



**NORWEGIAN POLICE  
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE**

**Police officers in the making:  
Findings from a longitudinal study of  
recruitment and education of police  
students in seven European countries  
(RECPOL)**

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## **The RECPOL project: Recruitment, education and careers in the Police: A European Longitudinal study**

- ▼ **Based on the StudData project developed by the Centre for the Study of Professions at Oslo University College, applied to more than 20 different professional educations in Norway.**
- ▼ **Longitudinal data on students:  
Background, motivations, values, expectations and views on education and future profession**
- ▼ **We adapted the research design and questionnaires to police education, with the addition of police-specific questions, and made it into a European-wide comparative study.**

# The RECPOL project

- ▼ Originally at least 12 European countries expressed interest in taking part.
- ▼ In the end, seven countries actually participated: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Iceland, Scotland, Belgium, and Catalonia in Spain.
- ▼ Four phases:
  - ▼ Phase 1: beginning of education
  - ▼ Phase 2: end of education
  - ▼ Phase 3: three into practice
  - ▼ Phase 4: six years into practice
- ▼ Data collection for phase 1 started Fall 2010 onwards.
- ▼ By spring 2016, Phase 1 and phase 2 data have been collected in six of the seven countries.
- ▼ Phase 3 data (three years into practice) is now being collected in several countries - but not yet analysed.

# Participant countries and response rates in the RECPOL survey:

▼ Norway	Phase 1: N=637, response rate 85%
	Phase 2: N=473, response rate 63%
	Phase 3: N=225, response rate 34%
▼ Sweden	Phase 1: N=350, response rate 96%
	Phase 2: N=302, response rate 83%
	Phase 3: N=351, response rate 35%
▼ Denmark	Phase 1: N=359, response rate 94%
	Phase 2: N=152, response rate 79%
▼ Iceland	Phase 1: N=92, response rate 100%
	Phase 2: N=74, response rate 80%
▼ Scotland	Phase 1: N=311, response rate 82%
▼ Belgium	Phase 1: N=675, response rate 82%
	Phase 2: N=433, response rate 53%
▼ Spain (Catalonia)	Phase 1: N=1279, response rate 98%
	Phase 2: N=1194, response rate 97%
	Phase 3: N=769, response rate 65%

## Limitations in the RECPOL data

- ▼ More countries from Central and Eastern Europe should have participated, providing more variation and coverage. Important countries are missing.
- ▼ From Scotland, only Phase 1 data were collected.
- ▼ Belgium only used parts of the questionnaire, leaving out many police-specific issues.
- ▼ Low number of respondents from Iceland (N=92).
- ▼ From Denmark, data collection for Phase 2 not yet completed.
- ▼ As a result, we have good Phase 1 and Phase 2 data from only Norway, Sweden and Catalonia (Spain) this far, with Denmark following up soon.

# Dimensions for comparative analysis

- ▼ Our data will make it possible to compare
  - ▼ Between countries (and institutions within countries)
  - ▼ Between different types of police education: vocational and academic
  - ▼ Between professions - how police students differ from e.g. teacher students or prison staff students
  - ▼ Longitudinally - how individual police students change over time as their education and careers progress
  - ▼ Between different cohorts - e.g. before and after educational reforms
- ▼ Previous similar studies of police students have been limited to single institutions or countries

# Police Initial Education

Tables and analysis:  
Lola Vallès & Kjersti Hove

		Responsible authority	Duration	Student Number year	% Females	% Immigrant backgr.	Employed after training
Nordic	Denmark	The Minister of Justice	3 years	192	25	6	Yes
	Iceland	The Ministry of the Interior	12 months	20	30	5	No
	Norway	The Minister of Justice	3 years	720	40	3,5	No
	Sweden	The Minister of Justice	2 year + 6 months probation	800	37	10	No
Continental	Belgium	The Minister of Internal Affairs and Minister of Justice	12 months	1000	50	5	Yes
	Catalonia in Spain	The Minister of Interior	10 months +1 year probation	939	22	3	Yes
Anglo-Saxon	Scotland in UK	Local Ownership	16 weeks + 2 year probation	1000	37	2	Yes

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# The RECPOL project's three main hypotheses

