

# Establishment on the labour market after graduating from higher education

First cycle and second-cycle 2019/20



Establishment on the labour market after graduation: First cycle  
and second-cycle 2019/20

Published by the Swedish Higher Education Authority

2023 Author: Louisa Vogiazides

Reference number: 51-00244-23

Report number: 2023:11

Swedish Higher Education Authority • Hammarbybacken 31 • Box 6024, 121 06 Johanneshov

Tel: +46 (0)8 563 085 00 • e-mail [registrator@uka.se](mailto:registrator@uka.se) • [www.uka.se](http://www.uka.se)

# Table of contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Establishment on the labour market .....  | 4  |
| Establishment statistics .....  | 4  |
| A majority of graduates are established on the labour market .....  | 5  |
| The percentage of male graduates established on the labour market declined slightly ...                   | 5  |
| Establishment varies over time .....  | 6  |
| Those with a professional qualification have the highest rate of establishment .....                      | 6  |
| For general qualifications, the rate of establishment was highest in the category health and welfare..... | 8  |
| Lower rates of establishment among graduates with a foreign background.....                               | 9  |
| Men gravitate towards the private sector .....  | 10 |

# Establishment on the labour market

In this report, the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) reviews establishment on the labour market 12 to 18 months after being awarded a first- or second-cycle qualification in the academic year 2019/20.

## Establishment statistics

One metric for how well higher education responds to the needs of the labour market is the extent to which graduates establish themselves on the labour market. Here, we show the percentage of graduates established 12 to 18 months after being awarded a first- or second-cycle qualification in the academic year 2019/20. The follow-up year is 2021, which was the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The criteria for establishment are relatively strict in that the graduate must have a good position on the labour market (see the fact box “Who is considered to be established”).

### Who is considered to be established?

To be considered established on the labour market, an individual must fulfil the following criteria:

- Employed in November of the follow-up year according to the definition used by Statistics Sweden in the Swedish Occupational Register.
- Total earned annual income must exceed SEK 260,300 (2021).
- There must be nothing to indicate periods of unemployment (whether full-time or part-time) or that the person has taken part in any labour market policy measures.

The definition of establishment used here is narrow in several regards. A number of conditions must be met during the follow-up year for someone to be considered to have an established position on the labour market. In other words, to be classed as established the transition from education to working life must have been fairly smooth.

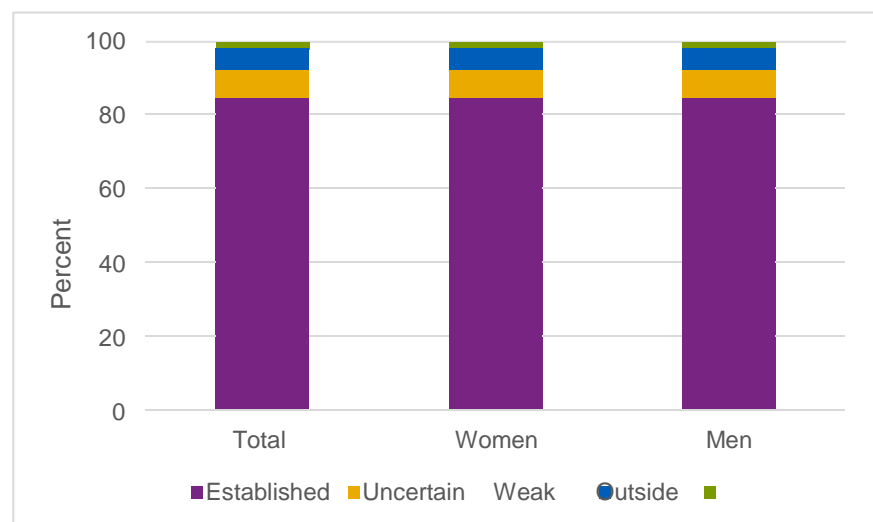
The population is divided into four categories based on their employment status:

- *Established*: Good position on the labour market
- *Uncertain*: Relatively low earnings or experiencing some unemployment
- *Weak*: Low earnings or experiencing full-time unemployment much of the year
- *Outside the labour market*: No earnings

## A majority of graduates are established on the labour market

Of those graduating during 2019/20, 84 per cent of both women and men were established on the labour market after 12 to 18 months (Figure 1). Still, not all graduates succeed in establishing themselves on the labour market: 8 per cent of those awarded a qualification in the academic year 2019/20 had uncertain status, while a further 6 per cent had weak status. A small group (2%) of graduates were outside the labour market. A slightly higher percentage of women than men had uncertain status, while men were more likely than women to be outside the labour market.

