


SUFFICIENCY IN EVERYTHING

Finland, like all countries of the Global North, is currently dependent on economic growth. Yet future growth may be very limited and uncertain¹ – and decoupling it from increasing environmental harm will not be easy. Could the principle of sufficiency help us navigate towards better futures?





Climate change, biodiversity loss and the overconsumption of natural resources are challenging society to renew itself in unprecedented ways.

This knowledge synthesis supports the integration of sufficiency thinking and solutions into decision-making on the path towards resilient, resource-efficient and just societies, with a focus on Finland. It explores what sufficiency means, what sufficiency solutions are, and what challenges they address. The synthesis brings together key perspectives, research findings and analyses on sufficiency.

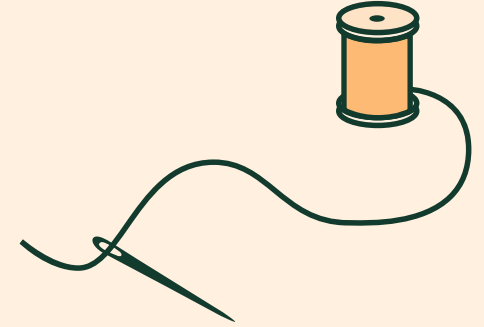
Within the SISU research project, we identify broadly acceptable sufficiency solutions that enable the core promises of the Nordic welfare state and the sustainability transition to be realised even in the absence of economic growth, or under conditions of low growth. Sufficiency solutions support a just transition away from harmful, unnecessary or outdated practices, while promoting people's wellbeing. Through sufficiency solutions, it is possible to advance a sustainability transition in which a good quality of life is within reach for all.

1 EVERYDAY SUFFICIENCY

Sufficiency has a strong place in Finnish values and cultural heritage. It has been shaped in particular by the experiences of those who lived their childhood and youth in the 1930s–1960s, marked by war and the period of scarcity that followed. Rationing and mutual aid were key survival strategies in a context where sufficiency was not a choice, but a necessity.

However, the value base of sufficiency continued to shape everyday life even after acute hardship and scarcity had receded.

In the SISU study, interviewees aged 65–82 from North Karelia described sufficiency in personal terms: what they feel they need, what they could let go of, and what kinds of pleasures are beneficial. For them, sufficiency is a value that guides a balanced life, as well as a sense of having enough and being content.²



” For me, sufficiency is also part of my life story. How I understand what is enough, what I am satisfied with, and where I can let go.” (Retired person)*

” I only know how to buy what is necessary. I repair and take care of what I have. Someone might say: ‘Well why don’t you go out and get this or that for yourself’. But if I don’t need it? That gives me a feeling of contentment.” (Retired person)*

* The interview excerpts on this page are from a research article by Teija Makkonen and Aleksi Neuvonen (2025). The interviewees were 65–82-year-olds participating in group activities organised by social and health associations in North Karelia, Finland.

