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Report on the Vaasa Citizens' Panel

STRONG
Implementing Democratic Innovations

Team

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Table of contents

Abstract 1
Why are citizens' panels utilized? 2
How was the citizens' panel in Vaasa implemented? 2
Theme of the citizens' panel 4
Research design 4
Information package 5
Surveys filled out by participants 5
How were the participants recruited? 6
Moderated small group discussions 11
Joint event with the city council members 12
Findings from the Vaasa citizens' panel 13
What was discussed? How did the discussions go? 13
What did the surveys reveal? 14
Did information about equality and non-discrimination increase? 22
How did the participants experience the citizens' panel? 23
Observations from the joint event 25
Reflections on the significance of the citizens' panel 26
Conclusion 27

Abstract

In the Vaasa citizens' panel, citizens invited on the basis of a random sample (N = 20 000) discussed the themes of equality and non-discrimination in online discussions held from 23 to 27 March 2026. In order to support the discussions, participants were provided with balanced information on issues related to equality and non-discrimination in the City of Vaasa. The discussions were held in small groups with the guidance of impartial and trained moderators in three languages: Finnish, English and Swedish. All materials for the citizens' panel were also prepared in these three languages.

The participants in the citizens' panel formed a group with diverse backgrounds. Although participants with a higher education background were slightly over-represented among those who took part in group discussions, the participant group was diverse regarding gender, age and native language. There were also a reasonably large number of participants with lower levels of education. The recruitment process aimed for an overrepresentation of people with a for-eign-language background, because this group has generally been found to participate less actively than the rest of the population.

To examine the participants' views, they were asked to complete several surveys before and after the citizens' panel. For the research, those willing to participate were randomly assigned to three equally sized groups. The first group consisted of the participants in the citizens' panel. They received an information package by mail beforehand, answered the surveys and discussed in small groups. The second group received an information package by mail and answered the surveys but did not participate in the group discussions. The third group served as a control group that only completed the surveys.

The survey results indicated that participating in the citizens' panel improved satisfaction with democracy in the City of Vaasa and increased participants' knowledge about issues related to equality and non-discrimination. Respondents were generally very satisfied with gender equality and somewhat satisfied with the realization of non-discrimination in the City of Vaasa.

The most popular actions to improve equality and non-discrimination, according to the participants, were adopting safer space principles in the city's services, improving street safety and training integration peer experts to help immigrants with integration. Participants' opinions changed as a result of the group discussions in the citizens' panel. Participants wanted the city to train more integration peer experts. In addition, services supporting learning and education should be concentrated in schools with the weakest learning results. Similar changes did not occur in other groups.

The participants also found the citizens' panel's group discussions to be appropriately diverse and were generally satisfied with how they were conducted. Some of the participants in the citizens' panel also participated in an event held on 20.4.2026, where they presented questions formed in the small group discussions to the members of Vaasa City Council. The event complemented the citizens' panel and strengthened its connection to the political decision-making system.

Why are citizens' panels utilized?

In the Finnish democratic system, citizens have the opportunity to participate in the political decision-making process not only by voting but also in other ways. Broader citizen participa-tion can be justified on several grounds, including that it increases citizens' interest in politics and strengthens their opportunities to influence public affairs. Citizen participation and influence can also lead to more considered decisions and increase their legitimacy.

Participation of citizens is addressed in the Local Government Act and in the Act on Wellbeing Services Counties. These laws identify several possible methods of participation such as public discussion and consultation events as well as citizens' panels, which are based on the principles of deliberative democracy. In deliberative democracy, decision-making is preceded by informed, equal and mutually respectful discussion where participants justify their own viewpoints and listen to others[1]. Hearing different viewpoints can reduce polarization by increasing citizens' knowledge and understanding of different viewpoints[2].

Methods based on the principles of deliberative democracy are commonly referred to as deliberative citizen discussions. In these processes, a group of citizens selected through random sampling is provided with expert information and discusses in moderated small groups to form a considered public opinion on a particular issue. Utilizing random sampling in participant selection is important as it helps to ensure a diverse group of participants representing a wide range of perspectives.

Before or during a citizens' panel the participants are provided with balanced information about the topics under consideration, so that they can engage in an informed discussion. Discussions are conducted in small groups and facilitated by trained moderators. The moderators' role is to ensure that every participant has a chance to participate in the conversation and that no individual dominates the conversation.

Examples of deliberative citizen discussion methods include citizens' juries, citizens' panels and citizens' parliaments. These different models vary in terms of number of participants involved, their duration and the nature of their outcomes. In Finland, citizens' panels have in recent years been organized primarily by municipalities and wellbeing services counties. Permanent citizens' panels, which can address multiple issues during their term, are becoming increasingly common. In 2026, permanent citizens' panels are in use in Jyväskylä and Turku.

How was the citizens' panel in Vaasa implemented?

In the Vaasa citizens' panel, citizens invited on the basis of a random sample (N = 20 000) discussed the themes of equality and non-discrimination in online discussions held between between 23-27 March 2026. The participants were provided with balanced information about equality and non-discrimination issues in Vaasa as well as the city's previous steps towards improving equality and non-discrimination. The information package was printed and sent to participants before the discussions making it available to them during the discussions.

1 Grönlund, K., Herne, K., Jäske, M., & Värttö, M. (2021). Opas kansalaispaneelin järjestämiseen kunnissa.
2 Setälä, M., Kulha, K., Värttö, M., & Taskinen, M. (2022). Puntaroivat kansalaiskeskustelut suomalaisen demokratian vahvistajina.

The discussions were held in small groups consisting of 6–12 (mean = 9) people. Each group discussed for approximately three hours. The small group discussions took place during the day (09.30–12.30 or 14.00–17.00) or the evening (17.00–20.00). There were ten small groups and 92 participants. The discussions were held online via Microsoft Teams. Discussions were conducted in three languages: Finnish, Swedish and English. The participants were asked beforehand to specify the language(s) in which they preferred to take part in the discussions. All the materials provided for the participants were in three languages as well.

The discussions were guided by impartial and trained moderators, who ensured that small groups followed the rules of discussion (Figure 1) which were sent to the participants earlier. Moderators also ensured that opportunities to speak were distributed reasonably evenly, that the discussion remained on topic, and that the groups followed the schedule.



Figure 1. Rules for the discussions.

The participants completed two surveys before the small group discussions and one survey following the discussions. The surveys examined the participants' views regarding equality and non-discrimination, as well as other social and political attitudes.

In addition to the small group discussions, the participants were invited to an event held on 20 April 2026, to which members of the city council were also invited. The participants presented questions to the council members about themes related to equality and non-discrimination. The questions were drafted previously in the small groups. At the event, participants and council members were also provided with some preliminary results of the citizens' panel.

Theme of the citizens' panel

Through the citizens' panel, the City of Vaasa obtains information based on deliberative discussion about residents' views on issues of equality and non-discrimination to support decision-making. City officials will utilize the results of the citizens' panel in preparing the City of Vaasa's Equality and Non-discrimination Plan (2026-2029). In addition, the results will be available when the Vaasa city council decides on the Plan.

Equality and non-discrimination are very broad topics; therefore, it was not possible for the citizens' panel to address all related perspectives. The working group responsible for the panel focused its scope on three themes related to equality and non-discrimination that were considered particularly significant:

1. Regional equality, particularly the situation of low-income residents
2. Gender equality
3. Equal treatment of people with foreign backgrounds

The information package for the citizens' panel was compiled to include these themes. In the small group discussions, the moderator ensured that all three themes were addressed.

Research design

A research design was also implemented as part of the citizens' panel to examine how information and discussion influence participants' opinion formation. For this purpose, willing participants were randomly assigned to three groups, each consisting of 150 people. The aim was to get 100 people for each group. 150 people were invited because previous studies have shown that a considerable number of those invited do not participate. Despite this oversampling, the target of 100 people per group was not reached in any of the groups.

The first group consisted of people participating in the citizens' panel. They were provided with the information package by post beforehand, completed three surveys, and discussed in small groups. The second group also completed three surveys but did not participate in the small-group discussions. The third group was a control group that only filled out three surveys (Table 1).

Table 1. Research design.

	Information package & small group discussion	**Information package only**	**Control group (no information package or discussion)**
N	92	106	82

The purpose of the research design was to examine whether opinion formation differs between the group that is provided with information and participates in a small group discussion, and the group that is only provided with information. The purpose of the control group was to account for any changes in public opinion that might occur during the period between the ad-ministration of the surveys. The assumption was that no changes in opinion would occur in the control group. Participants in the small group discussions received a 50-euro gift card, those who only received the information package received a 20-euro gift card, and participants in the control group received a 10-euro gift card, provided that they completed all surveys sent to them.

Information package

Participants in the citizens' panel were provided with information about the themes of the panel through an information package. The information package was prepared by researchers working in the STRONG initiative together with the City of Vaasa. It was prepared in Finnish, English and Swedish, with identical content in all three languages. The information package offered the participants balanced and neutral information about the topics of equality and non-discrimination.

The information package described what the city's Equality and Non-discrimination Plan was about. The information package briefly presented the themes of the citizens' panel: **1) Regional equality, particularly the situation of low-income residents, 2) Gender equality and 3) Equal treatment of people with foreign backgrounds.** In addition, the information package defined the key concepts of equality and non-discrimination, such as gender equality, equality, positive discrimination (affirmative action) and discrimination. The information package briefly introduced the legal basis of equality and non-discrimination. It also outlined the three themes of the panel in the context of regional issues in Vaasa, and described previous actions taken by the City of Vaasa to promote equality and non-discrimination.

Finally, the information package introduced the rules concerning the panel's deliberative discussions and offered information about the key principles and practices of the panel such as random sampling, participants' access to information, utilization of the results in municipal decision-making as well as the practical organization of the process.

Surveys filled out by participants

The participants were asked to complete several surveys before and after the citizens' panel. The surveys were administered online using the QuestionPro platform. A link for the first sur-vey (t1) was sent to the individuals selected through random sampling together with the invita-tion to participate in the citizens' panel. The survey inquired about respondents' willingness to participate in the citizens' panel's small group discussions. In addition, respondents were asked, among other things, about their views on the implementation of equality and non-discrimination in Vaasa, as well as various background characteristics.

A link to the second survey (t2) was sent to respondents who had expressed interest in partici-pating in the citizens' panel or the related research. The survey inquired about respondents' views on various value-related issues, their trust in different societal institutions and satisfac-tion with the functioning of democracy in Finland and in Vaasa.

The third survey (t3) was conducted shortly after the small group discussions. In the survey, the participants were able to express their views on the fairness of the discussions and the effectiveness of the panel's organization. The survey also included several questions that had appeared in the previous surveys. By asking the same questions before and after the panel, it is possible to assess how participants' views may have changed as a result of participating in the citizens' panel's discussions and reviewing the information package. The surveys conducted before (t1 and t2) and after the panel (t3) examined respondents' views on seven different measures regarding equality and non-discrimination. In addition, the respondents were asked to express their views about two statements regarding the services of the City of Vaasa and justify their answers. This was done in order to assess what impact deliberative discussion and access to information had on respondents' ability to justify their views.

