QUESTION OF THE WEEK, WEEK 43–44 (21.10–1.11.2026)

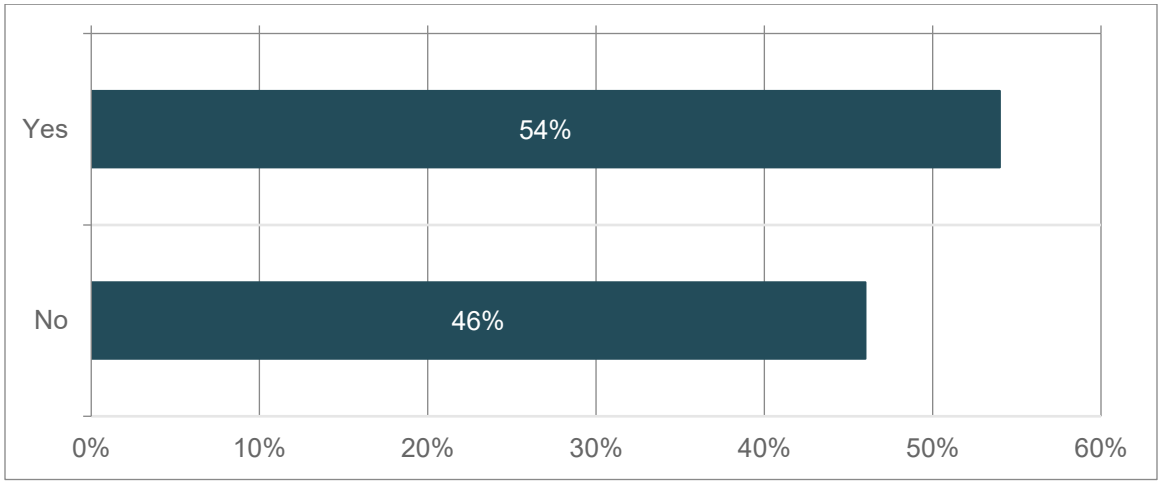
NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS: 343

The margin of error is 5 % and thereby the answers are considered to reflect the opinions of the population in Jakobstad.

THE BILINGUALISM PROGRAMME (FOLLOW-UP 2026)

In the Question of the Week the residents were asked: ***"The town of Jakobstad has developed a bilingualism programme 2024–2030, with the intention of promoting equality between Finnish and Swedish within the town's administration and services, as well as strengthening an atmosphere where people from both language groups feel equal and likes living in the town.***

Have you heard about the bilingualism programme?"



"The bilingualism programme includes five concrete measures:

1. Reviewing and updating the town's language policy
2. Providing language training in the second national language for the personnel
3. The town ensures that the town's services and communication are carried out in both Finnish and Swedish
4. Organising bilingual events and forums on bilingualism for residents
5. Developing cooperation between Finnish- and Swedish-speaking schools

Below is a summary of how the measures have been implemented so far. You can comment each measure.

Measure 1: "Reviewing and updating the town's language policy"

This has already been completed and was approved by the Town Council on 14 September 2026. (In Swedish), (in Finnish)"

The comments present a mixed picture of the review and update of the town's language regulations. Several residents see the measure as a good and important first step, but many are

calling above all for **concrete implementation, continuous monitoring, clear responsibilities, and regular reporting** on how the language regulations work in practice.

Particular concerns relate to the availability of services in Finnish, staff members' actual language skills, recruitment, and the use of languages at the town's meetings, while some comments also emphasize the importance of safeguarding the position of Swedish. Several residents also point out that Jakobstad is becoming an increasingly multilingual community and that mother tongues other than Swedish and Finnish also need to be taken into account in the continued work.

"Measure 2: "Providing language training in the second national language for the personnel"

The language skills and language related needs of the personnel were examined in March 2026, and this information is the basis for planning and implementing the future language training for the personnel."

Residents' comments show that language training for staff is generally regarded as an **important, necessary, and concrete measure** for strengthening services in both national languages. At the same time, many are calling for clearer information on how the training will be implemented, who it will cover, its scope and focus, and how staff members' language skills will be monitored.

Several respondents emphasize that customer service and administrative staff in particular need to be able to provide services in both Swedish and Finnish, while others point out that language skills also need to be used and continuously developed in day-to-day work. There are also comments suggesting that language requirements and opportunities for language training should be equal for Swedish- and Finnish-speaking staff and that language skills should already be taken into account during recruitment.

"Measure 3: "The town ensures that the town's services and communication are carried out in both Finnish and Swedish"

In the Question of the Week survey (March–April 2025), residents ranked this measure as the most important. The town also carried out a comprehensive resident survey in December 2025 using the same questionnaire as in 2021. The results of the survey showed that all average values except one remained at the same level or had improved compared to the corresponding survey in 2021.
(The comprehensive resident survey includes, among other things, a question on residents' satisfaction with living in the town. On a scale of 1–5 the residents gave an average score of 3.9. This is one of the twelve strategic indicators in the strategy of the town of Jakobstad, and the goal is to raise the average score to above 4 by 2030. The survey is conducted every second year, with the next survey planned for 2027.)"

Residents' comments show that the measure is considered **very important**, but that experiences of how bilingualism works in practice vary considerably. Many Finnish-speaking residents highlight shortcomings in the availability of services and information in Finnish and call for higher-quality Finnish-language communication and translations, while others feel that the town's communication already works well in both languages.

