



Ilkka Haavisto

EVA ATTITUDE AND VALUE SURVEY

– *Finns' Opinions on the EU in the Midst of European Debt Crisis*

Summary of Key Findings

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Finns' attitudes towards EU membership have – perhaps contrary to expectations – become more positive. A majority (55%) relate positively towards EU membership, one fourth neutrally and one fifth negatively.

A majority supports the euro as well: the EMU membership is seen widely as a prudent bet that has turned out well and the euro is currently considered to entail more advantages than disadvantages.

Although Finns are much more committed than previously to EU membership and the euro, the opinions are also more polarized than before, especially in line with political party affiliation. Changes in attitudes may therefore be partially attributable to changes in today's political scene.

Finland's firm policy on handling the euro crisis gains the support of its citizens. People want Finland to follow more proactive and also more stringent policies. However, only one-third would be willing to tighten the screws so much that Finland would paralyze the EU's decision-making ability.

All these results become clear from the fresh value and attitude survey of the Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA.

The report *EU vai EI?* was published 28th March 2012 and is the sixteenth in the series of EVA's value and attitude research studies on the EU, started in 1992. It has been written by Mr *Ilkka Haavisto* from EVA. The following summary includes a few of the main results selected from the wide-ranging study. The report (in Finnish) can be read in its entirety on EVA's website www.eva.fi.

28.3.2012

Finns' attitudes towards the EU

- Attitudes towards EU membership have – perhaps contrary to expectations – become more positive. A majority of the Finns nowadays have a positive attitude toward membership. Opinions about the euro have also become more positive.
- Changes in attitudes may be partially attributable to changes in the today's political scene: opinions toward EU membership are more polarized than before especially in line with political party affiliation.
- Although Finns are much more committed than previously to EU membership and the euro, they also say they have become more critical towards the EU. The correlation between the membership stance and the tone of their attitudes is therefore not straightforward. The current EU debate is widely regarded as too populist.

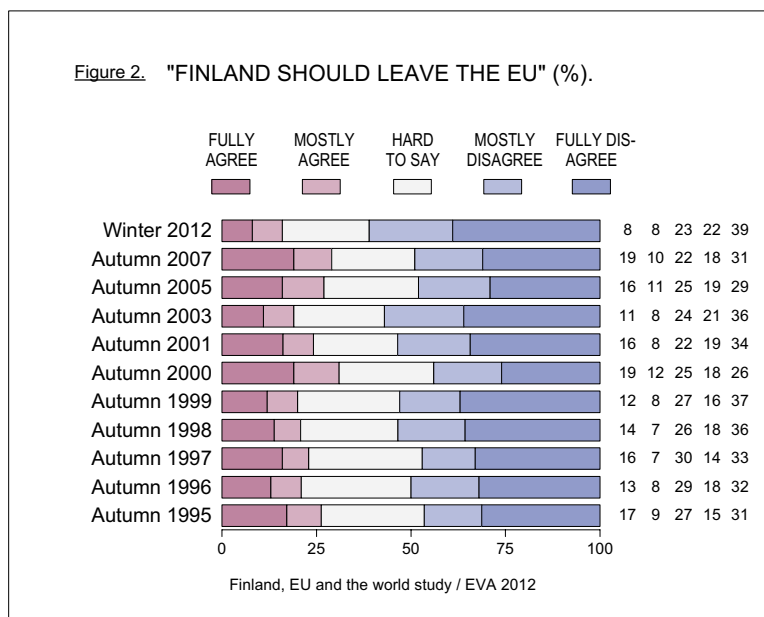
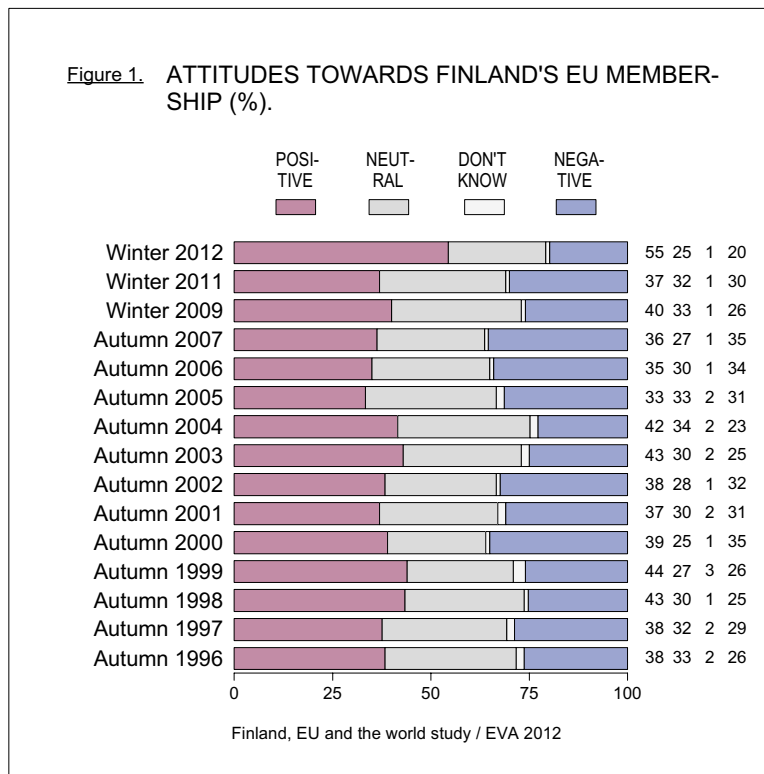
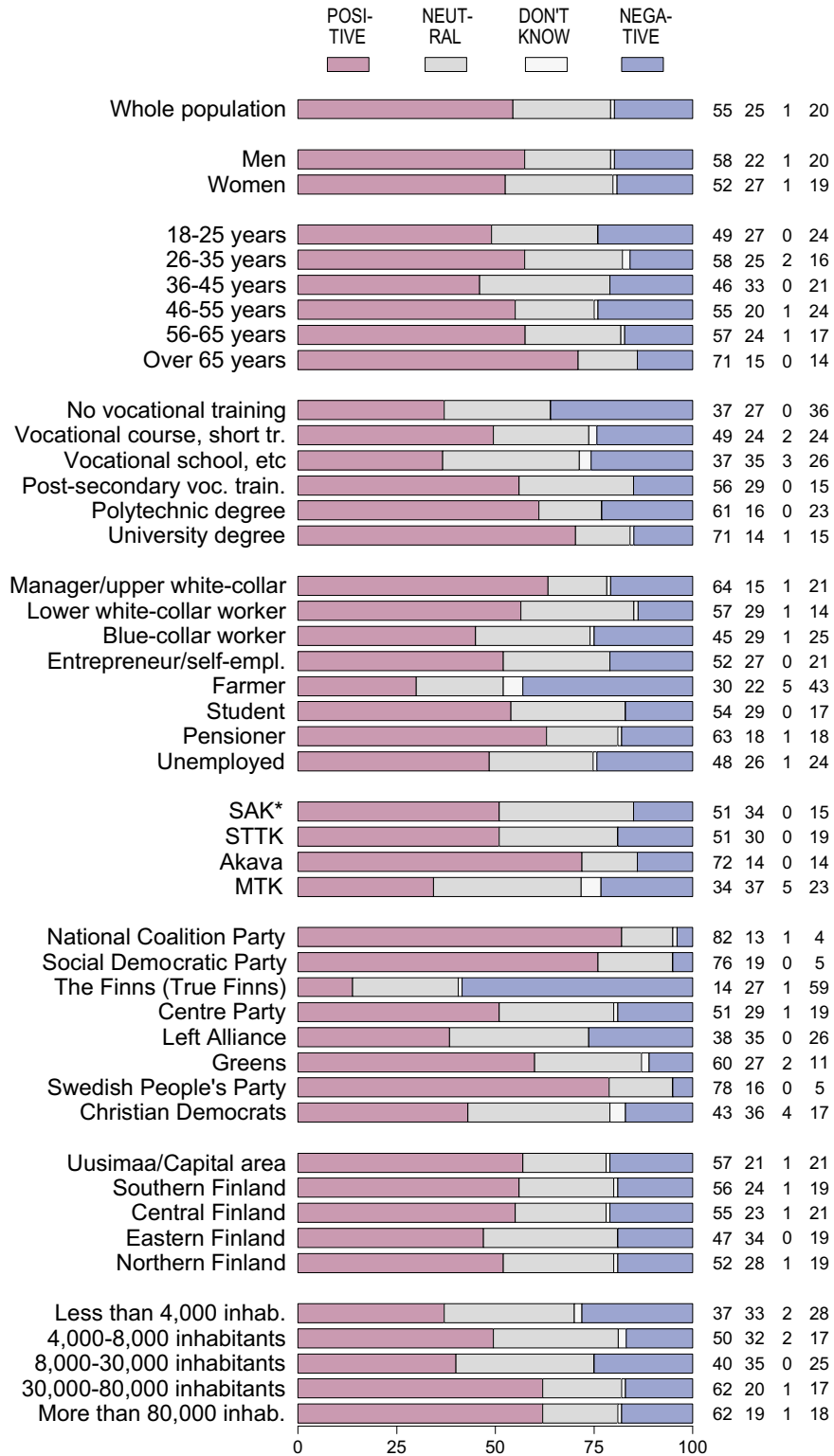


Figure 3. ATTITUDES TOWARDS FINLAND'S EU MEMBERSHIP (%).



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Figure 4. ATTITUDES TOWARDS FINLAND'S EU MEMBERSHIP: VOTERS OF PARLIAMENTARY PARTIES, YEARS 2011 & 2012 (%).