The fourth survey (t4) was conducted after the joint event where respondents met members of the city council. In the survey, the respondents who had attended the event were asked about their views on the organization of the event, on the council members' answers to questions presented by the participants and their expectations regarding the impact of the panel's re-sults on the City of Vaasa's Equality and Non-Discrimination Plan.

How were the participants recruited?

Participants were recruited via invitation letters that were mailed to 20 000 randomly selected residents of Vaasa aged 18–84. The sample was obtained from the Digital and Population Data Services Agency, and it was divided by first language and age to account for differences in willingness to participate. In the sample, older age groups and people whose first language was neither Finnish nor Swedish were overrepresented.

Vaasa residents chosen by random sampling received the invitation letter in which the citizens' panel was described. They were asked to answer the online survey in which the respondent could indicate their willingness to participate in the panel. The respondents were also asked to provide an email address to facilitate any future contact. The survey was open for responses between 29 January and 26 February 2026. Halfway through February, 10 000 people who had not yet responded to the survey were mailed a letter reminding them to do so. The people receiving the reminder letter were chosen by random sampling as well on the basis of age and first language.

A total of 1,268 respondents completed the first survey, corresponding to a response rate of 6.3%. Of these, 936 respondents (73.8%) were willing to participate in the citizens' panel. Among those who did not volunteer for the panel, the most common reason provided was that the timing was not convenient (51.9%). Figure 2.1 illustrates the development of participation rates based on the recruitment survey and the reminder letter.

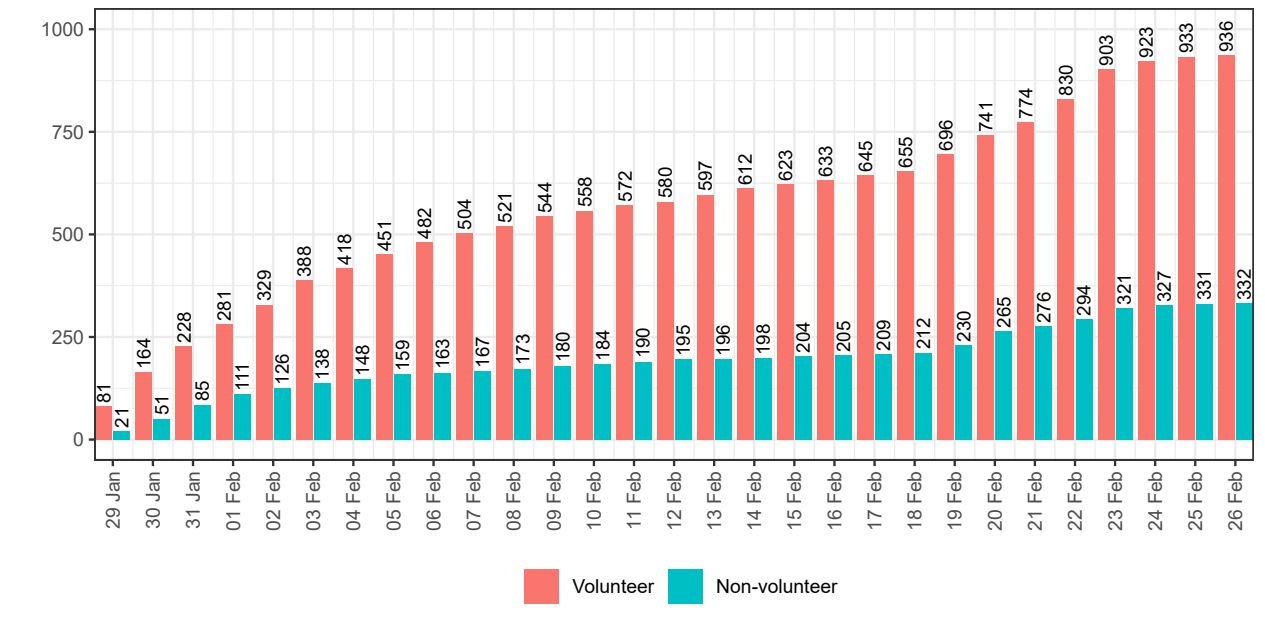


Figure 2. Changes in the number of volunteers and non-volunteers based on the recruitment survey.

After the recruitment period ended, 450 people were selected from the volunteers for three different experimental groups (150 people per group). The selection was done by determining the language in which the volunteers wished to participate and when they were able to partic-ipate. The discussion language was determined by a multiple-choice question in which the response options were Finnish, English, and Swedish. In addition, the volunteers could choose which of the dates provided would be the most convenient for their participation.

In the next phase, the participants were assigned to small groups. Four Finnish, three Swedish and three English groups were created for the citizens' panel. Once the language of the small group was determined, participants were randomly selected from among the volunteers who had indicated their availability to participate in a discussion in that language at the specific time. In addition, to account for the educational imbalance among the volunteers, the participants were divided so that 40% of the selected participants had a higher education degree and 60% did not have a higher education degree. 15 participants were assigned to each small group. The aim was to create small groups of ten and 15 participants were chosen, because previous experience has shown that some registered participants do not end up attending.

The following example illustrates how participants were assigned to small groups. First, one of the ten small groups was selected (in this example, the Tuesday group held from 17.00 to 20.00). After this the discussion language was chosen to be English. Next, nine people who had indicated in the recruitment survey that they wished to participate in English, were available at that time, and did not have a higher education degree were randomly selected. Similarly, six people who did have a higher education degree were randomly chosen. Afterwards these 15 people were removed from the group of volunteers.

When 150 people were randomly assigned to small groups for discussions, the rest of the volunteers were randomly assigned to two groups: a group of 150 participants who received the information package, and to a control group of 150 people. To ensure comparability with the group participating in the citizens' panel's discussions, stratified sampling was used so that 40% of those selected held a higher education degree and 60% did not.

The respondents were informed in the second survey whether they were chosen to participate in the small group discussions or not. Those who had volunteered but were not selected for any of the three groups (the small group discussions, the information package or the control group) were notified by email that this time they were not selected to participate in the project. At the same time, they were given the opportunity to express their interest in receiving information from the City of Vaasa about future opportunities in citizen participation. The same opportunity was also given to those who had expressed interest in participating during the recruitment survey but were not able to participate in the citizens' panel.

Table 2. Participants in the three study groups by background characteristics, compared with the population of Vaasa.

n (%)	Small-group discussion N = 92	Information package N = 106	Control group N = 82	Total N = 280	Vaasa
Gender					
Male	47 (51 %)	53 (50 %)	45 (55 %)	145 (52 %)	51 %
Female	45 (49 %)	53 (50 %)	37 (45 %)	135 (48 %)	49 %
Age					
18–34	34 (37 %)	28 (26 %)	19 (23 %)	81 (29 %)	35 %
35–49	17 (18 %)	25 (24 %)	23 (28 %)	65 (23 %)	24 %
50–64	21 (23 %)	21 (20 %)	18 (22 %)	60 (21 %)	20 %
65–84	20 (22 %)	32 (30 %)	22 (27 %)	74 (26 %)	22 %
Native language					
Finnish	47 (51 %)	60 (57 %)	55 (67 %)	162 (58 %)	64 %
Swedish	22 (24 %)	18 (17 %)	11 (13 %)	51 (18 %)	22 %
Other	23 (25 %)	28 (26 %)	16 (20 %)	67 (24 %)	13 %
Level of education					
No higher education degree	47 (51 %)	66 (62 %)	53 (65 %)	166 (59 %)	69 %
Higher education degree	45 (49 %)	40 (38 %)	29 (35 %)	114 (41 %)	31 %

Table 3. Background characteristics of small group discussion participants by discussion group.

n (%)	**Group 1, Finnish N = 11**	**Group 2, Finnish N = 11**	**Group 3, Englishi N = 10**	**Group 4, Swedish N = 7**	**Group 5, Swedish N = 8**	**Group 6, English N = 12**	**Group 7, Finnish N = 9**	**Group 8, Swedish N = 9**	**Group 9, Englishi N = 6**	**Group 10, Finnish N = 9**	**Total N = 92**
Gender											
Male	7 (64 %)	6 (55 %)	5 (50 %)	5 (71 %)	5 (63 %)	4 (33 %)	4 (44 %)	2 (22 %)	4 (67 %)	5 (56 %)	47 (51 %)
Female	4 (36 %)	5 (45 %)	5 (50 %)	2 (29 %)	3 (38 %)	8 (67 %)	5 (56 %)	7 (78 %)	2 (33 %)	4 (44 %)	45 (49 %)
Age											
18–34	1 (9,1 %)	2 (18 %)	6 (60 %)	4 (57 %)	4 (50 %)	9 (75 %)	1 (11 %)	2 (22 %)	3 (50 %)	2 (22 %)	34 (37 %)
35–49	2 (18 %)	3 (27 %)	3 (30 %)	0 (0 %)	1 (13 %)	2 (17 %)	0 (0 %)	2 (22 %)	3 (50 %)	1 (11 %)	17 (18 %)
50–64	2 (18 %)	2 (18 %)	0 (0 %)	2 (29 %)	1 (13 %)	1 (8,3 %)	6 (67 %)	2 (22 %)	0 (0 %)	5 (56 %)	21 (23 %)
65–84	6 (55 %)	4 (36 %)	1 (10 %)	1 (14 %)	2 (25 %)	0 (0 %)	2 (22 %)	3 (33 %)	0 (0 %)	1 (11 %)	20 (22 %)
Native language											
Finnish	11 (100 %)	8 (73 %)	3 (30 %)	1 (14 %)	2 (25 %)	3 (25 %)	8 (89 %)	3 (33 %)	1 (17 %)	7 (78 %)	47 (51 %)
Swedish	0 (0 %)	2 (18 %)	0 (0 %)	5 (71 %)	6 (75 %)	2 (17 %)	1 (11 %)	5 (56 %)	0 (0 %)	1 (11 %)	22 (24 %)
Other	0 (0 %)	1 (9,1 %)	7 (70 %)	1 (14 %)	0 (0 %)	7 (58 %)	0 (0 %)	1 (11 %)	5 (83 %)	1 (11 %)	23 (25 %)
Level of education											
No higher education degree	7 (64 %)	5 (45 %)	5 (50 %)	5 (71 %)	3 (38 %)	7 (58 %)	5 (56 %)	5 (56 %)	2 (33 %)	3 (33 %)	47 (51 %)
Higher education degree	4 (36 %)	6 (55 %)	5 (50 %)	2 (29 %)	5 (63 %)	5 (42 %)	4 (44 %)	4 (44 %)	4 (67 %)	6 (67 %)	45 (49 %)

Some participants withdrew from participation after the groups had been formed. Where possible, participants who had already been assigned to a group for the small group discussion but were subsequently unable to attend their designated group were reassigned to another small group. If this was not possible, they were reassigned to the group that received only the infor-mation package. The participants in different groups and small group discussions are presented in Tables 2 and 3, by background characteristics.

