



# Samfundet Folkhälsan's strategy 2026–2030

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## 1. Summary of the strategy

Samfundet Folkhälsan i svenska Finland (Folkhälsan) is the largest Swedish-speaking organization in Finland that works to promote health and wellbeing. We contribute to a better society through research, service provision, expertise, and a strong membership organization.

Our strategy for 2026–2030 is grounded in today's major public health challenges, current societal structures, as well as our expertise, strengths, and existing activities.

Folkhälsan's ambition is to have a central role in and, within certain carefully selected areas, influence and contribute to positive societal development. The strategy focuses on clear priorities, a long-term perspective, and achieving measurable societal benefit with a focus on health and wellbeing. This is pursued under the overarching theme **Brain health at critical stages of life**, within three strategic programs:

### **A good start in life**

– preventing exhaustion among parents of young children, empowering families, and ensuring safety for children

### **Strengthened confidence in the future among children and adolescents aged 9–16**

– reducing loneliness, social exclusion, and mental health challenges

### **Strengthened brain health among older adults**

– preventing and reducing the negative effects of cognitive decline

Through our strategic programs, and drawing on our strong values, long experience, and unique combination of research, service provision, expertise, and volunteer- and association-based activities, we aim to be a socially transformative actor:

*Pioneers in health and wellbeing.*

## 2. Background and context, Folkhälsan 2025

### 2.1 External factors

These are the key external factors shaping the conditions for our strategy:

**Politics:** The wellbeing services counties in Finland are relatively new and are undergoing extensive reforms and transitions. Political governance is currently short-term in nature, creating uncertainty. At the same time, requirements and regulations for service providers are increasing.

**Finances:** Public funding is decreasing, there is uncertainty regarding inflation, and market competition is challenging. The wellbeing services counties face resource shortages as well as increasing demands for efficiency and quality. They need to develop new models to fulfill their societal mission.

**Social factors:** There is continued polarization in health and wellbeing. Finland has a high proportion of parents of young children experiencing exhaustion. Social isolation and loneliness constitute a significant public health challenge across the entire life course. Finland's population is aging rapidly, and the number of people living with cognitive impairment is expected to increase sharply over the next 15 years.

**Technology:** Digitalization and AI create new opportunities to develop services, but they also require investments in technology and skills development, particularly in data security.

**Ecology:** Climate change and environmentally related health risks affect everyone in society, especially children, people with illnesses, and older adults. Sustainability requirements for societal actors are increasing, requiring them to take responsibility for systematically reducing environmental impact and promoting sustainable lifestyles.

**Laws and ethics:** Ethical guidelines, sustainability, transparency, and equal access to services are increasingly important principles to safeguard in the Finnish welfare society.

### 2.2 Starting point Folkhälsan 2025

Folkhälsan is a public-benefit, non-profit organization founded in 1921, which has developed into one of the most significant actors in public health work in Swedish-speaking Finland.

Throughout our first 100 years of operation, we have been a major contributor to societal development across several different areas. Some examples of fields we have focused on

include initiatives in school healthcare in Finland, children's oral health, and adolescent wellbeing.

Samfundet Folkhälsan i svenska Finland fulfills its purpose of promoting public health in Swedish-speaking Finland by operating its own activities, through Folkhälsan associations, through companies wholly or partially owned by Folkhälsan, or in collaboration with other partners.

The Folkhälsan Group includes several types of activities:

- Folkhälsan Research Center
- Four wholly owned operational companies: Folkhälsan Välfärd (welfare), Folkhälsans Allaktivitetshus på Åland (activities in Åland), Folkhälsan Utbildning (education), and Folkhälsans Fastigheter (properties)
- Folkhälsans förbund, four regional associations, and 97 local associations

Samfundet Folkhälsan is responsible for the overall direction, strategic priorities, finances, and brand of the entire Folkhälsan Group. At the time of developing this strategy, Folkhälsan has approximately 1,400 employees, over 18,000 members, and assets of around one billion euros. The returns on these assets are used to finance the Folkhälsan Research Center, Folkhälsans förbund, and the administration of Samfundet Folkhälsan.

The four wholly owned operational companies are non-profit, and each is intended to cover its costs through the revenues it generates. Samfundet Folkhälsan is governed by the members of the association through the general assembly and the board of Samfundet Folkhälsan.

