

THE FUTURE IS BUILT IN UNIVERSITIES

OBJECTIVES OF FINNISH UNIVERSITIES FOR THE 2027-2031 PARLIAMENTARY TERM

FINLAND NEEDS HUMAN CAPITAL TO GROW. HUMAN CAPITAL GROWS IN UNIVERSITIES.

Finland's future success will be based on groundbreaking research and high-level, constantly evolving expertise – human capital. Universities produce the knowledge, insight, and expertise that are essential for ensuring democracy, security, bildung, a sustainable economy, and societal renewal. Without this foundation, Finland will merely be able to respond to global change rather than creating the future we desire.

Finland is at a crossroad. We must now decide whether we will use the coming parliamentary term to invest in research and higher education and restore human capital to the strategic core of Finland's economic growth and security. Otherwise, we risk continuing the underfunding of university research and education and accept a low level of education, weak productivity, and a stagnating economy.

FINLAND'S SUCCESS IS BUILT ON EXPERTISE, NOT SCALE.

Finland cannot become bigger, but it can become more skilled.

Finland is an economy that consists of a declining population with a unique language, operating in an increasingly competitive global landscape. Finland cannot compete on low costs, market size, or the number of experts– instead, we must focus on how much value we can produce with our expertise.

Highly educated experts will build Finland's future. We must increase the level of education among young people, as well as the number of doctoral graduates. In addition to quantity, we must invest in quality. Universities must have the necessary resources to provide high-quality education that meets both individual and societal needs: education that is based on the latest research and that develops learning ability, critical thinking, and other future skills needed in working life and in a rapidly changing world. The value factor for expertise is determined by the quality of education.

FINLAND EVOLVES WHEN WE TRUST IN SCIENCE FOR SOLUTIONS

The most significant opportunities grow from groundbreaking research

Breakthroughs that shape society emerge from the ability to look where no one has looked before. Groundbreaking research happens when basic and applied research are allowed to move beyond conventional questions and proceed without predetermined endpoints. Breakthroughs arise from long-term research efforts, the accumulation of new knowledge, and cross-disciplinary interaction. This fosters new ways of thinking, expertise, and solutions that strengthen competitiveness and leaps in new growth sectors.

Finland is home to high-quality research. This quality is built on a longstanding tradition of trust in education and research, and on a commitment to investing in both over the long term. Quality is also shaped by scientific freedom and the processes that guide scientific conduct and evaluation: science guides its practitioners, filters out weak work, and strengthens what withstands critical scrutiny. Therefore, investing in groundbreaking research is not a risk, but a prerequisite for societal development.

THE FORMULA FOR NATIONAL RESILIENCE

Human capital is a key driver of productivity and economic growth. Investments in research and education are necessary for building a path towards new growth and a sustainable economy. Through these investments, we are also laying the foundation for our cultural and deeper societal well-being: culture, science, and the arts.

Groundbreaking research × High level of education

→ Versatile expertise × Innovation capacity

→ Higher productivity × Economic growth

→ Stronger competitiveness × Sustainable economy



Space and opportunities for increasing the wellbeing of Finns

CREATING THE BEST CONDITIONS FOR GROUND- BREAKING RESEARCH

- **We must ensure the best growth conditions for new ideas and innovations** by safeguarding the autonomy and scientific freedom of Finnish universities.
- **We must invest in internationally high-quality and long-term groundbreaking research** by increasing the core funding of Finnish universities and the share of funding for groundbreaking research.
- **We must strengthen the role of predictable, long-term core funding** in higher education and implement the necessary index adjustments in full throughout the upcoming government term.
- **We must reinforce the national commitment to extending the Act on R&D Funding** to 2040.

RAISING THE LEVEL OF EDUCATION

- **We must enhance the quality, quantity, and accessibility of higher education** so that 60% of young adults will have a higher education degree by 2040.
- **We must fully finance of the increase in student intake** by increasing the core funding of Finnish universities and align Finland's public university funding—relative to student numbers and GDP growth—with the Nordic level
- **We must expand doctoral education** and support Finnish universities in their efforts to reform researcher training.

FOSTERING RENEWAL AND INTERNATIONALISATION

- **We must allocate competitive research funding** to higher-risk projects, based on their excellence and renewal potential, to achieve new innovations and scientific breakthroughs.
- **We must develop and resource** national research data management services, research infrastructures, and collaboration
- **We must develop the roles and degree structures** of universities and universities of applied sciences according to their distinct profiles, emphasizing their complementary strengths.
- **We must strengthen the provision of continuous learning** through new, economically sustainable solutions
- **We must strengthen work- and education-based immigration** and support the integration and pathways of international experts into the Finnish working life.

