



International
Talent Finland

Digital nomads and Finland

International Talent Finland Research Project
E2 Research

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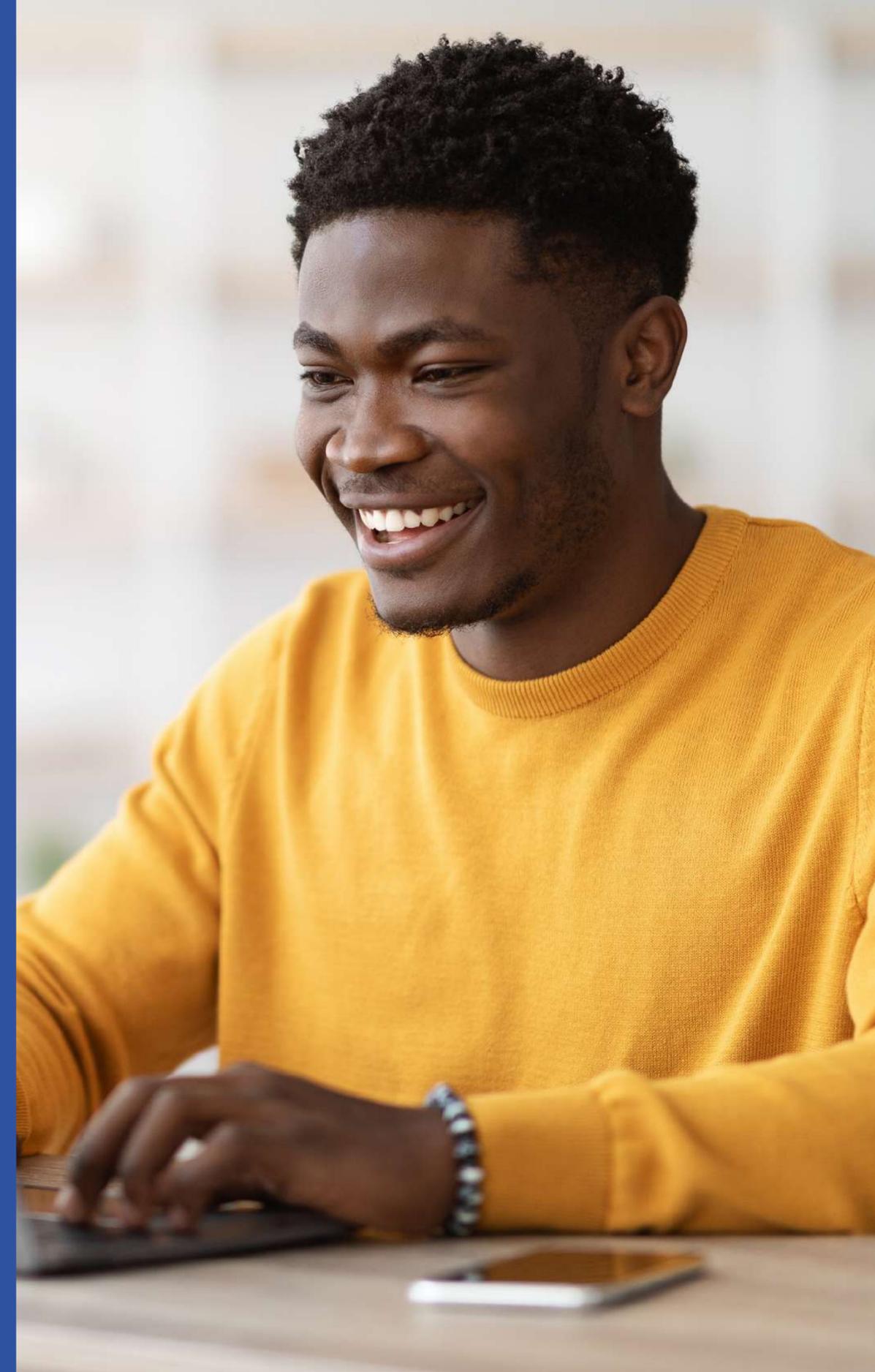
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I. ABOUT THE STUDY



INTERNATIONAL TALENT FINLAND RESEARCH PROJECT



In the International Talent Finland Research Project, we ask how to attract international talents to work and live in Finland. We look at talent and different talent groups with a solution-oriented approach and from the perspective of resources.



