dal 1994 Consorzio Interuniversitario AlmaLaurea

27th Report
2024 Graduates' Profile

2025 Summary Report

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Summary of the 2025 AlmaLaurea Report on the 2024 Graduates' Profile (27th Survey)

1. The survey and its context

The Graduates' Profile takes into account 305,256 graduates in the calendar year 2024[1] from 80 universities participating in AlmaLaurea.[2] These universities are distributed across the country with a certain homogeneity: 29 in the North, 24 in the Centre, 27 in the South. In 2024 six universities (Sapienza University of Rome, Bologna, Padua, Turin, Naples Federico II and University of Milan) had more than 10,000 graduates. The population of graduates breaks down as follows: 170,943 first-level graduates (representing 56.0% of all graduates in 2024), 31,889 single-cycle second-level graduates (10.4%), 102,424 two-year masters (33.6%).[3] The five largest fields of study are health and pharmacy, economics, engineering and engineering trades, natural sciences, mathematics, physics and statistics and politics, social sciences and communications, which together account for more than 60% of the graduates. Most fields of study include a "3+2" structure, while six of them also have single-cycle second-level graduates.

The questionnaire was completed by 284,867 graduates, representing 93.3% of the total population surveyed.

The documentation presented was broken down by degree type, each of which is characterised by a different frame by field of study.

Single-cycle second-level and first-level courses of study are the only ones that can be accessed with a high school/secondary school diploma. The first-level courses include from 15 fields of study, with a greater concentration in economics (15.3%), health (13.2%), engineering and engineering trades (11.4%), politics, social sciences and communications (11.1%) and natural sciences, mathematics, physics and statistics (9.8%). The single-cycle second-level courses of study (lasting at least five years) are concentrated in a few fields: health and pharmacy (46.2% of single-cycle second-level graduates), law (28.7%), education (17.1%, with only the degree class in Primary Schooling Sciences), architecture and construction (5.4%), veterinary (2.3%), humanities and literature (in 2024, only 81 graduates - that is 0.3% - are in the Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage course of study instituted by the Italian Ministerial Decree of 2 March 2011).

The two-year master's courses are open to graduates who have already earned at least one first-level degree. The two-year masters are divided into 15 fields of study, most from four of them: economics (16.3%), engineering and engineering trades (15.9%), natural sciences, mathematics, physics and statistics (14.8%) and politics, social sciences and communications (10.6%). In the joint analysis by field of study and degree type, single-cycle second-level graduates in humanities and literature are not taken into account due to their small number.

[1] AlmaLaurea has also been carrying out annual surveys on the Profile and Occupational condition of PhD and Academic Master graduates since 2015. The results of the most recent surveys are available at www.almalaurea.it/en/our-data/almalaurea-surveys.

[2] As at June 2025, 82 Universities are members of AlmaLaurea.

[3] Graduates of courses pertaining to the programme before the reform of Italian Ministerial Decree no. 509/1999 and graduates of Primary Education Sciences (before the reform of Italian Ministerial Decree no. 249/2010) were excluded from the Report due to the particularly low number of students (a total of 830 graduates). Documentation is available at www.almalaurea.it/en/our-data/almalaurea-surveys/graduates-profile.

Any analysis of the performance of the Italian university system must necessarily take into account the broader context in which our country operates. Italy continues to lag significantly behind in education levels, both among the adult population and among younger people. In 2024, the share of graduates in Italy among 25–34-year-olds stood at 31.6%, placing the country near the bottom of European rankings, ahead only of Romania.(Eurostat, 2025a) These results are all the more concerning when considering that one of the strategic goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by the UN General Assembly (ONU, 2015) is to achieve a 45.0% graduation rate among 25–34-year-olds by 2030 (Consiglio dell'Unione europea, 2021), a target that Italy is unlikely to meet. Moreover, there are still too many young people aged 15–29 who are neither studying nor working. These so-called NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training) accounted for 15.2% of Italian youth in 2024, a percentage that has declined in recent years.(Eurostat, 2025b) Nevertheless, Italy remains the country with the highest NEET rate in the European Union (except for Romania) and well above the EU average (11.0% in 2024). Adding to an already complex situation is the limited investment in tertiary education (OECD, 2024). In 2021, Italy allocated just 1.0% of its GDP to the sector (a value that has remained stable), placing it well behind the major European countries and the OECD average (1.5%).)

To outline the context in which the country operates, it is important to monitor university enrolment trends. According to the latest data from the Ministry of University and Research (MUR-USTAT), following a rise in enrolments between 2000/2001 and 2003/2004 (+19.0%) – mainly due to a return to the university by large segments of the adult population after the introduction of the "3+2" reform (Ministerial Decree no. 509/1999) – there was a significant decline in enrolments lasting until 2013/2014 (–20.5% compared to 2003/2004). Since 2014/2015 enrolments have started to rise again, reaching +16.6% in 2019/2020 compared to 2013/2014 and continuing to grow in 2020/2021, partly due to the impact of the pandemic on the labour market (+25.3% compared to 2013/2014). From academic year 2021/2022 to the most recent 2023/2024, the trend has fluctuated, reaching 328,000 enrolments. This value remains higher than that recorded in 2019/2020, indicating a general upward trend compared to pre-pandemic levels. In any case, the drop in enrolments observed since 2003/2004 has almost been completely eliminated (in 2023/2024 the decline stood at just 2.9%).

Several factors influence enrolment trends: the sharp demographic decline among 19-year-olds, a low university transition rate, an underdeveloped student support system and the financial difficulties faced by families in affording higher education. It is important to remember that university education should be the main driver of social mobility and the key tool available to public authorities to address unequal opportunities.(Istat, 2024) Far too often, in the absence of adequate investment in education and effective student support and guidance policies, young people's socio-economic background continues to play a major role in shaping their educational and career choices. In this complex and multifaceted context, the Graduates' Profile Survey provides a snapshot of graduates' characteristics, their university achievements, the experiences they have gained during their studies, the evaluation of the studies they have completed, post-graduation study prospects and prospects for employment.

2. Gender and social background

Gender

Accounting for more than half of all graduates in Italy since the early 1990s, women represent 59.9% of all graduates in 2024.[4] Such a share has tended to be stable over the last ten years.[5] Women account for 69.4% of single-cycle second-level course of study, an appreciably higher proportion than what was observed among two-year masters (57.8%) and first-level graduates (59.4%). As can be seen from these data, the share of female graduates tends to decrease in the transition from first-level degrees to two-year master's degrees. This trend among others is confirmed in the transition to the third level of university studies: the share of women among PhDs is under 50% (48.5%).[6]

There is a strong differentiation in the gender composition of the various fields of study, confirming the greater propensity of women to choose humanistic courses of study over scientific ones, in particular those of the STEM area (science, technology, engineering, mathematics).[7] In 2024 women accounted for 41.1% of STEM graduates, a share that has remained stable over the past decade. In the first-level courses, women constitute a significant majority in education (94.5%), foreign languages (84.5%), psychology (81.1%), health (75.1%) and arts and design (72.1%). Conversely, they represent a minority in information and communication technologies (ICTs) (14.5%), engineering and engineering trades (26.3%) and sports sciences and physical education (30.8%). A similar distribution can also be observed within the two-year master's degree: there is a strong female prevalence in education (92.0%), foreign languages (85.1%), psychology (82.1%) and arts and design (73.9%), while there are very few in sports sciences and physical education (25.2%), information and communication technologies (ICTs; 25.4%) and engineering and engineering trades (28.7%). In single-cycle second-level degree women prevail in all fields of study: from 95.6% in education to 61.7% in architecture and construction.

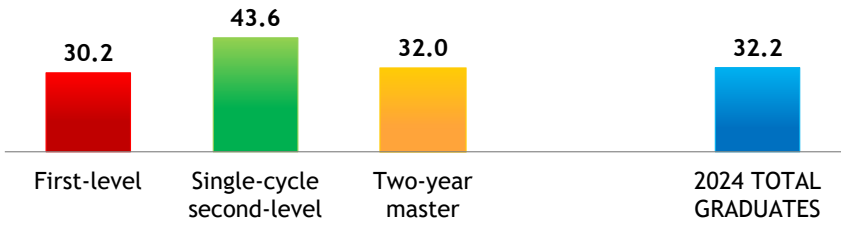
Social background

For years AlmaLaurea has been pointing out that the population of graduates comes from more elevated socio-cultural backgrounds compared to the Italian population in general, confirming the persistence of strong gaps in access to third-level education. This is supported by the fact that overall 15.1% of Italian men between 45 and 64 (the reference age group for fathers of graduates) obtained a university degree.[8] But among the fathers of graduates surveyed by AlmaLaurea, this share is appreciably higher at 21.4%. The comparison between the Italian female population and the mothers of graduates leads to similar conclusions (respectively 18.8% and 23.6%). This means that the parents of university graduates more frequently have a university degree than the population of the same age

[4] On the topic of gender differences, in January 2022 AlmaLaurea published the report "Laureate e laureati: scelte, esperienze e realizzazioni professionali", www.almalaurea.it/i-dati/le-nostre-indagini/indagini-tematiche/laureate-e-laureati-scelte-esperienze-e-realizzazioni-professionali (in Italian).
[5] Even though the composition of AlmaLaurea's graduates in 2014 was different from the current one, both in terms of number of universities and of degree type (pre-reform of Italian Ministerial Decree no. 509/1999, first and second level), specific insights in the same number of participating universities confirmed the substantial constancy over time of the comparisons presented in the Report.
[6] AlmaLaurea (2024), *9th Survey of PhD Profiles 2023. 2024 Report*, www.almalaurea.it/en/our-data/almalaurea-surveys/phds-profile.
[7] Graduates from the STEM area are those from the following fields of study: natural sciences, mathematics, physics and statistics; information and communication technologies (ICTs); architecture and construction; engineering and engineering trades.
[8] Analysis of 2024 Eurostat data with respect to the population by age and level of education.

as a whole. Jointly considering the levels of education of both fathers and mothers analysed by AlmaLaurea, it was found that 32.2% have at least one parent with a university degree (28.0% in 2014). This share is 30.2% among first-level graduates, 32.0% among two-year masters and rises to 43.6% among single-cycle second-level graduates (Figure 1). Among first-level graduates and two-year masters in 2024 this percentage was particularly evident in engineering and engineering trades (40.1% and 38.0% respectively), while among single-cycle second-level graduates it was even more pronounced, at 51.6%, in health and pharmacy.