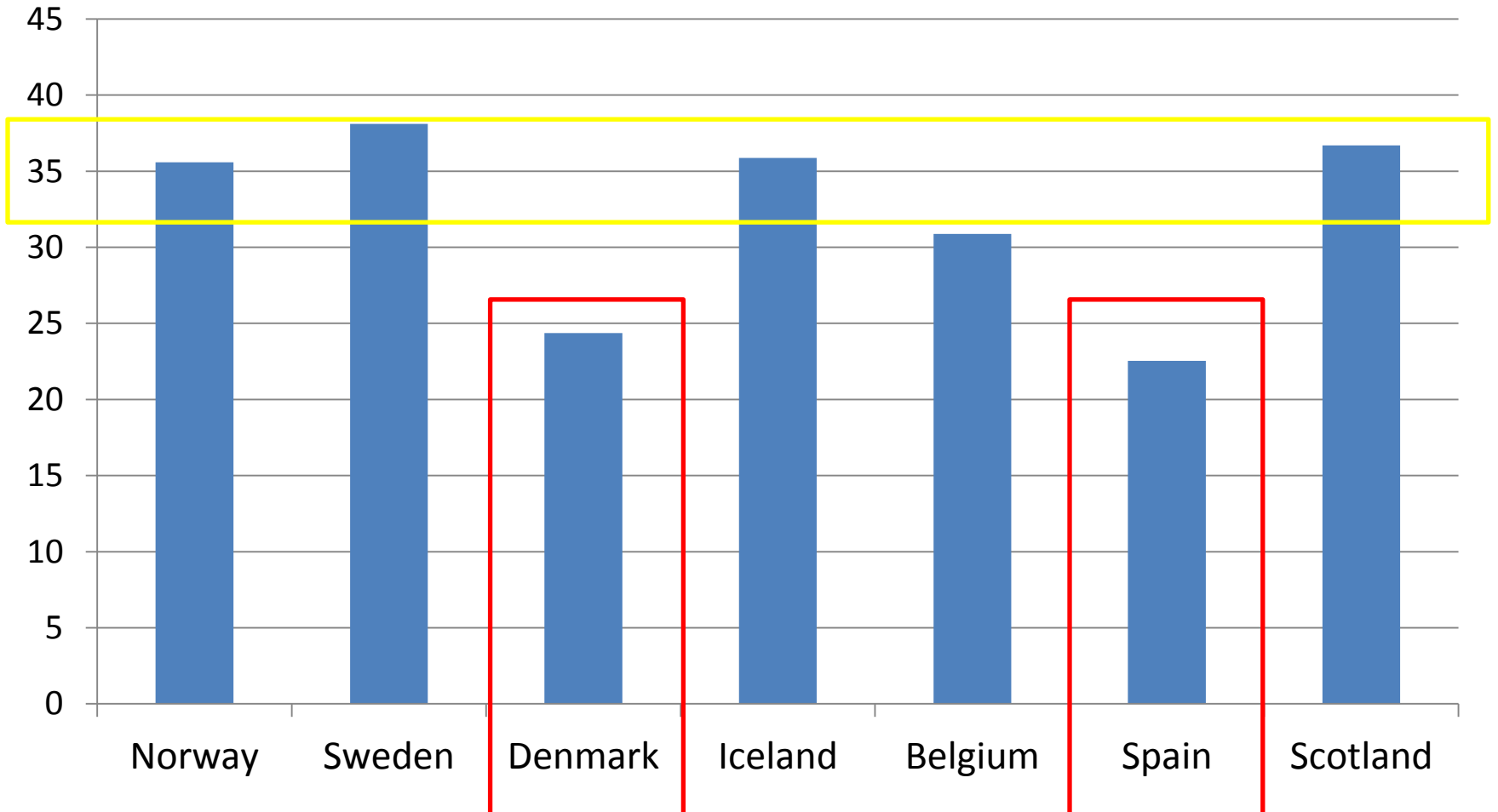
1. Different systems of police education attract different types of police students (Phase 1 data)
2. Different police education systems shape the police students' values, attitudes and career plans in different ways through the training and education process (Phase 2 data)
3. Experience from the field of practice – working among police colleagues and with the public and offenders – will impact further on the values, attitudes and career plans of the newly educated police officers (Phase 3 and 4 data)

▼ **Do our data confirm or reject these hypotheses?**

## Further questions and issues that may be addressed by the RECPOL survey

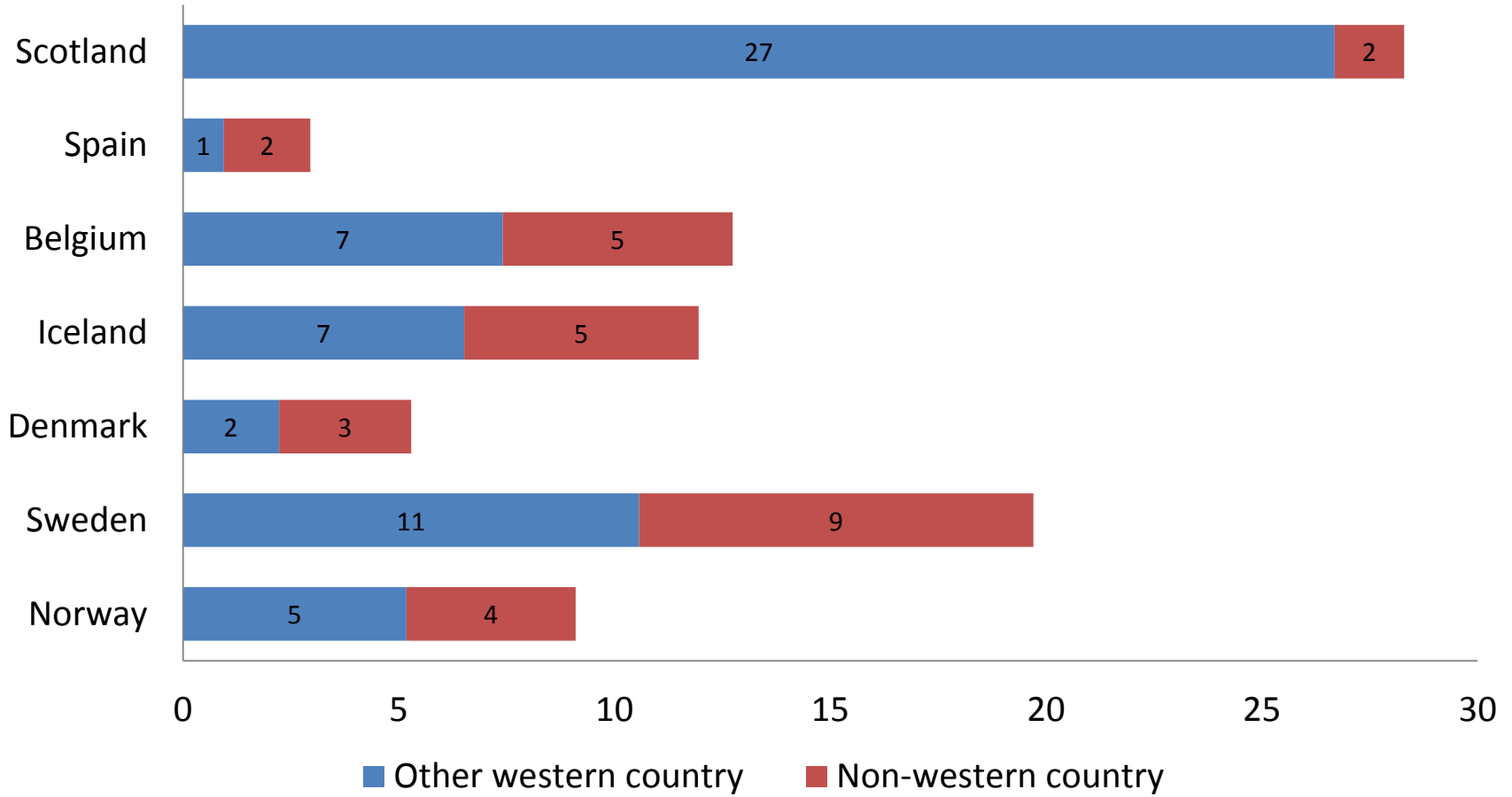
- ▼ What characterize persons recruited to the police education and profession?
- ▼ Are there significant differences between the persons recruited to police education in the various European countries in terms of background and motivations?

