Introduction

The research examined the change in the population of Finland in about 100 years. Research questions:

- How have the number and age structure of Finns changed in about a hundred years?
- What factors have affected the change?

Research methods

We searched for information on the internet. We analyzed the information we found and presented it in diagrams.

Results

The population of Finland has grown by 130 % since 1890. The diagram shows that the population has increased almost continuously. Immediately after the wars, the diagram is the steepest, so the biggest change in the population dates back to 1915.

The population has decreased in the 1920s when more people died than were born. This was caused by four wars: the Finnish Civil War, the Lapland War, the Winter War and the Continuation War. The next drop in the diagram is visible between 1945 and 1950 caused by World War II.

In the 1960s and 1970s the population decline was caused by migration to foreign countries, especially to Sweden, for better work. Then emigration almost doubled compared to the previous decade. Altogether over one million Finns have moved abroad during the last hundred years.

The birth rate has been decreasing in Finland since 1950. At this moment the birth rate is at its lowest in a hundred years. The mortality rate compared to the population is, in turn, at its highest since the wartime. Since 2015, more people have died than were born annually in Finland. This can’t be seen in the graph of population development because immigration to Finland has been growing since the end of the 20th century first because of Ingrän immigrants and then asylum-seekers.

The age structure of Finns used to be child-dominated and there were less elderly people. Today older generations are bigger than young generations. The aging of the population observed in the age pyramid may be caused by the decreasing birth rate and prolonged life span. The baby booms born in 1945 to the 1950s are seen in the diagram as a large number of people aged 60 to 75 thanks to developed social work and health care.

Conclusions

In the early 20th century the population of Finland was reduced by crop failures, migration and infectious diseases, such as pulmonary tuberculosis. The Great Depression in 1929 to 1934 probably reduced the growth of Finland’s population. When families had trouble getting bread to the table, they gave up on the thought of having as many children as before. Because of the wars more people died than were born in 1918 and between 1939 and 1945. After the wars the men returned home from the battlefield. There was nearly no family planning, and therefore a lot of children were born.

In the 20th century the industrial structure changed rapidly. Industry, trade and various services generated new jobs. People dared to have children again. On the other hand, migration from rural areas to population centers decreased childbirth. Migration in the 1960s 1970s also decreased the population.

The contraceptive pill was introduced in Finland in the 1960s. We believe that this affected the decrease of the birth rate. This assumption is supported by the steepening negative slope of the diagram of live births. The reformed abortion law in the 1970s may also have affected childbirth. Other reasons for the low birth rate include changed age structure and family concept, prolonged studies, delayed transition to work and desire for comfort and convenience.

Thoughts

It was interesting to conduct a statistical survey. Suitable statistics were hard to find at first but we became better at searching when our project proceeded.

Our hypotheses were right. We were surprised that today less Finns are being born than dying. A question arises whether Finns will eventually die of extinction if the amount of immigrants decreases and the birth rate remains the same. In the future, for example the low birth rate of Finns could be investigated.