

# Asylum seekers – health evaluation and vaccination in Finland

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Taneli Puumalainen



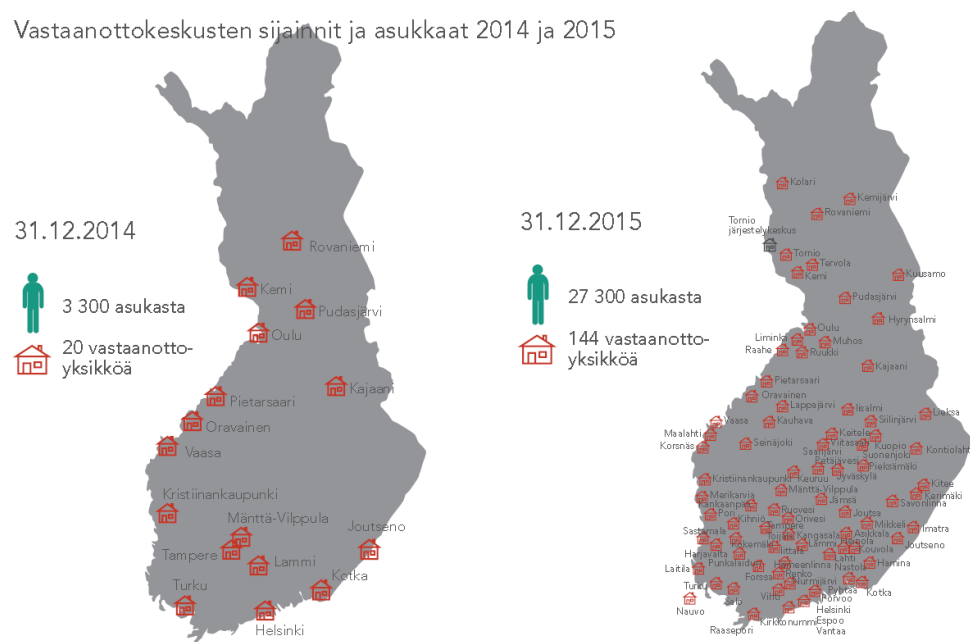
TERVEYDEN JA HYVINVOINNIN LAITOS



# Nearly 10 times more asylum seekers and asylum centres in 2015

- 32 000 asylum seekers
  - 20 000 Iraq
  - 5000 Afghanistan
  - 2000 Somalia
  - 900 Syria
- 2500 children below 7 years of age
- Currently nearly 200 centres for asylum seekers
- Early 2016: back to normal situation?

Vastaanottokeskusten sijainnit ja asukkaat 2014 ja 2015



# Legislation and official guidance

- All persons in Finland entitled to emergency care
- Asylum seekers below 18 years of age have same rights for care than Finnish children
- Adult asylum seekers entitled to social and health care deemed necessary by a health care professional
  - Including necessary treatment for chronic diseases, antenatal care etc
  - Is vaccination part of necessary care?
- Health care is organized by the Finnish Immigration Service through contracts with private clinics and public health care in municipalities
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Health guidance on screening of infectious diseases among refugees and asylum seekers (2012)
  - National Institute for Health and Welfare (THL) guidance

# Health evaluation

- Within 2 weeks from arrival, at the asylum centre:
  - Current health situation and symptoms
  - Previous diseases, medication, living conditions before and during the travel
  - Vaccination history
  - Health education
- Vaccination at the asylum centre or referral to a public/private clinic for vaccination
- Screening tests as soon as possible but latest within 3 months from arrival

# Screening tests based on the country of origin

- Tuberculosis
  - Chest x-ray
  - Children <7 years: IGRA
- HIV
- HBV
- Syphilis (Trpa-Ab)
- Children < 16 years
  - Intestinal parasites
- Screening tests based on a country list:
  - Former home country incidence 10x higher than in Finland e.g. tbc incidence > 50/ 100 000/y
  - Special circumstances e.g. refugee camp
  - <http://www.thl.fi/attachments/Infektiotaudit/Maaluettelo.pdf>
    - Asylum seekers from Iceland: No testing needed

