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# NORDISKE ARBEJDSPAPIRER

## N O R D I C   W O R K I N G   P A P E R S

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### **Student Survey of the “Nordic Master Programme” 2012**

*Oxford Research*

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# Student Survey of the 'Nordic Master Programme' 2012

Oxford Research, August 2012

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# Summary

The Nordic Master Programme (NMP) is a Nordic higher-education programme for students from all over the world. The programme started in 2008 and consists of nine Nordic study programmes at 17 Nordic universities.

In 2010, Oxford Research conducted a comprehensive evaluation of NMP. NMP students were one of multiple sources used to evaluate, among other things, the quality of the programme. Since 2010, more study programmes have been added to NMP, more students have signed up for the programmes, and some students have now completed their NMP. In light of this, in summer 2012, Oxford Research conducted a survey of how NMP students view the study programmes.

In general, the study indicates that students are satisfied with their NMP. Almost all students would happily make the same choice all over again, and heartily recommend the programme to others. The salient points are listed below under topic headings.

Main results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Motivation:</b> Students opt for NMP because it provides them with the opportunity to study in more than one country, it fits well with their general educational plans and it enables them to meet students from other countries. The survey also identifies the Internet as the students' main source of information about NMPs.</li><li>• <b>Expectations:</b> In general, students say that NMP has lived up to their expectations. Mobility, interaction with fellow students and the quality of English in teaching are all evaluated positively. Several students identify marketing as one area that does not live up to their expectations.</li><li>• <b>Teaching methods:</b> Students indicate a generally high level of satisfaction with the various teaching methods. Improvements they would like to see include more group work and less focus on e-learning.</li><li>• <b>Student life:</b> Most students felt welcome at the university where they were enrolled, and are satisfied with the support they received from the university. Assistance in finding a place to stay was identified as one possible area for improvement.</li><li>• <b>Mobility:</b> About half of students would not be interested in NMP if the teaching were restricted to a single Nordic country. In other words, mobility is very important to these students. The main barriers to mobility are lack of support and the living expenses. These factors are especially pronounced for non-Nordic students.</li><li>• <b>Funding:</b> NMP students access a range of funding sources. The primary sources of funding are 'income from work', 'grant from public student support institution', 'financial support from parent' or 'own savings'. Due to lack of funding, some students found that they were not as mobile during the NMP as they would have liked.</li><li>• <b>Future career opportunities:</b> The general consensus is that NMP provides stu-</li></ul>

dents with good career opportunities, in terms of both finding work and research posts (PhD). In general, European students on NMP are more positive about their future career prospects than non-European students.

- **Careers after NMP:** Of the students who have completed their NMP, 42% are now PhD students and 31% are employed (including graduate programmes). In other words, a total of 73% are in work or still studying after their NMP, while 23% are currently not working. Both those currently employed and those doing a PhD state that the NMP increased their chances of getting a job or a PhD fellowship. Of those not currently in work, half are from Nordic countries, the other half from non-European countries.
- **View of NMP among companies:** The majority of students believe that employers see NMP as an advantage. The Nordic students are particularly positive about employers' views of NMP. However, individual students have experienced problems having their NMP recognised, and up to a year after graduation have still not received their diploma.

The above findings are covered in greater depth in the report. The report is structured so that the primary results are presented at the beginning of each theme. The results of the survey question are then presented in graphs.

# Methodology

## Data acquisition

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Current and former NMP students completed an online questionnaire.

They were invited to participate via their private e-mail addresses and by direct contact via the co-ordinators of their respective NMPs. The data was acquired during June 2012. Reminders were issued twice during the period.

Direct invitations and a link to the questionnaire were sent to 65 students, 16 of whom responded. In addition, during the data-acquisition period the co-ordinators for the respective NMPs sent out invitations to participate in the survey. This increased the number of respondents by 75.

In total, **91 NMP students**, including 65 current students and 36 former ones, took part. It is not possible to specify an exact response rate. However, a solid estimate suggests a rate of around 45%. This is considered satisfactory for this type of study, in which the respondents have a broad geographical spread and some are no longer associated with the programme.

42% of respondents were from the Nordic Region, 39% from non-European countries, and 19% from Europe.

## Data processing

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After the data-acquisition phase, the survey's **quantitative data** was purified so that only relevant information was used in the report. In general, this means that the 'don't know' responses were omitted. In addition, a single statistical cross tabulation was conducted on the background variable 'geography' (i.e. the student's nationality). Interesting variations in the data have been included in the report.

In the presentation of data, the results of the survey have been calculated as percentages. This means that all figures – unless otherwise specified – are based on 91 respondents. In other areas, the data is based on fewer respondents. Please note that data based on only a few respondents should be treated with caution.

The **qualitative data**, obtained from open responses to questionnaires has been included according to frequency. In other words, the most frequently recorded statements in response to the open questions are reported within the theme. All of the open responses have also been submitted to the Nordic Council of Ministers as a separate appendix.

# Results

The survey elicited a large quantity of data relating to a broad spectrum of conditions relevant to NMP students. Below, the **main results are summarised in the introduction to each main theme**. The results within each theme are presented in graphical form. Where it has been possible to compare the results of the 2012 survey with the survey conducted in 2010, these results have been included in the same graph.

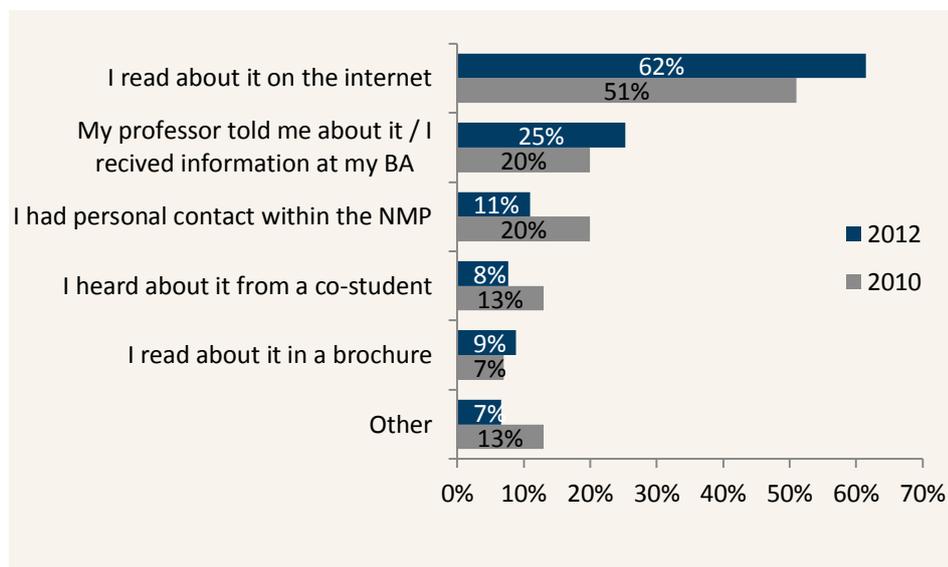
## Motivation

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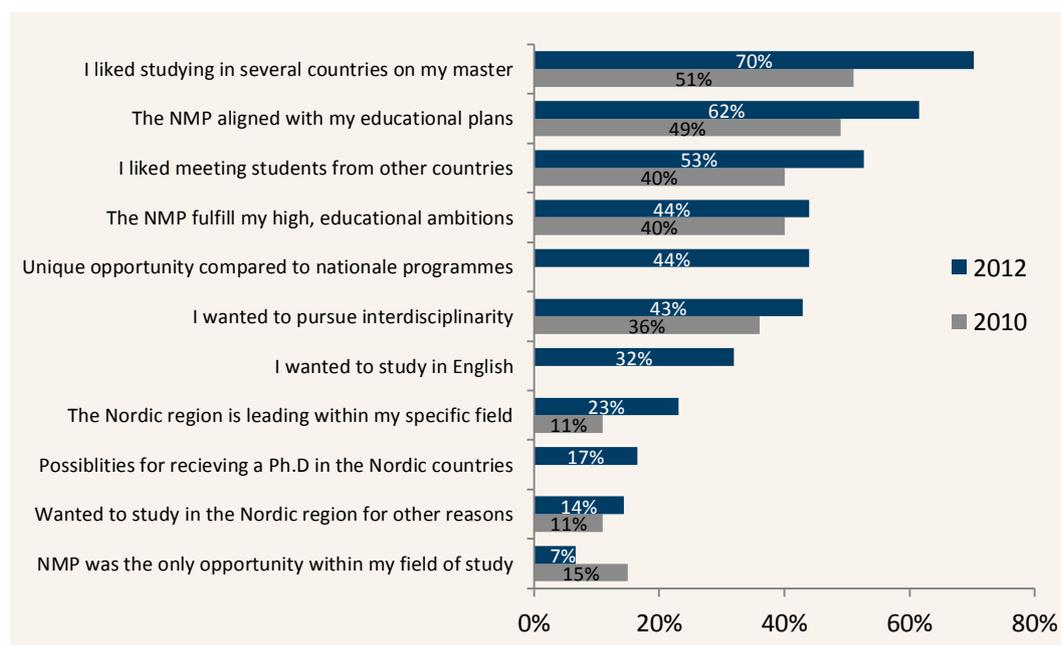
The survey shows that the **Internet** is the students' main source of information about NMP. Students report a range of **motivating factors** behind their decision to opt for NMP. The most important are that it provides them with the opportunity to study in more than one country, it fits well with their general educational plans and it enables them to meet students from other countries. Specifically, the survey identifies that:

- There are several ways students typically learn about NMP. The 2012 survey corroborated the 2010 finding that the Internet is a particularly important source of information. While there has been an increase from 2010 to 2012 in the proportion of students who learned about the programme via the Internet, the proportion of students who learned about NMP through their contacts has fallen from 20% to 11%. There have been no significant changes from 2010 to 2012 in the sources that students used to obtain information about NMP.
- The students' reasons for choosing to apply for NMP, instead of a national study programme with the same focus, have changed from 2010 to 2012. In particular, there has been an increase in the proportion of students who opted for NMP because it provided them with the opportunity to study in multiple countries – from 51% in 2010 to 70% in 2012. In addition, a greater proportion of students in 2012 opted for NMP because it fits better with their educational plans – from 49% in 2010 to 62% in 2012; because they can meet students from other countries – from 40% in 2010 to 53% in 2012; or because the Nordic Region is a leader in their specific discipline – from 11% in 2010 to 23% in 2012.
- 78% of students in 2012 state that they would have chosen to study in a Nordic country even if NMP had not been available to them. Of these, 90% of students from non-European countries stipulate that they would have studied in a Nordic country even if a relevant NMP did not exist.
- Overall, there are three areas in which students think that the marketing of NMP can be improved. The first one relates to strengthening the online profile of NMP. This would involve better and more professional websites and the use of social media. Secondly, NMP could increase its focus on raising awareness, as some students encountered no marketing of their NMP whatsoever. Thirdly, better-targeted marketing towards specific geographical areas, such as China.