## Female police students by country

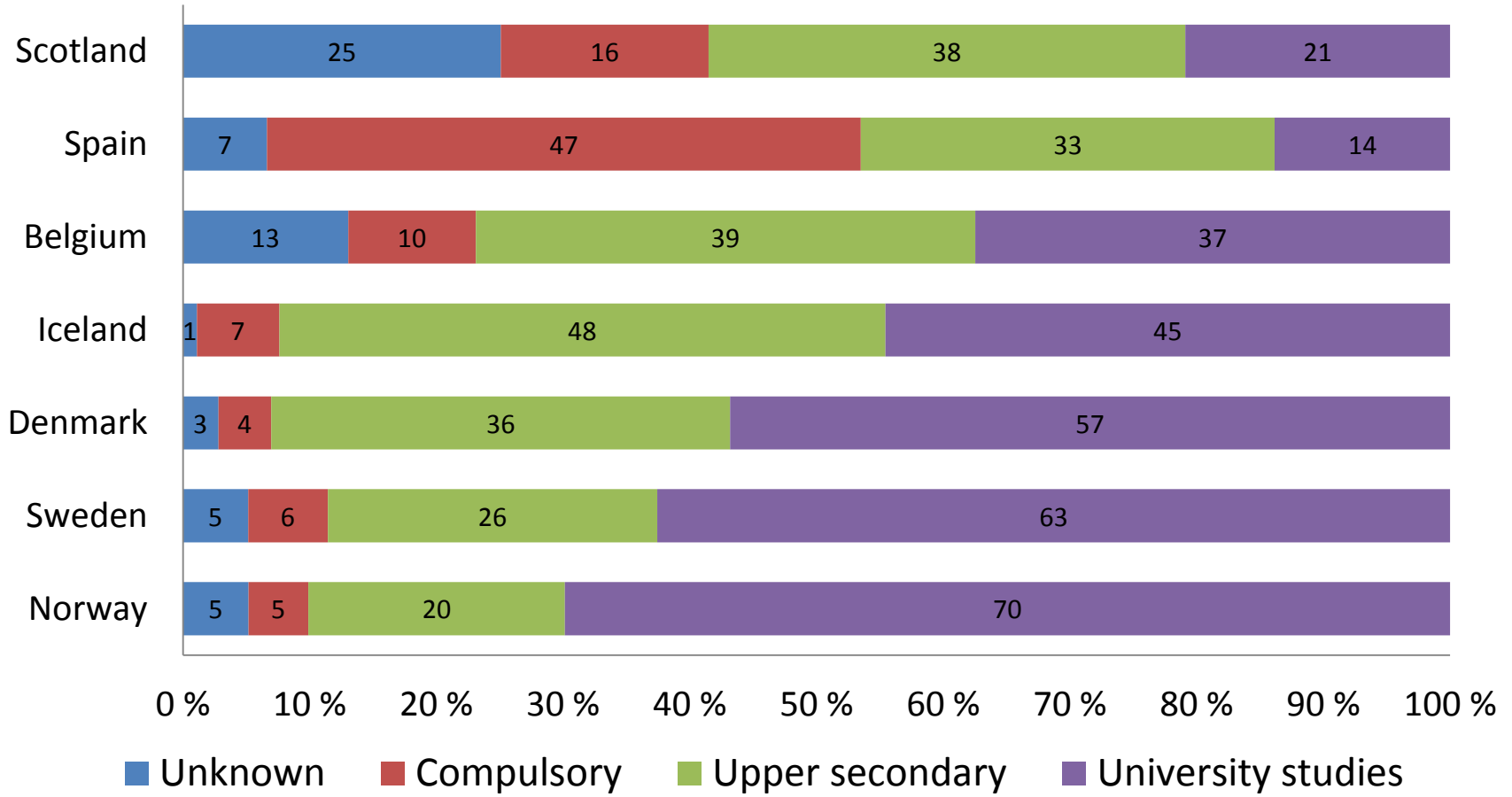


# Parents country of birth

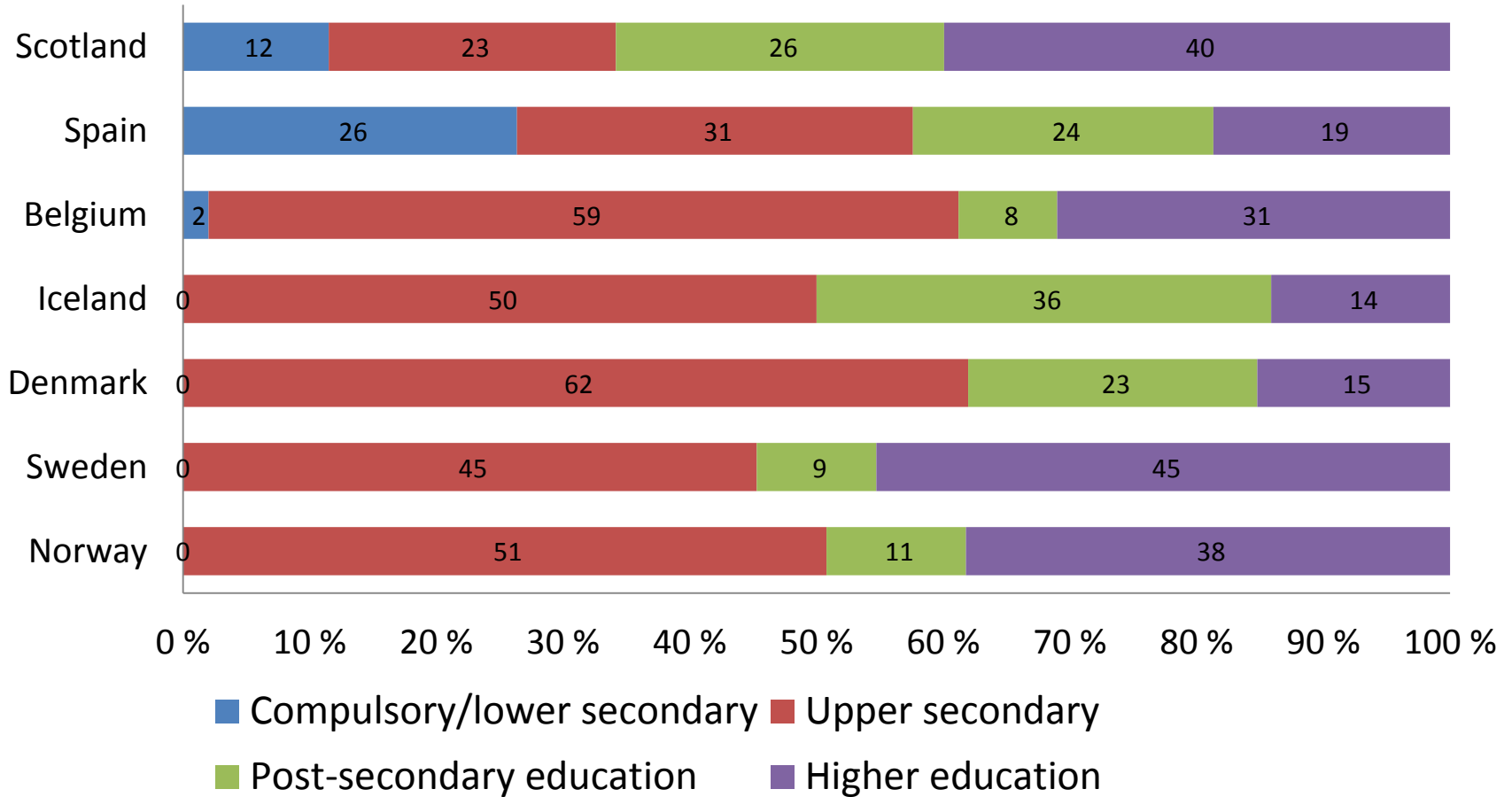
(per cent of new students)



# Parental level of education (Socio-economic background)



# Own level of education



# What are the consequences and impacts of these differences?

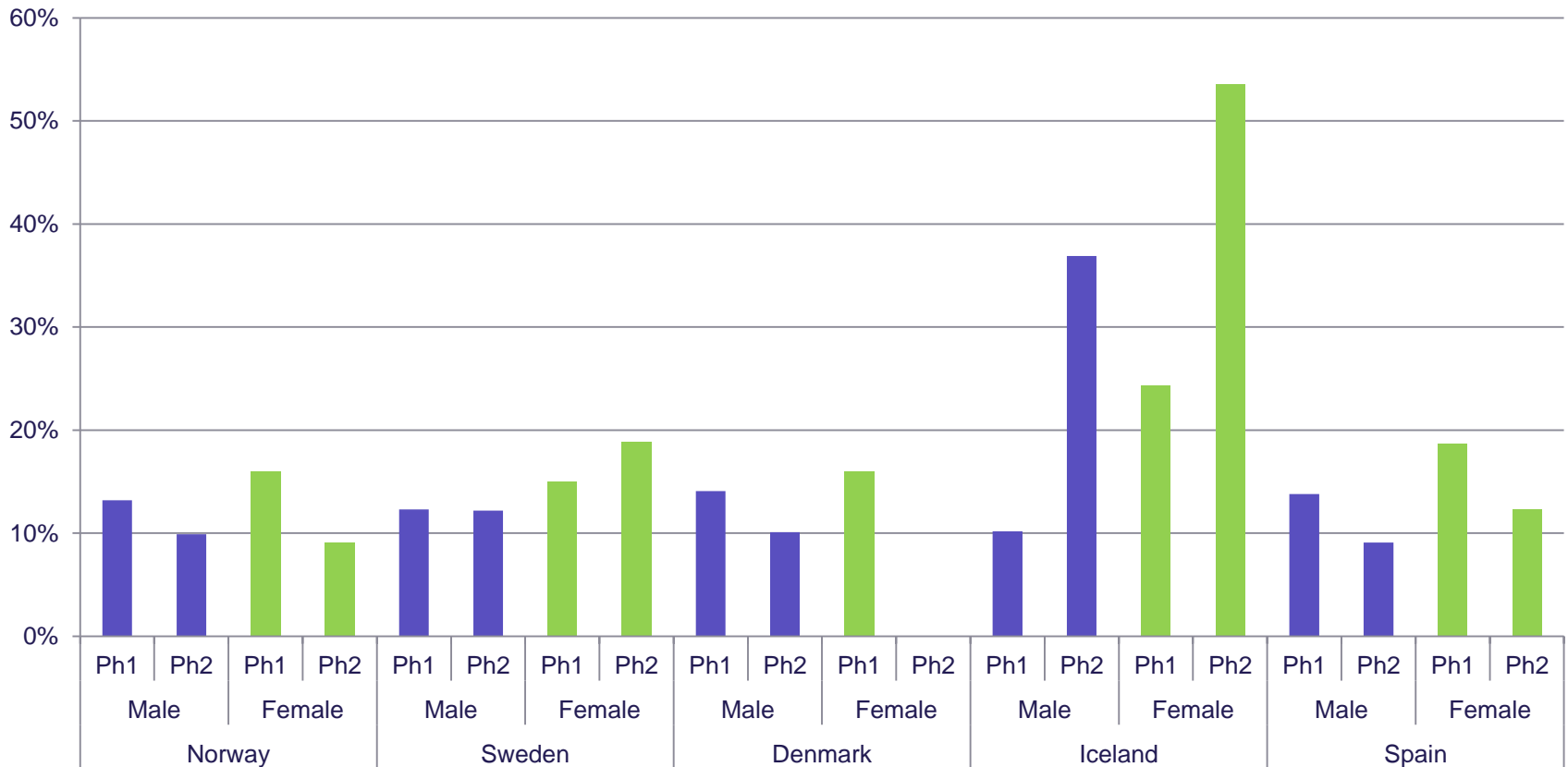
- ▼ “If police recruits are given an academic police education, we will produce desktop police officers who will not want to patrol the streets!”
- ▼ Are there significant differences between the persons recruited to police education in the various European countries in terms of motivations for future police work?
- ▼ Are those with an academic police education or background less interested in policing the streets?
- ▼ What is the impact of gender on career preferences?