# Vaccination of asylum seekers



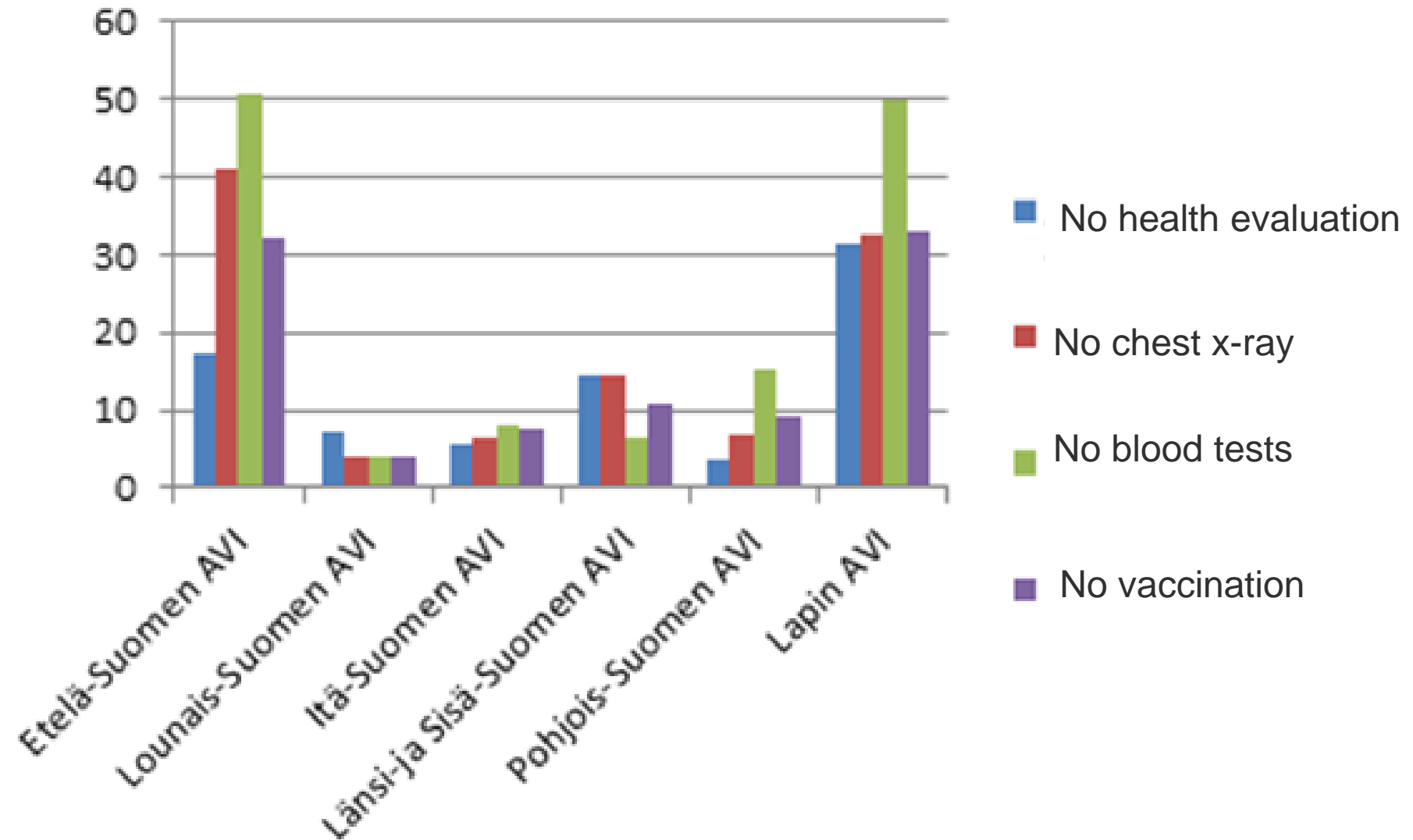
- Adults
  - Protection against diphtheria, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella
  - Polio vaccine if the person is from a high risk country OR if staying in the same accommodation unit as a person from a high risk country
  - Influenza vaccine
- Children
  - National immunization programme - speeded up and tailored to ensure the best protection
  - Risk group vaccines according to normal guidelines (BCG, Hep B etc)
- When needed/individual evaluation
  - Hepatitis A vaccine to limit outbreaks, Hepatitis B vaccine to family members of carriers