Several comments emphasize the need to ensure equal service in Swedish and Finnish in practice and to continue monitoring differences in how the language groups experience the town's services and communication.

"Measure 4: "Organising bilingual events and forums on bilingualism for residents"

The town has committed to organising 3–5 residents' forums per year. In 2025, the town organised four resident forums, and in 2026 the total is expected to be five. These events are always bilingual. In the Question of the Week survey in March–April 2025 the residents were given the opportunity to propose ideas for this measure. It was, however, difficult to draw any clear conclusions from the suggestions received."

Residents' comments show that bilingual events and resident forums are generally regarded as **important and positive**, but that many residents are unaware of the forums being organized or feel that information about them does not reach them effectively enough. Several call for clearer and more extensive communication about the events and emphasize that bilingualism should genuinely permeate the entire programme rather than being limited, for example, to opening greetings.

There are also calls for a broader and more varied range of bilingual cultural and recreational events, while some point out that the forums can address a wide variety of current issues and thereby create opportunities for interaction and dialogue between the language groups. The importance of resident forums is emphasized, but comments have also been made regarding forms of participation, such as the possibility of taking part remotely.

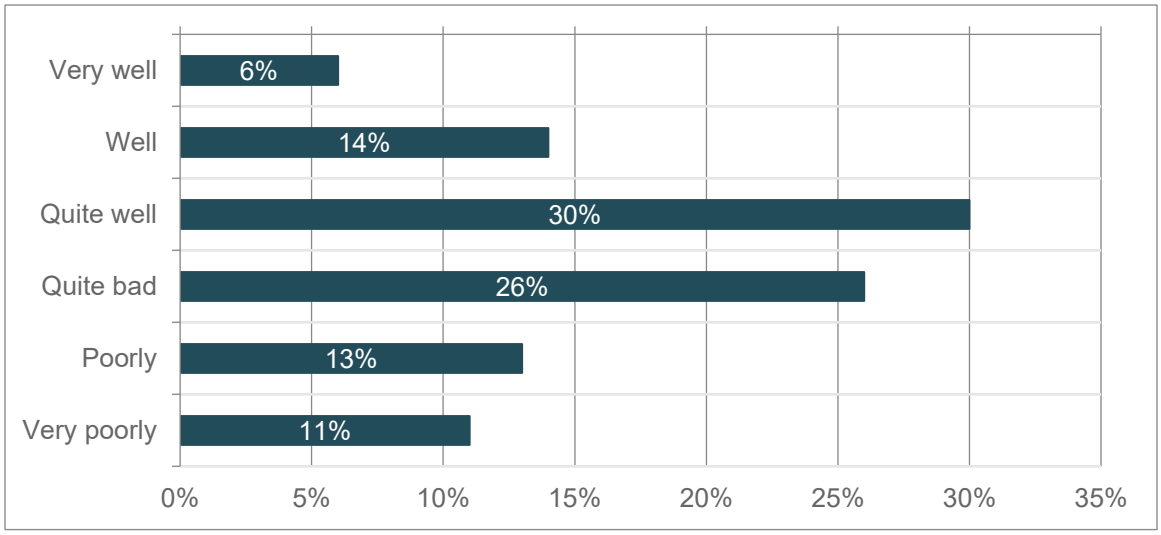
"Measure 5: "Developing cooperation between Finnish- and Swedish-speaking schools"

In the Question of the Week survey (March–April 2025) residents ranked this measure as the second most important. In the same survey residents were also given the opportunity to submit their own suggestions for this measure. The full report was forwarded to the Management Group, the Education and Wellbeing Committee, and the Technical Services Committee."

Residents' comments show strong support for increased cooperation between Finnish- and Swedish-language schools, but at the same time, many feel that concrete cooperation is currently limited or not sufficiently visible. Recurring suggestions include joint activities, visits and exchanges between schools and classes, more language immersion, and more opportunities for children and young people to meet naturally across language boundaries.

Several respondents also suggest that Finnish- and Swedish-language education could to a greater extent be provided under the same roof, while others emphasize the need for equal educational opportunities in both languages. Overall, schools are seen as an important setting for strengthening language skills, a sense of community, and natural interaction between the language groups from an early age.

"Considering the information above, how well do you think the measures of the bilingualism programme have been implemented so far?"



The assessment of the implementation of the bilingualism programme is divided: 48.8% rate it as at least quite good, while 51.2% consider it quite bad poor or worse. The largest response categories are "quite well" (30.0%) and "quite bad" (26.2%), indicating varying experiences rather than a clear-cut overall picture.

NEXT STEP

It is important to remember that the bilingualism programme runs until 2030, and it is therefore natural that not all measures included in the programme have yet been fully implemented by the end of 2026.

The bilingualism programme's working group will meet in mid-November to follow up on how the programme's five measures have been implemented and to discuss the results and comments from the *Question of the Week*. The follow-up will then be compiled into a report to the Town Council, in accordance with the principle that the Town Board annually reviews the implementation of the bilingualism programme and reports on it to the Town Council.

Residents' views will be considered as a basis for the continued work on the programme's measures. Recurring themes in the comments include the availability of services in both languages, staff members' language skills and language training, information about bilingual events, and cooperation between Finnish- and Swedish-language schools.

Some of the comments concern social welfare and healthcare services. These services are not part of the organisation of the Town of Jakobstad but fall under the Wellbeing Services County of Ostrobothnia.

More information:

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