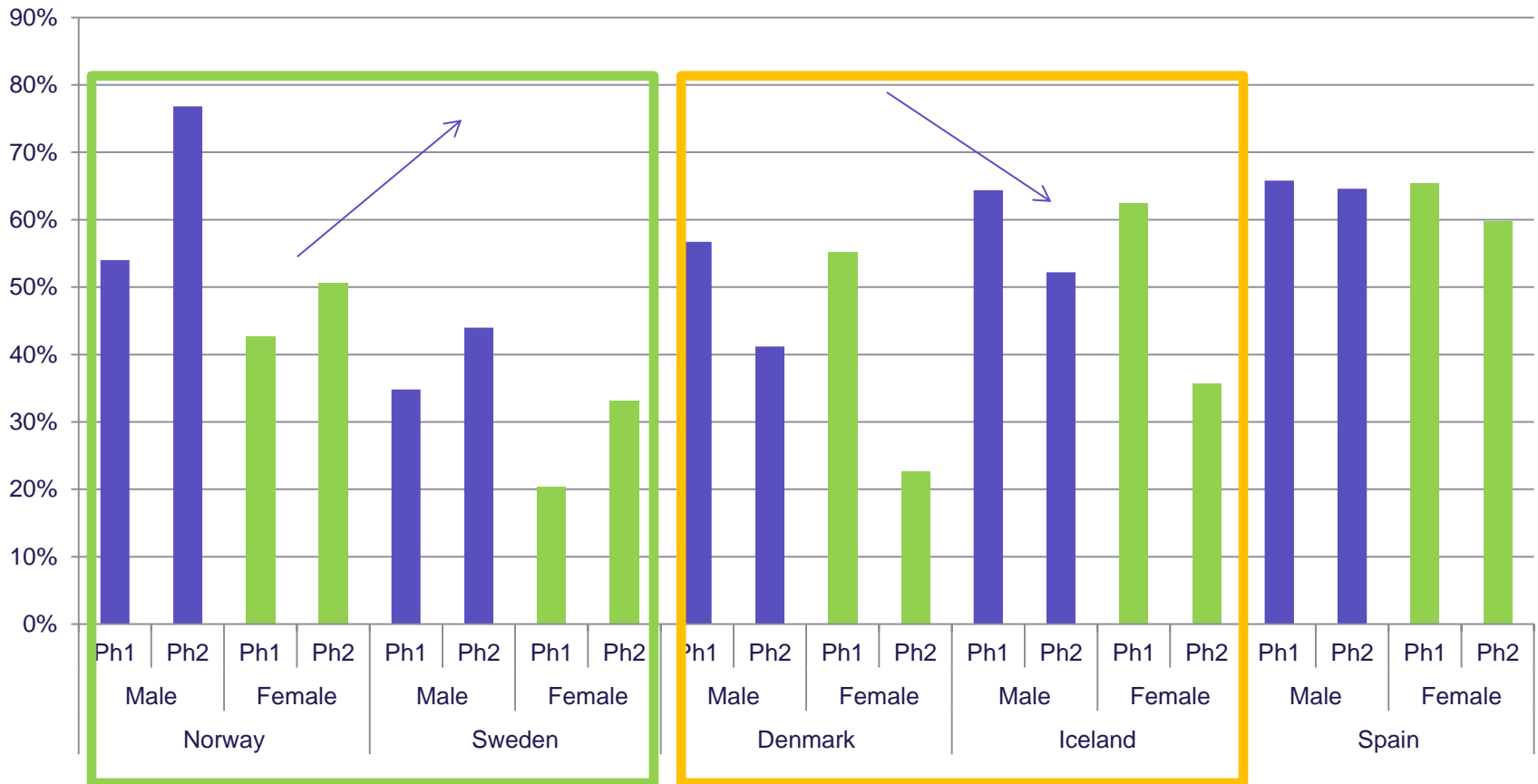
# Survey Questions of primary interest

- **Q7. If you try to imagine what your life will be like in ten years, how probable is it that the following statements will apply to your situation?**
  - **I have leadership responsibility**
  - **I am doing uniformed patrol work**
  - **I do investigative work**
  - **I am working with crime prevention**
  - **I am working with intelligence and analysis**
  - **I am working with administration and management**
  - **I am working in a specialized operational unit, e.g. a special intervention team**
- **Scale 1) Applies very well – 5) Doesn't apply at all**
  - **Answer 1 & 2 merged in the following presentation**