**Question 9: Where did you learn about the Nordic Master Programme?**



**Question 10: Why did you choose to apply to the Nordic Master Programme instead of a national Master Programme with the same or a similar focus?<sup>1</sup>**



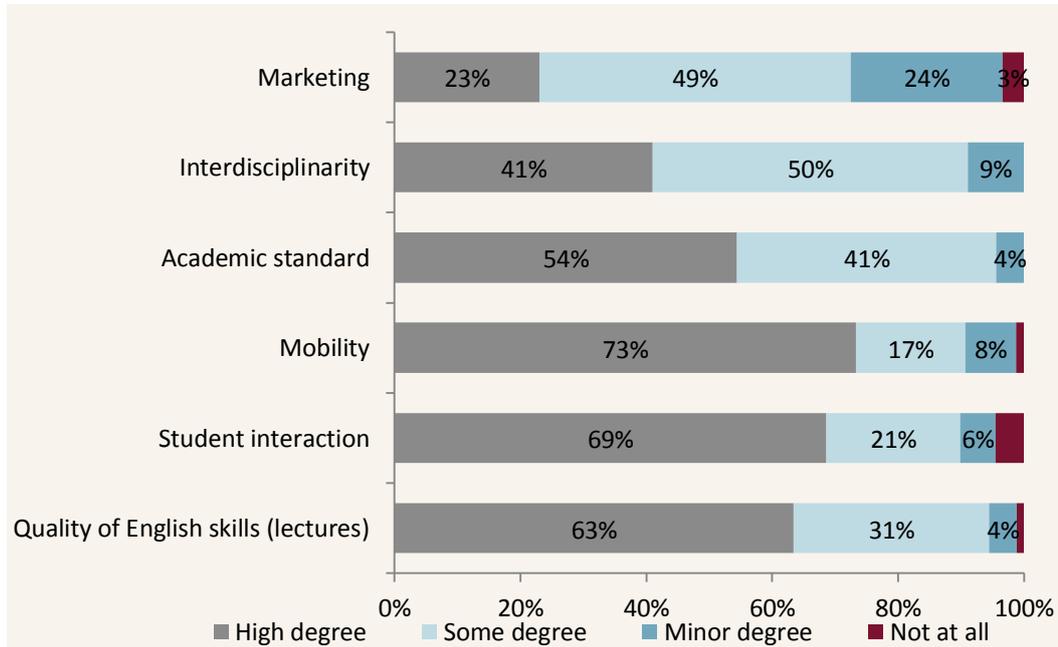
<sup>1</sup> The following possible responses were not available in 2010: 'Unique opportunity compared to national programmes', 'I wanted to study in English', 'Possibilities for receiving a Ph.D in the Nordic countries.'

## Expectations

In general, students think that NMP has lived up to their expectations. In particular, NMP has lived up to student expectations in **the following areas: mobility, interaction with students and quality of English in the teaching**. The **greatest dissatisfaction is with marketing**, with 27% indicating that NMP did not live up to their expectations or only did so to a lesser degree.

- A closer look at the students' nationalities reveals that Nordic students are generally more inclined to think that the marketing lived up to their expectations. 30% said it did so to a great degree, compared to 18% of students from other European or non-European countries. Regarding interaction with fellow students, 84% of Nordic students say that NMP has very much lived up to their expectations, compared to 65% for European students and 54% for non-Europeans.
- In the open responses, the students also mention three main areas where they consider that the NMP has not lived up to expectations. Firstly, and in particular, in relation to the co-ordination and administration of the programme. Secondly, several students point out that online teaching has not always worked very well and has been of variable quality. Thirdly, several say they would have liked to have seen greater focus on research and career opportunities post-NMP.

### Question 12: Has the NMP lived up to your expectations according to:



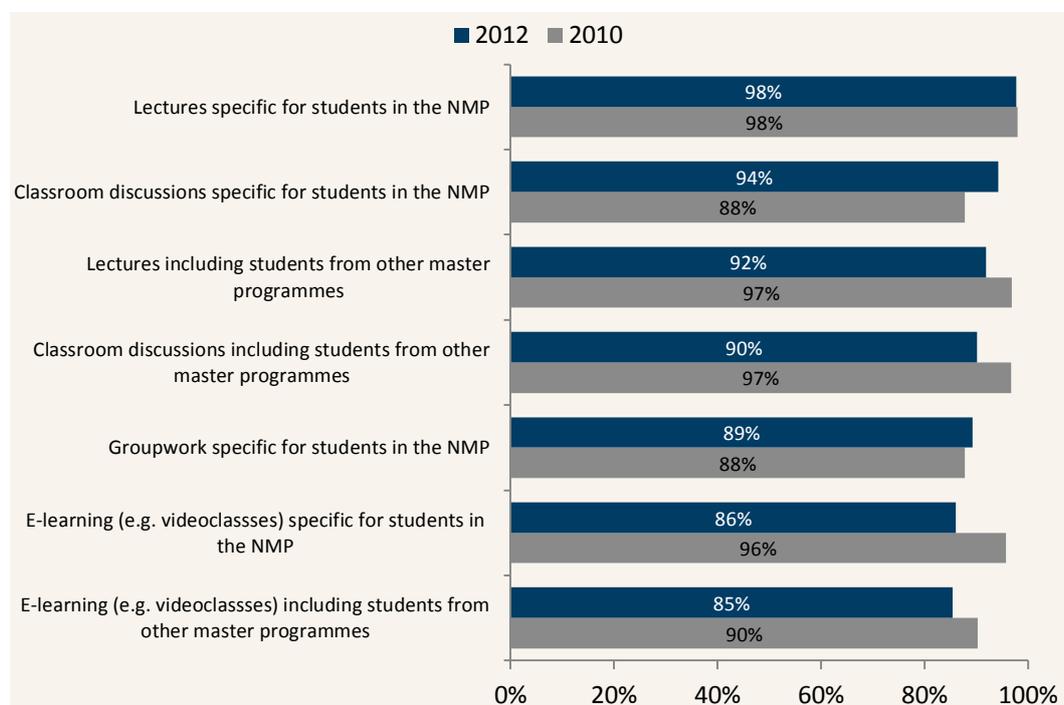
## Teaching methods

If you look closely at student satisfaction with the **various teaching methods**, the general impression is of **very high satisfaction**. This was also the case for the 2010 survey.

The students' comments and suggestions for improvement included the following:

- Greater focus on lectures, less on e-learning
- E-learning was not always a positive experience because teachers did not effectively communicate the necessary practical information
- Small groups are preferable because they increase interaction between students and professors. The big lectures associated with other international Master's programmes were less effective.

**Question 14: How satisfied are you/were you with the teaching styles and methods used in your Nordic Master Programme?**



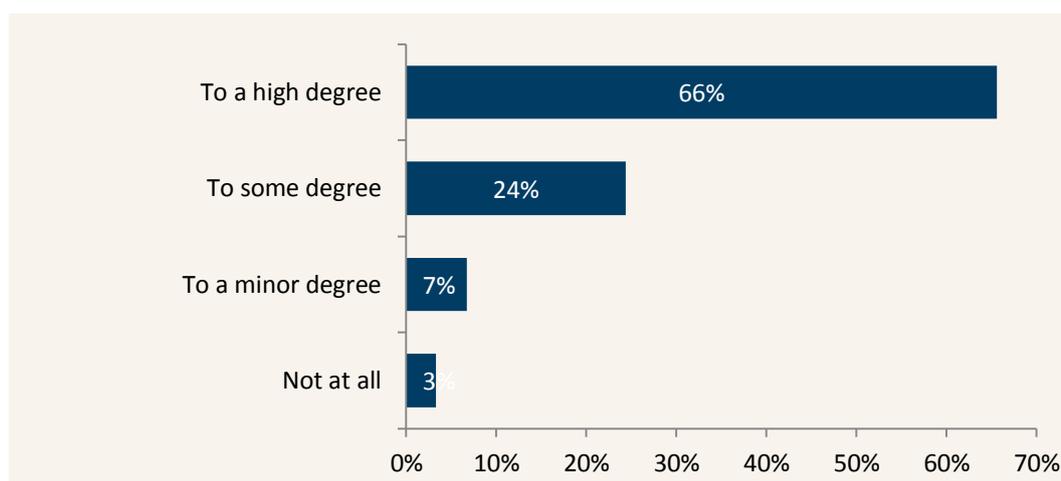
(The categories 'Very satisfied' and 'Satisfied' have been merged on this question in both surveys.)

## Student life

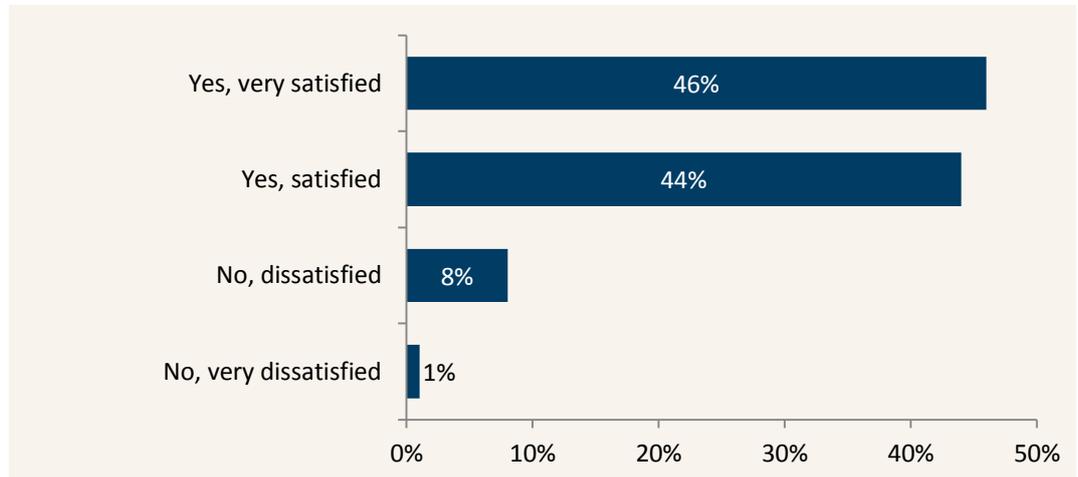
Generally students are/have been **satisfied with student life on their NMP**. More specifically, the data reveals that:

- 90% feel either to a great degree or to some degree that they have been welcomed at the university at which they enrolled
- 90% have been very satisfied or satisfied with the support they have received from the university at which they enrolled
- 83% have been very satisfied or satisfied with the level of services to students
- 66% did not have a job while they were enrolled on NMP
- 90% think it is either advantageous or very advantageous to work for an employer in a Nordic country. Among those who say it is very advantageous, 81% are from other European countries, 60% are from non-European countries, and 50% are from Nordic countries.
- In response to the open questions, several students request greater assistance from universities in relation to finding a place to stay, because they end up spending a lot of time looking for places to stay when moving to a new city. A few would also like to see more opportunities to gain work experience and internships with companies as part of the study programme.

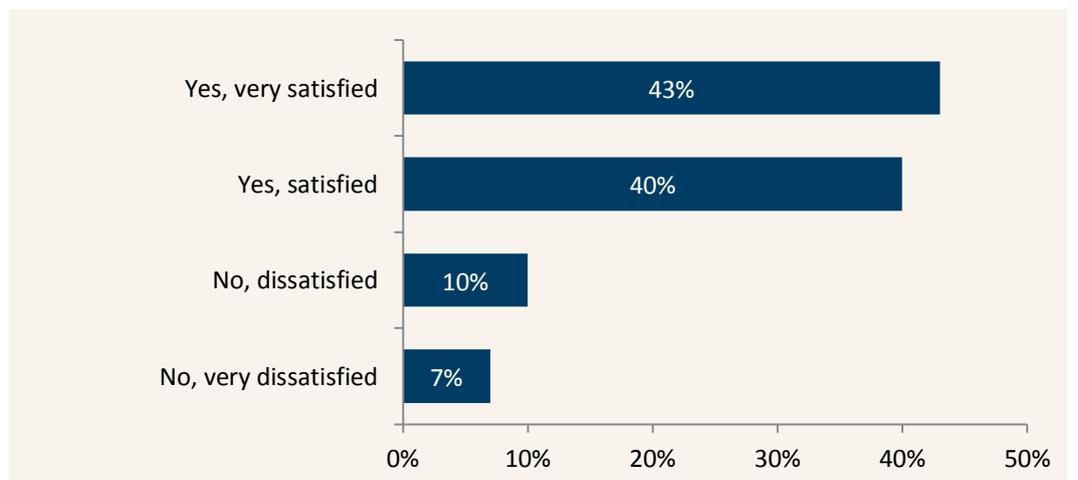
**Question 16: To which degree do you feel that your host institution has been welcoming to you as a NMP student?**