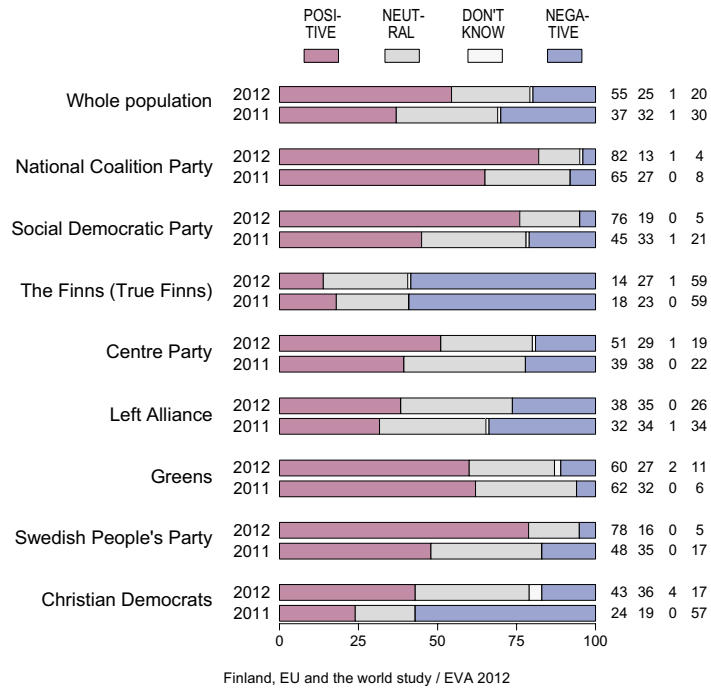


Figure 5. HAS YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARD THE EU BECOME MORE FAVOURABLE OR CRITICAL IN RECENT YEARS? (%).

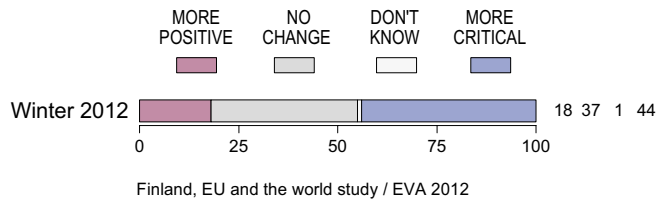


Figure 6. "NOWADAYS I FEEL THAT I AM NOT ONLY FINNISH, BUT INCREASINGLY ALSO EUROPEAN" (%).

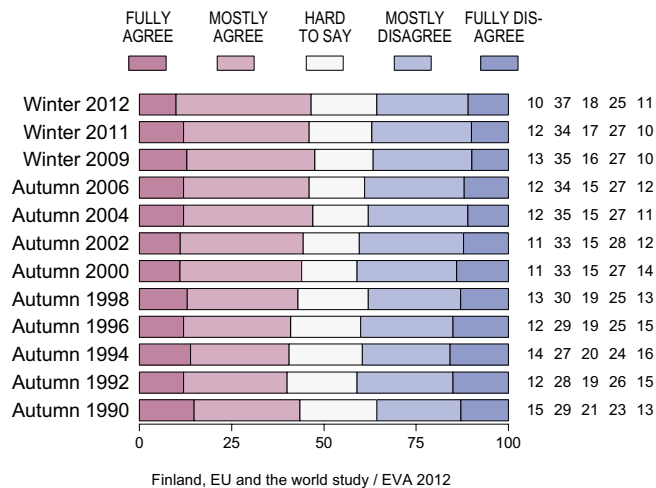
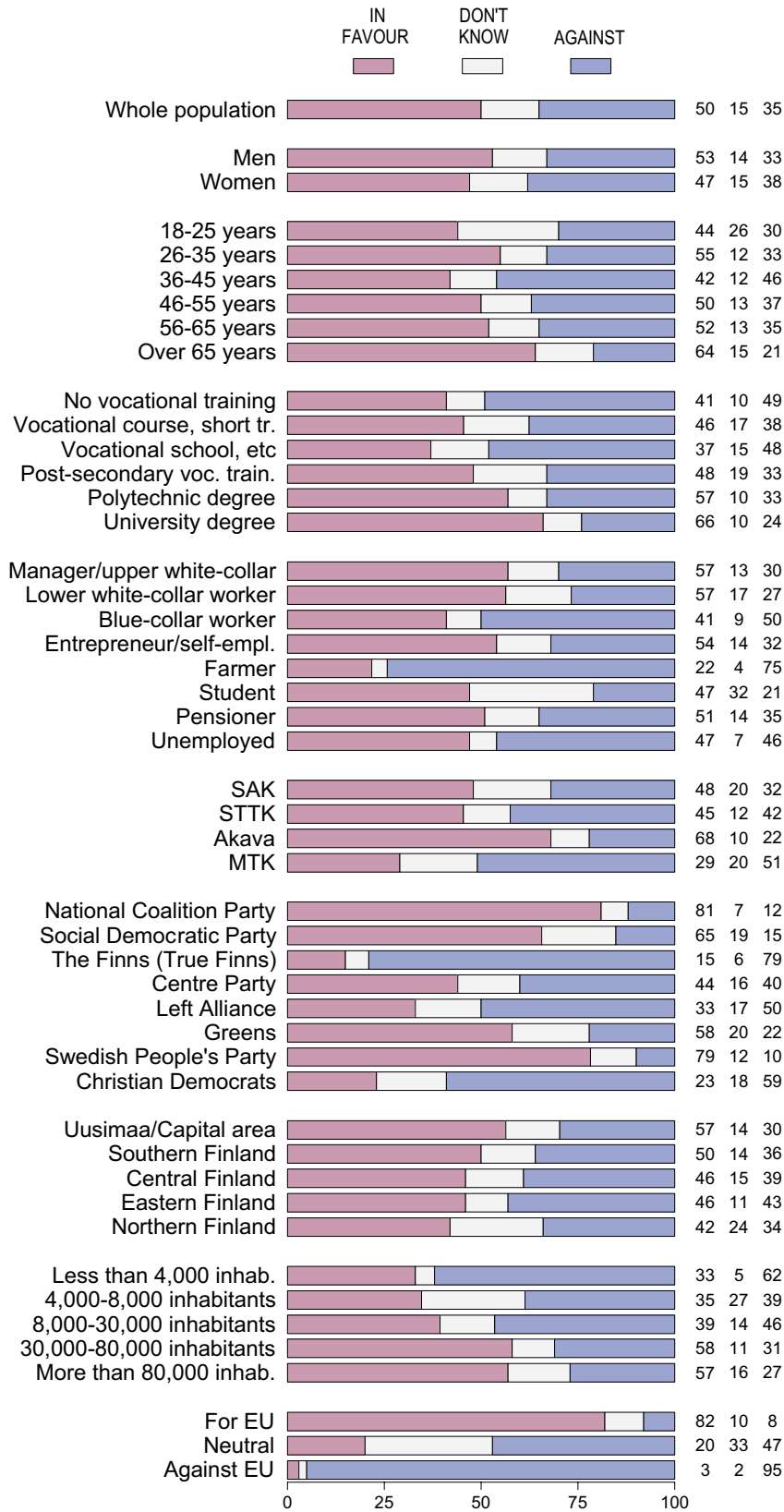


Figure 7. IF THE REFERENDUM ON FINLAND'S EU MEMBERSHIP WERE HELD NOW, WOULD YOU BE IN FAVOUR OF MEMBERSHIP OR AGAINST IT? (%).



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How is the EU perceived?

- The EU is widely seen as playing a crucial role in guiding the continent’s development. The majority think that the Union’s regulation is excessive, but this is not perceived as constituting a threat to Finland or Finnish culture directly.
- The EU is seen as a bureaucratic community suffering from a democratic gap where the large member states dictate the terms. Nevertheless, the EU’s activity is regarded as having succeeded fairly well.
- The EU is believed to safeguard peace and promote economic prosperity. The economy is deemed, however, to gain too much attention in the Union. Europe’s cultural dimension does not evoke strong feelings in Finns, but it does divide opinions.

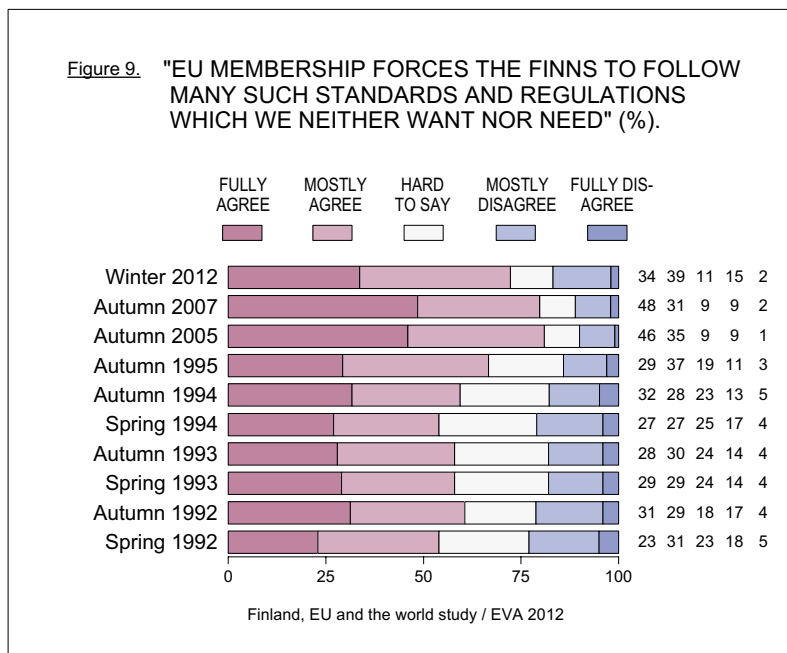
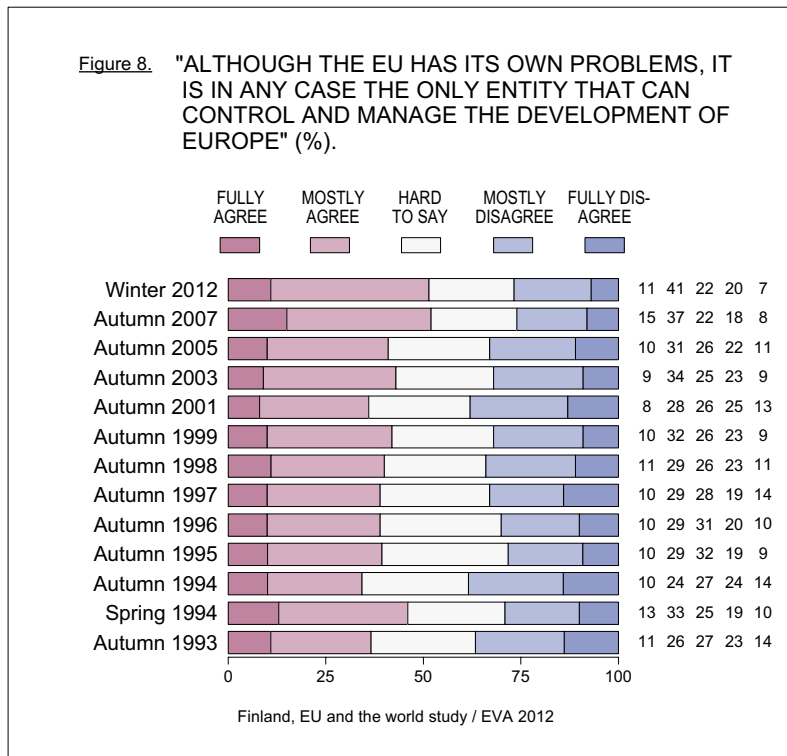


Figure 10. "FINLAND HAS MAINTAINED ITS OWN NATIONAL UNIQUENESS AS A EU MEMBER" (%).