Most people recognise the importance of research and education. However, progress has been limited, as they are still treated as mere sectors among many others.

In reality, research and education drive productivity across all other sectors. Strengthening groundbreaking research and raising the level of education will enhance society as a whole, regardless of who is in power. **Research and education provide long-term benefits for both individuals and society, with returns that far exceed any initial investments.**

SUPPORTING RESEARCH AND EDUCATION IS A WINNING POLICY.

FACTS AND OVERVIEW

FUNDING

The funding of Finnish universities today is, in real terms, considerably lower than it was 10 years ago. The reductions in student intake in the early 2000s and the subsequent funding cuts and index freezes have weakened the funding base of universities in Finland. The focus of their funding has also shifted – a larger share is now earmarked and fixed-term.

In proportion to the number of full-time students, higher education funding in Finland is 25–35% lower than it is in Sweden, Norway, or Denmark. Funding per completed master's degree has declined by more than 32% at universities between 2010 and 2025.

Finnish universities operate efficiently. While their core funding has decreased by over 4% in real terms since 2010, they have still managed to increase both their student count and research output. Even with lower real funding, Finnish universities continue to produce more degrees, publications, and patents.

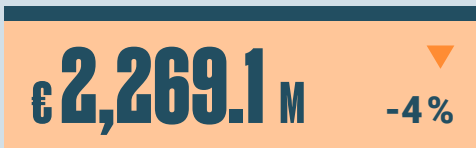
The Finnish higher education system is efficient – and high quality. When we compare the performance of higher education sector relative to GDP, Finland ranks first among 50 countries in relation to the size and development of its economy.

Finnish universities continue to systematically develop their operations. They cooperate extensively, and the results of these efforts include the extensive reforms to student admission and doctoral education, as well as the Digivisio 2030 programme. Other on-going initiatives include for example the development of future student admissions services together with Finnish universities of applied sciences, and streamlining transfer application processes to make it easier for students to change fields during their studies.

The core activities of Finnish universities are financed primarily through the core funding provided by the state. In practice, all degree education for Finnish students is funded through this core funding. Core funding also enables long-term, high-quality research. The university index, which compensates for the effects of inflation, is essential for maintaining university activities at their current level. Additional investments are needed to strengthen university funding, and this funding should be provided as long-term core funding rather than fixed-term supplementary funding.

KEY UNIVERSITY FIGURES IN 2025 AND CHANGE FROM 2010 (%)

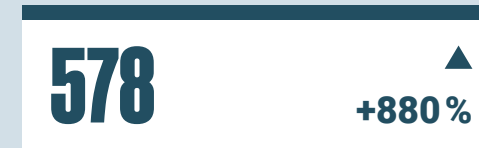
Core funding from the state



Peer-reviewed scientific articles and books



Patents and invention disclosures



Degrees



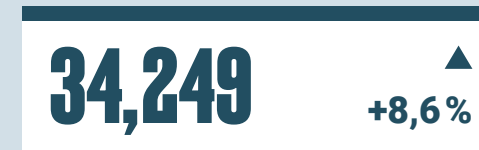
Bachelor's degrees	16 171
Master's degrees	20 404
Doctorates	2 127

New students



Bachelor's degrees	21 177
Master's degrees	8 355

Personnel



LEVEL OF EDUCATION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

Finland needs more highly educated experts. The need for raising Finland's level of education has been widely recognised in economic research, business sector views and, for example, in the IMF's country report on Finland.

Raising the level of education will have a positive impact on Finland's economic growth and the efforts to balance its public finances. Increasing education and skills levels are key sources of productivity growth: highly educated experts improve productivity—they develop new innovations and adopt new technologies.

For individuals, education is, in many ways, the pathway to a better life. A high level of education is linked to an improved level of expertise, employment, pay, and perceived health. High-quality higher education – which allows students to learn, think critically, and attain other essential future-oriented skills – provides individuals with the ability to navigate and thrive in working life and as members of society in a rapidly changing world.