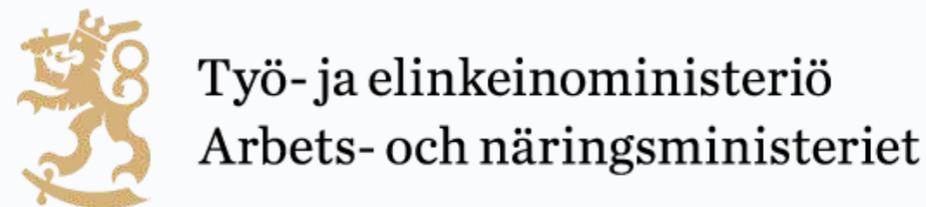
We ask how Finland can become a country that invites, engages, and attracts talent, and where it is easy for an expatriate Finn to return to or a foreigner to come to work. How could people from outside Finland also take part in building the country?



RESEARCH

The research project was conducted from October 2021 to March 2023 by E2 Tutkimus (E2 Research), an independent research institute. E2 Tutkimus is a multidisciplinary research institute serving third-sector organisations, businesses, foundations, municipalities, ministries, political decision-makers, and the media.

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BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In this study we refer to 'digital nomads' as people who change their residence regularly and whose work is location independent and takes place in the digital sphere.¹

An interest in digital nomadism has been on the rise during the COVID-19 pandemic. The shift to remote work has also made digital nomadism possible for an increasing amount of people.²

Digital nomads have been studied extensively.³ However, only a limited number of studies have been done from the viewpoint of Finland. This report offers unique knowledge about digital nomads' work and choice of a destination country, as these themes have been examined especially from the perspective of Finland.

1. Välimäki, Pitkänen, Niemi & Veijola 2023 2. Hooper & Benton 2022, 5–7

3. See e.g., Reichenberger 2018; Thompson 2018, 2019; Green 2020; Hannonen 2020; de Loryn 2022





Data

This report is based on two qualitative datasets. Four focus group interviews are used as primary data and open-ended survey responses as supplementary data. Interviewees and respondents have self-identified themselves as digital nomads.

Focus group interviews were carried out in January and February 2023. The total number of participants in the focus groups was 21. Interviewees represent different age groups, nationalities, and professional fields. They have lived as digital nomads for different lengths of time and were in different countries at the time of the interviews. Interviewees were recruited amongst respondents of the survey and via social media channels. Each interview lasted approximately one hour.

The survey was conducted between December 2022 and January 2023. However, due to the limited number of survey respondents, we have utilised only the open-ended responses in the analysis.





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The research project is conducted by E2 Research. The Director of the project is Docent, DSocSci Mari K. Niemi, and the Deputy Director is Docent, DSocSci Ville Pitkänen.



The main author of the report is MSocSci Eija Eronen. Docent Ville Pitkänen, DSocSci Matti Välimäki and Docent Mari K. Niemi have participated in the implementation of the research project in all its phases. MA Gökhan Depo was responsible for the collection of the interview data. MA Roosa Veijola is responsible for the graphic design of this report.



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II. DIGITAL NOMADS AND FINLAND



1. WORK





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Digital nomadism is a location-independent way of working

- Digital nomadism is a technology-enabled, location-independent way of living that allows travelling and working remotely, anywhere in the internet-connected world. Some digital nomads travel for years, but some are nomadic for shorter periods and take working sabbaticals and "workcations" lasting from several weeks to months.
- Some digital nomads travel around the globe, but many choose to live and work while exploring a single area or country.
- The interviewees value especially freedom and flexibility in this lifestyle.

1.MBO Partners 2021



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**"What I value in my life
first and foremost is
freedom."**

(Focus group 2, participant 2)





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In 2022, digital nomads were mainly self-employed, of whom more than half were business owners and approximately 35 percent were gig workers or freelancers (Statista Research Department 2022).

Work flexibility is important to digital nomads

Previous research indicates that professional freedom and work-life balance are important to digital nomads.¹

According to our data, factors that digital nomads consider important in their employer or client are trustworthiness, friendliness, and good communication. They value especially flexibility in working time, and place of work when choosing a company.

They also appreciate good salary and flexible work that provides opportunities for growth. In addition, the international and sustainable values of a company are important to many of them.

1.Reichenberger 2018

**"I actually feel very strongly that I would want to have a truly international company, not only having international clients and projects, but to have international colleagues."
(Focus group 2, participant 2)**

"For me, I normally consider the flexibility of time, because I'm not a nine-to-five kind of person. I can work for longer hours straight, and I always consider the time factor whenever I take any job into consideration." (Focus group 4, participant 5)





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Factors that digital nomads value in their employers or clients



"Remote asynchronous work – my work should not be bound with physical location."

"Ability to make a positive social or environmental impact through my work. Flexibility and autonomy. A good level of pay. Opportunities to learn and expand my existing skill set"

"Good communication and trust. And a partnership. I own my own business now, when I do a project I do that as an equal partner that wants to help them do better. I'm not an employee they can boss around."

Source: open-ended survey responses

Finnish companies are not well known among digital nomads

Interviewees have searched for job opportunities via several digital channels.

However, only a few of them have encountered businesses, employers or clients from Finland or other Nordic countries.

