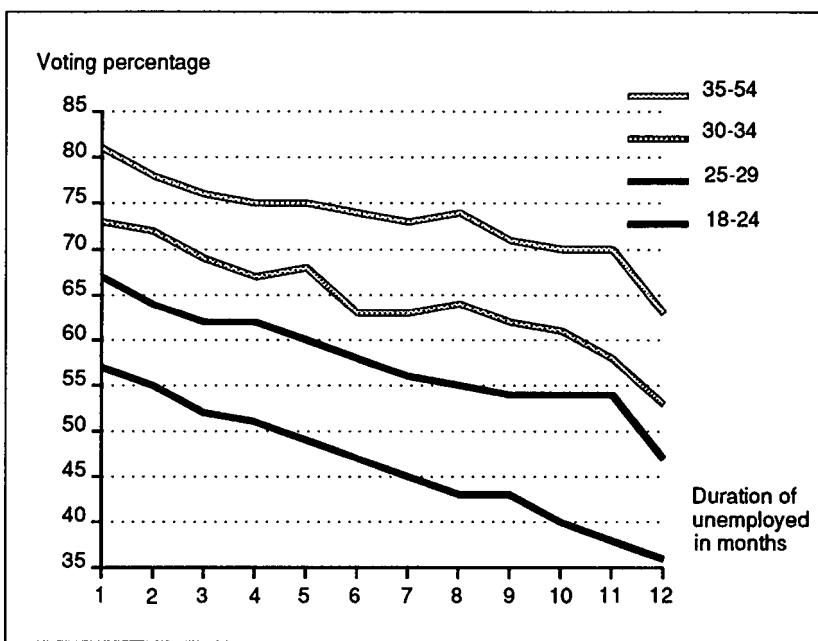


Figure 7:  
Voting activity by age and duration of unemployment

disappeared (Rosenstone 1982, 34). In Finland, however, as stated earlier, the duration of unemployment and the decline in activity follow each other with monotonous regularity.

The above observation becomes even clearer when the voting behaviour of those unemployed for at least 12 months is compared between electoral districts.

The alienating effect of long-term unemployment is most pronounced in Eastern Finland, represented in Table 24 by the electoral district of Northern Karelia, and in Southern Finland and South-eastern Finland, the voting percentage in the age group 18-24 years varying between 25% and 30% in these areas. Western Finland differs markedly from the rest of the country, however, for reasons which are difficult to identify.

The extent to which the relation between unemployment and voting activity reflects the 'independent' effect of unemployment

can again be ascertained from the logit analysis, as presented in Table 25.

The first column in Table 25 indicates voting activity in groups classified by duration of unemployment. As indicated by the table, voting activity does not follow this duration with the same consistency as it does in Table 24, which was based on age. The second column indicates that the 'abstention risk' among the long-term unemployed is almost three times as high as among the employed population but slightly less than among those who have been unemployed for 1-2 months. When age is also taken into consideration (third column), the difference between those who have been unemployed for a short time and the employed population decreases and the long-term unemployed stand out even more markedly. This suggests that correct interpretation of this relationship requires a comparison with age. The results also suggest that there is a relatively high number of young people, who are generally reluctant to vote, among those unemployed for a short period.

**Table 24:**  
**Voting activity (%) of those unemployed for a period of at least 12 months by age: selected electoral districts**

Electoral district	Age			
	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-54
Helsinki . . . . .	27	42	46	57
Uusimaa . . . . .	30	36	49	60
Turku, southern . . .	32	52	49	59
Turku, northern . . .	62	73	73	76
Häme, southern . . .	34	39	43	57
Kymi . . . . .	25	43	53	57
Northern Karelia . . .	27	40	51	62
Vaasa . . . . .	51	68	57	68
Oulu . . . . .	37	47	50	65
Lapland (rural districts) . . . .	53	67	73	74

**Table 25:**  
**Effect of unemployment on voting. Voting percentages and bivariate and multivariate logit model coefficients (odds ratios): employed and unemployed population**

	% Bivariate	Multivariate*			
			+age	+marit. status	+others
Employed	80	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Unemployed 1-2 months	59	0.38	0.51	0.56	0.61
Unemployed 3-7 months	64	0.46	0.60	0.65	0.68
Unemployed 8-11 months	64	0.46	0.48	0.54	0.61
Unemployed 12+ months	59	0.37	0.34	0.41	0.48
Unemployed, unknown	57	0.34	0.30	0.38	0.45

\* The first column indicates the voting percentage of the given category, the second one the 'abstention risk' with respect to the reference class (employed), the third one the change caused by age, the fourth one the change caused by age and marital status and the fifth the change in the relationship between unemployment and voting when age, marital status, sex, education, place or residence and native language are all taken into consideration in the model.

In order to examine the independent effect of unemployment, the next parameter that was added to the model was marital status. The results indicated that this factor reduces

the differences between the unemployment groups slightly, in the sense that failure of a marriage, which is connected to some extent with unemployment, is a background factor which slightly but inexorably reduces the voting activity of the unemployed even further. This effect is particularly evident among the long-term unemployed, while native language has no effect in this case (not shown in the table). When sex, education and place of residence are included in the final model alongside the above factors the differences between the unemployment groups decrease still further.

As clearly indicated by the above results, unemployment has an independent effect, reducing voting activity most markedly in the case of those unemployed over a long period of time. It is also evident that the low voting activity of the unemployed is partly attributable to other known factors which cause voting passivity.

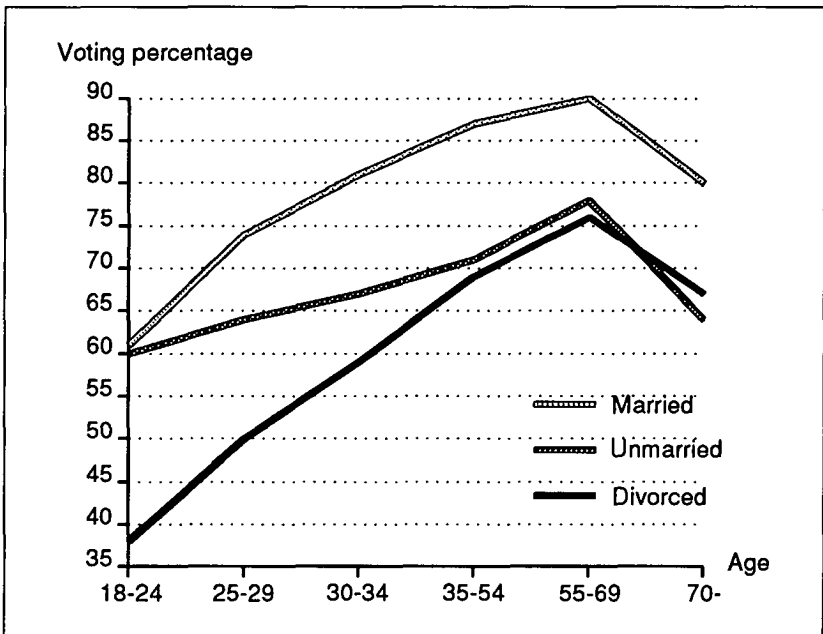
### Voting as a social rite

Voting has generally been considered a means of exercising one's political will only, a matter separated from the individual's other fields of life. This narrow approach has been repeatedly questioned earlier in the present investigation. The relation of voting to such a subjective range of personal experience which in fact should have nothing to do with politics directly, is presented in Table 26, which contains a comparison between voting and marital status.

The table contains one of the most interesting results of the investigation: the activity difference of 20 percentage points between the unmarried and married population. What is also noticeable is that the difference increases with age up to 16 percentage points in age group over 70 years (80% vs 64%). There is no essential difference in the age group 18-24 years, presumably since being unmarried is the most common and characteristic way of life for individuals of this age in any case.

**Table 26:**  
**Voting activity (%) by age and marital status**

Marital status	Age						Total
	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-54	55-69	70+	
Married .....	61	74	81	87	90	80	85
Unmarried .....	60	64	67	71	78	64	65
Separated .....	35	49	60	70	79	70	67
Divorced .....	38	50	59	69	76	67	69
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>76</b>



**Figure 8:**  
**Voting activity by age and marital status**

It is also interesting to note that the break-up of a marriage, either divorce or separation, reduces an individual's interest in voting. This is particularly evident in the young age groups, the voting activity of those under 30 years dropping by approximately 25 percentage points under such circumstances. There is also a marked drop in the voting activity of persons over 35 years, which settles near the activity level for unmarried individuals of the same age.

The results are generally similar to those yielded by research in the United States, which indicated that there is no appreciable difference between married and unmarried young people, whereas older age groups are characterized by a significant activity difference (Wolfinger & Rosenstone 1980, 44-46). The activating effect of marriage is accounted for by investigations which indicate that personal interaction has the greatest effect on the behaviour of those

**Table 27:**  
**Effect of selected background variables on voting.**  
**Voting percentages and logit model coefficients**  
**(odds ratio) in bivariate and multivariate models:**  
**employed and unemployed population**

	Voting %	Multivariate		
		Bivariate	+age	+others
<b>Marital status</b>				
Married . . . . .	86	1.00	1.00	1.00
Unmarried . . . . .	69	0.38	0.35	0.40
Divorced/separated	65	0.30	0.52	0.54
Widowed . . . . .	84	0.86	0.60	0.65

\* The first column indicates the voting percentage, the second one the 'abstention risk' with respect to the reference category (married), the third one the effect of age, and the fourth one the change in the connection between marital status and voting when age, unemployment, sex, education, place of residence and native language are included in the model.

with a weak political engagement. Marriage is, of course, a source of personal interaction, but it is also an institution which tends to encourage uniformity of behaviour. This is indicated by the fact that it is relatively seldom that only the husband or the wife votes: either both or neither vote (Glaser 1959, cf. Petersson, Westholm & Blomberg 1989, 307–320).

The results regarding the considerable activity difference between married and unmarried persons again indicate the social nature of voting, which can thus be considered a social ritual or rite capable of being shared by two people. This notion of ritual accounts partly for the considerable activity differences between the elderly and the young. The dissolution of the 'rite environment' by separation or divorce has an exceptionally strong effect on younger people.

It can be concluded from Table 27 (logit models) that there are no (distributional) factors underlying the activity difference between unmarried and married populations that could be attributed to age, unemployment, sex, education, place of residence or native language. This is indicated by the fourth column, in which the coefficient for the married population remains practically unchanged in the final

model. The coefficient suggests a smaller activity difference between the divorced population and the reference group (married) once age is taken into consideration, which points to an outcome similar to that seen in Table 26, i.e. that the effect of divorce on voting is greater in the younger age groups. The coefficient for the widowed drops once age is taken into consideration, which indicates that the widowed are usually of fairly advanced age (the elderly vote more actively). Thus the effect of widowhood, which in itself reduces voting activity, is manifested properly only in relation to age.

In conclusion, marital status indisputably has an independent effect on voting activity, and the differences connected with it are at least not attributable to the other factors included in the model.

### Voting activity of the linguistic minority

Most of the hypotheses and partial explanations which have been put forward before to interpret peaks in voting activity are reflected in condensed form in the political socialisation of the Swedish-speaking minority.

Firstly, the role of politics and public policy-making is crucial for the minority's maintenance of its identity, and the effects of politics are regarded as focusing on the critical point in life, the language. This feature makes politics into an equally important arena for the linguistic minority as it is for the farmers, for example. Secondly, the Swedish-speaking minority has for decades quite unanimously pledged its adherence to one single party, which has given politics and political choices an unproblematic and self-evident nature. The object of this political choice, i.e. the Swedish People's Party, is regarded not only as a political party but also as an organisation reaching out into all sectors of society which are of interest to the minority culture, ranging from economic affairs to art. In addition, the conditions for effective political socialisation are exceptionally good among the minority, thanks to the activities

**Table 28:**  
**Voting activity (%) by language and age (excluding the Åland Islands)**

Native language	Age						Total
	18-24	25-29	30-34	35-54	55-69	70+	
Finland .....	59	67	75	82	86	71	76
Sweden .....	73	78	83	88	90	77	83
- rural area .....	74	87	91	92	93	78	88
Other .....	60	68	67	73	86	67	72

**Table 29:**  
**Voting activity of Swedish-speakers (%) by selected electoral districts and age**

Electoral district	Age						Total
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-69	70+	
Helsinki .....	74	77	80	86	90	79	83
Uusimaa .....	69	78	86	88	89	75	82
- urban .....	68	76	86	88	89	75	82
- rural .....	70	81	86	89	89	74	83
Turku, southern .....	67	78	85	86	89	74	81
Vaasa .....	77	85	90	91	93	76	85
- urban .....	75	81	88	90	90	76	84
- rural .....	79	88	91	92	91	76	87
Mariehamn .....	35	45	53	60	67	53	52
Swedish-speakers total (excl. Åland Islands) .....	73	81	88	90	91	77	84
Finnish-speakers .....	59	71	81	84	86	71	76

of families, various organisations and the local communities. Also, the likelihood of falling into a spiral of declining fortunes is much less than the average. In other words, the Swedish-speaking minority possesses all the preconditions for active political participation.

The differences between the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking population are obvious in all age groups and correspond roughly to the picture provided by researchers such as Erik Allardt in his investigations from earlier years, the first of which dealt with the election of 1951 (Allardt & Bruun 1956; Allardt 1956). Table 28 leads to a significant observation con-

cerning young people: the activity difference between the Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking population is 14 percentage points in the youngest age group and 11 percentage points in the next oldest one. This means that being of Swedish-speaking background serves as a significant socialisation factor even though its effect in the entire material may be smaller than expected. This suggests that Swedish-speakers are not a homogeneous group in their political engagement and that there may be some regional variation which has not been detected in the total material. The association is examined in greater detail in the following and is shown to support the above assumption.

At least the following points should be noted:

- The efficiency of socialisation is by far the greatest in the Swedish-speaking culture of the western coast of Finland. Political activity is high and consistent in all age groups, which is exceptional even in the light of the present investigation.
- The most marked regional differences occur in the younger age-groups, which may point to a weakening of political identification based on linguistic identity, particularly in Southern Finland.
- There are also considerable regional differences in the age group 25–34 years, with the significant exception that those living in rural areas are markedly more active than those in urban areas.

- The age group 35–69 years is relatively homogeneous in the material, with no appreciable differences in terms of region or place of residence

As indicated by the above, linguistic identity is a significant socialisation factor, but occupies an exceptionally prominent role only in a restricted area. In addition, the role of language is also characterized by variation between the urban and rural areas.

Mariehamn, the capital of the entirely Swedish-speaking peripheral province of Åland, provides an interesting addition to the above statistics. Its exceptionally low voting percentages, which will not be commented on here, indicate the low status which the people of the Åland Islands choose to attach to Finnish politics.

# III Party support and social changes

## 1. Pressures of change on party support

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As stated in the introductory chapter, international comparisons have indicated that party selection in the Scandinavian countries, Finland in particular, is based to an exceptionally great extent on the social class of voters. Research has indicated that, unlike the other Western countries, the Scandinavian countries are characterized by a closer connection between occupation and the left wing – right wing configuration which usually constitutes the basic dimension of party selection (Rose 1974, 3–25). The significance of social class and stratum is regarded as originating from the fact that the Scandinavian countries constitute quite a homogeneous entity in terms of other social factors, such as religion, language and ethnic origins. Whenever such divisions as the above have existed, however, they have also formed part of the backbone of political organization in Scandinavia, as elsewhere, so that language serves as the rationale of the Swedish People's Party in Finland and religion for the Christian parties which have existed in Scandinavia at various times.

Henry Valen and Stein Rokkan describe political oppositions in Norwegian society by means of a tripolar pattern consisting of 'labour', 'capital' and 'agriculture'. These three economic categories and the related classification of the population by class, social stratum and occupation together correspond to a political division into parties representing labour, the upper and middle classes, and the farmers (Valen & Rokkan 1974, 333). The pattern can also be applied to Finland (Uusitalo 1975, 31–32).

The quantitative relations between the various social classes and economic sectors in Finland have changed rapidly and profoundly in the last two or three decades, but the party system closely connected with this division has remained quite stable.

Figures based on an investigation by Matti Alestalo (Table 30) clearly indicate the changes which took place in the class structure in Finland between 1960 and 1985 (Alestalo 1990, 217). The basic idea in his classification is that the economic class position of the various occupational groups is determined by their relation to the means of production, their possibilities of sharing the benefits obtainable from the markets, the nature of their work, the manner in which their incomes are determined and the grounds on which they become recruited into industrial life and enter the service of particular employers (Alestalo 1990, 212). It is unnecessary here to examine in any further detail the way in which the various social classes differ in this respect, but it should be noted in the light of research that the above class criteria are significant for any explanation of the social behaviour of individuals, as a result of which the established social classes are likely to be held together by a uniform 'class behaviour'. Examination of the connections between objective social position and patterns of behaviour of individuals is in fact one of the aims of research into class and class determination.



The Finnish party system is basically as old as the country's independence, and parts of it even older. The political and geographical identity of Finland, then known as 'the eastern territory', developed while the country was still part of the kingdom of Sweden, to which it belonged from the Middle Ages up to 1809. From that year onwards Finland was an autonomous Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire, remaining so until its independence in 1917. This autonomy allowed the country to have its own legislation and administration and the required governmental institutions. Political organisation and the formation of parties had begun while Finland was still part of Sweden, and this activity expanded under Russian rule to form a basis for the present party system. The reform of the parliamentary and electoral legislation in 1906, when the Diet of the Four Estates was replaced by a unicameral Diet to be elected through universal and equal suffrage, marked a turning point in the development towards a modern multi-party system which is based on extensive mobilisation of the general public. This change naturally meant that the political parties had to organize their modes of operation to conform to the principles of modern mass parties.

