

Unlocking Insights on Homelessness Through Integrated Administrative Data: A Methodological Framework for Researchers in EU Countries

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Seminar 7: Data collection methodologies II

Y-Säätiö



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Why using (integrated) administrative data in homelessness research?

PROS:

No need to recruit hard-to-reach participants →
Large sample (even total data), no sample bias,
comparative research design

Longitudinal data → little attrition

Reliability, data triangulation

“Easy” to combine different information sources

CONS:

Less flexibility

Structured data

Challenges of identifying the target population

Non-service users may be missing

Expensive

See the discussion in Thomas & Tweed (2021)

General Data Protection Regulation EU 2016/679

Act on the Secondary Use of Health and Social Data 552/2019

FINDATA

Social and Health Data Permit Authority

RADAR: Register Data Analysis for Addressing Homelessness and Reducing it

Cost-effectiveness of Finnish Housing First

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The housing, service and benefit pathways of the homeless in Turku*

University of Turku: Veera Niemi, Jarkko
Rasinkangas, Aleksi Karhula

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*Turku Urban Research Programme 2024-2025

Measuring homelessness

(Baptista et al. 2012; Busch-Geertsema et al 2014; Benjaminsen et al. 2020; Pitkänen 2010; Kauppinen ym. 2015)

Housing (and homelessness) pathways

(Clapman 2003; Meeus & de Decker 2015)

Use of services

(Pleace et al. 2018; Kerman et al. 2016)