Figure 3 compares the participants to the population of Vaasa based on gender, age, native language and level of education. The figure shows that gender distribution closely mirrors that of the population. Regarding age, the distribution among the participants in the small group discussions corresponds well to the population distribution whereas younger people are somewhat underrepresented in the group that received the information package and in the control group.

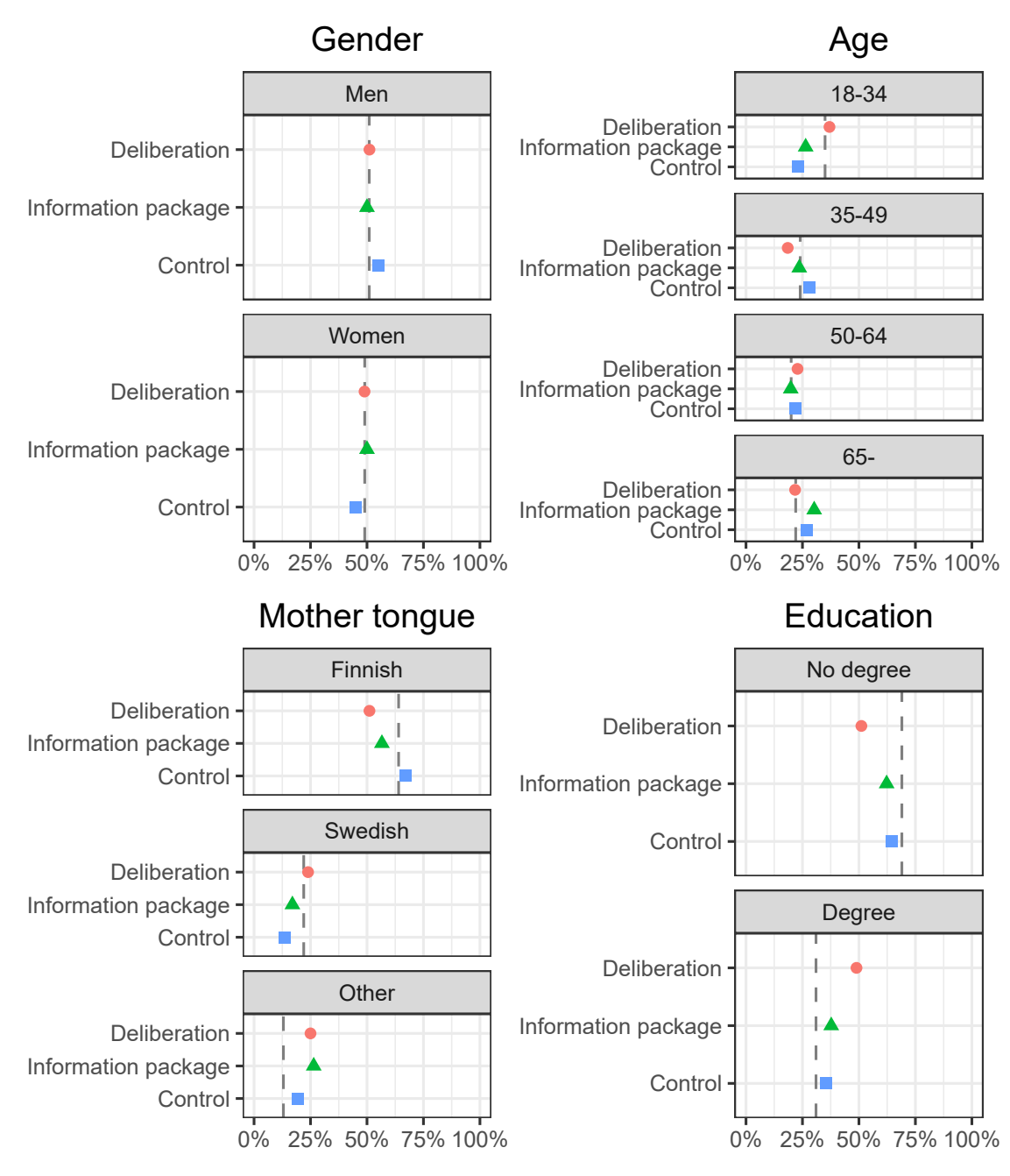


Figure 3. Comparison of participants' background characteristics across the three study groups.

Regarding native language, participants with a native language other than Finnish or Swedish are overrepresented. In addition, participants with higher education degrees are overrepresented particularly among those who participated in the small group discussions.

During recruitment, an overrepresentation of those with a native language other than Finnish or Swedish was sought because the City of Vaasa was particularly interested in the views of that segment of the population. Although those with a higher education degree were slightly overrepresented among participants in the small group discussions, it can be said that the overall group of participants was diverse regarding gender, age and native language. In addition, individuals with lower levels of education were also reasonably well represented among the participants.

Moderated small group discussions

The citizens' panel's small group discussions were held online via Microsoft Teams. Four of the groups were held in Finnish, three in Swedish and three in English. Therefore, participants were able to participate in the panel in the language in which they felt most comfortable. The purpose of this language arrangement was to enable participation not only for Finnish- and Swedish-speaking residents but also for those with more limited proficiency in either of these languages. Some participants with a foreign language background took part in the discussion in Finnish or Swedish, while the English language groups also included individuals whose native language was Finnish or Swedish.

Each participant participated in one small group discussion. A moderator and a technical moderator were always present in the small group. The moderator made sure that opportunities to speak were distributed evenly and ensured that all three sub-topics of the panel were covered. However, the moderator did not participate in the discussion or give opinions on the thoughts presented by the participants. The moderator's ability to influence the course of the conversation was deliberately limited so that the participants' own ideas could move the discussion forward and shape its content.

In practice, the small group discussions focused on three sub-topics of equality and non-discrimination. The City of Vaasa was particularly interested in learning about residents' views on these topics. The information package regarding the themes of equality and non-discrimination was sent to the participants before the discussions. The information package included information about relevant concepts, challenges identified in Vaasa and measures previously taken to promote equality and non-discrimination. In addition to helping focus the discussions, the purpose of the package was to encourage participants to reflect on the themes of the citizens' panel before the small group discussions and thereby facilitate participation in the discussion.

Each Teams meeting lasted three hours. About two out of three hours were reserved for discussions. Between the discussions, a 15-minute break was held. The final 30 minutes were used to draft questions for members of the City Council for the joint event held on 20 April 2026 in Vaasa's city council chamber. A technical moderator was also present in the small group discussions to help participants with any technical difficulties before and during the discussion. In addition, the participants were offered instructions and an opportunity to test the Teams platform before the discussions. In the end, participants faced relatively few technical issues – only one participant had to withdraw from the discussion because of technical issues.

Joint event with the city council members

At the end of the small group discussions, the participants drafted questions for the city councilors. Each group was instructed to prepare three questions and choose one participant from their group who would present the questions to the councilors at the joint event held on 20 April. A total of 26 citizens' panel participants and 12 city council members were present at the event. The council members represented every party in the city council.

Members of the research team chose one question from each group that the group's representative was asked to present at the event (see Appendix 1). This was done to avoid overlap among the questions. The questions were sent to the city council members approximately a week before the event to allow them sufficient time to prepare their responses.

At the beginning of the event, research team members Kaisa Herne and Marina Lindell presented results of the surveys that were conducted as part of the citizens' panel. Afterwards, the group representatives presented their questions. Two to three city council members had the opportunity to present their responses to one question. All in all, there was time for nine questions during the event. One group's question was not presented, since none of the members of the group were able to attend the event. The event was not recorded but two members from the research team took notes of the city council members' responses. The discussion highlighted both the measures already taken by the city to promote equality and non-discrimination and the importance of the third sector in advancing these goals. On the other hand, the city council members recognized many of the issues that the participants brought up.

The aim of the event was to strengthen the connection between politicians and panelists and create pressure to consider the panel's results in the upcoming equality and non-discrimination plan. This type of joint event between panelists and city council members hasn't been tested in Finland before, thereby providing insights into the usefulness of similar methods in the future.



City council members and participants at the joint event in the Vaasa City Council Chamber on 20 April 2026

Findings from the Vaasa citizens' panel

What was discussed? How did the discussions go?

We evaluated the contents of the discussions based on the notes taken by the moderators. Moderators filled out a short survey after each small group discussion in which they described the contents of the discussions, equality of the discussions in the small groups and drafting of the questions for the joint event in the group.

In the discussions, equality and non-discrimination were examined from multiple perspectives. Themes related to systemic issues and social and cultural dimensions were brought up during the discussions. We identified three cross-cutting themes from the moderators' notes. The three themes related to **regional equality and segregation, multiculturalism and multilingualism and economic inequality and employment.**

The discussion highlighted the need to strengthen regional equality and prevent segregation. Regional inequality was seen especially as a systemic issue which is influenced, for example, by housing policy, coverage of public transportation and access to public services. Regarding housing policy, increasing the availability of affordable housing, diversification of housing stock and improving student housing were highlighted. Public transportation was seen as an important tool for improving regional and gender equality as it improves, for example, the accessibility of public services. **Public transportation** was brought up in half of the groups. Segregation was a source of concern because of concerns about unsafe environments and social issues, especially in some areas.

Another central theme was related to multiculturalism and multilingualism. **Racism and ethnic discrimination** were discussed in many instances. Participants viewed the region's multilingualism, language requirements, and other linguistic challenges as important equality issues. They felt that teaching immigrants Finland's national languages is important for facilitating integration. At the same time, multiculturalism, cultural understanding, and a family-oriented approach were highlighted as factors that can strengthen people's attachment to the region. While immigrants were also considered to have a responsibility for their own integration, participants also emphasized that everyone, including members of marginalized groups, should have the opportunity to live according to their own identity and values. Overall, participants felt that improving immigrants' employment opportunities and supporting integration require both structural and community-based solutions.

A third central theme was related to economic inequality and employment. The position of low-income residents, such as students and immigrants, was brought up in multiple discussions. Economic difficulties limit, for example, participation in hobbies or social activities. Language requirements in employment were seen as unreasonable, since employment was considered a tool for integration. The outmigration of highly educated workers was also raised as a concern. **Improving the match between labor supply and labor demand** was therefore seen as an important regional objective. In addition, gender-based discrimination, harassment and inequality in working life were recognized as ongoing problems.

The themes were not separate from one another but rather intertwined, and many of the identified challenges overlapped. For example, economic inequality and regional segregation were seen as closely connected, particularly in relation to the location and availability of affordable housing. Similarly, multilingualism and demanding language requirements in working life were considered challenges for the employment and social integration of immigrants. Overall, **recognizing those in vulnerable positions and supporting them** emerged as an important theme.

