

Fighting Childhood Obesity - -The experience of Finland

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**Conference on "Nutrition and Physical activity
from childhood to old age: challenges and
opportunities"**

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politics and policies(health, trade and marketing, agriculture, education, town planning, finance etc.)

food environment
family food habits
access to healthy food

hobbies, free-time
living environment
opportunities for physical activity

Energy
(food)
intake



Energy
expenditure
(physical activity)

cultural values and norms

economic resources

knowledge

medicine and technology



Can government prevent obesity?

YES, by influencing

- Living environments and circumstances,
- Products and services available,
- Ensuring that people have sufficient skills and information
- Supporting and guiding individuals/families/communities

YES, using tools such as

- Information-based guidance
- Legislation and fiscal tool
- Allocation of resources
- Intersectoral cooperation
- Steering of administrative sector

Government resolution on development guidelines for health-enhancing physical activity and nutrition



- Accepted June 2008
- Action plan for the years 2008-2011
- Endorses recommendations of nutrition and physical activity, special focus on health inequalities and obesity
- Wide consultation and cooperation within public sector and with different stakeholders (NGO's, private sector, research institutions)

Overcoming Obesity

--- Wellbeing from Healthy Nutrition and Physical Activity National Obesity Programme 2012-2015



- Challenges different stakeholders in society to collaborate and implement the actions presented in the programme
- Key actors&partners include government, municipalities, health services, schools, child day care, NGOs, sports organisations, employers, food industry, catering services, media, research institutions, defence forces.....

In Finland we aim to

- Affect the structures of the society; community-based interventions
 - aim for more permanent and wide-reaching results than with campaigns and one-off measures
- Target the whole population/age-group - the measures are not limited only to the risk groups or the head of the distribution
 - Move the whole distribution instead of aiming at the risk groups only
- Use Health in All Policies approach: Health and health promotion should be taken into account in decisions made by different sectors. Intersectoral mechanisms for implementation (horizontal committees, HIA, formal and informal consultations etc.)



Examples of Finnish policies (legislation)

- Free maternal care and child health care services, legislation covers weight management (2011→)
- Healthy food at daycare and at school to all pupils, free of charge (1948→)
- Obligatory health education classes (2001→), nutrition and cooking lessons as well as physical education classes also earlier
- Excise duties on sweets, chocolate, soft drinks and ice cream (2010→)
- EU school milk subsidies are not given to products that are high in fat or salt (2009→)
- Act of Health Care emphasises health promotion at local level (strategic planning, coordination, frequent evaluation and report to decision makers), 2011 →

Maternity and child welfare clinics, school and student health care, and preventive oral care Decree 380/2011

”...nutrition, physical activity and weight management must be adressed in all health counselling...”

This guidance should be:

- based on client need
- promote willingness to assume personal responsibility for his/her own health
- target the entire family