Figure 1. Labour market status (%) 12–18 months after being awarded a first- or second-cycle qualification in the academic year 2019/20. In total and divided by women and men.



## The percentage of male graduates established on the labour market declined slightly

The vast majority of graduates from Swedish higher education institutions (HEIs) establish themselves on the labour market. However, the percentage of male graduates established on the labour market declined slightly year-over-year: 84 per cent of men graduating in 2019/20 were established 12 to 18 months later, a decline of 1 percentage point compared to the previous cohort (Table 1). The rate of establishment among female graduates remained stable. A slightly higher percentage of all women and men graduating in 2019/20 had uncertain status on the labour market compared to those graduating in 2018/19.

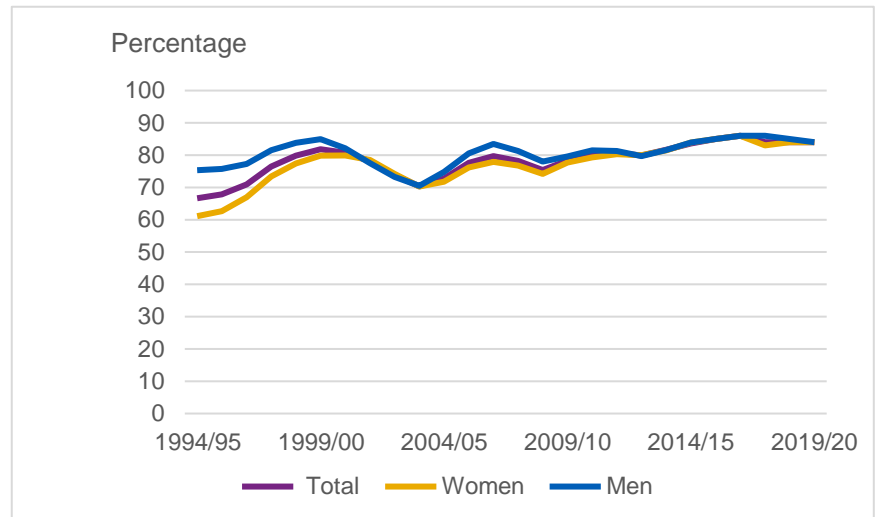
Table 1. Labour market status (%) 12–18 months after being awarded a first- or second-cycle qualification in the academic years 2018/19 and 2019/20. In total and divided by women and men.

|             | Total   |         | Women   |         | Men     |         |
|-------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|             | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
| Established | 84      | 84      | 84      | 84      | 85      | 84      |
| Uncertain   | 7       | 8       | 7       | 8       | 6       | 7       |
| Weak        | 6       | 6       | 6       | 6       | 6       | 6       |
| Outside     | 2       | 2       | 2       | 2       | 3       | 3       |

## Establishment varies over time

From a long-term perspective, the rate of establishment for those who graduated in 2019/20 and were followed up in 2021 was relatively high. Figure 2 illustrates variations in establishment over a twenty-five-year period from 1996 to 2021. At 86 per cent, those graduating in 2016/17 had the highest rate of establishment during the period. External factors such as economic cycles or decreased or increased public spending may make it easier or more difficult to establish oneself in any given year.

Figure 2. Rate of establishment (%) 12–18 months after graduating in the academic years 1994/95–2019/20, in total and divided by women and men.



## Those with a professional qualification have the highest rate of establishment

There are distinct variations in the rate of establishment between graduates from different programmes. Of those awarded a professional qualification in the academic year 2019/20, 89 per cent were established 12 to 18 months after graduating, compared to 77 per cent of those awarded a general qualification.

The rate of establishment was significantly lower (39%) for those awarded a qualification in the fine, applied and performing arts (Table 2). This can be partly explained by the fact that many graduates who go on to work in the arts and culture support themselves through scholarships and grants that are tax-free and thus do not appear in income statistics. The rate of establishment for graduates with a qualification in the fine, applied or performing arts did however increase compared to the previous year, especially for women.