Participants also proposed solutions to issues related to equality and non-discrimination, as well as ways to increase awareness of these issues. **Education** was seen as playing a particularly important role in promoting awareness of equality and reducing discrimination and racism. Different **culture events** were seen as tools to promote non-discrimination as well. Different kinds of **support services**, such as utilizing service vouchers to promote integration and extending food aid, were proposed in the groups. In addition, different **associations** were identified as having an important role in promoting equality, and participants hoped that the City of Vaasa would provide support for their activities. The discussions also considered the relationship between individual responsibility and the structures provided by society. In conclusion, the discussions brought up a need for comprehensive solutions, which combine structural measures, community-based support and cultural understanding.

The level of activity varied across groups. In some groups, the discussion was lively and more questions emerged than necessary. In other groups the number of active participants was lower, and the moderators had to encourage participants to share their views. In two groups segregation or the discussed issues were not identified as local issues and participants found it more difficult to address these issues and formulate related questions. In one group, it was also noted that the timing of the discussion and participants' level of alertness at that time affected the group's output.

What did the surveys reveal?

How did participants respond to the surveys, and can any changes in their responses be observed as a result of participation in the citizens' panel? The surveys examined issues related to equality and non-discrimination in the City of Vaasa as well as support for different measures to improve equality and non-discrimination. First, let's examine the participants' views on gender equality and equal treatment of different groups in Vaasa (Figure 4).
The figure is based on questions about gender equality (left side of the figure): *"How satisfied are you with the way that gender equality is realized in Vaasa?"* and non-discrimination (right side of the figure): *"How satisfied are you with the way that equality between different groups of people is realized in Vaasa?"* Responses were given on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 means not at all satisfied and 10 means completely satisfied.

Figure 4 presents the means (M) and standard deviations (SD) before and after the small group discussions. The black dots represent means and horizontal lines above and below each mean represent the 95 percent confidence intervals. The individual coloured dots represent the responses of individual participants at the two measurement points. The same applies to all similar figures presented in the remainder of the report.

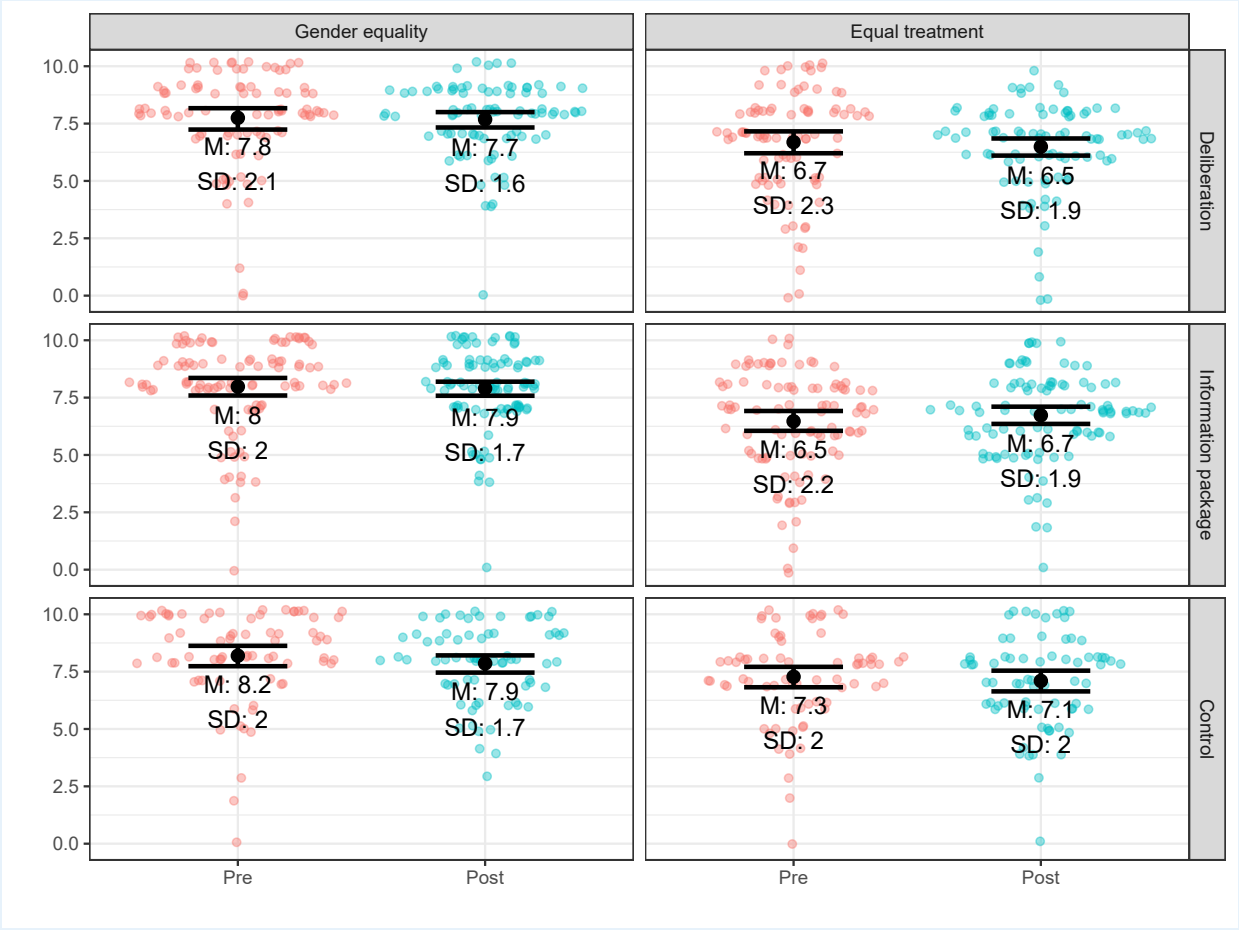


Figure 4. Satisfaction with gender equality and the equal treatment of different groups across the three study groups (small group discussion participants, information-only group and control group) before (Pre) and after (Post) the Citizens' Panel.

Figure 4 shows that respondents were highly satisfied with the state of gender equality in Vaasa, with a mean score of approximately 8. Equal treatment received a somewhat lower mean score of approximately 6.8. No statistically significant changes in satisfaction with gender equality or equal treatment were observed in any of the groups (ANOVA post hoc tests with Bonferroni corrections). This finding indicates that **participation in the citizens' panel or reading the information package did not affect respondents' perceptions of how gender equality and equal treatment are realized in Vaasa.**

Although participants were generally satisfied with the realization of gender equality in Vaasa, some variation is observed between individual respondents, which can be seen from standard deviations and response distributions. Based on subgroup analyses, we found, for example, that women were less satisfied than men with both gender equality and equal treatment in Vaasa. Significance testing showed that views on gender equality did not change in any of the groups. While small differences can be observed between the two measurement points, these differences were neither statistically significant nor systematic.

Similar patterns can be observed with regard to equal treatment of different groups. The mean scores were somewhat lower than those for gender equality, suggesting that residents were slightly less satisfied with how different groups are treated. As with gender equality, there was some variation between individuals. Based on the standard deviations, most respondents' scores fell between 5 and 7, although a small number of very low scores, around 0-2, were also observed. No changes were detected between the two measurement points in this measure either.

Next, we will examine the respondents' opinions on suggestions for concrete measures, which aim to strengthen equality and non-discrimination in Vaasa (Figure 5).

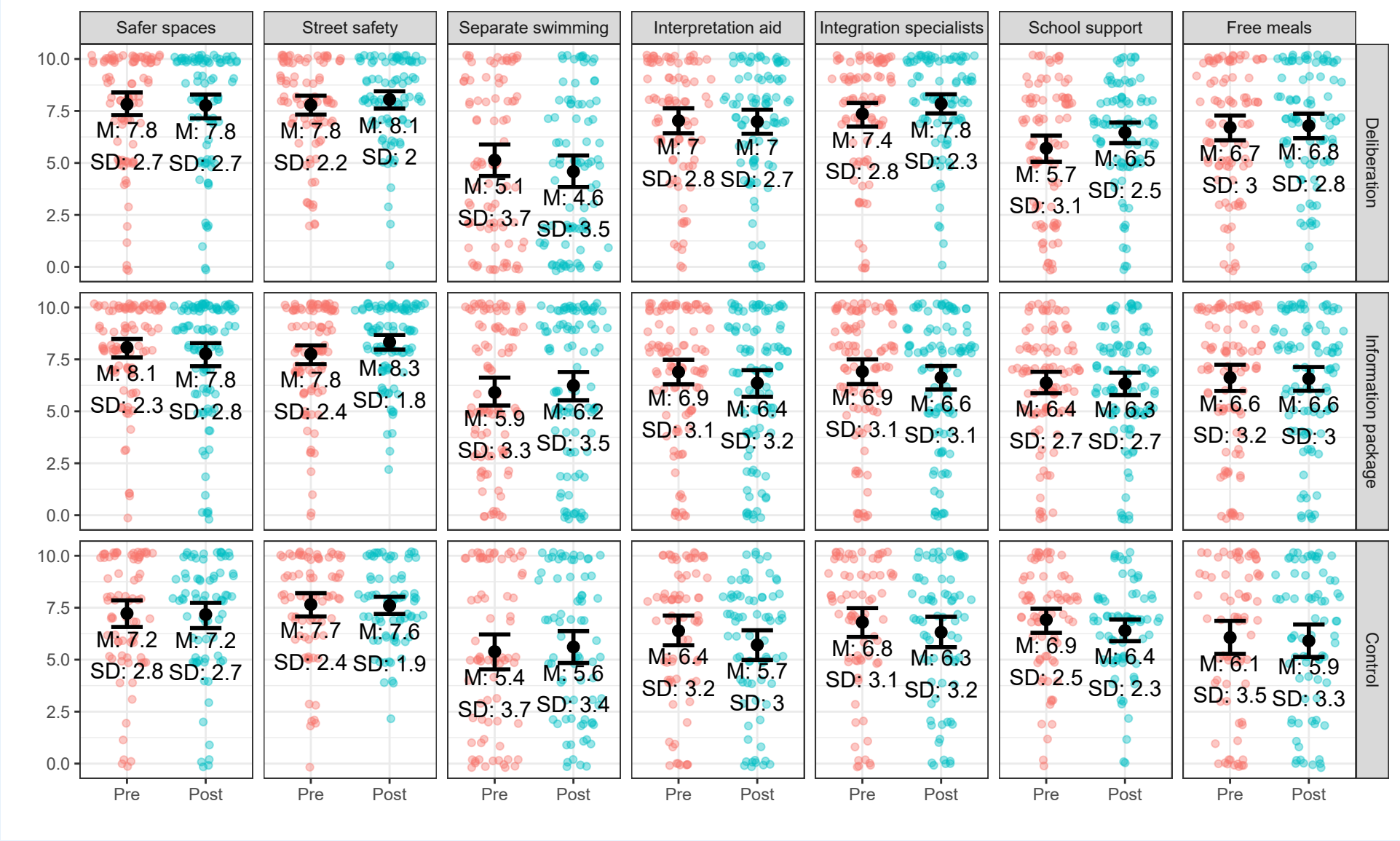
Participants responded to questions about measures on a scale of 0-10 (Completely disagree – Completely agree). Questions related to measures were framed as follows:

Safer spaces: All city services should adopt principles for a safer space that prevent inappro-priate behavior and discrimination.
Street safety: Urban planning should pay special attention to improving street safety, for example by increasing street lighting.
Exclusive swimming pool slots: The city should not reserve swimming pool slots exclusively for certain user groups, such as women.
Interpretation services: The city must ensure that residents with an immigrant background always have access to interpretation assistance when needed while using city services.
Integration peer experts: The city should train more integration peer experts who help resi-dents with an immigrant background become familiar with Vaasa and its services.
Services supporting learning: Services supporting learning (remedial teaching, classroom assistants, school youth workers, morning and afternoon activities) should be concentrated in schools with the weakest learning outcomes.
Free meals: Vaasa should provide free meals for children and young people during the summer when school meals are not available.