Figure 1 2024 graduates: at least one parent with a university degree obtained by degree type (percentage values)



Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

In this respect, among those who have at least one parent with a university degree it is interesting to note the consistency between the parents' and the children's areas of study. Among the latter, 20.5% of them complete their studies in the same field of study as one of their parents. However, this share rises to 37.5% among single-cycle second-level graduates, it is within the degrees that most frequently lead to the self-employment (reaching 41.2% both among graduates in law and those in health and pharmacy).

Graduates with a high social background (i.e. those whose parents are entrepreneurs, self-employed and managers) accounted for 22.4% in 2024 (20.9% among first-level graduates, 22.0% among two-year masters and 32.2% among single-cycle second-level graduates). Conversely, graduates with a less-favoured social background, whose parents perform blue collar occupations, are 23.2% (25.0% first-level graduates, 21.8% among two-year masters, 17.4% among single-cycle second-level graduates).

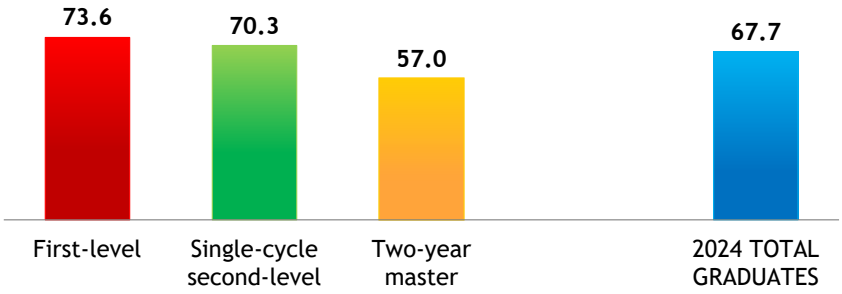
Although schematic, these data highlight the weight of social background on the choices and possibilities of successfully completing a university education. Enrolment in single-cycle second-level courses inevitably requires a longer term investment than first-level degrees, an investment that will often continue with further specialisation courses. This is part of the reason why single-cycle second-level graduates represent a population with a relatively high social background, particularly those in health and pharmacy (37.4%), law (36.1%) and veterinary (35.2%). Moreover, the social background of two-year masters tends to be higher than that of first-level graduates. In brief, graduates whose families are culturally favourable and more suited to supporting their children's studies are more likely to continue their studies.

3. Geographical origin and educational background

Geographical origin

In 2024 42.4% of the graduates earned their degree in the same province where they graduated from high school/secondary school diploma, and a quarter moved to a neighbouring province (25.3%). It therefore follows that 67.7% of the graduates studied at most in the province neighbouring the one where they got their high school/secondary school diploma. This value has decreased over time (in 2014 it was 74.4%), showing a long-term trend of increasing mobility for studying. This phenomenon, which involves 73.6% of first-level graduates and 70.3% of single-cycle second-level graduates, drops to 57.0% among two-year masters (Figure 2). The data show that the choice to move for study reasons (long-range mobility) is more frequent in the transition from the first to the second level of study.

Figure 2 2024 graduates: level of mobility for study (up to a neighbouring province of the one where the high school/secondary school diploma was earned), by degree type (percentage values)



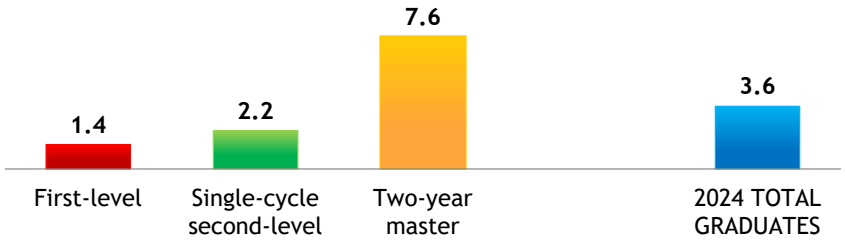
Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

At field of study level, the share of graduates who moved at most to a neighbouring province is highest in education (78.7%), sports sciences and physical education (73.9%) and economics (72.1%), and lowest in psychology and arts and design (both 59.2%), as well as in politics, social sciences and communications (60.8%). The choice to study 'close to home' is explained among others by the wide spread of university campuses,[9] but also by the need of less favoured families to keep education costs down. According to the data, at most 72.3% of those from less favoured backgrounds studied in the neighbouring province compared to 64.5% of graduates with a high social background.

In 2024, 16,036 citizens from other countries graduated from one of the universities in AlmaLaurea Consortium. Foreigners account for 5.3% of all graduates and are increasing: they counted 3.4% in 2014. However, these are mostly young people belonging to immigrant families but living in Italy where 31.5% of graduates with non-Italian citizenship have obtained a high school/secondary school diploma in our country (33.6% in 2014). By taking into consideration the share of foreign citizens with a high school/secondary school diploma earned abroad, which probably identifies the segment of the population that moved to Italy when choosing the university, the value among the 2024 graduates is 3.6% and has slightly increased in recent years (it was 2.3% in 2014). The value rises to 7.6% among two-year masters and decreases to 1.4% among first-level graduates and 2.2% among single-cycle second-level graduates (Figure 3).

[9] As a matter of fact, almost all Italian provinces are home to one or more course of study.

Figure 3 2024 graduates: foreign citizens with high school/secondary school diploma abroad by degree type (percentage values)



Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

While 39.8% of all foreign nationals, including those who graduated high school in Italy, come from Europe (in particular from Romania and Albania, 10.0% and 5.6% respectively), among foreign graduates who earned their high school/secondary school diploma abroad the share of those coming from Europe fell (28.7%). 50.7% of the foreign graduates who earned their high school/secondary school diplomas abroad come from Asia and Oceania, and the most represented country, with 12.7%, is Iran, followed by China (7.6%) and India (6.0%). Foreign graduates who earned their high school/secondary school diploma abroad are more heavily represented in specific fields, particularly in architecture and construction (11.1%), but also in information and communication technologies (ICTs; 6.9%), engineering and engineering trades (5.1%), politics, social sciences and communications (4.4%), economics (4.3%) and arts and design (4.1%). In contrast, in the field of study of education less than 1% of foreign graduates earned their diplomas abroad.

Educational background

As for the educational background of graduates in 2024, a prevalence of high school diplomas (73.0%) is found, in particular for scientific high school diplomas (held by 37.5% of graduates) and high school diplomas in language and classical studies (respectively 11.9% and 11.7%). This is followed by technical secondary school diplomas (19.7%) while vocational diplomas are marginal (3.3%).

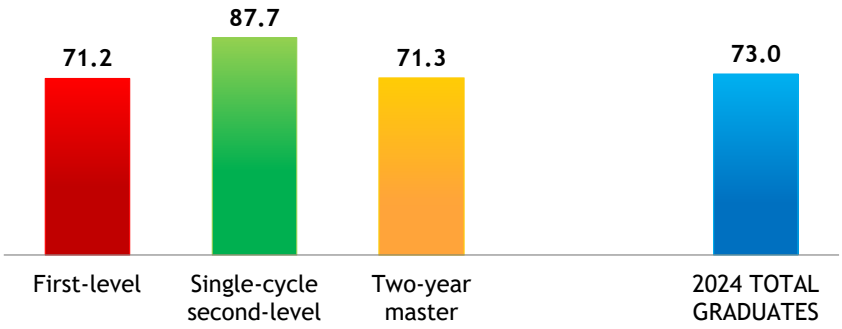
The share of graduates with a high school diploma rose from 73.9% in 2014 to 76.9% in 2018, then declined in recent years to 73.0% in 2024, largely at the expense of those with technical secondary school diplomas, which fell from 21.2% in 2014 to 18.8% in 2018, before rising again to 19.7% in 2024. Vocational diplomas followed a similar trend to the technical diplomas, albeit at much lower levels: a decline between 2014 and 2018 (from 2.3% to 2.0%) followed by a recovery to 3.3% in 2024. Overall, the recent decline (since 2018) in high school diplomas has been matched by a slight increase in technical and vocational diplomas. It will be interesting to monitor future trends given the recent activation of technical university degrees aimed in particular at students with technical and vocational diplomas with the aim of preparing professionals who are ready to immediately enter the labour market.[10] Indeed, it should also be remembered that since 2010 there have also been Higher Technical

[10] The first-level graduates of 2024 include some graduates in vocational courses of study, which were launched in the 2018/2019 academic year. This refers to 251 graduates from courses of study launched before the introduction of the new vocational first-level's degree classes L-P01, L-P02, and L-P03 (Ministerial Decree no. 446/2020), plus the first 110 graduates from those new classes.

Institutes, which offer highly specialised technical training to young people who do not wish to go on to study at the university.

Focusing on graduates with a high school diploma, slight differences can be observed between first-level graduates and two-year masters, whereas single-cycle second-level graduates are strongly identified (Figure 4). Among the last-mentioned graduates, 87.7% have in fact a high school education mainly in scientific (45.9%), classical studies (23.6%) or language studies (6.7%), compared to 71.2% of first-level graduates (from high school in scientific, classical and language studies, 35.4%, 9.2% and 13.3% respectively) and 71.3% of two-year masters (from high school in scientific, classical and language studies, 38.3%, 12.1% and 11.1% respectively).

Figure 4 2024 graduates: high school/secondary school diploma (classical studies, scientific studies, foreign languages, human science, art, music and dance) by degree type (percentage values)



Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

It is worth highlighting an important link between the type of high school/secondary school diploma earned and the field of study chosen for university studies, which also shows a certain stability over time. While on the whole 71.2% of first-level graduates come from a high school diploma, such educational background relates to the majority of graduates in humanities and literature (88.4%) and psychology (86.9%). On the other hand, graduates with a high school diploma are less common among graduates in information and communication technologies (ICTs; 44.6%) and agriculture and forestry (46.2%), among whom technical diplomas are more common, and also vocational diplomas only in the case of the agriculture and forestry field of study.

As previously mentioned, 87.7% of single-cycle second-level graduates came from a high school; this percentage is close to 90% among graduates in health and pharmacy (89.9%). Compared to the average for single-cycle second-level graduates, the share of graduates with a technical (8.7%) or vocational (1.0%) qualification is higher among graduates from architecture and construction (17.2%), law (12.0%) and education (10.9%). This percentage is negligible among graduates in health and pharmacy (4.9%).