The political grouping and emergence of the parties was closely connected with the various crises in the political and social history of Finland, and the resulting 'political questions' of the day. The reinforcement of national identity was reflected politically in terms of 'the language question' in the late 19th century, when confrontations developed between the 'Swedes', recalling the bygone Swedish era, and the 'Finns', representing the political and social needs of ordinary people and the broad Finnish majority. It was slightly later that those with more radical opinions on the language question broke away from the 'Finns' to form a political group which later developed into a liberal party. The gradual disappearance of the agrarian society of the four estates, industrialisation and the expansion of the agrarian proletariat at the turn of the century gave rise to a 'social question' which was reflected politically in the socialist labour movement and related political organizations, in accordance with the worldwide pattern.

Differing attitudes towards Russia and its strict unification policy gave rise to confrontation between the 'conformists' and the more hard-line 'constitutionalists'. The question of the form of government for the new independent state of Finland also gave rise to political confrontation between the 'republicans' and 'monarchists'. The triumph of the former was ensured by the defeat of Germany – the main constitutional and ideological model of the monarchists – in the First World War. The protracted struggle between the moderate and

radical trends inside the labour movement was resolved after the Civil War of 1918, the radical leaders of the defeated group founding the Finnish Communist Party, based on the ideology of revolutionary Marxism, whereas the SDP represented moderate socialism.

The emergence of the party system was ultimately based on practical questions of topical interest, into which the ideological elements of political thought were required to merge as secondary elements. Thus, when observed in the light of practical politics, the Finnish party system cannot be divided into clear-cut ideological categories. Finnish politics right up to the present day have been characterized by political 'pragmatism' and 'realism', and the only ideological dimension to contribute to party differences in any distinct or consistent manner is the left-wing / right-wing opposition, the extremes of which are represented by the communist SKDL and the right-wing Coalition Party.

Practical questions and related ideological elements have become organized into six political groups and corresponding parties, which have represented the basic cleavages in Finnish politics throughout independence. The various groups and parties are presented below, including the time of emergence of each party or its immediate predecessor and the official year of its foundation.

Group/ideology:	Party (present name):
Conservatives, moderate right-wing	Coalition Party; around 1860, officially 1918
Liberals	Liberal Party (LKP); around 1880, officially 1918
Swedish-speaking minority	Swedish People's Party (RKP); around 1880, officially 1906
Farmers and rural areas	Centre Party; 1906–08
Moderate left-wing	Social Democratic Party (SDP); 1903
Radical left-wing	Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL)/Left-wing Union; 1903, officially 1918 and 1944

This pragmatism and relative lack of ideological oppositions is partly attributable to legislative and institutional factors. The Finnish electoral system is largely based on the principle of relativity, as no voting thresholds are set for political groups to gain seats in the parliament, which has in fact led to a considerable number of other parties of a more temporary nature with limited support regularly participating in elections in addition to the above six groups. 17 parties had candidates at the election of 1991, and 9 gained some degree of representation in parliament.

The functioning of a multi-party system which is divided into so many groups requires the formation of coalition governments and the establishment of major ideological compromises. The content of post-war politics has been dominated to varying degrees by the Nordic model of the welfare society, a line on which there has been no major disagreement in principle between the leading parties. The model is characterised by a public administration that adopts major responsibility for satisfying the basic needs of its citizens by means of public services which are either free or receive substantial state support. Economic life is essentially based on private ownership and self-employment, while extensive state control over the economy applies only to agriculture. Political 'pragmatism' and 'realism' have manifested themselves most markedly in Finland's foreign policy, which has been essentially governed by questions concerning relations with the Soviet Union. The consensus prevailing in Finland's foreign policy is embodied in the principle behind the 'Paasikivi-Kekkonen line', originated by the first two post-war presidents of Finland.

In the light of party support and the balance of political power between the parties, the Finnish political system is characterised by the existence of:

- a politically dominant agrarian party which enjoys considerable support, as it has renewed itself both internally and functionally and thus managed to retain its position despite a decrease in the rural population,
- a widely supported radical left-wing (communist) party, the support base of which has been undermined by trends within the welfare state and the collapse of international communism, and
- a close connection between party support and the class and occupational structure of society, which has now eroded and changed into a loose array of general parties, i.e. a number of parties share the same groups of voters and supporters.

The above basic groupings have come under pressure from changes in the structure of society and general political trends both in Finland and abroad. These pressures can be regarded as being reflected in the following three successive post-war trends in party support, some of which have manifested themselves simultaneously:

- emphasis on the political dichotomy between the cities and the countryside,
- adjustment of the party system to structural changes in society,

- loosening of social connections involved in party support and a movement towards the status of general parties.

Finland was essentially an agrarian society at the time when the political groupings and the range of parties were developing, and since most of the population lived in rural areas, all the major parties also received extensive support from such areas. The situation was changed radically as the population migrated into the cities, however, the SDP and Coalition Party establishing their position as urban parties at the elections of 1950's and 1960's, whereas the Centre Party oriented itself towards the status of a general party representing the countryside. In the case of the SDP, this trend reached its culmination at the parliamentary election of 1966, when it became the largest party in the country and a leading political force.

This tendency was combined with reflections of an opposite trend in the results of parliamentary elections between 1970 and 1987. The changes which occurred during this period were again attributable to those taking place in the class and occupational structure of society, but their effects now caused a degree of instability and change in the party system which proved difficult for the parties to overcome.

The Rural Party triumphed at the 'protest election' of 1970, obviously on account of a reaction and protest in rural areas directed at the new urban orientation in politics. The election also marked a rise in support for the Coalition Party, an effect derived from the same expansion within urban areas that had earlier increased the support for the SDP but more clearly attributable to the rapid expansion of the new middle class. In addition, the number of small parties and their proportion of the votes increased at that time, partly reflecting the difficulties which the party system had in adjusting to changes in social conditions.

The movement towards a more uniform class and occupational structure in society and its centralisation around the politically anonymous middle classes has forced the parties to pursue the status of general parties acceptable to all the major groups of voters. This trend has prevailed throughout the post-war period, although it has manifested itself quite slowly in the actual election results. The replacement of the traditional grounds for voting with new themes for the grouping of parties was not reflected to any appreciable extent until the recent parliamentary election of 1991.

**Table 30:**  
**Social classes of the employed population in 1960–1985**

Social class	Socioeconomic composition	1960	1970	1985
		Percentages		
Farmers	Agricultural employers, agricultural entrepreneurs and assisting family members	28	13	7
Working population	Employees in forestry and agriculture, other skilled and specialized labour, unskilled and unspecialized labour, lower salaried workers (certain occupations among lower salaried staff)	43	50	46
Entrepreneurs	Employers, entrepreneurs and assisting family members other than in agriculture, some company managers	7	5	6
Lower middle class	Lower salaried staff in government or local authority employment, or elsewhere	12	22	27
Upper middle class	Upper salaried staff in government or local authority employment, or elsewhere, excluding senior civil servants	4	7	12
Upper class	Some company managers, senior civil servants	1	1	1
No data obtained		-	1	2
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
(Thousands)		(2033)	(2118)	(2227)

The data from 1985 are not directly comparable with those from the previous years (Alestalo 1986, 186; Alestalo 1990, 217).

**The changes that have occurred in the class structure of society can be fitted into the tripolar pattern established for the party system as follows:**

	Left wing SDP & COMM	Right wing Centre	Coalition
Working class	declining in numbers, becoming more 'bourgeois', becoming more middle class		
Farmers	declining in numbers, becoming more uniform, gaining more entrepreneurs		
Middle classes	expanding in numbers, becoming more diverse, becoming more working class		

The basic Left wing, Centre and Right wing support groups and the most important trends in social change affecting these, both those that have already taken place and those now in progress, are indicated in the above diagram.

There has been an exceptionally rapid, profound change in industrial and occupational structure in Finland after the

Second World War. Finland was an agrarian society by European standards immediately after the war, with more than 60% of the skilled labour employed in agriculture. Today the proportion of farmers is only approximately 10%, which does not deviate appreciably from the average level for the most advanced industrial societies. In addition to a quantitative reduction, marked changes have also taken place in the social

and economic position and in the internal structure of the group. In the 1940's and 1950's the rural areas were dominated by small farms for which forest work in wintertime was still a vital additional source of income. The corresponding group of small farmers and forest workers, living predominantly in the rural areas of eastern and northern Finland, who used to constitute a significant proportion of the employed agricultural population in the 1950's and even into the 1960's, has in practice died out completely, and with it the traditional notion of an impoverished rural class which has had a major effect on social, economic and political conditions in Finnish society in so many ways. Rural areas and agriculture are today dominated by medium-sized farms owned by families whose members usually also work in other spheres of the economy outside farming. This spread of family farms has also meant in practice the disappearance of the earlier common class of hired farm labour.

The average field area of farms has increased markedly as a result of the demise of the smallest units in particular and the differences between farms have thus narrowed. The agricultural policy pursued in recent times has also effectively levelled out the income differences between farmers which arise from the size and geographical location of their farms. Thus the internal structure of the farming class has become markedly more uniform. In addition, there has been a crucial change in the social and economic nature of agriculture, in that where agriculture traditionally used to provide farmers not only with a profession, a means of livelihood and a source of income but also with a complete way of life, it is nowadays more obviously a business endeavour which, instead of self-sufficiency, aims at the exchange of goods on the open market and is characterized by the increasing dominance of cost-benefit considerations.

The above changes have had two types of effect on the relations between farmers and the political parties. As the farmer class is becoming increasingly uniform in its composition, interests and aims, it may politically constitute an entity which be-

haves in a more coherent manner and which is more straightforward for the parties to appreciate. On the other hand, the political thinking and choices of farmers are governed more by economic calculations, which may loosen and even sever completely their traditional political and ideological bonds. This may be further reinforced by their increased dependence on government agricultural policies.

The number of industrial workers has also decreased since the 1970's, following the universal development of 'postindustrialized' societies, and the internal structure of this group has also changed more rapidly than earlier. In spite of this, the proportion of women in the working population has remained relatively stable, as the diversification of the economy has given rise to new groups. The expansion of the social services in particular has provided the working population with new professions which are female-dominated and poorly paid, whereas traditional industrial work is increasingly adopting advanced technology in its production methods, which also places higher requirements on employees in terms of professional skills and education. This is of course reflected in their wages, other material benefits and their outlook on life and social values. The proportion of skilled labour has in fact increased and that of unskilled labour decreased despite the new poorly-paid professions, while the once fairly extensive class of unskilled workers no longer exists at all.

A dominating trend from the point of view of political participation is that the working population has become more affluent and thus may be regarded as beginning to adopt features typical of the middle-class, including its attitudes, values and other patterns of behaviour. The various new poorly-paid groups created by the renewal of the internal structure of the working population nevertheless serve to counter-balance this affluence and possible drift towards the middle class and may well continue the traditional political patterns of thought and behaviour of the working population by virtue of their economic and social position.

**Table 31:**  
**Relationship between parties and the social class structure in 1948–1991**

**A. Party support within the social classes (%)**

	Farmers				Workers				Salaried staff			
	1948	1966	1978	1988	1948	1966	1978	1988	1948	1966	1978	1988
SDP	10	8	7	7	40	42	41	45	16	22	21	18
SKDL	10	9	6	1	32	33	25	16	3	6	10	3
Centre	56	59	61	81	8	7	14	14	4	8	10	17
Coalition	14	9	12	6	9	5	8	12	50	37	36	41
Other	10	15	14	5	11	13	12	13	27	27	23	21
(%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

**B. Party support by social class (%)**

	Farmers				Workers				Salaried staff			
	1948	1966	1978	1991	1948	1966	1978	1991	1948	1966	1978	1991
SDP	14	7	1	4	76	74	65	52	1	19	29	43
SKDL	19	11	1	-	78	82	68	68	3	7	20	32
Centre	81	72	31	35	16	18	33	27	3	10	24	38
Coalition	27	12	5	10	25	20	23	13	48	68	52	77

Source:

Haranne (1980) and the joint research material of the Department of Political Science at the University of Helsinki and Finnish Gallup Oy; the figures for the year 1991 Sänkiäho (1991).

Thus the most distinctive change in class structure has been the expansion of the middle classes, the lower middle classes in particular. This expansion is closely related to the growth of the public sector and the marked increase in administrative, clerical and service posts in the private sector. In addition, the increased number of employed women has also contributed to the proliferation of clerical posts and the expansion of the middle classes.

The middle class has undoubtedly become more diversified in terms of its internal structure and now contains groups whose economic position is similar to that of the working population. The middle class has traditionally been located close to the upper class both socially and in terms of public appreciation.

Trends in the connections between the parties and social groups can be examined more tangibly in the light of the figures provided in Table 31. Section A indicates the patterns of party support among the farmers, working class and salaried staff, the latter group also including those in managerial positions. Section B then reverses the approach and indicates the

composition of party supporters in terms of these three occupational and social groups. The figures provided in the above tables cover the period from 1948 to 1991 and are based on material collected from interviews used in sampling surveys, as a result of which they may contain some imprecision and errors. It is nevertheless possible to make the following fairly reliable general comments on the connections between party support and social background in the light of the above figures:

- Class-based political behaviour determined by occupational status is still a basic feature of political participation in Finland. Although there have been only minor changes, they are nevertheless crucial for understanding the corresponding minor changes in the balance of power between the parties.
- The political support of farmers is more widely directed towards the Centre Party than earlier. As indicated by Table 31, the Coalition Party, the Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL) and the group of other parties have suffered the highest losses among the farmers. The proportion of farmers in the sample of

approximately 1000 voters is so small, however, that the effect of random variation must be taken into consideration. Even so, it can be stated with certain reservations that farmers are becoming even more uniform in terms of their political orientation and that the 'class factor' plays an ever more prominent role in their selection of party.

- There are two main features distinguishable in the political orientation and party affiliation of the working class. Firstly, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) has managed to increase its support among the working class since 1978 and has unquestionably emerged as the main party of the working class following the dissolution and loss of support of the communists. Secondly, a markedly higher proportion of working class support is directed beyond the traditional Left than before, towards the conservatives, the Coalition Party and the Centre Party in particular. 60% of the working class supported the Left wing in 1988 as opposed to approximately 75% in 1966. There has thus been a decrease in working class identification in their political participation, which points again to a spread of middle-class behavioural patterns.
- There has been some change in the political behaviour of salaried staff in relation to the working class. According to an investigation carried out in 1948, 80% of salaried persons supported the Coalition Party and certain others, mainly the Liberal Party (LKP) and the Swedish People's Party, the corresponding figure being only approximately 60% in 1966, 1978 and 1988. The change was primarily caused by a drop in support for the Coalition Party and an increase in that for the Centre Party. The SDP, the Centre Party and the group of other parties nowadays each receive about a fifth of the votes cast by salaried employees, which means that the political behaviour of these people is not so much based on class as it used to be.

Changes in social alignment in society and the effects of the weakening of class-based

political behaviour are presented in section B of Table 31, which indicates that the immediate political role of farmers is almost entirely connected with the Centre Party, whereas the working-class, though a slowly diminishing group, constitutes a considerable proportion of the supporters of all parties. Strategically the most important group for the parties is that of the salaried staff which is still expanding constantly and now constitutes at least one quarter of the supporters of all the major parties and more than three quarters of those of the Coalition Party.

As indicated by the above tables, the most immediate cause for the stability of party support in spite of major changes in the social basis has been the fact that the parties have managed to maintain their traditional supporters, the Centre Party even more successfully than before, and simultaneously gain the support of the expanding middle classes to fairly equal extents. Stability has also been increased by the fact – not shown in Table 31 – that none of the major parties has lost support to the emerging new small parties to a decisively greater degree or any more permanently than the others.

The political support of the significantly expanded middle classes is a strategic necessity for the major parties in particular. The competition for middle class support and the attempt to retain the traditional support groups at the same time places the parties in a contradictory situation, despite the fact that the differences and conflicts of interest between the social classes have narrowed. In fact, political participation currently seems to be governed by the peculiar coexistence of social determination, increased separation and mobility, which increases the tension between continuity and as change discussed in the introductory chapter. The traditional tripolar pattern based on the political behaviour of the working class, middle classes and farmers, has shifted inside the expanded middle class, in which the SDP, Coalition Party and Centre Party are faced with a situation of increasing competition. The outcome of this becomes all the more difficult to predict the more the effect of socialisation mechanisms and political traditions is weakened and

replaced by a growing tendency among the electorate to commit themselves to elections late and to base their selections increasingly on topical issues and current political events.

In terms of their social position, salaried employees and the middle class in general constitute a quite diverse entity which can be divided into distinctive layers on the grounds of education, income and other indicators of social status, the boundary between this and the working class being in many ways a fuzzy one. Even if actual social grounds did exist, this stratification would fail to yield any straightforward Left-Right division inside the middle class relying on traditional political thought. On the contrary, research has indicated that 'radical' tendencies in attitudes and behaviour may occur in groups which objectively possess a higher class status, and conversely 'conservative' tendencies may occur in groups with a lower social position (Matheson 1979, 72). These deviations from the traditional patterns of political behaviour indicate that the role of social classes in integrating the social activity and behaviour of the population has weakened.

Changes in the balance of power between the parties and in their competitive positions are examined in the current investigation by means of material derived from individual local authority districts, or communes. It is thus appropriate to examine the regional and geographical nature of the above changes in

the class and occupational structure of society and the support of the parties.

In addition to these changes, it is also justifiable to pay attention to two other factors which may be of relevance to the regional balance of power between the parties. These are the nationally unifying political culture and the centre-periphery relationship.

