

STAKES

Knowledge for  
Welfare and Health  
Strategy 2012

---

STAKES – Knowledge for Welfare and Health Strategy 2012

Approved by the STAKES Management Group on 29 September 2005

National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health

Graphic design  
Workshop Päiviä Oy

Cover photograph  
Heikki Päiviä

Photographs  
Antero Aaltonen  
Jaakko Alatalo  
Niko Backström  
Heikki Päiviä

Translation  
Leena Saarela

Printed by  
Erweko Oy  
Helsinki 2006

# STAKES

## Knowledge for Welfare and Health Strategy 2012

3

### Vision

STAKES is a key actor in influencing the social and health sector.  
It works to ensure that the social and health sector operates effectively and in an economically and socially sustainable way.

### Strategic priority areas

Sustainability of welfare policy • The effectiveness of welfare and health promotion and services •  
Responding to demographic changes • Reducing social inequalities •  
Information as a basis for steering • Innovativeness

### Values

Social responsibility • Reliability • Innovativeness • Co-operation



## The changing context

The average well-being and life span of the resident population of Finland is expected to develop positively. However, this bright overall picture may disguise the negative developments underway that are partly associated with the country's internal developments and partly with global developments. With regard to people's living conditions and also service provision and policy-making, the goals and preconditions of "a good life" are affected by the globalisation of economy, the marketisation of society, and demographic changes.



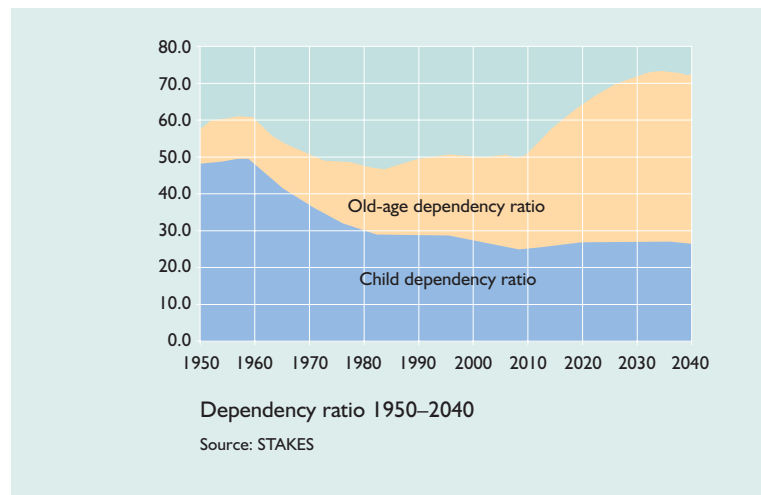
## Welfare and health

Welfare and health among the Finnish population will be affected by a number of factors in the near future, including demographic changes, increasing inequalities, work- and employment-related developments, public health trends, and new technologies with their opportunities and pressures. Demographic changes will involve both an increasing number of older people and a declining child population.

The deep economic recession in Finland in the 1990s increased social exclusion and contributed to its becoming more persistent, even intergenerational. Welfare and health are still unevenly distributed between regions and population groups. As for exclusion, specific areas of concern include psychosocial problems among children and young people and the high number of the older long-term unemployed. Mental disorders are among the most common public health

problems, and they will require even more attention than previously. Moreover, social and health problems will increase in the near future with the growth of alcohol consumption. New public health threats include obesity, metabolic syndrome, adult diabetes with related complications, and outbreaks of new global infections. Despite these threats, trends in major national diseases are expected to develop as positively as in the past few decades.

The service and income transfer system needs to be constantly assessed and adjusted in order to address changes in the age structure, internal migration, and increasing immigration. In particular, people's well-being and health is affected by the rapid changes taking place in working life and working environments. In order to be able to increase the attraction of work in ways that take into account demographic changes, policy makers both need to increase the possibilities for young people to start a family and to promote older workers' coping at work.

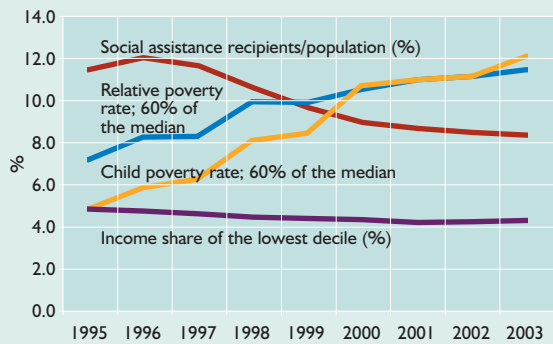


The rapid changes in working life and working environments are also felt in the social and health sector, where the increasingly high employee retirement rates in the forthcoming years and high work pressures will lead to a shortage of labour unless efforts are made to ensure the availability of professional personnel. Technological advancement also contributes to shaping activities in the social and health sector. Advanced communication technologies facilitate interaction between service systems and citizens. Health-care technology offers new devices, methods of treatment and medicines, all of which tend to increase health-care costs.