Two-year masters have an educational background that is quite similar to that of first-level graduates, that is, a diploma mostly in high schools (71.3%) and technical secondary schools (18.2%) with similar differentiation by field of study. Another important aspect to take into consideration when analysing the educational background of graduates is the average high school/secondary school diploma mark, which among 2024 graduates is 84.1 out of 100 (in 2014 it was 81.7). The average high school/secondary school diploma mark for two-year masters' graduates is 83.0 out of 100, compared to 84.6 for first-level graduates. This result, verified in most field of study, is in contrast to that of

previous years, where it was evident that the most prepared students tended to continue their studies after the first-level degree. The sharp increase in high school/secondary school diploma marks among first-level graduates is likely due to the fact that over 60% of them got their high school/secondary school diplomas during the pandemic years, 2020 and 2021, years that saw a noticeable increase in final marks compared to the previous period.[11] By contrast, nearly all two-year masters earned their high school/secondary school diploma before the pandemic and therefore did not "benefit" from the increase in high school/secondary school marks observed during the COVID-19 years.

The high school/secondary school mark earned by first-level graduates in 2024 was highest for graduates in engineering and engineering trades (89.0) and natural sciences, mathematics, physics and statistics (87.7). In contrast, high school/secondary school marks were appreciably lower than the average among graduates of sports sciences and physical education (78.3), education (80.0) and law (81.5).

The high school/secondary school diploma marks are even higher among single-cycle second-level graduates, who on average earn 85.0 out of 100. The reasons for these particularly brilliant results can be partly attributed to the selection process for accessing courses with number-based admissions, which characterises single-cycle second-level course of studies more than others. It is not surprising to note that the high school marks are particularly high among graduates in health and pharmacy (87.9).

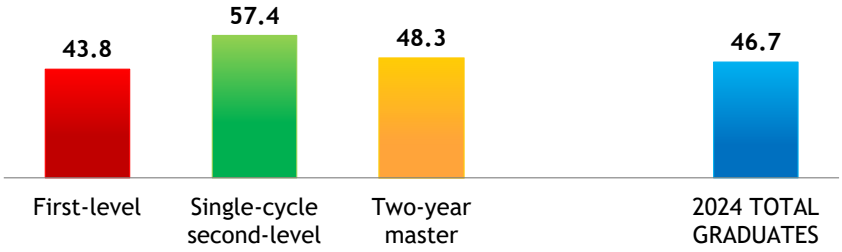
4.Reasons behind the choice of degree type

The survey explores the reasons why students chose their degree type when they enrolled at university, with students indicating the extent to which cultural factors (interest in the subjects taught) and professional factors (career prospects) influenced their decision. For 46.7% of graduates, both components were considered very important. Meanwhile, 29.3% chose their degree mainly for cultural factors, 10.2% mainly for professional factors, and 13.7% said neither factor was particularly influential. It is interesting to note that this latter percentage has declined in recent years (from 17.2% in 2014). At the same time, the share of students who rated both cultural and professional factors as very important has increased (from 40.4% in 2014) and now hovers around 47%.

Single-cycle second-level graduates are especially driven by both cultural and professional reasons: 57.4% considered both factors very important, compared with 48.3% of two-year masters and 43.8% of first-level graduates (Figure 5).

[11] Indeed, AlmaDiploma data show that the average high school/secondary-school diploma mark rose by over 5 points (on a 100-point scale) between 2019 and 2021 (from 77.1 in 2019 to 81.7 in 2020 and 82.7 in 2021). These values progressively returned to pre-pandemic levels between 2022 and 2024.

Figure 5 2024 graduates: very important reasons for the choice of degree type (both cultural and professional factors), by degree type (percentage values)



Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

Among single-cycle second-level graduates driven by both cultural and professional factors, the highest shares are found in health and pharmacy (63.7%) and education (60.3%), while the lowest are in architecture and construction (40.5%), veterinary (47.3%) and law (49.2%). Among two-year masters, the share of those who found both factors decisive is highest in engineering and engineering trades (59.6%), information and communication technologies (ICTs; 58.3%) and economics (55.5%). The lowest shares are found in humanities and literature (35.9%) and arts and design (37.6%), fields in which students mainly chose their degree for cultural reasons. Among first-level graduates, trends vary widely across field of study: the highest shares are seen in health (59.8%) and also in engineering and engineering trades (51.5%) and information and communication technologies (ICTs; 51.1%). The lowest shares are in humanities and literature, arts and design, politics, social sciences and communications, and foreign languages (ranging from 28.5% to 33.8%).

5. Experiences during university studies

According to the survey, experiences during university studies are mainly focused on study abroad, curricular internship experiences and work during studies.

Study abroad experiences

Study abroad experiences gained during the course of study and recognised by the course of study involved a total of 10.3% of graduates in 2024[12] (Figure 6). In most cases (8.6%) these involved European Union programmes (Erasmus in first place), while the other experiences recognised by the course of study (Overseas, thesis abroad, etc.) were much less common (2%).

The proportion of graduates with a study abroad experience that was recognised during the course of study, which had increased slightly until 2020 (when it stood at 11.3%), dropped significantly in 2021 and 2022 (when it fell to 8.5% and 8.3%, respectively), most likely due to the pandemic, during which study abroad experiences came to a standstill due to the severe travel restrictions. In the last two

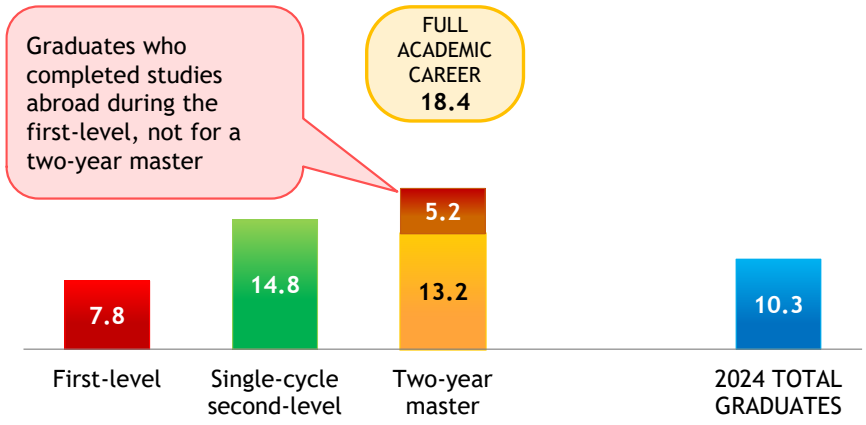
[12] For the sake of brevity, the entirely marginal share of graduates who had a study abroad experience on their own initiative (0.6% of 2024 graduates) was not reported.

years, however, there was an upturn in these experiences (+2.0 percentage points compared to 2022). This increase was seen in all degree types, but especially two-year masters' degree.

Among the 2024 first-level graduates, the recognised study abroad experiences involve 7.8% of graduates, with a particularly marked peak in foreign languages (22.9%) and above-average values in politics, social sciences and communications (14.1%) and economics (11.7%).

Among the single-cycle second-level graduates, the study abroad experiences recognised by the course of study are relatively more widespread and affect 14.8% of graduates. These experiences are particularly frequent in architecture and construction (19.1%), law (17.1%), health and pharmacy (16.4%) and veterinary (15.0%).

Figure 6 2024 graduates: study abroad recognised by the course of study by degree type (percentage values)



Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

Two-year masters who during their second level benefited from studying abroad as part of initiatives recognised by the course of study account for 13.2%. These were joined by other graduates who participated in study abroad experiences during the first-level course of study, for a total of 18.4% over the 3+2 years. As was to be expected, study abroad during two-year master's studies were particularly strong for graduates in foreign languages (23.1%), but also among those from engineering and engineering trades (18.1%), economics (16.2%), politics, social sciences and communications (15.5%), architecture and construction (15.4%), agriculture and forestry (15.3%) and information and communication technologies (ICTs; 15.0%).

Among graduates who have gained study experience abroad recognised by their course of study, 82.4% took at least one exam that was validated upon their return to Italy. This value has seen an increase of more than 10 percentage points in the last ten years. 22.7% of those who completed a period of study abroad prepared a relevant part of their theses there (a percentage that rises to 38.8% among two-year masters). This share has started to grow again after the relevant decrease recorded during the pandemic, and this is the case across all degree types (reaching 33.6% in 2021 among two-year master's degrees).

Satisfaction with recognised experiences abroad is very high (97.8% in 2024), with rates consistently exceeding 95% in recent years. These are experiences that, aside from rounding out their personal background, allow them to acquire greater language skills. In fact, 92.8% of graduates who studied abroad in recognised programmes know at least one foreign language with a self-assessment

at a level equal to or higher than B2 in writing. Conversely, this share is 65.4% among those who had not such an experience.

A specific analysis[13] shows that, all things being equal, those who completed a period of study abroad (recognised by their course of study or arranged on their own)[14] are more likely to be employed one year after graduation than those who never spent time abroad (+7.9%).

Internships

Curricular internships carried out and recognised by the course of study represent for Italian universities one of the strategic goals in terms of understanding and collaboration between universities and the economic system. In 2024, 61.0% of graduates had a curricular internship (Figure 7). In 2014 they involved 56.8% of graduates, and until 2019 there was a steady increase (bringing this share to 59.9%), which was followed by a noticeable contraction (by almost 3 percentage points) between 2020 and 2021, probably due to the pandemic. From 2022 the share of graduates with this experience grew again and reached its maximum level in 2024 (almost +4 percentage points compared to 2021). It is also worth noting that the decline in these experiences during the pandemic was likely mitigated by the fact that most internships could be carried out remotely. 38.1% of graduates had their curricular internship in a non-university setting, 12.4% in a university setting and 10.1% had a job that was then recognised by their course of study. The trend observed last year continued. In fact after the increase in experiences within the university and concurrent decrease in those outside in 2020 and 2021, this trend reversed in the last three years suggesting a gradual return to normality after universities had tried to make up for the difficulties of companies hosting students in their facilities during the pandemic. Those who experienced a curricular internship show a high level of satisfaction: 94.3% of graduates expressed a positive opinion.

