

International migration of skilled persons from Finland

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Introduction

Emigration alters the population structure of Finland's regions. Here emigration is discussed, not only of persons born in Finland, but also of immigrants. For an immigrant this could involve either a return to the original country or migration to yet another. Finland's balance of international migration from 1988 to 2006 has been positive, but with net losses of Finnish citizens since the first half of the 1990s. Substantially more Finnish citizens have left than expatriates have returned. The reverse is true of foreign citizens who

come to Finland, which is why the total balance of international migration is positive. The net loss of Finnish citizens was 811 in 2006 (Table 1).

Currently, most Finns decide to live abroad for the sake of studies, work, and life-experience, and intend that the stay will be temporary. Plans to live permanently abroad are often due to marriage. Retired persons constitute their own emigrant group: many live abroad for only part of the year and are known as seasonal migrants.

This article discusses worldwide destinations and characteristics of emigrants who are moving from Finland. Additional information is sought about expatriate-Finns, i.e. whether they have plans to move back to Finland. The analysis is based on results from the recent ESF-project conducted at the Institute of Migration (Heikkilä & Pikkarainen 2008), on the most recent data from Statistics Finland, and on other data purchased from Statistics Finland.

Emigration flows

In all, 12 443 persons emigrated from Finland in 2007. The majority, or two-thirds, of the moves were to other EU member states (Figure 1). Of these, Sweden has been undeniably the most preferred, having attracted 2 833 migrants. Great Britain, Estonia, Germany and Spain have followed. Of the other European countries, Norway, Switzerland and Russia stand

Table 1. International migration of Finnish and foreign citizens in 1988–2006 in Finland.

	Finnish citizens			Foreign citizens			All citizens
	Immigration	Emigration	Net migration	Immigration	Emigration	Net migration	Total net migration
1988	6 473	7 312	-839	3 247	1 135	2 112	1 273
1989	7 013	6 463	550	4 206	911	3 295	3 845
1990	7 066	5 539	1 527	6 492	938	5 554	7 081
1991	5 763	4 867	896	13 238	1 117	12 121	13 017
1992	4 204	4 570	-366	10 350	1 485	8 865	8 499
1993	3 921	4 887	-966	10 874	1 518	9 356	8 390
1994	3 978	7 138	-3 160	7 633	1 534	6 099	2 939
1995	4 877	7 441	-2 564	7 345	1 516	5 829	3 265
1996	5 755	7 578	-1 823	7 539	3 009	4 530	2 707
1997	5 417	8 272	-2 855	8 147	1 582	6 565	3 710
1998	5 852	9 126	-3 274	8 340	1 691	6 649	3 375
1999	6 807	9 966	-3 159	7 937	2 000	5 937	2 778
2000	7 785	10 183	-2 398	9 110	4 128	4 982	2 584
2001	7 918	10 996	-3 078	11 037	2 157	8 880	5 802
2002	8 141	10 134	-1 993	9 972	2 757	7 215	5 222
2003	8 406	9 805	-1 399	9 432	2 278	7 154	5 755
2004	8 822	9 470	-648	11 511	4 186	7 325	6 677
2005	8 611	9 737	-1 126	12 774	2 632	10 142	9 016
2006	8 583	9 394	-811	13 868	2 713	11 155	10 344

out. Nearly 85 % of the moves to North America were to the United States. The common destinations of Asia have been China and India, where Finnish companies have invested in recent years. There has been less migration to other continents. Young adults (aged 25–34) have moved abroad most frequently in 2007. Their share is one-third and their absolute number 4 269 persons. Women have been the slight majority in this age group.

A growing number of emigrants

In this section, emigration structure is examined using gross-stream data obtained from Statistics Finland. The data include all persons of working age (15–74 years) who had moved from Finland either in 1993 or in 2002. In 1993, when the country was undergoing a recession, working-aged emigrants numbered 4 725 (Table 2). Of these, over one third left from the Uusimaa county and of these, almost one thousand left from Helsinki itself. Varsinais-Suomi, Ostrobothnia and Pirkanmaa were the next most frequent counties of departure. Relative to the area's population staying in place, emigrants were most common in the Åland Islands (1,0 %), Ostrobothnia (0,3 %), Uusimaa (0,2 %) and Lapland (0,2 %). Large regional centers such as Helsinki, Turku, Tampere and Oulu have high emigration rates. On the other hand, Etelä-Savo and Kainuu had the lowest ratios of emigrants to persons staying in place.