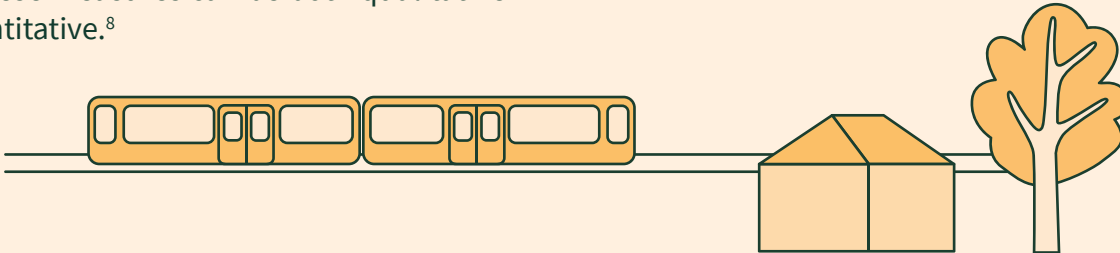
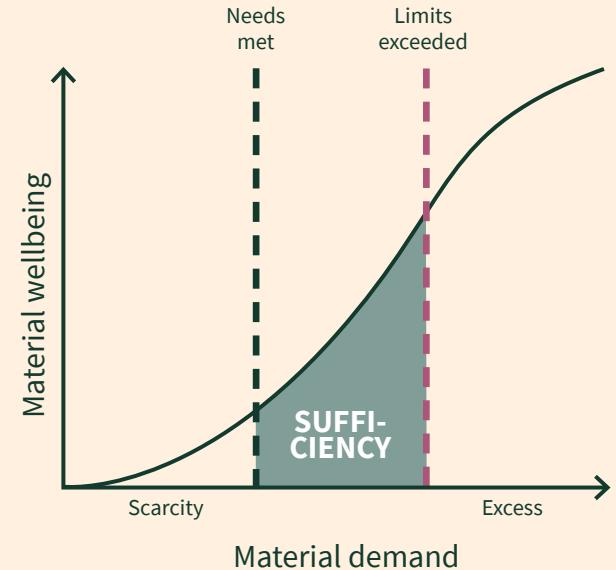
2 SUFFICIENCY AS AN ECONOMIC AND SOCIETAL PRINCIPLE

Decoupling economic growth from greenhouse gas emissions, unsustainable resource use, and other environmental harms has been thus far slow and limited.^{3,4,5} As a result, global warming, biodiversity loss and environmental degradation are likely to persist even if the full potential of technological solutions were realised.⁶


The risk of undermining the conditions that sustain life is increasing year by year.⁷ This is why, alongside technological solutions, sufficiency measures are needed to steer both demand and supply towards ecological sustainability. These measures can be both qualitative and quantitative.⁸

Scarcity and excess challenge society to renew itself

Sufficiency emphasises a fair societal transition. It draws attention to two extremes – scarcity and excess. Scarcity is shaped by how justly resources are distributed, while excess is determined by ecological limits. Sufficiency guides the just implementation of a sustainability transition across different sectors of society and among the population. At its core, sufficiency means avoiding both scarcity and excess.



3 SUFFICIENCY IN A SUSTAINABLE SOCIETY

 More examples of sufficiency solutions are collected in [this table](#). Add your own!

Sufficiency solutions provide ways to reassess the sources of wellbeing and to secure the conditions for a good life within planetary limits. They extend beyond individuals' everyday choices to include political decision-making, which shapes societal structures. Sufficiency solutions aim to ensure the fair and adequate distribution of resources and capacities in a managed and broadly acceptable way.

There are many types of sufficiency solutions. They support the private and public sectors, as well as civil society, in embedding sufficiency thinking across their practices and organisational cultures.

We have categorised sufficiency solutions into five types: quantitative and qualitative sufficiency, use sufficiency, sharing sufficiency, and steering sufficiency.

Sufficiency solutions and practical examples

Type	Definition	Practical examples
Quantitative sufficiency	Appropriate amounts of resources* owned, produced or used.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing food waste • Renovation and adaptive reuse instead of new construction • Reducing the number of cars per household • Limiting the use of forest biomass
Qualitative sufficiency	Appropriate quality, type, physical size or nominal capacity of resources*.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choosing a smaller, less resource-intensive car • Partially replacing animal proteins with plant-based alternatives • Low-impact construction • Electrification of transport, prioritising carbon-neutral or low-emission mobility
Use sufficiency	Appropriate speed, intensity, timing, duration or lifespan of resource use*.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applying circular economy criteria in procurement (e.g. prioritising reuse and repairability) • Reducing car-based shopping trips • Reduced VAT on second-hand goods and repair services • Turning off advertising displays at night
Sharing sufficiency	Appropriate distribution of use through social practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car-sharing schemes • Rental services for hobby equipment, tools and festive wear • Shared public spaces such as hobby rooms, event venues and saunas • Renting out unused spaces • Library services
Steering sufficiency	The design and implementation of systems, spaces, practices, rules, information sharing and incentives that promote sufficiency.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EU Right to Repair Directive • Higher taxation and advertising restrictions on high-impact products (e.g. meat consumption, flying, private car use, fast fashion) • Establishing car-free urban areas • Behavioural campaigns (e.g. energy-saving and lower-emission lifestyles) • National, local, corporate and personal consumption and emissions quotas

*Resources refer to goods, services, infrastructure, assets, equipment, people, time and other forms of capital.