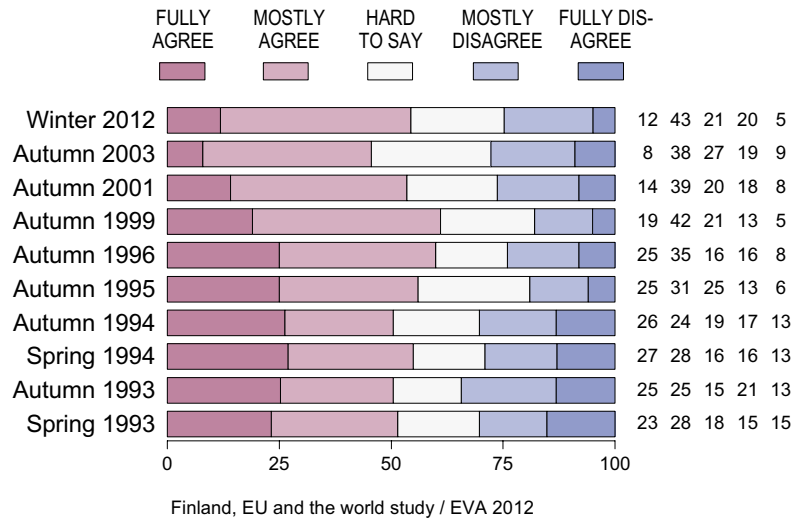
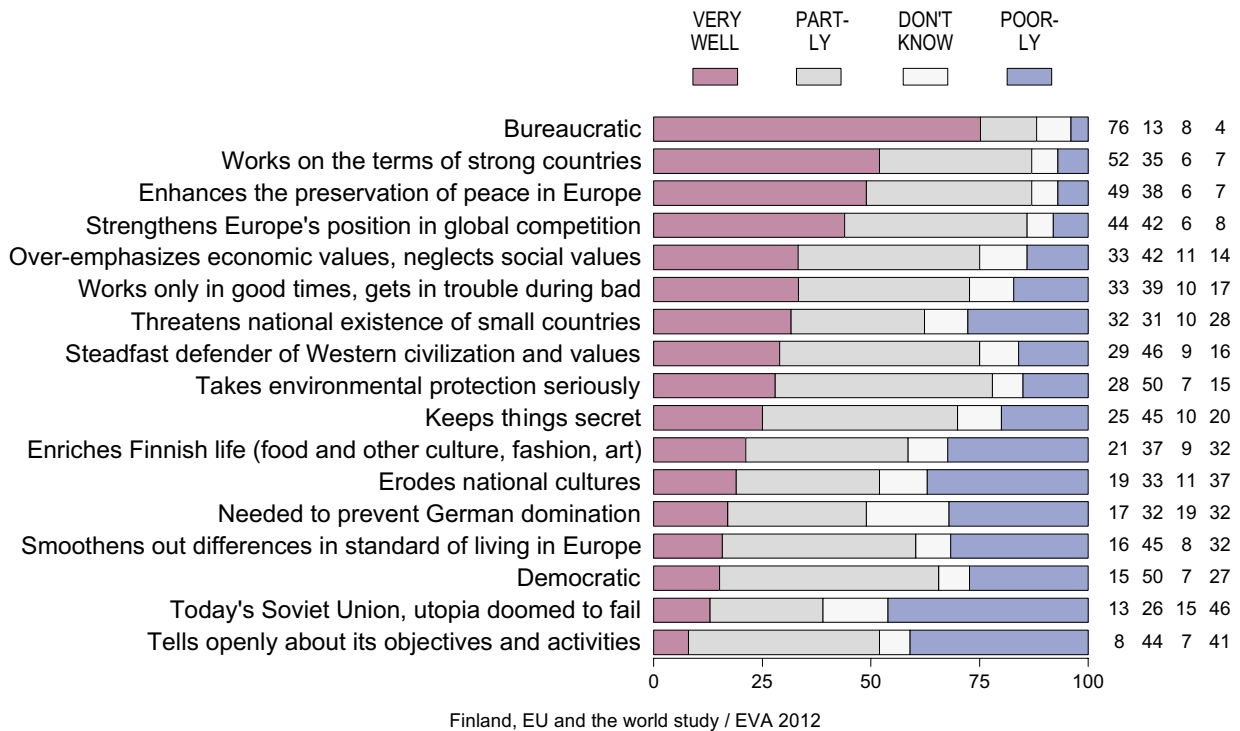


Figure 11. HOW WELL DO THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERISTICS AND DESCRIPTIONS SUIT YOUR PERSONAL IMPRESSION OF THE EU? (%).



What about the euro and EMU membership?

- The majority of Finns have a positive attitude toward the euro while relatively few long for the days of the markka. A majority supports the euro: the EMU membership is seen widely as a prudent bet that has turned out well and the euro is currently considered to entail more advantages than disadvantages.
- It is not perhaps so much the admiration of the euro, but rather the fact that the alternatives are regarded as bad. Many think that Sweden was wise in rejecting membership in the EMU and the euro.
- Finland's firm policy on handling the euro crisis gains the support of its citizens. Even so, the current stance is considered to be too lax as opposed to being too tight.
- As a monetary unit the euro is seen as having served its function well. Opinions of the political benefits are more cautious. The adoption of the euro is deemed to have brought European countries closer together politically, but in a negative way.

Figure 12. ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EURO (Q: How do you feel about the fact that our monetary unit was changed from the markka to the euro?) (%).

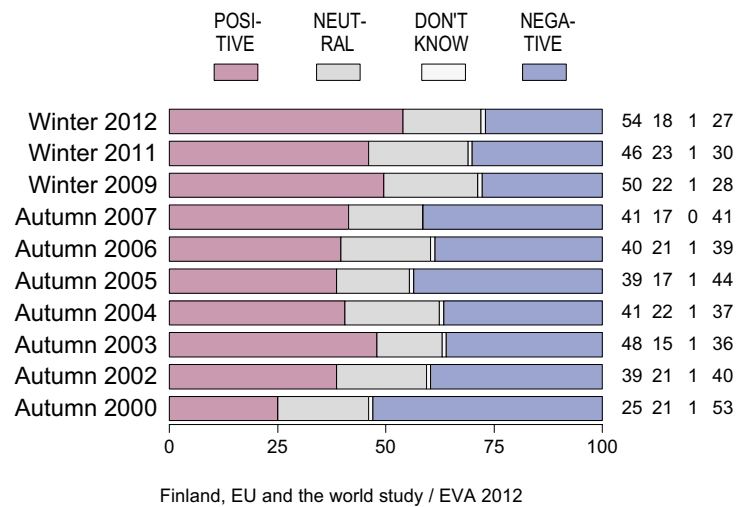
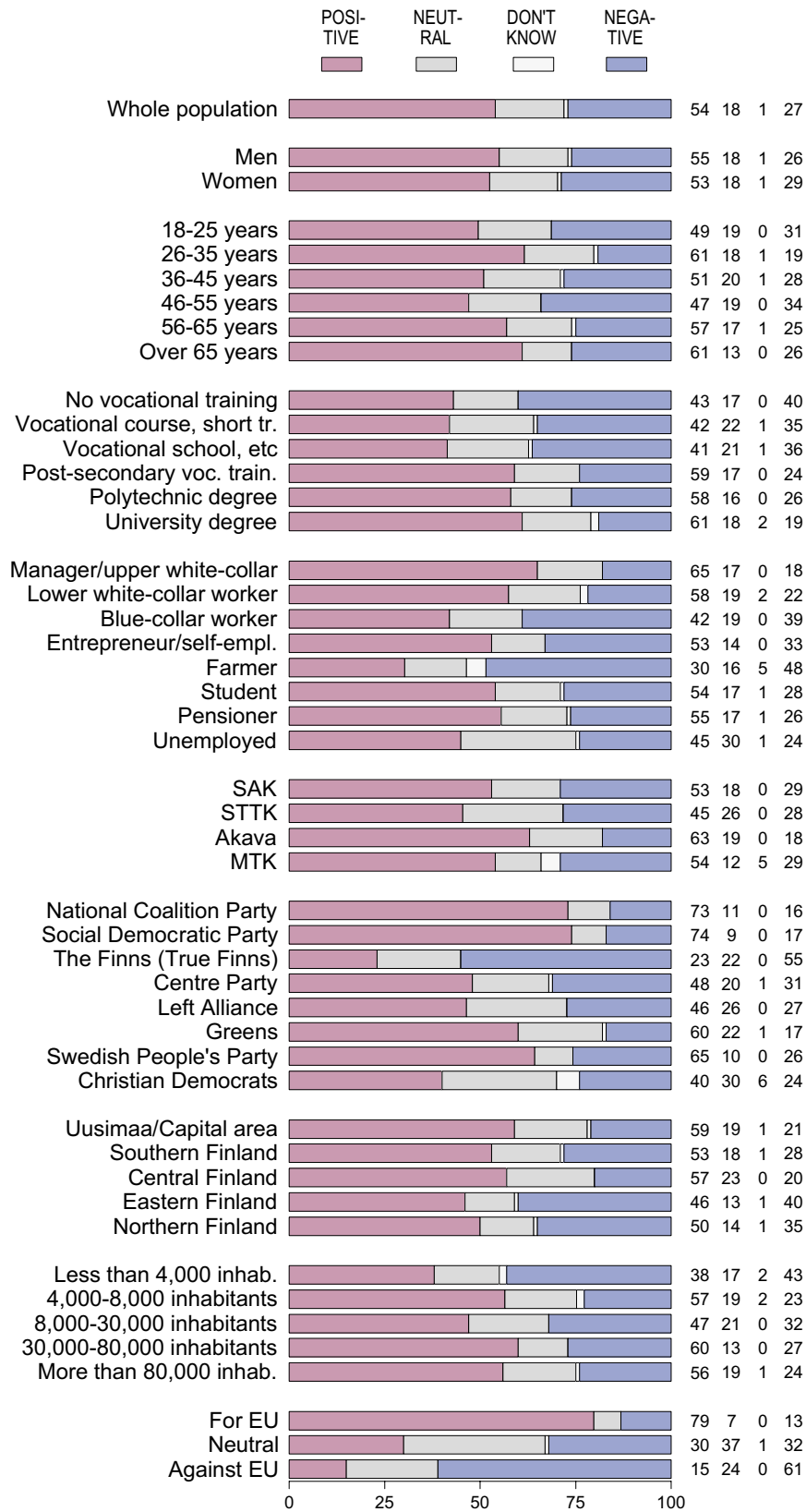