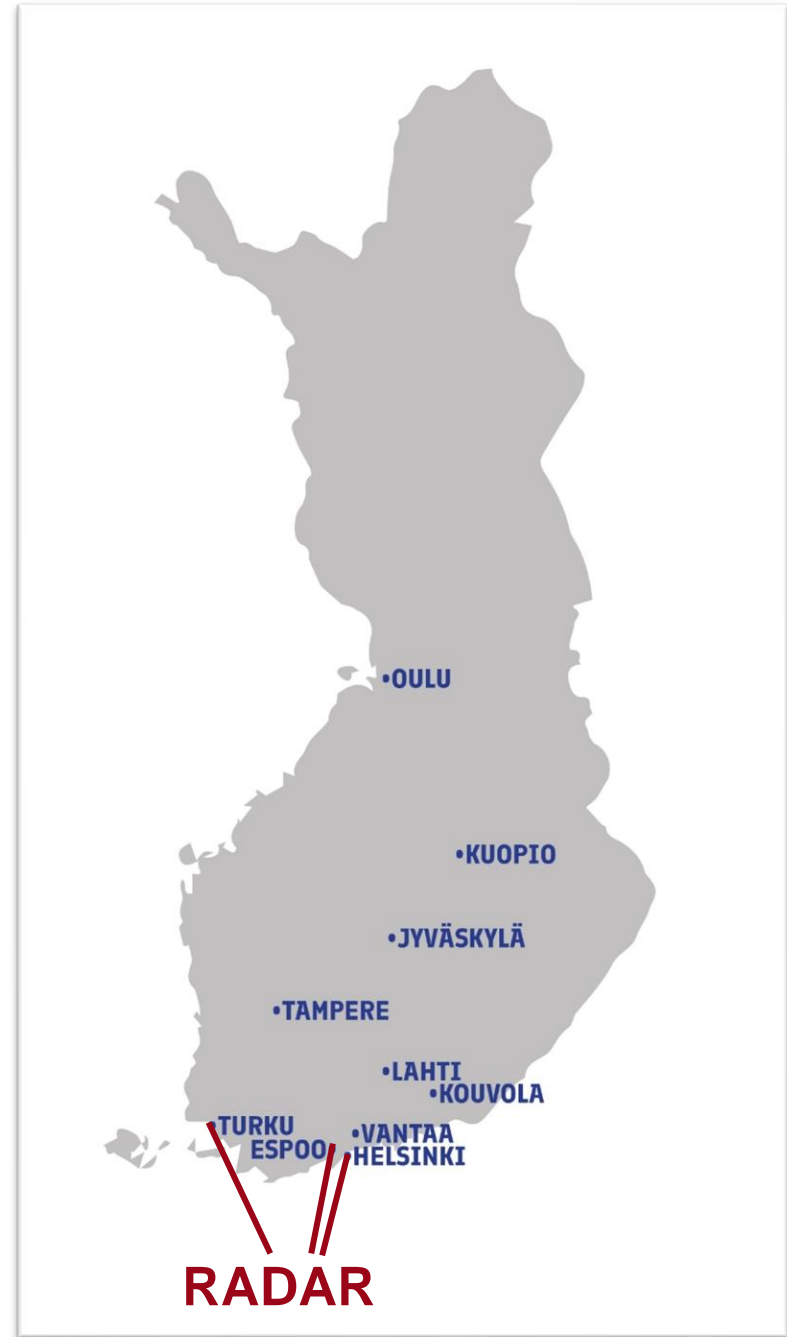
RADAR

Individual, systemic and structural explanations

(Benjaminsen 2016; Fitzpatrick et al. 2013; Piat et al. 2015)

Cost-effectiveness of Housing First

(Sillanpää 2013; Ympäristöministeriö 2011; Ly & Latimer 2015; Lemoine et al. 2021)



Cost-effectiveness of Finnish Housing First



Goal: Calculate the magnitude of cost offsets generated by Housing First in Espoo and Helsinki



How: Compare the use of services and benefits of people placed in Housing First with that of homeless people (before-after; target-comparison group)



Data: Integrated administrative data through Findata for 2016-2021

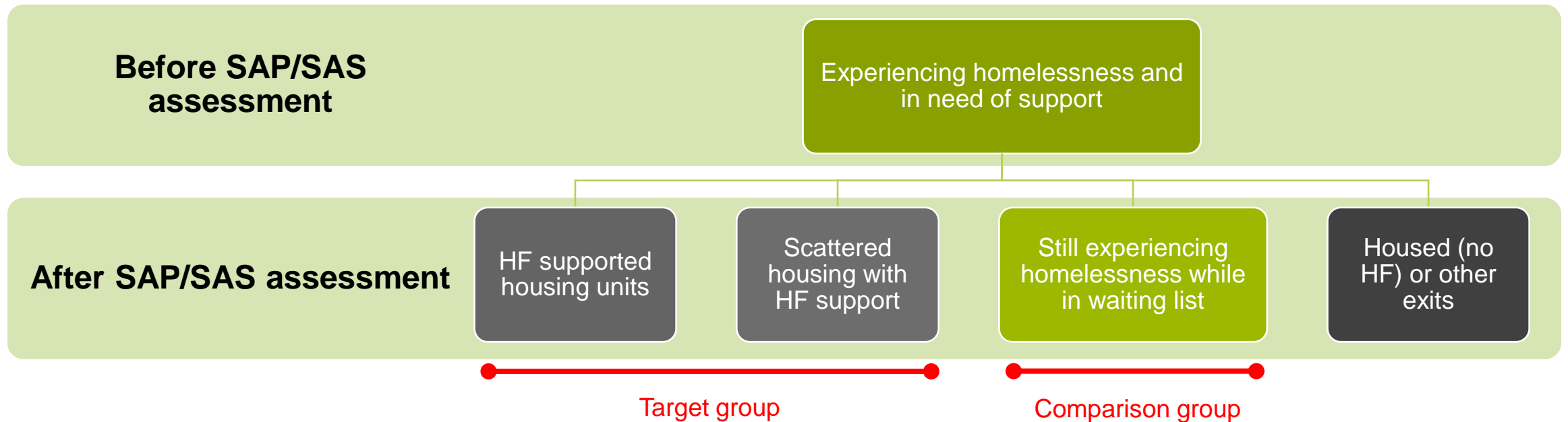


Phase: Pseudonymization of data

Registers, variables and time limits

- Registers on primary healthcare and social services (municipalities), secondary healthcare (hospital district HUS), benefits/allowances (KELA), birth/death + family history + housing history (DVV)
- More than 800 variables
- Monthly data for the period 2016-2021

Target and comparison group



Thoughts on the process

- Findata was developing practices and procedures
- Compatibility issues:
 - Registers and variables change over time
 - Helsinki and HUS switched to Apotti during 2020-2021
 - Helsinki and Espoo use different information and management systems
- Lack or insufficient description of variables required continuous assistance
 - assistance is sometimes difficult to obtain
 - need for statistical as well as frontline workers assistance
- Expensive and costs were unknown until registers and variables were identified
- Long waiting time (application was first submitted in Dec 2021)

Data and analysis in Turku

Research question:

What are the housing, service and benefit pathways preceding homelessness?