As in many other countries, the regional distribution of support for the political parties is uneven in Finland, i.e. there are regions in which given parties, political ideologies and ideas are weaker or stronger than average. These political regions have proved quite stable and independent of the general changes taking place in society. The development of political regions is usually attributable to concrete historical causes and events, and once these original causes have disappeared, their continuity tends to be based on local and regional traditions and 'political climates', which are able to influence the political thought and behaviour of the population in the region (Jutikkala 1955, 75-81, Rantala 1970). Political publicity has become more uniform over the whole country, thanks to the electronic mass media, and at the same time, the issues discussed in politics and the solutions proposed are more often national ones, concerning the whole of society. It may thus be concluded that regional and local political traditions and cultures in the accustomed sense are declining as factors directing the public's political thinking and activities.

#### Pressures for change imposed on party support in different situations of regional development

Pressures for change	Types of regional development			
	Centres		Periphery	
	Areas of accumulating growth	Growing areas of structural change	Declining areas of structural change	Regressive areas
Class and occupational change	+	+++	++	+
Integrating political culture	+	+	++	+++
Regional contrasts and regional policy	+	+	++	+++

The centre-periphery dichotomy is expanded above into four types which roughly correspond to the empirical development classification of local government districts discussed later in this work. The peripheral areas are divided into two types: regressive areas, where the industrial structure has not kept pace with the general rate of development and which have lost a considerable amount of their population, and declining areas of structural change, in which a higher than average number of industries have developed to replace the marked retraction in agriculture. The centres are also divided into two types: centres of accumulating growth, i.e. old-established, major cities whose urban industrial and class structure has not changed essentially despite a large increase in population, and developing areas which are in the process of structural change, having originally been dominated by agriculture but which have grown rapidly and fundamentally renewed both their industrial and class structure.

Changes in class and occupational structure exert pressure for changes in party support, particularly in areas undergoing structural change. It is obvious, however, that in spite of minor changes in their industrial structure, centres of accumulating growth will also be characterized by changes in the nature of the classes which are of significance from the point of view of the political behaviour of their population. Changes in the mobilisation basis and the resulting pressures for political changes are smallest in the regressive areas, the economic life of which is still based on agriculture.

It has been estimated that the highest pressures of change resulting from a unifying political culture occur in peripheral areas, as their party composition is most clearly characterized by local features as well as a basis created by a regional or small community which may be subjected to changes when rationalizing and centralizing politics gains a footing. Such criteria were adopted earlier in centres and the main question now involves the expansion of the criteria to concern the entire country.

The pressures of change connected with the centre-periphery opposition are regarded as being most prominent in the peripheral areas. The related notions of the necessity for 'balanced development' of the various regions unite the inhabitants of the peripheral areas irrespective of their political views. This opposition and the political programmes formulated accordingly may provide the inhabitants of peripheral areas with significant criteria for political judgement. This means in practice that it is difficult for parties which are heavily dependent on the support of peripheral areas, the Centre Party and the communists (SKDL) in particular, to extend their support in growing areas unless they are able to find a platform which reconciles the interests of the 'centre' and the 'periphery'.

The aspirations of the population tend to increase in the centres, areas of net immigration and areas of intensive economic growth. Immigration itself is accompanied by hopes of a rise in social status and of achieving norms defined in terms of standard of living, which may emphasize the position of certain branches of politics, particularly social welfare and taxation policy, as objects of political interest, grounds for evaluation by the public and issues of competition between the parties.

It may be most difficult for the inhabitants of the actual peripheral areas to outline the principles of their political orientation. As indicated in the above diagram, the pressures for change exerted on party support are regarded as controversial matters in the above areas. The established political traditions of the Centre Party, the communists (SKDL) and the social democrats (SDP) in the above areas cannot be renewed in a straightforward or unproblematic manner in favour of some other party or political ideology. The fact that social progress and the focuses of social welfare policy have shifted to the south and to the residential centres may give rise to a need for disengagement from the traditional alternatives even if one was satisfied with their content.



The diagram below outlines some alternatives for the changes in party support which the structural change in society and the related changes in the class and occupational structure are imposing on the major parties.

The key areas of Centre Party support are to be found in the diminishing rural communities and in the growing residential centres. It has been possible for the party to expand and become the principal representative of the agricultural population, but too centralized an attempt at renewal and expansion of its support among the inhabitants of the larger population centres may endanger its position in this respect. Unless the party is able to renew itself, it will be faced with a 'natural defeat' in those rural areas in which

the social structure has been most radically changed by industrialization and service sector expansion.

The changes in the structure of society and the related renewal of the class structure are providing the Coalition Party and the Social Democratic Party with the best opportunities for the expansion of their support. The groups subject to the most intense expansion, i.e. the new middle classes, have traditionally supported the Coalition Party, in addition to which they are geographically located in areas which have traditionally been a significant source of this party's support. It will also be possible for the Coalition Party to increase its support in peripheral areas insofar as the need arises there to seek new political alternatives.

**Combinations of structural change in society and changes in party support**

Party and direction of change	Regional differentiation connected with structural changes in society			
	Periphery		Centres	
	(1) Regressive areas of net immigration	(2) Developing and renewing areas	(3) Areas of rapid change	(4) Areas of accumulating growth
SDP	-	reduction in earlier agrarian support		workers becoming more middle class
	0			
	+		—————	natural growth —————
SKDL (Comm)	-	reduction in the basis of support for 'backwoods communism'	—————	workers becoming more middle class
	0			
	+		—————	natural growth —————
Centre Party	-	protest against renewal of party	natural loss	
	0			
	+	becoming the major party of rural areas	delay in loss	renewal of basis of support —————
Coalition Party	-			
	0			
	+	protest	—————	natural growth —————

The same forces also directly favour the Social Democratic Party, the left-wing welfare policy of which suits the lower middle classes in particular, who are close to the working class in terms of social position. In addition, the concentration of population in the cities and other centres may also favour the Social Democratic Party which, in spite of its former agrarian connections, has an urban image.

The support of the Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL) is concentrated in the most remote areas of the country, in the form of 'backwoods communism', as Erik Allardt puts it, and in the industrial and residential centres, in the form of 'industrial communism' (Allardt 1964). The social

basis of rural communism has become narrower, particularly due to the drastic decline in the number of forest workers living on small farms, as a result of which a 'natural decrease' in party support can be said to have taken place. The greatest threat to communism resulting from changes in the class structure in industrial areas is caused by the working class adoption of middle-class status and behaviour. The structural renewal and partial expansion of the working class of course also provides the communists with an opportunity for 'natural expansion' in areas of growing population which are subject to a process of structural renewal. This possibility is largely counteracted, however, by the prevalent atmosphere of left-wing antipathies.

## 2. General features of changes in party support

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Post-war changes in party support will first be looked at in the light of Tables 32 and 33 and the diagrams based on these, all of which indicate the changes in the proportions of votes received by the four major parties, the Finnish People's Democratic League (SKDL), the Social Democratic Party (SDP), the Coalition Party and the Centre Party, at general elections between 1945 and 1987, separately for urban and rural areas and for the entire country. In addition to the major parties, changes in the relative support enjoyed by groups designated as 'basic parties' vs. 'new parties' will also be looked at together with a comparison between elections with respect to the degree of total political change which took place in each. The election results on which the tables and diagrams are based and the proportions of votes received by each party are presented in more detail in the Appendix.

As indicated in the tables and diagrams, the party groupings and changes in party support differ markedly between the urban and rural areas.

**The urban areas** were dominated by the SDP, SKDL and Coalition Party throughout the period. SDP support remained virtually unchanged, being 25.9% at the general election of 1945 and 27.1% in 1987. There was nevertheless some variation, a difference of almost 15 percentage points existing between the lowest and the highest figures.

Urban support for the Coalition Party remained fairly stable, with a difference of less than 10 percentage points between the lowest and highest levels. The party achieved a new post-war peak in support at the 'protest election' of 1970, after which its proportion of the vote rose almost continuously until the election of 1987. The changes in support for the Coalition Party are quite closely connected with those for the SDP, and it is evident that these two parties were competing with each other. A comparison of the changes is given in Fig. 10. A total of 12 general elections were held between 1945 and 1987, of which 10 were marked by contrasting changes in support for the SDP and Coalition Party in urban areas.

In addition to the above figures and tables, it must also be noted that competition was even more intensive between the Coalition Party and the Liberal Party. Support for these two remained fairly stable in 1945–1970, after which the gradual fading out of the Liberal Party from the party system has obviously contributed to the expansion of the Coalition Party.

The SDP received its lowest proportions of the votes at the elections of 1945 and 1962 the results of the former being marked by the post-war rise of the SKDL and the latter by dissent within the party and the resulting emergence of the TPSL (Workers' and Small Farmers' Social Democratic Union) which received 5.4% of the urban vote. The SDP regained its established level of support, partly even expanding it, at the election of 1966, at which it received 34.3% of the votes. Support subsequently settled at a level approximately 4 percentage points below this, which reflects a further expansion in support for the Coalition Party.

There has not been any appreciable connection between changes in the support shown for the SKDL and that for the other major parties. As indicated by Fig. 10, however,

the SKDL and SDP were competing alternatives, showing contrasting trends in electoral support, up to the general election of 1966, after which they in fact showed similar changes in support. The elections of 1966, 1970 and 1983 were significant turning points for the communists (SKDL) both in the urban areas and in the entire country, and the party has been unable to recover from these losses at subsequent elections.

The steady but relatively minor increase in support for the Centre Party in urban areas does not seem to be connected with the changes in the support given to the other parties to any great extent.

The rural areas were dominated by the Centre Party, which consolidated and increased its support as the main party in such areas up to the election of 1966. Its support dropped markedly in the 'protest election' of 1970, however, and remained almost unchanged from that stage on to the general election of 1987.

There were striking similarities in the changes in support for the Centre Party and the SKDL from the general election of 1958 up to around 1980, i.e. throughout the

**Table 32:**  
The proportions of votes obtained by the SKDL (Communists), SDP, Centre Party and Coalition Party in the whole country and in urban and rural areas separately at general elections in 1945–1991

Year	SKDL (Comm.)			SDP			Centre Party			Coalition Party		
	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas
1945	23.5	28.2	23.8	25.1	25.9	24.9	21.3	2.1	26.8	15.0	20.4	11.9
1948	20.0	24.0	20.2	26.3	30.0	25.2	24.2	1.7	31.8	17.1	23.3	12.9
1951	21.6	25.3	20.0	26.5	33.1	23.5	23.2	1.8	35.5	14.6	19.5	10.6
1954	21.6	24.2	20.3	26.2	32.6	23.0	24.1	2.0	37.1	12.8	17.6	9.4
1958	23.2	26.4	22.0	23.2	29.2	20.2	23.1	2.1	36.3	15.3	20.6	10.4
1962	22.0	24.3	20.8	19.5	25.5	15.6	23.0	3.7	36.5	15.0	21.2	9.9
1966	21.2	22.7	20.2	27.2	34.3	21.4	21.2	4.6	35.8	13.8	17.9	9.5
1970	16.6	18.2	14.9	23.0	28.9	17.7	17.1	5.4	29.2	18.0	23.6	12.3
1972	17.6	18.8	14.9	25.8	31.5	19.0	16.3	5.4	29.4	17.6	22.2	12.1
1975	18.9	20.5	16.4	24.9	28.9	19.1	17.6	7.9	31.4	18.4	22.1	13.3
1979	17.9	19.3	15.6	23.9	27.3	18.8	17.3	8.5	30.3	21.7	25.1	16.7
1983	13.5	14.5	11.8	26.7	30.1	21.6	17.6	9.5	29.8	22.1	25.3	17.4
1987	13.6*	14.5*	12.3*	24.1	27.1	19.4	17.6	9.7	30.5	23.1	26.4	18.0
1991	10.9	10.7	9.0	22.1	24.9	17.8	24.8	16.2	38.6	19.3	22.4	14.4

\* Includes votes received by the Democratic Alternative Party (whole country 4.2%, urban 4.8%, rural 3.4%)

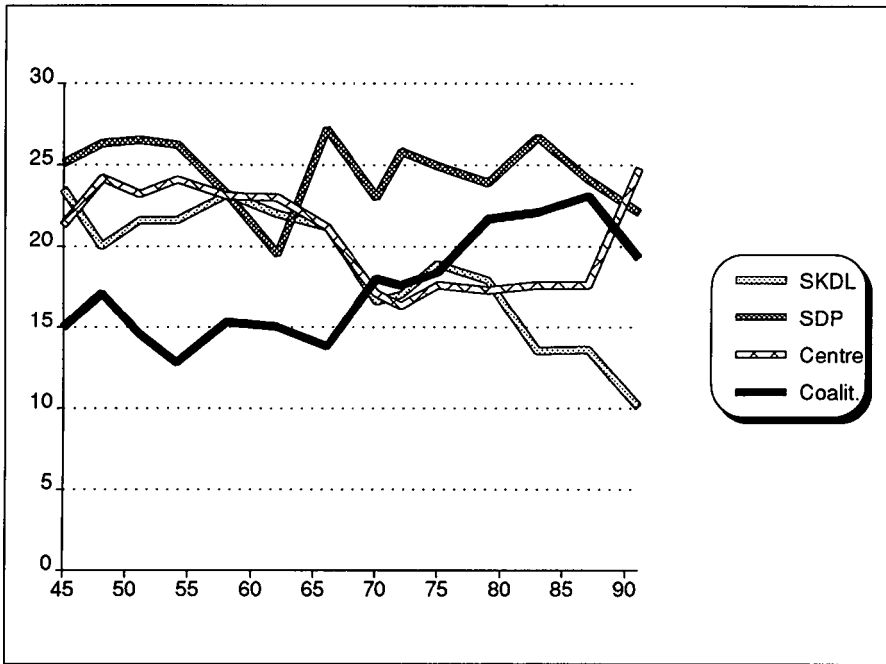


Figure 9:  
Trends in support for the SKDL (Communists), SDP, Centre Party and Coalition Party at general elections in 1945-1991, Whole country

period of 'Kekkonen's republic', but the decline of the SKDL which began in the 1980's marked a deviation from this pattern. There is no comparable competition between the SDP and the Coalition Party in rural areas to that observable in the towns, but rather the support achieved by the former has in fact tended to follow the steady increase in that of the latter ever since the general elections of 1966 and 1970. As indicated in Fig. 11 above, the trend in support for the Coalition Party in rural areas has been almost a mirror image of that of the Centre Party, featuring a period of declining support up to the election of 1966 followed by a rise in 1970 and a continuation of this trend up to 1987.

When looked at with respect to the entire post-war period, the SDP has lost support in the rural areas to the extent of approximately 5 percentage points. The party received its lowest support at the general election of 1962, mainly due to the 4% of the vote received by its 'splinter' party, the

TPSL, but also on account of the expansion of the Centre Party as the main choice in rural areas.

The political post-war 'remobilisation' was accompanied by a focusing of support on the four largest parties, the total proportion of the vote captured by these being approximately 85% over the whole country, 77% in the urban areas and 87% in the rural areas. In addition to these parties, there are two others which can be regarded on historical grounds as basic elements in Finnish politics: the Liberal Party (LKP), the last remaining representative of the liberal political tradition in Finland, and of course the Swedish People's Party, which occupies a significant, permanent position as the political representative of the Swedish-speaking minority. The almost continuous decline in total support for these six basic parties and the corresponding rise in the popularity of new parties has been the most striking feature of the post-war political changes. The first significant manifestation

of the rise of new political groups was the dissent within the SDP and the resulting creation of the TPSL around 1960. Of the new parties, the Finnish Rural Party (SMP) has met with the greatest support, which reached its peak in the election of 1970 in the form of a political protest in the peripheral parts of the country (Helander 1971). Following losses in the later elections of the 1970's, this 'protest' party again gained almost 10% of the votes at the general election of 1983, a level which it was largely able to sustain in 1987. This renewed success was essentially attributable to an expansion of support in Southern Finland and in the urban areas.

The support enjoyed by the basic parties has also been reduced by the increasing attraction of the Christian League and the Greens. Support for the Christian League (SKL) was at its highest at the general election of 1979 (4.8%), while the Greens commanded 4% of the vote at the general election of 1987.

As indicated in Table 33, the patterns of decline in the support for the major parties and the basic parties in general and those visible in the corresponding increase in votes for the new parties are only partially reflected in the index of total change in party support (sum of absolute values of between-election changes among all the parties). The total change in support has not increased to the extent which could be inferred from the fragmentation of the party system and the increase in the number of small parties. The greatest total change in the post-war period occurred at the general election of 1970, and it was also greater at the elections of 1975 and 1983 than in the 1950's and 1960's, pointing to the existence of greater mobility and scope for change in the party system and among the voters. The average changes in party support have remained small or even declined from one election to the next. Thus political mobility and the expansion of the group of those deserting their loyalty to a given party is most evidently reflected in the fragmentation of the political sphere and drastic changes in the balance of power between the basic political alternatives.