Figure 13. ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EURO (%).



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Figure 14. "FINLAND JOINING THE EMU WAS THE RIGHT SOLUTION" (%).

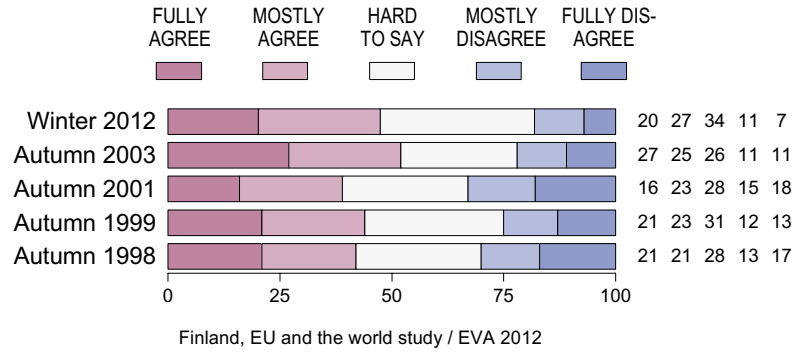


Figure 15. IS THE EURO AND EMU MEMBERSHIP AN ADVANTAGE OR DISADVANTAGE FOR FINLAND IN THE CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION? (%).

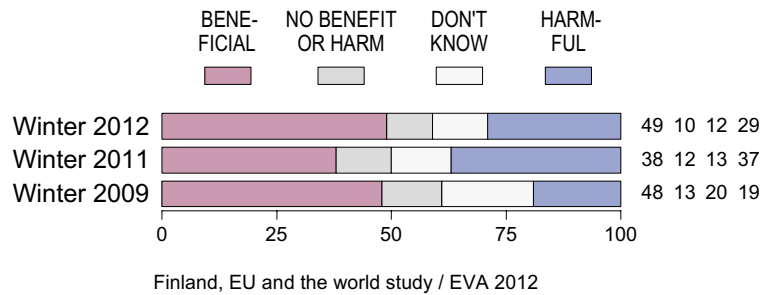


Figure 16. "THE SWEDES WERE WISE TO VOTE 'NO' TO THE EURO AND EMU" (%).

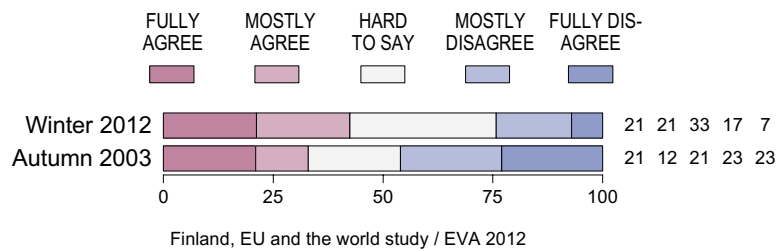
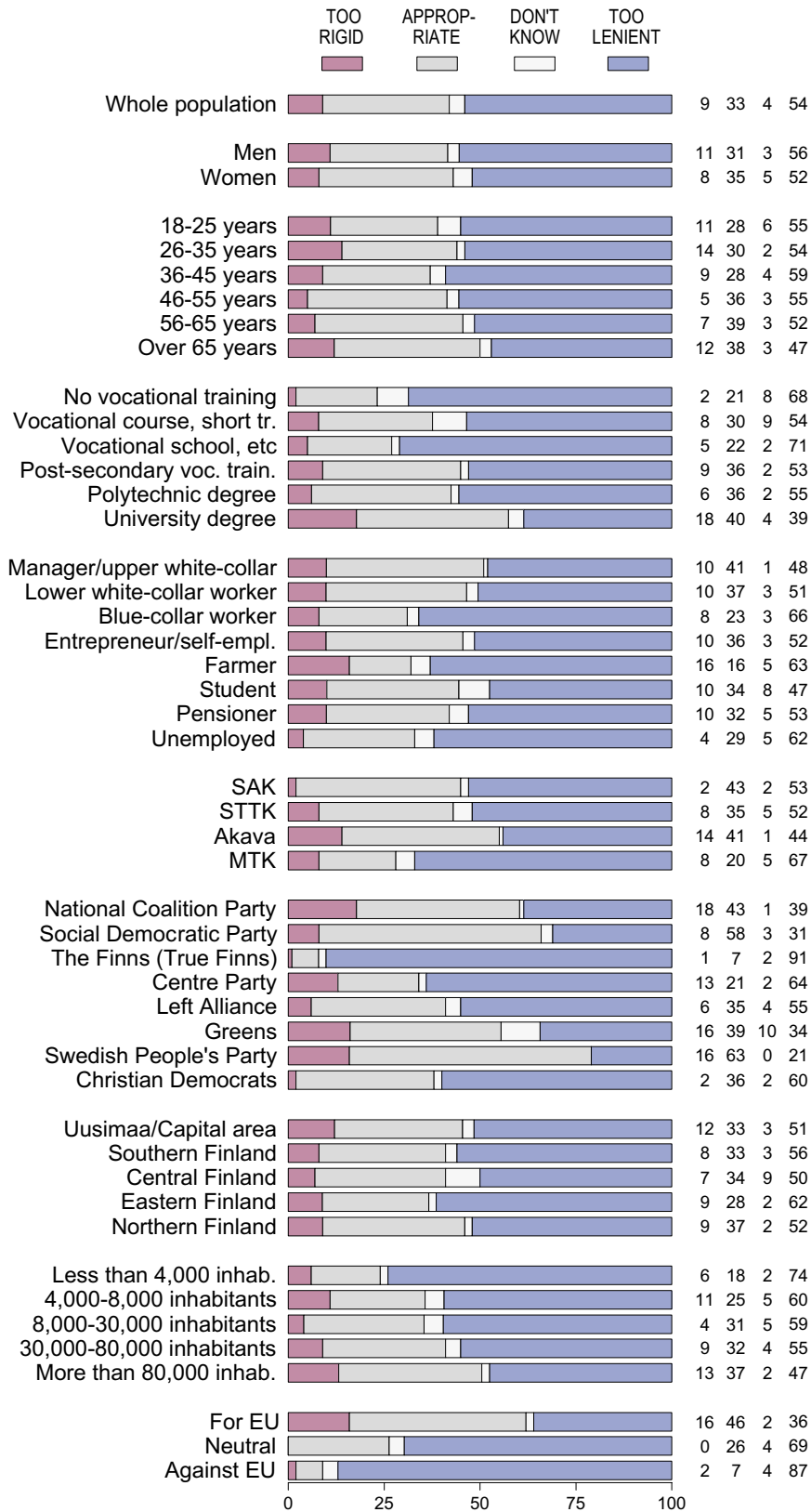
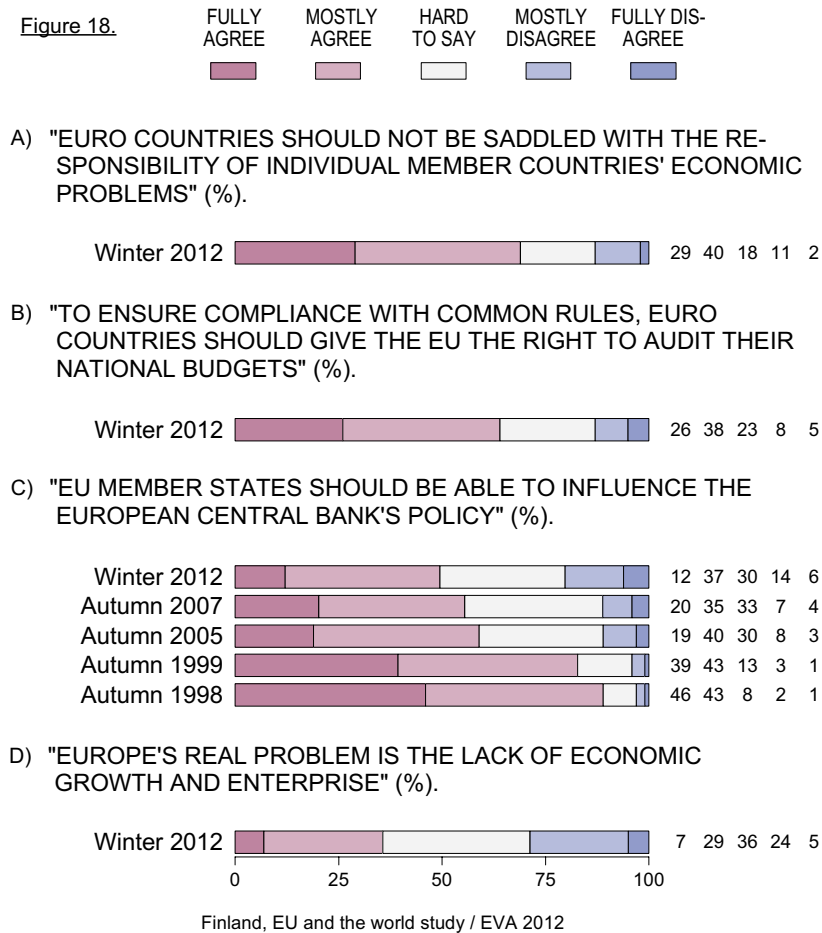


Figure 17. HOW DO YOU REGARD FINLAND'S STANCE ON ISSUES CONCERNING SUPPORTING EURO COUNTRIES THAT HAVE RUN INTO FINANCIAL PROBLEMS? (%).