Emigration of the working-aged doubled from 1993 to 2002: by the end of this period, already 9 572 emigrants were within that age range. The largest share, which is now nearly one-half, had left from Uusimaa, and those who departed Helsinki represented over one-quarter of the working-aged emigrants. Varsinais-Suomi, Pirkanmaa and Northern Ostrobothnia followed the capital area, but with significantly lower readings. In 2002, relative to the county population staying in place, emigrants were most common in the Åland Islands (1,8 %), Uusimaa (0,4 %), Ostrobothnia (0,4 %) and Lapland (0,4 %). The regional centers also

continued to be prominent emigration areas. Relative to the populations staying in place, emigration was rarest in Satakunta, Kainuu and Southern Ostrobothnia.

Next emigration of 2004 according to nationality and county of departure is examined, the absolute number of emigrants being 13 656 persons. Finnish citizens represented 69 % of the total emigrants, numbering 9 470 persons. A substantial share of the Finnish citizens left from Uusimaa (42 %) and the next most often from Varsinais-Suomi and from Pirkanmaa (both 8 %). Citizens of the other Nordic countries represented only 4 % of the total emigrants. Emigrants within that group were mainly Swedish (71 %) and about one in three have left from Uusimaa; their next most important county of departure was the Åland Islands. Citizens of the so-called old EU-12-countries made up 7 % of those who moved away in 2004, and included mostly Britons, Germans and French citizens. Uusimaa was their most common county of departure. Some Britons moved from Varsinais-Suomi, or 32 persons. Citizens of EU-10 countries represented 6 % of the emigration. This group was largely (69 %) Estonian; the next most common citizenship was Hungarian. Estonians left chiefly from Uusimaa, their next most common county of departure having

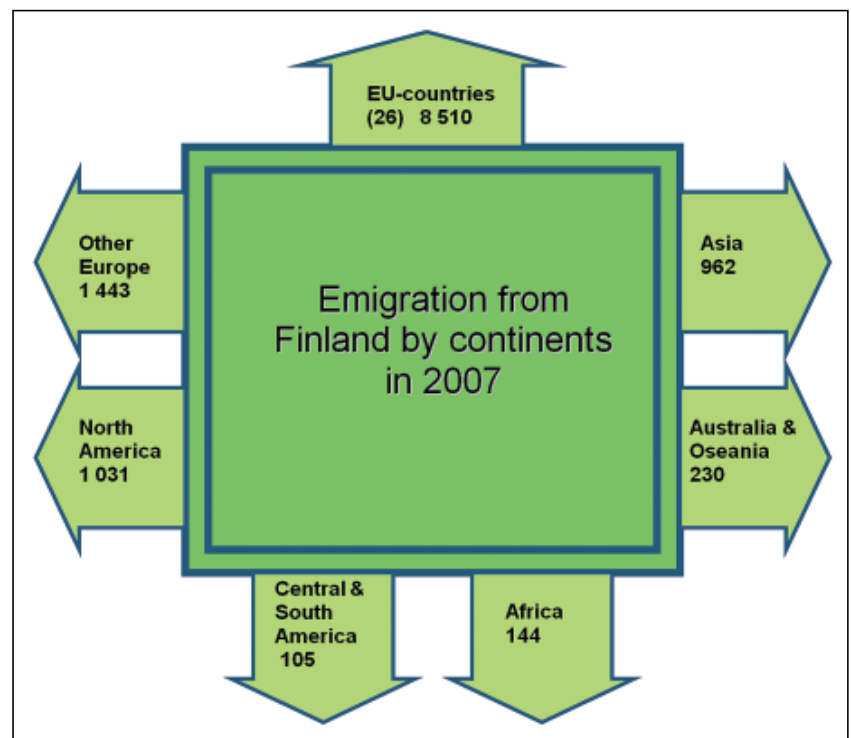


Figure 1. Emigrants from Finland to foreign countries in 2007, by continent (Statistics Finland 2008).