4 SUFFICIENCY IN PUBLIC ATTITUDES

Citizens are ready for sufficiency solutions

There is clear readiness for sufficiency solutions in Finland. Policy measures that promote sufficiency are widely accepted among citizens.⁹

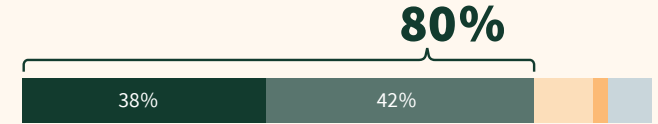
Results from the Finnish Nature and Climate Barometers indicate a willingness to moderate resource use.¹⁰ They suggest that sufficiency is widely valued in Finnish culture.

European-wide surveys show that citizens are willing to support sufficiency-oriented measures as part of the sustainability transition even when change comes at a cost. This willingness is particularly evident in countries with higher standards of living.¹¹ The findings point to a growing willingness to reassess and redirect the use and distribution of resources in line with sufficiency thinking.

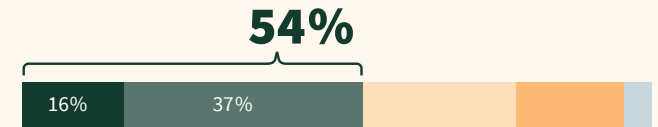
Sufficiency solutions can also be supported through alternative indicators of development and wellbeing. More than 80% of European citizens support the adoption of metrics that go beyond GDP.¹² This is also reflected in Finland's current government programme: "The Government will prepare a model that measures comprehensive sustainability – which comprises wellbeing, economic profitability and the state of the environment – in addition to GDP."¹³



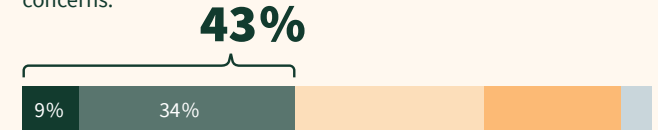
91 percent of Finns believe products should be designed to last longer, even if this increases their price.



80 percent believe non-essential production and consumption should be reduced for environmental reasons.



More than half have reduced their consumption due to climate concerns.



Nearly one in two have changed their lifestyles – including mobility, diet or housing – to mitigate climate change.