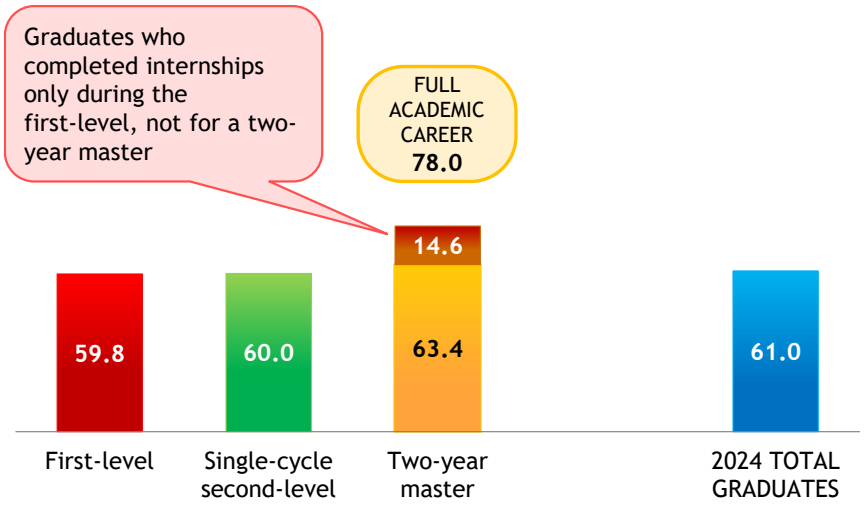
More specifically, the internship recognised by the course of study involved 59.8% of first-level graduates. In particular 39.0% had these experiences in a non-university setting. Internships are part of the educational background of more than 80% of first-level graduates in education (94.0%), health (90.8%), agriculture and forestry (81.4%). The minority of graduates in engineering and engineering trades (29.6%) and humanities and literature (30.5%) are instead involved in internships. Among first-level graduates, however, internships were less common (54.5%) among those who intend to pursue further studies with a two year master's degree.

Curricular internships are also frequent among two-year masters, reaching 63.4%. Moreover, 14.6% of the two-year masters have participated in an internship but during their first-level course of study, which brings the total percentage of two-year masters with internship experiences in their educational background to 78.0%. Graduates in sports sciences and physical education (91.1%), health (84.3%) and education (77.6%) are more committed to these activities, while those from the humanities and literature (41.2%) are less so.

[13] AlmaLaurea (2025), *27th Survey on the Occupational Condition of Graduates. Summary of the 2025 Report*, www.almalaurea.it/en/our-data/almalaurea-surveys/graduates-employment-status.

[14] These are study experiences within the framework of a European Union programme (i.e. Erasmus) and other programmes recognised by the course (i.e. Overseas). It also includes study experiences abroad arranged on one's own initiative. This information reflects not only experiences undertaken in the degree course just completed, but also any study abroad experiences during previous university courses.

Figure 7 2024 graduates: internships recognised by the course of study degree type (percentage values)



Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

With reference to single-cycle second-level courses of study, curricular internships involved 60.0% of graduates, although the situations differ widely according to the field of study. As many as 85.3% of graduates in education engaged in these activities compared to 26.6% of those in law.

Work during studies

Over the past ten years there has been a slight decline in the share of graduates with work experience during their studies (from 67.4% in 2014 to 66.7% in 2024). This is the result of a more pronounced contraction seen until 2015, which was followed by a period of substantial stability until 2020 and a slight decrease thereafter. However, in the last two years there was an appreciable recovery of 2.6 percentage points. The decline seen until a few years ago is probably the combined effect of a number of factors, from the uncertain economic environment that characterised the decade under review, coupled with the gradual decline in the proportion of the adult population enrolled in university studies, to the more recent emergency caused first by the Covid-19 pandemic and then by the uncertain geopolitical landscape. More specifically, in 2024, 8.2% of university graduates were studying workers, i.e. they graduated while also working during their studies.[15] This share has been slowly but steadily recovering over the past six years. Working students, i.e. all the other graduates who have worked during their university studies, accounted for 58.6%. In contrast, the proportion of graduates without any type of work experience reached 32.9% in 2024.

67.3% of first-level graduates performed some kind of work during studies. 6.5% were studying workers. Graduates who have had work experience are more frequent in sports sciences and physical education (82.1%), education (79.2%), law, politics, social sciences and communications and agriculture and forestry (for all three field of study 76.6%). This type of experience is less frequent in health field of study (57.2%), engineering and engineering trades (57.4%) and information and communication technologies (ICTs; 57.5%). Except for information and communication technologies (ICTs), these last

[15] Studying workers are those who stated that they worked continuously on a full-time basis for at least half of the duration of their studies, both during and after lectures.

field of studies show a very small number of studying workers (ranging from 2.7% to 4.5%), which are more prevalent in law (24.0%), education (15.1%), but also in sports sciences and physical education (9.8%) and politics, social sciences and communications (9.5%).

As shown previously, single-cycle second-level courses of study are attended more than others by young people from more favourable family backgrounds. Although family context influences working experience, which is often a source of funding for university studies, more than half of single-cycle second-level graduates (58.0%) are involved in working activities, ranging from 78.7% of graduates in education to 45.9% of graduates in health and pharmacy. It is true however that only 5.5% of single-cycle second-level graduates were for all intents and purposes studying workers.

68.6% of two-year masters worked during their master's studies, a share ranging from 90.1% in health to 55.3% in engineering and engineering trades. The share of studying stands at 11.8%, although it reaches decidedly substantive levels among graduates in health (46.9%) and education (31.6%). In contrast, it is minimal among graduates in architecture and construction (4.8%) and among graduates in engineering and engineering trades (4.9%).

6. Study conditions

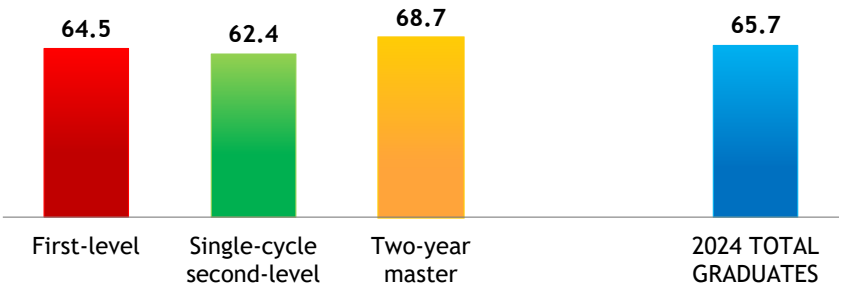
Class attendance

65.7% of 2024 graduates regularly attended classes for at least three quarters of the planned lessons: 64.5% for first-level graduates, 62.4% for single-cycle second-level graduates and 68.7% for two-year masters (Figure 8). Note that this count includes lessons attended remotely, particularly those held during the pandemic. After a phase of slow, steady growth that lasted until 2021 (when it peaked at 71.7%), class attendance has gradually decreased over the last three years (-6.0 percentage points), a value lower than ten years ago (in 2014 it was 67.9%). This contraction is most evident among two-year masters (-7.9 percentage points compared to 2021).

As already mentioned, 64.5% of first-level graduates stated that they regularly attended classes. Here also there are relevant differences among individual fields of study. Class attendance is particularly high in health (87.6%), architecture and construction (82.0%), engineering and engineering trades (73.4%) and natural sciences, mathematics, physics and statistics (69.5%). Conversely, class attendance was relatively lower among graduates in education (43.2%) and psychology (47.2%).

Overall, 62.4% of single-cycle second-level graduates reported having attended classes regularly. However, this is the result of strongly differentiated situations by field of study: among architecture and construction and veterinary students, attendance was decidedly broad and widespread (respectively 90.0% and 85.9%), while graduates in law, who make up 28.7% of the total number of single-cycle second-level graduates attend relatively little (only 44.6% attend classes regularly).

Figure 8 2024 graduates: regular attendance of at least 75% of lectures by degree type (percentage values)



Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

The two-year masters were particularly diligent in their attendance (68.7%). Class attendance differs appreciably according to field of study, from the highest in architecture and construction (85.5%), engineering and engineering trades (76.4%), arts and design (72.8%) and natural sciences, mathematics, physics and statistics (72.4%) to the lowest in education (36.0%).

Scholarships and other student support services

Among graduates in 2024, besides scholarships (27.8%), the services used at least once and provided by the right to higher education body were canteens/foodservice (30.7%), transport subsidies (24.5%), book loans (23.5%), aid for international mobility (16.9%), vouchers for the purchase of books (11.5%), rent subsidies (10.2%), vouchers for the purchase of computer equipment (9.8%), part-time work (9.1%) and housing (4.0%).

In general, graduates are satisfied with the student support services provided by the institution for the right to education, with peaks of 87.1% for the loan of books. Conversely, graduates are less satisfied with rent subsidies (57.0% satisfied).

As established by the Italian Constitution (art. 34, paragraphs 3 and 4), the scholarships are the main tool for providing financial support to students who are deserving and deprived of facilities to attend university. However, the coverage of scholarships is not yet complete, despite improvements in recent years that have made them available to over 97% of those eligible, and the coverage is not uniform throughout the country (Osservatorio Regionale del Piemonte, 2025). In the South, for example, the percentage of scholarships among those eligible is lower than the national average.

AlmaLaurea data show that the use of scholarships has grown in recent years (+5.6 percentage points compared to 2014, though the increase was more evident in the last six years), probably as a result of the most recent regulatory measures that have broadened the number of beneficiaries (expansion of the NoTax area and ISEE brackets for which full or partial exemptions are provided).[16] Over the same period, graduate satisfaction with both the timing of scholarship disbursement and the adequacy of the amount increased strongly (more than 12 and 10 percentage points respectively compared to 2014). Scholarships are less frequent among single-cycle second-level graduates (22.2%)

[16] Italian Law no. 232 of 11 December 2016, 'State Budget Plan for the 2017 Financial Year and Multi-Year Budget for 2017-2019', Article 1, paragraph 252-267 and subsequently Italian Decree-Law no. 34 of 19 May 2020 (Article 236, implemented by Italian Ministerial Decree no. 234 of 26 June 2020 and Italian Law no. 178 of 30 December 2020 (Article 1, paragraph 518, implemented by Italian Ministerial Decree no. 1014 of 3 August 2021).

due to their more favoured socio-economic background, while they are used by 28.5% of two-year masters and 28.4% of first-level graduates. The use of scholarships is also differentiated by field of study. In fact, this is particularly the case in both first-level and two-year masters in education and foreign languages. Moreover, further analyses found that compared to non-scholarship holders, graduates with scholarships attend lectures more regularly have more successful university careers in terms of degree completion time and graduation mark and have taken greater advantage of study abroad and internship opportunities throughout their studies.