- variation among the homeless population
- comparison with non-homeless adult social work clients / Finnish population
- individual and monthly/yearly level data, over decades
- sequence analysis



DIGITAL AND POPULATION
DATA SERVICES AGENCY

Client registers of Turku social and health services (Efficca and Pegasos) 2003/2009 -

Ready-made modules: FOLK basic data, family, household dwelling unit, migration, period data and INFRA location, 1987 -

Housing history, changes in family roles, since birth

National registers

durations and time periods

Statistics Finland 



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General

age, gender, nationality
cities

household-dwelling units (alone,
with spouse and/or child/children, with
parents as adult, in institution etc.)

housing tenure

custodies and parenthoods of
children

marriages and divorces

Social benefits

housing, unemployment, study,
sickness, rehabilitation,
disability, family and income
assistance benefits, pensions

Regional registers



Variables

durations, time periods, grouping of services, reasons for ending of service

Social sector register: adult social work, addiction services, supported housing, day centre, additional income support, rehabilitative work activities, child protection after care, social lending, invalidity services, emergency social services

Health sector register: addiction and mental health services, hospital periods, 'special need' health care visits

Extraction of the homeless population in Turku

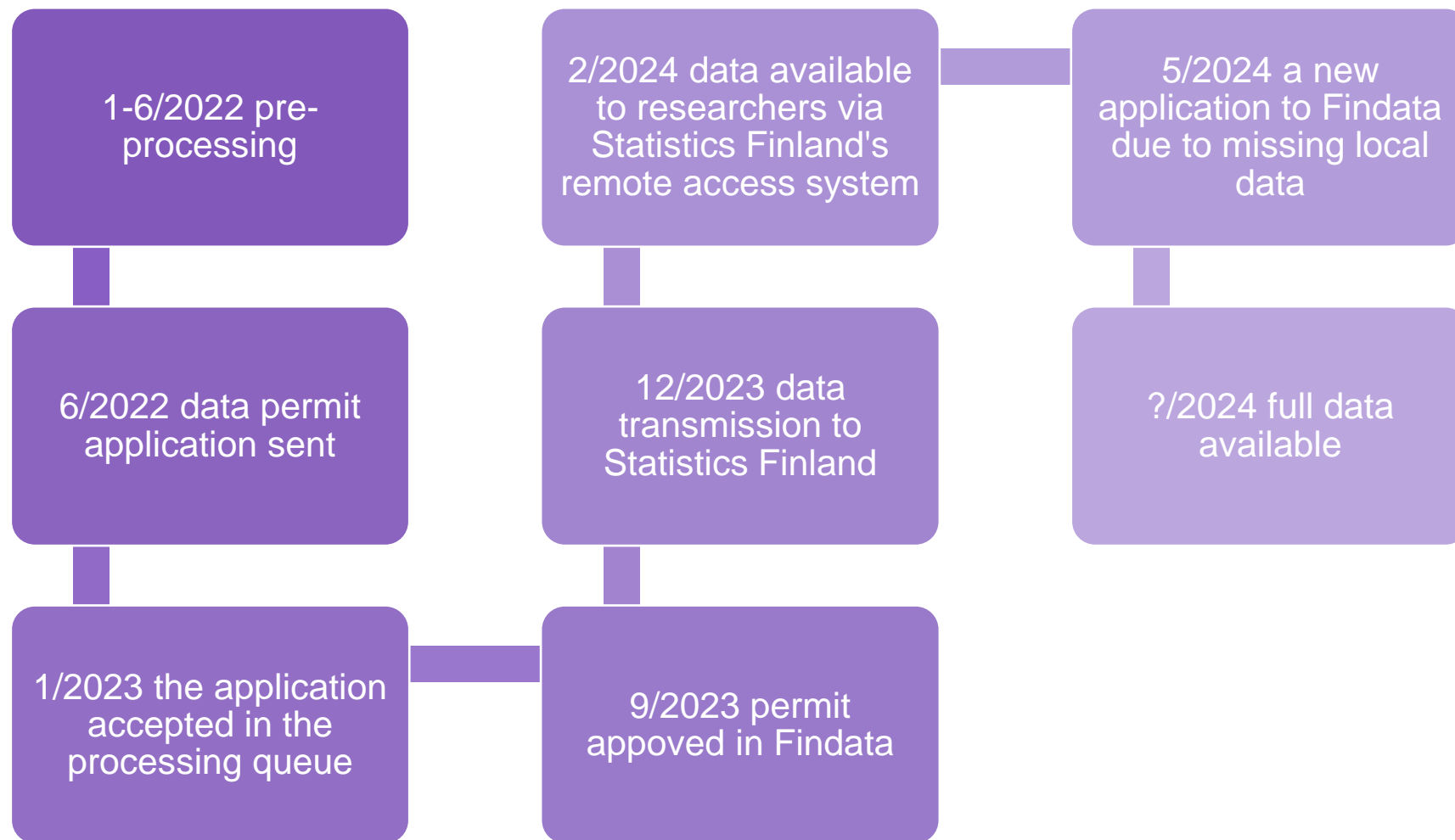
yearly national count 15.11.(ARA)



