

FINLAND

Country name in English (PCGN recommended name)	Finland
Country name in Finnish Country name in Swedish	Suomi Finland
State title in English (PCGN recommended name)	Republic of Finland
State title in Finnish State title in Swedish	Suomen tasavalta Republiken Finland
Official languages	Finnish (fin), Swedish (swe) ¹
Script	Roman
ISO-3166 country code (alpha-2/alpha-3)	FI/FIN
Capital Finnish/Swedish	Helsinki/Helsingfors ²
Population	5.55 million ³

Introduction

Finland is a Nordic country, with about one third of its territory north of the Arctic Circle. Part of Sweden from the 12th century, it became the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1809, an autonomous part of the Russian Empire until Finland declared independence in 1917. It includes the Swedish-speaking Åland islands in the Baltic Sea, at the entrance to the Gulf of Bothnia, administered as the autonomous region of Åland.

Geographical names policy

Official place names in Finland reflect the official language(s) of the area and can be found on maps produced by the Finnish national mapping agency and standardisation authority for geographic names [Maanmittauslaitos](#) (MML), also known as the National Land Survey of Finland (NLS). PCGN recommends that the place name spellings found on these products should be shown on UK government products.

Finland is divided into regions at first-order administrative level (ADM1). For most regions, the Finnish name should be shown first, followed by the Swedish name. (See Administrative Divisions section below for more information.) Swedish is the sole official language in Åland.

The regions are divided into municipalities at second-order administrative level (ADM2). In monolingual municipalities, PCGN recommends that only the place name in the official language of that area should be shown on UK government products. In bilingual municipalities, the name of the majority language should be shown first, followed by the minority language name. In Saami-language areas, the Finnish name should be shown in primary position, followed by possible North Saami (sme), Inari Saami (smn) and Skolt Saami (sms) names (in that order) and then the Swedish name (if there is one) if there is space.

¹ Both Finnish and Swedish are the national official languages, Saami languages have local official status, see 'Languages' section. ISO 639-3 codes are given for languages mentioned in this Factfile.

² It is PCGN policy to recommend showing both the Finnish and Swedish names for the capital city on UK government products.

³ https://www.stat.fi/til/vrm_en.html, January 2022.

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Here are some examples of the order of municipality names that PCGN would currently recommend. These may change depending on the balance of the population after each census. (See Administrative Divisions section below for more information):

Jakobstad/Pietarsaari (swe/fin)
 Jomala (swe)
 Kronoby/Kruunupyy (swe/fin)
 Kuopio (fin)
 Larsmo/Luoto (swe/fin)
 Lemland (swe)
 Oulu/Uleåborg (fin/swe)
 Ruokolahti/Ruokolax (fin/swe)
 Inari/Anár/Aanaar/Aanar/Enare (fin/sme/smn/sms/swe)

Languages

Finnish and Swedish are the official languages of Finland⁴. [Statistics Finland](#) states that 86.9% of the population speak Finnish as their Mother Tongue, 5.2% speak Swedish and 0.04% speak Saami. According to the [Finnish Constitution](#) the indigenous Saami people have the right to maintain and develop their own language and culture. The [Saami Language Council](#) states that there are three dialects of Saami that have official status as minority languages in Finland: Inari Saami (smn), North Saami (sme) and Skolt Saami (sms).

Most geographical names in Finland are Finnish, but in multilingual areas of Finland, geographical names may be found in two or more languages and these names may be found on maps, road and street signs in all local languages (with the majority language name first).

Swedish place names may be found on the south and west coasts of Finland, particularly in the Ostrobothnia region, where the Swedish-speaking population have lived since the 12th century, and in Åland, where Swedish is the sole official language. Saami is spoken as a minority language in the four northern-most municipalities⁵ of Finland.

Inventory of characters (and their Unicode encodings⁶):

The **Finnish** alphabet uses all 26 letters of the Roman alphabet and contains the following letter-diacritic combinations:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Å	00C5	å	00E5
Ä	00C4	ä	00E4
Ö	00D6	ö	00F6

The **Swedish** alphabet uses all 26 letters of the Roman alphabet plus the following letter-diacritic combinations:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Å	00C5	å	00E5
Ä	00C4	ä	00E4
Ö	00D6	ö	00F6

The vowels with diacritics come at the end of the Finnish and Swedish alphabets. They represent distinct sounds and should be strictly distinguished from the vowels a and o.

⁴ <https://oikeusministerio.fi/en/constitution-of-finland>

⁵ Utsjoki, Inari, Enontekiö, Sodankylä.