7. Language and computer skills

Language skills

At the end of their university studies, students provide a self-assessment of their foreign language skills, based on the levels defined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages.[17] 64.9% self-assessed their knowledge of written English with an "at least B2" level, while the knowledge of other languages is much lower. In fact, in terms of written skills with an "at least B2" level, 12.0% know Spanish, 7.7% French and 2.8% German. As far as language skills are concerned, the survey questionnaire has only been adapted to the Common European Framework since 2019, so it is not possible to analyse trends over a long-time span. However, what emerges from the comparison with previous surveys is a trend towards an increase in English language skills (as far as written English proficiency at a level of “at least B2” is concerned, the increase is 11 percentage points compared to 2019 graduates).

By focusing on the English language, written knowledge (at least at B2 level) concerns 58.3% of first-level graduates, 67.8% of single-cycle second-level graduates and 75.2% of two-year masters. This result is probably influenced by the higher proportion of two-year master’s courses entirely or partially in English, which have increased considerably in recent years. There are clear differences according to the field of study: among first-level graduates, knowledge of English at a level "at least B2" is particularly high, for clear reasons, in foreign languages (92.0%), followed by engineering and engineering trades (71.6%) and information and communication technologies (70.1%). In contrast, it is significantly lower among graduates in education (25.8%) and sports sciences and physical education (33.3%). Among single-cycle second-level graduates, knowledge of written English are particularly high among education graduates[18] (83.7%), while they are significantly lower than average in architecture and construction as well as in law (51.1% and 58.4% respectively). For two-year masters, English knowledge “at least at B2” level relates to almost all graduates in foreign languages (93.9%), but also shows high levels among graduates in information and communication technologies (90.9%) and engineering and engineering trades (86.3%); lower values in health (41.9%) and education (47.6%).

[17] The classification is based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which has six common reference levels: A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2. For a detailed description of the various levels see europa.eu/europass/system/files/2020-05/CEFR%20self-assessment%20grid%20IT.pdf.

[18] The high levels of proficiency among single-cycle second-level Primary Education graduates are explained by the requirement to attain at least a B2 level in English to complete the degree.

IT skills

The level of knowledge of IT tools is another important indicator of the skills acquired by students at the end of their course of study. With reference to the 11 aspects surveyed, internet browsing and communication is by far the most widespread: knowledge is "at least good" for 88.6% of 2024 graduates. Next in descending order of knowledge are presentation tools (72.7%), operating systems (72.4%), word processors (72.0%), spreadsheets (58.0%) and processing and publishing multimedia content (50.9%). The least known include programming languages (15.9%), assisted design (12.5%), databases (12.1%), data transmission networks (11.6%) and website creation (10.5%).

Compared to first-level and single-cycle second-level graduates, two-year masters are distinguished by a greater knowledge of all IT tools. Knowledge of the first six tools mentioned above tends to be universal across fields of study, although they are more familiar to graduates in information and communication technologies (ICTs), architecture and construction and engineering and engineering trades. On the other hand, the less widespread tools are strongly affected by the features of each course of study. For example, assisted design is a tool known in particular by graduates in architecture and construction (98.3% of single-cycle second-level graduates), while programming languages, databases, website creation and data transmission networks are tools known in particular by graduates in information and communication technologies (among two-year masters, 86.2%, 74.9%, 59.3% and 53.0% have a level of knowledge that is "at least good" respectively). In terms of trends, the level of knowledge of IT tools has generally decreased over the last ten years (with the exception of presentation tools, which have been available since 2015, and operating systems).

8. Degree completion time and its determinants

Here the time spent obtaining a degree is analysed by taking into account several factors such as enrolment age, the duration prescribed by the course regulation and the degree completion time, as well as the age at graduation.

For the courses attended at the end of high school/secondary school diploma, there is a considerable regularity in enrolment, since in most cases enrolment takes place after graduation. In fact, 83.8% of the first-level graduates enrolled at least one year later than the prescribed age, which is defined by AlmaLaurea as 19 years old. The single-cycle second-level graduates are even more regular (84.6%).

Some specific considerations regard two-year masters who have already completed a previous university degree. Among these, the share who enrolled within one year later than the prescribed age – set by AlmaLaurea at 22 – is not particularly high, standing at 63.7%, due to both delays in enrolment to the two-year master's degree and delays accumulated during earlier university studies. It is worth recalling that 36.6% of two-year masters completed their previous three-year undergraduate programme with at least a one-year delay.

The average graduation age for 2024 graduates is 25.8, with obvious differences depending on the degree type: 24.5 years for first-level graduates, 27.1 for single-cycle second-level graduates and 27.4 years for two-year masters. As has also been noted in previous editions of the Report on the Graduates' Profile, the average age at graduation has fallen appreciably compared to the university system prior to the reform of Italian Ministerial Decree no. 509/1999 and has continued to decrease over time (in

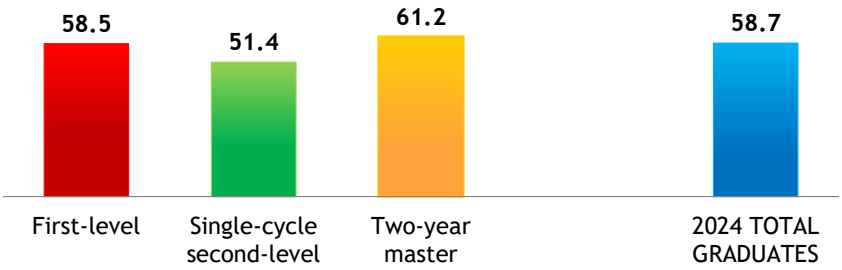
2014 it was 26.5 years), although in the last two years there has been a slight recovery (+0.2 years compared to 2022).

The average age at graduation among 2024 first-level graduates fluctuated between 23.7 years in engineering and engineering trades and 27.2 years in law (for these graduates the high age at graduation is due in particular to the fact that 34.8% enrol two or more years later than the standard age of 19). The average age at graduation of single-cycle second-level graduates varies relatively little despite the different duration of the courses (5 or 6 years), and ranges from 26.6 years in law to 28.2 in education. As noted, the average age of two-year master's graduates is 27.4 years: 26.4 years for the fields of study in engineering and engineering trades and economics, compared to 30.6 years in health. However, this is an age in gross terms, which is also conditioned by the considerable numbers of graduates who entered the two-year master course at a higher age than usual.

The degree completion time of studies, which measures the ability to complete the course of study in the time set by the regulations, concerned 58.7% of 2024 graduates (Figure 9). Until 2022 there was a steady and marked improvement in the degree completion time of studies, which increased in recent years due to the extension of the academic year closure granted to students for the Covid-19 emergency.[19]

However, in 2023, for the first time in 12 years, the share of on-time graduates decreased slightly (–1.0 percentage point compared to 2022) despite the extension of the academic year. In 2024 the value dropped further (–2.8 percentage points compared to 2023), likely due to the suspension of that extension. The contraction recorded in the last year is more evident among two-year masters (-3.6 percentage points) than among first-level graduates (-2.8 points), while for single-cycle second-level graduates constancy began to fall only from 2024 (-0.9 points compared to 2023). However, the increase of degree completion time of studies over the last decade was very substantial: in 2014, 44.7% of all graduates completed their studies on time. By contrast, while ten years ago 12.5% of graduates completed their course of studies four or more years beyond prescribed degree completion time, today this proportion is more than halved (5.6%).

Figure 9 **2024 graduates: completion of the course of study within the prescribed degree completion time by degree type** (percentage values)



Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

[19] Degree completion time of studies depends on the date of graduation, the date of enrolment in the course of study and the prescribed duration of the course of study, taking into account the degree sessions of the academic year (the third and final session ends on 30 April). Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Italian Decree Law no. 18 of 17 March 2020, Art. 101, paragraph 1, had extended the end of the academic year to 15 June for the first time. The extension to 15 June was also established by subsequent decrees for 2021, 2022 and 2023. Starting in 2024 the extension was no longer granted, so the final graduation session once again ended on 30 April, as in the past.

Degree completion time appears consolidated and continues to apply to a high share of first-level graduates (58.5%). As many as 70.0% of the graduates in psychology complete their studies within the three years prescribed by regulations. At the other extreme, 45.8% of the graduates in information and communication technologies (ICTs) graduate on time.

As for single-cycle second-level graduates, 51.4% of them obtained their degree within the time prescribed for graduation. Here too, diversified situations result in each field of study. Graduates in both education and health and pharmacy are regular (73.6% and 51.5% respectively). On the other hand, only 20.3% of graduates in architecture and construction and 40.9% in veterinary are regular.

Compared to first-level graduates, there is even greater degree completion time for two-year masters, where 61.2% of graduates complete their studies with peaks of over 70% for graduates in health (76.0%), law (74.5%) and sports sciences and physical education (73.5%). On the other hand, graduates from architecture and construction, arts and design, humanities and literature, engineering and engineering trades, education and foreign languages are less regular (with percentages of 38.4%, 50.7%, 51.5%, 52.2%, 56.0% and 57.3%).

A linear regression model was applied to analyse the many factors that affect degree completion time. The dependent variable is the delay index, which is the ratio between graduation delay and the prescribed duration of the course of study. This index allows the delay to be measured regardless of the duration of the course of study. It is equal to zero for those who are completely on time and it increases in proportion to the accumulated delay and is negative for those whose degree completion time is shorter than the prescribed duration of the course of study. 2024 graduates had a delay index of 0.35, meaning that on average they took 35% longer to complete their studies than the prescribed duration of the course of study.

The analysis took into account the following factors: *gender*, parents' educational qualifications, high school/secondary school diploma marks, *average provincial score of the 2024 Invalsi tests in Italian*, degree type, field of study, geographic mobility for study purposes, professional reasons for enrolling at university, delay in enrolment, size of the university, class attendance, *study abroad experience*, receipt of a scholarship, work during studies, at least good knowledge of written English and university degree marks.[20]

One of the most important factors in determining the accumulated delay is the field of study (Table 1): compared to graduates in sports sciences and physical education, those graduated in architecture and construction take 44.0% longer than the prescribed duration of the course of study. As an example, a first-level graduate in sports sciences and physical education takes three years to obtain their degree while a first-level graduate in architecture and construction takes around 4.5 years.

By degree type, two-year masters take 16.5% longer than first-level graduates, all else being equal.

High school/secondary school and university marks are significant indicators of how long it will take to complete one's studies: compared to those who earned the highest marks in high school, students who earned their diploma with 60 out of 100 took 18.1% longer. Graduates who earn a final mark of 66 out of 110 take 88.8% longer than those who graduate with the highest mark.