**Table 33:**  
Proportions of votes cast for 'major parties', 'basic parties' and 'new parties' at general elections in 1945-1987 and total change in party support

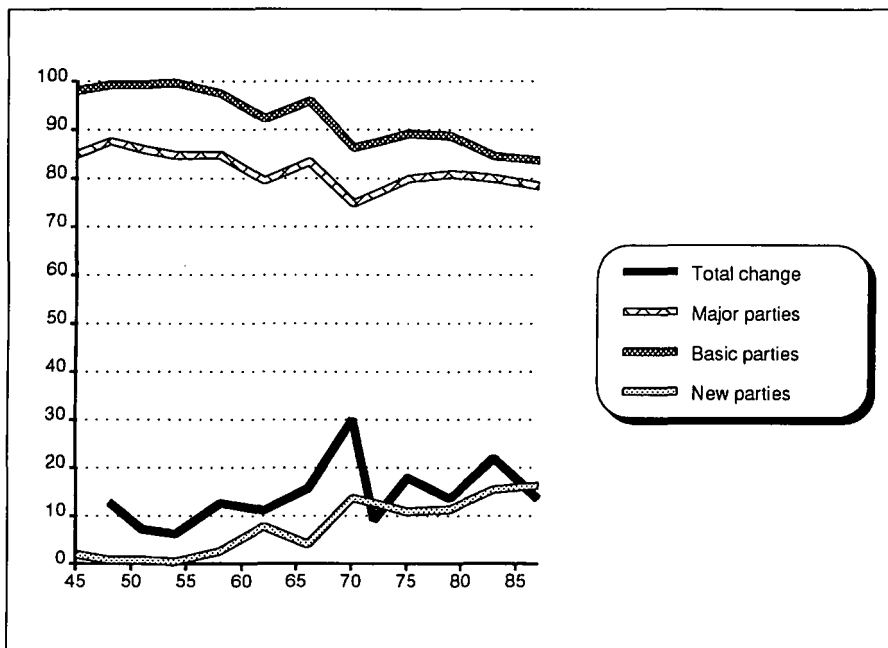
Whole country				
	Major parties	Basic parties	New parties	Total change
1945	84.9	98.0	2.0	..
1948	87.6	99.2	0.8	12.8
1951	85.9	99.2	0.8	7.2
1954	84.7	99.6	0.4	6.2
1958	84.8	97.4	2.6	12.6
1962	79.5	92.2	7.8	11.2
1966	83.4	95.9	4.1	15.8
1970	74.7	86.3	13.7	30.0
1972	76.7	87.3	12.7	9.2
1975	79.8	89.1	10.9	18.0
1979	80.8	88.7	11.3	13.6
1983	79.9	84.5	15.5	22.0
1987	78.4	83.7	16.3	13.6

Urban areas				
	Major parties	Basic parties	New parties	Total change
1945	76.6	98.6	1.4	..
1948	79.0	99.5	0.5	15.2
1951	79.7	99.2	0.8	13.2
1954	76.4	99.3	0.7	8.8
1958	78.3	95.8	4.2	17.6
1962	74.7	92.5	7.5	12.0
1966	79.5	96.0	4.0	19.4
1970	76.1	90.5	9.5	27.8
1972	77.9	90.5	9.5	9.6
1975	79.4	90.0	10.0	17.8
1979	80.2	89.2	10.8	12.8
1983	79.4	84.1	15.9	25.2
1987	77.7	83.1	16.9	15.8

Rural areas				
	Major parties	Basic parties	New parties	Total change
1945	87.4	97.9	2.1	..
1948	90.1	99.3	0.7	13.0
1951	89.6	99.2	0.8	9.0
1954	89.8	99.8	0.2	5.8
1958	88.9	98.2	1.8	8.6
1962	82.8	92.1	7.9	13.0
1966	86.9	95.7	4.3	11.6
1970	74.1	82.8	17.2	33.6
1972	75.4	83.5	16.5	6.1
1975	80.2	87.8	12.2	20.0
1979	81.4	87.7	12.3	12.1
1983	80.6	85.0	15.0	18.8
1987	80.1	85.2	14.8	11.2



**Figure 10:**  
**Changes in support for parties of given types over the whole country at general elections in 1945–1987 and index of total change, Whole country**

There are some differences between urban and rural areas in terms of changes in the balance of power between the major parties, the basic parties and the small parties. The total proportion of votes gained by the major parties, i.e. the SDP, SKDL, Centre Party and Coalition Party, in urban areas remained almost unchanged over the interval 1945–1987 and from one election to the next, the increase in support for the new parties taking place at the expense of the lesser basic parties, i.e. the Liberal Party and the Swedish People’s Party. Thus where the Liberals received 10.1% of the urban vote and the Swedish People’s Party 11.9% at the election of 1945, the Liberal Party did

not contest the election of 1987 as an independent party at all and the proportion of votes received by the Swedish People’s Party in urban areas was 5.4%. The decline in support for the SKDL and the rise in that for the Centre Party nevertheless indicate that the changes in the balance of power between the parties are more diverse than one would assume from the above and require a more detailed examination later.

The creation and expansion of new parties in rural areas has caused corresponding losses both among the four major parties and among all the basic parties.

## Regional distribution of party support

The geographical distribution of party support in Finland follows the relatively permanent boundaries of political regions which date from the early history of the party system. Table 34 contains a group of indicators calculated from data on party support in individual local government districts which allow an evaluation of the role of post-war changes in the regional concentration of party support. The indicators on the upper lines of the table will not be looked at in detail here, but the main focus will be on the lowermost lines, which provide a good outline of the magnitude of regional differences in party support. The earliest values from the period concerned were calculated as averages of the results of the 1945, 1948 and 1951 general elections in order to reduce the effect of the exceptional political situation after the war. The period examined extends to the general election of 1983 (there were no major changes between the elections of 1983 and 1987).

The indicators lead to the following observations:

- The largest absolute differences in the regional distribution of party support at the beginning and end of the period examined, as indicated by the standard

deviation and quartile deviation, were obtained for the Centre Party. The regional distribution of its support is thus the most heterogeneous, corresponding to the rural emphasis of the party. The regional differences in support for the SDP, SKDL and Coalition Party were markedly smaller, and of almost equal magnitude.

- The values obtained for 1948/51 and 1983 do not differ appreciably, which means that the regional concentration of support for the major parties has not changed essentially. The differences between the SDP, SKDL and Centre Party decreased slightly and those for the Coalition Party increased slightly. The bottom two lines in the table point to even more interesting and somewhat surprising features of changes in party support.
- The relative deviation, indicating the standard deviation as a percentage of the corresponding arithmetic mean for party support, serves to eliminate differences in regional distribution arising from the level of support, and in this respect provides a more comparable basis for examination of the various parties and points of time.

**Table 34:**  
Regional distribution of party support between 1945 and 1983 by selected indicators

	SDP		SKDL (Comm.)		Centre party		Coalition party	
	1945/1951	1983	1945/1951	1983	1945/1951	1983	1945/1951	1983
<b>Whole country</b> .....	<b>25.9</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>21.7</b>	<b>13.5</b>	<b>22.9</b>	<b>17.6</b>	<b>15.6</b>	<b>22.1</b>
Commune-specific parameters:								
1. arithmetic mean .....	23.6	21.8	21.0	11.5	32.4	29.4	12.2	17.3
2. lower quartile .....	14.2	12.7	13.2	5.8	18.7	15.7	6.2	10.8
3. median .....	23.2	21.5	20.2	10.6	33.6	31.2	11.0	16.9
4. upper quartile .....	32.3	28.9	28.5	16.0	45.3	41.4	16.7	23.5
5. standard deviation .....	11.4	10.4	10.3	7.3	18.9	16.8	7.9	8.3
6. quartile deviation .....	9.1	8.1	7.6	5.1	13.3	12.9	5.2	6.4
7. relative deviation .....	48.3	47.7	49.0	63.5	58.3	57.1	64.7	47.9
8. 'periphery coefficient' .....	92	82	97	86	142	168	79	79

- The relative regional differences in support for the SDP and Centre Party remained almost unchanged in the years examined, while marked differences occurred in the case of the SKDL and the Coalition Party in this respect. There was a considerable relative increase in regional differences in support for the Communists, while those for the Coalition Party decreased markedly. This means that the decline in the popularity of the SKDL was characterized by regional heterogeneity, so that support not only declined but also became more centralized. The opposite trend is observed in the case of the Coalition Party: as there was only a slight increase in absolute regional differences in party support, the relative regional support for the party has become markedly more homogeneous. Thus it has developed regionally towards the status of a general party.
- The lowermost indicator in Table 34 is calculated by dividing the arithmetic mean of the percentages of the vote gained by a given party in the individual local government districts by the percentage received by that party over the whole country and multiplying the result by 100. This is termed the index of peripheral support, or 'periphery index', as it indicates the extent to which party support is concentrated in districts with a small population. A value of 100 indicates equal levels of support in districts of varying sizes, while the more the index exceeds 100, the more the party's support is concentrated in small districts. Correspondingly, a figure falling below 100 indicates that party support is derived from communes with a high population.
- Support for the SDP and SKDL became increasingly concentrated in communes with a high population over this period of time, although the change was not a significant one. There was practically no change in support for the Coalition Party in this respect, but it did remain a representative of the major population centres as before. On the other hand, the number of such centres increased over

the same period and the contrast between small and large communes became more evident. Thus the Coalition Party may be said to have followed urban development and managed to increase its support. This constitutes a rider on the above statement that the Coalition Party has developed regionally towards the status of a general party, in that the statement holds good for areas with an increasing population.

- Measured by the above index, Centre Party support became increasingly concentrated in districts with a small population, which deviates markedly from both the image given by its attempts to expand party support and its stable pattern of support in the face of structural changes in society. This means that the Centre Party has succeeded better in its attempt to develop into the principal party of rural areas than in achieving the position of a general party on a national scale which is also successful in urban areas.

Regional differences and concentrations in party support have thus not changed essentially during the post-war era. The profiles of party support have maintained the regional forms that originated on the establishment of the party system. This political stability can also be approached from another point of view. The connection between the levels of support at the beginning and end of the period in question, i.e. the mean for the 1945, 1948 and 1951 elections vs. the 1983 election, is presented in the form of a correlation and its square in the following. The latter of these indicates the percentage by which the regional distribution of party support at the election of 1945 corresponds statistically to the regional distribution in 1983, i.e. how much these two points in time resemble each other.

	$r$	$100r^2, \%$
SDP	.85	72
SKDL	.86	74
Centre	.93	86
Coalition	.78	61
RKP	.98	96



As indicated by the above figures, the results achieved by the Swedish People's Party and the Centre Party in 1983 correspond most markedly to the regional distribution of support in 1945, while the Coalition Party was able to re-shape the regional pattern of its support the most. In addition to the Centre Party and the Swedish People's Party, the SDP and SKDL are also characterized by marked changes in regional emphasis. The changes in the regional distribution of party support over the period concerned were small, however, in accordance with earlier findings. The above discussion may be complemented by the following correlations which indicate a straightforward connection between changes in the level of party support between 1945 and 1983 and the levels of support in those years.

	Change in support, 1945-83			
	SDP	SKDL	Centre	Coalition
Level of support 1945	-.42	-.72	-.47	-.26
Level of support 1983	.12	-.27	-.11	.39

The above correlations can be approached from the point of view of either of these years.

The changes which occurred in the support for each major party in individual local government districts in 1945-1983 are related to the level of party support in 1945. Support for the SKDL declined by approximately 10 percentage points during this period, the correlation (.72) indicating that the decline consistently involved areas in which party support had been high. Thus the communist vote in 1983 was still higher than average in those districts in which the party had suffered above average losses. This means that as support for the SKDL declined in national terms, it also withdrew and became concentrated to some extent in areas in which it had traditionally been high. As already indicated by the above figures for the regional distribution of support, voting for the SKDL is relatively concentrated, as is also true of the Centre Party, support for which is restricted to traditional

areas, though not so prominently as that for the SKDL.

The opposite trend can be said to exist in the case of the SDP and the Coalition Party in particular, where there is a positive correlation between support at the general election of 1983 and the changes which took place in 1945-1983. Thus areas in which party support was above average were partly created as a result of changes which occurred after the war. This means that the regional pattern of support has altered somewhat, as is particularly evident in the case of the Coalition Party.

The following tabulation of correlation coefficients indicates the connection between the levels of support for the major parties in 1945 and 1983. The correlations indicate the degree of similarity or dissimilarity between the regional distributions of party support in the years in question.

	SDP		SKDL		Centre	
	1945	1983	1945	1983	1945	1983
SKDL	-.11	-.06				
Centre	-.42	-.63	-.16	-.07		
Coalition	.22	.36	-.09	-.10	-.20	-.33

Although the correlation changes are fairly small, their trend illustrates well the development of the political situation. As stated earlier in the present survey, the SDP and Coalition Party in particular derive most of their support from the major agglomerations while the Centre Party's support is reinforced in relative terms in the smaller local government districts. This trend is manifested in the correlations in the sense that support for the SDP and the Coalition Party is more markedly concentrated in the same districts. Thus the political opposition between the centres and periphery has increased in regional terms. The SKDL is fairly neutral in this respect and there have been no changes in its position. This is understandable, as its support is divided regionally into two trends, the 'industrial communism' of the population centres and the 'backwoods communism' of the peripheral areas. It can be concluded from the correlations that this division still exists.

The Finnish party system was created under conditions of an agrarian society, and each of the major parties has derived a considerable proportion of its support from rural areas. Once the focus of society shifted to the urban areas, the political confrontation of the parties and competition between them also became concentrated in these areas. This observation was confirmed earlier in results which showed that competition between the parties is increasingly impinging upon the expanding middle classes.

The data on inter-party competition may be supplemented by the correlations below, which indicate how changes in the support achieved by the four major parties in 1945/48–1983 are connected.

	SDP	SKDL	Centre
SKDL	-.09		
Centre	-.18	-.33	
Coalition	-.13	-.23	-.23

The proportions of the vote attracted by the parties and the changes which took place in these are of course related to each other for purely computational reasons: total support is always 100% and the success of one party always requires the defeat of another party. In view of this, the correlations in the above table are surprisingly low, which indicates that there is no consistent competitive framework which binds the major parties together as far as the whole country is concerned, but rather the party system is diffuse in this respect. What is also notable is that there is a negative relation between all the major parties, as if they were all at war with each other.

The above observations are provided with a more substantive content by the data in Table 35, which indicate changes in the total proportion of votes gained by the SKDL, SDP, Centre Party, Coalition Party and the other parties in their traditional areas of support between the elections of 1945–1966 and 1966–1983. The classification of the

areas of support is based on the investigation by Onni Rantala (1970) which explicates the geographical distribution and permanence of party support throughout the period of independence up to the general election of 1958. Rantala points out that distinct geographical areas can be assigned to certain parties, areas in which their support has regularly remained high. These areas usually form homogeneous regional entities, but each party or party group has also had individual nodes, separate strongholds in which their support has for some reason been exceptionally high. The actual areas and nodes of support for the various parties are combined in Table 35. Rantala investigated in particular the areal distribution of support for the Communist Party, SDP and Centre Party (formerly the Agrarian Party), treating support for the remainder of the non-socialist parties as a single entity.

**Table 35:**  
Changes in support for the major parties in their traditional core areas in 1945–1983, %-points

	Core area				
	Agrarian Party	Other non-socialists	SDP	Communists	None of these
<b>SDP</b>					
1945–1966	-3.6	3.8	-6.7	-1.9	-1.9
1966–1983	2.0	-0.5	-0.2	1.8	0.1
1945–1983	-1.6	3.3	-6.7	-0.8	-1.8
<b>SKDL</b>					
1945–1966	1.2	-1.6	-2.9	-1.2	-1.7
1966–1983	-7.6	-4.7	-6.3	-13.1	-7.7
1945–1983	-6.4	-6.3	-9.2	-14.3	-9.4
<b>Centre</b>					
1945–1966	0.0	2.8	6.1	0.9	3.0
1966–1983	-7.0	-2.8	-6.3	-2.2	-9.3
1945–1983	-6.9	0.0	-0.3	-1.7	-5.1
<b>Coalition</b>					
1945–1966	-1.6	-3.0	-1.2	-1.7	-2.4
1966–1983	4.5	6.3	8.2	5.6	8.7
1945–1983	2.9	3.3	7.0	3.9	6.3
<b>Others</b>					
1945–1966	4.0	-2.0	4.7	3.9	3.0
1966–1983	8.1	1.7	4.6	7.9	8.2
1945–1983	12.1	-0.3	9.3	11.8	11.2

It can be inferred from the above table that the changes which have taken place in the support enjoyed by the parties during the two periods examined here are mostly mutually opposed. Thus developments preceding the general election of 1966 and those occurring after it constitute distinctive political periods. The figures in Table 35 also have an obvious connection with the features of change indicated by the correlation coefficients presented above.

As for the individual parties, the following comments can be made:

- The support given to the SDP, which remained fairly stable throughout the country between 1945 and 1983, is nevertheless characterized by regional features of change. The party lost some of its support in its traditional areas, but increased it in areas which have traditionally been non-socialist. The changes mainly concern the period preceding the election of 1966, during which the losses experienced by the Social Democrats mainly seem to have favoured the Centre Party, which was able to increase its support in the former's areas by an average of approx. 6 percentage points. The Centre Party then lost most of this gain in support to the Coalition Party after 1966, when the latter increased its support by over 8 percentage points in areas traditionally favouring the SDP. The group of other parties also increased its support in these areas throughout the period studied by a total of 9.3 percentage points.
- The communists (SKDL) suffered their losses after 1966, involving all groups within the political tradition (Table 35), particularly areas traditionally favouring

the party, in which its support dropped by 14 percentage points from 1945 onwards. This is in line with the correlations presented earlier in the current investigation, which also indicated that the decline in support for the SKDL mostly involved areas of traditionally strong party support.

- The election of 1970 marked a turning point in the trend for the Centre Party. Apart from its traditional areas, it increased its support in all groups within the political tradition between 1945 and 1966, particularly in areas of mainly agrarian origin which had traditionally favoured the Social Democrats. The Centre Party also maintained its position even in its own areas of support precisely at the average of the levels attained in the elections of 1945, 1948 and 1951. The party has been losing its support in all groups since 1966, mainly in its traditional areas, those of the SDP and areas which are not regarded as favouring any party in particular. Thus as far as the whole post-war era is concerned, the Centre Party has lost support, mainly in its traditional areas.
- Support for the Coalition Party has increased everywhere since the election of 1966, but particularly in areas traditionally supporting the SDP and in areas which are traditionally not dominated by any given party.
- Apart from areas supporting other non-socialist parties, the group 'other parties' has increased its support quite steadily in all the types of region studied. This increase in support mainly took place during the period following the election of 1966.