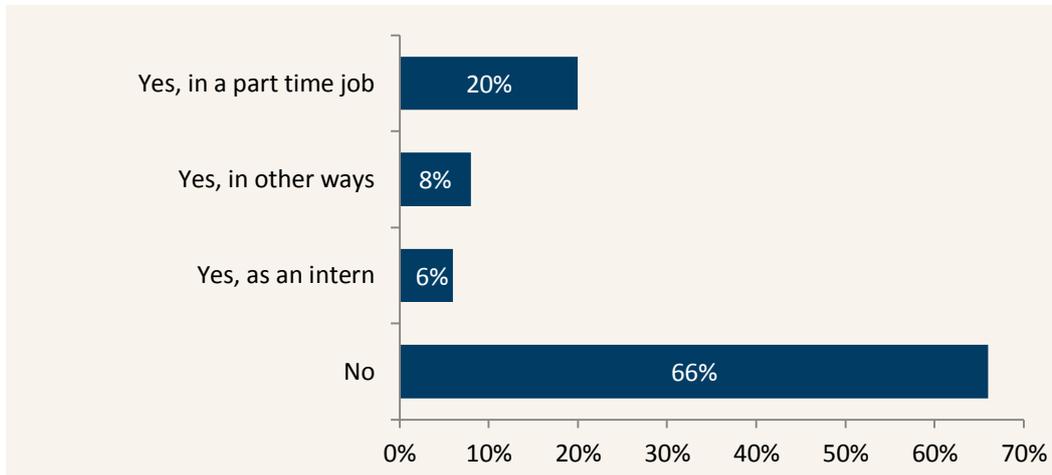
**Question 17: Were you satisfied with the level of support offered to you upon your arrival at the host institution?**



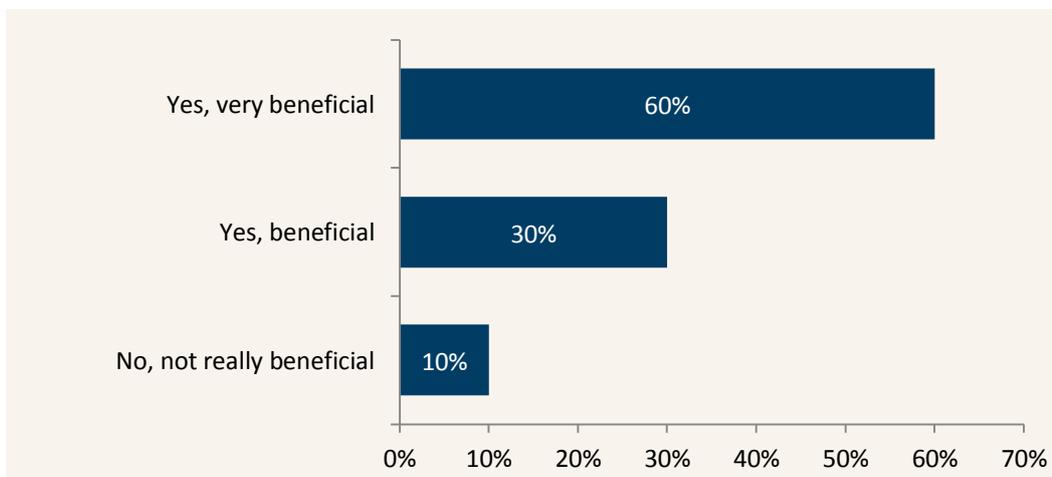
**Question 18: Are you satisfied with the level of student services offered to you?**



**Question 19: Did you / do you work for an employer based in a Nordic country with relevance to your studies during your NMP?**



**Question 20: Is it / would it be beneficial for you to work for an employer based in a Nordic country with relevance to your studies during your NMP?**



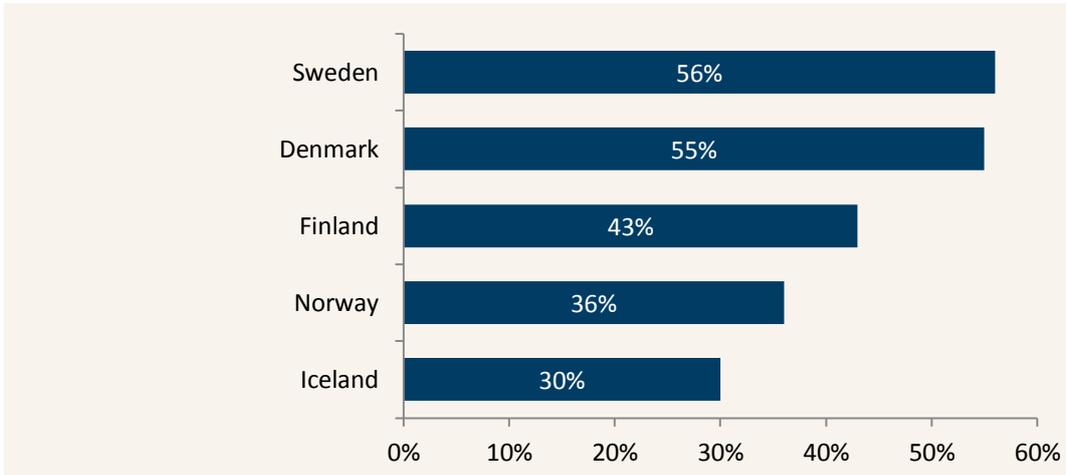
## Mobility

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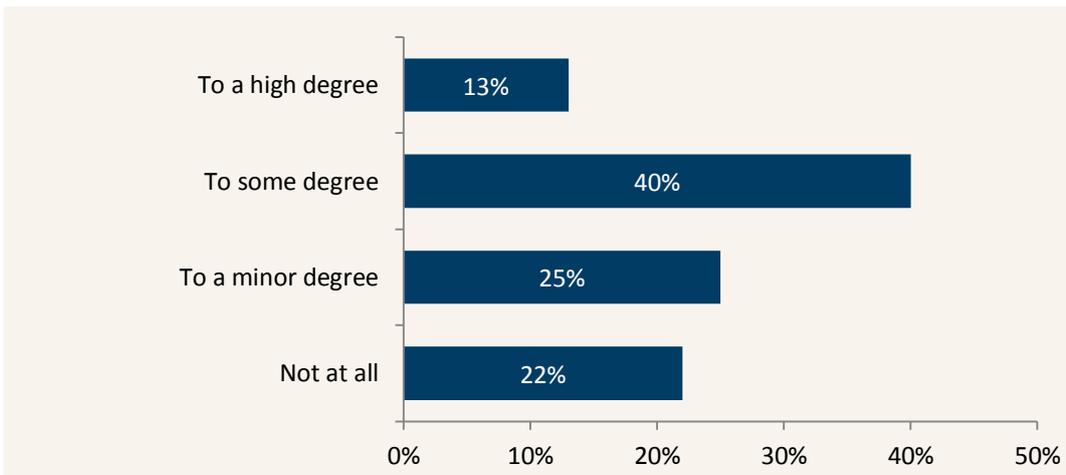
The study indicates that **students are mobile in their NMPs** and that **they appreciate this mobility**. The figures in the section below reflect students' experiences of mobility on the NMP. The results can be summarised as follows:

- Most of the students plan to study or have studied in Sweden (56%) or Denmark (55%). The corresponding figures are 43% for Finland, 36% for Norway and 30% for Iceland.
- 13% say that they would, to a high degree, still have been interested in NMP even if they had only received teaching in a single country. 40% would be interested to some degree, 22% would not be interested.
- The main obstacles to mobility are lack of support and the living expenses. 62% cite living expenses as an obstacle to a high degree or some degree, while 49% cite lack of support as an obstacle to a high degree or some degree. Living expenses represent an obstacle to a high degree or some degree for non-European (83%) and other European students (73%). For Nordic students, the corresponding figure is 38%. Similarly, non-European and other European students see lack of support as more of an obstacle than do Nordic students.
- Language constituted a bigger obstacle for non-European students than for Nordic and other European students. 39% of non-European students consider language to be an obstacle to a high degree or some degree, compared to 13% of the other European students and 5% of Nordic students.
- Visa requirements appear not to pose a major obstacle to student mobility – 74% say that they have not really been an obstacle. Broken down by nationality, it becomes apparent that non-European students see visa requirements as more of an obstacle. One third of non-Europeans said that they were an obstacle to a high degree or some degree.
- Variations in tuition fees between the Nordic countries are generally considered a minor obstacle by students. 70% indicate that they are not an obstacle at all. Again, students from outside Europe are less positive, with 31% stating that fees are an obstacle to a high degree or some degree, compared to 8% of other European students and 3% of Nordic students.
- 80% indicate that they, to a high degree or some degree, have been or are interested in learning a Nordic language. Of these, 11% say they speak a Nordic language fluently, while 42% indicate that they are able to get by in their new Nordic language(s). 59% of Nordic students say that they have either become fluent in or can cope in another Nordic language, compared to 71% of European students and 39% of non-European students.
- In the open responses, several of the students said that it would enhance mobility if they received more help and assistance from universities in relation to finding a place to stay. Non-European students, in particular, see finding a place to stay as a problem – 40% say it is an obstacle to mobility to some degree or a high degree. In addition, a number of students think that there is a general lack of information about opportunities for mobility, and that, for example, it is difficult to build up an overview of courses run by other universities.

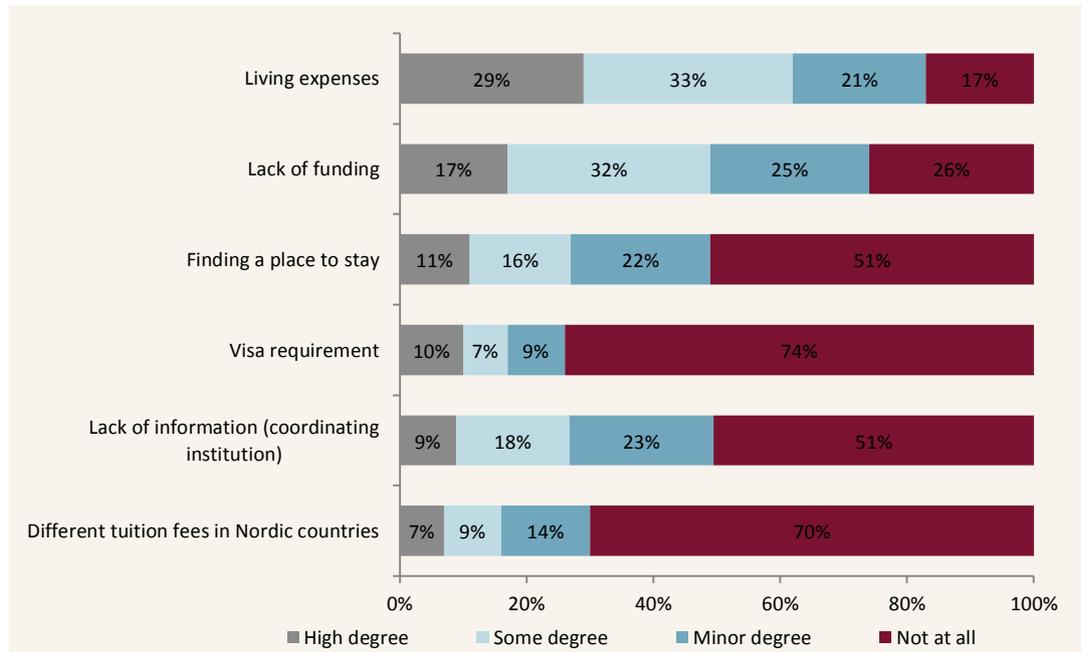
**Question 22: During the NMP, in which Nordic countries will you / did you study?**



