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The children in the margin of the society in Finland

The number of children placed outside their home in Finland has increased rapidly in the 1990's and early 2000's. In 1991 some 9 000 children were placed outside their home while in 2005 the number was above 15 000. Finland experiences a deep recession in the early 1990s. The economy started to recover towards the mid 1990s. However, the 1990s were a period of cuts more than of expansion in social protection. In the early 2000s Finland kept most of the cutbacks in force and allowed inflation to further erode existing benefits despite strong economic growth. The general income level is considerably higher than in the early 1990s but child poverty has also increased. So far there is no qualitative study to explain the rise in the number of children placed outside their home. Does that only reflect intensified efforts of the child protection official or have the living conditions of the children living on the margins of the society indeed deteriorated?

The results indicate that the share of children placed outside the home is higher where more alcohol is consumed and abused. Unlike in the U.S. risk of child placed outside the home is clearly associated with alcohol abuse in Finland. However, the relationship between single parenthood and child placement outside the home got strongest empirical support. The correlation between single parenthood and the share of children placed outside the home was very strong on regional and sub-regional level and fairly strong on municipal level. Some evidence was also found to the link between children's mental health problems and the share of children placed outside the home.

Increase in the share of children placed outside the home was related to increase in long-term social assistance receipt, long-term unemployment and alcohol abuse.

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