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## **HOMELESSNESS IN FINLAND**

In 1987 there were almost 20 000 homeless in Finland. Since then, the numbers have declined drastically, and by 2019 there were **4 600 homeless** living in Finland. Homelessness has been declining seven years in a row. Long-term homelessness in Finland decreased by 40 per cent between 2008 and 2017. Finland is the only country in Europe where homelessness has declined in the recent years.

Most (65%) of the homeless live temporarily with relatives and acquaintances. In the streets and shelters lived about 300 homeless in 2018. Homelessness is concentrated in the Greater Helsinki region and other major growth centres. More than half (55%) of all homeless lived in the Greater Helsinki region and over one third (38.6%) in Helsinki in 2018, and 80 % of homeless were male.

**The current government** has promised to halve homelessness during its government term and **eradicate homelessness by 2027** with the help of Housing First principle, among other things. The government will also develop the collection of statistics on homelessness.

### Housing First Principle

With the help of nationwide long-term homelessness reduction programs, the **Housing First principle** was adopted as the guiding principle in homelessness reduction in 2008. New housing units were established with the support of the state. According to the model, people are offered first an apartment and only then can the treatment and rehabilitation of the problems caused by homelessness begin. Getting a home is not tied to a life change requirement. Within the project, homeless shelters have been converted into low-cost rental apartments and Finnish municipalities have been helped to plan affordable housing solutions. The Housing First model can be applied either in dispersed apartments or in a housing unit.

A recent trend in Finland has been an increase in the proportion of women, young people and immigrants among the homelessness.