Table 2. Counties departed by emigrants in 1993 and in 2002 (Data: Statistics Finland).

Year 1993	Persons	%	Year 2002	Persons	%
Uusimaa	1 829	38,7	Uusimaa	4 195	43,8
Helsinki	988	20,9	Helsinki	2 656	27,8
Varsinais-Suomi	346	7,3	Varsinais-Suomi	730	7,6
Turku	191	4,0	Turku	414	4,3
Ostrobothnia	344	7,3	Pirkanmaa	621	6,5
Pirkanmaa	330	7,0	Tampere	404	4,2
Tampere	207	4,4	Northern Ostrobothnia	583	6,1
Lapland	290	6,1	Oulu	356	3,7
Northern Ostrobothnia	207	4,4	Ostrobothnia	518	5,4
Oulu	99	2,1	Lapland	512	5,4
Central Finland	175	3,7	Central Finland	360	3,8
Åland Islands	172	3,6	Åland Islands	320	3,3
Satakunta	127	2,7	Päijät-Häme	277	2,9
Päijät-Häme	126	2,7	Pohjois-Savo	258	2,7
Pohjois-Savo	120	2,5	Southern Karelia	178	1,9
Kymenlaakso	108	2,3	Satakunta	157	1,6
Kanta-Häme	91	1,9	Kymenlaakso	139	1,5
Southern Ostrobothnia	84	1,8	Etelä-Savo	127	1,3
Northern Karelia	82	1,7	Northern Karelia	121	1,3
Southern Karelia	78	1,7	Kanta-Häme	119	1,2
Itä-Uusimaa	78	1,7	Itä-Uusimaa	118	1,2
Etelä-Savo	54	1,1	Southern Ostrobothnia	97	1,0
Central Ostrobothnia	50	1,1	Central Ostrobothnia	83	0,9
Kainuu	34	0,7	Kainuu	59	0,6
Kajaani	13	0,3	Kajaani	25	0,3
Counties total	4 725	100,0	Counties total	9 572	100,0

been Varsinais-Suomi. Citizens of other European countries accounted for less than 3 % of the emigration, of which Russians were the majority (68 %). Many left from Uusimaa, but also from Kymenlaakso, Varsinais-Suomi and Päijät-Häme.

Citizens of African countries have made up 3 % of the 2004 emigrants. About 53 % of this group were Somali and they moved mainly from Uusimaa. About 3 % of the total emigrants were Asian and most often, Chinese, Indian and Japanese citizens. For these groups as well, Uusimaa was the main county of departure. Some Chinese citizens left from Varsinais-Suomi and from Ostrobothnia. The share of North Americans among the emigrants was 2 %, U.S. citizens representing 84 % of this group. Aside from their main area of departure Uusimaa, U.S. citizens also

left from Northern Ostrobothnia, from Varsinais-Suomi and from Pirkanmaa. Very few of the 2004 emigrants (0,4 %) were citizens of South American countries. Persons in this small group were often Brazilian and left mainly from Uusimaa and from Kymenlaakso. Another small fraction (0,4 %) were from Oceania; almost all, or 53 persons, were citizens of Australia. They moved most often from Uusimaa, followed by Varsinais-Suomi.

A well-educated group

Of the 1993 emigrants, nearly half had primary education, secondary education belonged to slightly more than one-third, and the higher-educated represented less than one-fifth. By 2002 there had been a rise in emigrants' education level, as those with primary education had fallen to one-third and the share of higher-educated persons had correspondingly risen to one-third (Table 3). As

before, one in three had secondary education. Examining more closely the education of those emigrants who had left in 2002, one finds that the most common studies of those with lower higher education were technology, health and social care, as well as business and social sciences. Of those with upper higher education who had left, one in three had been trained in business and social sciences, and slightly over one-fourth in technology. The most common fields among those with doctoral education were natural sciences as well as health and social care, followed by technology.