Most interviewees do not know any Finnish companies.

*"Only Nokia. And yeah, I know that there are some other [Finnish companies]. But for me, that's not an important question, like I am not really interested."
(Focus group 2, participant 1)*

*"I can't think of ever having encountered a Finnish company, definitely haven't had them as clients. So no, no."
(Focus group 2, participant 2)*

*"I honestly answer no. I have not seen any Finnish companies."
(Focus group 3, participant 1)*





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Digital nomads encourage companies to hire internationally

Interviewees give advice to Finnish employers and clients who are looking to hire digital nomads:



It is important that employers and clients demonstrate an understanding of the nature of remote work.



Clear communication is of great importance.



Recruiting should be done internationally, and it should be aimed at hiring the most competent applicant.



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"If you're searching for the best talents, you should search globally. And if you're searching globally, then you don't care where people are located and then you shouldn't care if they are moving or staying in one place." (Focus group 2, participant 1)

Approaching digital nomads on LinkedIn pays off



According to the interviewees, future employers reach them especially via digital channels.

Many of them favour LinkedIn in particular.

Other channels that interviewees use are Angelist, remote.com, Facebook, Twitter and Indeed.

*"You will find some pockets of communities on Facebook, and there are a few groups on Facebook that are remote job places. But LinkedIn, it's the biggest."
(Focus group 1, participant 1)*

*"I try to separate my life, and I feel that it is really helpful for my mental health. I have a professional life, personal life and all that. So if I get a job offer from Facebook or Instagram, I will probably delete it. But if it's on LinkedIn or Indeed, I am more likely to look at it."
(Focus group 3, participant 1)*



A person is walking on a city street, pulling a light-colored rolling suitcase. The person is wearing a light-colored coat, dark pants, and dark boots. The background shows a blurred city street with buildings and parked cars. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. A white rectangular box is centered over the image, containing the text '2. CHOOSING A DESTINATION COUNTRY' in white, bold, sans-serif font.

2. CHOOSING A DESTINATION COUNTRY



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Digital nomads emphasize affordability when choosing a destination country

Digital nomads share information on destination countries in blogs and on social media channels (Thompson 2019). In 2022, the most visited countries by digital nomads were the United States, Thailand and Spain (Statista Research Department 2022).



Interviewees take several factors into account when choosing a destination country.

These factors include infrastructural support for work¹, affordability² and security. Some interviewees also value access to a community of other digital nomads in the destination country. For others, geographical proximity to family or a family-friendly environment is important.



But with a child, it's very much suitability for the family. Because obviously, having tried some locations in Asia, particularly cities can be quite scary for a child. So that's a big consideration now, whether it suits my daughter. (Focus group 4, participant 6)



1. See also Green 2020 2. See also Thompson 2018

The respondents and interviewees find nature and safety appealing in Finland.

In addition, they bring up functioning infrastructure, health care and education system.

Some of them complement the high English proficiency of Finns.

"You can work in the middle of nowhere or in the middle of nature. Basically, the whole country is covered by at least 4G network and 5G is getting more and more popular in bigger and dense city centers."
(Focus group 1, participant 2)

"I am glad a lot of Finnish people speak English. I would say that is definitely positive. Because the Finnish language was not easy to comprehend."
(Focus group 3, participant 1)

Digital nomads consider functioning infrastructure a strength of Finland



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Positive views of Finland



“Safe country (but still I don't want to walk alone in dark time).”

"I've heard that Finland has a high value for sustainability. As a sustainable blogger, I care about this and appreciate a country protecting it's stunning nature."