The most popular measures for promoting equality and non-discrimination among respondents were the adoption of safer space principles in city services, improving street safety, and training integration peer experts. These remained the most popular measures even after the panel discussions and reading the information package.

Figure 5 presents the means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the proposed measures before and after the discussions. We observed some statistically significant changes in support for the different proposals (ANOVA post hoc tests, Bonferroni corrections). Support for training integration peer experts and services supporting learning increased among those who participated in the citizens' panel. The opinions of participants in the citizens' panel changed as a result of the discussions so that **participants wished that the city would train more integration peer experts and that services supporting learning should be concentrated in schools with the weakest learning outcomes.** In the group that only received the information package, support for improving street safety increased, whereas support for interpretation services decreased. Support for interpretation services also decreased in the control group.

Figure 5. Support for proposals to strengthen equality and non-discrimination by study group before and after the Citizens' Panel.



Let us now take a closer look at support for the individual proposals. Regarding the *Safer spaces* proposal, the figure shows that residents of Vaasa generally support the measure, with mean scores ranging from 7.2 to 8.1. Considerable variation in individual opinions was observed at both measurement points. The similarity of the standard deviations suggests that opinions did not become more concentrated following the post-test. There were no statistically significant changes between the two measurement points in any of the groups either.

Regarding *street safety*, participants supported the proposal, with mean scores ranging from 7.6 to 8.3. Variation between individuals was smaller, as indicated by the smaller standard deviations. Unlike the safer spaces proposal, the number of respondents strongly opposing the proposal was smaller, and the responses were more concentrated between the values of 6 and 8. In addition, a statistically significant change was observed between the two measure-ment points among participants who received the information package. Their support increased by 0.5 points, and the standard deviation decreased from 2.4 to 1.8. Therefore, reading the information package changed and unified opinions on the proposal for street safety.

The *exclusive swimming pool* slots proposal received less support among the residents of Vaasa. The mean scores varied between 4.6 and 6.2, and the standard deviations were large, indicating substantial variation in opinions and a degree of instability in attitudes. No statistically significant changes were observed between the two measurement points. The wording of the statement, which included a negation, may have contributed to random response patterns and possible misinterpretations.

Mean support for *interpretation services* ranged from 5.7 to 7.0. The large standard deviations suggest substantial differences between individuals and possible instability in opinions. A statistically significant change was observed in support for the proposal: support decreased both in the group that read the information package and in the control group. One possible explanation, especially for the change in the control group, is that something occurred in public discourse during the fieldwork period that weakened support, and that this change was partly counterbalanced in the small-group discussions. Another possible explanation is misin-terpretations and random response patterns, which may suggest a change in attitudes. The large standard deviations suggest that respondents may have found the statement particularly difficult to evaluate.

Support for the *Integration peer experts* proposal ranged from 6.3 to 7.8, and the standard de-viations were also large. A statistically significant change was observed in support for the proposal: support increased among participants who took part in the small-group discussions. The smaller standard deviations suggest that the views of those who participated in the small-group discussions also became more clearly defined. One possible explanation is that discussions with people from different backgrounds highlighted the need to meet others with similar experiences in order to strengthen integration.

Regarding the *services supporting learning* proposal, mean support ranged from 6.3 to 6.9, and the standard deviations were somewhat smaller than for the other statements, suggesting more unified opinions. A statistically significant change was observed for the proposal, with support increasing among participants who took part in the small-group discussions. Discussions with people from different backgrounds may have helped participants to reflect on and clarify their views on the balance between equal treatment and fair treatment.

Finally, mean support for the *free meals* proposal ranged from 5.9 to 6.8, and the large standard deviations suggest variation in opinions. No statistically significant differences were observed between the two measurement points in any of the groups.
In addition to changes in attitudes, we examined how participants viewed the functioning of democracy in Finland and in Vaasa. Figure 6 presents respondents' views on the functioning of democracy before and after the citizens' panel.

Satisfaction with the functioning of democracy was measured with two questions: *"How sat-isfied are you with the functioning of democracy in Finland?"* and *"How satisfied are you with the functioning of democracy in Vaasa?".* Participants were asked to respond on the following scale: Not at all satisfied, Not very satisfied, Fairly satisfied, Very satisfied, Cannot say.

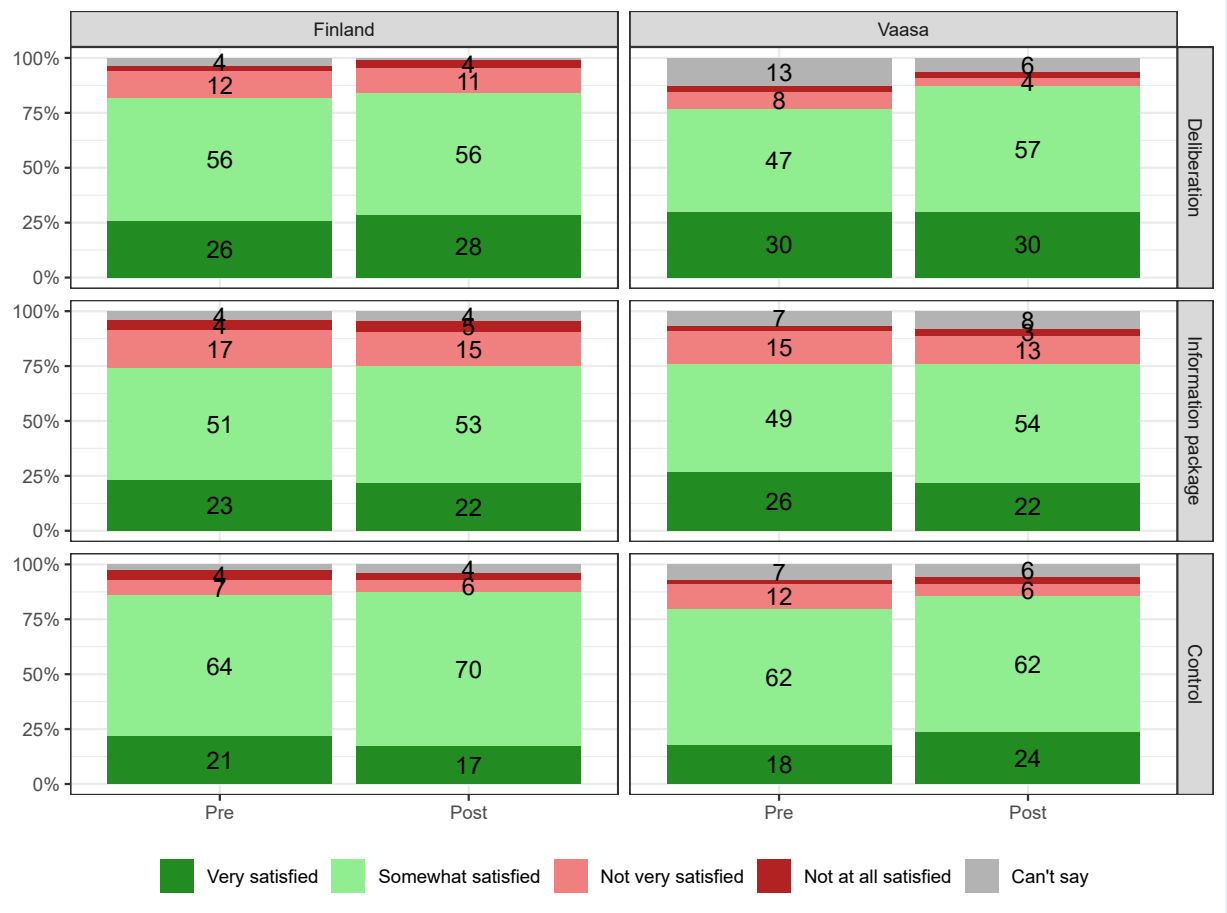


Figure 6. Satisfaction with democracy in Finland and in Vaasa by study group and measure-ment occasion.

Figure 6 presents the distribution of responses for Finland (left side) and Vaasa (right side) according to the group allocation used in the research design. Statistical analysis shows a statistically significant increase in satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Vaasa among those who participated in the citizens' panel (McNemar test). This is largely due to the fact that many respondents who had no opinion about local democracy before the citizens' panel had formed a positive view of it by the post-measurement. The proportion of respondents who were either "fairly satisfied" or "very satisfied" with democracy in Vaasa increased from 77% to 87%. No other statistically significant changes were observed. **Participation in the citizens' panel therefore did not increase satisfaction with democracy in general, but it did increase satisfaction with democracy at the municipal level, that is, at the level at which the citizens' panel was conducted.**