Persons who moved abroad in 2002 had on average a slightly higher education level than had two other groups of that time: the population staying in place and the country-internal migrants. Thirty-two percent of emigrants had higher education, in contrast to 28

Table 3. Education level of emigrants, of country-internal migrants, and of the population staying in place in 2002 (Data: Statistics Finland).

Year 2002	Emigrants		Country-internal migrants		Population staying in place	
	Persons	%	Persons	%	Persons	%
Primary education	3 306	34,5	16 824	19,6	1 348 465	35,6
Secondary education	3 204	33,5	44 679	52,0	1 477 165	38,9
Lowest higher education	943	9,9	8 098	9,4	494 092	13,0
Lower higher education	812	8,5	8 078	9,4	219 453	5,8
Upper higher education	1141	11,9	7 818	9,1	231 381	6,1
Doctoral education	166	1,7	482	0,5	24 050	0,6
Education total	9 572	100,0	85 979	100,0	3 794 606	100,0

percent of country-internal migrants and 26 percent of the population staying in place. The emigrant group included the smallest absolute number of persons with doctoral education (166), but this was the largest doctoral-educated share of any of the three groups.

For the well-educated, the case is often “target migration”, whereby emigration speeds up the progress of one’s career. More common among the less educated is so-called “forced migration” motivated by unemployment in the country of departure and by the hope of finding work in the new country. The migration flows from Finland consist largely of young and well-educated people: of emigrants between ages 25 and 29 for instance, 38 % had higher education and 37 % secondary education. Turning to the 30–34-year-olds, it is found that already a clear majority had higher education (47 %) in contrast to secondary education (24 %). In addition, already 47 persons with doctoral education fall within that emigrant group. Koikkalainen (2008: 36) has observed that men seem to move more often on grounds of work (33 %) and women on grounds of love (37 %).

A range of qualifications

Among the employed who had moved abroad in 1993, the most common economic sectors during residence in Finland were trade (20 %), finance, insurance, real estate and business activities (11 %), and education and research (10 %). Turning to the employed persons who had emigrated in 2002, it is found that the most common fields of employment had not changed: they had worked in trade (15 %), in finance, insurance, real estate and business activities (14 %), and in education

and research (9 %). There has been a rise in mobility from the various economic sectors; over 600 left our country’s trade sector, a slight majority of them women. The rise in emigration volume has affected various economic fields. For example, Finland’s often-discussed health sector decreased by 353 persons in 2002, an amount three times greater than in 1993. Men have continued to be the majority of emigrants who had worked in the following sectors: construction (90 %), manufacture of machinery and equipment (87 %) and manufacture of transport equipment (87 %). Women have been the majority of social care (85 %) and health care (80 %) emigrant workers.

Are expatriate-Finns willing to return migrate?

The young and educated are prominent among the emigrants from Finland, and this development skews population structure as long as Finland does not receive a corresponding number of returnees. The increase in moves shows that general mobility is on the rise, but for Finland it is essential that net international migration somehow increase and that Finnish citizens’ balance of migration change to positive once again.

Based on the responses to a questionnaire addressed to Finnish expatriates by Institute of Migration, 92 % of Finns who live abroad had not planned the length of their stay in advance. Many are currently married to foreigners and doubt that the spouse could adapt to or find work in Finland as easily as they have in the foreign country. Respondents often mention having left with a specific amount of time in mind though the stay has indeed been prolonged to many years. If a good