### 3. Social basis of changes in party support

The connections between the changes which have taken place in party support and various social and political background factors will be specified in the following by means of regression analyses based on the total set of local government districts in Finland except for the province of Åland. The intention is not to define models which provide the maximum statistical explanations, but primarily to point out the roles of the various factors and their mutual contribution to the connections between the structure of society and changes in party support.

The regression models which will be discussed first were created cumulatively, i.e. each model was complemented in stages by adding clusters of variables consisting of various background factors. Parameters

indicating the social basis of party support were used as the point of departure, the final elements added to these being variables indicating political competition. The models are presented in Table 36.

The groups consist of the following parameters:

- Occupational structure and its change:
  - relative change in the number of persons employed in agriculture, 1950-1980
  - relative change in the number of persons employed in industry, 1950-1980
  - relative change in the number of persons employed in the service sector, 1950-1980

**Table 36:**  
**Connection between changes in support for the SKDL, SDP, Centre Party and Coalition Party between 1966 and 1983 and social and political background factors. Cumulative regression models**

a = cumulative index of determination (100 R<sup>2</sup>)

b = contribution of each variable group to the index of determination (%)

	Change in support 1966-1983							
	SKDL (Comm.)		SDP		Centre		Coalition	
	a	b	a	b	a	b	a	b
<b>Urban areas</b>								
Occupational structure	14.9		32.1		65.9		41.3	
Class structure	19.9	30	35.3	47	68.3	77	47.9	59
Affluence	47.9	41	48.1	17	79.6	13	55.4	9
Political tradition	66.0	26	63.6	20	87.3	9	76.9	27
Political competition	68.0	3	75.6	16	87.9	1	81.0	5
<b>Total, %</b>		<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>
<b>Rural areas</b>								
Occupational structure	20.3		10.6		25.4		17.7	
Class structure	22.5	29	14.9	29	26.3	42	18.6	35
Affluence	28.1	7	18.4	7	34.0	12	31.8	30
Political tradition	75.1	61	46.9	55	59.2	41	46.7	33
Political competition	77.4	3	51.4	9	62.4	5	47.3	2
<b>Total, %</b>		<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>
<b>All areas</b>								
Occupational structure	17.0		11.5		38.2		25.3	
Class structure	17.7	25	19.3	34	38.8	56	27.6	50
Affluence	28.7	15	22.7	6	46.6	11	36.6	16
Political tradition	69.5	57	48.3	46	67.3	30	52.9	29
Political competition	71.6	3	56.2	14	69.3	3	55.7	5
<b>Total, %</b>		<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>		<b>100</b>

- relative change in population in 1960–1980
- proportion of persons employed in agriculture in 1950
- proportion of persons employed in forestry in 1950
- proportion of persons employed in industry in 1950
- Class structure:
  - proportion of upper salaried staff in 1980
  - proportion of lower salaried staff in 1980
  - proportion of workers in 1980
  - proportion of persons with a university degree in 1980
- Living conditions and affluence:
  - average rate of unemployment in 1975–1980
  - average income level in 1980
  - number of persons emigrating to Scandinavian countries in 1970–1975
- Political tradition:
  - party's level of support in 1945/1951, to be explained by the model, and change in support in 1945/1951–1966
- Political competition:
  - The models for individual parties include changes in support for their primary political alternatives in 1966–1983, as follows:
    - SKDL: SDP, Rural Party (SMP), Centre
    - SDP: SKDL, SMP, Coalition
    - Centre: SMP, Coalition
    - Coalition: SDP, Centre, SMP

Insertion of new groups of variables into the models increases their index of determination, i.e. the proportion of the regional variation in changes in party support which the model accounts for. The magnitude of this increase indicates the contribution which each parameter group makes to the total explanation of variance achieved by the model. The contribution of each group of variables to the total determination can

only be interpreted in the light of the model concerned, as its magnitude is dependent on the order in which the groups of variables have been added to the model, those inserted first naturally being most likely to achieve a high index of determination and those added last tending to have the lowest index. The groups of variables were introduced into the models discussed here in an order determined by their presumed causal role and the approach adopted in the investigation, the most important aspects in which are the social basis for party support and its changes. Competition between the parties is regarded as a factor whose effects on changes in party support are defined by the social basis, living conditions and political tradition. It should also be noted that the order in which the variables are inserted into the model is of minor significance from the point of view of the final results of the analyses proper as the models are compared primarily between regional classifications and parties, aspects in which all the models are in principle comparable and uniform.

Regression models were compiled for urban and rural districts separately and combined.

No appreciable, consistent differences were found between the parties in the index of determination. The models account for approximately 50–80% of the changes in party support. Apart from the SKDL, the indices of determination of the models are by far the highest in the urban communes.

The changes which took place in support for the major parties between 1966 and 1983 were best accounted for by the occupational sector and class criteria and the earlier position of the parties and the development of their support. Aggregate indicators of living conditions and affluence have a relatively weak connection with changes in party support, although with certain exceptions. The role of political competition is statistically small, apart from the SDP in urban areas, possibly also due to the fact that these variables were inserted into the model at the last stage.

The differences found between the parties are relatively small, whereas those found between urban and rural areas are pronounced and highly significant.

Apart from the SKDL, the changes in party support in urban areas are markedly more closely connected with occupational sector and class criteria and their changes than are those in rural areas, whereas political tradition is much more connected with the development of the parties in the latter areas than it is in the former. The urban trend in support for the SKDL is very closely connected with variables indicating living conditions and affluence, and that for the SDP fairly closely connected with these. In rural areas, these factors are essentially connected with changes in support for the Coalition Party only.

In the case of the regression models outlined briefly above, attention was paid solely to the relative significance of the various groups of variables as factors accounting for changes in party support. The following models also attempt to examine the direction of the effects of the various factors and to utilize a more detailed regional classification to evaluate the differences in the criteria for political behaviour among the general public which arise from political traditions and social conditions.

The regional classification used as the basis for the following regression models was constructed according to the political traditions and the centre-periphery positions of the individual local government districts.

The above two criteria were used to establish five groups of regions on the basis of which more detailed analyses of the background factors to changes in party support can be performed:

#### 1 Population centres of Southern Finland:

Districts in which less than 30% of the working population was employed in agriculture in 1960, located in the regions

of Uusimaa, Varsinais-Suomi, Satakunta, Southern Ostrobothnia, Southern Häme, Tammermaa or South-eastern Finland. In terms of political tradition, the area is dominated by the Coalition Party and the SDP.

#### 2 Population centres of Northern Finland:

Districts in which less than 40% of the working population was employed in agriculture in 1960, located elsewhere than in the above regions. The political tradition is dominated by the Centre Party and the SKDL.

#### 3 Rural areas of Southern Finland:

Districts in which 70% of the working population in 1960 was employed in agriculture, located in the regions of Uusimaa, Varsinais-Suomi, Satakunta, Southern Ostrobothnia, Southern Häme or Tammermaa. In terms of political tradition, the areas are dominated by the Coalition Party and the SDP.

#### 4 Rural areas of Middle Finland:

Districts in which over 60% of the working population was employed in agriculture in 1960, located in the regions of South-eastern Finland, Central Finland, Southern Savo and Northern Karelia. The political tradition of these areas is dominated by the Centre Party and the SDP. The fact that the Social Democrats have traditionally received agrarian support is still evident in both this group and the preceding one.

#### 5 Rural areas of Northern Finland:

Districts in which over 60% of the working population was employed in agriculture in 1960, located elsewhere than in the areas of the previous two groups. In terms of their political traditions, these areas are dominated by the Centre Party and the SKDL.

The compromises which are inevitable in any classification of the above kind are manifested here in the case of Ostrobothnia, which forms an independent political and economic region rather than a part of some other region. Such an approach would have rendered the classification excessively fragmentary, however. Another matter of discretion is the fact that Northern Savo is included in the same group as Kainuu and Lapland, for example. This is justified by the considerable support for the SKDL in the area, a feature which links it with Northern Finland, although as far as its economic tradition and development is concerned, Northern Savo would be regarded as belonging to Middle Finland. On the other hand, the differences between these regions have narrowed down to such an extent that their rural parts nowadays constitute a fairly homogeneous entity.

Changes in support for the SDP, SKDL, Centre Party and Coalition Party between 1966 and 1983 are analyzed in the following regression analyses. This particular period was selected on two grounds. Firstly, it is possible that the effects of social changes on political phenomena may occur with a given delay, which means that inclusion of the years immediately following the war could have introduced factors into the analysis which would have detracted from its aims. Secondly, the general elections of 1966 and 1970 marked an obvious turning point in post-war political development, whereas the election of 1962 represents the culmination of the first post-war era, at which the support for the Centre Party, for instance, reached its peak and that for the SDP an extremely low level due to the disorder within the party.

The regression models are presented in Table 37.

Although the variables in the models and the phenomena indicated by these are fairly obvious, one of the variables, i.e. that indicating 'over-support' for a party at the general election of 1962, may require more detailed explanation. This variable is based on a regression analysis in which support

for each of the parties discussed here is accounted for by the extent of the party's natural, primary group of supporters. Should party support be higher than could be expected on the basis of this statistical model, it is regarded as having 'over-support'. This level of support which exceeds or falls below the 'natural' or 'expected' level indicates both the extent of support attributable to tradition and the pressure exerted towards 'normalization' of the level of support. A level of support lower than the normal represents in turn a potential for the party to expand its support locally.

Table 37 contains only the partial regression coefficients ( $\beta$ ) of the models, indicating the extent of determination of a given parameter when the effects of the other parameters are controlled.

The results of the analyses for the four parties are as follows:

The rise in support for the SDP in the centres of Southern Finland, amounting to nearly 5 percentage points in the period concerned, is mainly attributable to industrialization within the districts and to unification within the party, the magnitude of the effect of which is dependent on the extent to which party dissidence manifested itself locally, i.e. the extent of support for the 'splinter party', the TPSL, in the 1962 election. In addition to this, the SDP was most successful in areas in which its support in 1962 was below that suggested by its 'natural' level. The support commanded by the Rural Party (a protest movement) during this period may best be referred to as representing a state of permanent defeat for the SDP.

In the case of the population centres of Northern Finland, in which the SDP increased its support by nearly 6%, this trend most obviously followed the increase in the number of persons employed in the service sector. The withdrawal of the TPSL and the reunification of the party also led to an increase in support for the SDP in these areas.

**Table 37:**

**Connections between changes in support for the SKDL, SDP, Centre Party and Coalition Party and changes in background factors affecting party support by groups of local government districts in 1966–1983: regression analysis and  $\beta$ -coefficients**

Background variables	SDP	SKDL	Centre	Coalition
	1966–1983	1966–1983	1966–1983	1966–1983
	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$	$\beta$
<b>Centres of Southern Finland</b>				
Industrialization	0.43	0.19	-0.59	0.00
Increase in service industries	0.22	-0.19	-0.31	0.34
Change in population	0.05	0.15	0.05	0.49
Change in education level	-0.09	-0.06	-0.22	0.22
Change in income level	0.07	-0.16	0.00	0.17
Rate of unemployment	0.09	0.08	0.19	-0.32
'Over-support' in 1962	-0.36	-0.27	-0.61	0.12
Support for Rural Party in 1970	-0.42	-0.11	0.03	0.21
Support for Liberal Party in 1962	0.10	0.05	-0.15	0.40
Support for TPSL in 1962	0.58	-	-	-
Index of determination for the model (100 R <sup>2</sup> , %)	44.6	31.3	63.6	55.6
<b>Centres of Northern Finland</b>				
Industrialization	0.20	0.36	-0.61	-0.07
Increase in service industries	0.42	-0.12	-0.59	0.14
Change in population	-0.26	0.09	0.32	0.14
Change in education level	-0.18	0.42	0.18	-0.28
Change in income level	0.15	0.17	-0.13	-0.21
Rate of unemployment	-0.23	0.16	0.07	-0.04
'Over-support' in 1962	-0.27	-0.30	-0.37	0.12
Support for Rural Party in 1970	0.13	-0.30	0.05	0.04
Support for Liberal Party in 1962	-	-	-	0.14
Support for TPSL in 1962	0.52	-	-	-
Index of determination for the model (100 R <sup>2</sup> , %)	47.3	47.1	62.4	13.1
<b>Rural areas of Southern Finland</b>				
Industrialization	0.24	0.20	-0.22	0.15
Increase in service industries	0.08	-0.03	-0.11	0.00
Change in population	0.08	0.03	-0.05	-0.14
Change in education level	0.07	0.00	0.03	0.10
Change in income level	-0.07	0.14	0.00	0.39
Rate of unemployment	-0.05	0.02	0.18	-0.04
'Over-support' in 1962	-0.21	-0.47	-0.28	0.18
Support for Rural Party in 1970	-0.22	0.00	-0.39	-0.17
Support for Liberal Party in 1962	-	-	-	0.42
Support for TPSL in 1962	0.45	-	-	-
Index of determination for the model (100 R <sup>2</sup> , %)	33.8	32.7	32.1	37.2
<b>Rural areas of Middle Finland</b>				
Industrialization	0.18	0.16	-0.34	0.07
Increase in service industries	0.25	-0.02	-0.22	0.04
Change in population	0.00	0.00	0.16	0.15
Change in education level	0.08	0.05	0.16	0.10
Change in income level	0.28	-0.02	-0.22	0.23
Rate of unemployment	0.24	0.08	0.23	-0.20
'Over-support' in 1962	-0.58	-0.63	-0.59	0.05
Support for Rural Party in 1970	0.08	-0.31	-0.41	-0.19
Support for Liberal Party in 1962	-	-	-	0.22
Support for TPSL in 1962	0.36	-	-	-
Index of determination for the model (100 R <sup>2</sup> , %)	50.1	48.7	58.6	18.2
<b>Rural areas of Northern Finland</b>				
Industrialization	0.07	0.10	-0.05	0.13
Increase in service industries	0.33	-0.07	-0.21	0.12
Change in population	-0.13	0.16	-0.09	0.09
Change in education level	-0.06	0.24	-0.09	0.06
Change in income level	0.09	0.12	-0.11	0.22
Rate of unemployment	-0.07	0.40	0.17	-0.06
'Over-support' in 1962	-0.32	-0.48	-0.28	0.14
Support for Rural Party in 1970	0.17	-0.15	0.00	0.04
Support for Liberal Party in 1962	-	-	-	0.15
Support for TPSL in 1962	0.63	-	-	-
Index of determination for the model (100 R <sup>2</sup> , %)	45.7	43.2	29.0	13.16



The rise in support for the Social Democrats in the rural areas as well, by slightly over 2 percentage points in Southern and Central Finland and nearly 4 percentage points in Northern Finland, was connected with changes in the basis of mobilisation, related to industrialization in the south, mainly to expansion in the service sector in the north and both of these in Middle Finland. Similarly the disappearance of the TPSL was connected with the success of the SDP in rural areas throughout the country. 'Over-support' regulated the trend most markedly in the rural areas of Middle Finland, which is obvious as there is a solid agrarian tradition of support for the party in this area, the preservation of which, particularly among the actual farming population, is difficult at times of changes in the population.

There is an interesting feature in the relations between the Rural Party and the SDP. As stated above, the elements of protest connected with the success of the Rural Party in the centres of Southern Finland has at least up to the present time been evident in the support achieved by the SDP, whereas the relation is reversed towards the northern parts of the country, in that the success of the Rural Party at the election of 1970 matched that of the SDP. This may be attributed to the fact that the outstanding success of the Rural Party in that year freed the population from their traditional party bonds and facilitated the expansion of the SDP into an area in which its position had earlier been weak. This is supported by the fact that the trend in support for the SDP after the election of 1970 correlated positively with that for the Rural Party, i.e. paralleled it, the correlation coefficient being .28 in the population centres of Northern Finland and .21 in its rural areas.

Changes in support for the communists (SKDL), which meant losses for the party during the period studied here, are not so directly connected with changes in the social basis as in the case of the SDP. The orientation of these connections is nevertheless obvious: the party has maintained its position best in the industrialized areas. Increases in the service sector are in turn as-

sociated to some extent with below average success for the party, although such a connection hardly exists in rural areas. Support for the SKDL declined least in the population centres of Northern Finland and particularly rural areas with a high rate of unemployment.

The 'over-support' gained by the SKDL in 1962 was even more decisive for the subsequent fortunes of the party than in the case of the SDP, enabling it to reinforce its image as the party of the industrial workers in the face of the changes experienced in the 1960's and 1970's. The party gained most of its 'over-support' in rural areas, in which the adherents of 'backwoods communism', mainly lumberjacks and small farmers, came to constitute no more than a minor group.

The protest vote attracted by the Rural Party (SMP) meant losses for the SKDL in Northern Finland, particularly in the population centres, and in the rural areas of Middle Finland, where it had traditionally found difficulties in establishing itself. The SKDL was unable to profit from the demise of the TPSL in any of the areas analysed here.

The Centre Party suffered considerable losses of support in 1962-1983, which were directly connected with changes in the industrial structure in all the areas considered. Party support declined most in the areas with the highest rate of industrialization and service sector expansion, a relation most in evidence in the population centres of Northern Finland. The delayed adjustment to earlier changes in the basis of support, as indicated by 'over-support' for the party, is also a factor which undoubtedly contributed to the losses suffered by the Centre Party. In addition, the Rural Party caused permanent losses of Centre Party support in the rural areas of Southern and Middle Finland during the period studied here, although in other areas the Centre Party managed to recover from these losses.

The analysis indicates that support for the Centre Party is not connected with migration either in the population centres or in the rural areas of Southern Finland, as indicated by the variable 'change in population'. This means that the party has

not managed to transfer its support along with the flow of migration from north to south, at least not to any systematic extent, as noted in earlier research. This connection exists to some extent in the centres of Northern Finland, however, where the growth in population has indeed increased support for the Centre Party, or at least reduced the losses suffered by it.