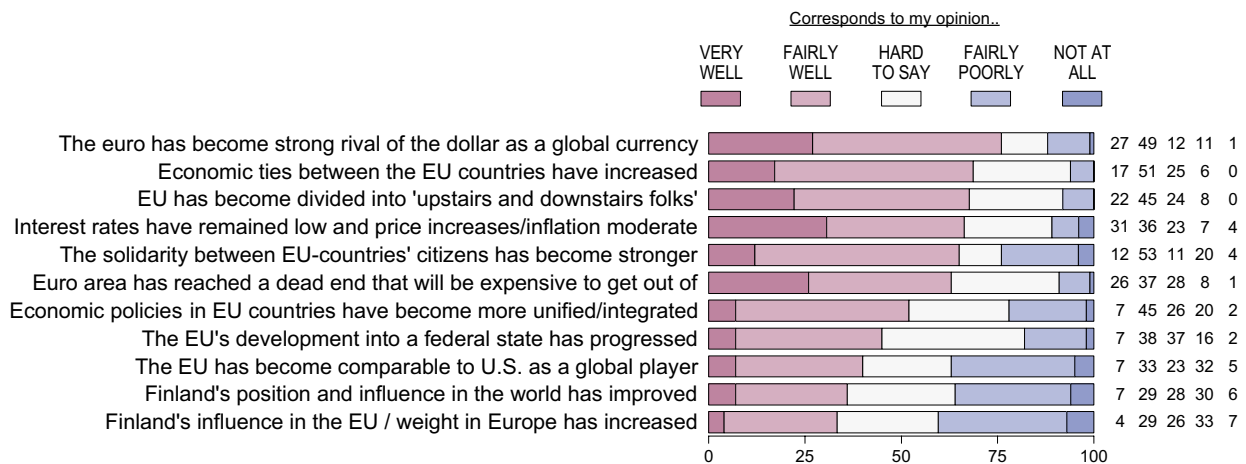
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Figure 18.



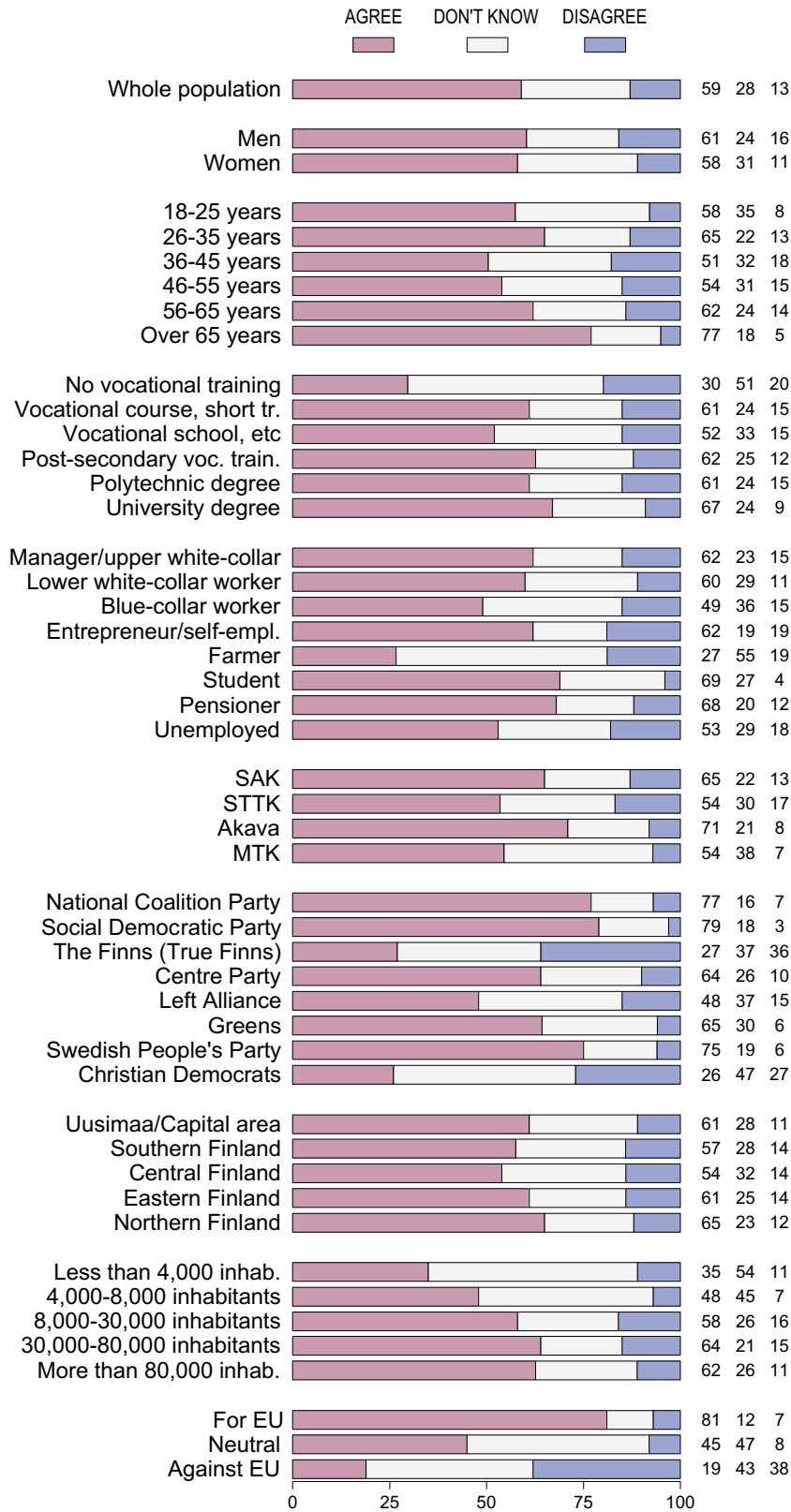
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Figure 19. HOW DO FOLLOWING ALLEGED CONSEQUENCES OF THE INTRODUCTION OF THE EURO CORRESPOND TO YOUR PERSONAL OPINION? (%).



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Figure 20. "RETURNING TO THE MARKKA AS A RESULT OF THE EURO CRISIS WOULD BE UNFORTUNATE FOR ORDINARY CONSUMERS AND DEBTORS" (%).



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Finland's place and policy in the EU

- Perceptions of Finland's voice being heard in Brussels have improved considerably, but satisfaction with the government's actions has not increased accordingly. Even the support of many proponents of the government parties is faltering.
- People want Finland to follow more proactive and also more stringent policies. However, only one-third would be willing to tighten the screws so much that Finland would paralyze the EU's decision-making ability by pursuing its own interests. Finns do not think it would necessarily be a bad idea to improve the EU's decision-making capacity, e.g. by shifting more towards majority-based decisions.

Figure 21. "FINLAND HAS MADE ITS VOICE WELL HEARD IN EU DECISION-MAKING" (%).

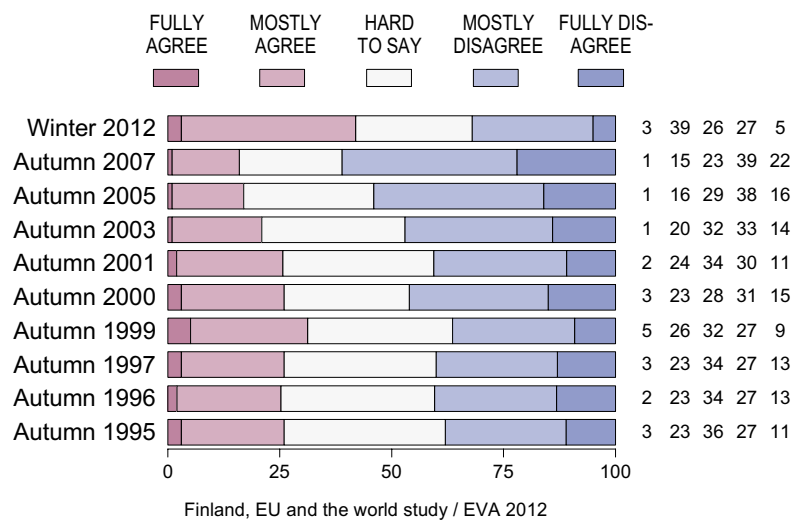


Figure 22. "I AM SATISFIED WITH THE ACTIONS OF OUR COUNTRY'S CURRENT GOVERNMENT IN EU AFFAIRS" (%).

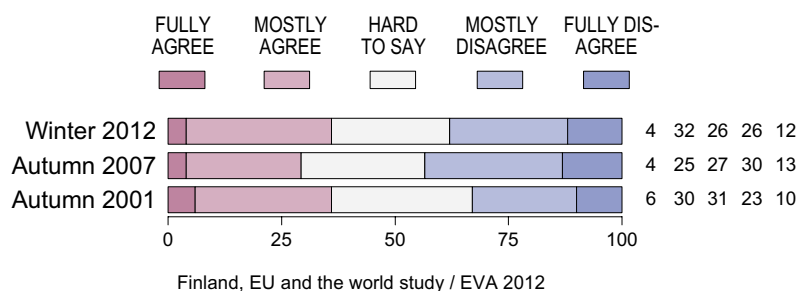


Figure 23. "FINLAND SHOULD, AS A SMALL COUNTRY, EN-GAGE MUCH MORE ACTIVELY IN EU POLICY, SO THAT IT COULD ACTUALLY AFFECT THE DECISIONS OF THE UNION" (%).