## Changes in welfare policy and the steering system

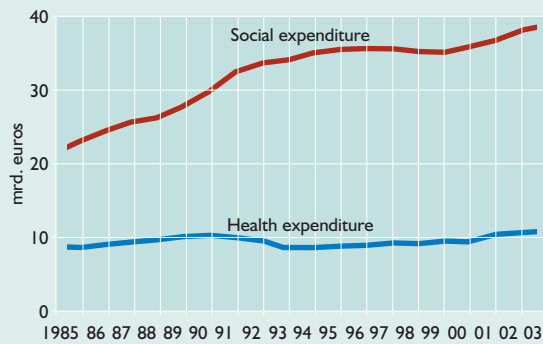
Changes in the age structure and other demographic changes automatically increase social expenditure, thus imposing increasing pressures on the public finances. This takes place through the growth of pension expenditure and an increase in the need for nursing and care. Finland has made attempts to lower the overall tax rate while also being committed to coping with an increasing pension expenditure. This may require a redefinition of the scope and nature of public sector welfare responsibilities.

Models for organising and providing social and health services probably need to be reconsidered. The service system should be based on regional structures larger than municipalities. In order for sound and sufficiently uniform health and social policies to be realisable even in the future, the systems for steering social and health care activities should be adjusted to these foreseeable developments. In practice, this means a shift from an extremely decentralised model towards a more



Poverty rate 1995–2003

Source: Statistics Finland



Social and health expenditure 1985–2003 (at 2003 prices)

Source: STAKES

integrated model that safeguards the future of the services that currently are the responsibility of the municipalities by giving them an appropriate structural and financial basis.

The range of social and health service providers will diversify, with a greater emphasis on consumer- and client-oriented approaches. When client expectations change and competition increases, new challenges emerge. Global and international co-operation becomes more important with changes in the world economy and other global developments, and this is also reflected in welfare among Finns. The country's social and cultural development and the need for social and health services are affected by developments in its neighbouring areas and the free movement of labour within the EU and other types of immigration. Long-term approaches should be applied in responding to challenges posed by cross-border co-operation and Northern Dimension policies. It becomes increasingly important to ensure effective co-ordination between various international and national projects in the social and health sector.

## Immediate operational prerequisites

One of the major challenges for STAKES in the forthcoming years is to be able to develop the system for steering social and health activities. In the future, steering through information should be based on a strong strategic view of development trends in society and an understanding of the development needs of the service system. In addition, it should make use of modern tools and appropriate knowledge and skills to bring about the desired effects.

Multi-stakeholder approaches will obviously become increasingly important in the area of research and development, too. Rearrangements in national research funding practices and the requirements concerning competitive tendering represent challenges that STAKES must face by focussing on its core expertise and by networking with its key co-operation partners. When national research funding is reallocated and opened up to competition, all research institutes will find themselves in a competitive environment where the impact of activities plays a key role.



# Values

---

8

## Social responsibility

STAKES engages in research and development and compiles and disseminates information to promote welfare and health among the population, with a particular focus on disadvantaged groups. The aim is to achieve equality between population groups and ensure balanced regional development. As an employer, STAKES is committed to social responsibility, offering a challenging working environment with an emphasis on a sense of community and sustainable development.

## Reliability

The information products, services and expertise offered by STAKES are based on critical scientific research, a broad understanding of practice, ongoing statistical monitoring and multiple co-operative networks. In addition to being an independent actor, STAKES has a broad range of expertise, knowledge and skills.

## Innovativeness

STAKES anticipates future welfare issues and highlights those facing society today. It offers a range of development options and shares welfare expertise with other stakeholders.

## Co-operation

STAKES actively seeks to build co-operation with national and international experts and partners. In co-operation with each other and interacting with customers, the STAKES staff create renewable common capital through their knowledge and skills.



## Vision

STAKES is a key actor in influencing the social and health sector. It works to ensure that the social and health sector operates effectively and in an economically and socially sustainable way.

## Mission

STAKES promotes the welfare and health of the population and develops social and health services.

STAKES assesses changes affecting welfare and health, evaluates the outcomes of welfare policy and brings forth new alternatives. Together with its national and international partners, it strengthens welfare expertise in Finland.

STAKES is a sector research institute under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Its core functions are research, development and information production. It also supports the Ministry in implementing the strategy of the administrative branch.

# Strategic priority areas

## I. Sustainability of welfare policy

### [why it is important and what it means]

For the Finnish welfare system to develop sustainably, it is of prime importance that it rests on an economically and socially sustainable foundation, that it continues to enjoy broad public support and that efforts are made to ensure equitable distribution of welfare.