# Infectious diseases findings

- Congenital rubella syndrome
- Diphtheria
- Hepatitis A cases in 2 asylum centres
- Varicella cases in 2 asylum centres
- Influenza cases
- Hepatitis B carriers
- Tuberculosis including MDR cases
- HIV cases
- Clostridium perfringens and shigella cases
- Borrelia recurrentis
- Several scabies epidemics
- High carriage rates for MRSA

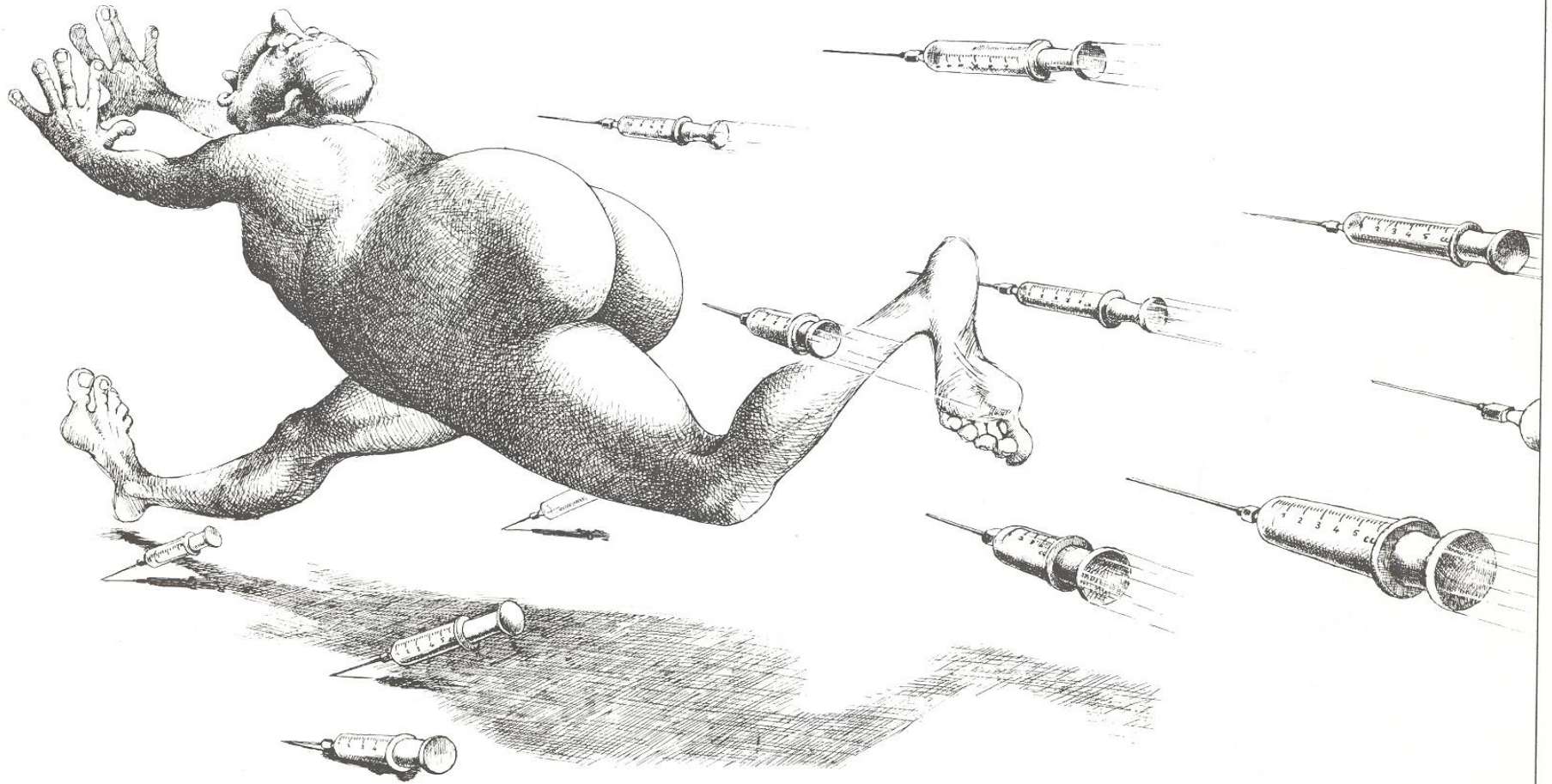
# Asylum centre survey – April 2016

~ 5000 (~15%) asylum seekers not properly screened and vaccinated





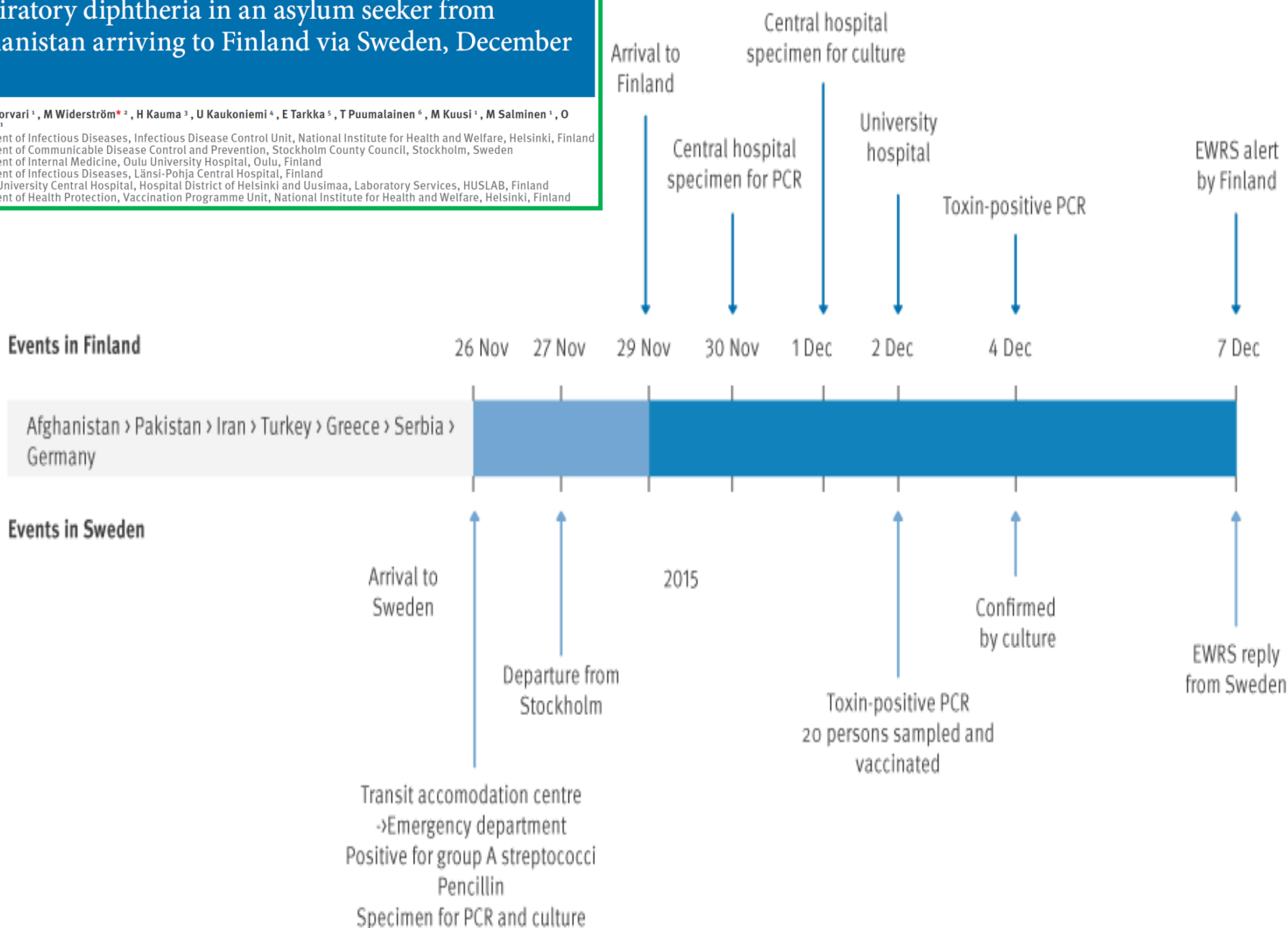
# Reason to worry?