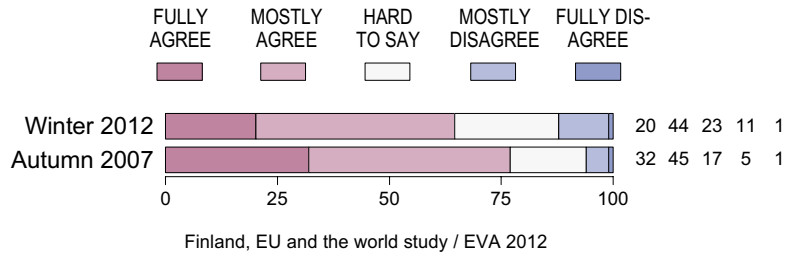


Figure 24. "FINLAND SHOULD PURSUE ITS OWN NATIONAL INTERESTS IN THE EU MUCH MORE DECISIVELY" (%).

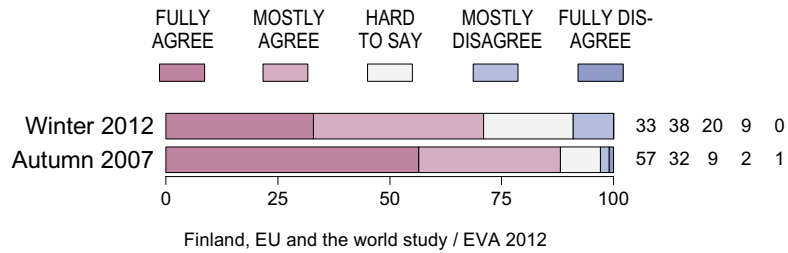


Figure 25.

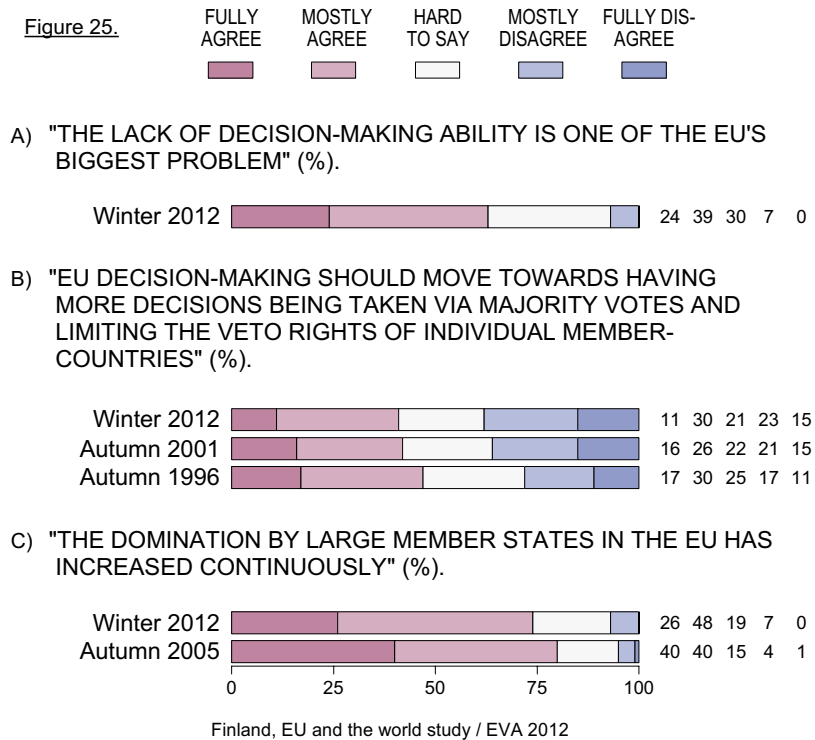
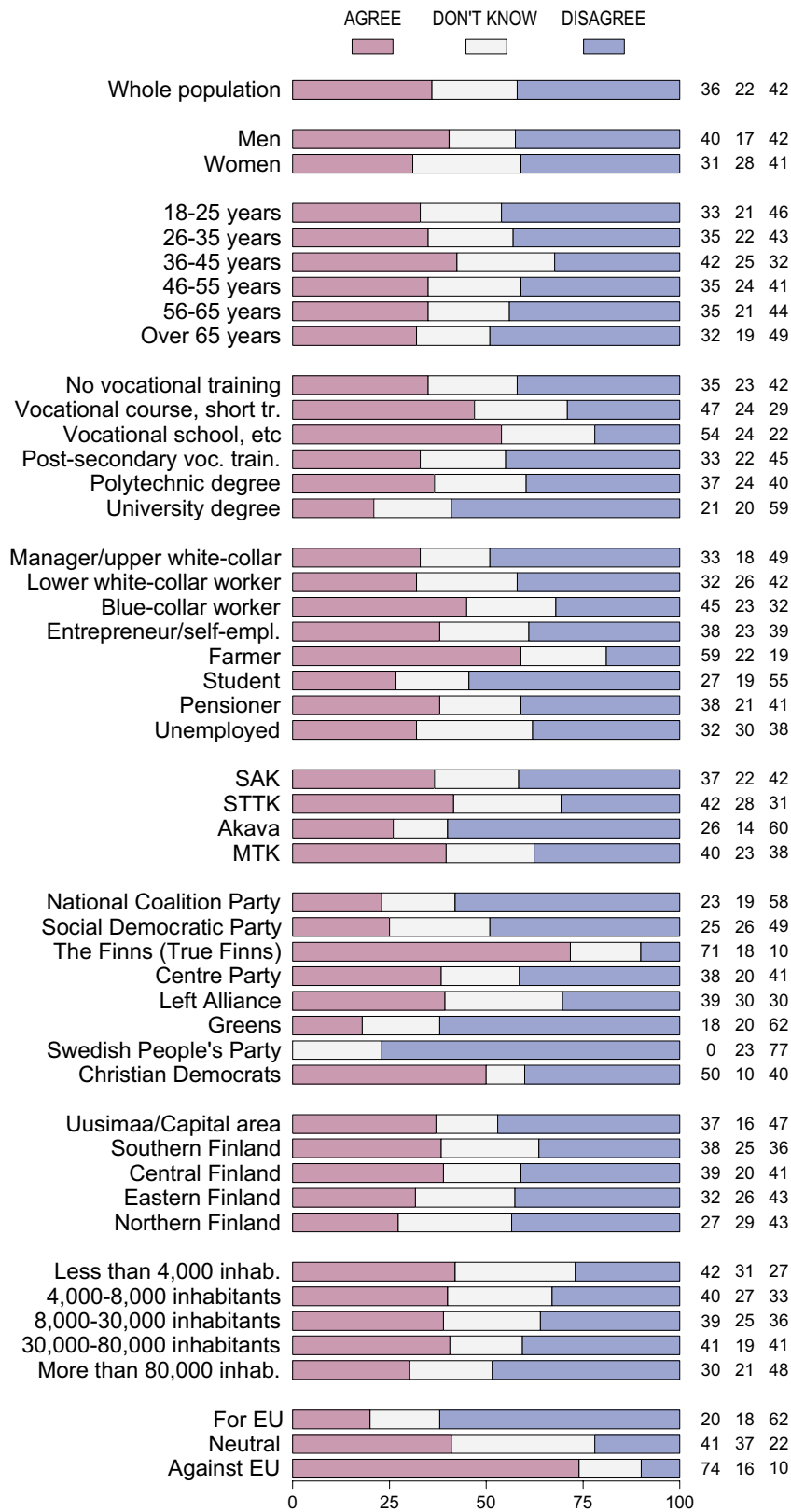


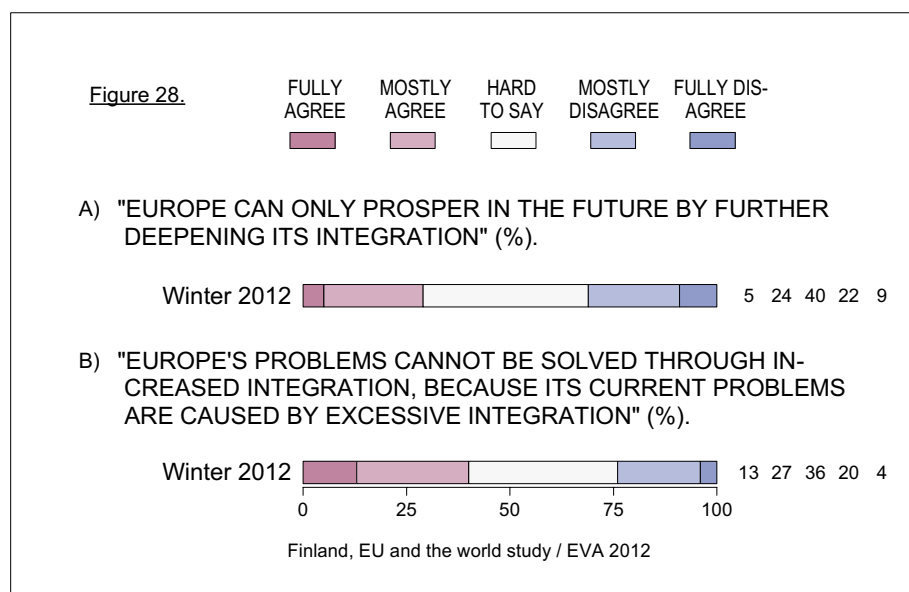
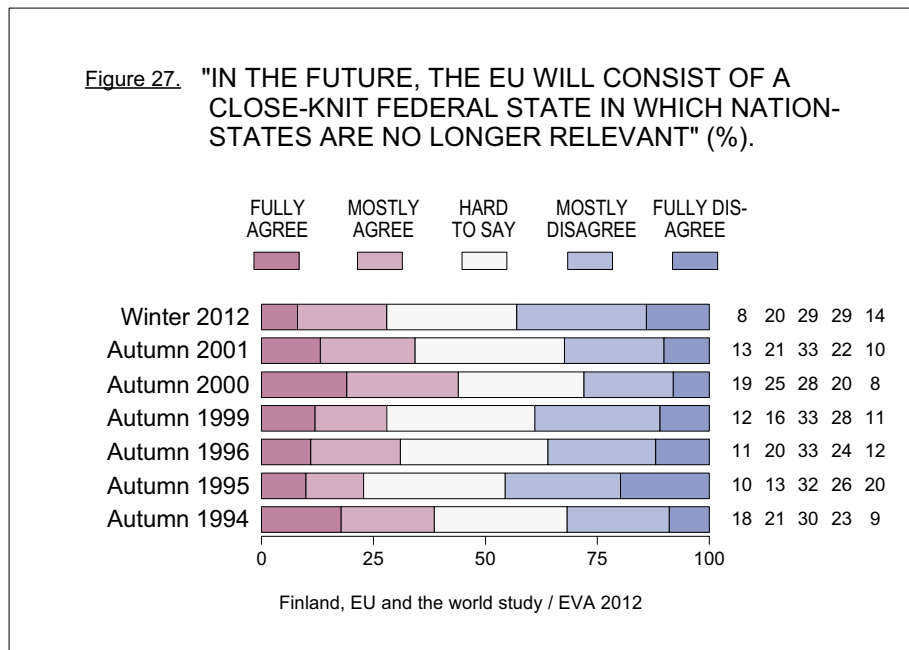
Figure 26. "FINLAND SHOULD BE PURSUING ITS OWN INTERESTS IN THE EU EVEN IF THIS MEANS PARALYZING THE DECISION MAKING ABILITY OF THE EU OR THE EURO AREA" (%).