⁶ See www.unicode.org

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The **North Saami** alphabet uses 22 letters of the Roman alphabet (not 'q', 'w', 'x' or 'y') and contains the following additional characters:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Á	00C1	á	00E1
Ð	0110	ð	0111
Ƒ	0166	ƒ	0167
Č	010C	č	010D
Š	0160	š	0161
Ž	017D	ž	017E
Ɔ	014A	ɲ	014B

The **Inari Saami** alphabet uses 23 letters of the Roman alphabet (not 'q', 'w' or 'x') and contains the following additional characters:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Ä	00C4	ä	00E4
Â	00C2	â	00E2
Á	00C1	á	00E1
Č	010C	č	010D
Ð	0110	ð	0111
Š	0160	š	0161
Ž	017D	ž	017E
Ɔ	014A	ɲ	014B

The **Skolt Saami** alphabet uses 22 letters of the Roman alphabet (not 'q', 'w', 'x' or 'y') and contains the following additional characters:

Upper-case character	Unicode encoding	Lower-case character	Unicode encoding
Å	00C5	å	00E5
Ä	00C4	ä	00E4
Â	00C2	â	00E2
Á	00C1	á	00E1
Č	010C	č	010D
Ɔ	01B7	ɟ	0292
Ž	01EE	ž	01EF
Ð	0110	ð	0111
Ĝ	01E6	ĝ	01E7
G	01E4	g	01E5
Ķ	01E8	ķ	01E9
Õ	00D5	õ	00F5
Š	0160	š	0161
Ž	017D	ž	017E
Ɔ	014A	ɲ	014B

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Administrative divisions

Finland is divided into 19 regions (fin: *maakunta*, swe: *landskapet*) at first-order administrative level (ADM1), each of which is run by a regional council (fin: *liitto*, swe: *förbund*). The regions are divided into municipalities (fin: *kunta*, swe: *kommun*) at second-order level (ADM2).

At the beginning of 2021 there were 309 municipalities in Finland, of which 260 are monolingual Finnish, 18 bilingual with a Finnish majority, 16 monolingual Swedish, 15 bilingual with a Swedish majority and 4 where Saami is spoken as a minority language. The Council of State decides after each ten-year census if a municipality is monolingual or bilingual. A municipality is considered bilingual if at least 8% of the population speak the minority language, or if the number of speakers amounts to more than 3,000.⁷ The next census will take place in 2022, when the majorities may change. More information can be found in the [Toponymic Guidelines for Finland](#).

The table below shows the Finnish and Swedish names for the regions. For most regions, the Finnish names should be shown first, followed by the Swedish names. The exceptions are Åland where Swedish is the only official language and the Ostrobothnia region in western Finland which has a Swedish-speaking majority where both names should be shown in the order Swedish/Finnish. Only the Region and the PPLA have a corresponding Finnish name in Åland, other geographical features in that region only have a Swedish name.

Finnish name	Swedish name	PCGN recommended name	Administrative centre name (PPLA)	ISO 3166-2 code
Lappi	Lappland	Lappi/Lappland ⁸	Rovaniemi	FI-10
Pohjois-Pohjanmaa	Norra Österbotten	Pohjois-Pohjanmaa/Norra Österbotten	Oulu	FI-14
Kainuu	Kajanaland	Kainuu/Kajanaland	Kajaani	FI-05
Pohjois-Karjala	Norra Karelen	Pohjois-Karjala/Norra Karelen	Joensuu	FI-13
Pohjois-Savo	Norra Savolax	Pohjois-Savo/Norra Savolax	Kuopio	FI-15
Etelä-Savo	Södra Savolax	Etelä-Savo/Södra Savolax	Mikkeli	FI-04
Etelä-Karjala	Södra Karelen	Etelä-Karjala/Södra Karelen	Lappeenranta	FI-02
Keski-Suomi	Mellersta Finland	Keski-Suomi/Mellersta Finland	Jyväskylä	FI-08
Etelä-Pohjanmaa	Södra Österbotten	Etelä-Pohjanmaa/Södra Österbotten	Seinäjoki	FI-03

⁷ [Toponymic Guidelines for Finland v.4.11 April 2021](#)

⁸ The accepted English name of the Region is Lapland, which is the anglicised version of the name, but as a term for the wider cultural region, traditionally inhabited by the Saami people, the name Sápmi should be used. The Sápmi region stretches over Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. The term 'Lap' for its inhabitants is now considered pejorative.