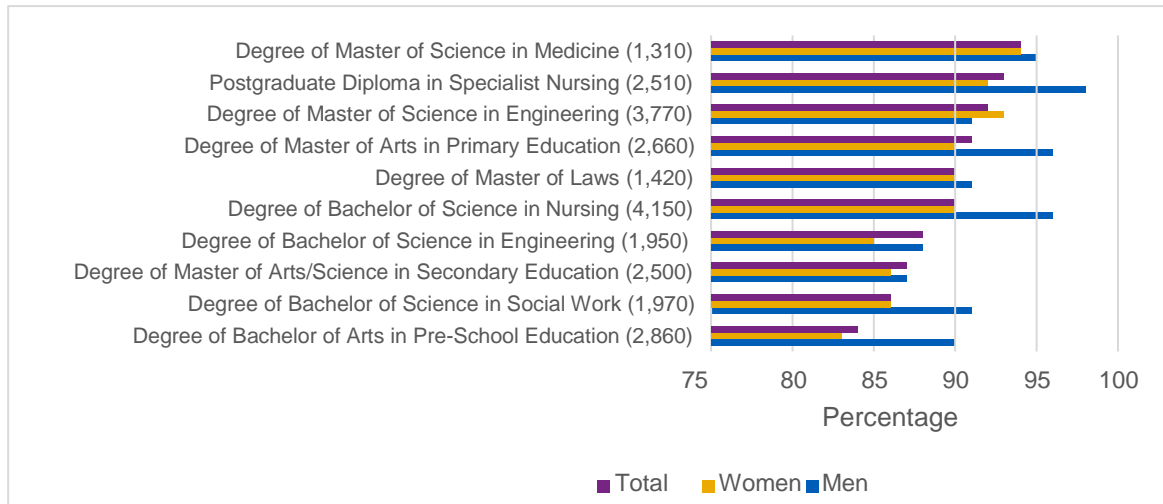
Table 2. Rate of establishment (%) 12–18 months after graduating with a professional qualification, general qualification or qualification in the fine, applied or performing arts in the academic years 2018/19 and 2019/20.

|  | Total   |         | Women   |         | Men     |         |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|  | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
| Professional qualification                             | 90      | 89      | 89      | 89      | 91      | 90      |
| General qualification                                  | 77      | 77      | 77      | 77      | 78      | 77      |
| Qualification in the fine, applied and performing arts | 35      | 39      | 32      | 38      | 40      | 42      |

Degree of Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Degree of Master of Science in Engineering were the most common professional qualifications. Graduates from these programmes also have the highest rate of establishment on the labour market: 90 per cent of those awarded a Degree of Bachelor of Science in Nursing and 92 per cent of those awarded a Degree of Master of Science in Engineering in 2019/20 were established on the labour market 12 to 18 months after graduating. In the case of some professional qualifications – Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Pre-School Education, Degree of Bachelor of Arts in Primary Education and Degree of Bachelor of Science in Nursing, for example – men had a higher rate of establishment than women (Figure 3).

Graduates awarded a Degree of Master of Science in Medicine had the highest rate of establishment (94%) among the 10 largest professional qualifications. They were closely followed by those awarded a Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Nursing, 93 per cent of whom were established. However, as this is a second-cycle programme, it is likely that those awarded the qualification were already established on the labour market before entering the programme. A detailed report on the rate of establishment for professional qualifications divided by category and gender can be found online in tables 1a, 1b and 1c.

Figure 3. Rate of establishment (%) in 2021 for the 10 professional qualifications with a high number of graduates in the academic year 2019/20. In total and divided by women and men. Number of graduates i brackets. Note break in X-axis.



## For general qualifications, the rate of establishment was highest in the category health and welfare

The rate of establishment for graduates awarded a general qualification in 2019/20 was 77 per cent, unchanged from the previous academic year. Here too there are major discrepancies between programmes. At 82 per cent, the rate of establishment was highest among graduates awarded a general qualification in the category health and welfare. The lowest level of establishment was among graduates with a general qualification in humanities and the arts, at 53 per cent (Table 3).

There was a year-over-year increase in the rate of establishment of graduates awarded a general qualification in the category services, which includes the subcategories tourism, travel and leisure and hotel, restaurants and catering, probably as a consequence of the gradual recovery of the tourism sector during 2021 after the restrictions imposed in 2020 due to the pandemic. In other categories the rate of establishment declined, with the exception of social sciences, law and business administration where the rate was unchanged.