# Respiratory diphtheria in an asylum seeker from Afghanistan arriving to Finland via Sweden, December 2015

J Sane<sup>1</sup>, T Sorvari<sup>1</sup>, M Widerström<sup>2\*</sup>, H Kauma<sup>3</sup>, U Kaukonieni<sup>4</sup>, E Tarkka<sup>5</sup>, T Puumalainen<sup>6</sup>, M Kuusi<sup>1</sup>, M Salminen<sup>1</sup>, O Lyytikäinen<sup>1</sup>

1. Department of Infectious Diseases, Infectious Disease Control Unit, National Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland  
 2. Department of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention, Stockholm County Council, Stockholm, Sweden  
 3. Department of Internal Medicine, Oulu University Hospital, Oulu, Finland  
 4. Department of Infectious Diseases, Länsi-Pohja Central Hospital, Finland  
 5. Helsinki University Central Hospital, Hospital District of Helsinki and Uusimaa, Laboratory Services, HUSLAB, Finland  
 6. Department of Health Protection, Vaccination Programme Unit, National Institute for Health and Welfare, Helsinki, Finland



MPR1

2016

2015

2014

2013

2012

2011

2010

2009

MPR2



Poista valinnat ✕ Aluerajoitus ✕

Aluerajoitus ▾

## Luokat

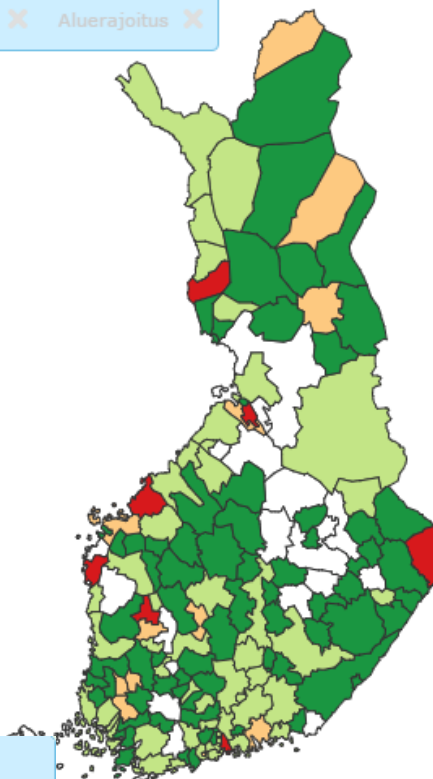
84 - 88

89 - 92

93 - 96

97 - 100

Ei tietoa



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| Alue       | Syntyneet | Nimittäjä | Kattavuus |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Koko Suomi | 59 077    | 52 401    | 95,07     |
| Helsinki   |           |           |           |
| Espoo      |           |           |           |
| Vantaa     |           |           |           |
| Oulu       |           |           |           |
| Tampere    |           |           |           |
| Jyväskylä  |           |           |           |
| Turku      | 1 707     | 1 642     | 93,91     |
| Lahti      | 1 123     | 1 096     | 95,35     |
| Pori       | 1 031     | 1 016     | 95,87     |
| Joensuu    | 982       | 947       | 97,04     |

**Childhood MMR coverage:**

- Whole country 94 – 95%
- In different municipalities 60 – 100%
- In different schools and day care centres <50 – 100% ?

# Conclusion

- High number of asylum seekers arriving to Finland has a significant impact to the Finnish society and politics
- Administrative and legislative challenges
- Infectious diseases control and immunization became very political issues
  - Are we vaccinating more asylum seekers or people afraid of asylum seekers?
  - Vaccination is good but vaccinating immigrants is bad?
- Impact to infectious diseases epidemiology has been very limited
  - Screening, early treatment and prevention by vaccination
- Focus should be asylum seekers access to health care services

# Acknowledgements

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