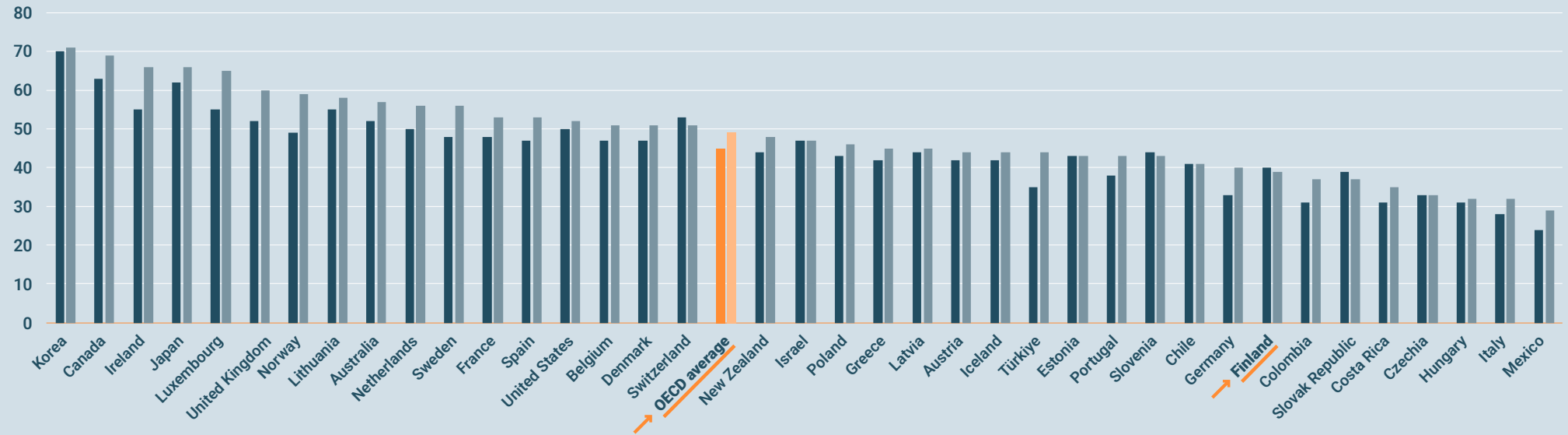
In recent years, isolated measures have been implemented to raise the level of education, but their impact has been almost non-existent. Instead, we need a comprehensive approach and coherent set of measures that can be utilised systematically across several government terms.

THE EDUCATION LEVEL OF YOUNG AGE GROUPS IN FINLAND IS CLEARLY BELOW THE OECD AVERAGE

Share of people aged 25–34 with a higher education degree

Source OECD, Education at a Glance 2025

■ 2019 ■ 2024



HIGHER EDUCATION EXPENSES PER FULL-TIME STUDENT

Between 2015 and 2020, student- and degree-specific funding decreased by over 32% in Finnish higher education institutions. This was a steep decline.

This is how much money (USD) is spent per full-time student in different countries (2022)

Source: OECD, Education at a Glance 2025)

■ Private and non-domestic expenditure ■ Government expenditure (ISCED 5-8)



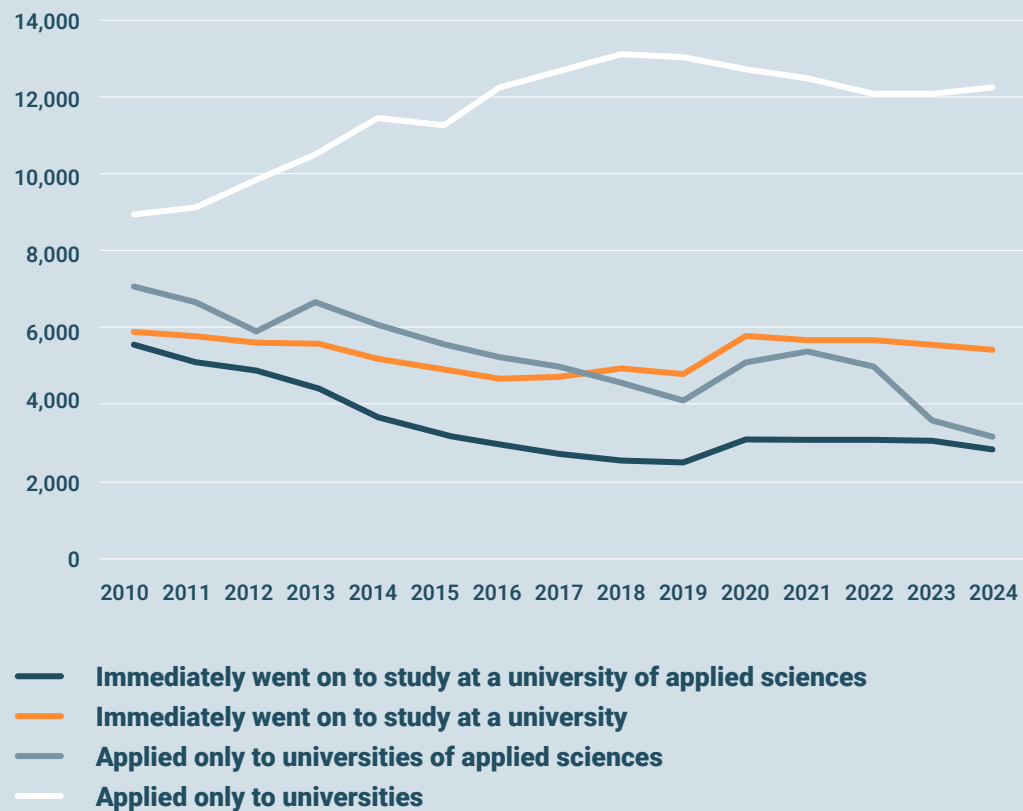
YOUNG PEOPLE WANT TO STUDY AT UNIVERSITIES