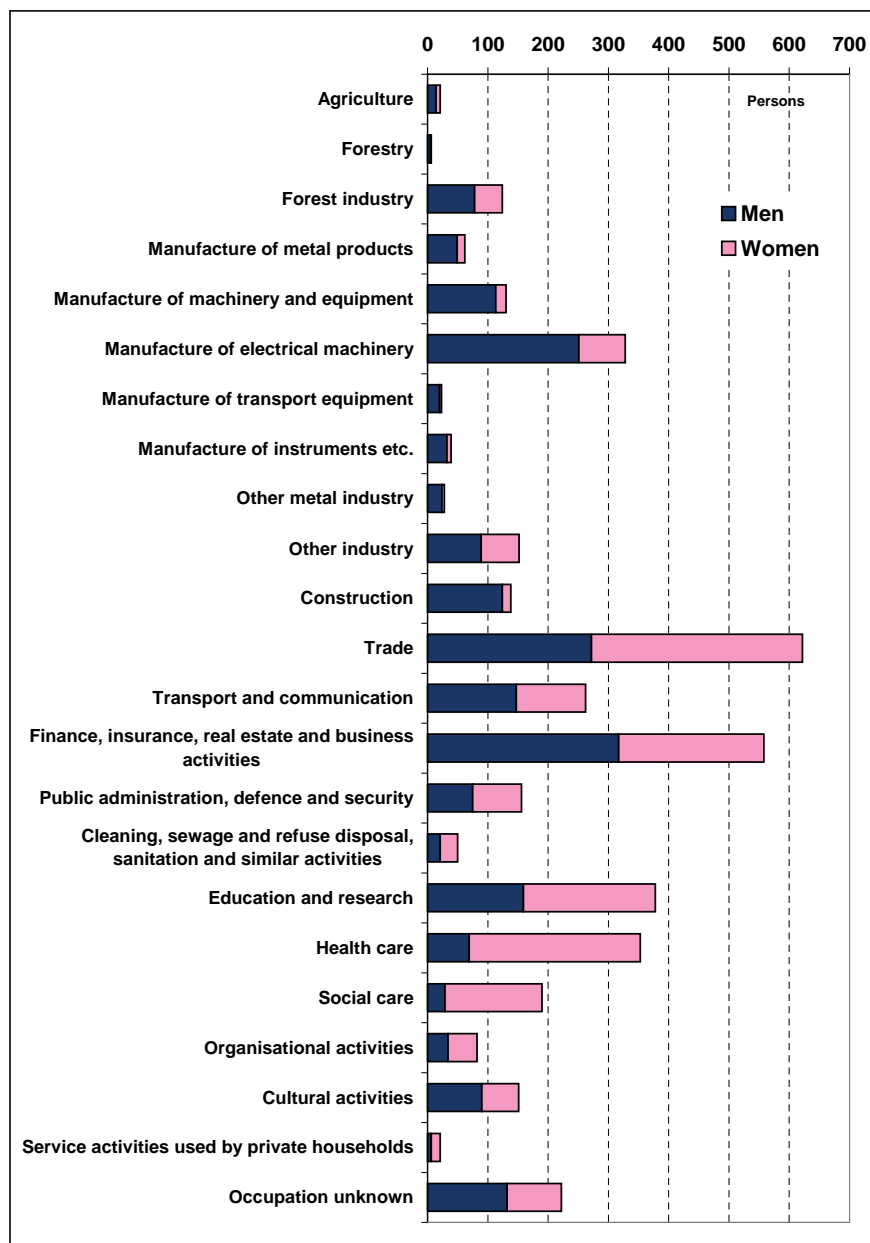


Figure 2. Economic sectors of employed emigrants in Finland in 2002 (Data: Statistics Finland).

well-paid work here that corresponded to their education.

As the Finnish population ages, some sectors already have a shortage of labour. When an expatriate returns to the country of birth, she or he often brings a foreign spouse. Therefore, benefits to the labour market include not only the returning Finn's own human capital acquired abroad, but also additional labour brought into the country. For return migration to be more appealing to expatriate-Finns, our country needs to consider the expatriate's entire family and their various necessities.

job is found abroad, the emigrant may, at least during the working years, be unwilling to return.

Finnish expatriates were also asked to identify the countries in which they were most inclined to work. Most often, they mentioned Finland as the most appealing; the United Kingdom, Sweden, and the United States followed. A 62 % majority of those willing to return have based their plans specifically on work. This suggests that Finland has not permanently lost her skilled citizens to other countries; the situation is one of brain circulation (see Williams 2005: 441–442; Koikkalainen 2008: 36). One in three considered spending their retirement years in Finland, and a few planned to study here. Some respondents had left Finland precisely because they could not find interesting,

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