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Finnish name	Swedish name	PCGN recommended name	Administrative centre name (PPLA)	ISO 3166-2 code
Pohjanmaa	Österbotten	Österbotten/Pohjanmaa (<i>swe/fin</i>)	Vaasa/Vasa (<i>fin/swe</i>) ⁹	FI-12
Keski-Pohjanmaa	Mellersta Österbotten	Keski-Pohjanmaa/ Mellersta Österbotten	Kokkola/Karleby	FI-07
Pirkanmaa	Birkaland	Pirkanmaa/Birkaland	Tampere	FI-11
Satakunta	Satakunta	Satakunta	Pori	FI-17
Päijät-Häme	Päijänne-Tavastland	Päijät-Häme/Päijänne-Tavastland	Lahti	FI-16
Kanta-Häme ¹⁰	Egentliga Tavastland	Kanta-Häme/Egentliga Tavastland	Hämeenlinna	FI-06
Kymenlaakso	Kymmenedalen	Kymenlaakso/Kymmenedalen	Kotka, Kouvola ¹¹	FI-09
Uusimaa	Nyland	Uusimaa/Nyland	Helsinki/ Helsingfors	FI-18
Varsinais-Suomi	Egentliga Finland	Varsinais-Suomi/Egentliga Finland	Turku/Åbo	FI-19
Ahvenanmaa	Åland ¹²	Åland/Ahvenanmaa (<i>swe/fin</i>)	Mariehamn/ Maarianhamina (<i>swe/fin</i>)	FI-01

Anglicised names exist for some of the Regions and they are shown below:

Lappi/Lappland - Lapland

Österbotten/Pohjanmaa - Ostrobothnia

Keski-Pohjanmaa/Mellersta Österbotten - Central Ostrobothnia

Pohjois-Pohjanmaa/Norra Österbotten - North Ostrobothnia

Etelä-Pohjanmaa/Södra Österbotten - South Ostrobothnia

Pohjois-Karjala/Norra Karelen - North Karelia

Etelä-Karjala/Södra Karelen - South Karelia

Pohjois-Savo/Norra Savolax - North Savo

Etelä-Savo/Södra Savolax - South Savo

Keski-Suomi/Mellersta Finland - Central Finland

Varsinais-Suomi/Egentliga Finland - Southwest Finland

The Anglicised names may be used in writing, but given the various language forms that may already be shown, would not usually be included on UK government maps.

⁹ Note that although the Region has a Swedish-speaking majority, the administrative centre has a Finnish-speaking majority.

¹⁰ Sometimes referred to as Häme.

¹¹ The region of Kymenlaakso has two administrative centres, one at Kotka and one at Kouvola.

¹² Åland is an autonomous region of Finland <https://um.fi/the-special-status-of-the-aland-islands>

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Other Significant Locations

PCGN Approved Name	Name in other languages	Location	Feature Type
Karelia ¹³	Karjala (Finnish, Estonian, Karelian) Карелия Kareliya (Russian)	64° N, 032° E	Geographic region
Sápmi	Lappi (Finnish) Lapland (Swedish) Lapland (Norwegian) Лапландия <i>Laplandiya</i> (Russian)	68° N, 025° E	Cultural region
Gulf of Bothnia	Pohjanlahti (Finnish) Bottniska viken (Swedish) Bottnischer Meerbusen (German)	63° N, 020° E	Gulf
Baltic Sea	Itämeri (Finnish) Östersjön (Swedish) Østersøen (Danish) Läänemeri (Estonian) Ostsee (German) Балтийское море Baltiyskoye more (Russian)	56° N, 018° E	Sea
Gulf of Finland	Suomenlahti (Finnish) Finska viken (Swedish) Финский залив Finskiy zaliv (Russian) Soome laht (Estonian) Finnischer Meerbusen (German)	60° N, 027° E	Gulf
Saimaa	Saimen (Swedish)	61° 15" N, 028° 15" E	Lake

Useful references

US Board on Geographic Names GONet Names Server: <http://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/>
 US Board on Geographic Names Geographic Names Standardization Policy for Finland: https://geonames.nga.mil/gns/html/Policies/Finland_Country_Policy_webversion_Dec_2017.pdf
 The Unicode Consortium: www.unicode.org
 International Organization for Standardization (ISO): www.iso.org
 ISO Online Browsing Platform records for Finland: <https://www.iso.org/obp/ui#iso:code:3166:FI>
 Languages: www.ethnologue.com , www.omniglot.com
 BBC Country Profile: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17288360>
 CIA World Factbook – Finland: <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/finland/>
 Statistics Finland: https://www.stat.fi/index_en.html
 Toponymic Guidelines of Finland: https://www.kotus.fi/files/2604/Toponymic_guidelines.pdf

Compiled by PCGN
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info@pcgn.org.uk

¹³ Karelia, home of the Karelian people, is a region now largely in Russia, stretching from the White Sea in Russia to the Gulf of Finland. Karelian is a Finnic language, closely related to Finnish.