

A Survey for change – A Foreigners Experience Of Rauma

In the summer of 2020 International Rauma launched the first A Foreigners Experience Of Rauma (AFEOR), to shed light on the needs in terms of work, ability to find information, social interaction and learning Finnish. The survey was shared on social medias such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. Most of the participants found the survey through Facebook and the survey received 100 answers within one week and later International Rauma Published a report on the findings of the survey.

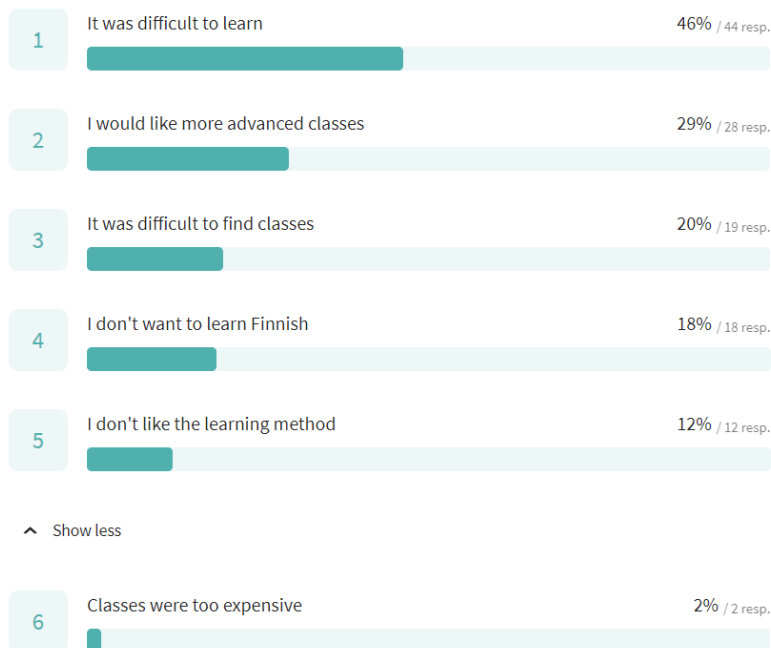
First, we determined the age, time lived and work status of the participants. Which showed, that the majority who answered were 31-40 (55%) and that 21-30 (18%) were the second biggest portion of the participants, it was also determined that 49% of the responders had lived in Finland for 2-4 years which was likely due to the short period work contracts at Oikiluoto and students from SAMK, as 56% were working and 15% were students.

Employment as a challenge

Then the survey went on to questions about how easy it is to find a job in Rauma, 36 % found it very difficult, 27% found it somewhat difficult and 26% answered that, it was neither easy nor difficult. This was an overwhelming opinion that finding work as a foreigner in Rauma was difficult and for some it was incredibly challenging. A result so overwhelmingly negative signals a bigger problem for foreigners and their desire to stay here and their ability contribute to the society.

Language barriers has been a topic which has come back again and again when talking with the local companies and the foreigners, as most companies demand some level of Finnish, in some instances at level C1 (C1 is the second highest level the next is C2 which is comparable to a native speaker). Most foreigners communicate well in English and yet tasks which does not require Finnish, is still advertised as Finnish language proficiency is important.

The answers to weather the participants had learned some Finnish even the basics at level A1, was remarkably interesting. 38% answered they had learned Finnish and a whopping 62% said they had not. To further the understanding of why participants had not learned the language or furthered their competences in the language the answers looked as follows.



Reasons for not learning Finnish: From the "A Foreigners Experience of Rauma 2020"

The most answered was if was difficult to learn and secondly people were asking for more advanced classes. The second one was interesting, so an investigation of offered language classes was set a sail and it was discovered that the highest level offered in Rauma at the time was B1. This was clashing with the demand from businesses that a proficiency of B2-C1 was what they were looking for, that makes it very difficult to better oneself if there's no courses available to help one get to that level of language. Third most answered were, that classes were hard to find.

Rauman Kansalaisopisto has a booklet with the courses offered every summer and winter, including language courses. They offer courses on level A1 through B1 and occasionally B2 talking groups, though it is unfortunate that some of the basic courses has been advertised in Finnish, which makes it difficult for the new residents from abroad to understand what the courses are all about.

Though International Rauma made a partnership with Salo Kansalaisopisto to carry out 52 online lessons of Finnish B1 for the autumn of 2020, International Rauma would rather find

a local solution where the companies, SAMK and the city of Rauma works together to create a solution where one can learn or improve their Finnish skills while having a job, this would help not only the single person, but also the companies gain international talent with insight to different cultures, views and perhaps technologies. While the city of Rauma acquires a citizen, who can contribute to the city and perhaps stay and grow their family in Rauma. It would also be recommended to arrange B2 classes and classes focused on the grammatical structure of Finnish in English, as the grammar is traditionally taught in Finnish it is therefore often a problem for the foreigner to fully learn and understand.