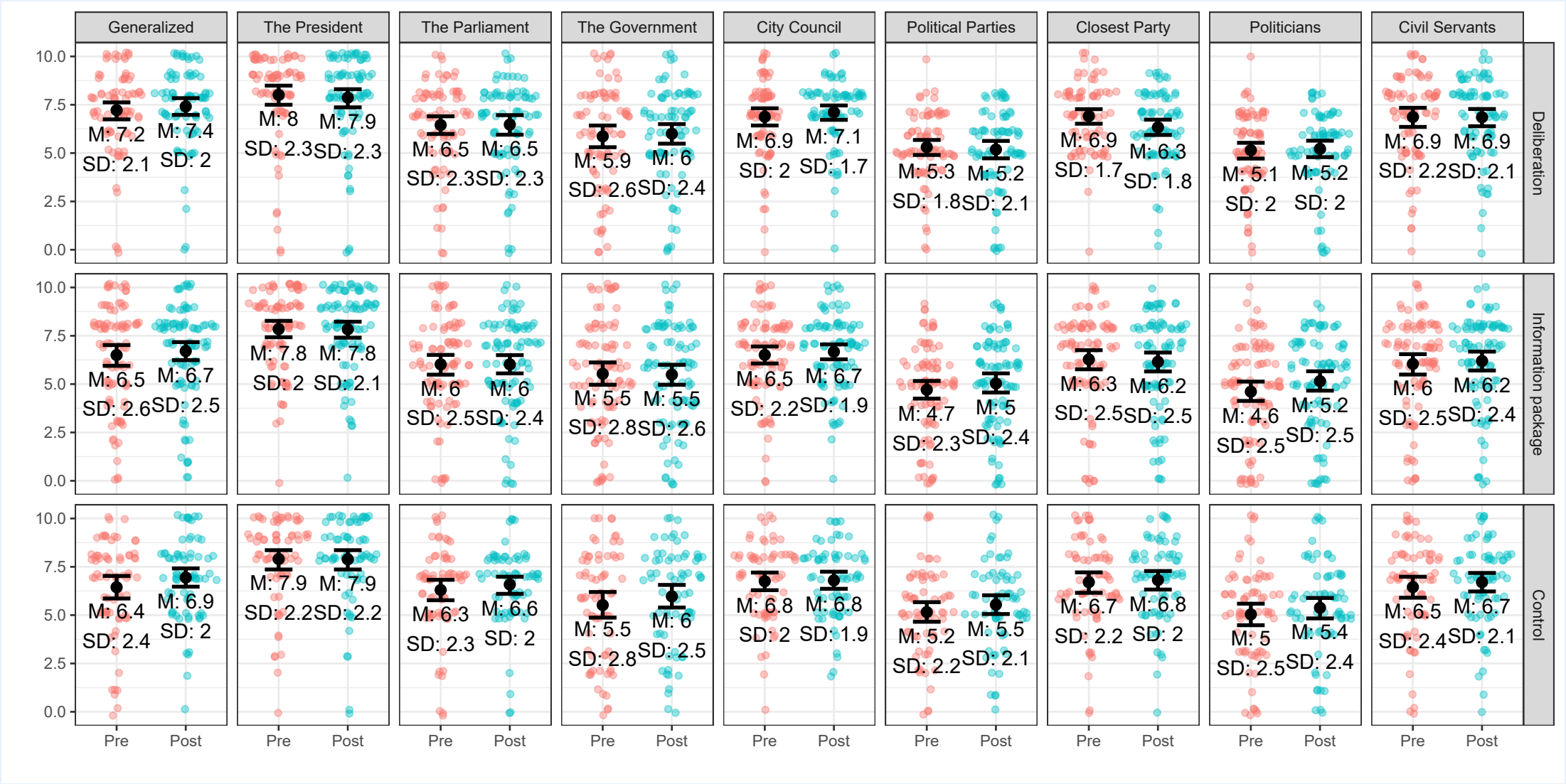
In addition to democratic attitudes, we examined general social trust (trust in other people) and political trust (trust in political institutions) (Figure 7).

General social trust was measured by a question: "Do you think that people, in general, can be trusted, or do you think that one cannot be too careful when dealing with people?". The re-sponse scale ranged from 0 to 10 (One cannot be too careful – Most people can be trusted). Different forms of political trust were measured using the survey question: "How much do you trust or distrust the following institutions?" The response scale ranged from 0 to 10 (Do not trust at all – Trust completely).

Regarding political trust, we observed that support is highest for the president, the city council and the civil servants. On the other hand, support is lowest for the parliament, the government, the political parties generally, the political party closest to respondents and politicians generally. General social trust is also high, but there are some differences between the study groups, so that participants in the small-group discussions already had higher levels of trust at the pre-test stage. This is partly explained by the fact that individuals with higher levels of trust were more likely to participate in the small-group discussions (n = 92) among those who had been selected for participation in the discussions (n = 150).

Figure 7 presents the mean responses (M) and standard deviations (SD) at two time points. Our analysis indicates that a statistically significant increase in trust in politicians was observed only among participants who received the information package only (ANOVA post hoc test, Bonferroni correction). In the other groups, the observed changes were not statistically significant.

Figure 7. General social trust and political trust by study group and measurement occasion.



Did information about equality and non-discrimination increase?

Knowledge was measured using five different questions: *"What does equality mean?"; "What is the unemployment situation in the Vaasa region?"; "When is residential segregation consid-ered socially harmful segregation?"; "A foreign-language speaker is defined as a person whose native language is other than Finnish, Swedish, or Sámi. At the end of 2024, the number of for-eign-language speakers living in Vaasa was ..."; "According to a survey conducted by the Euro-pean Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, among Finnish respondents belonging to sexual and gender minorities, discrimination in different areas of life during the previous 12 months had been experienced by ...".* Each question included five response options: four substantive alter-natives, one of which was correct, and a "Cannot say" option. In the analysis, responses were coded so that correct answers received a value of 1 and all other responses a value of 0. An index was created by calculating the mean of the responses at each measurement point. For example, answering all questions correctly produces a value of 1, whereas answering two out of five questions correctly produces a value of 0.4.

Figure 8 presents the means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of the knowledge index at two measurement points. We observed a statistically significant increase in respondents' level of knowledge: it increased both among participants in the citizens' panel and among those who received the information package (ANOVA post hoc test, Bonferroni correction). The increase was greater among citizens' panel participants, and the number of correct answers after the discussions was also higher than in the group that received only the information package. Participation in the citizens' panel therefore increased knowledge related to equality and non-discrimination.

The increase in knowledge is also clearly visible when examining how it developed in individual questions between the pre- and post-measurements. The proportion of correct answers to the question concerning the unemployment situation in the Vaasa region increased by 15 percentage points among participants in the small group discussions (from 40% to 55%), but by only 11 percentage points (from 31% to 42%) among those who received only the information package. In the question concerning residential segregation, knowledge remained at the same level in the information-package group, whereas it increased by 7 percentage points among participants in the small group discussions. The largest differences in knowledge gains were observed in the final two questions. Among participants in the small group discussions, the proportion of correct answers increased by as much as 18 percentage points on the question concerning the share of Vaasa residents whose native language is neither Finnish nor Swedish, whereas the increase was only 9 percentage points among those who had received the information package. For the question concerning the prevalence of discrimination experiences, the difference was as much as 18 percentage points compared with 1 percentage point. These comparisons illustrate that knowledge increased somewhat more among participants who took part in the citizens' panel than among those who only received the information package.