Samfundet Folkhälsan's statutes were revised in 2025 and will take effect in January 2026. At that time, the size of the board will be reduced from 14 to 9 members, while the number of possible members will increase from 80 to 120, strengthening the organization's access to expertise.

Folkhälsan functions as a research organization, service provider, and expert and civil society organization. This gives us a unique breadth and deep societal anchoring. Folkhälsan's staff, with their broad expertise and strong commitment, together with the strength of our volunteer and association activities, form our foundation and make our vision possible in practice.

## 2.3 Samfundet Folkhälsan's mission, vision, and values

### **Mission (purpose clause):**

Samfundet Folkhälsan i svenska Finland is tasked with promoting health among the people across Swedish-speaking Finland, partly through comprehensive scientific research on the population's mental and physical health, and partly through practical measures that advance public health.

**Vision:**

Pioneers in health and wellbeing.

**Values:****Competence**

We continuously learn and develop to remain knowledgeable and credible. Our work contributes to better public health.

**Commitment**

We work together to promote wellbeing, participation, and community. We strive to influence societal development.

**Courage**

We are innovative and seek new, sustainable solutions. We stand up for what we believe in. We work to promote equality, fair treatment, and diversity.

## 2.4 Folkhälsan's unique strengths and opportunities

Folkhälsan has several strategic strengths:

- A strong brand
- A stable financial position that allows for long-term action
- Committed and competent staff
- A broad range of activities spanning research, service provision, expertise, and organized volunteer and association activities

To leverage these strengths, we must be able to lead and develop an operational model, which initially is complex, involving different financing and governance structures.

Folkhälsan has the potential to be a leading actor in addressing some of today's major public health challenges and contributing to the sustainable development of the welfare society.

To realize this potential, we must be able to set clear priorities, harness digitalization, strengthen collaboration between research and activities, and establish strategic partnerships with external actors.

We also need to address increasing regulation and fact resistance, while maintaining preparedness and the capacity to respond to rapid and significant societal changes that could substantially alter the conditions for our activities.

## 2.5 Current situation analysis – major challenges in public health

Folkhälsan's activities are influenced by a range of external factors that together shape the conditions for our strategic work. In the preparatory work for the 2026–2030 strategy, we carefully analyzed and assessed political, economic, social, technological, ecological, legal, and ethical external factors, and developed the strategy with these factors in mind.

Today, the major challenges in public health in Finland span several areas:

- increased mental health challenges among children, families with young children, adolescents, and older adults
- a rapidly aging population where the number of people living with chronic illnesses and cognitive impairment is expected to increase sharply over the next 15 years
- social inequality in health, strongly linked to socioeconomic factors
- lifestyle-related diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular diseases
- environmental health risks
- the risk of rapidly spreading infectious diseases

In Finland, the welfare society is built around a strong, tax-funded public sector, with interaction between the state, municipalities, and wellbeing services counties, alongside an active civil society. Within this model and regarding selected public health challenges, Folkhälsan can play a strong, pioneering role.

## 3. Our Strategy 2026–2030

### 3.1 Strategic objective

Folkhälsan has a unique opportunity to address some of the above-mentioned challenges by combining research, service provision, expertise, volunteer- and association-based activities, and by being courageous, innovative, and seeking strong partnerships to contribute to positive societal development.

The overarching strategic objective is to be pioneers in health and wellbeing under the theme Brain Health at Critical Stages of Life, through three strategic programs:

- **A good start in life**
  - preventing exhaustion among parents of young children, empowering families, and ensuring safety for children
- **Strengthened confidence in the future among children and adolescents aged 9–16**
  - reducing loneliness, social exclusion, and mental health challenges
- **Strengthened brain health among older adults**
  - preventing and reducing the negative effects of cognitive decline

We work long-term within these programs to benefit society, with a focus on health and wellbeing.

By “pioneers” we mean that Folkhälsan aims to influence and contribute to positive societal development within these strategic programs, with a focus on the welfare society. This can be achieved, for example, by developing new models that are sustainable and can be implemented broadly in society, by influencing legislation, and by being a leading voice in public debate.

We work based on facts and evidence, in ways that leverage Folkhälsan's full potential. The commitment and continued competence development of Folkhälsan's staff and volunteers is a crucial part of ensuring successful implementation of the strategy.