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Finns' hopes for the future of Europe

- The potential development of the EU into a federal state is viewed negatively by two-thirds of Finns, and they do not express any special desire for deepen integration. Nevertheless, among other things a common foreign policy receives the majority's support.
- For many, it is only a matter of time before weaker euro countries will be required to throw in the towel. In other respects, perceptions of the future development are characterized by caution and restraint. Hardly anyone believes that the EU will break up or that the euro will cease to be used.



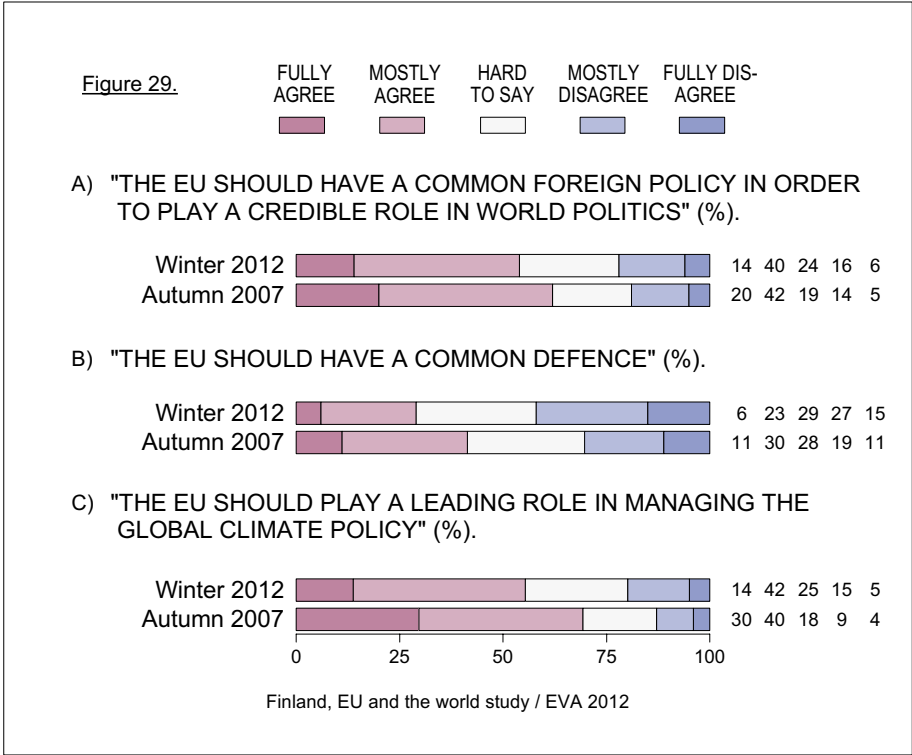
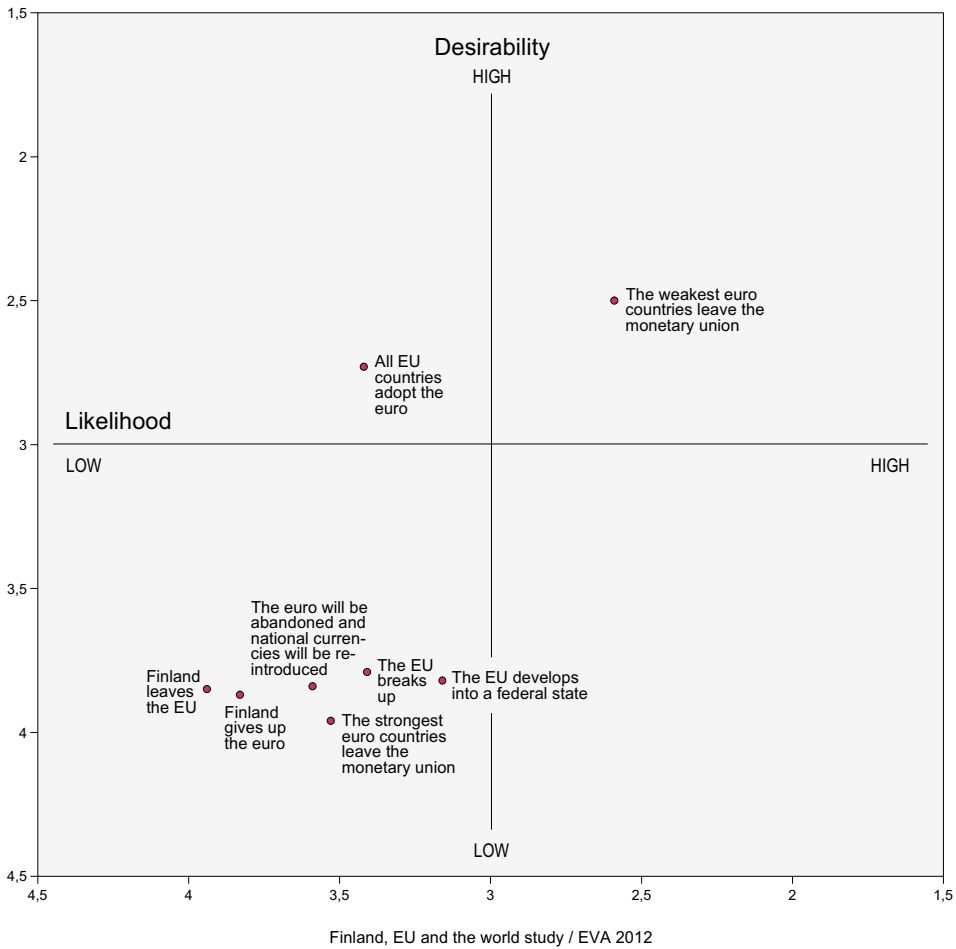


Figure 30. FINNS' ESTIMATES OF DESIRABILITY AND LIKELIHOOD OF POSSIBLE EU-RELATED FUTURE EVENTS AND DEVELOPMENTS OVER THE NEXT 10 YEARS (mean values of 1-to-5 rating scales).



Finland's place in the world

- Finns do not feel that there is an especially great risk of isolationism nowadays. The majority naturally hopes that the decision-makers would focus more on domestic problems, but they do not see this widely leading to isolation.
- Support for Finland's possible NATO membership has decreased greatly. Two-thirds oppose membership, and not even our country's political leadership supporting it could turn Finns' heads. In contrast, attitudes towards our neighbours, the Nordic countries and Russia – despite the problems of the latter – are very positive.

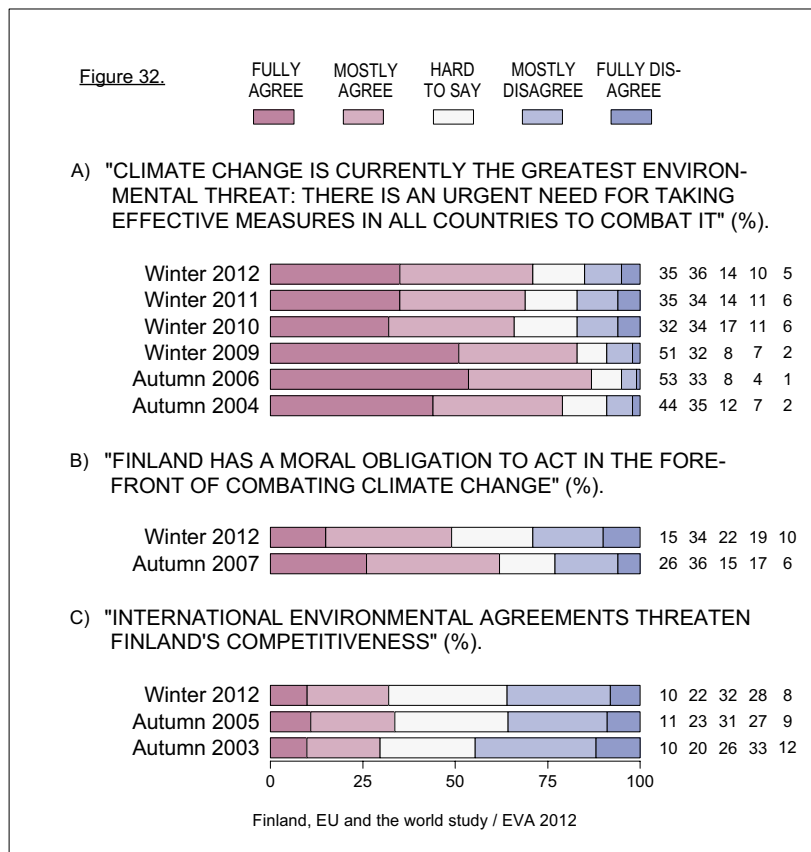
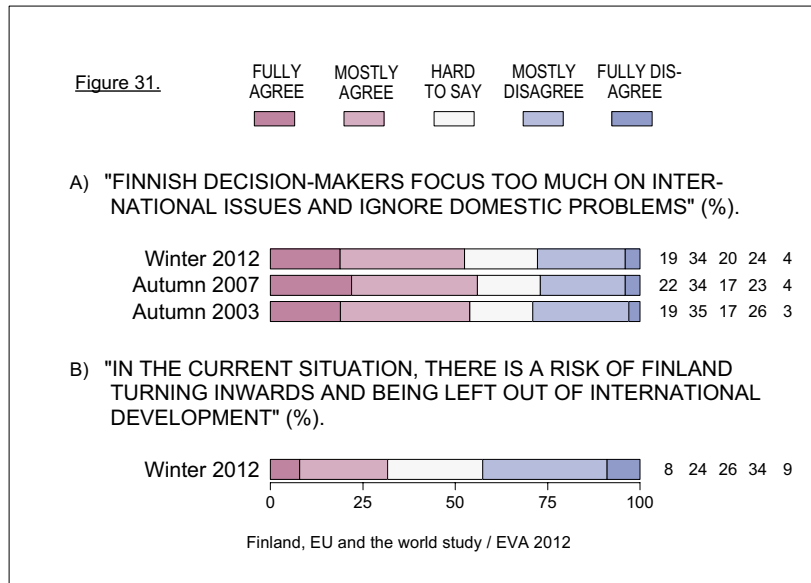


