

Summary

This study shows that the identity of Finns draws not only on near friends and family, but also on the idea of being Finnish, on mother tongue, and on education and work. These factors are important to more than 80 percent of the Finns, and they have minor importance to only a few percent. Finns have a very uniform identity regardless of gender, age, domicile or, for instance, political opinion.

Also immediate surroundings (64 %), municipality of residence (73 %) and region (65 %) are important to most people, but Finnish identities also largely include a Nordic identity (75 %) and a European one (71 %). There is no contradiction between cosmopolitan and local.

Although the overall picture is surprisingly uniform, there are some interesting differences between population groups. Age is one of the factors that best explain differences in identity. Young people put more than average weight to friends, education and leisure activities, whereas those above 60 emphasize work. University graduates esteem education more than others. The results indicate that especially with regards to work there is a generation gap: younger generations do not value work as much as the large cohorts of the late 1940s do.

Most people, on the other hand, do not stress religion, political stance or social class. Only a third define their identity through religion or political views. Social class bears importance to a little more than 40 percent.

Although Finns cannot be described as very class-oriented, a clear majority (60 %) in the upper-middle and upper class define themselves significantly through social class. Class identity is especially strong among those who have grown up in an upper-middleclass family and continue to identify with that class. Those identifying themselves with the middle class or working class put less stress on class.

Childhood surroundings bear a special importance for those who have grown up in a scarcely populated rural area or downtown in a bigger city. The extent of identification with the municipality of residence – whether rural or urban – does not correlate with the size of the municipality.

Territorially defined identities also link to political affiliation. Regional identities clearly have the highest importance to supporters of the Centre Party. This shows especially in the attachment to childhood environment, the area from where the family comes and the historical Finnish tribes. Regional identities are least important to the supporters of the Greens and the Left Alliance.

Regional attachment varies much with the province. More than average emphasis on regional identity is seen among those living in North Carelia (80 %), South Carelia (77 %), South Ostrobothnia (79 %), Ostrobothnia (75 %) and Lapland (72 %). On the other hand, Päijänne Tavastia (56 %) is the clearest example of a province with a weak identity.

Regional identity also connects to how people identify with the historical Finnish tribes. Little less than half of the population cherishes a tribal identity. Carelian, Ostrobothnian and Savonian identities are strong: 73 percent of South Carelians and 72 of North Carelians feel that they belong to the Carelian tribe. In Savonia, 71 percent of both South and North Savonians identify themselves with the Savonian tribe. With 75 percent, the South Ostrobothnian identity also is very strong.

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