A survey of staff and elected representatives conducted at the start of the strategy process also shows strong support for focusing on selected target groups, specifically mental health among children and youth and the health of older adults. Staff also consider a clearer focus necessary to achieve greater impact and avoid fragmentation.

### 3.2 Strategy implementation: themes, programs, and foundations

Samfundet Folkhälsan's strategy for 2026–2030 is grounded in two major themes:

- **Brain health at critical stages of life**, with three prioritized strategic programs for selected age groups
- **Critical foundations**, to create optimal conditions for development within the strategic programs

Samfundet Folkhälsan is comprehensively committed long-term to three strategic programs targeting children, youth, and older adults under the common umbrella **Brain health at critical stages of life**. The target groups for the programs are chosen because they represent critical life stages—“windows of opportunity”—that have a long-lasting impact on a person's wellbeing.

- **A good start in life** – the goal is to prevent exhaustion among parents of young children in Finland and to empower families while ensuring safety for children. The initiatives include early support, strengthened protective factors, and a daily-life culture that promotes mental health and digital balance. Professionals, civil society, and employers are mobilized to give families support and children security.
- **Strengthened confidence in the future for 9–16-year-olds** – the goal is to reduce loneliness, social exclusion, and mental health challenges among 9–16-year-olds, while also strengthening their sense of meaning and participation. The work focuses on developing and establishing a national model that applies effective

early promotion, prevention, and intervention methods to enhance youth resilience, mental health, and optimism about the future.

- **Strengthened brain health among older adults** – the goal is to prevent and reduce the negative effects of cognitive decline among older adults, enabling more people to maintain wellbeing for longer and live more independent lives with preserved quality of life. Preventive and individualized care is made possible through research-based initiatives, allowing older adults to lead meaningful lives within their communities. The goal is to extend the period of independent living and delay the need for extensive interventions. Particular emphasis is placed on interventions that support brain health and strengthen networks and resources for those with early cognitive decline.

Focusing on these three target groups does not mean that other important issues are neglected or that Folkhälsan's activities are limited to these areas; rather, the strategic programs provide a clear direction and prioritization over time.

The programs aim to test, develop, and establish pioneering national models through coordinated efforts among professionals, civil society, and decision-makers. Each program can include three levels of treatment: health promotion, prevention, and intervention. Together, these initiatives aim to create a more inclusive, family-friendly, and memory-supportive society. Health promotion efforts focus on strengthening what is already healthy by building community and encouraging positive habits; prevention focuses on the development and evaluation of evidence-based models; and intervention involves targeted support for individuals. To create the greatest possible societal benefit over time, the primary focus should be on health promotion and the broader general population. However, pilot projects, development, and evaluation take place in smaller groups. The approach should be flexible and allow room to question existing solutions, as well as opportunities to test and develop new ones.

The work is grounded in knowledge and analysis. By identifying needs and gaps in knowledge, methods based on research and evidence are developed and tested. To ensure implementation, competence and capacity are built both within and outside the organization, enabling methods to be applied efficiently and with high quality in practice. Results and lessons learned are disseminated through collaboration and strategic partnerships that strengthen joint public health work and contribute to sustainable solutions. Through clearer governance, professional leadership, and a learning organization, the strategy is translated into action and creates lasting impact to promote public health and contribute to sustainable societal development.

The strategic programs are based on the areas identified during the strategy process where Folkhälsan can exert influence at the societal level. Within the framework of these programs, we will develop pilot projects and allocate time and resources, as well as establish clear objectives and indicators to measure progress. We must remain attentive to changes in society to ensure the continued relevance of our priorities.



To create the best possible conditions for the strategic programs, we have identified several **critical foundations**:

- **Develop the operating model and resource management:** During the strategy period, Folkhälsan Group's operating model will be further developed to fully support and reinforce the strategic direction.
- **Clear strategy for the central functions:** IT, Communications, HR, and Legal Services are to be organized and governed with a balance between centralization and proximity to the activities. Transparency in costs and a clear division of responsibilities are essential, as is optimizing how these functions best support the activities and Samfundet's overall strategy.
- **Develop and implement a new property strategy:** Folkhälsan has property holdings in more than 40 locations across Swedish-speaking Finland, and they comprise various legal forms, intended for different types of activities. The strategy should clarify priorities and governance tools for long-term strategic property ownership.
- **Implement the investment strategy:** The investment strategy will be developed during autumn 2025 and will provide a framework for investments to ensure financial sustainability. The investment strategy should include clear principles for total return, risk management, strategic allocation, reporting, and how we adjust the portfolio over time. A sustainability policy for investments will be developed in 2026.
- **A Sustainable Path Forward for Folkhälsan Utbildning:** The education activities are facing major societal changes, and we must adapt to the different conditions at Norrvalla, Solvalla, and within Föregångarna.