year	number of homeless in Turku
2018	475
2019	433
2020	384
2021	341
2022	377
2023	382

referral group: adult social work clients in Turku / partly whole Finnish population

Timeline of the Findata process



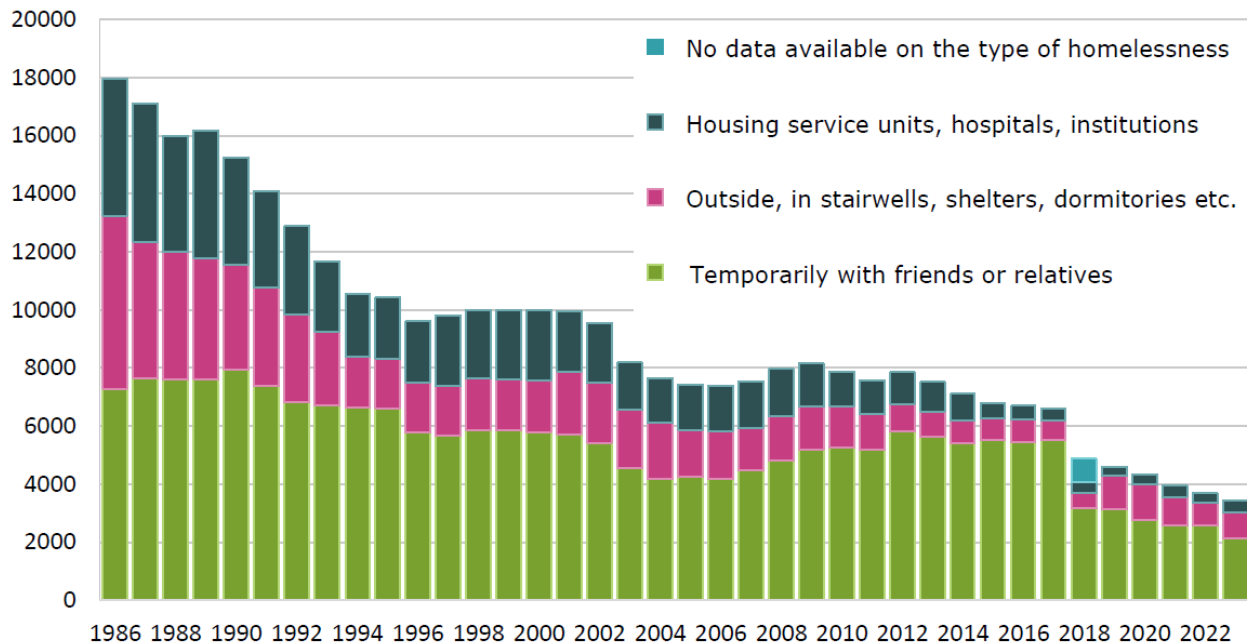


Table 8. Homeless women, men, young people and immigrants in 2023 and the change from the previous year.

The homeless	Volume	Change	Share of all homeless people living alone
Women	755	-155	22%
Men	2674	-102	78%
Young people (under 25-year-olds)	530	-285	15%
Immigrants	831	210	24%

Table 1. Homelessness in 2023 and the change compared to 2022.

Form of homelessness	2023	change
Homeless - living alone	3,429	-257
Long-term homeless*	1018	-115
Homeless families*	123	-32

RADAR:

- Comprehensive description of housing, services and benefit pathways & intersections
- Duration of homelessness spell
- Profile of people experiencing homelessness:
 - Details on age
 - Family status
 - Mental health issues or addiction disorders
 - Immigration history
 - Child protection history

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Thank you!!!

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<https://ysaatio.fi/en/hankkeet-en/radar/>

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