It is worth noting that the industrial structure of some urban districts may well have been dominated by agriculture, especially if the surrounding rural districts were later amalgamated with these, which in fact was a common procedure. As indicated above, support for the Centre Party was directly dependent on the size of this rural population. When this factor is taken into account, as in the present models, it is seen that the increase in population conveyed some of the support for the Centre Party from the rural areas of Northern Finland to its population centres along with the migration of population.

Most of the increase in support for the Coalition Party was concentrated in the southern parts of the country, involving both the population centres and the rural areas to an equal extent. In the case of the centres, this effect was quite obviously based on the growth in population and increase in the number of persons employed in the service sector, further supported by the rise in levels of income and education. A considerable part of the party's success must be attributed to the expansion of the service industries. When the growth of this group is measured

in real terms, i.e. related to the average population of a local government district, the correlation rises as high as .66. Thus the expansion of the party took place mainly in the areas which had the highest increase in the proportion of persons employed in the service sector irrespective of the extent to which this increase altered the industrial structure, i.e. the proportion of persons representing the various occupational sectors.

The reasons for the expansion of the Coalition Party are not by any means as distinct in the rural areas of Southern Finland. What is significant from the point of view of the social structure is only the rise in income level, which is also true of rural areas in other parts of the country. As indicated by the models, the success of the Coalition Party in the population centres of Northern Finland has been quite random and apparently based on highly local factors.

The rise in support for the Coalition Party was also accelerated by the considerable support enjoyed by the Liberal Party at the election of 1962 and the subsequent political vacuum left upon the decline of this party.

The expansion of support for the Coalition Party deviates from that of the other parties in that the 'over-support' received by the party at the 1962 election did not detract from its later success but rather led to the opposite trend, in that the party achieved greater than average success in places where it had already exceeded the level of support to be expected in the light of its social basis.

## 4. Main features of changes in party support

The Finnish party system, with its origins deeply rooted in the conditions prevailing in an agrarian society, has remained virtually unchanged up to the present time. The post-war changes in support discussed here reflect quite well the pressures for structural change in society and their effects. The focus of attention in society and the scene of political competition between the parties

have shifted from the rural areas to the cities, centres and urban areas, and as the above analyses have indicated, trends in party support have generally followed this change quite closely. The essential aspect from the point of view of the parties has of course concerned the changes in the composition and proportions of the social classes.

The political contrast between the cities and the rural areas manifests itself best in the pattern of support for the Coalition Party and the Centre Party, the former having profited most consistently from the creation and expansion of new professional and occupational groups and the growth of the cities and population centres, while the latter has devoted its efforts to establishing its support in cities and achieving the position of a party of general appeal on a national scale. Although the Centre Party has in fact succeeded in its aims to some extent, the post-war changes have led to its acquiring the status of a general party representing the rural areas. Despite the increasing changes in Centre Party support in the urban areas, the role of the support gained from the rural and peripheral areas has become proportionally more significant.

The cities and population centres currently occupy a more prominent role in political competition, as reflected in the fact that the instability which has appeared in the established party system and the creation of new parties has increasingly been taking place in the cities. The parliamentary election of 1970 and the success of the Rural Party in it were in fact the last marked political changes to have been initiated in the rural and peripheral areas to date, whereas the small political groups which broke up the traditional patterns of party allegiance in earlier times were often connected with the rural areas, and particularly with the political activity of the poorer sector of the population in these areas. It should be noted that support for the Rural Party later became focused more markedly on the cities and the southern parts of the country, as indicated by the parliamentary election results of 1983 at which the party was almost as successful as in 1970.

As a consequence of the changes that have taken place, the political differences, and possibly opposition, between the rural areas and cities have increased. There is thus a fairly clearcut and significant gulf between them in terms of factors contributing to the changes in party support. Factors connected with the structure of society, especially changes in class and occupational structure,

have contributed more markedly to changes in party support in the cities and developing areas than in the rural areas. This may at least partly mean that it is more difficult for people living in the countryside to attach political meanings to social changes than it is for those living in the cities. On the one hand, the joint development of rural areas and peripheral areas has created a need to centralise and unify political power, as reflected in trends in support for the Centre Party, while on the other hand the social changes have given rise to uncertainty and a threat to existence in the declining areas, which has manifested itself in the form of political protests and proposals that differ radically from earlier political opinions. In addition to the Rural Party, a certain randomness typical of a protest movement is also reflected in the rural vote for the Coalition Party and Christian League.

Examining the political changes which have taken place since the Second World War, the parliamentary elections of 1966 and 1970 constitute a distinct turning point. The periods preceding and following these form two distinct political phases marked by almost totally reversed trends in regional support for the various parties. The trend preceding the parliamentary election of 1966 was dominated by a shift in allegiance to the SDP towards the cities and population centres, the fragmentation within the party and the resulting rise of the TPSL contributing at least to some extent to the disengagement of the party from its earlier agrarian roots. Re-unification of the SDP, on the other hand, meant that its support became more firmly concentrated in the cities, so that it could not immediately recover its earlier traditional level of support in the rural areas, which turned to the Rural Party at the parliamentary election of 1970 and the Christian League at the next election.

In contrast to the urbanisation of the SDP, the Centre Party achieved the status of a general party for the rural areas, increasing its support beyond the post-war level particularly in the rural areas of Southern Finland. Trends in the support for the other parties are not so distinct: support for the Coalition Party dropped by a few percentage

points throughout the country after the Second World War up to the election of 1966, whereas the SKDL reinforced its support slightly, particularly in areas where it had already established itself.

The trends following 1966 are typified by the parliamentary election of 1970, in which the political protest embodied in the Rural Party caused considerable losses to all the parties which had established their support in rural areas, particularly the Centre Party, but also the SKDL and SDP. By the time of the 1987 parliamentary election, however, the Centre Party had managed to restore its support almost to the 1970 level in the rural areas in Northern and Eastern Finland, i.e. its traditional support base, whereas it had not recovered from its losses in the small rural districts of Southern Finland, where it had expanded markedly in the 1950's and 1960's.

Support for the SDP was stable in the 1970's and 1980's, and the party managed to maintain its central position in the cities despite minor losses. The party increased its support slightly in the rural areas of the north in particular, though not to such an extent as to replace the losses suffered by the party at the election of 1970. It has thus maintained its urban image, which was reinforced in the 1950's and 1960's. Support for the Coalition Party has also increased significantly in the cities and growth centres, progress which is attributable not only to changes in professional and occupational structure, but also to the demise of the Liberal Party, which provided the other parties with an opportunity to expand their support in the cities by approximately 10 percentage points relative to the situation in the 1960's.

As indicated by the above analyses, the parties have been competing with each other in an unorganized manner on a variety of levels as far as relations between those winning or losing at elections are concerned. This may partly be due to the fact that the trends in party support are examined here over long periods of time and in relation to their regional distribution. Such trends are in any case not a question of individual voters shifting their support but rather the effects

of a renewal process among voters. The profound change observable at both the local level and over larger areas between the elections of 1945 and 1987 is attributable to factors concerning birth rates, mortality and migration. Long-term investigations thus emphasize the question of the ability of the parties to maintain and renew their support under various conditions of social change. In this respect, the disorganisation of the political parties means that the role of political traditions and other factors working for political continuity has decreased and that the parties have become ideologically similar and have adopted the role of general parties which are not distinguished by earlier boundaries of social class.

As stated above, the trends in the support for the parties are essentially dependent on changes in social structure and among the social groups connected with these. To generalize the results obtained from the analysis, the detailed classification of changes in party support based on a division of the local authority districts in terms of their level of development indicates that in addition to social position and the underlying social structures, the political activities of the public are also affected by factors such as regional political tradition, earlier voting patterns, the prevailing social atmosphere and manner of thought, examples obtained from the environment and how they are adopted in wider terms, purely local factors and situations which are in general terms random ones.

The role of local and regional traditions can be regarded as having weakened as a result of increased, nationally uniform political publicity, for example, which is attributable to the mass media and the new 'marketing techniques' adopted by politicians. In spite of this, post-war trends in party support have still been regulated by political traditions in a variety of ways and have conformed to the traditional basic boundaries on the political map of Finland, as is evident mainly in the political changes seen in the rural areas. Despite extensive migration from north to south, the Centre Party has not managed to shift its support to the southern parts of the country, where it has historically been weak. There was a marked

expansion in the support for the Centre Party in the south and in rural areas traditionally supporting the SDP before the general election of 1970, but this was returned to the earlier level by a shift in allegiance towards the SMP, Coalition Party and SKL. Together with other corresponding changes, this indicates that the new small parties, particularly the SMP and to a lesser extent also the SKL, have acted as filters in times when changes in the composition of voters or other causes have created pressures to go against local ideological traditions.

The expansion of support for the SDP prior to the election of 1966 and that for the Coalition Party from the election of 1970 onwards is attributable to support from fairly similar areas and social groups. This reflects at least partly fluctuations in social opinion and atmosphere which placed the major emphasis on social matters in the 1960's and were concerned with the individual in the 1980's. The disappearance of liberalism (LKP) and communism (SKDL) from the scene can also be regarded as corresponding ideological turning-points, a fact which does not connect the structural changes in society either directly or exclusively with those taking place in the social basis of politics.

The detailed classification of changes in party support indicated that there are distinct situations in which local authority districts of different types constitute geographically uniform or closely related entities. This indicates that political participation is still affected by the mechanisms governing the diffusion of innovations, which are based on social examples and interaction, and whose role has often become evident in the history of social mass movements. Factors of this kind were also found to lie behind cases in which the types of changes were distinguished primarily by virtue of the timing of features of general political change in a district of a given type. Thus the general trends will have manifested themselves earlier in some types of local government district, becoming visible in other types later, and possibly in a less prominent manner. Such areal differences were not

found to be connected with change factors in society, while those in the degree of changes in party support seemed to be based even more prominently on factors which are independent of the general trends in society. All types of local authority district, in both centres and marginal areas, irrespective of their state of social development, included cases in which the magnitude of the changes among the parties deviated from the general level.

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The SDP and the Coalition Party formed a joint government after the election of 1987, together with representatives from the Swedish People's Party (RKP) and the Rural Party (SMP). This was the first time that the SDP and Coalition Party – in 'normal' times – had been engaged in parliamentary cooperation. Despite the emphasis on pragmatics in Finnish politics, this cooperation between a left-wing and a right-wing political force was considered new and surprising: in the ideological sense, it was often referred to as an 'unholy alliance'. The government nevertheless remained in office throughout the entire four-year legislative period, thus becoming the longest-living one in the country's history. There was an unfavourable trend in the economy at the same time, however, which hampered implementation of the essential improvements decided on by the government. As both this and particularly the 'bad publicity' that the government had acquired had led to considerable public discontent, the Centre Party, which had been in opposition, achieved a major victory at the parliamentary election of 1991, increasing its vote by 7.2 percentage points and becoming the largest party in the country. The results indicated that the party had increased its support not only in its traditional rural base but also markedly in urban areas. The success of the Centre Party was a new feature in the history of both the party and the entire party system, as it broke away significantly from the political dichotomy between urban and rural areas which had intensified in previous years, as mentioned above.

When analysed at the regional level, the above changes in support for the parties and in the balance of power between them can be summed up in three structural cleavage dimensions which manifest themselves in the form of regional contrasts and also reflect the tensions and dynamics existing in Finnish politics at a more general level. The first dimension is connected with urbanisation, modernisation and improved welfare, and it centres geographically around areas which developed rapidly in the 1960's and 1970's. Most of the migration in the country was focused on these areas, where levels of income and education in the population increased very much more rapidly than on average. This line of welfare and growth was also reflected politically in the choices made by voters, first leading to a strengthening of the position of the SDP and its major triumph at the election of 1966, at which it was regarded as a reformed urban welfare party with a modern social development programme and also the means to satisfy the needs of the expanding middle classes. The social and political dynamics shifted from the SDP to the Coalition Party after 1966, creating a basis for an expansion in support for the latter up to the election of 1987. This political and social dimension was also clearly reflected in the grouping of those supporters who voted for Mauno Koivisto, the current President of Finland, at the presidential election of 1982. The support gained by Koivisto's electoral alliance was in fact highest in those areas of dynamic development which had formed the basis of support for the SDP and the Coalition Party.

Areas representing the 'depths of the countryside' constitute the core content of the second cleavage. The primary meaning of the term lies neither in outlying location nor in low standards of living, but in the fact that agriculture and the countryside are significant for the rural population, providing them with a way of life and an ideological background. Support for the Centre Party increased even further in the rural areas, which have a political profile of their own, in the 1950's and the 1960's, as a

result of which its role as a representative of the countryside was reinforced. The protest created by urban trends in politics in the late 1960's was felt most strongly in the rural areas, where it manifested itself in the form of major support for the SMP and losses for the parties which were traditionally dominant in the areas, such as the Centre Party. These rural areas were also the most prominent supporters of the electoral alliance by which Urho Kekkonen was first elected President in 1956. Politically neutral areas of static average development are located at the opposite end of this regional cleavage dimension.

As indicated by these two dimensions, the contrast between rural and urban areas is a basic determinant in political participation which has long marked the direction of the changes that have taken place in the balance of political power and emphasis in Finland. This is aptly symbolized by the fact that the same contrast also applies to two presidents representing different periods in time and to the supporters that mustered around them, thus suggesting that they were on opposite sides of a social divide. The political roots of Kekkonen's republic were profoundly agrarian, whereas those of Koivisto's are essentially urban.

The third regional-level structural cleavage dimension is concerned with political divisions in the countryside. Radical areas, characterized by protest elements, extensive communist support and a major role for the Rural Party (SMP) and occasionally for other small parties, are located on one end of the scale, and areas characterized primarily by Centre Party or Coalition Party support and the occurrence of only minor political changes on the other. There are no obvious social or economic factors underlying this division, which is most prominently connected with the historical difference between radical Eastern Finland and conservative Western Finland which developed in connection with divisions within the Finnish nationalist movement in the 19th century.

By comparison with the above dimensions, the parliamentary election of 1991 can be regarded as an entirely isolated event, as the results, particularly the major rise in support for the Centre Party, are not directly connected with the above long-term trends in political changes. This indicates in a concrete manner that the results of the election primarily reflect the general political situation and fluctuations in public opinion.

Although the results of the election of 1991 should be approached with some reservation, and although the high support figures may not remain as high as to imply a breakthrough for the Centre Party in urban areas, they nevertheless do reflect increased political sensitivity among the middle classes and the topicality of the aforementioned tripolar pattern of political mobilisation (p. 55) .

# IV Features of voting in Helsinki

Representative democracies are characterized by the fairly passive role adopted by their citizens, which involves the expression of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the political leadership at regular intervals. As pointed out earlier in the present investigation, even this minor role is becoming the privilege of a continually diminishing segment of the population, while an increasing proportion of citizens are turning their back on politics. Passivity and abstention have come to adopt a significant role in the balance of power in everyday politics, as it is easy to conclude that the decline in voting activity from the 85% peak of 1966 to the level of the general election of 1987 (76%) meant defeat for the political left and success for the right wing. This is particularly evident in the population centres, where support for the Coalition Party increased by approximately 11 percentage points during the same period.

Helsinki assumed a pioneering role in this respect, its voting percentage at parliamentary elections dropping by 10 percentage points (from 84% to 74%) between 1966 and 1987, while support for the SDP dropped by 8 percentage points (from 32.4% to 24.3%) and that for the communists (SKDL and Democratic Alternative) by 6.5 percentage points (from 18.1% to 11.6%). Meanwhile the right-wing Coalition Party increased its proportion of the vote by 12 percentage points (from 19.1% to 31.0%).

Taking the average changes which have occurred between the parties in the different decades (Table 49), support for the SDP is observed to have actually remained highly stable in the long run, while the Coalition Party and the SKDL/Democratic Alternative have shown contrasting trends which are obviously correlated with the decline in voting activity. Although Table 49 indicates that support for the SDP has not dwindled in Helsinki, this does not mean that the party

**Table 38:**  
Voting activity and party support at parliamentary and municipal elections in Helsinki: averages of elections per decade, 1940-1980

	Voting percentage:		Party support (%):		
	Parliamentary election	Municipal election	Parliamentary election		
			Coalit.	SDP	SKDL
1940's	80	68	20	24	23
1950's	77	69	20	27	20
1960's	84	75	22	27	19
1970's	79	73	27	27	16
1980's	76	67	30	26	12

has managed to avoid the steady decrease in voting, but rather that a certain measure of abstention has caused its support to remain unchanged in relative terms and has prevented it from developing in accordance with the prospects created by the changes in social structure.

Conditions for improved political participation were particularly poor in the 1980's, as a result of which voting activity at municipal elections in Helsinki dropped by 9 percentage points in one decade (from 72.1% to 63.3%) and that in parliamentary elections by 4 percentage points (from 78.4% to 74.1%). The effect of abstention, which could be regarded as a wave of political escapism, was already pointed out in research into the municipal election of 1984. Young people living in the traditional working-class areas were found to be especially reluctant to vote, but a similar trend was also noted among those living in the suburbs and the elite areas in the city centre. This is markedly evident when comparing the presidential election of 1982 with the municipal election of 1984, since voting was exceptionally high in the former and low in the latter (Table 50; findings presented in Helsingin Sanomat 15.11.1984).