Table 3. Rate of establishment (%) 12–18 months after graduating with a general qualification in the academic years 2018/19 and 2019/20. By category.

|  | Total   |         | Women   |         | Men     |         |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|  | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
| General qualification (total)  | 77      | 77      | 77      | 77      | 78      | 77      |
| Education science and teacher training                                     | 82      | 80      | 82      | 81      | 79      | 78      |
| Humanities and the arts  | 57      | 53      | 57      | 54      | 56      | 53      |
| Social sciences, law and business administration                           | 78      | 78      | 78      | 78      | 78      | 79      |
| Natural sciences, mathematics and information and communication technology | 79      | 78      | 77      | 76      | 80      | 80      |
| Engineering, manufacturing and construction                                | 82      | 79      | 81      | 78      | 82      | 80      |
| Agriculture and forestry, veterinary                                       | 81      | 80      | 78      | 81      | 89      | 76      |
| Health and welfare   | 83      | 82      | 82      | 83      | 84      | 77      |
| Services   | 71      | 74      | 72      | 74      | 71      | 75      |

## Lower rates of establishment among graduates with a foreign background

Among those graduating in the academic year 2019/20, the rate of establishment 12 to 18 months after graduation (86%) was higher for those from a Swedish background than a foreign background (80%).

For statistical purposes, the term *Swedish background* applies to anyone born in Sweden to at least one parent born in Sweden. The term *foreign background* applies to anyone born abroad or born in Sweden to two foreign-born parents. Incoming students are not considered part of the Swedish population and are consequently not included in these statistics.

The discrepancy between Swedish and foreign background was greater among men (7 percentage points) than women (4 percentage points). The rate of establishment of graduates from a foreign background awarded a qualification in 2019/20 was 2 percentage points lower than for graduates in the previous academic year (Table 4).

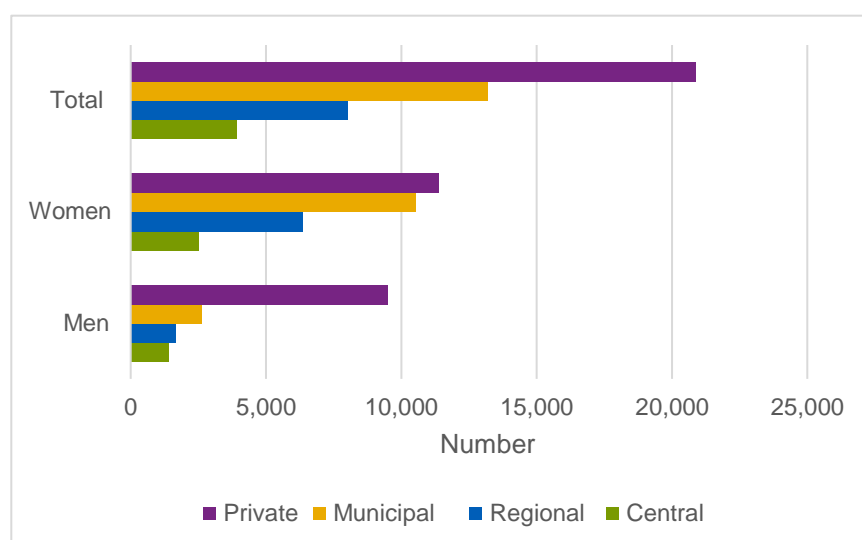
Table 4. Rate of establishment (%) 12–18 months after graduating with a general qualification in the academic years 2018/19 and 2019/20. Divided by Swedish and foreign background.

|                    | Total   |         | Women   |         | Men     |         |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
|                    | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
| Swedish background | 86      | 86      | 85      | 85      | 86      | 86      |
| Foreign background | 82      | 80      | 83      | 81      | 81      | 79      |

## Men gravitate towards the private sector

To a large extent, the Swedish labour market is gender segregated. Most men awarded a higher education qualification in the academic year 2019/20 who were established on the labour market 12 to 18 months after graduating worked in the private sector. Although the private sector was also the largest employer of women, it was not as dominant. A significantly higher percentage of women than men worked for local or regional authorities. The central government sector is significantly smaller but this too employed more women than men (Table 4). This situation reflects gendered study choices. For example, men are in the majority among graduates in the natural sciences, mathematics and computer sciences, all programmes that are more likely to lead to employment in the private sector. Women are in the majority in many healthcare programmes, which tend to lead to employment in the regional sector.

Figure 4. Number of graduates awarded a first- or second-cycle qualification in the academic year 2019/20 who were established in 2021, divided by sex and private, municipal, regional and central government sectors.



The Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) is tasked with strengthening higher education in Sweden and assuring Sweden's status as a knowledge society. We review the quality of higher education, analyse and follow up developments in the higher education sector and monitor legal certainty for students.

**uka.se**

