



Finland — Va-PoReg Country Report

Kailitz, Steffen, et al., 2026: Varieties of Political Regimes (Va-PoReg). Country Report Finland, Dresden: Hannah Arendt Institute for Totalitarianism Studies.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/JYEL7U>

09/17/1809 Start Part of Other Country [of Russia]: Finland became part of the Russian Empire after the Finnish War of 1808-1809. The Romanov Emperor of Russia became also the Grand Duke of Finland, represented by a governor-general in Finland.¹ As an autonomous Grand Principality in the Russian Empire, Finland achieved universal suffrage in 1906, becoming the second country in the world to adopt universal suffrage. The Finnish parliamentary election of 1907 was the first time when women were elected (19 of 200 MPs). Despite that the Grand Duke of Finland was the emperor of Russia Finland was a borderline case between being a part of the Russian Empire and a semi-autonomous protectorate. Free and fair pre-independence election for a parliament were already held on 10/1&2/1917.² According to LIED only multiparty legislative elections were held during this period. LIED considers political liberties as absent and V-Dem's PCLI as ambiguous for the whole time. From 1900 to 1904, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. For 1905, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were moderate, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. For the following year, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were absent. From 1907 to 1911, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were robust, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were limited. From 1912 to 1917, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating robust constraints on the executive.

11/07/1917 Continuation as Part of Other Country [of Russia, Communist Ideocracy]: On this date the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) was proclaimed.

12/06/1917 End Part of Other Country [of Russia, Communist Ideocracy]/Start No Central Authority: During the period between 12/06/1917 and 05/16/1918, Finland was in a state of intense turmoil due to the Finnish Civil War, which erupted shortly after the country declared independence from Russia on 12/06/1917. The nation was effectively divided between two opposing regimes, each controlling different parts of the country and imposing strict controls over their territories. On one side was the Finnish Socialist Workers' Republic, known as Red Finland, proclaimed on 01/28/1918 by the socialist faction composed mainly of the working class and supported by the Social Democratic Party. They sought to establish a socialist state inspired by the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Red Finland controlled the southern industrial regions, including major cities like Helsinki and Tampere. The regime implemented radical reforms such as nationalization of industries and collectivization of agriculture. Political liberties were suppressed for those opposing socialist rule; freedom of speech and assembly were limited, especially for non-socialist parties. Dissent was not tolerated, and the government exercised strict censorship to control information and maintain power. On the other side was the Senate of Finland, referred to as White Finland, representing the non-socialist government that had declared independence. Led by Prime Minister Pehr Evind Svinhufvud and General Carl Gustaf Emil Mannerheim, who commanded the White Army, they aimed to establish a democratic republic with a market economy. The White regime held control over the northern and central regions of Finland. While advocating for democratic

principles, they also curtailed political liberties during the civil war. Leftist parties and organizations were suppressed, and censorship was imposed to maintain order and morale. Freedom of speech and assembly were restricted, and those suspected of supporting the Reds faced persecution. The civil war had a profound impact on political liberties across Finland. Both regimes imposed censorship to control propaganda and suppress dissenting voices. Publications opposing the ruling faction in each territory were banned or strictly regulated. Public gatherings were restricted due to martial law conditions, and political organizations affiliated with the opposing side were outlawed. Members of these organizations were often arrested or persecuted, and the conflict led to human rights violations on both sides, including arbitrary arrests, executions without trial, and other wartime atrocities. This period is classified by us as having no political liberties because the civil war created an environment where basic freedoms were severely restricted by both competing governments. The state of emergency and military actions took precedence over constitutional rights, leading to widespread suppression of political and civil liberties. The conflict disrupted normal political processes, and the focus on military objectives overshadowed any commitment to upholding individual rights. On 01/03/1918 independence was recognized by the highest Soviet executive body. All datasets like BMR, LIED and RoW consider Finland immediately from the date of its independence as democratic.³ Historically this is wrong since this classification overlooks the period of civil war, while after the war Finland became a democracy and continued its universal suffrage, there were still severe problems concerning political liberties according to our observations.⁴ LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as ambiguous regarding the state of political liberties. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were comprehensive, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were robust. V-Dem's indicators LCE and JCE seem to be here largely misleading and to say it clearly wrong (see text above).

05/16/1918 End No Central Authority/Start Liberal Democracy: After the conflict concluded with the victory of the White forces, the Senate reestablished control over the entire country. In the aftermath, efforts were made to stabilize the nation and rebuild democratic institutions. However, the immediate period following the war saw harsh reprisals against those who had supported the Reds, which continued to affect political liberties. It took time for Finland to fully restore democratic norms and protect political freedoms for all its citizens. In November 1939 Finland was invaded by the Soviet Union and forced to cede parts of its territory. When Risto Heikki Ryti took over the presidency in December 1940, the government started negotiations with Nazi Germany and by June 1941 Finland entered World War II as a co-belligerent against the Soviet Union. Ryti resigned in August 1944 and was succeeded by Carl Gustav Mannerheim, who had been Commander-in-Chief during the war against the Soviet Union, but his government is not considered military. His presidency emerged out of the state of crisis and was supported by a majority in parliament. He resigned in March 1946.⁵ From this point on, presidencies rarely changed, indicating very stable conditions.⁶ Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. LIED consistently categorizes Finnish elections as competitive. V-Dem's CEI scores all elections since independence as clean. Their EF&FI scores elections as somewhat free and fair until 1945 and since then as free and fair. Finland is a parliamentary representative democracy with a unicameral system.⁷ Legislative power is vested in the parliament (Eduskunta) and while the president, elected for six-year terms, is the chief executive, he shares his power with the Council of State.⁸ The political regime is characterized by in our observations fair and free elections within the framework of a competitive multi-party system. This is in line with the observations of LIED. The constitution guarantees an independent judiciary. As per FH's classification for this regime period, the country is considered free with a score ranging from 2 to 4, which we also interpret as free in our framework. Moreover, political liberties were first acknowledged by LIED in 1950 and remained present ever since. V-Dem's PCLI underlines that political rights were somewhat present from 1919 to 1938, in 1945 and in 1947. Between 1939 and 1944 the scores decreased to an ambiguous level. In 1946 and since 1948 political liberties were constantly present. The universal suffrage applies to citizens aged 18 and older (OSCE 2023c). Based on Polity5's assessment, during this period, the executive was either equal

to or subordinate to other institutions, demonstrating strong constraints on decision-making authority. For the relevant regime period, V-Dem's JCE and LCE are both interpreted by us as indicating comprehensive constraints on the executive.

Liberal Democracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Alapuro/Allardt 1978, Anckar/Anckar 2010, Arter 1985, Arter 1999, Auffermann 2009, Coakley 1986, Endemann 1999, Karvonen 2000, Nousiainen 2001, Siaroff 1999)

Notes

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grand_Duchy_of_Finland

² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1917_Finnish_parliamentary_election

³ https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Finland_2011?lang=en

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_suffrage#cite_note-centralasiainstitute.org-37

⁵ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html>, see narratives for version 5.0, Finland_R: 2-3.

⁶ <http://www.chisols.org/narratives.html>, see narratives for version 5.0, Finland_R: 3, Finland_V: 1-2.

⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politics_of_Finland

⁸ <https://www.britannica.com/place/Finland/Labour-and-taxation#ref26132>

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