**Table 39:**  
**Voting activity (%) in Helsinki at the municipal election of 1984 and the presidential election of 1982 by area and age (sample of voting precincts; number of voters 28 000)**

Age	Elite city centre areas		Elite areas near city centre		Traditional working-class areas		Suburbs	
	1982	1984	1982	1984	1982	1984	1982	1984
18-24 .....	81	56	82	53	72	38	82	48
25-28 .....	88	59	86	60	80	53	84	62
29-34 .....	90	67	87	65	85	59	89	68
35-44 .....	93	78	91	76	83	60	91	74
45-54 .....	94	80	93	79	83	59	93	75
55-69 .....	95	80	92	82	88	73	93	81
70+ .....	85	76	85	75	79	63	83	74

\* Elite city centre areas: Kruununhaka, Ullanlinna, Eira  
 Elite areas near city centre: Munkkiniemi, Meilahti, Marjaniemi  
 Traditional working-class areas: Kallio  
 Suburbs: Käpylä, Paloheinä, Roihuvuori, Tapaninkylä, Ylämalmi

The results indicate the considerable extent to which voting activity is affected by the nature of the election itself and the candidates standing in it. The presidential election of 1982 was in a sense a direct expression of public opinion, in that the popularity of Mauno Koivisto, the leading candidate, exceeded that of the other candidates by a wide margin. In addition, appeals were made at the beginning of the campaign to exclude the possibility of a late 'dark horse' candidate emerging and to avoid the use of 'party tactics' in the electoral college. It was also characteristic of that election that emphasis was placed on the position of the leading candidate as a politician who was above conventional party politics. Mauno Koivisto's obvious connections with the working class and the political left also appealed to left-wing voters, while the 'image' that had grown up around him also appealed effectively to the large number of voters who had recently migrated to the Helsinki region, who would normally remain passive in an 'ordinary' election and show poor identification with the traditional party contrasts, gradually disengaging themselves from political activity. This resulted in an exceptional rise in the total vote (for further details, see Martikainen & Yrjönen 1983).

Correspondingly, the atmosphere of the municipal election of 1984 was characterized by a marked criticism of politics and politicians and a movement to eliminate the fringe effects that had become rooted in the Finnish political culture, particularly the

'purge of political connivance'. This resulted in a plunge in voting activity, so that participation among voters of age 18-24 years declined by 25-35 percentage points from the presidential election of 1982, depending on the area of residence. This pronounced decline in voting was also reflected in the results of the election, for by comparison with the municipal election of 1980, the SDP lost nearly 9 percentage points of its support in the traditionally working-class areas and the SKDL over 5 percentage points. This abstention favoured all the 'protest parties', the Greens, the Rural Party and certain individuals aiming to exploit the protest vote, while the Coalition Party and the Swedish People's Party managed to maintain their support the best. This indicates how changes in voting activity between elections in Helsinki are accompanied by considerable changes in party support. In addition, the left-wing parties did not manage at all to press home the advantage created by the new voting enthusiasm which had arisen at the presidential election.

On the other hand, such a drastic decline in the level of political mobilisation is difficult to comprehend, as it is particularly in Helsinki that the background factors favouring effective political socialisation have increased enormously in the past few years. This is manifested by the fact that the proportion of young people with a matriculation examination among those aged at least 15 years was 27.1% in 1987 as compared with 11.5% in 1951. This intense

growth in background factors which should increase voting activity, such as the level of education, has obviously prevented an even greater breakdown in political mobilisation. This finding supports well the assumption that political behaviour such as voting is not solely determined by the social characteristics of individuals. The political engagement of young people in particular is determined by their experiences in everyday life and their objective perception of political phenomena and procedures (Jääsaari & Martikainen 1991).

The above phenomenon is not a new one in the capital region and population centres, however, for voting activity in Finland has always been characterized by differences created by age and social inequality. The role of Helsinki was investigated by Erik Allardt and Kjetil Bruun in their survey of the parliamentary election of 1951 (Allardt & Bruun 1956), some of the figures from which have had to be combined in various ways for use in Table 51 in order to ensure comparability with the data from 1987. The latter figures are based on material provided by the Central Statistical Office of Finland and cover all inhabitants of Helsinki who are entitled to vote.

As indicated in Table 51, voting activity in Helsinki increased only in the older age-groups, from 55 years onwards, during the period of 35 years and declined by almost 10 percentage points among those under 30 years. There has indeed been a fairly constant drop in voting activity in Helsinki from one election to another, in both municipal and general elections. In

**Table 40:**  
Voting activity in Helsinki (%) at the parliamentary elections of 1951 and 1987 by age

Age	Year of election	
	1951	1987
18/21-24*	64	56
25-30	74	64
31-35	75	72
36-44	80	78
45-54	83	81
55-69	81	85
70+	65	75
<b>Total,%</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>74</b>

\* The age limit in 1951 was 21 years.

addition, the activity level at municipal elections is now approximately 10 percentage points lower than that at general elections.

The above trend has been further aggravated by a typically Finnish phenomenon, the correlation of voting activity with a number of social factors such as education, income level, socioeconomic position, language, unemployment and marital status. It is now evident that some background factors lost their significance in the interval between 1951 and 1987 while others have maintained or even reinforced their position. Such comparison is possible up to a certain point on the basis of the investigation by Allardt and Bruun. The situation in 1951 may be characterized as follows:

- The youngest voters were the most passive ones.
- Women were more passive than men in all age-groups.
- Especially young women were more passive than young men (59% vs. 70% in the age group 21-25 years).
- Married people were markedly more eager to vote than unmarried ones, the difference being greater among the men except for the youngest and oldest age-groups, in which unmarried women had a lower voting activity than unmarried men.
- Salaried staff had an approximately 10 percentage points higher voting activity than workers (84% vs. 74%, as evaluated from Table 10, page 72).
- There were no activity differences between workers, lower salaried staff and other people employed in the service sector. Women employed in the latter had the lowest activity level.
- The activity level of workers was higher in areas dominated by the working class and labour parties than in areas dominated by salaried staff and non-socialist parties.
- The voting activity of the Swedish-speaking segment of the population was higher in all age groups than that of Finnish-speakers.

According to the general notion prevailing in the early 1950's, voting was strictly governed by features indicating social position and type of living community. Contrary to all expectations, voting is now even more profoundly determined by such characteristics, supporting the assumption that abstention and discontent are related. The gap between the working class and salaried staff has widened the most, the voting percentage of the former in the age-group 18-34 years being almost 15 percentage points lower in the entire material in 1987 than that of the latter and the difference between the workers and upper salaried staff being over 25%. Political participation has thus not become any more unified but is increasingly determined by social factors, as indicated in the following table (all inhabitants of Helsinki entitled to vote, data from the Central Statistical Office of Finland):

Table 52 again supports the assumption presented earlier that voting cannot be approached as an independent phenomenon, but rather individuals interpret politics and related phenomena by reference to their own situation in life. This is particularly evident in the low voting percentages achieved by young age-groups (35%) and divorcees (25%), which suggests that voting seems to be part of the "I'm doing all right" image. In their analysis of voting in Denmark, Palle Svensson and Lise Tøgeby point out that an interpretation of the voting of young people can be largely based on how well they have integrated into society. 'Marginalization' and the severing of bonds with the employment market in particular also produce a drop in the level of political participation (Svensson & Tøgeby, 326-330).

**Table 41:**  
Voting activity (%) in Helsinki at the parliamentary election of 1987 by age, socioeconomic status (selected groups), level of education, ownership and marital status (N = 395 423)

	Age-group						Total
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-69	70+	
<b>Socioeconomic position</b>							
Entrepreneurs .....	49	67	76	82	88	87	78
Upper salaried staff .....	66	84	91	93	96	93	89
Lower salaried staff .....	54	70	81	85	89	86	76
Workers .....	42	54	67	74	81	61	63
Students .....	71	78	79	74	95	.	73
Unemployed .....	35	46	58	64	79	75	54
Pensioners .....	25	40	52	66	83	75	76
<b>Education</b>							
Comprehensive school .....	48	50	66	75	81	71	68
Lower middle grade .....	46	60	75	82	88	80	69
Higher middle grade .....	69	76	85	89	92	85	80
Lowest upper grade .....	72	81	89	91	93	84	89
University degree .....	80	88	92	94	95	90	92
<b>Ownership</b>							
Owner-occupied dwelling .....	66	76	85	87	89	78	82
Non-owner-occupied dwelling .....	48	61	68	72	77	68	65
<b>Marital status</b>							
Married .....	53	76	84	87	90	83	84
Divorced .....	25	54	65	70	75	69	68
Single .....	56	64	70	73	79	70	64
<b>Total .....</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>74</b>

**Table 42:**  
**Voting activity (%) among the age-group 18–24 years in certain voting areas in Helsinki at the parliamentary election of 1987 by socioeconomic status (N = 395 423)**

	Socioeconomic position:			Field of activity:	Total	
	Upper salaried	Lower salaried	Workers	Con- struction industry	18–24	All
<b>Elite city centre:</b>						
Ullanlinna .....	85	61	44	52	66	79
Vanha Munkkiniemi .....	59	66	47	.	71	84
Lauttasaari .....	73	55	40	42	61	79
<b>Elite areas near centre:</b>						
Länsi-Pakila .....	80	61	61	64	72	84
Tammisalo .....	61	81	.	.	81	90
<b>Suburbs:</b>						
Vuosaari .....	75	60	44	41	59	75
Tapulikaupunki .....	75	52	37	38	52	72
Itäkeskus-Marjaniemi .....	59	58	48	63	59	75
<b>Middle class:</b>						
Etelä-Haaga .....	68	53	37	18	58	77
Yliskylä .....	70	59	44	27	63	80
Pitäjänmäki .....	73	57	45	27	57	75
<b>Working class:</b>						
Kontula .....	53	55	40	42	51	71
Harju .....	60	49	39	35	49	66
Vallila .....	53	46	40	14	47	68
Roihuvuori .....	80	46	46	61	54	73
<b>'Concrete jungle':</b>						
Jakomäki .....	63	45	36	35	41	61
Vesala .....	56	48	34	38	42	60
Ala-Malmi .....	88	52	36	20	48	71
<b>Helsinki, total</b> .....	<b>66</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>74</b>

The above areal classification is based on a BMDP-KM cluster analysis of the residential areas of Helsinki on variables consisting of features indicating socioeconomic structure. The table contains those areas which characterize the above classification best.

**Elite city centre:** Areas in or close to the city centre which are characterized by relatively old housing, a fairly advanced age structure and in which the proportions of Swedish-speakers and the higher income classes are greater than the average.

**Elite areas near the centre:** Wealthy areas of the higher social classes dominated by terraced houses and private houses.

**Suburbs:** Residential areas with a fairly young population having at most an average income and educational level.

**Middle class:** Residential areas with a population which is older, wealthier and more highly educated than the average and contain a higher proportion of Swedish-speakers.

**Working class:** Residential areas occupied by workers and lower salaried staff with average or low income. The housing is relatively old and located adjacent to the city centre or in old-established areas nearby.

**'Concrete jungle':** Working-class residential areas in which levels of income and education are fairly low and the proportion of rented flats relatively high.

The exceptional nature of the situation in Helsinki is also evident in distinct areal differences in political behaviour, which are most pronounced in the young age-groups. Voting percentages among workers aged 18–34 vary from 35% to 45% in the traditional working-class areas and relatively new residential areas occupied by workers and lower salaried staff. When voting behaviour is further specified by occupational field, however, the extreme 'record lows' are seen to occur among those employed in the construction industry.

The following conclusions can be drawn on the basis of the above:

- There has been a long-term drop in the level of political mobilisation in Helsinki, with a particularly drastic change in the 1980's, in addition to which political 'disengagement' is coming to concern older age-groups than earlier.
- Abstention among the young age-groups in particular has assumed prodigious dimensions, and is further characterized by the exceptionally low voting activity of lower salaried persons and young workers in particular (as the number of young persons in the upper salaried category is quite small in some areas, no attempt is made here to interpret their voting activity).

- Pronounced areal differences occur.
- Educational level has a significant effect on the voting activity of young people, a threshold factor for the age-group 18–24 years being the matriculation examination.
- Differences in the level of political mobilization are connected with differences in social position: voting obviously reflects the image of being well-off, whereas abstention is one feature of 'marginalization'.
- A significant change concerning the determination of voting activity involves sex differences, in that the activity difference between men and women has disappeared and has gradually been reversed, since the voting activity of women in the entire material was 75% and that of men 74%. The most marked sex-related difference in the age-group 18–24 years occurred at the age of 19–20 years (women 56%, men 52%) and that in the age group 25–34 years at 31–34 years (women 74%, men 70%). Nowadays the men exceed the women in voting activity only in the age-groups above 63 years.

# V Results and conclusions

Only the most essential aspects of the results obtained will be discussed in the following. Attention will be paid first to voting activity and then to changes in party support, followed by a brief evaluation of the general significance of the results.

The following can be concluded from the trends in voting activity over the past decades:

- Public participation in elections has declined constantly since 1962 and 1966, the years when voting activity was at its peak, as indicated by the fact that the figure was nearly 10 percentage points lower at the election of 1987. Passivity has increased most markedly among the young age-groups and in the population centres.
- The 1980's in particular provided a poor starting point for the political socialisation of young adults, as a result of which there was a marked decline in voting activity especially in the population centres. The difference between the elections of 1979 and 1987 in the age-groups immediately above or below 23 years of age was almost 15 percentage points. Voting activity in the age-group 18-24 years was 60% and that in the age-group 25-29 years 67% at the election of 1987. In addition, voting passivity is coming to involve older groups of working age than earlier, although it is still quite high among those aged 55-60 years (86%). Such major differences between age-groups are typical of Finland and do not occur to such an extent in the other Scandinavian countries.
- Connections between voting activity and social structure occupy a prominent role in Finland. Voting still remains an element of the image of the 'well-off' as indicated by the fact that 95-98% of persons with a taxable income of over FIM 150,000 a year voted in 1987. A

notable feature of the comparison between the various occupational sectors is the high voting activity of persons employed in forestry and agriculture in all age-groups.

As far as young adults are concerned, those employed in the construction industry have the lowest voting activity (50%), which is close to the level for those employed in industry and commerce (52%). Apart from agriculture and forestry, voting in the age-group 18-24 years is less than 58% in all other occupations. There were only minor differences in the older age-groups, the activity level of those aged 55-69 years varying from 87% to 92%, for example.

- The activity differences connected with socioeconomic position are even more pronounced, that of the upper salaried staff, employers and entrepreneurs varying from 86% to 90% while that of the lower salaried staff is 81% and that of workers 72%.

The differences between the occupational groups are accentuated by age, in addition to which it is also notable that the voting percentage of the upper and lower salaried staff in the public sector is 4 percentage points higher than that of the corresponding staff in the private sector. The voting activity of young workers is almost 20 percentage points lower than that of the upper salaried staff and approximately 10 percentage points lower than that of the lower salaried staff.

- Education is also a significant factor contributing to the creation of activity differences. The difference between the educational groups representing the lowest and the highest levels is 30-33 percentage points in the age range 18-34 years, for example. The matriculation examination or a corresponding level of education (upper middle grade) constitutes an obvious threshold factor. The

difference between the lowest educational level and the upper middle grade in the population centres amounts to approximately 20 percentage points in the age-group under 35 years.

- The desire to vote decreases markedly as a result of unemployment, for example, i.e. the longer the unemployment period the lower the voting activity. The activity level of young people in Southern, Eastern and South-eastern Finland who have been unemployed at least one year varies from 25% to 32%.
- An interesting outcome which depicts well the social nature of voting is the close connection between marital status and voting activity. The voting activity of unmarried people is as much as 20 percentage points lower than that of married people (65% vs. 85%), while an even greater difference exists between married people and those divorced or separated in the young age-groups.
- The voting activity of the Swedish-speaking population is markedly higher than that of the Finnish-speaking majority. The former do not constitute a homogenous group, however, as they are characterized by considerable regional differences. The electoral district of Vaasa, in which the activity of all age-groups is exceptionally high, amounting to 80% even in the youngest age-groups, was the most active of the Swedish-speaking areas, while the most passive was the Åland Islands, as indicated by the results obtained for Mariehamn, the capital, in which the voting activity of the youngest age-groups was only 35%.
- Although the social determination factor in voting activity is intense and consistent, its effects are not absolute ones nor are they independent of the topical issues related to individual elections.

A good example of this is the presidential election of 1982, at which voting activity was exceptionally high with respect to the prevailing situation and a record high even in general terms, i.e. the effects of the above factors which give rise to

differences in voting activity remained unrealized or were substantially weaker. This indicates that the decline in interest in elections is not a 'pathological' phenomenon. Responsiveness to mobilization exists, but a motivating electoral setting is required to trigger it off.

- In spite of this, the anchoring of voting activity to social features is now more solid than it was 20–30 years ago. Age is a dominant factor, and its role has become more prominent. Passivity has quite obviously extended to concern more generally young people from all social groups. It is only the most intense socializing factors such as education and belonging to the Swedish-speaking minority that have maintained their activating effect on young people. The social determination of voting activity in the young age-groups has weakened in this sense and a unified behavioural model independent of social points of departure has developed within political participation.

The older age-groups are characterized by increased social differences, however, educational level being the most significant single factor, in addition to which those related to socioeconomic position and occupation are also evident. The independent role of income is a factor largely subordinate to education, for example, whereas property is a significant factor independently connected with voting activity when determined in terms of home ownership.

As the principal features of change in party support were discussed in Section III.4 above, it is only necessary here to discuss briefly the following three points in general terms:

- Trends in party support have been fairly closely connected with changes in social structures, particularly in the composition of the various social groups. The most direct benefit from social changes and the related reorganization of class and industrial structures was obtained by the Coalition Party, the expansion of support for which between the general elections

of 1970 and 1987 was mainly located in the expanding and rapidly modernizing areas. Support for the SDP has been concentrated in the cities and population centres throughout the entire post-war era, while its traditionally extensive agricultural support has correspondingly declined. The decline in support for the communists (SKDL), the urban-oriented development of support for the Coalition Party and the SDP and the movement of the Centre Party towards the role of a general party representing the rural areas have increased the political gulf between the towns and the countryside.