[20] The variables in italics were included in the model but not shown in Table 1 for reasons of simplification given their modest contribution. The following factors were instead excluded from the model due to their negligible contribution: social status, type of high school/secondary school diploma, cultural reasons for enrolling at university, distance between housing and place of study, renting housing during studies, doing in internships recognised by the course of study. A model with the same definition of covariates was applied to a logarithmic transformation of the delay index, confirming the results here presented.

Table 1 2024 graduates: linear regression model for the assessment of the delay index

	b	S.E.
Parents' educational qualifications (both with a university degree=0)		
only one with a university degree	0.01	<0.01
upper secondary school diploma	0.02	<0.01
professional qualification, lower educational qualification, or no qualification	0.06	<0.01
High school/secondary school diploma mark (average, out of 100)	<0.01	<0.01
Degree type (First-level=0)		
Single-cycle second-level	0.08	<0.01
Two-year master	0.16	<0.01
Field of study (Sports sciences and physical education=0)		
Agriculture, forestry and veterinary	0.25	0.01
Architecture and construction	0.44	0.01
Arts and design	0.32	0.01
Economics	0.09	0.01
Education	0.04	0.01
Engineering and engineering trades	0.28	0.01
Foreign languages	0.31	0.01
Health and pharmacy	0.16	0.01
Humanities and literature	0.36	0.01
Information and communication technologies (ICTs)	0.32	0.01
Law	0.14	0.01
Natural sciences, mathematics, physics and statistics	0.26	0.01
Politics, social sciences and communications	0.15	0.01
Psychology	0.11	0.01
Geographic mobility for study (secondary school diploma in the North and degree in the North=0)		
secondary school diploma abroad and degree in Italy *	0.05	0.03
secondary school diploma in the South and degree in the Centre	0.13	0.01
secondary school diploma in the South and degree in the North	0.07	0.01
secondary school diploma in the South and degree in the South	0.18	0.01
secondary school diploma in the Centre and degree in the South	0.10	0.02
secondary school diploma in the Centre and degree in the North	0.04	0.01
secondary school diploma in the Centre and degree in the Centre	0.12	<0.01
secondary school diploma in the North and degree in another geographic area	0.04	0.01
Relevance of professional reasons for the choice of the degree programme (relevant=0)		
not relevant	0.04	<0.01
Delay in enrolment (regular or 1 year delay=0)		
2 or more years delay	0.04	<0.01
Size of the university (less than 10,000 enrolled=0)		
from 10,000 to 19,999 enrolled	0.11	0.01
from 20,000 to 29,999 enrolled	0.10	<0.01
from 30,000 to 59,999 enrolled	0.14	<0.01
over 60,000 enrolled	0.09	<0.01
Attended classes on a regular basis (more than 75% of prescribed classes=0)		
less than 25%	0.13	0.01
25% to 50%	0.08	<0.01
50% to 75%	0.04	<0.01
Receipt of a scholarship (yes=0)		
no	0.11	<0.01
Work during studies (no work experience=0)		
studying workers	0.27	<0.01
working students	0.07	<0.01
Knowledge of written English (at least B2 level=0)		
levels lower than B2	0.06	<0.01
Graduation mark (average, out of 110)	-0.02	<0.01
Constant	0.52	0.01

Note: R-squared = 0.18 (adapted R-squared = 0.18), N = 257,336

* Significance at 5% ($p<0.05$). Where not explicitly stated, parameters significant at 1% ($p<0.01$).

Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

Also influencing the speed of finishing one's studies is the approach taken to classes, including class attendance. Specifically, compared to a graduate who attends classes assiduously (for more than 75% of the classes), those who attend less than 25% of classes take 13.1% longer than the prescribed duration of the course of study, while those who attend between 25% and 50% of classes take 8.5% longer and those who attend between 50% and 75% of classes take 4.1% longer. Work experience gained during studies also has an impact: for studying workers it takes 27.0% longer than for those who never worked during their studies, while for working students it takes 7.0% longer.

Compared to those who benefited from a scholarship, those who did not have one take 10.7% longer. In order to qualify for a scholarship a certain number of credits must be earned during the academic year, passing exams on time.

There are also relevant differences regarding the territorial area and geographic mobility for study purposes. In general, graduates who got their high school/secondary school diploma in the North (regardless of the location of their university) and those who got their high school/secondary school diploma in the Centre and continued their studies in the North are quicker to complete their university studies. Those who graduate from a university in the Centre, having got their high school/secondary school diploma in the South, take 13.4% longer than those who got high school/secondary school in the North and stayed on to study at a university in the same region. Those who graduate from a university in the South, having also finished high school/ secondary school in the South, take 18.0% longer.

Compared to those graduating from small universities (less than 10,000 students), those graduating from large universities (over 60,000 students enrolled) take 9.5% longer than the prescribed duration of the course of study.

The level of written English proficiency also influences on-time graduation. All else being equal, those who report a level below B2 take 5.6% longer than those with B2 or higher. Students who enrol two or more years late compared to the expected age accumulate a delay equal to 3.8% of the prescribed duration of the course of study.

Considering the parents' educational qualification as an indicator of the graduate's family background, it can be seen that on average those who have parents with at most a vocational qualification take 6.3% more time than those who have both parents with a university degree.

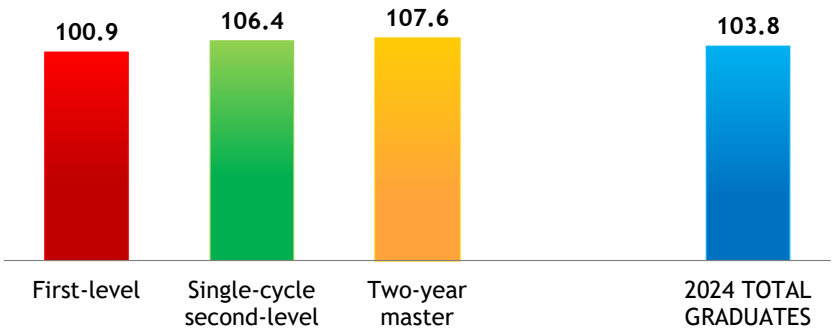
Furthermore, there is less constancy (+3.9% more time than the prescribed duration of the course of study) among those who chose the degree type not motivated or not fully motivated by professional factors compared to those who chose the course for precisely these reasons.

9. Graduation mark and its determinants

The average graduation mark recorded among graduates in 2024 was 103.8 out of 110, a value that has gradually increased in recent years (from 102.2 in 2014). This steady upward trend became particularly pronounced between 2021 and 2022 (+0.5 points), followed by a slight decrease in 2024 (–0.2 points compared to 2023, excluding single-cycle second-level graduates, who recorded a modest increase). As previously noted, over the past ten years the average final mark has risen, with the largest increase seen among single-cycle second-level graduates (+2.7 points compared to 2014). In this respect, among 2024 graduates there were appreciable differences by degree type: 100.9 for

first-level graduates, 106.4 for single-cycle second-level graduates and 107.6 for two-year masters (Figure 10).

Figure 10 2024 graduates: graduation mark by degree type (average, out of 110)



Note: when calculating averages, the mark of 110 cum laude was converted to 113.
Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

As noted, while the average mark for first-level graduates is 100.9, there is a certain heterogeneity among field of study, with final marks ranging from 97.2 for economics to 97.7 for engineering and engineering trades to 104.7 for health to 105.0 for humanities and literature.

The average graduation mark for single-cycle second-level graduates, 106.4 out of 110, shows a smaller range of variation, from 103.8 among graduates in law to 108.0 among graduates in architecture and construction.

Two-year masters show a very high average graduation mark (107.6), with a narrow range of variation from 105.9 among engineering and engineering trades graduates to 110.2 among humanities and literature masters. It should be remembered that the high average graduation mark of the two-year masters is also due to an incremental effect compared to the performance obtained at the end of the first-level course of study: the average increase in graduation mark obtained at the end of the second-level course of study is more than 6 points compared to the degree obtained in the first level.

To analyse the determinants of the graduation mark, a linear regression model was applied (Table 2). The analysis took into account the following factors: *gender*, *parents' educational qualifications*, *citizenship*, high school/secondary school diploma type and marks, degree type, field of study, geographic mobility for study purposes, cultural reasons for enrolling at university, delay in enrolment in the course of study, class attendance, receipt of a scholarship and work during studies.[21]

The model confirms the presence of a relevant difference based on degree type: all other thing being equal, compared to a first-level graduate it is estimated that a single-cycle second-level graduate will earn final marks that are 3.0 points higher (out of 110) while a two-year master's graduate will earn marks that are 7.8 points higher. A strong heterogeneity in terms of fields of study is also confirmed. A degree in health and pharmacy results in a boost in terms of degree marks of 7.0 points compared to a degree type in engineering and engineering trades. High school/secondary school diploma marks have a strong impact on university performance in terms of graduation marks. Indeed,

[21] The variables in italics were included in the model but not shown in Table 2 for reasons of simplification given their modest contribution. The following factors were instead excluded from the model because of their negligible contribution: social status, average provincial score of the 2024 Invalsi tests in Italian, professional reasons for enrolling at university, size of the university, distance between housing and place of study, renting housing during studies, participation in internships recognised by the course of study.

those who earn 100 out of 100 in high school/secondary school obtain a graduation mark that is more than 10 points higher than a high school/secondary school student who has obtained the minimum mark of 60 out of 100). In this respect, a graduate with a high school diploma and a graduate with a technical secondary school diploma obtain, all other things being equal, more points than a graduate with a vocational secondary school diploma (3.9 points and 1.9 points respectively). Similar to what was shown in the model on degree completion time, the way the course of study is approached has a certain impact on university performance, measured in terms of graduation marks. Specifically, compared to a graduate who attends less than 25% of the scheduled lectures, those who attend more than 75% of the lectures earn graduation marks that are 2.5 points higher.

There are also differences about territorial area associated with geographic mobility for study purposes. In general, graduates from central and southern universities earn higher graduation marks, regardless of where they went to high school/secondary school. For example, compared to graduates who migrated for study purposes from the South to the North of Italy, those who completed all their studies in the Centre score almost 4 points higher and those who move from the North to another place score 4.5 points higher.

Enrolment delays also affect graduation marks: compared to students who enrolled at the expected age, those who enrolled two or more years late achieved marks that were 1.4 points higher.

Those who enrolled with strong cultural reasons ended their university experience with marks 1.5 points higher than those who considered this reason less relevant. Regarding the influence of work experience while studying, compared to studying workers, working students score around one point higher, while those with no work experience score 1.6 points higher. Finally, those who received a scholarship score almost one grade higher than those who did not receive this type of study support.