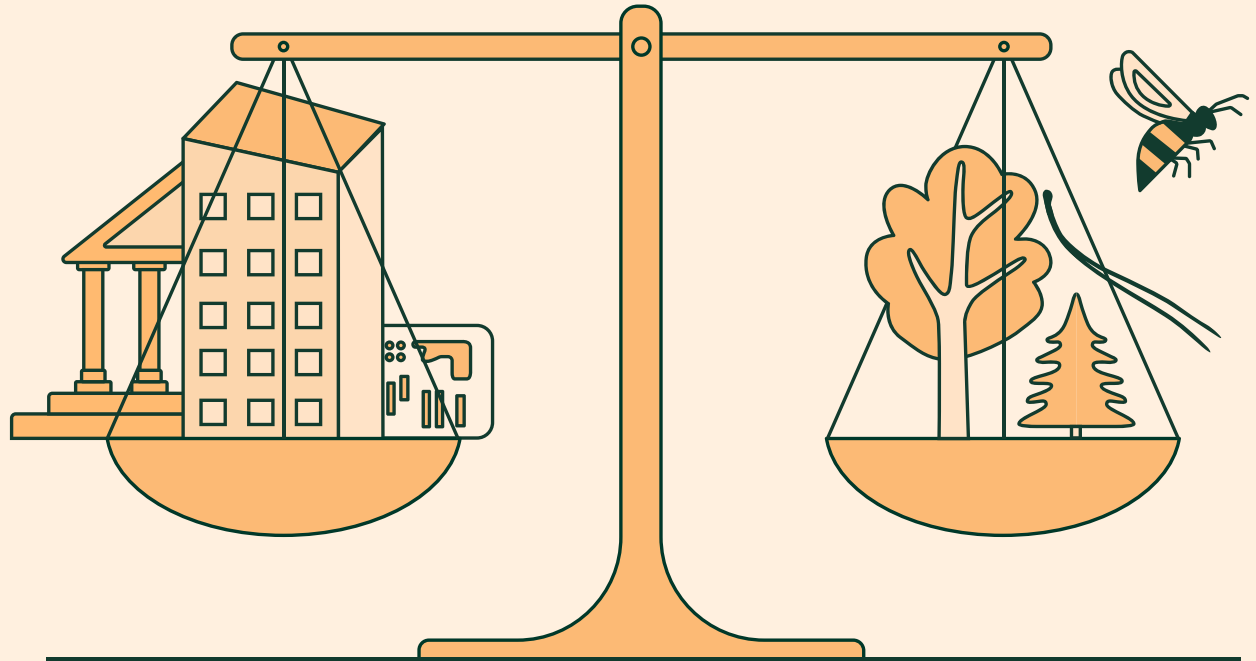
- Completely agree
- Somewhat agree
- Partly disagree
- Completely disagree
- I don't know

...but what do the experts think?

We examined the readiness of experts working on sustainability to apply sufficiency and sufficiency solutions. Experts recognise clear potential in sufficiency thinking, but approach questions of growth dependency with caution.

At the same time, they view sufficiency as offering a softer and less politically polarising approach to economic debate¹⁴ than, for example, degrowth approaches that critically question economic growth. Sufficiency helps guide the economy and society towards **sustainable and just** resource use. It focuses on actions that are beneficial from both human and ecological perspectives, without relying on continued economic growth.

Experts clearly recognise the need for sufficiency, but call for more concrete experiments and practical examples to support its broader application in decision-making and planning.



5 A GOOD LIFE FOUNDED ON SUFFICIENCY

Sufficiency solutions can help drive a sustainability transition that cuts across all sectors of society.¹⁵ The task is demanding, but necessary. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Risks Report, the coming years (2024–2033) are likely to be shaped by extreme weather events, critical shifts in Earth systems, biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and resource scarcity.¹⁶

Sufficiency solutions, together with the ongoing period of low economic growth¹⁷, challenge us to imagine a society that is not dependent on growth. A good life requires a sufficient material standard of living to meet basic needs, but quality of life is largely shaped by opportunities beyond the monetary economy.¹⁸ This means that wellbeing is possible without continuous increases in production and consumption.

The extreme situation of prisoners interviewed for the SISU research offers a revealing perspective.¹⁹ When the scope of life and available choices are reduced to meeting basic needs, something essential about sufficiency is revealed: what is simply ordinary can be enough.

”Sufficiency can be achieved when a person no longer focuses only on making money, but takes only what they need.”*

Sufficiency thinking can help us focus on the good that already exists in our lives. When continuous increases in material living standards are no longer the central goal, more space opens up for aspects of life that enhance its quality.

* Interview excerpt from a research article by Sirpa Manninen and Teija Makkonen (2025).



- We are developing an ecological macroeconomic model to simulate sufficiency solutions.
- We are examining the future orientations of vulnerable groups using register data and interviews.
- We are identifying factors that sustain citizens' trust in institutions during the sustainability transition.
- We are organising future heritage workshops in collaboration with museums, where we co-create future-oriented sufficiency solutions.
- We are convening transition arenas to further develop sufficiency solutions together with actors across society.

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<https://sisu-stn.fi/en/>

LinkedIn: [SISU](#)



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