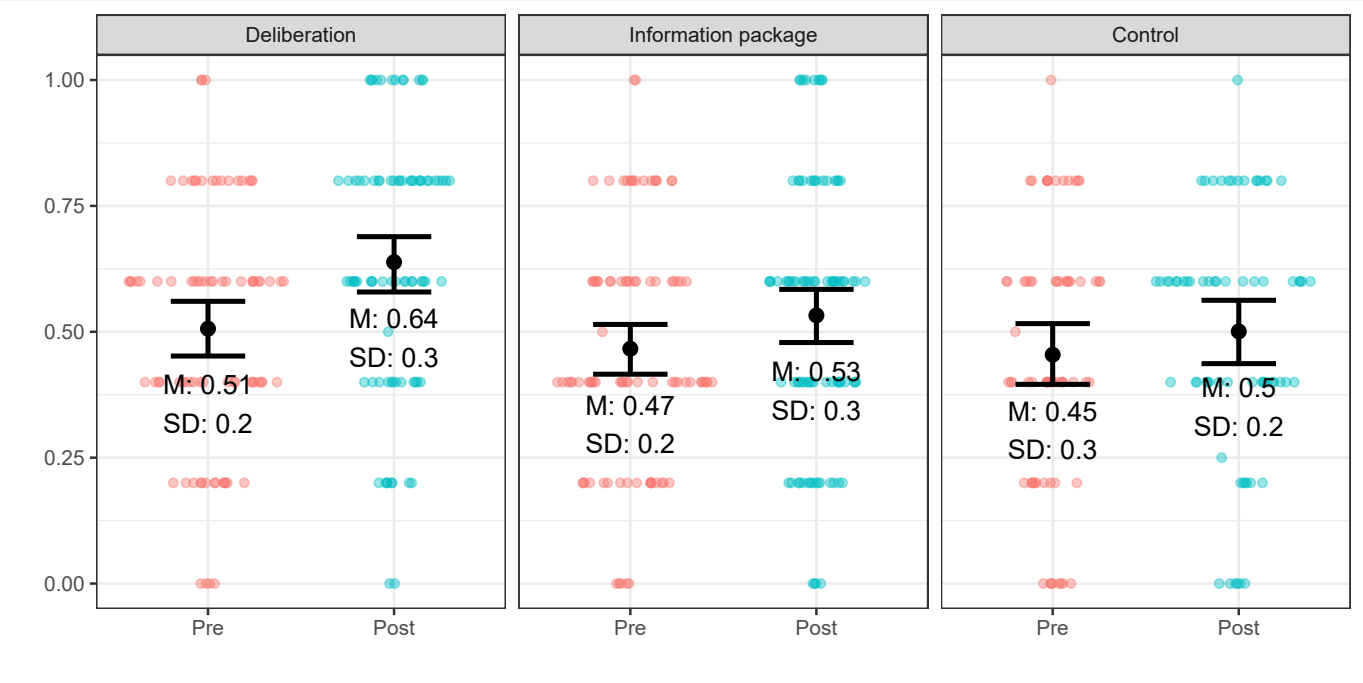


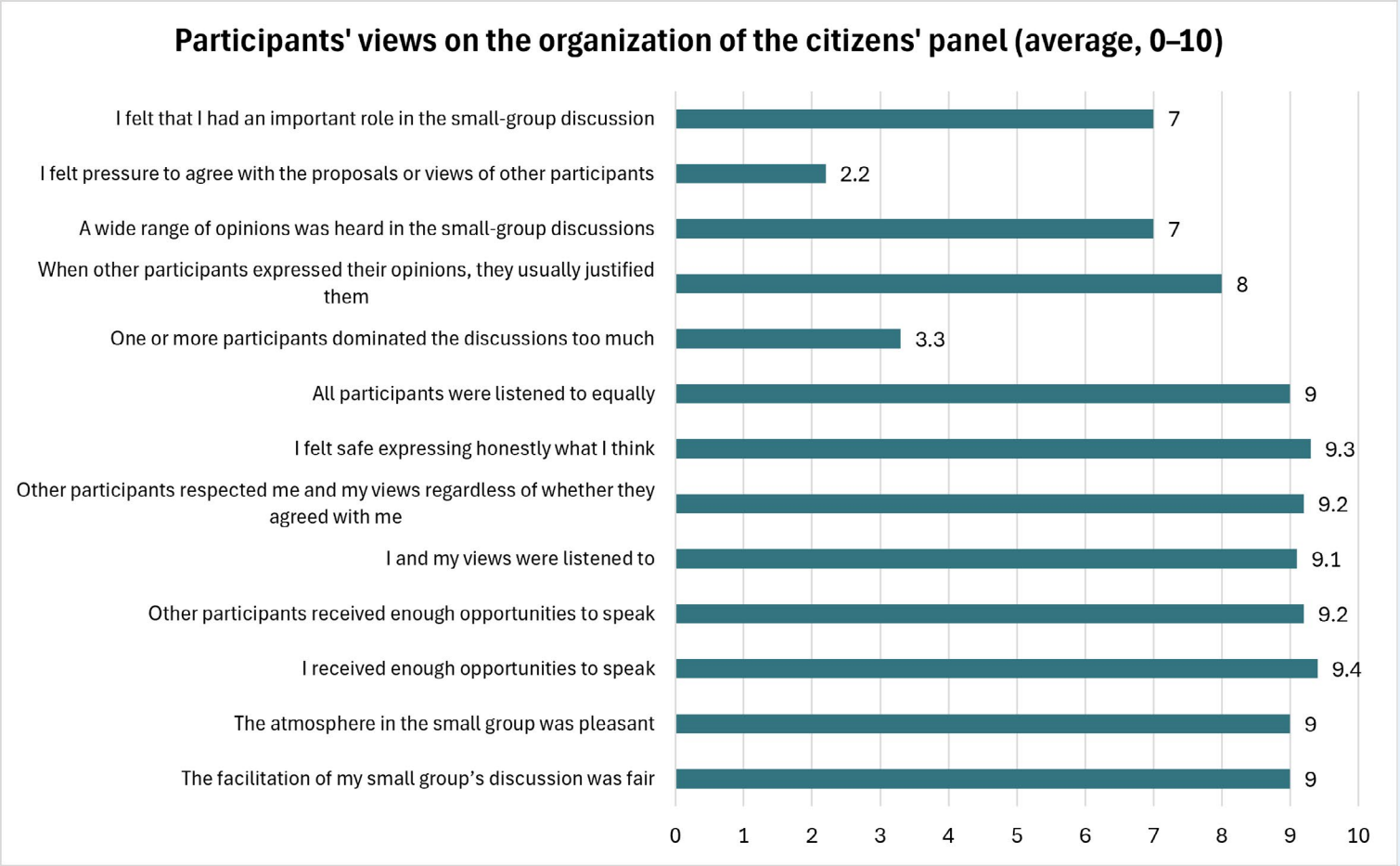
Figure 8. Knowledge levels across study groups before and after the citizen deliberation.

How did the participants experience the citizens' panel?

We examined the participants' experiences of the citizens' panel through 13 statements. On a scale of 0-10, eight out of thirteen statements received a mean score of 9 or higher. The participants felt that there was a positive atmosphere in the small groups: all participants and their views were heard and the participants respected each other. The participants were very satisfied with the moderation of the small groups and the distribution of speaking turns as well. Slightly lower, but still high, scores were given to statements concerning the diversity of opinions expressed in the small-group discussions, the importance of the participant's role, and the justification of opinions during the discussions. Statements "One or more participants dominated the discussions too much." and "I felt pressure to agree with the proposals or views of other participants." have inversed wording. Therefore, low scores reflect a positive assess-ment of the citizens' panel. The vast majority of participants felt that these statements did not accurately describe their experience. It appears that **participants perceived the citizens' panel's small group discussions as sufficiently diverse in viewpoints and, overall, highly successful (Figure 9).**

In comments sent directly to organizers by email, participants thanked the researchers for the clear and consistent communication and emphasized the importance of increasing direct citizen participation. Constructive feedback was given particularly regarding the payment schedule for gift cards and the collection of personal data required for issuing the gift cards. Some participants also raised questions about whether the small-group discussions and the policy proposals put forward during the citizens' panel would actually be utilized in decision-making in Vaasa. This demonstrates that those who participated in the small group discussions care about whether their participation has an impact on decision-making in Vaasa. At the same time, this demonstrates that the participants regard democratic innovations such as deliberative small group discussions as an important component of a well-functioning and democratic society.

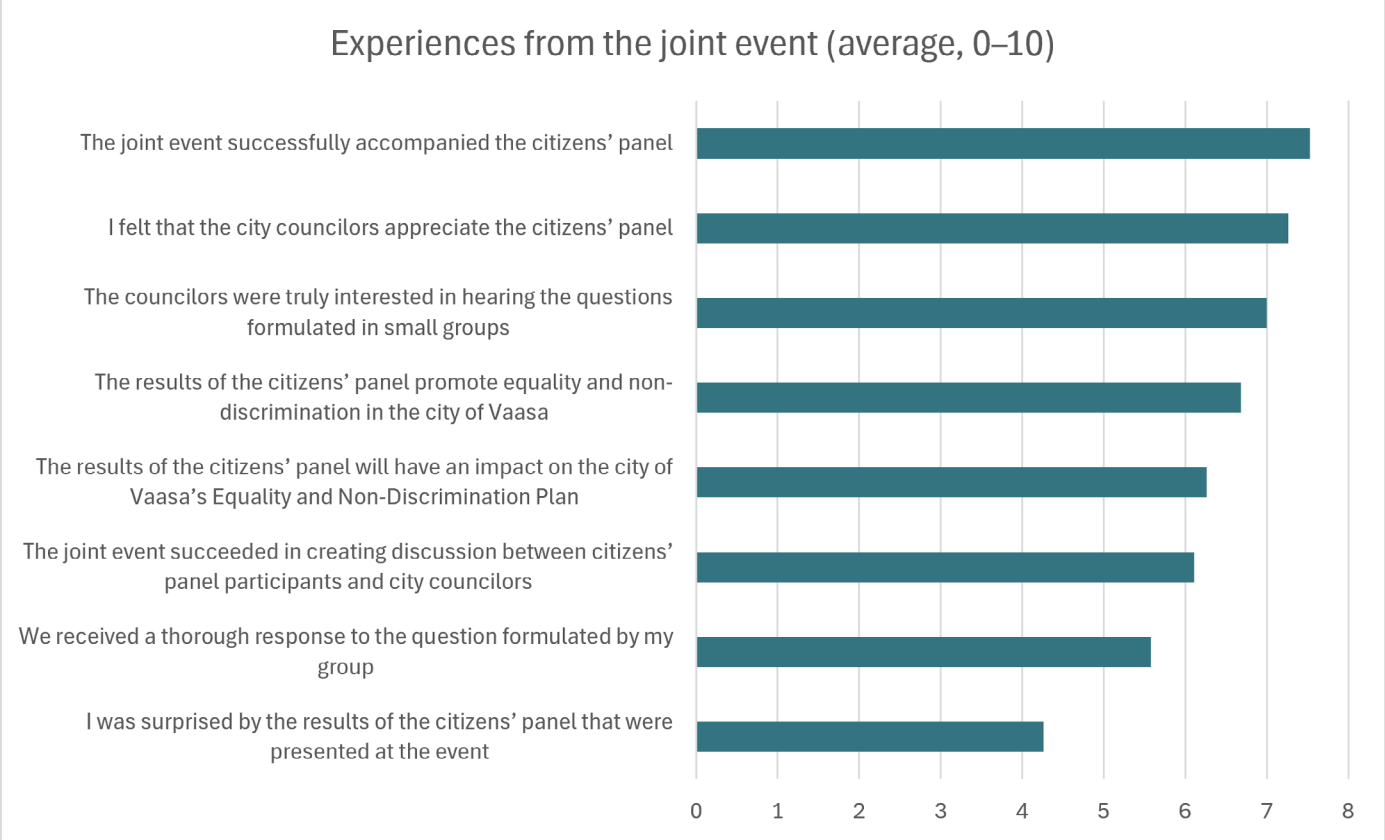
Figure 9. Participants' assessments of the Citizens' Panel small group discussions.



Observations from the joint event

After the joint event, 19 participants responded to a survey that was sent to them regarding their reasons for participating in the event and the organization of the event itself. Participants generally felt that the joint event involving city council members and citizens' panel participants complemented the panel. They also felt that the council members who attended the event valued the panel and were interested in hearing the questions formulated in the small group discussions. On the other hand, not all respondents were satisfied with the responses of the city council members or with the discussion between the city council members and par-ticipants.

In the survey conducted after the joint event, participants were also given the opportunity to provide written feedback on the event. Participants generally considered the arrangements successful and were satisfied with the opportunity to meet councilors. However, some respondents also raised more critical observations regarding the practical arrangements. For example, respondents felt that there was room for improvement in the interpretation, as the Swedish-language responses were not interpreted into English. Several respondents considered the duration of the event too short and would have welcomed additional time for presenting questions, so that a larger number of the questions developed in the small groups could have been addressed during the event. As it was, the council members responded to only one question from each small group. One respondent also suggested that time should have been reserved for explaining the background of each question: what issues were discussed in the small group and why this particular issue emerged as an important theme.



In addition, the participants viewed the city council members' responses as ambiguous and would have hoped for more information about the concrete actions taken to address the issues brought up by participants and how they will be addressed moving forward. The participants also wished that there would have been the possibility of presenting additional questions to the city council members or commenting on their responses. Nonetheless, participants were generally satisfied that the event had been organized and hoped that similar face-to-face events with council members would also be arranged in the future.

Reflections on the significance of the citizens' panel

Citizens' panels have emerged as promising tools for strengthening citizens' participation in decision-making. Their basic idea is simple: randomly selected citizens come together to discuss societal issues, are provided with background information, and develop considered views to support decision-making. However, citizens' panels are not only about participation and broadening the knowledge base of decision-making. They are also about how citizens are perceived as epistemic actors.

Epistemic agency refers to people's ability to form, evaluate, and revise their beliefs, as well as to participate in the production and sharing of knowledge with others. In a citizens' panel, this agency is not merely a starting point but also an objective. The design of the panel, including its background materials, facilitated discussions, and shared ground rules, is intended to support a particular form of epistemic activity.

The rules of the discussion offer a good example of the relationship between the panel and agency. Participants are encouraged to justify their opinions, to listen to others openly and to be willing to change their opinions if the arguments presented are convincing. Besides the practical instructions, rules can be seen as a description of an ideal citizen – an epistemic actor who considers issues from different perspectives and respects others. In addition to drawing on citizens' epistemic agency, the citizens' panel also contributes to defining what that agency should be.

The panel also shapes the epistemic environment of its participants. Participants are provided with balanced information about the themes under discussion, the discussions take place in small groups, and they are guided by a trained moderator. This separates the panel from many everyday discussion settings, where information is sparse and the discussion is often polarized. The panel is designed to create conditions that enable participants to carefully consider and weigh issues from a variety of perspectives. Therefore, agency is not only a characteristic of the citizen but also depends on the environment in which they operate.

