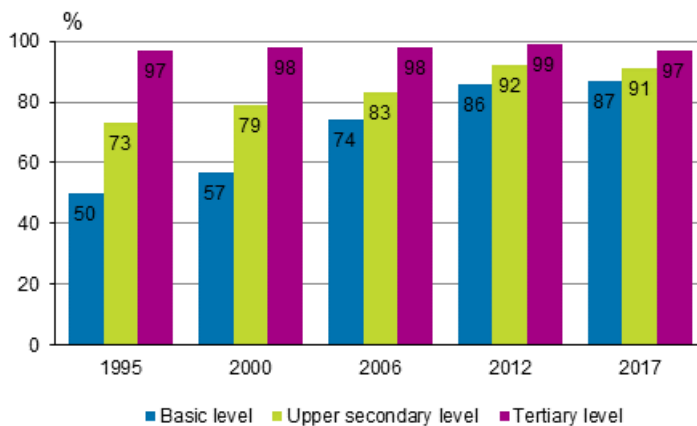


Participation in adult education 2017

At least one foreign language is spoken by 93 per cent of the population aged 18 to 64

More than nine out of ten Finns aged 18 to 64 said they knew at least one foreign language. The number is the same as five years before. The dependency between the level of education and knowledge of foreign languages has decreased and language skills have increased from 1995 most among those with merely basic level qualifications, the share having grown by 37 percentage points by 2017. This information derives from Statistics Finland's Adult Education Survey 2017.

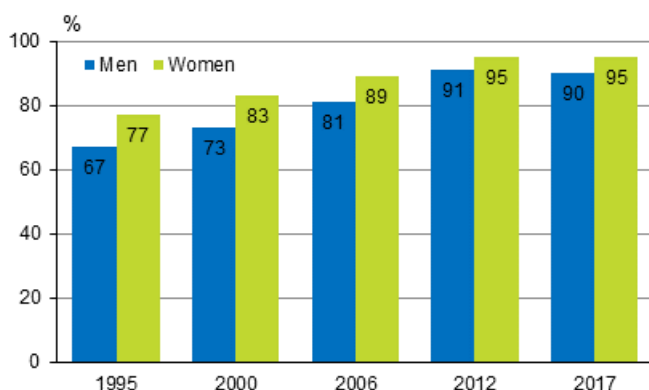
Persons with knowledge of at least one foreign language by level of education in 1995, 2000, 2006, 2012 and 2017 (population aged 18 to 64), %



Those with longer basic education knew foreign languages more often than those with shorter basic education. When nearly all of those with tertiary level degrees knew at least one foreign language, this was so for 91 per cent of those with upper secondary level qualifications and for 87 per cent of persons with basic level qualifications.

The dependency between the level of education and knowledge of foreign languages has decreased considerably in 22 years. During that time, those with only basic level qualifications have increased their language skills most, by 37 percentage points. The language skills of those with upper secondary level qualifications also increased steadily from 1995 to 2012, by nearly 20 percentage points. In 2017, the difference between the language skills of those with basic level qualifications and tertiary level qualifications was only 10 percentage points.

Persons with knowledge of at least one foreign language by gender in 1995, 2000, 2006, 2012 and 2017 (population aged 18 to 64), %



Knowledge of languages grew from 1995 until 2012, when 93 per cent of the population aged 18 to 64 said they knew some foreign language at least a little. In 1995 and 2000, ten percentage points fewer men than women said they knew foreign languages. The difference had halved by 2017. In 2017, there were as many foreign language speakers as five years ago, 93 per cent of the population aged 18 to 64.

Nearly all persons aged under 45 knew at least one foreign language (96 to 97 per cent). Among older people, 92 per cent of those aged 45 to 54 knew at least one language and 83 per cent of those aged 55 to 64.

The most spoken foreign languages were in the order English, Swedish and German. Nine out of ten persons aged 18 to 64 said they knew English, seven out of ten Swedish and three out of ten German.

The respondents of the Adult Education Survey were asked about their native language and what foreign languages they knew. They were also requested to assess their level of language skills from the classification given to them. The lowest knowledge level meant understanding a few words and phrases, the highest level an almost perfect command of a language.

Contents

Tables

Appendix tables

Appendix table 1. Knowledge of foreign languages and number of languages known in 2017 (population aged 18 to 64).....	4
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Appendix tables

Appendix table 1. Knowledge of foreign languages and number of languages known in 2017 (population aged 18 to 64)

	Knows languages	Number of known languages (share of the population)					Total		
	Yes	1 language	2 language	3 language	At least 4 languages	Does not know			
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	N	
Age									
18–24	97	11	42	26	18	3	100	463 250	
25–34	97	13	36	26	22	3	100	699 460	
35–44	96	16	31	29	20	4	100	663 695	
45–54	92	15	32	27	18	8	100	724 870	
55–64	83	18	26	22	17	17	100	739 770	
Sex									
Men	90	19	34	23	14	10	100	1 666 069	
Women	95	10	32	28	24	5	100	1 624 976	
Socio-economic group									
Farmers	95	20	37	31	7	5	100	43 130	
Other self-employed persons	93	17	28	26	22	7	100	192 762	
Upper-level employees	97	5	25	34	33	3	100	588 589	
Lower-level employees	95	12	36	29	19	5	100	732 451	
Workers	88	29	36	15	8	12	100	598 489	
Students	99	8	40	29	22	1	100	424 077	
Pensioners	78	17	25	22	13	22	100	208 261	
Other or unknown	90	18	32	23	17	10	100	503 285	
Level of education									
Basic level	87	22	36	17	12	13	100	661 392	
Upper secondary level	91	19	37	22	13	9	100	1 504 935	
Tertiary level	97	5	25	36	32	3	100	1 124 718	
Municipality group									
Urban	94	14	31	28	22	6	100	2 331 637	
Semi-urban	88	19	37	22	11	12	100	484 587	
Rural	88	17	38	21	13	12	100	474 822	
All	93	15	33	26	19	7	100	3 291 045	
Total	3 047 287	492 984	1 080 238	848 596	625 470	243 758	100	3 291 045	

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Source: Participation in adult education 2017, Statistics Finland