Young people want to study and educate themselves. 59% of young people wish to attain a university degree (Youth Barometer 2025).

The educational capacity of universities must be increased to meet the educational aspirations of Finland's youth.

Application and admittance rates of new matriculation examination graduates to Finnish higher education

Source: Statistics Finland



GROUNDBREAKING RESEARCH IS A CRITICAL INVESTMENT

Investing in research is one of the most effective ways to boost sustainable economic growth, competitiveness, and social sustainability.

Economic research suggests that long-term growth is primarily driven by the accumulation of new knowledge, ideas, and expertise – and not just by investments or workforce-related increases. Technological development and productivity growth emerge in research-intensive environments, where publicly funded basic research plays a decisive role.

The OECD has particularly emphasised the importance of universities as knowledge producers and brokers: countries that invest in their universities' research capacity and stable core funding also make better use of international technological breakthroughs and achieve faster productivity growth.

The research evidence gathered in Finland also supports this conclusion. The most impactful and cutting-edge knowledge is generated through university-led, publicly funded basic research. Applied R&D activities rely on the new knowledge, expertise, and methods that emerge from universities.

A predictable and adequate core funding is essential for enabling researcher-driven and long-term research that can achieve the most significant breakthroughs. When we allow our core funding to erode, we also undermine the quality of our research, its international impact, and its commercial potential – and these effects are later reflected across the entire economy.

International comparisons show that Finnish university research is world-leading in terms of its quality and impact. This creates the foundation for new technologies, start-ups, industrial reforms, and societal solutions.

Investing in the core funding of Finnish universities is a strategic investment in Finland's entire future – it strengthens the innovation system, improves the growth prospects of companies, and ensures that Finland will continue to produce new knowledge instead of merely relying on technologies developed by other countries.

RESEARCH IS ALSO A SHORT-TERM GROWTH INVESTMENT

The Finnish economy is also in urgent need of rapid growth measures. Research and innovation activities at universities also boost short-term growth.

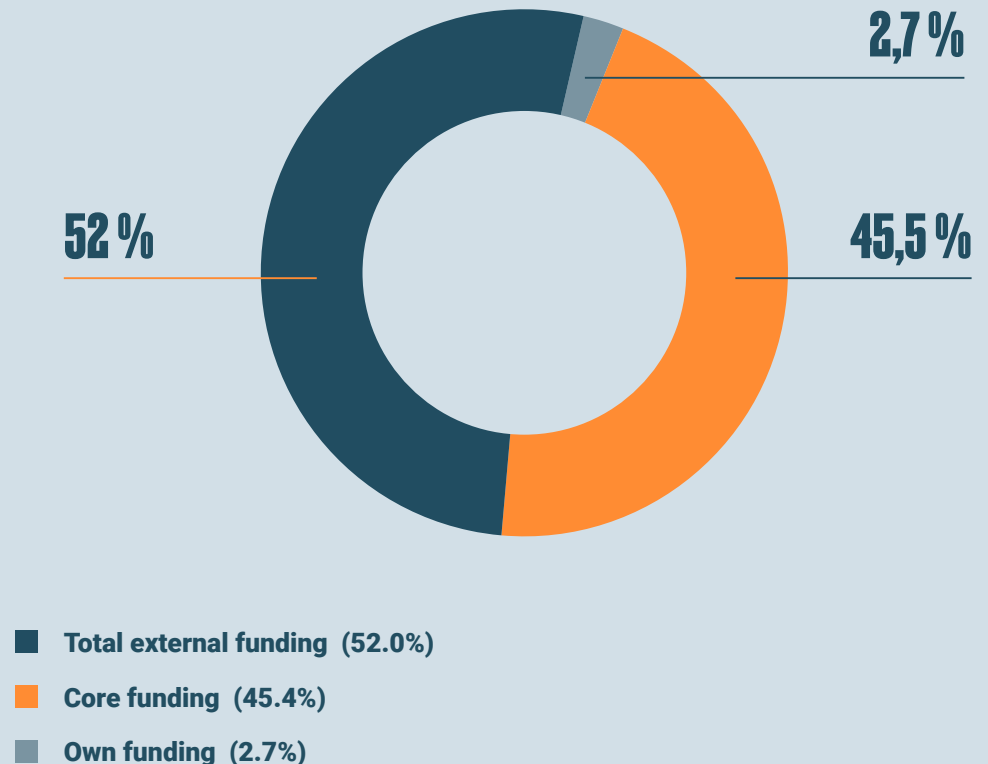
The OECD and the IMF underline that public funding in research and innovation can produce an exceptionally strong economic impact. Publicly funded research accelerates companies' innovations, leverages private investments, and boosts GDP growth more than most other public expenditures. Public funding for university-driven innovation activities attracts companies to participate and speeds up the commercialisation of research results and innovations.