Information produced by the panel is concretely used in decision-making, in this case in the preparation of the City of Vaasa's Equality and Non-Discrimination Plan. The connection to decision-making gives participants' views a special significance, because the panel is not merely about expressing opinions but also about citizens' epistemic contribution to collective decision-making. However, this relationship is not entirely unproblematic. Citizens' panels are based on the assumption that participants are able to act this way, that is, to justify their views, listen to others, and evaluate information critically. In reality, such capacities are not distributed evenly. Factors such as low income, educational background, or language proficiency may influence how accessible participation actually is. In addition, experiences of discrimination or marginalization can weaken trust in one's own voice and its meaningfulness.

This creates tension between ideal and reality. The citizens' panel aims to strengthen every participant's epistemic agency but at the same time it leans on the assumption that this kind of agency is sufficiently strong at the outset. The panel requires a certain kind of agency, because shared deliberation cannot succeed without a willingness to listen, provide reasons for one's views, and learn. It is therefore possible that the panel strengthens the voices of some participants more than those of others, especially those who already have better capacities for participating.

On the other hand, it is precisely here that the key promise of the citizens' panel lies. By creating a structure that supports equal participation, the panel can help to overcome many barriers to epistemic agency. Facilitation aims to ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak while the purpose of the shared ground rules is to create a safe space for those who might not otherwise participate actively. In this sense, the citizens' panel does not merely reflect existing epistemic agency but also strengthens it, and in doing so, strengthens democracy as well.

Conclusion

In the Vaasa citizens' panel, a diverse group of residents of Vaasa selected through random sampling discussed issues related to equality and non-discrimination in March 2026. The discussions were conducted online in small groups, each facilitated by a trained moderator. To support informed discussion, participants received a balanced information package on equality and non-discrimination before the discussions. Participants completed two surveys before the small-group discussions and one survey afterwards. These surveys made it possible to examine how participants' views developed as a result of taking part in the citizens' panel. Following the small-group discussions, we also organized a joint event in April, which both city council members and citizens' panel participants were invited to attend. During the event, the council members responded to questions posed by the participants.

What did we observe based on the analysis of the surveys? When we examined participants' perceptions of the state of equality and non-discrimination in Vaasa, we found that participants were relatively satisfied with the realization of gender equality in the city, whereas they were somewhat less satisfied with the equal treatment of different groups of people. Participation in the citizens' panel did not affect these perceptions.

What did the participants think about measures to improve equality and non-discrimination? **The views of those who participated in the citizens' panel changed as a result of the dis-cussions. Participants became more supportive of the city training additional integration peer experts to support the integration of immigrants, and of concentrating learning support services in schools with the weakest learning outcomes.**

Concern about the integration of immigrants and the segregation of schools was also reflect-ed in the moderators' notes on the themes discussed. From the moderators' summaries, we identified three cross-cutting themes related to regional equality and segregation, multicul-turalism and multilingualism, and economic inequality and employment. The discussions highlighted the need to strengthen regional equality and prevent segregation. In relation to housing policy, particular attention was given to increasing the availability of affordable housing, diversifying the housing stock, and improving housing conditions for students. Public transportation was seen as an important tool for promoting regional equality and equal opportunities. Another central theme concerned multiculturalism and multilingualism. The region's multilingualism, language requirements, and other linguistic challenges were viewed as problematic from the perspective of equality and non-discrimination. A further theme that featured prominently in the discussions was economic inequality and employment. The situation of low-income residents, such as students and immigrants, was raised in several discussions.

The discussions also brought forward a range of solutions, particularly concerning the promo-tion of equality. Education and teaching were seen as playing an important role in reducing discrimination and racism. Participants felt that increasing awareness and organizing cultural events could help promote non-discrimination.

Various support services were also proposed, such as the use of service vouchers to support integration and the expansion of food aid. Associations were regarded as important actors in promoting equality, and participants hoped that the City would provide support for their activities.

Participation in the citizens' panel changed participants' perceptions of democracy in Vaasa. Participation increased satisfaction with the functioning of democracy in Vaasa, which suggests that citizens appreciated the fact that the city listened to their views. Participation in the citizens' panel also increased knowledge about equality and non-discrimination. The increase in knowledge indicates that the small-group discussions were information-based and that the growth in knowledge had an effect on the changes in partici-pants' opinions.

Participants' responses to the questions concerning the small-group discussions imply that they considered the citizens' panel discussions to be diverse in viewpoints and, overall, successful. In their communications with the organizers, participants also raised some questions about how the citizens' panel would be utilized. They expressed concern about whether the small-group discussions and the policy proposals put forward during the panel would actually be taken into account in decision-making in Vaasa. This indicates that those who participated in the discussions care about whether their participation has an impact. Overall, our findings from the Vaasa citizens' panel suggest that participants regard democratic innovations such as deliberative small-group discussions as an important component of a well-functioning and democratic society. Direct citizen participation in decision-making is an integral part of a strong democracy.

Appendix 1: Questions drafted in the small groups

QUESTIONS PROPOSED BY THE SMALL GROUPS FOR THE CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS
The organizers recommended the underlined questions. The recommended questions were selected in order to avoid presenting several questions of a similar nature during the event.

Ryhmä 1: Maanantai 23.3. klo 9:30–12:30, moderaattorina Tuuli:
a) Millä periaatteella Vaasan kaupunki päättää palvelujen sijoittumisesta?
b) Miten varmistetaan, että eri asuinalueiden asukkaat voivat työskennellä ja käyttää palvelui-ta julkisen liikenteen varassa?
c) Millaista yhteistyötä kaupunki tekee alueen yritysten ja oppilaitosten kanssa ulkomaalais-taustaisten työllistymisen suhteen?
d) Positiivisen segregaatiorahan kouluille on muualla todettu tuovan hyviä tuloksia. Mikä on Vaasan tilanne, ja ovatko valtuutetut sitoutuneita nostamaan segregaatiorahan osuutta niille kouluille, joiden asuinalueilla on työttömyyttä ja vähäosaisuutta?

Ryhmä 2: Maanantai 23.3. klo 17:00–20:00, moderaattorina Ellen:
a) Miten kaupunki voi varmistaa, ettei segregaatio lisäänny kaupungissa?
b) Miksi kaupunki ei pysty tarjoamaan tiloja vapaaehtoisperusteiseen ruoka-avun tarjontaan? Voiko ruokaapua laajentaa niin, että lapsille ja nuorille tarjotaan ruokailumahdollisuus myös kesäisin?
c) Mitkä mahdollisuudet kaupungilla on vaikuttaa siihen, että ulkomailta tulevat opiskelijat saavat realistisen ja todellisen kuvan siitä, millaista Vaasassa on elää?
d) Mitä kaupunki ja korkeakoulut voivat tehdä opiskelijoiden asumisolojen parantamiseksi?

Group 3: Monday, March 23 at 17:00–20:00, moderator Risto:
a) How does Vaasa intend to alleviate the financial situation of low income people, especially in terms of equality between Finns and foreigners?
b) How are you planning to help people find jobs, especially those with a foreign background?
c) What improvements do you intend to make to the public bus system in Vaasa, in terms of price, routes, and timetables?

Grupp 4: Tisdag 24.3 kl. 17:00–20:00, moderator Robin:
a) Vad gör staden för att stöda barn och ungas möjligheter till fritidsintressen, och hur kunde utbudet och det ekonomiska stödet göras mera synligt?
b) Kan staden stöda mera med mathjälp för låginkomsttagare?
c) Hur kan staden uppmuntra invandrare att lära sig språk för att bättre integreras i samhället?

Grupp 5: Onsdag 25.3 kl. 9:30–12:30, moderator Robin:
a) Vilka framtida investeringar, byggnationer, infrastruktur eller kulturevenemang finns det som kan befrämja integrering och sociala kontaktnät i speciellt utsatta områden som till exempel Korsnäståget?
b) Hur kan Vasa stad stöda integreringen av befolkningen med utländsk bakgrund

(invandrare, asylsökande, flyktingar och arbetsinvandrare) i syfte att uppfylla en långvarig/faktisk integrering som gäller hela familjen och tar i beaktande tidigare utbildning samt möjlighet till arbete, språk, och kulturell kännedom?
c) Finns det något sätt för Vasa stad och Vasek att sporra företagen att pröva på anonym rekry-tering?

Group 6: Wednesday, March 25 at 17:00–20:00, moderator Risto:
a) How is the city of Vaasa (and companies) ensuring that the language requirements are fair? It's unfair that low-educated jobs require more languages than high-educated jobs.
b) Why does it take so much time to see doctor? Is the city taking feedback from services on what the situation is?
c) What is city of Vaasa doing to integrate immigrants, in terms of services, housing, infra-structure, jobs?

Ryhmä 7: Torstai 26.3. klo 14:00–17:00, moderaattori Tuuli:
a) Miten anonyymi työnhaku on toiminut?
b) Miten varmistetaan, ettei kukaan jää palveluiden ulkopuolelle digitalisaation takia?
c) Voisiko kaupunki toimia maahanmuuttajien mentorikoordinaattorina eli koordinoida vapaaehtoisia avuksi maahanmuuttajille arjen pienissä kulttuurisissa asioissa?
d) Olisiko Vaasalla halua ja edellytyksiä pitkät perinteet kaksikielisenä kaupunkina ottaa tavoitteekseen tulla tasa-arvon ja yhdenvertaisuuden mallikaupungiksi? Esimerkiksi juuri maahanmuuttaneiden kotoutumisen ja yhteiskuntaan sopeutumisen edistämisen avulla.

Grupp 8: Torsdag 26.3 kl. 17:00–20:00, moderator Ellen:
a) Finns det möjligheter för staden att implementera servicesedlar i arbetet för att både främja integration av barnfamiljer, och för att understöda långinkomsttagare (servicesedlarna kunde ha inkomstgräns)?
b) Hur beaktar staden jämställdhet och likabehandling i beslutsfattandet på en konkret nivå?
c) På vilket sätt kan stadens understöd av mathjälpen utvecklas långsiktigt?
d) Kan staden främja integrationen genom att nyttja rådgivningen för att integrera även mammor som annars hamnar utanför samhället?

Group 9: Thursday, March 26 at 17:00–20:00, moderator Risto:
a) What are the steps to prevent Vaasa from slipping into marginalization of vulnerable groups?
b) What does Vaasa plan to do to help immigrants that are waiting for Migri permits, but can not work or study while waiting, e.g. allow these people to work for fixed hours or study something?
c) What can Vaasa do to protect women and children suffering of domestic violence and sexual harassment?

Ryhmä 10: Perjantai 27.3. klo 9:30–12:30, moderaattori Ellen:
a) Miten puututte budjetoinnilla taloudellisen syrjäytymisen ehkäisemiseen?
b) Voiko kaupunki tukea yhdistystoimintaa, jotta pienituloisia työllistettäisiin ja ulkomaalaistaustaisten syrjäytymistä voisi ehkäistä?
c) Miten kaupunki aikoo tarttua asunnottomuusongelmaan?


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