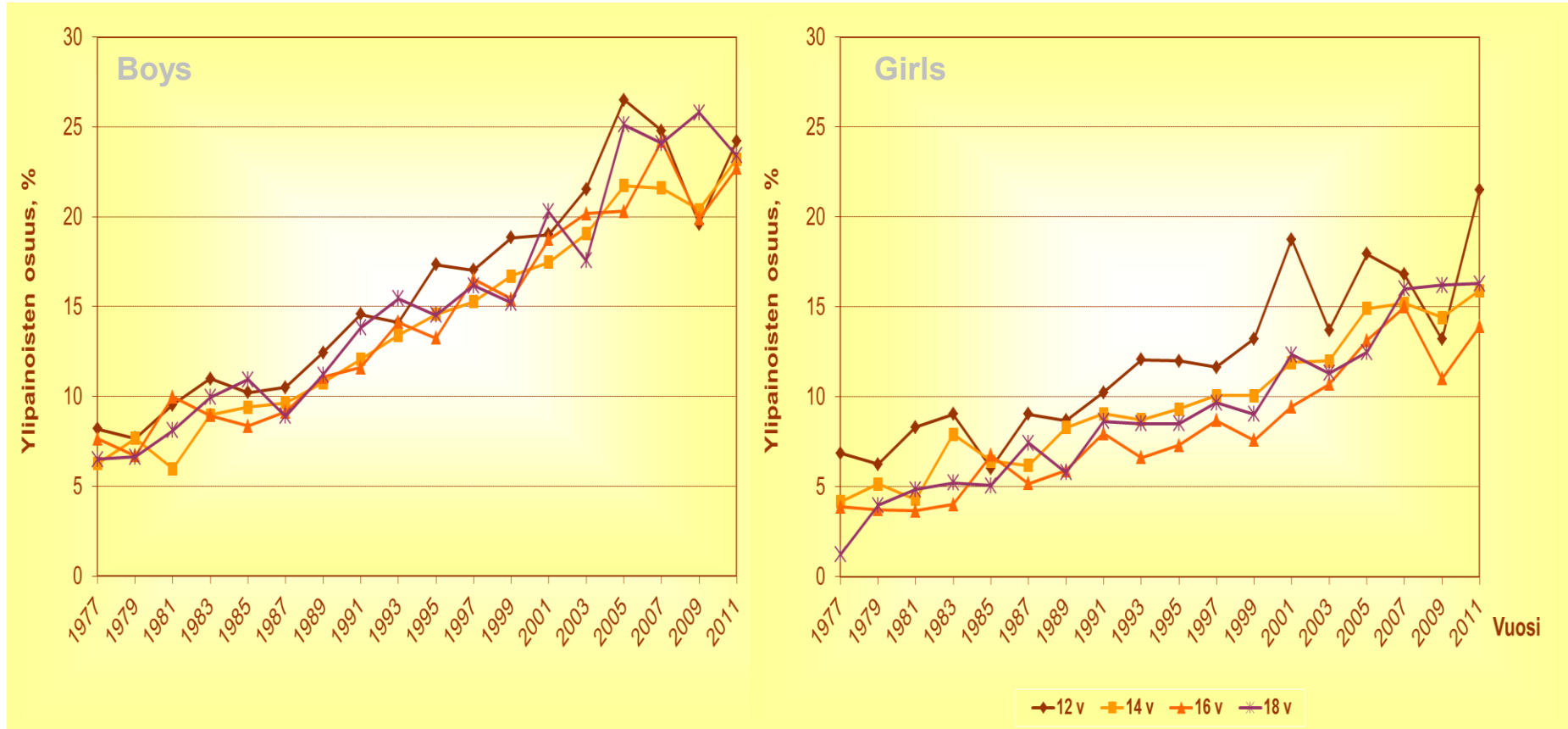
Instructions and tools have been developed to support proper guidance and good nutrition

Municipalities have to provide these services, about 99% of families use them

Examples of Finnish policy (information guidance, resource allocation etc)

- Updated guidelines on physical activity (2013), dietary recommendations (2014) and services at maternity and child health clinics (2013)
- Recommendations on foods sold at school premises
- Recommendations on marketing foods to children (2005→)
- Nutritional criteria for procurement (2010→)
- Funding pilot projects on weight management, information campaigns and education programs
- Promoting physical activity prescriptions at health care
- Creating systems to data collection and sharing
- Consensus meetings on obesity