Figure 33. "THE UNITED STATES' ACTIONS IN WORLD POLITICS ARE CORRECT AND ALSO DESERVE THE SUPPORT OF FINNS" (%).

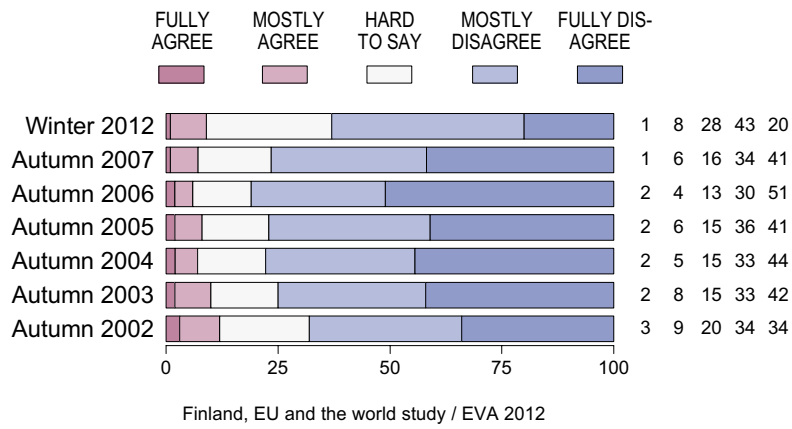


Figure 34.

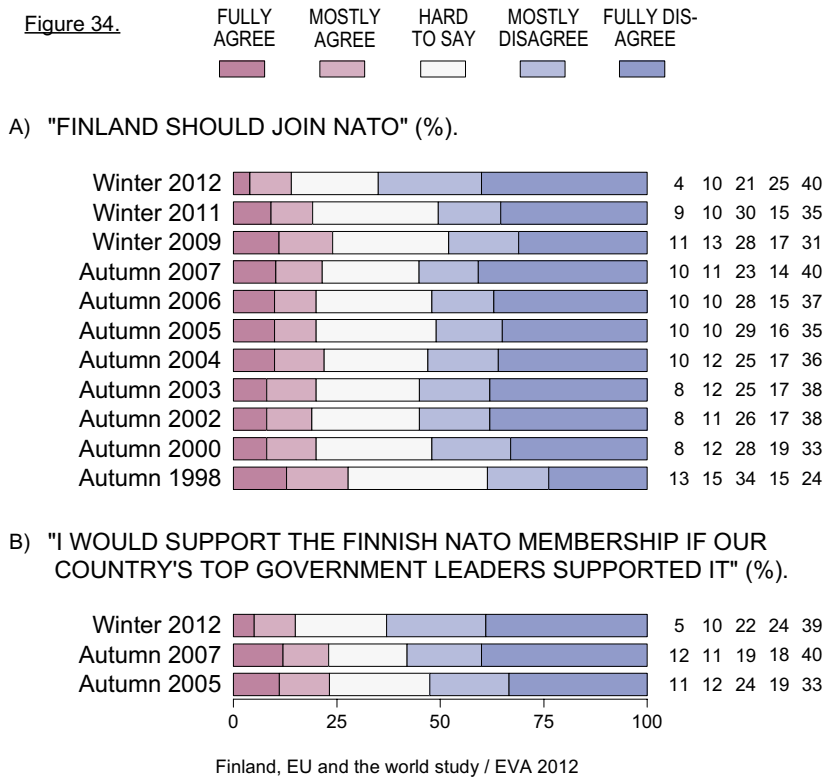


Figure 35. "FINLAND MUST UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES BE ABLE TO BE IN CHARGE OF ITS OWN SECURITY; OTHERS WILL BE OF NO HELP" (%).

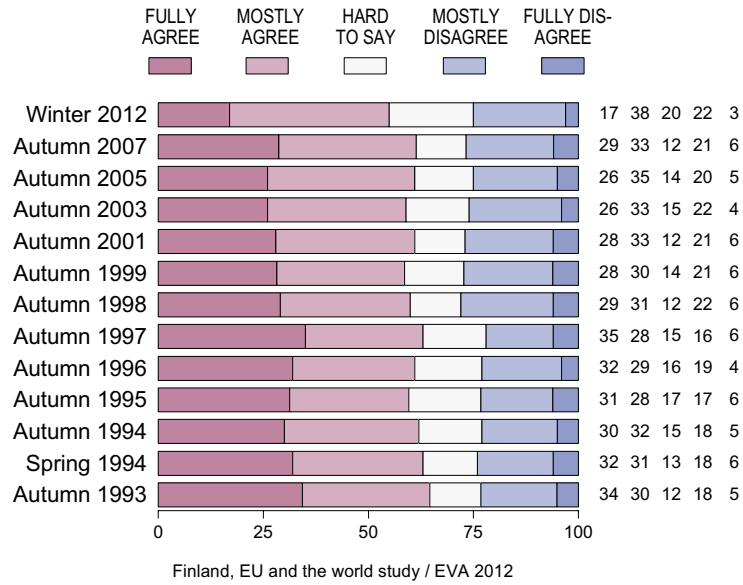


Figure 36. "NORDIC CO-OPERATION IS STILL VERY IMPORTANT TO US DESPITE EU MEMBERSHIP" (%).

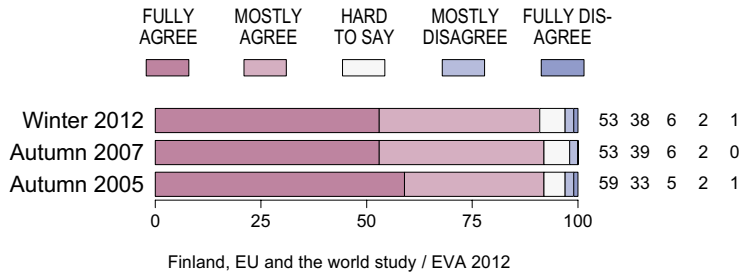
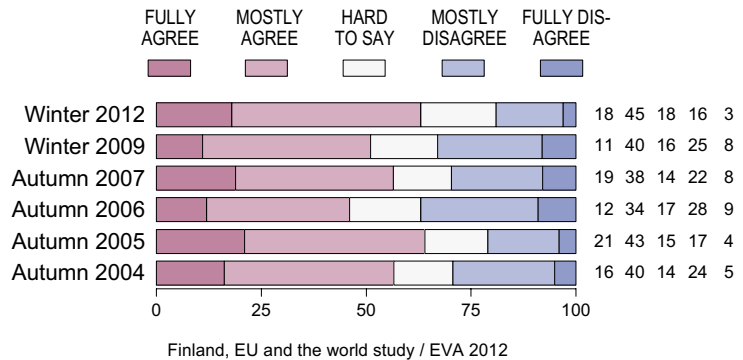


Figure 37. "WHILE RUSSIA HAS ITS PROBLEMS, THERE IS NO REASON FOR FINNS TO HAVE A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD OUR LARGE NEIGHBOUR" (%).



Background information on the study

The study's findings are based on 1271 person's answers. These data were collected during the period of January 12–23, 2012. Respondents represent the population of the entire country (excluding the Åland Islands) between 18–70 years of age.

The data were collected via Taloustutkimus Ltd's internet panel. The target group consisted of a panel selected at random from Finnish residents (excluding Åland) 18–70 years of age representative of the population by age, sex, province of residence, education and occupation / status. In previous studies EVA has used a questionnaire sent by mail.

The data is weighted to represent the population aged 18–70 according to the respondents' age, gender, residential area, education, occupation / status, industry as well as political affiliation (how they would vote in parliamentary elections).

The confidence interval, i.e. the margin of error, for the data at the aggregate level depending on the shape of the distribution (the obtained percentage share) is 2–3 percentage points in either direction.

As in EVA's previous studies, the statistical analysis of the data was performed by Yhdyskuntatutkimus Ltd which has also compiled the graphs presented in the study.

Additional information

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Finnish Business and Policy Forum

Finnish Business and Policy Forum EVA a pro-market think-tank financed by the Finnish business community. It is also a forum for forward-looking discussion for Finnish business leaders.

EVA's task is to identify and evaluate trends that are important for Finnish companies and the society as a whole. EVA aims to provide current information on prevailing trends as well as bring fresh ideas to public debate. EVA publishes reports, organises debates and publishes policy proposals.

Further information: www.eva.fi