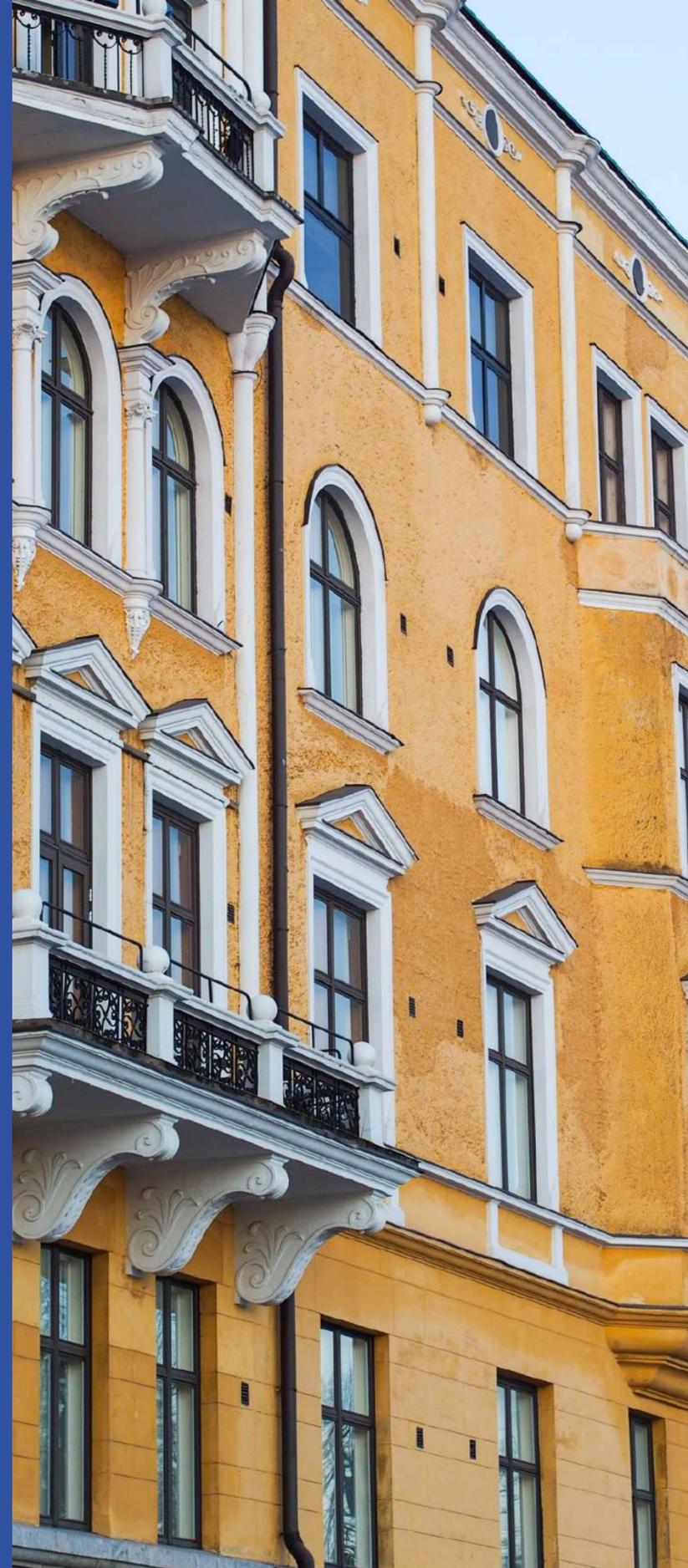
"Beauty, nature, strong tech, high English language usage, Santa Claus lives there, hard working people."

Source: open-ended survey responses from the digital nomad survey



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Digital nomads consider the high cost of living a weakness of Finland



According to our data, the negative sides of Finland are the cold and dark climate as well as high tax rates and cost of living, although some digital nomads point out that the price level is not excessively high. In addition, some of them think that the Finnish language is difficult to learn. Others refer to the introverted mentality of Finns.

"The cost of living and the cost of travelling there is quite high, and this has been the reason why I haven't exploited opportunity to go over there."

(Focus group 3, participant 1)



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Negative views of Finland

“Always cold or very cold, always raining something, mosquitos, grey and dark almost 10 months per year.”

"Introvert and boring Finnish people, not so beautiful nature or cities, Helsinki concentrated work and too expensive costs of living."

"For visiting: employer's risks on their income being taxed because they have somebody working from Finland = NO GO.

For homebase - high taxes (mandatory payments), taxation risks for employer's income."

Source: open-ended survey responses

Hubs could attract digital nomads to Finland

According to the interviewees, Finland could attract digital nomads in several ways:



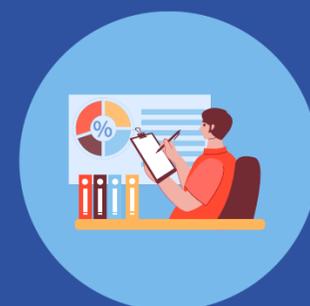
By promoting
itself more
actively



By easing the
visa application
process



By offering
concrete help for
digital nomads to
ease entry into the
country



By clarifying
taxation and
offering tax
incentives



By creating hubs
that provide
opportunities for
social interaction
and networking





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"- - Creating a hub or several in the country where people can network. Perhaps a co-living space set up with achievements in mind, business development in mind. Access to perhaps events at university or local business centers." (Focus group 2, participant 2)

Summary of results



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- Digital nomads value work flexibility
- Finnish companies are not well known among digital nomads
- Digital nomads encourage Finnish employers and clients to hire internationally
- Digital nomads search for work opportunities especially on LinkedIn

Summary of results



- Affordability is a central criterion for digital nomads when choosing a destination country
- Digital nomads consider functioning infrastructure a strength of Finland
- Digital nomads consider high living costs a weakness of Finland
- Hubs could attract digital nomads to Finland



Kansainvälisten
osaajien Suomi

III. Literature



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