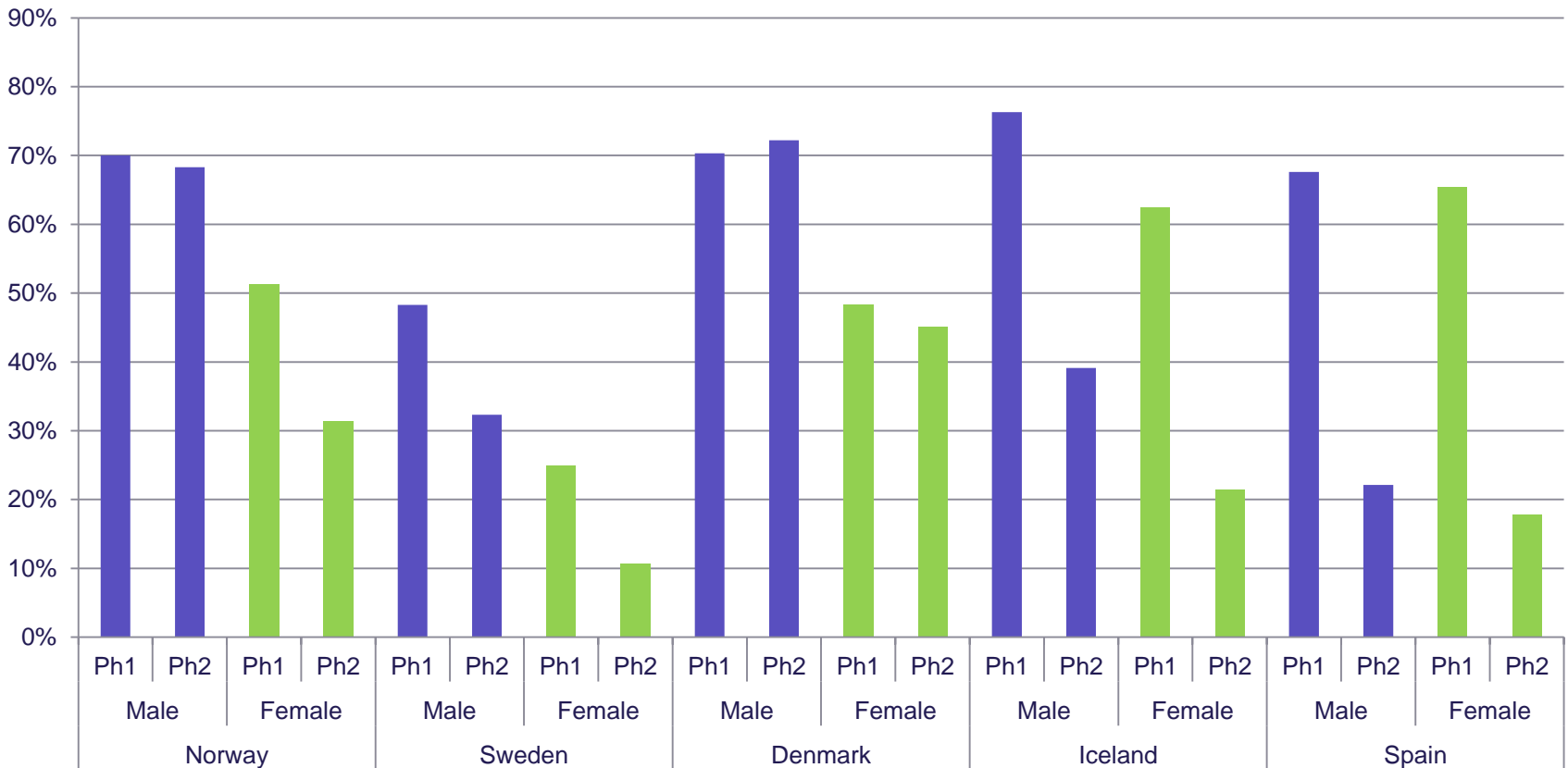
# Horizontal career aspirations – administration and management