- The fact that the emphasis in political competition and dynamics has shifted to the urban areas manifests itself in the fact that the creation of new political groups and the distribution of their support has been increasingly oriented towards the cities and the developing areas. The creation of new parties and political groups and the fragmentation of the party system is an obvious manifestation of political changes and the increased mobility of voters, which has affected changes in party support even more markedly than the competition between the traditional major parties and the related successes and defeats. The proportion of the votes received by the major parties has decreased almost continuously since the Second World War.

Although the development of party support is closely connected with changes in social structure, it has not by any means been directly determined by these or the resulting changes in class and industrial structure. The party system and its relations with the people at large have a more complicated structure which has governed the manifestations of changes in party support. To generalize the results obtained from the analysis, the detailed classification of changes in party support based on a division of local government areas in terms of their development indicates that in addition to social position and the underlying social structures, the political activities of the public are also affected by factors such as regional political tradition, earlier political patterns, the prevailing social atmosphere

and manner of thought, examples obtained from the environment and how they are adopted in wider terms, purely local factors and situations which are in general terms random ones.

There has been a simultaneous accentuation of the boundaries between the various social groups and unification of patterns of public behaviour. The expansion of passivity and the related sharpening of the social distinction between active and passive individuals is a feature dominating voting activity and its development, due to the fact that activity is closely connected with social affluence and passivity with poverty. In the case of young people, passivity has to some extent developed into an independent general pattern of behaviour irrespective of social background. Choice of party is in turn characterized by the increased number of groups and voters in society for which all the three major parties, the SDP, Centre Party and Coalition Party are viable political alternatives. These groups and voters of course primarily represent the expanding middle classes, the creation of which is an outcome of the renewal of the occupational and industrial structure and the concentration of the population into cities and urban areas. In this sense, the major parties already largely occupy the role of general parties, although they have also reinforced their connections with the core of their supporters in line with this development. The workers' support is thus concentrated more firmly than ever in the left-wing parties, mainly the SDP, while the farmers and rural population are even more profoundly dominated by the Centre Party. Despite the political diversity of the middle classes, support for the Coalition Party is also becoming increasingly dependent on the support of this group, and of course also that of persons in a managerial position.

As far as their social background is concerned, the trend towards political passivity and that towards parties with low, unified profiles adopting a general role and concentrating on practical politics differ from each other in the manner stated above. In spite of this, there is an obvious symmetry between these two facts. The similarity of the general parties may revert



to a lack of significance for the voters and constitute a motive for political passivity.

These aspects were discussed in the introductory chapter to the present investigation in the light of problems of identification, motivation and legitimacy connected with the relations between politics and the public. The wide-scale abstention among young people which has come to affect a wider range of social backgrounds has to be interpreted as suggesting that, for them, a consciousness of the similarity and shallowness of political alternatives that primarily appeal to the well-off and educated and most often exists alongside the traditional passivity mainly connected with poverty and low social status. All this may in time cause abstention and political indifference, and even hostility to expand to other age-groups, as is undoubtedly suggested by the current findings. As social changes advance, political traditions and the renewing class and group structures cannot create links between politics and the public in such a way and as automatically as they have up to now. Also the norms of society no longer define voting as the duty of every 'loyal citizen' with the same degree of obligation as before that attendance to this duty comes to be regarded

as a value in itself. As stated in the introductory chapter, politics must be able to earn the approval of the public by its own actions and results. There are as yet no signs suggesting the nature of the forms that might replace the relations between politics and the public which have become or are becoming disengaged from their earlier foundations.

One possibility for the future is, of course, that the political mobility of the public and their tendency to change their political views will continue to increase and become permanent patterns of behaviour. In this case the changes in the balance of power between elections will become more pronounced, the fragmentation of the parties will continue, and the formation of political opinions will become dominated by major topical questions of social policy, public views on the success of the government and leading politicians and the fluctuating trends and stresses in the climate of opinion within society. This trend may increase political populism and artificial 'commercialism' as well as allowing the expansion and deepening of public discussion on matters of social policy and the reinforcement of democracy in the traditional sense.

# VI Material and methods

## On the use of Logit models

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It is unrealistic to assume that the variation in any dependent quantity to be explained, in this case voting, can be accounted for by one independent variable only, but rather the effect of factors such as education must be assumed to vary, for instance, among the age-groups and between men and women. Thus an attempt must be made to point out the effect of common variation among a number of factors on the phenomenon under investigation. The information provided by ordinary cross-tabulations will then become quite difficult to interpret, however, and it will be almost impossible to estimate the strength of the effects of various separate variables in particular on the basis of cross-tabulations only.

Control over a phenomenon which consists of a number of factors can often be facilitated by converting it into a mathematical model. In this case the model is employed to explain the way the given background variables affect the distribution of voting in a multi-dimensional table. The high number of observations ( $N = 3\ 754\ 641$ ) allows for simultaneous control of numerous factors without resulting in too few observations in any variable combination category.

If the probability of voting in category  $i$  is denoted by  $p_i$ , then  $1-p_i$  denotes the likelihood of abstention. Correspondingly, the regression model accounting for the probability of voting will be:

$$p_i = a + b_1x_1 + b_2c_2 + \dots + b_px_p,$$

in which  $x$  stands for the explanatory factors and  $b$  for the coefficients indicating their effects, while  $a$  is a constant mainly depen-

dent on the size of the material. An explanatory model of this kind does not function very well, however, as the probability, estimated in terms of relative frequency, is restricted to between 0 and 1, which means that its prediction must also remain between these boundaries. It is thus more natural to examine the risk ratio  $p_i/(1-p_i)$ . If  $p_i = 0.5$ , i.e. voting and abstention are equally probable, the ratio will be 1. If abstention is more probable than voting, the ratio will be below one and in the reverse case more than one. As the theoretical range of variation for the regression prediction is from  $-\infty$  to  $\infty$  a natural solution would be to express the risk ratio in logarithmic form. This will also allow examination of the relative changes and express the fact that changes occur at a slower rate at the extremes of the above range, i.e. nearer to 0 and 1.

The above procedure, i.e. use of the logarithm of the risk ratio, corresponds well to the actual logic behind voting decisions. If an individual is most likely not going to vote, marginal changes in the relevant background factors will do little to increase his chances of voting. Correspondingly, if an individual is highly likely to vote, marginal changes in factors either promoting or discouraging voting will not affect the likelihood of his doing so to any great extent. In this sense, not all voters are affected by background factors in the same way (additively), but the effect is also dependent on the location of the individual on the axis 'abstention probable' – 'voting probable'. It is thus justified to apply logistic regression, the equation for which is:

$$\log(p_i/(1-p_i)) = a + b_1x_1 + b_2c_2 + \dots + b_px_p.$$

The analysis was carried out using GLIM software. The results indicate the effects of the various factors in terms of quotients, i.e. odds ratios, which compare the risk ratios calculated in different classes. The cells of the multi-dimensional cross-tabulation were used as data units.

The empirical parts of the investigation compare the likelihood of voting in the various groups. To illustrate this, the following table can be provided to compare voting among men and women, for example. The symbols used are M for male, F for female, a for the number of men voting, b for the number of women voting, c for the number of men abstaining and d for the number of women abstaining.

	M	F
Voting	a	b
Abstaining	c	d

The above now allows calculation of the relationship between voting and sex by defining the relation between the risk ratios mentioned above, i.e.  $(a/c)/(b/d)$  or  $[(a * d)/(c * b)]$ . If  $a = 20$ , for example,  $b = 15$ ,  $c = 25$  and  $d = 30$ , then  $a/c = 0.8$ ,  $b/d = 0.5$  and  $(a/c)/(b/d) = 1.6$ , which would mean that the likelihood of voting is 1.6 times higher for men than for women. The example applies, of course, only to a situation with one explanatory variable.

## Material

Individuals who voted or abstained at the general election of 1987 constituted the basic target population for the current survey. Preceded by an extensive planning period, the present investigation became topical as a result of the low voting percentage in this election and the availability of the 1985 census data in Autumn 1987. In addition, information was needed on individuals who had voted at the election concerned, which was obtained by requesting access to the electoral registers of the local election committees.

Finnish citizens residing in Finland on 17.11.1985, i.e. the objects of the 1985 census, formed the material for the present investigation. The basic target population was obtained in the following way: all individuals aged under 18 years on 31.12.1986 were excluded from the material, as well as those deceased by that time and all foreigners. This means that the target population does not correspond exactly to the electoral list, since the local election committees do not have up-to-date data on factors such as deaths as are available afterwards from the appropriate registers.

The investigation was carried out by selecting those background parameters for the target population from the census material of 1985 which were most essential with respect to voting activity. The resulting file was then supplemented with data on voting or abstention by individuals, linked to the file by means of social security numbers.

The following data were included in the investigation: voted/abstained in 1987, age on 31.12.1986, sex, marital status, language, place of birth, last date of moving, place of residence on 17.11.1985, polling district, status of family, size of household, type of dwelling, possession of dwelling (rented/owner-occupied), household amenities, size of dwelling, primary economic activity, occupational position, socioeconomic status, field of activity, full-time/part-time work, duration of unemployment in months, education, type of local government district (urban/rural), electoral district, household income decile and personal taxable income (state taxation).

As stated above, the number of those entitled to vote as obtained from the electoral registers does not entirely correspond to the target population defined here, but the difference is so small that it is insignificant from the point of view of the investigation. The difference between the number entitled to vote and the size of the target population over the whole country was less than 3000.

Since the census was carried out on 17.11.1985 and the election took place on 15.-16.3.1987, i.e. 1 year and 4 months later, the background variables derived from the census data pre-date the election by just

over a year. This is of no practical significance, however, for as the material is an extensive one, errors of the above kind usually cancel each other out. Users of the statistical data should nevertheless note that some of the items, such as occupation, employment or primary activity, may have changed in the young age-groups in particular.

The current material included data on 3.75 million persons entitled to vote, i.e. practically all enfranchised Finnish citizens of age 18 years at the time of the election of 1987 who were registered as resident in the country at the time.



# Appendix

## Results of parliamentary elections 1945–1991

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The following tables present the results of the postwar parliamentary elections. The figures show the percentages of the vote (valid ballot papers) received by the parties. The Official Statistics of Finland series XXIX A was used as the source. The data are presented separately for urban and rural areas, the classification reflecting the situation at the time of the election. From 1945 to 1975, urban areas are grouped together with what used to be known as market towns.

The tables show only the latest names of the political parties as follows:

1. Democratic League of the People of Finland (SKDL)
2. Social Democratic Party of Finland (SDP)
3. 1945–62: Agrarian Party  
1966–83: Centre Party (Kesk.)
4. National Coalition Party (Kok.)
5. Swedish People's Party in Finland (RKP)
6. 1945–48: National Progressive Party  
1951–62: Finnish People's Party  
1966–: Liberal Party (LKP)  
1983: in conjunction with the Centre Party
7. Social Democratic Union of Workers and Small Farmers (TPSL)
8. 1962: Small Holders  
1966: Small Holders' Party of Finland  
1970–: Finnish Rural Party (SMP)
9. Christian League of Finland (SKL)
10. 1975–79: Unification Party of the Finnish People  
1983: Union for Democracy (KVL)
11. Other
12. Greens

	SKDL (Comm.) <sup>1</sup>			SDP			Centre Party <sup>2 3</sup>			Coalition Party		
	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas
1945	23.5	28.2	23.8	25.1	25.9	24.9	21.3	2.1	26.8	15.0	20.4	11.9
1948	20.0	24.0	20.2	26.3	30.0	25.2	24.2	1.7	31.8	17.1	23.3	12.9
1951	21.6	25.3	20.0	26.5	33.1	23.5	23.2	1.8	35.5	14.6	19.5	10.6
1954	21.6	24.2	20.3	26.2	32.6	23.0	24.1	2.0	37.1	12.8	17.6	9.4
1958	23.2	26.4	22.0	23.2	29.2	20.2	23.1	2.1	36.3	15.3	20.6	10.4
1962	22.0	24.3	20.8	19.5	25.5	15.6	23.0	3.7	36.5	15.0	21.2	9.9
1966	21.2	22.7	20.2	27.2	34.3	21.4	21.2	4.6	35.8	13.8	17.9	9.5
1970	16.6	18.2	14.9	23.4	28.9	17.7	17.1	5.4	29.2	18.0	23.6	12.3
1972	17.0	18.8	14.9	25.8	31.5	19.0	16.4	5.4	29.4	17.6	22.2	12.1
1975	18.9	20.5	16.4	24.9	28.9	19.1	17.6	7.9	31.4	18.4	22.1	13.3
1979	17.9	19.3	15.6	23.9	27.3	18.8	17.3	8.5	30.3	21.7	25.1	16.7
1983	13.5	14.4	11.8	26.7	29.9	21.6	17.6	10.3	29.5	22.1	25.1	17.5
1987	13.6*	14.5*	12.3*	24.1	27.1	19.4	17.6	9.7	30.3	23.1	26.4	17.9
1991	10.1	10.7	9.0	22.1	24.9	17.8	24.8	16.2	38.6	19.3	22.4	14.4

	RKP <sup>4</sup>			LKP <sup>5</sup>			TPSL			SMP		
	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas
1945	7.9	11.9	7.2	5.2	10.1	3.3	.	.	.	.	.	.
1948	7.7	12.3	6.9	3.9	8.2	2.3	.	.	.	.	.	.
1951	7.6	9.5	6.6	5.7	10.0	3.0	.	.	.	.	.	.
1954	7.0	8.7	6.0	7.9	14.2	4.0	.	.	.	.	.	.
1958	6.7	7.7	6.0	5.9	9.8	3.3	1.7	3.0	1.0	.	.	.
1962	6.4	7.5	5.8	6.3	10.3	3.5	4.4	5.4	3.7	2.2	0.4	3.4
1966	6.0	6.8	5.3	6.5	9.7	3.5	2.6	3.2	2.1	1.0	0.2	1.8
1970	5.7	6.1	5.2	5.9	8.3	3.5	1.4	1.6	1.1	10.5	6.4	14.8
1972	5.4	5.6	5.1	5.2	7.0	3.0	1.0	1.1	0.8	9.2	5.6	13.3
1975	5.0	4.9	5.1	4.3	5.7	2.5	.	.	.	3.6	2.5	5.2
1979	4.2	4.3	4.1	3.7	4.7	2.2	.	.	.	4.6	3.7	5.8
1983	4.6	4.6	4.6	.	.	.	.	.	.	9.7	9.3	10.4
1987	5.3	5.3	5.2	1.0	1.2	0.6	.	.	.	6.3	5.5	7.7
1991	5.5	5.5	5.3	0.8	0.9	0.5	.	.	.	4.8	4.5	5.4

	SKL			Greens <sup>6</sup>			Other		
	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas	Whole country	Urban areas	Rural areas
1945	.	.	.	.	.	.	2.0	1.4	2.1
1948	.	.	.	.	.	.	0.8	0.5	0.7
1951	.	.	.	.	.	.	0.8	0.8	0.8
1954	.	.	.	.	.	.	0.4	0.7	0.2
1958	.	.	.	.	.	.	0.9	1.2	0.8
1962	.	.	.	.	.	.	1.2	1.7	0.8
1966	.	.	.	.	.	.	0.5	0.6	0.4
1970	1.1	1.2	1.0	.	.	.	0.2	0.2	0.2
1972	2.5	2.8	2.3	.	.	.	.	.	.
1975	3.3	3.4	3.2	.	.	.	4.0	4.0	3.9
1979	4.8	4.9	4.7	.	.	.	1.9	2.2	1.8
1983	3.0	3.1	2.9	.	.	.	2.8	3.5	1.8
1987	2.6	2.7	2.5	4.0	5.0	2.5	2.4	2.9	1.7
1991	3.1	3.1	2.9	6.8	8.5	4.2	2.7	3.2	1.9

\* Includes votes received by the Democratic Alternative Party (whole country 4.2%, urban 4.8%, rural 3.4%)

1 In 1991, Left Wing Alliance.

2 Up to 1962, Agrarian Party.

3 Figures for 1983 include the Liberal Party.

4 Figures for 1948–1975 include the votes of the Coalition of Åland.

5 Up to 1948, National Progressive Party; 1951–1962, Finnish People's Party.

In 1983, in conjunction with the Centre Party.

6 Not organized as a party until after 1987.

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**Abstract**  
Voting and political parties, the cornerstones of a representative democracy, have been subjected to critical evaluation in recent public discussion.

The present study – carried out by Tuomo Martikainen and Risto Yrjönen, researchers at the Department of Political Science in the University of Helsinki, in conjunction with Statistics Finland – discusses voting and party preference from the point of view of their socio-economic background and their connections with social change.

Based on unique Statistics Finland data files and containing a number of new results, the book makes an important contribution to the discussion of the state of Finnish democracy.

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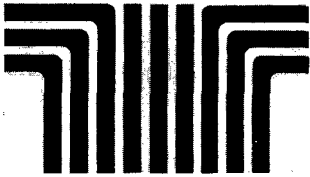
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# Voting, parties and social change in Finland

Tuomo Martikainen – Risto Yrjönen

Voting and political parties, the cornerstones of a representative democracy, have been subjected to much critical evaluation in public discussions in recent times.



The present investigation compiled by Tuomo Martikainen and Risto Yrjönen, researchers at the Department of Political Science in the University of Helsinki, in conjunction with the Central Statistical Office of Finland provides a detailed account of the social background to voting and party preference and their connections with the changes that have been taking place in society.

This book is based on unique material obtained from the Statistics Finland. It provides a wealth of new results and makes an important up-to-date contribution to discussions about the state of Finnish democracy.

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