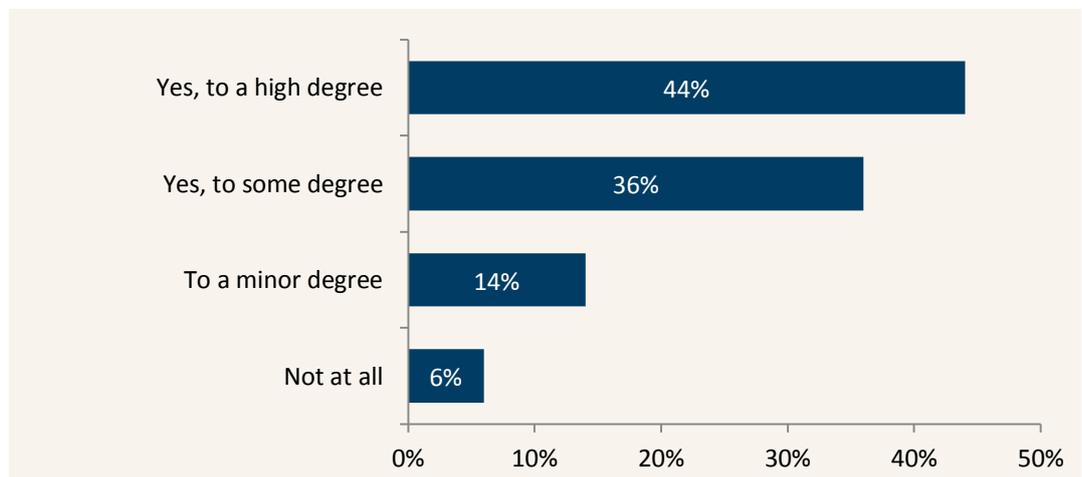
**Question 23: To which degree would you have been interested in a NMP taught in only one Nordic country with guest lecturers from other Nordic countries?**



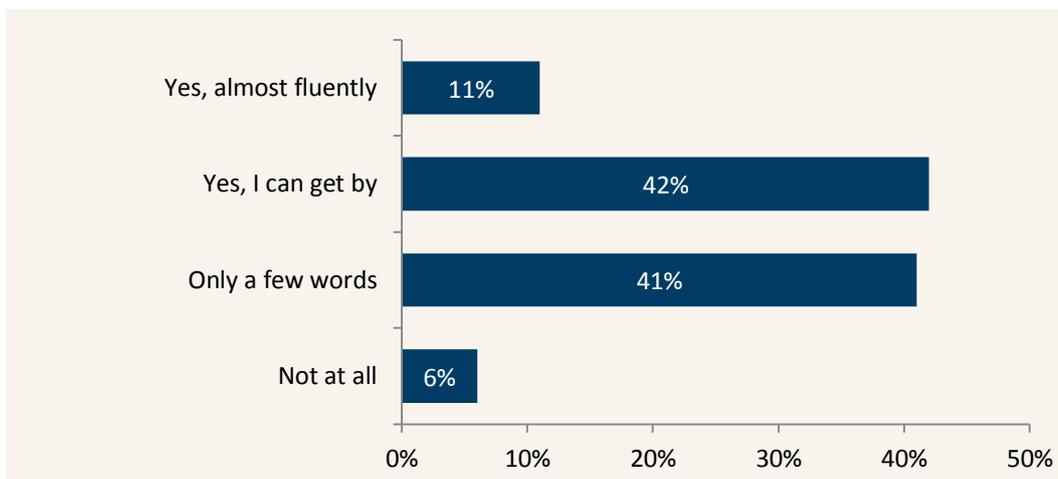
**Question 24: To which degree have the following topics been obstacles to your mobility:**



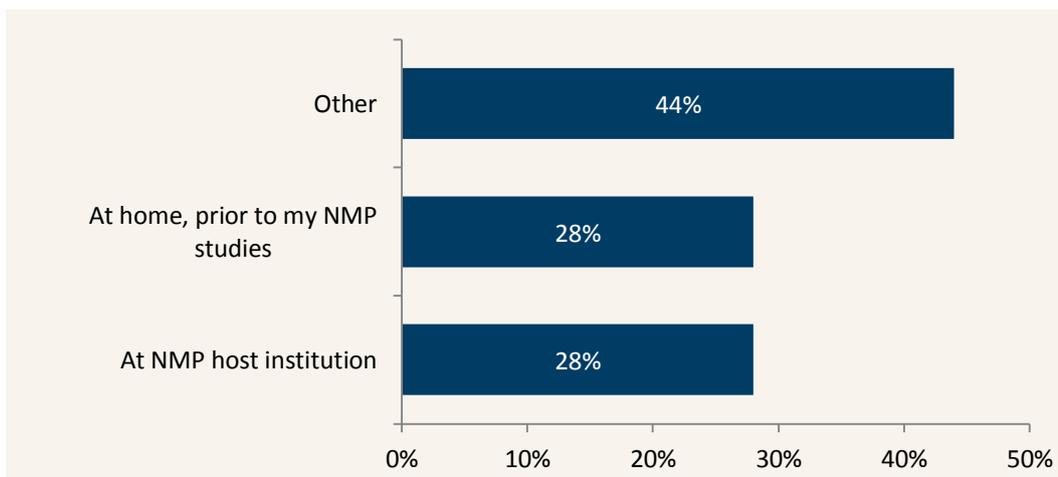
**Question 25: Are you interested / have you been interested in learning a Nordic language?**



**Question 26: Have you learnt a Nordic language?**



**Question 26.a: When did you learn it?**



## Funding the programme

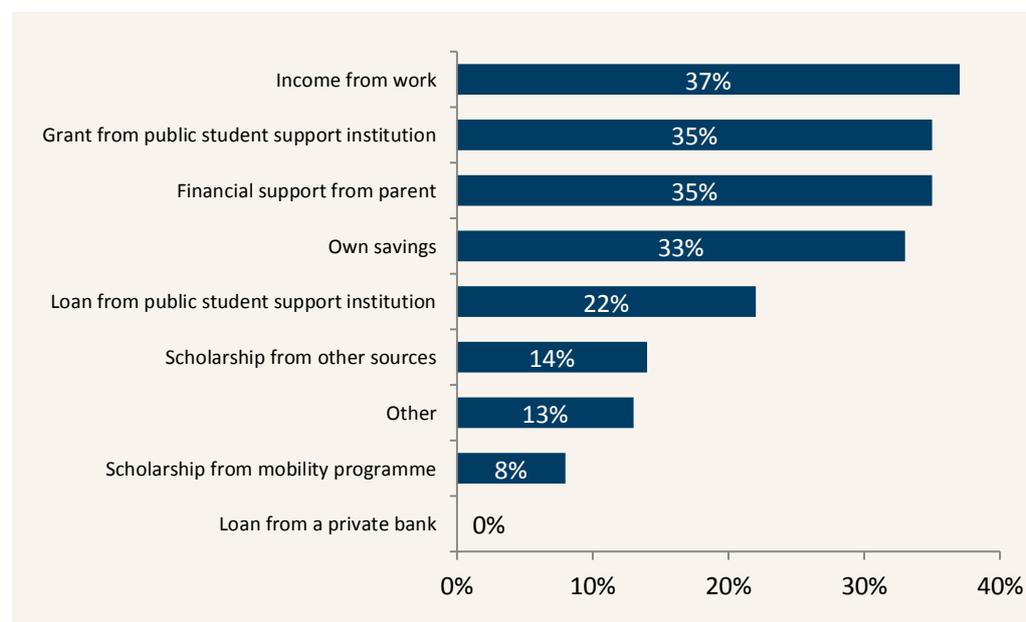
**NMP students rely on multiple funding sources.** The primary sources of funding are 'income from work' (37%) 'grant from public student support institution' (35%), 'financial support from parent' (35%) or 'own savings' (33%). Broken down by nationality, it appears that it is mostly Nordic students that fund NMP through income from work (63%), compared to 29% of students from other European countries and 14% of non-European students. Similarly, public-sector funding is most common among Nordic students (63%), while the same is true of 18% of other Europeans and 17% of non-Europeans. Parental support is most common among other European students (76%), followed by non-Europeans (44%), then Nordic students (8%).

Those who have financed their studies through other types of scholarships primarily identify sources such as Nordplus, Fulbright, Erasmus Mundus and other national schemes (e.g. the German DAAD).

In addition, 83% say they have had sufficient resources to comply with their mobility needs during their NMP. 94% of Nordic students think so, as do 75% of other Europeans and 74% of non-European students.

From the open responses, it is clear that several individual students have had problems funding their stay in the Nordic countries – one mentions that the available grants were insufficient, while another highlights that Norway was a more expensive place to study than he expected, and he therefore had to go back home.

### Question 28: How do/did you finance your NMP studies?

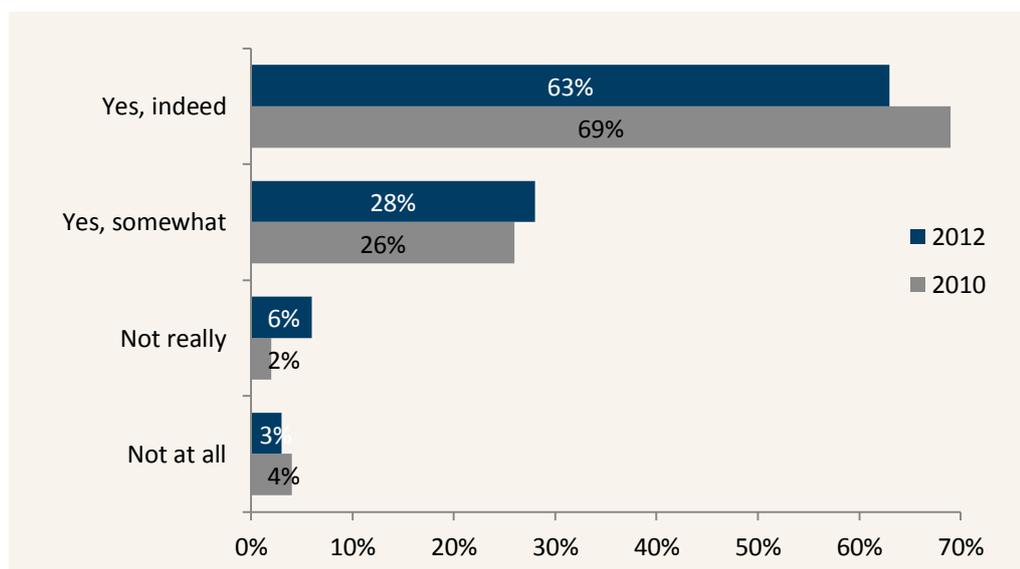


## Career opportunities – for current students

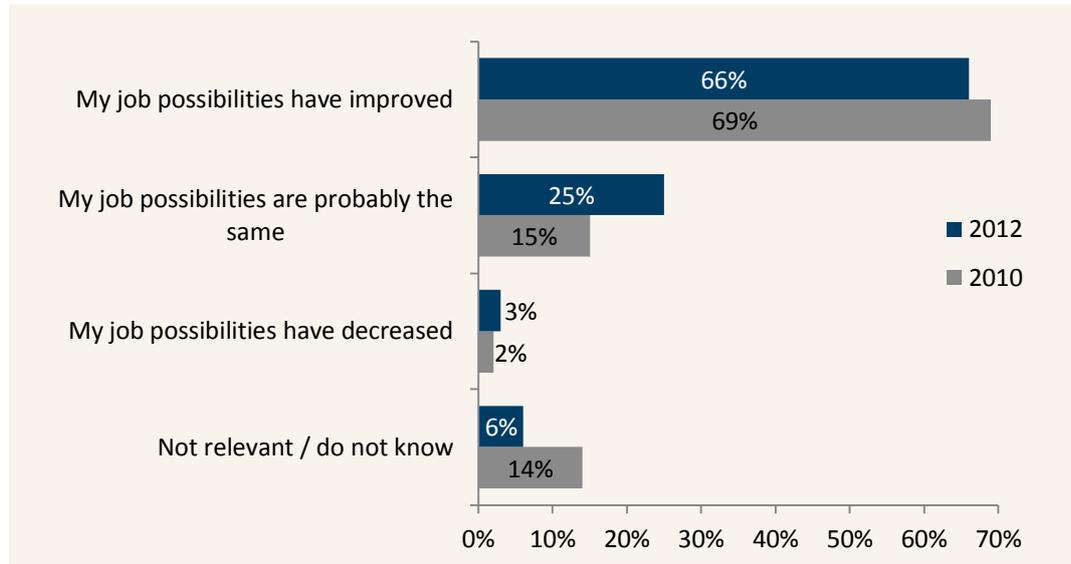
When asked, students are generally **positive about the career opportunities that NMP offers them**, and this has not changed significantly from 2010 to 2012. More specifically, the data reveals that:

- In 2012, 63% say that NMP is highly relevant to their future career. Nordic (71%) and other European students (64%) in particular think that their job prospects have improved, compared to 52% of non-European students.
- In 2012, 66% say that their job prospects have improved because they have participated in NMP. Nordic (79 %) and other European students (71 %) in particular think that their job prospects have improved, compared to 48 % of non-European students.
- In 2012, 54% think NMP has improved their chances of being awarded a PhD, while 22% think that the chances are about the same as if they had taken another Master's degree. This is particularly the case for Nordic students (71%) compared to 29% of the other Europeans and 48% of non-Europeans.
- 61% have plans to continue on to a PhD after they have finished their Master's. Of these, 90% are planning to take their PhD at a university under NMP.
- A total of 41% indicate they will remain in a Nordic country after they have graduated from NMP, a further 41% say it is a possibility, and 17% believe they will move on. Those who plan to move on are primarily from non-European countries (26%), compared to 23% of European students and only about 8% of Nordic students.