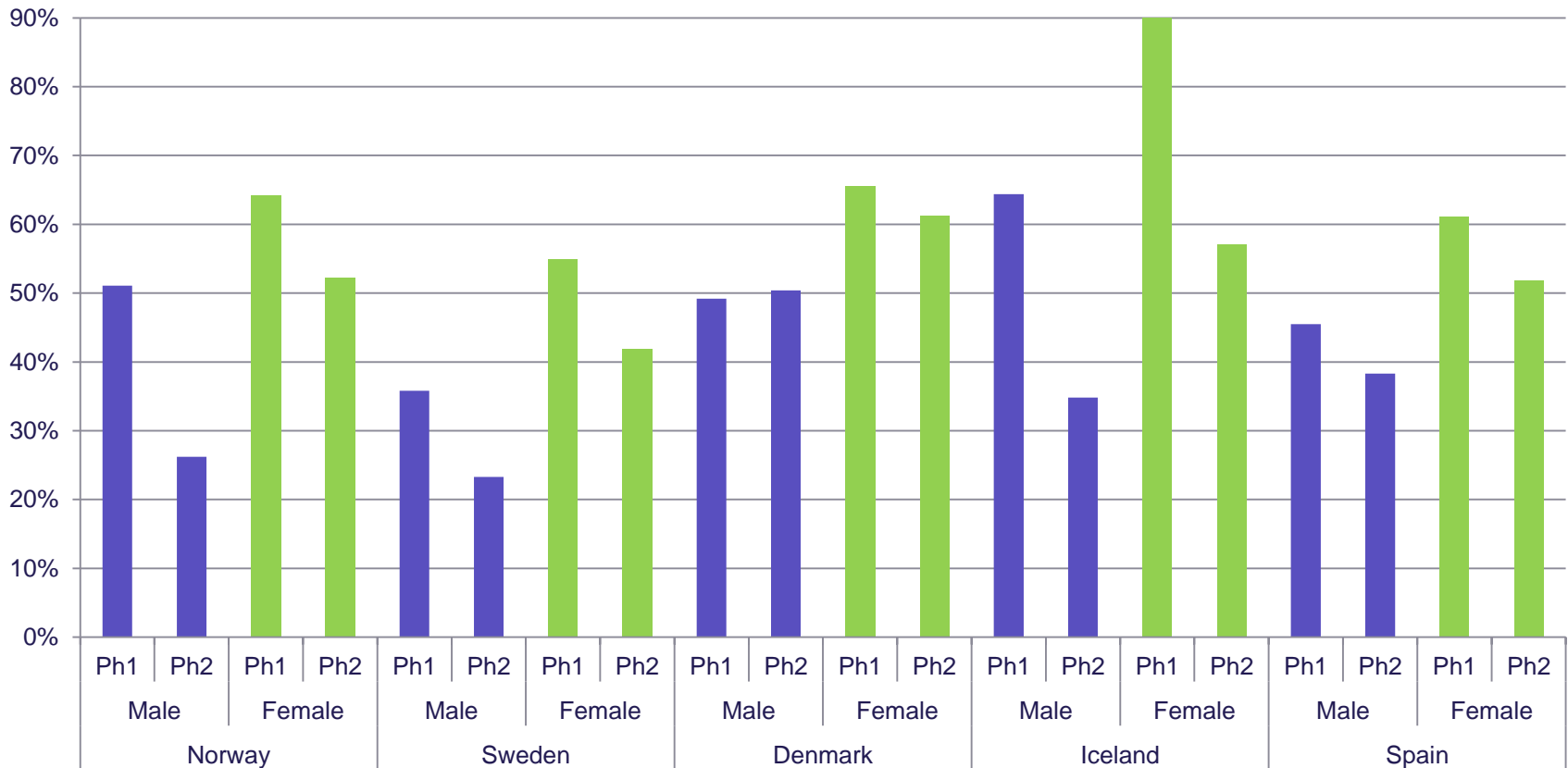
# Horizontal career aspirations – patrol work



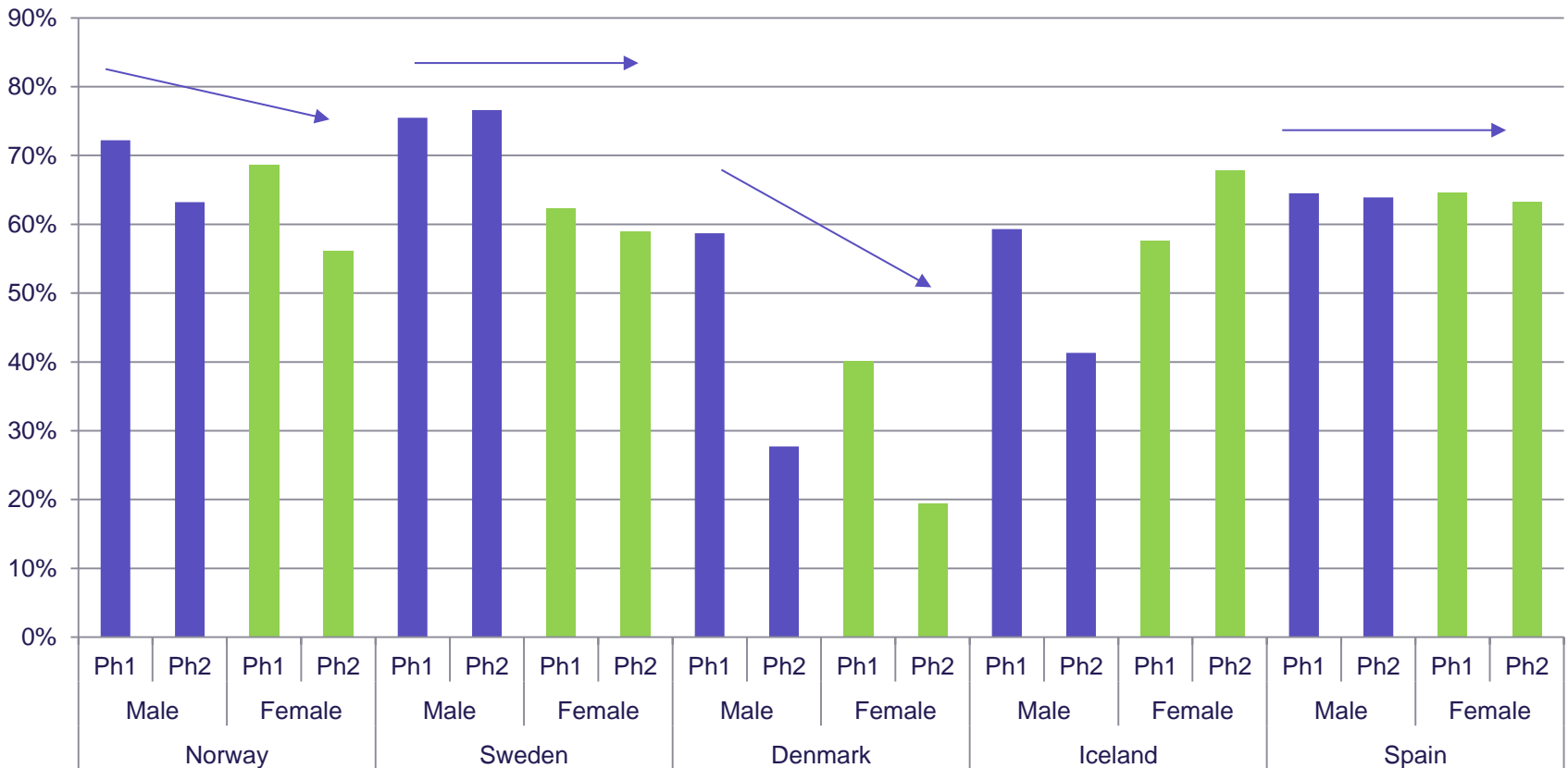
# Horizontal career aspirations – specialized operational unit



## Horizontal career aspirations – investigative work



## Vertical career aspirations - Leadership



# What are the consequences and impacts of these differences ?

- ▼ To what extent does their different social or educational backgrounds influence their views on society and policing?
- ▼ To what extent and when do police students and new officers develop cynical attitudes towards the public and/or the police organisation?
- ▼ Does the acceptance of non-legalistic measures – “Dirty Harry” attitudes – develop to different extent among police students or officers in different countries or at different stages in their careers?