The variability of the graduation mark whether among different courses of study or different universities considering the same field of study, is also the result of a number of casual institutional factors: standards for awarding marks in exams, criteria for awarding the final mark and any extra points, standards for assessing and the complexity of the final papers and so on.[22]

[22] A focused study conducted on 2020 graduates showed that, even when controlling for characteristics at admission (gender, family background, type of high school/secondary school diploma, geographical origin, etc.), first-level humanities and literature graduates achieved an average exam mark that was 2.6 points higher (on a 30-point scale) than engineering and engineering trades graduates. Such variability, measured all other things being equal, raises reasonable questions about the ability of the graduation mark to accurately measure the level of graduates' skills. (AlmaLaurea, 2021).

Table 2 2024 graduates: linear regression model for the assessment of final graduation marks

	b	S.E.
Diploma type (vocational=0)		
high school	3.89	0.07
technical	1.95	0.07
High school/secondary school diploma mark (average, out of 100)	0.26	0.00
Degree type (First-level=0)		
Single-cycle second-level	3.02	0.05
Two-year master	7.81	0.03
Field of study (Engineering and engineering trades=0)		
Agriculture, forestry and veterinary	4.95	0.09
Architecture and construction	4.08	0.08
Arts and design	6.61	0.08
Economics	1.69	0.05
Education	6.57	0.07
Foreign languages	4.08	0.06
Health and pharmacy	7.03	0.05
Humanities and literature	5.81	0.06
Information and communication technologies (ICTs)	2.96	0.09
Law	4.11	0.08
Natural sciences, mathematics, physics and statistics	3.26	0.05
Politics, social sciences and communications	4.50	0.06
Psychology	4.45	0.07
Sports sciences and physical education	5.02	0.09
Geographic mobility for study (secondary school diploma in the South and degree in the North=0)		
secondary school diploma abroad and degree in Italy	1.00	0.31
secondary school diploma in the South and degree in the Centre	1.78	0.07
secondary school diploma in the South and degree in the South	3.04	0.06
secondary school diploma in the Centre and degree in the South	4.13	0.18
secondary school diploma in the Centre and degree in the North	2.53	0.09
secondary school diploma in the Centre and degree in the Centre	3.92	0.06
secondary school diploma in the North and degree in another geographic area	4.53	0.11
secondary school diploma in the North and degree in the North	2.77	0.05
Relevance of cultural reasons for the choice of degree programme (not definitely yes=0)		
definitely yes	1.54	0.03
Delay in enrolment (regular or 1 year delay=0)		
2 or more years delay	1.37	0.03
Attended classes on a regular basis (less than 25% of prescribed classes=0)		
25% to 50% *	0.16	0.07
50% to 75%	0.69	0.06
more than 75%	2.50	0.06
Receipt of a scholarships (no=0)		
yes	0.79	0.03
Work during studies (studying workers=0)		
working students	1.07	0.05
no work experience	1.60	0.05
Constant	79.48	0.13

Note: R-squared = 0.42 (adapted R-squared = 0.42), N = 261,763

* Significance at 5% ($p<0.05$). Where not explicitly stated, parameters significant at 1% ($p<0.01$).

Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

10. Assessment of the university experience

Graduates involved in the AlmaLaurea surveys have reported a general level of satisfaction with various aspects of their university experience, regardless of the degree type. As described in previous reports, the pandemic did not affect evaluations so much as the use of some university facilities and services, which decreased significantly until 2022. However, such use has picked up in the last two years thanks to the gradual return of students to the classroom, although the values recorded in 2024 were still far from pre-pandemic levels. The largest increase was seen for equipment for teaching (+5.8

percentage points compared to 2022). The increase in use levels over the past two years was most pronounced among two-year masters, i.e. among graduates who had shown a more pronounced drop until 2022. Extending the observation timeframe, the decrease in the share of those who used library services (down about 11 points compared to 2014), computer workstations (more than 8 points) and equipment for teaching such as laboratories and practical work (more than 2 points) remained significant. In this regard, it is interesting to note that the decline in the use of most university facilities had already begun before the advent of the pandemic, which inevitably intensified its effects.

With regard to the classrooms attended by 97.9% of 2024 graduates, 81.8% considered them to be "always or almost always adequate" or "often adequate". With regard to the evaluation of the equipment for teaching, such as laboratories and practical work, among those who used them (78.2%) there was an overall satisfaction of 79.0% (sum of those who rated it as "always or almost always adequate" and "often adequate"). Library services (e.g. loans/consultation and opening hours), used by 77.3% of graduates, receive a positive assessment (the rating scale used in the questionnaire considers the sum of 'definitely positive' and 'fairly positive') from 93.4% of users. Individual study areas were used by 76.6% of students and 64.5% considered them "appropriate". Computer workstations used by 66.4% of graduates were judged to be "present in adequate numbers" by 63.3% of users.

With regard to teaching activities (lectures, exercises, simulations, online workshops, chats, forums), 87.3% of the 2024 graduates declare themselves satisfied overall (this is the sum of those who say they are definitely satisfied and quite satisfied, which in the rating scale used in the questionnaire corresponds to “definitely yes” and “more yes than no”). In addition, 88.5% of graduates reported being satisfied with their relationship with teachers.

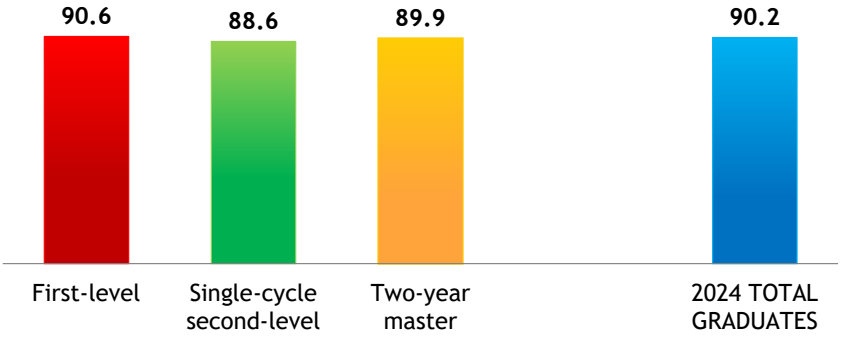
Among the other services offered by the university, 2024 graduates say they made extensive use of the student administrative offices (89.9%), distantly followed by post-graduate study orientation services (61.2%), job orientation training initiatives (56.5%), job search support services (52.9%) and finally the job placement service (52.7%). The users of these services expressed lower levels of satisfaction than for the other aspects assessed (the rating scale used in the questionnaire considers the sum of "definitely yes" and "more yes than no"): 67.8% for the job placement service, 66.6% for student administrative offices, 65.4% for post-graduate study orientation, 63.7% for job orientation training initiatives and finally 60.3% for job search support.

The organisation of exams (including exam sessions, timetables, information, bookings) was rated as adequate (“always or almost always” or “for more than half of the tests”) by 83.2% of the graduates. Furthermore, 83.6% of the graduates felt that the workload was overall adequate with respect to the duration of the course of study (according to the rating scale used in the questionnaire this corresponds to the sum of “definitely yes” and “more yes than no”).

The analysis of the trend in ratings over time shows a general improvement in all aspects surveyed through to 2022 followed by a slight decline, except for library and IT workstation services, which remained largely stable in the past two years, and other university services, which have seen a gradual increase.

A summary of the various aspects of the university experience can be seen in the overall satisfaction of the course of study, in respect of which 90.2% of the graduates say they are satisfied overall (equal to 85.9% in 2014) (Figure 11).

Figure 11 2024 graduates: overall satisfaction of the course of study by degree type (percentage values)



Note: the percentage of satisfaction includes the sum of the "definitely yes" answer and "more yes than no".
Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

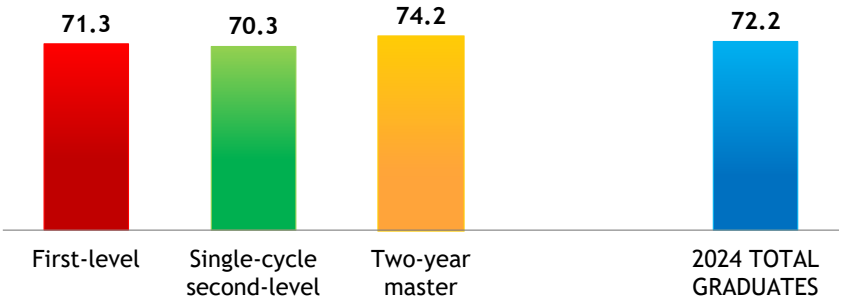
Breaking it down by degree type, satisfaction with the university experience is high and consolidated over time among first-level graduates: 90.6% say they are satisfied overall with the course of the study they completed. The most satisfied are first-level graduates in education (95.1%), law (93.2%), psychology (93.1%), but also natural sciences, mathematics, physics and statistics (92.2%) and humanities and literature (91.8%). Despite the gap is generally small, graduates in foreign languages (85.2%) tend to be more critical.

Among single-cycle second-level graduates, 88.6% said they were generally satisfied with their university experiences. The most satisfied were graduates in education (93.0%) and law (91.4%). Conversely, those who were less satisfied came from health and pharmacy (85.2%).

The overall satisfaction level of two-year masters with their most recent university experience is 89.9%. The most satisfied are the graduates in humanities and literature (92.9%), engineering and engineering trades (92.3%), economics (91.6%), psychology and information and communication technologies (ICTs; both 90.6%). The most critical are the graduates in health (81.4%) and those of sports sciences and physical education (84.6%).

The perceived value of the experience nearing its end is also provided by answering the question "If you could go back in time, would you enrol again in the same course of study?". A fully positive answer, given by those who would confirm the choice made both in terms of course of study and university, is recorded for 72.2% of the total population (Figure 12). This value rose until 2021 (reaching 72.9%, up from 66.7% in 2014), and after a slight dip in 2022 has remained stable at around 72% over the past two years. 9.2% of graduates would confirm the university, but would move on to another course of study, 10.2% would follow the same course of study but changing to a different university, 5.3% would change both course of study and location. Only 2.4% would no longer enrol at the university (as for the two-year masters, reference is made only to the final two years).