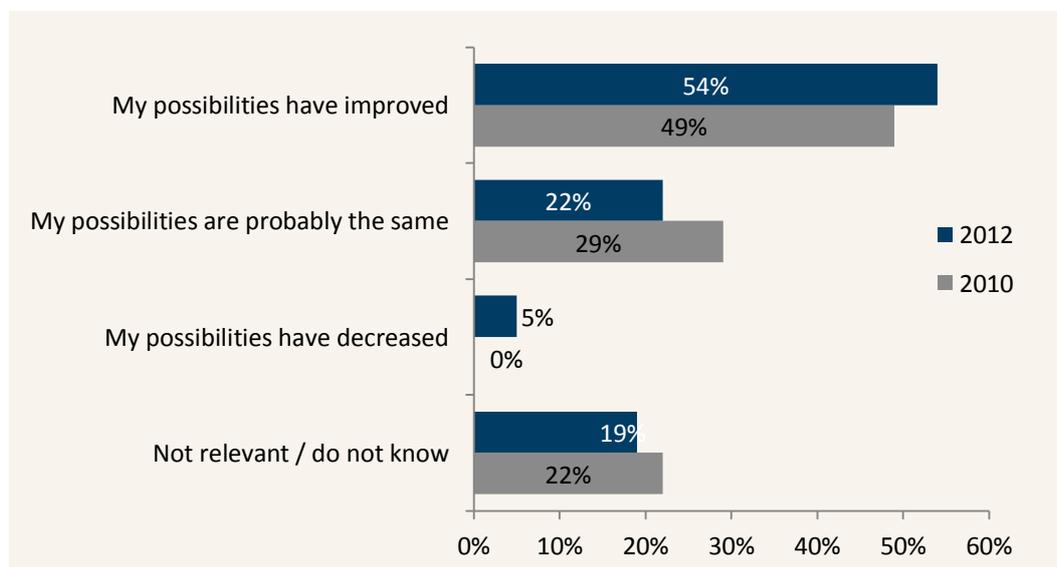
**Question 31: Do you find the Nordic Master Programme to be relevant to your future career? (65 respondents)**



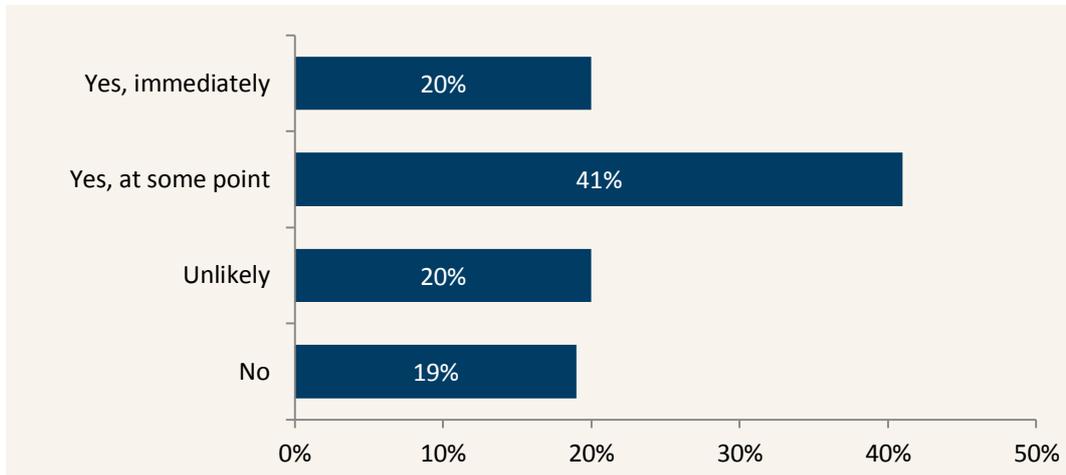
**Question 32: How do you think the Nordic Master Programme will affect your future job possibilities outside the university compared to other master's degree programmes you could have done? (65 respondents)**



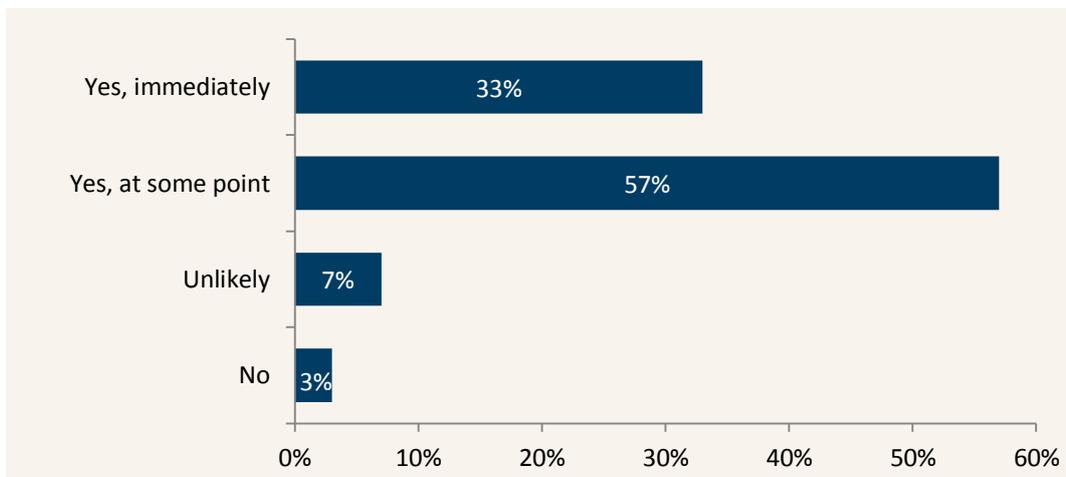
**Question 33: How do you think the Nordic Master Programme will affect your possibilities of pursuing a Ph.D. compared to other master's degree programmes you could have chosen? (65 respondents)**



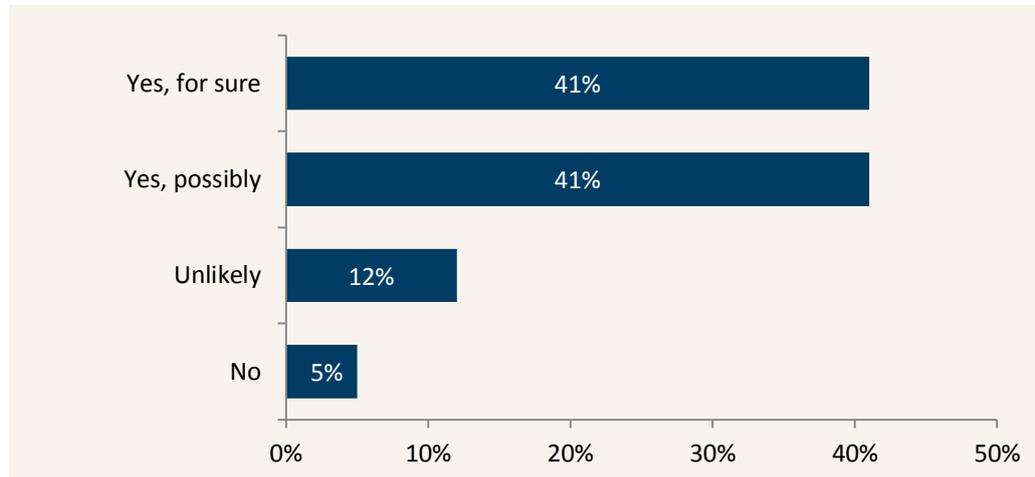
**Question 34: Do you plan on pursuing a Ph.D. after your Masters? (65 respondents)**



**Question 34.a: Do you plan on pursuing a Ph.D. after your Masters at a university in the NMP? (30 respondents)**



**Question 35: Do you plan on staying in the Nordic countries after graduation?  
(65 respondents)**



## Career development – for NMP graduates

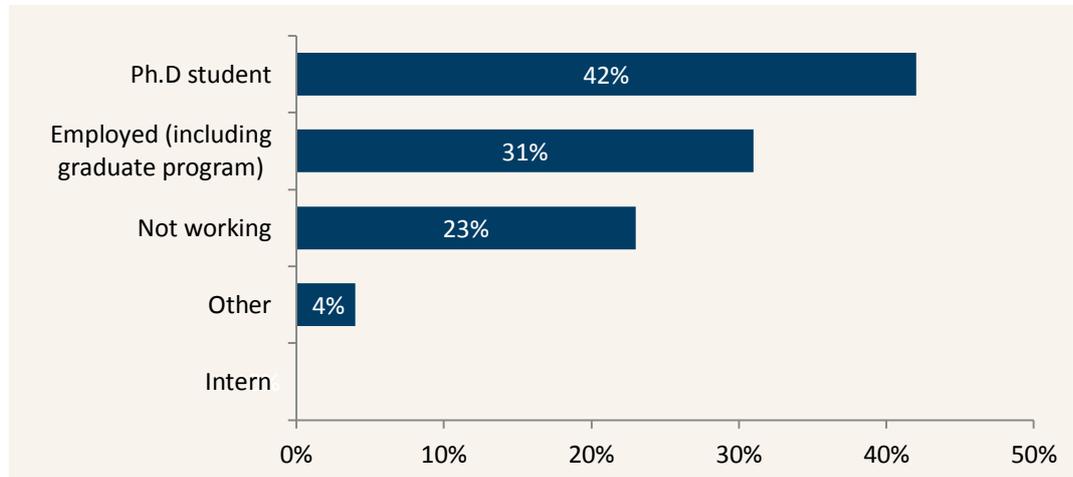
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This section illustrates post-NMP career paths. It should be stressed that a limited number of students participated in this part of the study. Between 7 and 26 students answered each question, and the results should therefore be interpreted on that basis.

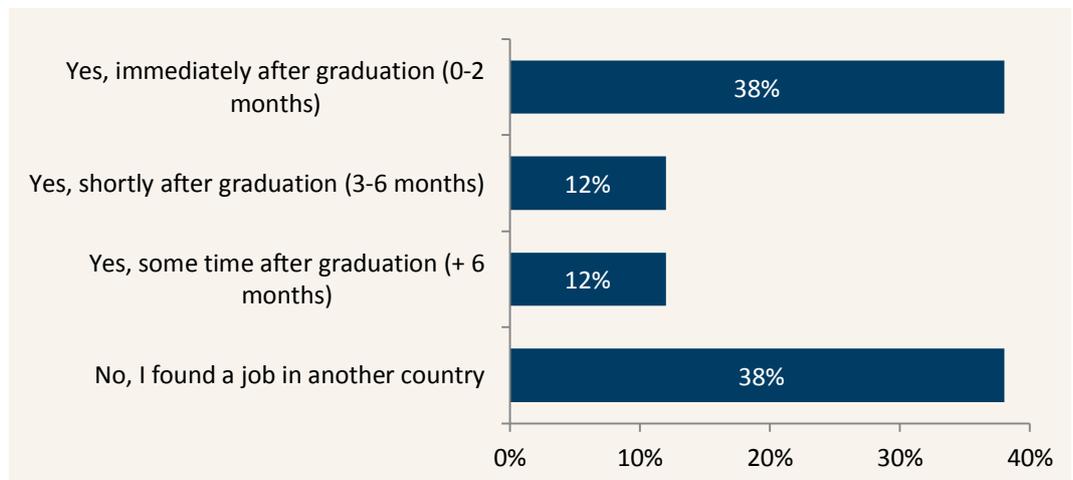
The results:

- 42% are PhD students, 31% are employed (including graduate programmes) and 23% are not working.
- Of those employed, 62% found a job in a Nordic country, 38% elsewhere.
- Of those employed, 63% say that participation in NMP greatly increased their chances of getting a job after graduation.
- Of those employed, 63% say their participation in NMP has to some degree or a high degree strengthened their interest in finding a job in the Nordic Region. This is particularly true of non-Nordic students.
- Among PhD students, 82% indicate that their participation in NMP has greatly increased their interest in studying for a PhD.
- 64% are undertaking their PhD at a university that is part of NMP, 18% at another Nordic university and 18% at a university outside of the Nordic Region.
- 91% believe that their participation in NMP has to a high degree or to some degree increased their chances of completing a PhD.
- Among those who are not in work, 14% are looking for a job, 43% for a PhD, and 43% for both. Of these, three are seeking work in Denmark, Norway or Finland, while one is looking for a job outside Europe.