# Dirty Harry?

## Nordic police students' attitudes on non-legalistic police measures

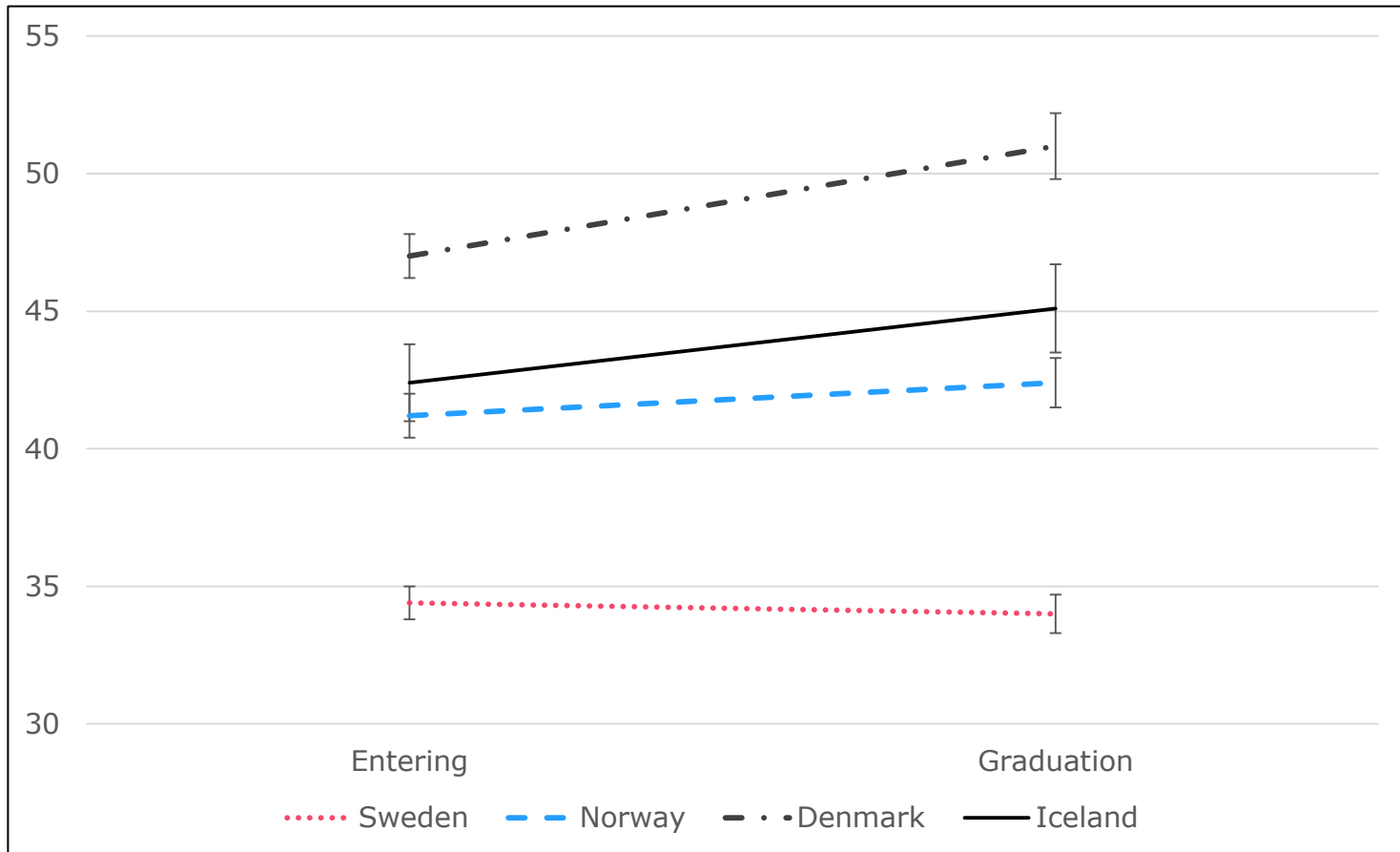
A study by Otto Petersson and Silje Bringsrud Fekjær



- Do police recruits in four Nordic countries differ in their degree of non-legalistic attitudes when they enter police education?
- How do these attitudes change during the education?
- To what extent does police culture have an impact on recruits while they are still enrolled at the academy?
- How do coherent months of field training affect students' attitudes towards non-legal measures?



# Nordic police students' attitudes on non-legalistic police measures: “The Dirty Harry index”



## Main findings:

- Swedish police students display less acceptance of non-legalistic measures than students in the other Nordic countries, and it remains low.
- There is a shift towards a more autonomous position, but the displacement on our scale is limited.
- Our data does not support the presumption that the recruits' encounter with police culture has any substantial effect on their outlook on non-legalistic measures.
- The norm “forget what you learned at school, now we start all over” does not seem to be widespread among the Nordic recruits, at least not while they are still enrolled at the academy.

## 3 to 6 years from now, we will have data on:

- ▼ How experience from the field of practice impacts on the views, values and career plans of the new police officers.
- ▼ How they evaluate the quality and relevance of the different types of police training and education they have received.

# The use of RECPOL data

- ▼ After RECPOL project participants have made their initial use of the data and published, other researchers may get access to RECPOL data for further analysis.
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  - ▼ [Otto.petersson@lnu.se](mailto:Otto.petersson@lnu.se)