

Insights from the results on tertiary completion rates

Nordic Seminar

Corinne HECKMANN

Analyst, Indicators of Education Systems

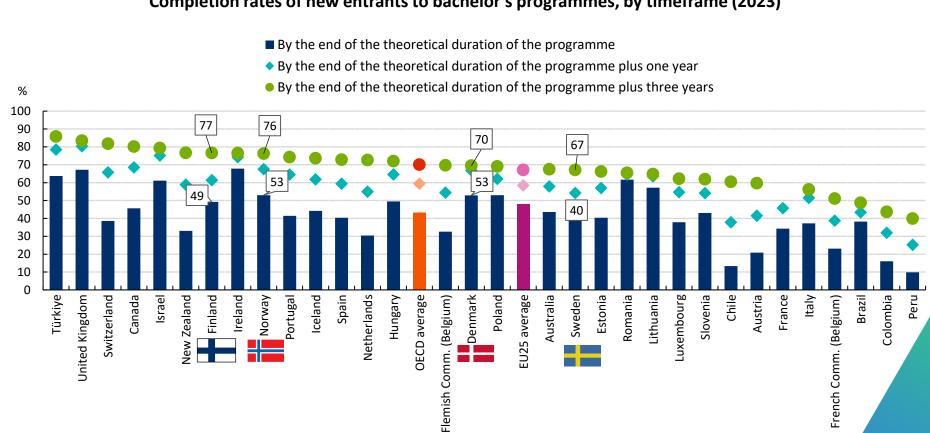
22 September 2025





Completion rates after theoretical duration surpass OECD average in all but Sweden

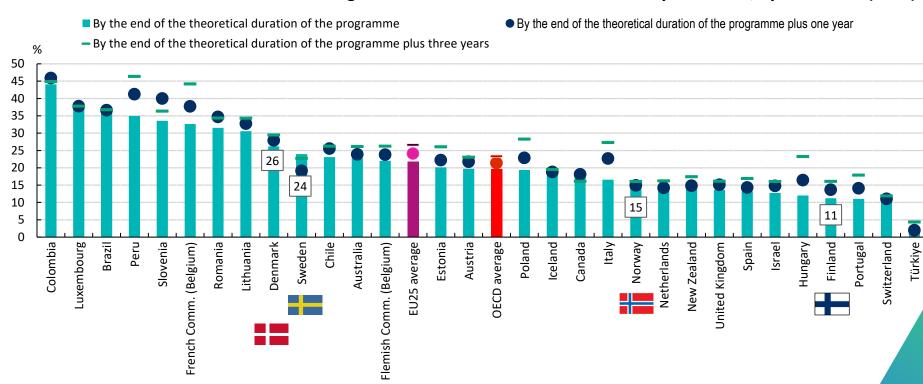
Completion rates of new entrants to bachelor's programmes, by timeframe (2023)





In Nordic countries, dropout occurs more often during the theoretical duration of the programme

Share of bachelor's students who have not graduated and are not enrolled in tertiary education, by timeframe (2023)

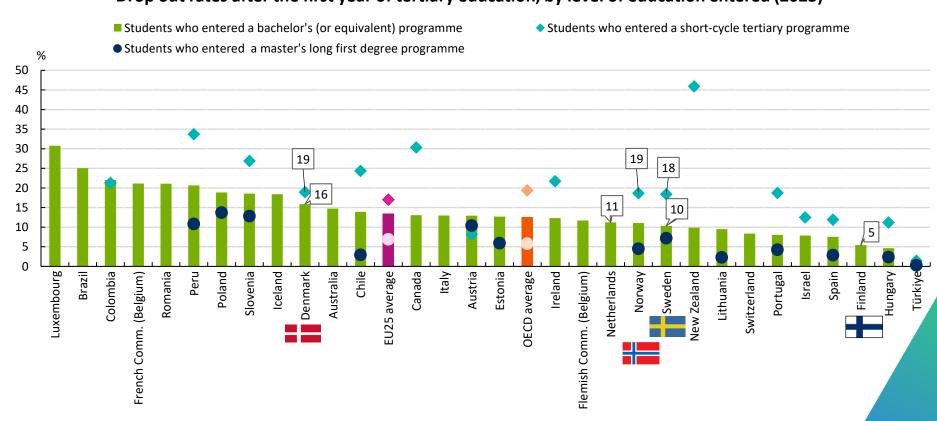


Sweden: Part of the decrease in the dropout rate between year N and N+1 is due to delays in issuing diplomas. Some graduates are recorded as neither enrolled nor graduated because their diplomas are still being processed, although they have completed the programme.



Drop out after the first year of tertiary education is more common at short-cycle level for all countries

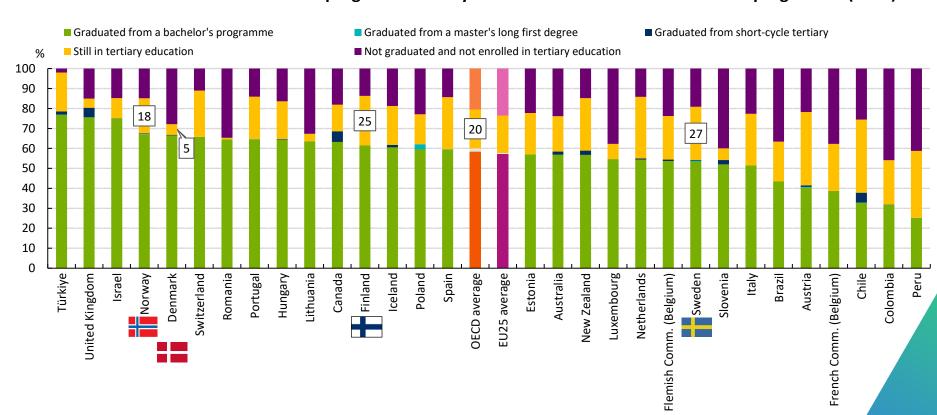
Drop out rates after the first year of tertiary education, by level of education entered (2023)