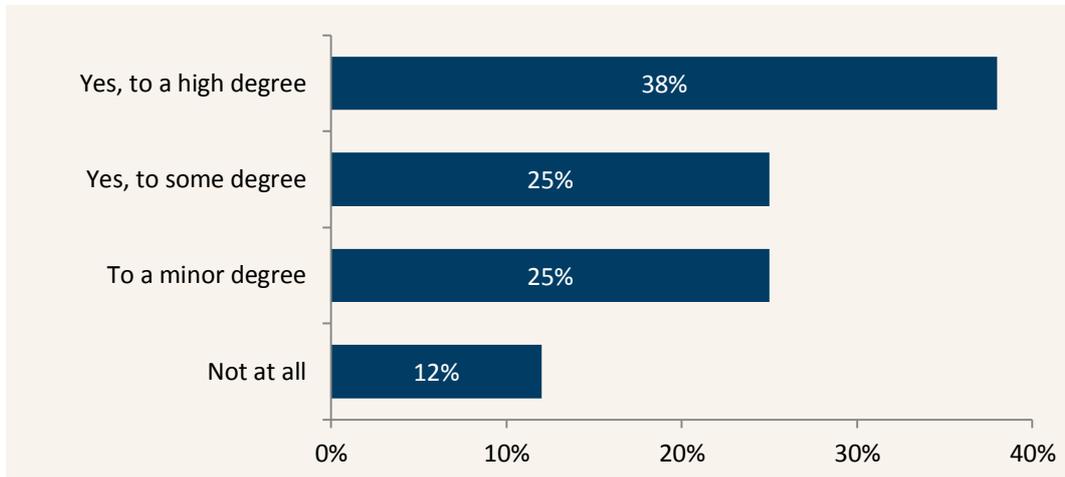
**Question 36: What is your current status after graduating from the NMP? (26 respondents)**



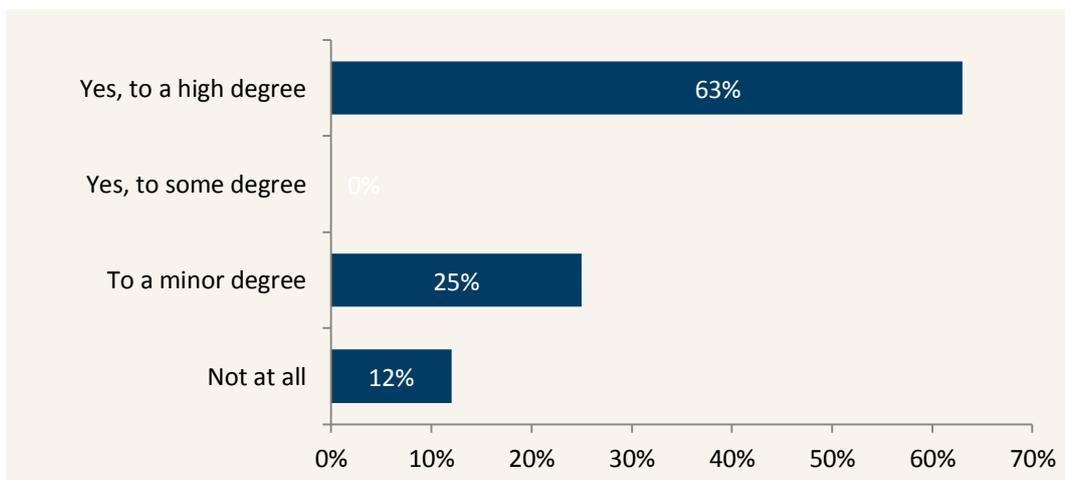
**Question 36.a: [If employed] Have you found a job in a Nordic country? (8 respondents)**



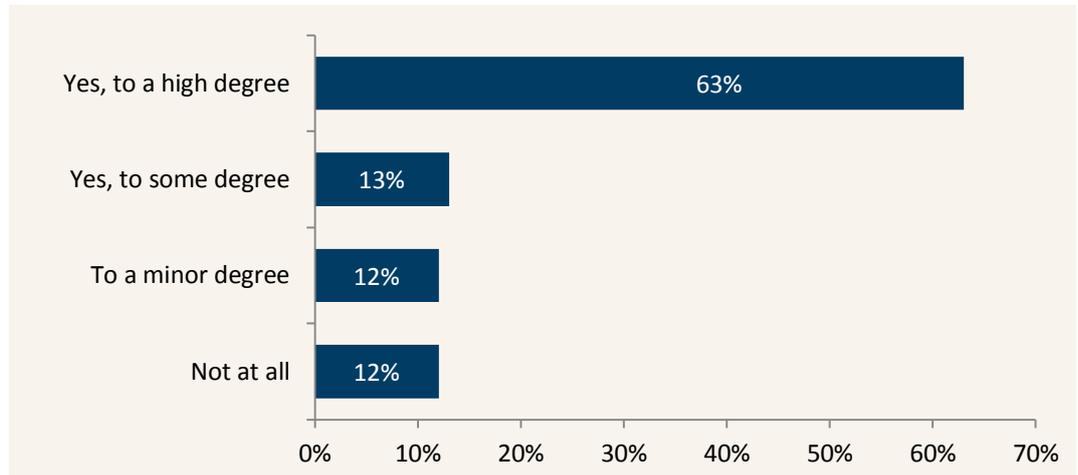
**Question 36.b: Has your participation in the NMP increased your interest in finding a job in a Nordic country? (8 respondents)**



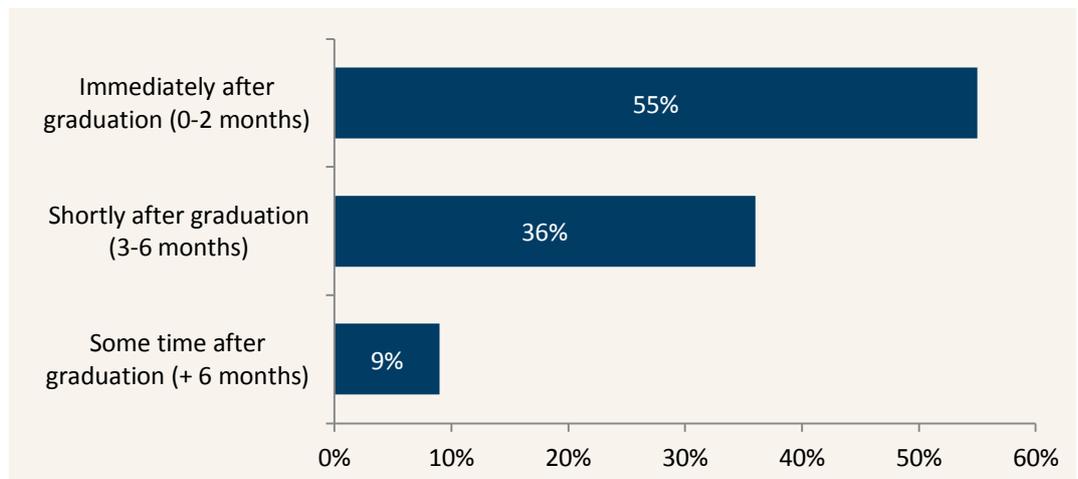
**Question 36.d: Is your current job related to your NMP studies? (8 respondents)**



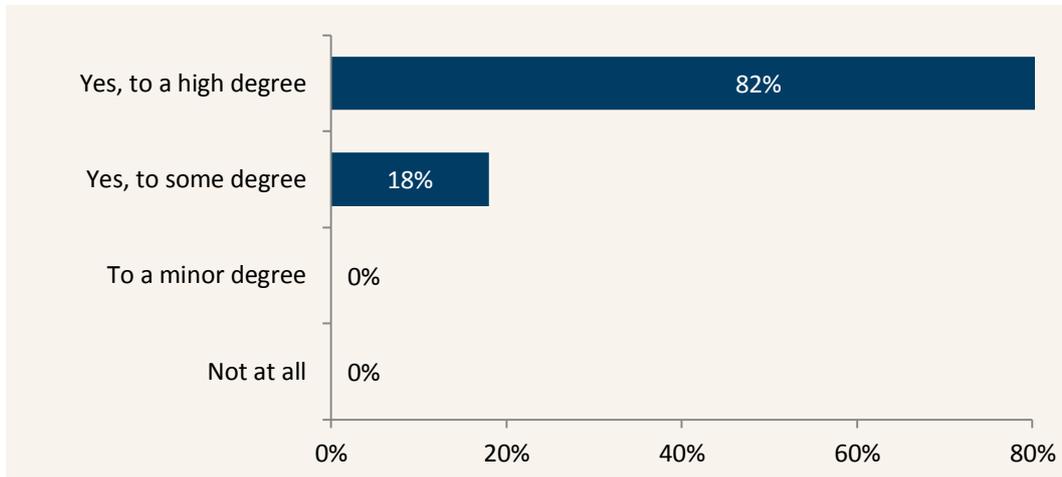
**Question 36.e: Do you assess that participating in the NMP has increased your chances of getting a job after graduation? (8 respondents)**



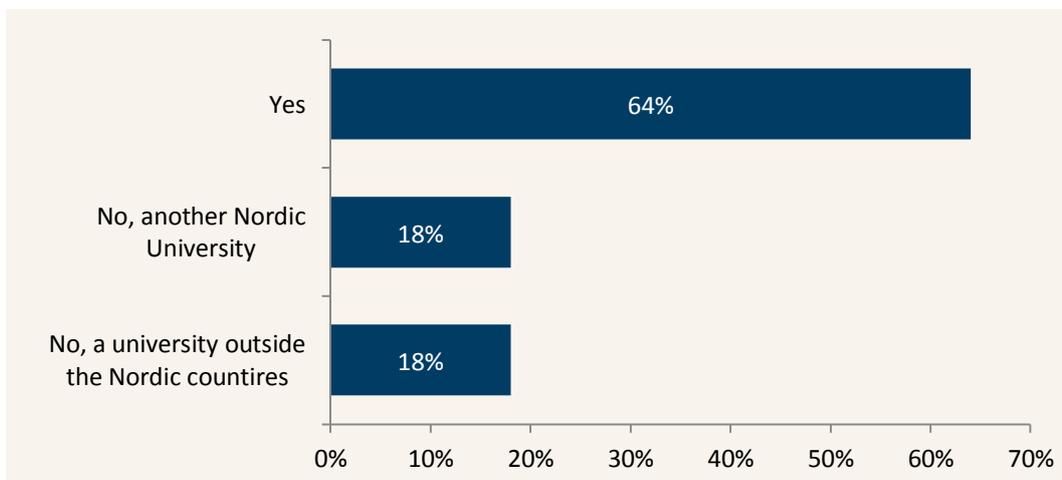
**Question 37.a: [If Ph.D] When did you start your Ph.D.? (11 respondents)**