Overweight among Finnish youth, 1977-2011

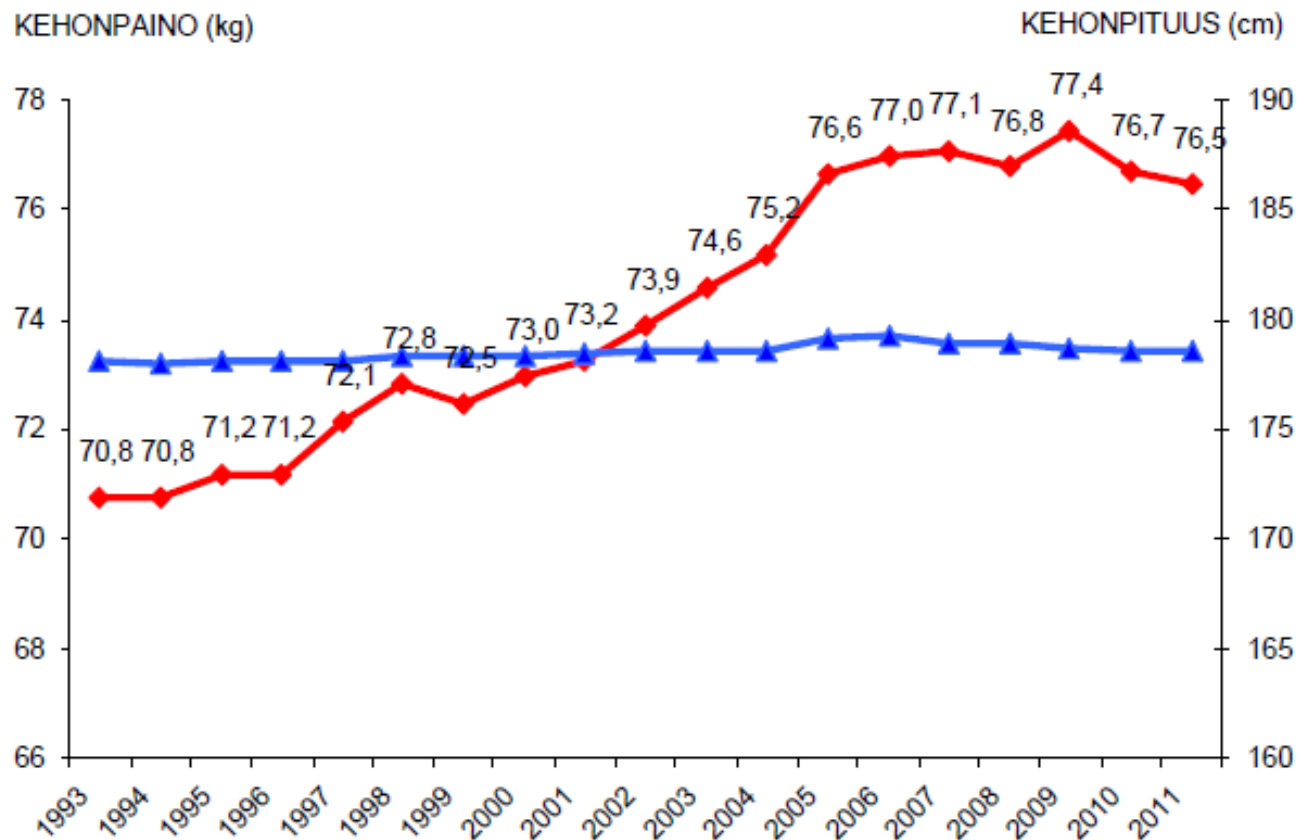


- Overweight assessed by IOTF criterion (Cole etc. 2000)

- "Nuorten terveystapatutkimus"