More than 1 student over 4 In Finland and Sweden is still enrolled beyond the theoretical programme duration

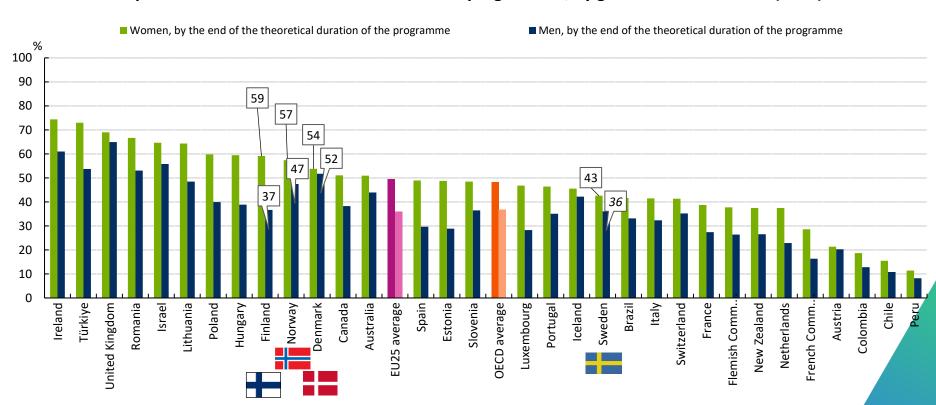
Status of new entrants to bachelor's programmes one year after the theoretical end of their programme (2023)





Women are more likely than men to complete their programme in all countries, with a particularly large gap in Finland

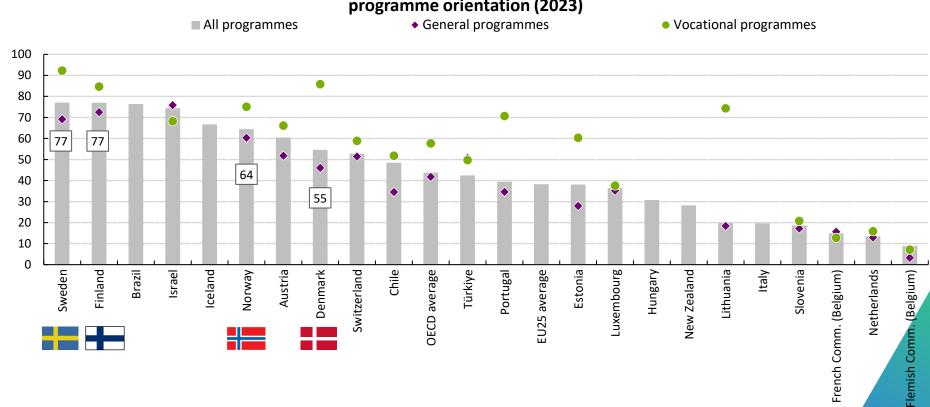
Completion rates of new entrants to bachelor's programmes, by gender and timeframe (2023)





In all Nordic countries, at least 50% of new entrants into bachelor's programmes took a gap of one year or more, above the OECD average

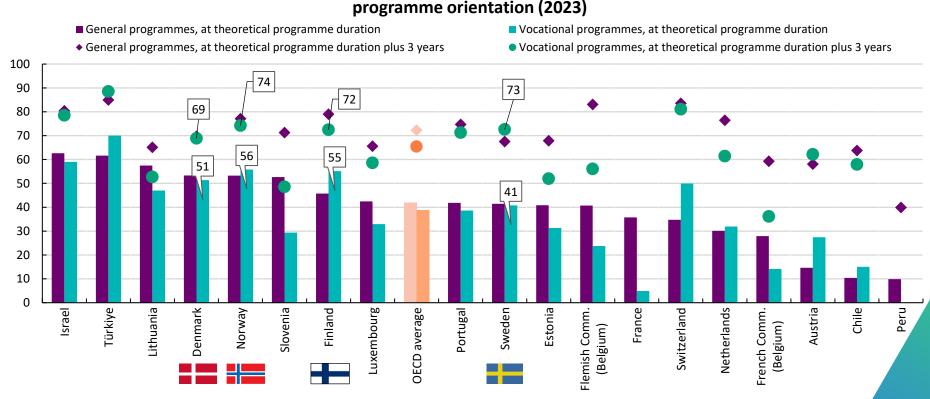
Share of tertiary new entrants into bachelor's programmes who took at least one gap year, by upper secondary programme orientation (2023)





In Nordic countries, completion rates for students with a vocational background are relatively high compared to other countries

Completion rates of students who entered a bachelor's programme, by time frame and students' upper secondary programme orientation (2023)





- •The Nordic countries show relatively high completion rates for students with an upper secondary vocational background compared to other OECD countries.

 What measures have been implemented to ensure that students from vocational pathways acquire the necessary skills? Are there programmes specifically designed for their background?
- •In Finland, there is a significant gap between women's and men's completion rates. How do you explain this difference? Have any measures been taken to increase men's completion rates?
- •In some Nordic countries (notably Sweden), completion rates are below the OECD average.

Our understanding is that, in these countries, employers may place less importance on the final degree and more on the skills acquired during studies. Is this really the case?