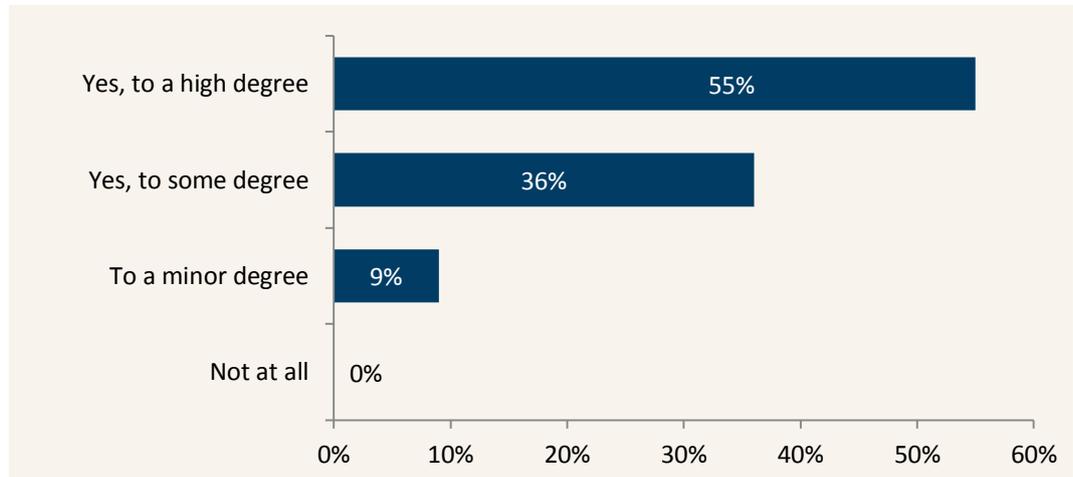
**Question 37.b: Has your participation in the NMP increased your interest in pursuing a Ph.D at a Nordic university? (11 respondents)**



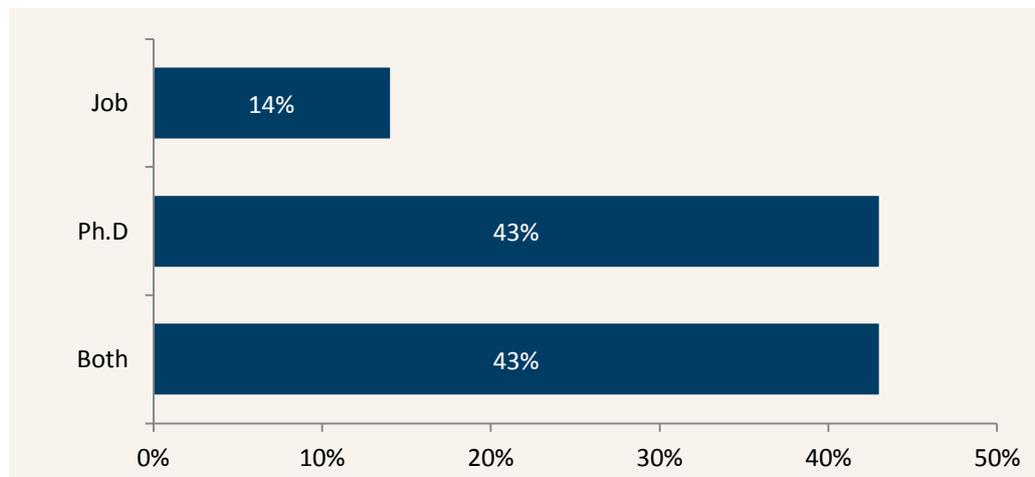
**Question 37.c: Is the Ph.D. at a university that is included in the NMP? (11 respondents)**



**Question 37.d: Do you assess that participating in the NMP has increased your chances of receiving a Ph.D after graduation? (11 respondents)**



**Question 38.a: [If not working / other] Are you looking for a job or would you like to pursue a Ph.D? (7 respondents)**

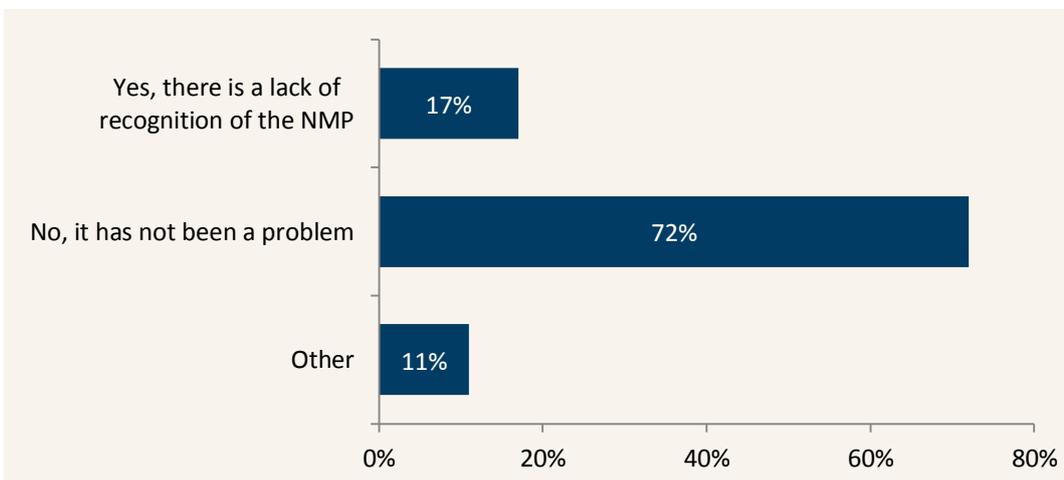


## Companies' view of NMP

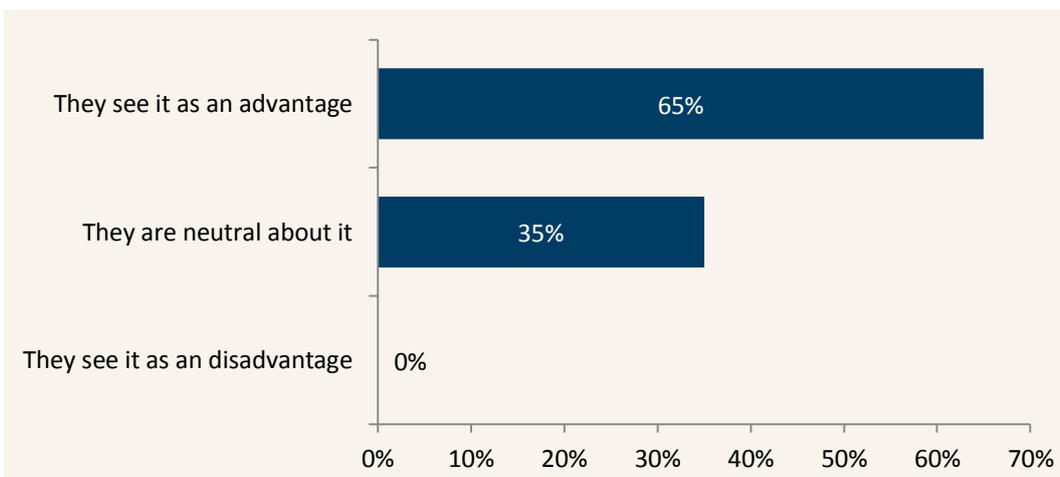
In the main, students have not experienced problems related to recognition of their NMP degree. 72% say that it **has not been a problem**. Those who have experienced problems indicate that this is because up to a year after graduation they have still not received their diploma

In addition, 65% of students think that 65 % employers see an NMP degree as an advantage. None think that employers see it as a disadvantage. Students from non-European countries most often indicate that employers are neutral about their diploma from NMP, while Nordic and European students are more likely to say that employers see it as an advantage.

**Question 39.a: Have you encountered any problems regarding the recognition of your NMP degree? (18 respondents)**



**Question 39.b: How do you think employers assess your NMP master's credentials? (17 respondents)**



## Recommending NMP

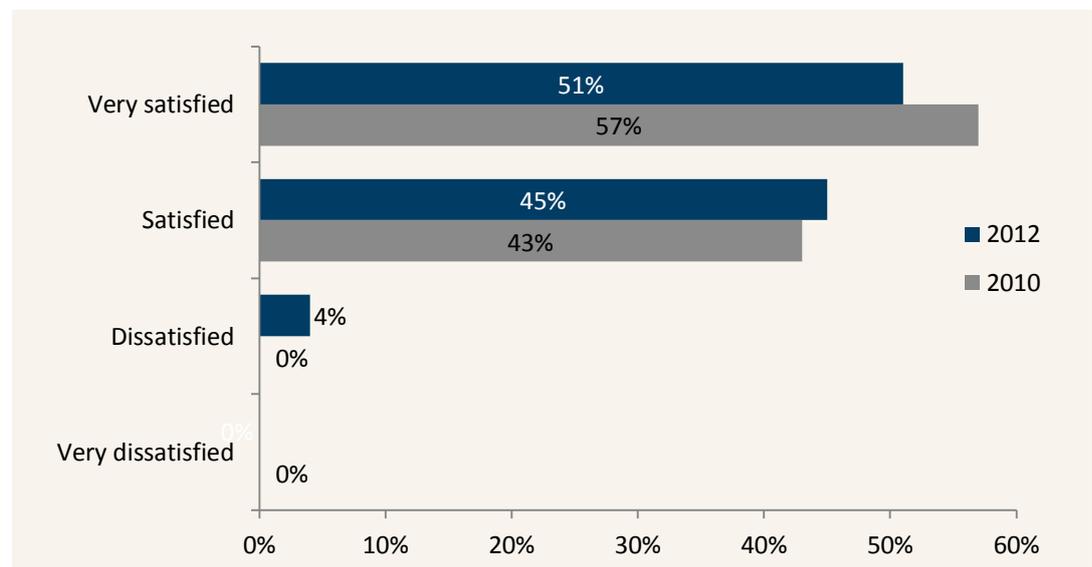
Generally, students are **satisfied with NMP. In 2012, 96% are very satisfied or satisfied.** In 2010, all of the students stated that they were very satisfied or satisfied with NMP. In 2012, Nordic students are the largest proportion of students who say they are very satisfied (76%), followed by the other Europeans (41%) and, finally, non-Europeans (31%).

Furthermore, 93% of students state that they would participate in NMP if they had to make the decision all over again, and that they do not regret their choice. 99% would recommend NMP to others.

Some students also say that further work could be done on some areas:

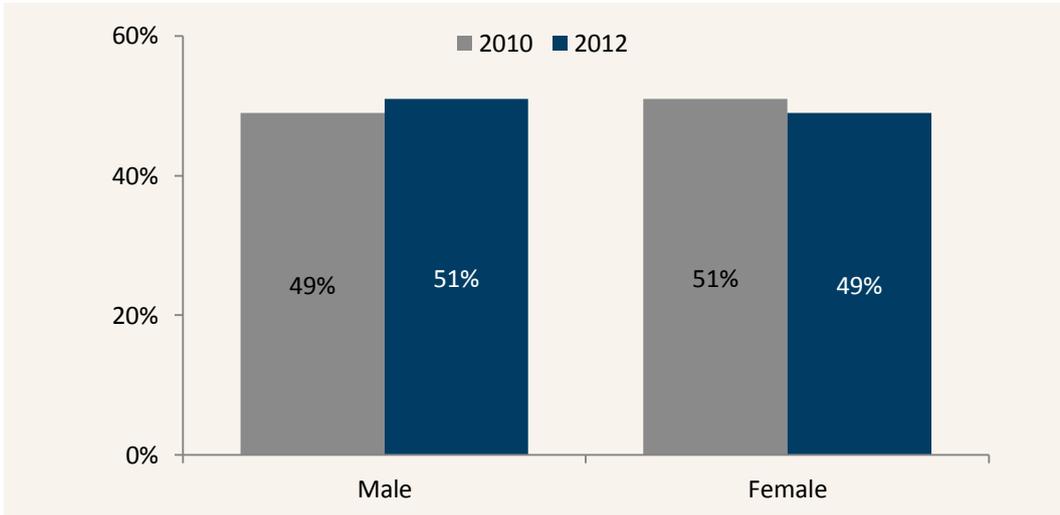
- More practical information on where classes will be held and when the semester starts again
- More marketing of NMP
- More focus on finding ways to increase mobility
- Better links between the programme and business and industry – for example, through short internships
- Reduction of differences between the individual universities' forms of examination.