Initially, greater emphasis will be placed on the critical foundations, while the strategic programs will gradually receive increased focus over time.

### 3.3 Sustainability

During the strategy period, we will carry out a structured effort to align Samfundet Folkhälsan with the UN's sustainable development goals. In parallel, the operating companies will review and further develop their sustainability strategies, using the EU Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) as the overarching framework.

### 3.4 Program objectives

We will begin the strategy period by answering a number of key questions within the framework of the three strategic programs, forming the basis for the development of

several pilot initiatives. This work will also include identifying external strategic partners that can provide broad societal value, help strengthen the strategic direction, and contribute additional knowledge.

We also need to develop methods to measure our societal impact, assess the effects of the efforts made within the strategic programs, and go through the research we already have, where knowledge gaps exist, and how we can address them. This initial work will lead to a model for how we proceed, create conditions for innovation, and allocate resources to the initiatives.

For the three strategic programs, we have established the following overarching objectives and guidelines:

**A good start in life – preventing exhaustion among parents of young children, empowering families, and ensuring safety for children**

The birth rate in Finland is low, and in our individualized society, exhaustion among parents of young children is widespread. Research also shows that support is often not available in the immediate surroundings of families in Finland.

Folkhälsan has the expertise and capacity, through its activities and in collaboration with relevant partners, to promote sustainable parenting.

Together with partners, Folkhälsan is driving change toward a more family-friendly society. This requires Folkhälsan to drive changes in attitudes and norms at all levels of society.

We develop implementable operational models that strengthen the caregiving around the child, the interaction between children and parents, and the confidence in “good-enough” parenting.

**Strengthened confidence in the future among 9–16-year-olds – reducing loneliness, social exclusion, and mental health challenges**

Research shows that a growing proportion of young people experience mental health challenges and symptoms of anxiety and depression. A worrying share of young people experience loneliness and a lack of confidence in the future. Children's and adolescents' overall life satisfaction, particularly among girls, has been alarmingly low for a prolonged period.

A sense of belonging to a group is a fundamental need, and without it, young people risk becoming passive and socially isolated. Mental health challenges often involve problems in social interaction, which can be improved through knowledge, support, and guidance.

Together with partners, Folkhälsan is developing new and innovative ways to strengthen resilience and hopefulness and implements them on a broad scale, so that no young person needs to feel lonely or without confidence in the future. The goal is to increase participation and establish positive habits that create security and balance in young people's everyday lives.

We engage young people, identify target groups at increased risk of loneliness and exclusion, and help create sustainable structures that provide the right interventions and services at the right time.

### **Strengthened brain health among older adults – preventing and reducing the negative effects of cognitive decline**

Cognitive decline is a growing public health challenge that affects quality of life and independence. In 2021, there were 150,000 people diagnosed with memory-related diseases in Finland, and the number is projected to increase significantly by 2040. At the same time, the wellbeing services counties struggle to provide preventive health care for the older population.

Folkhälsan has research-based knowledge, practical experience, and strong networks that facilitate the prevention of cognitive decline, the detection of early signs, and the development of interventions that benefit both individuals and society.

Together with partners, Folkhälsan is developing and establishing national models for brain health that strengthen knowledge, preventive measures, and early detection—from the individual level to workplaces and civil society. The goal is to reduce the negative impacts of cognitive decline and enable more older adults to live longer, healthier, and more independent lives while maintaining their quality of life. The goal is also to delay the need for extensive interventions.

## **3.5 Measurement and Follow-up**

The strategy is monitored using both qualitative and quantitative indicators linked to objectives and focus areas—covering both the critical foundations and the strategic programs. In addition, financial key figures, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement are monitored.

Annual objectives are established ahead of each fiscal year to translate the strategy into concrete actions and ensure clarity in implementation. We maintain an active dialogue with both employees and members and ensure transparent and regular reporting of results, lessons learned, and progress.