Figure 12 2024 graduates: chance to enrol again at university by degree type (percentage values)



Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

Among first-level graduates, 71.3% would fully confirm the choice they made at the time of enrolment (same course same university). Another 10.5% would remain at the same university but would opt for a different course of study; 10.0% would do vice versa, that is, the same course of study but at a different university. 5.5% would change both course of study and location and only 1.8% would not enrol at the university. First-level graduates in psychology (77.6%), education (76.9%), humanities and literature (76.2%), and engineering and engineering trades (75.2%) were most likely to enrol again in the same course of study. On the other hand, the percentage of those who would enrol in the same programme again is lower among graduates in foreign languages (56.3%), who would often change courses, universities or both.

If they could go back, 70.3% of the single-cycle second-level graduates would repeat the choice of the course of study and the university (compared to 81.1% of the graduates in education and 64.2% in health and pharmacy). 16.8% would repeat the same programme but in a different university. The difference compared to first-level graduates is partly attributed to the fact that some single-cycle second-level courses are linked to passing an admission test and often it is necessary to enrol where one is admitted.

The most positive opinions expressed on various aspects by two-year masters are echoed in the high tendency to confirm the choice of course of study and the university where they graduated (two-year masters obviously refers only to the two-year course of study) according to 74.2% of graduates. Here also there are different situations among the field of study: from 80.4% of the graduates in humanities and literature to 69.0% in foreign languages.

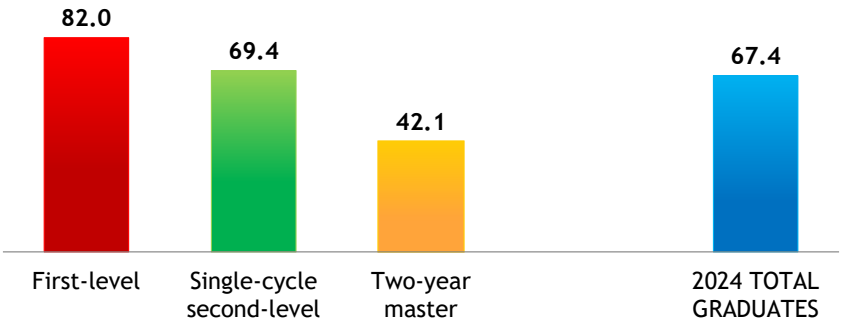
11.Post-graduate study prospects

Among 2024 graduates, pursuing education after graduation is the intention of 67.4% of graduates (Figure 13). This share, which had been gradually increasing over time (63.5% in 2014), peaked in 2021 (68.6%), before slightly decreasing in recent years. Specifically, attention should be paid to the significant growth seen in the last decade among first-level graduates: +5.4 percentage points compared to 2014. The contraction recorded in the last years is more pronounced with regard to the continuation of education of first-level graduates with a two-year master's degree.

As might be expected, the trend to continue one's studies is particularly marked among first-level graduates (82.0%), who intend to move largely towards a two-year master's degree (64.6%), and among

single-cycle second-level graduates (69.4%), for whom post-graduate schools (33.1%), academic masters (10.4%) and internships/legal internships (8.5%) are the most frequently prospect. Although the two-year masters are relatively less likely to continue their studies (42.1%), some of them intend to continue with a PhD: 15.0% (a slight increase in recent years).

Figure 13 2024 graduates: intention of continuing studies by degree type (percentage values)



Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

Among first-level graduates, the intention to continue their studies is particularly widespread among graduates in psychology (95.4%), humanities and literature (91.6%), sports sciences and physical education (90.9%) and natural sciences, mathematics, physics and statistics (90.0%). On the other hand, graduates in information and communication technologies (ICTs; 64.8%), law (67.3%) and agriculture and forestry (72.0%) are less convinced that they want to continue their studies. Not all first-level graduates who intend to continue their studies are considering a two-year master's degree, although this choice is confirmed as the most widespread objective, being indicated by 64.6% of graduates: it is particularly wished for by graduates in psychology (91.0%), engineering and engineering trades (86.1%), natural sciences, mathematics, physics and statistics (83.7%) as well as humanities and literature (83.1%). In detail, 70.5% of first-level graduates who intend to enrol in a two-year master's degree do so to complete and enrich their education. This percentage varies from 94.5% in health (where the number of those who intend to continue their studies with a two-year master's degree is definitely low) to 51.3% in psychology, where the number of those who intend to enrol in a two-year master's degree is very high, considering it an almost compulsory choice in order to enter the labour market. 65.5% of first-level graduates intending to enrol in a two-year master's degree declare that they intend to continue their studies at the same university (from 76.7% in architecture and construction to 52.8% in politics, social sciences and communications).

69.4% of single-cycle second-level graduates plan to continue their studies. This willingness varies significantly by field of study: it is high among graduates in veterinary (82.2%, with 40.9% oriented towards a post-graduate school) and in health and pharmacy (81.4%, with 61.1% oriented towards a post-graduate school), while it is average among graduates in law (68.6%, with 27.4% intending to engage in practical training). On the other hand, the intention to continue studies is lower among graduates in architecture and construction (42.1%, 11.0% oriented towards an academic master and an identical percentage towards a PhD), as well as education (46.2%, 10.4% oriented towards a post-graduate school and 8.0% towards an academic master).

42.1% of two-year masters intend to continue their studies. Specifically, these are two-year master's in psychology (81.9%, with 32.6% planning a post-graduate school and 20.3% an internship), humanities and literature (60.9%, with 28.0% planning a PhD), health (58.6%, with 31.1% planning an academic master) and natural sciences, mathematics, physics and statistics (56.3%, with 32.5% planning a PhD). Graduates in engineering and engineering trades (23.6%, 13.7% with a PhD), economics (25.2%, 9.5% with an academic master) and information and communication technologies (ICTs; 27.3%, 18.7% with a PhD) are less likely to continue their studies.

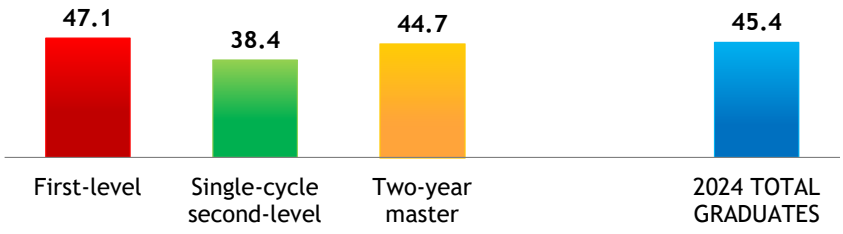
12. Prospects for employment

Regarding prospects for employment, the consolidated south/north mobility for study and work purposes that has persisted in our country for some time now has expanded to include mobility towards foreign countries. This last type of mobility is an objective of interest for a good number of young graduates, not only for study but also as a possible work destination by virtue of the better working conditions generally offered in other countries.

45.4% of graduates state they are willing to work abroad, a proportion that is 3.4 percentage points lower (among single-cycle second-level graduates it drops as much as -10.9 percentage points) compared to 2014 (when it was 48.8%): after exceeding 50% in 2015, the following years saw a contraction, particularly evident between 2020 and 2023, and then a slight recovery in 2024. This reduction, which began before the pandemic, was certainly reinforced by the spread of teleworking and more generally the possibility of remote working from one's home country. Broken down by degree type, this share is 47.1% for first-level graduates, 38.4% for single-cycle second-level graduates and 44.7% for two-year masters (Figure 14). The graduates most willing to work abroad are those in foreign languages (56.8%) and information and communication technologies (ICTs; 53.6%), followed by those in politics, social sciences and communications and engineering and engineering trades (respectively 52.3% and 52.2%). 27.7% even say they are ready to move to another continent.

At the same time, there is a widespread willingness to travel for business, even frequently (28.0%), as well as to relocate (39.0%), although these percentages have been declining over the last ten years. Only 5.5% of 2024 graduates are not willing to travel, a proportion that has risen constantly since 2019. It remains to be understood to what extent the propensity to travel outside national borders is experienced by graduates as an opportunity for personal enrichment and to what extent it is felt to be a necessity for more satisfying professional prospects.

Figure 14 2024 graduates: decidedly willing to work abroad by degree type (percentage values)



Source: AlmaLaurea, Graduates' Profile Survey.

While permanent and full-time jobs are the labour contracts most sought by graduates (85.2% and 78.6% are respectively decidedly willing to accept them), there is also a willingness to accept part-time jobs (35.4%) and fixed-term labour contracts (30.6%). In recent years there has been a strong increase in the willingness to engage in smart working or teleworking (48.5%), an option that is increasingly used by companies and that was highly appreciated by graduates during the pandemic (more than 37 percentage points higher than in 2014, the result of a substantial increase of almost 28 percentage points observed between 2019 and 2024).

The change in expectations regarding the working world is particularly evident from an analysis of the evolution attributed by graduates to the various aspects for job-seeking. Among the aspects considered most relevant, for some time now what matters most is the acquisition of professional skills, specified by 76.8% of graduates. Very relevant (percentages above 60%) are job security (72.6%), earning prospects (71.4%), career prospects (70.8%), independence or autonomy at work (64.5%) and the possibility of making the best use of the skills acquired during studies (60.5%). Note however that since 2016, the year from which all the aspects currently assessed by the questionnaire are surveyed, increases of about 23 percentage points have been observed for the pursuit of free time (reaching 54.2% in 2024), of 18 points for flexibility of working hours (47.3% in 2024), of more than 14 points for the possibility of earning prospects (71.4% in 2024), of more than 13 points for the workplace (location, physical features of job environment, 49.6% in 2024) and of more than 11 points for the pursuit of independence and autonomy (64.5% in 2024). These trends, together with the new methods of working that have emerged as a result of the pandemic, show the urgency of a new approach to work that, thanks to the development of technology, enables an improvement in lifestyles and work-life balance.

When asked “Are you willing to accept jobs have no connection with your degree?”, there was a broad willingness on the part of graduates: among 2024 graduates, 23.1% would accept unconditionally, 54.5% only as a temporary solution, while only 21.0% would reject an unrelated job. Compared to 2016, the first year for which data are available, there was a 7% decrease in the those who would unconditionally accept a job that is not related to their studies. In 2024, 86.1% say they would not accept a monthly net amount lower than €1,250 for full-time employment, a share that has increased substantially over the past six years (it was 48.9% in 2016). In addition to the reduction in purchasing power in recent years due to the economic landscape, this shows that graduates increasingly believe that it is important for their investment in education to be recognised, including from a financial point of view.

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The complete documentation is available at:
www.almalaurea.it/en/our-data/almalaurea-surveys/graduates-profile.

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