CORE FUNDING ENABLES RISK, COMPETITION BOOSTS QUALITY

There must be a balance between competitive external funding and core funding in science. Finland is one of the few countries that covers over half of its higher education RDI expenditure via external funding. (OECD)

Sources of Funding for University Research and Development Activities (2024)

Source: Statistics Finland



SCIENTIFIC IMPACT REQUIRES INVESTMENTS

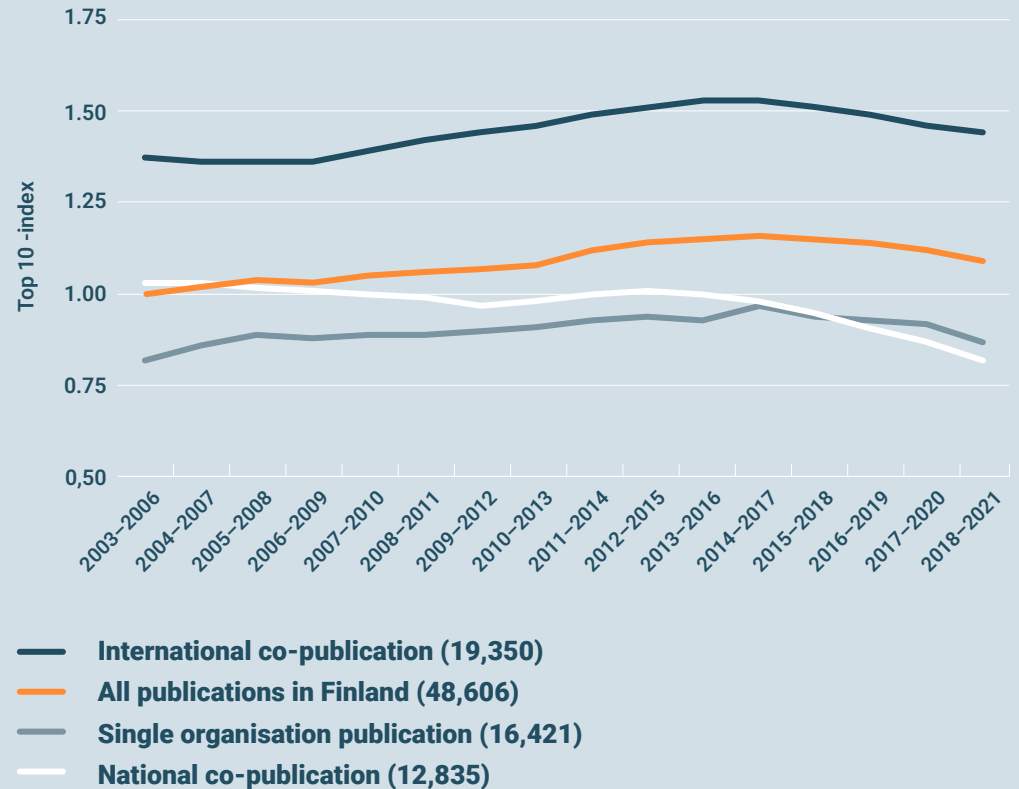
Over the past 20 years, Finland has risen and remained above the Top 10 Index's global average in terms of its scientific impact.

However, key reference countries, such as Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland and the Netherlands, outperform Finland in terms of the scientific impact of their publication activities. (State of scientific research in Finland 2024, Research Council of Finland)

Investments in R&D activities are essential for remaining competitive internationally.

Development of the citation impact of Finnish publications

Source: Research Council of Finland, 2024



unifi

COUNCIL OF RECTORS OF FINNISH UNIVERSITIES – UNIFI RY

[UNIFI.FI/VAALIT20207](https://unifi.fi/vaalit20207)