The language barrier is also affecting the international students who would like to have a summer training in Rauma or generally in Finland, as SAMK only offers courses until A2 which is in most cases not sufficient for getting a summer job within Finland, this model pushes these students either back to their home country or another country who then gains the talent educated at SAMK. Ultimately the students who doesn't have to pay tuition gets an education paid by Finnish taxes, but since the majority aren't able to stay, they are not contributing back to the Finnish society after their education has ended if they go elsewhere to use their valuable education. In short Rauma and Finland is losing valuable international talent and tax paying citizens.

Being informed and getting assistance in English

Information and assistance from the city and authorities of Rauma are important. In situations where you need help in an emergency, searching for information on childcare or need help with your Finnish tax card.

AFOER asked how easy it is to find information in English both online and by other physical sources. Participants answered that it was neither difficult nor easy. Which maybe interpret as the information is available, but you have to know where to look or dig a bit to find it, there's room for improvement in regard to information which has been translated into English.

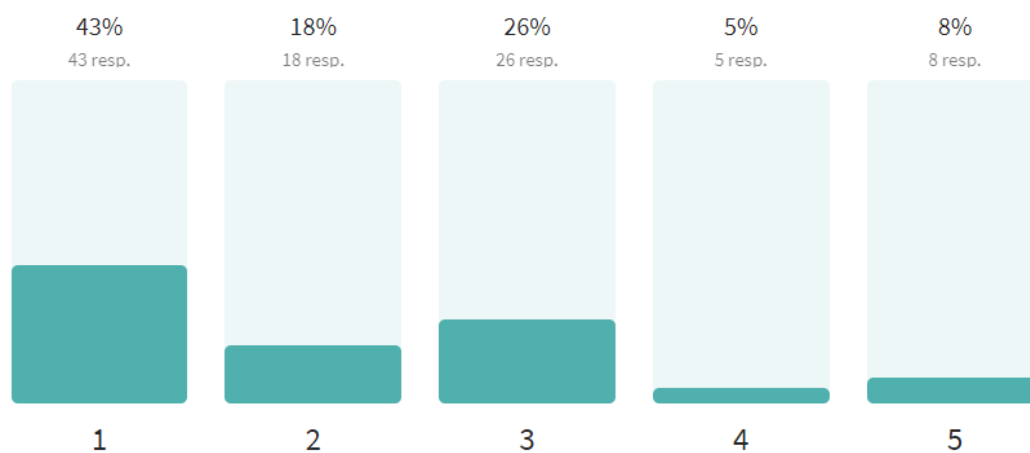
In regard to assistance by the city of Rauma and authorities the majority (8%) answered, that it was fairly easy to get the help needed in English, which is a very positive finding, showing that the city and authorities have accomplished a good level of communication when it comes to assisting their international citizens.

A need to be social and active

Social activities are important for mental health, a sense of belonging is a part of forming social connections to the society you live in. A sense of belonging and community is also connected to lower risk of mental illness, criminal activities as well as drug and alcohol addiction, which often leads to unemployment and higher amounts of people on social benefits. Social interaction is also a booster for the immune system and helps support healthy habits

We asked the participants if there were a need for more social activities for international citizens this question was a scale question from 1 to 5. 1 for “strongly agree” and 5 for “strongly disagree”. The response was that 43% were strongly agreeing with the need for more social and free time activities opportunities for the international community. A strong indicator for the need of social activities.

2.2 Average rating



The need for social activities: From A Foreigners Experience of Rauma

In response to this question a mingle and history tour was begun in August, the social gathering was advertised together with the Facebook group “Rauma in English” the gathering was popular and before corona got a real hold of Finland the amount of participants were between 10 – 20 per time. The last physical mingles were held outdoors. As the pandemic still didn’t slow down, an online mingle was created in October of 2020, giving the opportunity for social interaction virtually, the online mingle serves as a social

gathering of where the participants can talk about whatever is on their mind, the first mingles dealt a lot with the impact of the pandemic on emotions and general life quality.



An outdoor mingle: Photo by Kairi Rintanen

Going forward

The “A Foreigners Experience Of Rauma” survey will be an annually survey to be able to improve the opportunities and to get to know if what was started had an impact on the international community and in which direction the impact had. The next survey will be launched in July of 2021.

International Rauma will continue to assist the foreign talent and their career opportunities as well as the local companies in Rauma, who are important for the city to keep people working and living in Rauma and the surrounding area. The organization will begin to offer webinars in late 2020 and the beginning of 2021 to support the job searching internationals and to broaden the knowledge of the benefits of having international talent in an organization’s workforce.

Written by Mona Elo, Founder of International Rauma