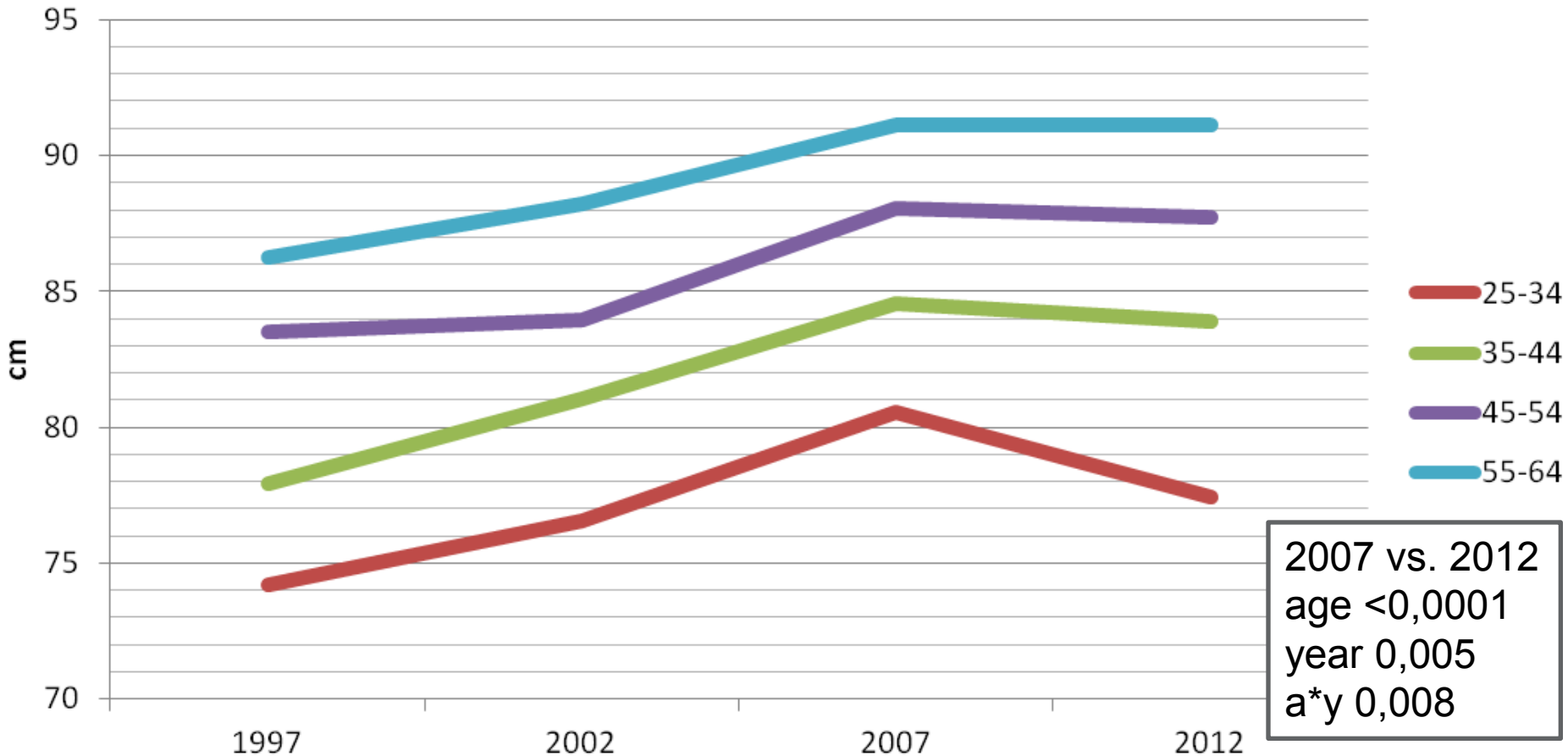
Kautiainen S. 2011

Weight and length of men in military service in Finland in 1993-2011

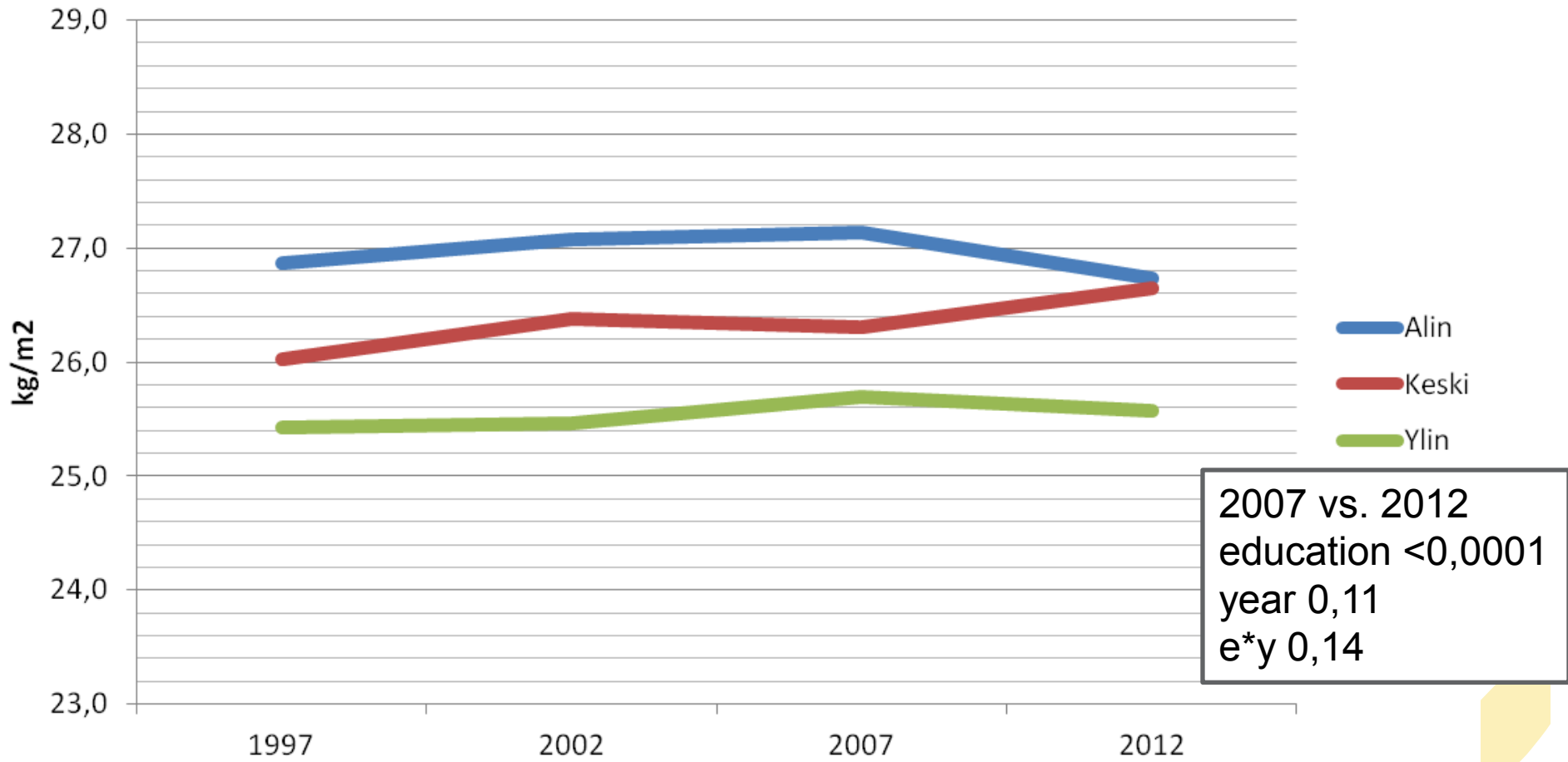


Santtila et al. Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise 2006
PEHENKOS, VM-kuntotestitulastot

Waist by age group, women 25-64 years



The least educated are the most obese, 25-64 –years old women



2007 vs. 2012
 education <0,0001
 year 0,11
 e*y 0,14

Some challenges in the obesity prevention

- “Health in all policies” -approach needed >> commitment from sectors outside health crucial
- Evidence-base often very limited (analysis of different policy options, structural measures etc.)
- Long term commitment and vision needed, governments change every 4 yrs
- Public acceptance? Political costs? EU?
- Health literacy among public, policy-makers, media and civil servants in all sectors needs improvement
- Global trade etc >> global solutions needed