### [STAKES main line of action]

STAKES conducts research into and evaluates welfare and health policies from the perspective of economic and social sustainability. It develops new models for organising services, and analyses alternative ways of fulfilling welfare responsibilities.

### [more detailed targets]

Priority lines of action:

- STAKES develops a range of service models and practices and spreads them in the social and health sector in order to promote welfare and health.
- STAKES monitors, evaluates and models developments in the costs and funding of social and health services and cash benefits.



## 2. The effectiveness of welfare and health promotion and services

### [why it is important and what it means]

Effective welfare services promote and maintain people's welfare, health and functional capacity with observable effects. Due to limited resources and increasing demands, the effectiveness of welfare services can only be improved by increasing their productivity and efficiency.

### [STAKES main line of action]

**STAKES develops and disseminates good practices in social and health care, in addition to offering knowledge, skills and tools for implementing them.**

### [more detailed targets]

Priority lines of action:

- STAKES works to ensure that the good practices applied in social and health care form client-oriented, effective service packages. The use of methods is based on assessed information.
- STAKES contributes to ensuring that the social and health sector has the necessary instruments for developing service systems and assessing their costs and effectiveness.
- STAKES supports decision-making by offering information about the welfare and health impacts that decisions are foreseen to have.



### 3. Responding to demographic changes

#### [why it is important and what it means]

The ageing of the population, the relatively low birth rate, and immigration and internal migration largely determine the need for social and health services. Changes in the need for services are qualitative as well as quantitative. With the ageing of the population, people's functional capacity becomes an important social and health policy issue. Living environments and lifestyles also play a crucial part in determining functional capacity.

#### [STAKES main line of action]

**STAKES analyses and anticipates demographic changes and their quantitative and qualitative effects on functional capacity, service needs, service structure and labour demand.**

#### [more detailed targets]

Priority lines of action:

- The tools offered by STAKES can be used to anticipate the type and degree of service needs and their resource requirements, and to redesign service structures.
- STAKES has an up-to-date picture of the demand for labour and professional skills in the social and health sector.



## 4. Reducing social inequalities

### [why it is important and what it means]

The growth of social inequalities between population groups decreases cohesion in the community and society at large. STAKES works to prevent any growth of inequalities primarily by conducting research and drawing up recommendations for action concerning inequalities in income distribution and the use of social and health services.

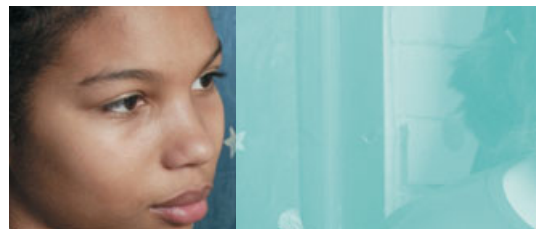
### [STAKES main line of action]

**STAKES monitors and works to anticipate the growth of inequalities in Finland and internationally. It also analyses factors that contribute to increasing inequalities and looks for ways of reducing them.**

### [more detailed targets]

Priority lines of action:

- STAKES analytically monitors and models current living conditions, well-being, service use and other areas of potential inequality.
- STAKES suggests ways of reducing inequalities.



## 5. Information as a basis for steering

### [why it is important and what it means]

The social and health sector should be developed on the basis of relevant up-to-date information. Information that can be used as a basis for steering policy-making is comprised of statistics, registers and research data sets, as well as the studies, surveys, indicators and other information products that draw on these data sources.

### [STAKES main line of action]

**STAKES works to create and maintain an information basis for steering the social and health sector.**

### [more detailed targets]

Priority lines of action:

- STAKES offers a comprehensive basis of up-to-date information for steering and policy-making. This information basis builds on an ongoing analysis of the welfare needs of the population, and on electronic client and patient data.
- STAKES provides user-friendly interactive information products that support activities and development work at national, regional and local levels.



## 6. Innovativeness

### [why it is important and what it means]

Innovativeness means an ability to think and act without prejudice and differently than before. The need for innovative solutions in social and health care arises from people's changing needs and limited public resources. A basis for innovativeness is provided by modern technology, multidisciplinary research and networking.

### [STAKES main line of action]

**STAKES enhances its own innovative activities and the innovative ability of the social and health sector at large.**

### [more detailed targets]

Priority lines of action:

- STAKES promotes innovation structures and processes and good practices in social and health care at national and regional levels
- STAKES' innovations are rendered into products and brought into use
- STAKES seeks to improve export opportunities for Finnish social and health care expertise and products.



National Research and Development  
Centre for Welfare and Health

Postal address  
STAKES  
P.O. Box 220  
FIN-00531 Helsinki, Finland

Street address  
Lintulahdenkuja 4  
00530 Helsinki

Telephone  
+358-9-396 71

[www.stakes.fi](http://www.stakes.fi)

E-mail  
[firstname.lastname@stakes.fi](mailto:firstname.lastname@stakes.fi)