**Question 40: All in all, how satisfied are you with the Nordic Master Programme?**

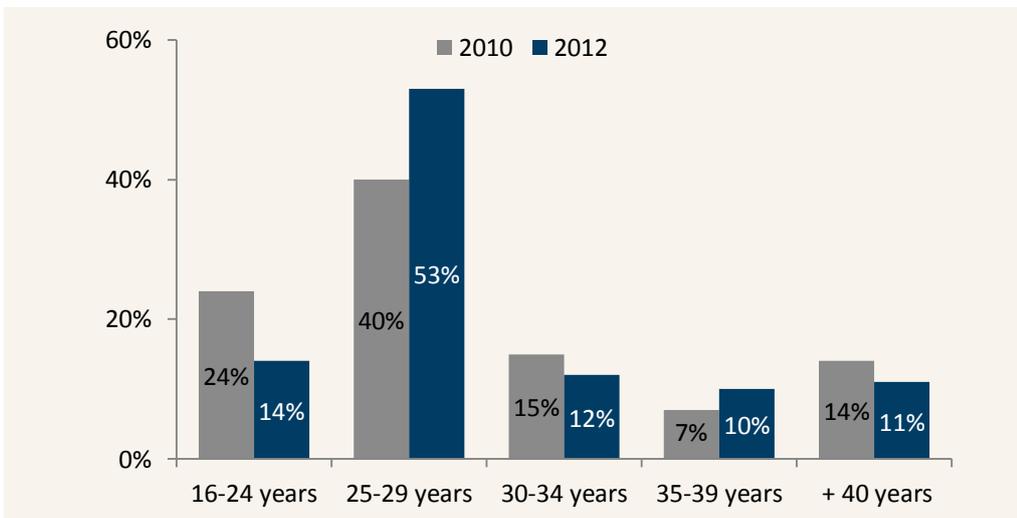


## Background variable

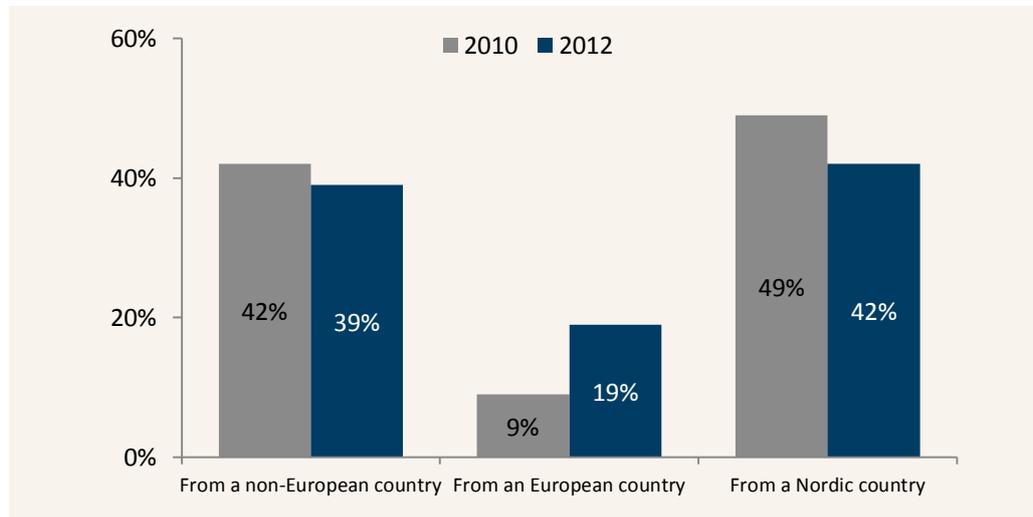
### Question 1: What is your gender?



### Question 2: How old are you?



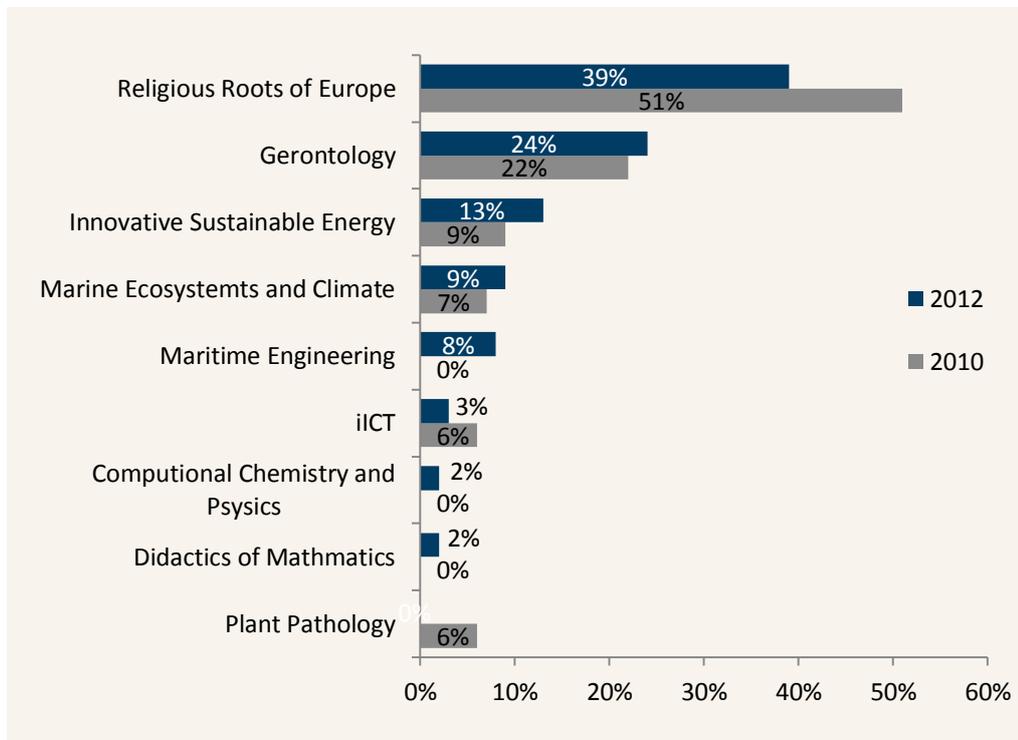
**Question 3: What is your nationality?**



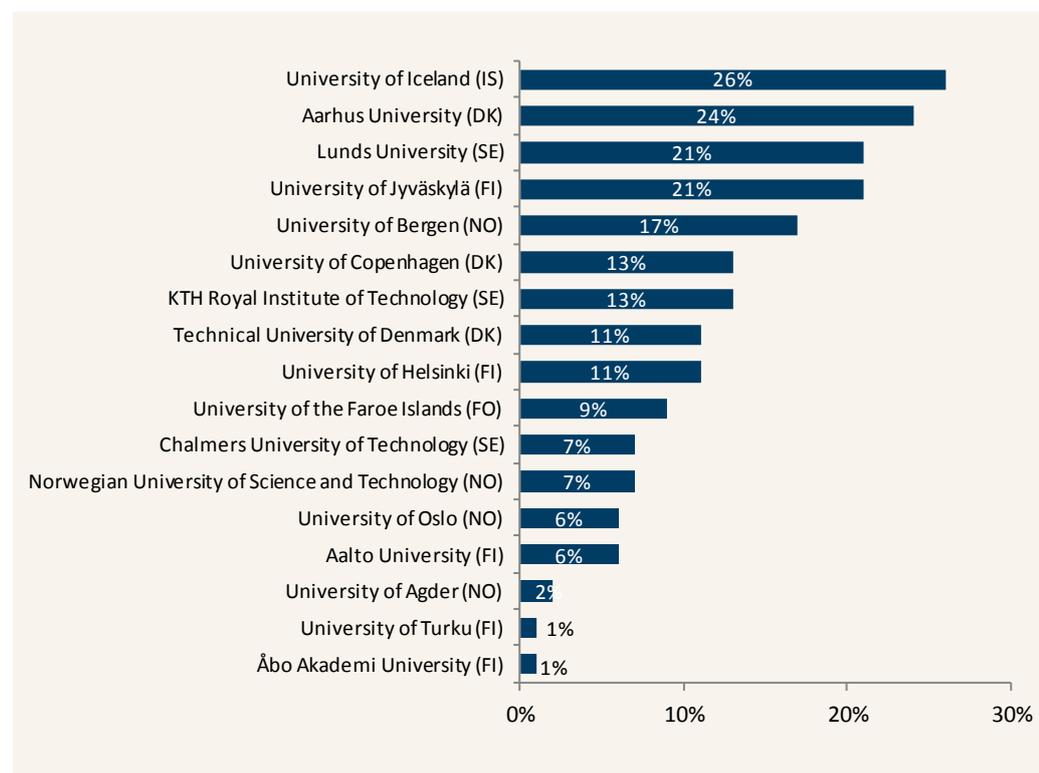
**Question 4: Have you studied in a foreign country before?**

36% answered yes.

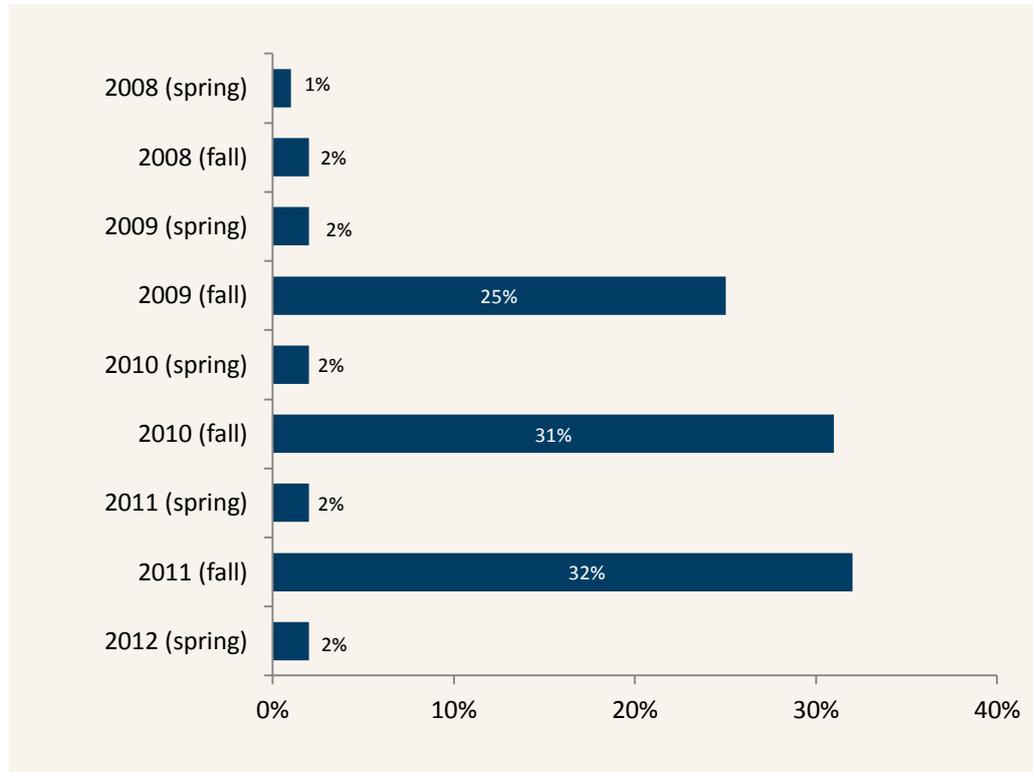
**Question 5: In which of the Nordic Master Programmes did you enroll?**



**Question 6: In which NMP-institutions have you been enrolled as part of the Nordic Master Programme?**



**Question 7: When did you enroll in the Nordic Master Programme?**



**Question 8: Have you graduated from the NMP?**

29% answered yes.