

# R&D-Report

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## Tracking Change: The Cultural and Economic Impact of Bodø2024

Alena Nelaeva

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Nord University  
R&D-Report no. 136  
Bodø 2026

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## Executive summary

This report is prepared by the Monitor2024 team.

The purpose of this report is to update the initial Baseline report, published at the beginning of 2024, that presented a detailed overview of the basic economy in the county of Nordland as well as the cultural dynamics within the region before the European Capital of Culture (ECoC) year. The structure of the present report follows the structure of the Baseline report and updates those figures of the Baseline report, where new data for 2024 is available, and discusses the contribution of the ECoC year to the new status of Bodø and Nordland. The main findings are as follows:

- **Tourism and Economic Impact**

Bodø2024 generated strong tourism growth, with both domestic and international arrivals rising well above national trends. This indicates clear success in strengthening external visibility and visitor appeal. However, the broader economic impact was limited. Employment growth occurred mainly in non-cultural sectors, the cultural and creative industries did not expand significantly, and culture-related job vacancies declined proportionally. Combined with Nordland's decreasing per-capita public cultural spending, long-term economic and cultural sustainability remains uncertain.

To convert tourism gains into long-term growth, the region should build on international visibility, improve international transport connections, and deepen links between tourism and culture through festivals and heritage-based attractions.

- **Education and Cultural Capacity**

Despite increased activity in 2024, a long-term structural challenge persists: declining capacity in arts education - fewer educators and lower student recruitment. This threatens cultural literacy, generational renewal, and the region's ability to maintain momentum created by the ECoC year.

Reversing this trend requires renewed investment in arts education, targeted recruitment and educators training, and stronger alignment between education and cultural policy.

- **Cultural System and Infrastructure**

Bodø2024 stimulated growth in selected cultural sectors, notably through the Bymuseet renovation, increased theatre activity, and higher attendance in some performing arts fields. These effects were broadly distributed across municipalities, demonstrating widespread regional engagement. However, other sectors - such as libraries and cinemas - showed little change, indicating that impacts were selective, not systemic.

To reinforce these gains, municipalities should build on the collaborative networks formed in 2024, and regional institutions should expand successful partnerships.

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## Abbreviations

ECoc	European Capitas of Culture
EC	European Commission

HKdir	Norwegian Agency for Higher Education and Competence
GVA	Gross Value Added
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
SSB	Statistics Norway

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. The purpose of this report

Monitor2024 research group was in charge of evaluation of Bodø2024 – one of the three European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) for 2024. The monitoring and evaluation process was done according to the guidelines for cities’ evaluation of the results of their ECoC projects developed by the European Commission (EC) – the organizer of ECoC initiative (European Commission, 2018) (Figure 1) and considering the objectives that Bodø2024 developed in its application (Bodø2024, 2019), presented in Figure 2.

General Objectives								
<b>Safeguard and promote the diversity of cultures in Europe, highlight the common features they share, increase citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural space (GO1), and foster the contribution of culture to the long-term development of cities (GO2)</b>								
Specific Objectives (SO)								
SO1: Enhance the range, diversity and European dimension of the cultural offering in cities, including through transnational co-operation	SO2: Widen access to and participation in culture	SO3: Strengthen the capacity of the cultural sector and its links with other sectors	SO4: Raise the international profile of cities through culture					
Operational Objectives								
Stimulate extensive cultural programmes of high artistic quality	Ensure cultural programmes feature a strong European dimension and transnational co-operation	Involve a wide range of citizens and stakeholders in preparing and implementing the cultural programme	Create new opportunities for a wide range of citizens to attend or participate in cultural events	Improve cultural infrastructure	Develop the skills, capacity and governance of the cultural sector	Stimulate partnership and co-operation with other sectors	Promote the city and its cultural programme	Improve the international outlook of residents

Figure 1. European Commission hierarchy of objectives (European Commission, 2018)

NR	STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	GOALS
1	To reverse the image of Nordland – Internally and externally	More attractive and exciting to visit, and to study, work, and stay in
2	To widen the production base for culture	More producing, co-producing, and cross-working
3	To connect with groups still not engaged	Addressing issues like diversity, mental health, isolation
4	To make better use of unusual spaces	New cultural areas and venues, driven by where people live
5	To create a connected web of “hotspots” especially for young people	Facilities are improved to create a strong and widely recognised cultural region
6	To make our cultural offer more international	More international collaborations. Better links with European artists and institutions
7	To improve the careers and opportunities for cultural professionals	A major capacity-building focus, which improves skills and experience, and creates jobs
8	To address freedom of expression	With our democratic experience, include freedom of expression in future cultural events

Figure 2. Bodø2024 objectives

According to the evaluation objectives, Monitor2024 issues a series of reports (see full list of reports in Appendix I), with “Baseline Report - Monitor 2024: Effects of Bodø as European Capital of Culture 2024” being one of the first. The purpose of the baseline report was to “present a detailed overview of the basic economy in the county of Nordland as well as the cultural dynamics within the region” (Henk et al., 2024). With the present report we aim to update the situation in Nordland region after Bodø2024 to be able to reflect upon changes that Bodø2024 brought to the region.

To evaluate the impact of Bodø2024 based on the Bodø2024 and European Commission’s objectives, Monitor2024 team have developed a comprehensive list of key performance indicators (KPIs). A KPI is a measurable indicator used to assess goal achievement. An effective KPI should be easy to measure and directly linked to the specific goal it evaluates (i.e. Bodø2024 and European Commission’s objectives). Often, multiple indicators are needed to reliably determine whether the desired change has occurred. Monitor2024’s full KPI list contains over 100 KPIs; all of them are captured with various data that Monitor2024 team has collected and presented in dedicated reports. This report focuses on KPIs that help assess how the basic economy and the cultural dynamics within the region changed after Bodø2024 (Table 1).

Table 1. KPIs used for the present report

<b>KPI code</b>	<b>Description</b>
OCE0035	Level of higher education
OCE0041	Number of culture-related job announcements
OCE010	Employment by industry sector
OCE013	“% of cultural professionals employed in the regional cultural sector
OCE0112	Net operating expenses per county for cultural purposes
OCE0113	Net operating expenses per capita for cultural purposes
SUP025	Accommodation capacity
SUP026	Accommodation by reasons to go
SUP027	Number of activities in museums
OCV014	Number of participants in library activities
DEM0031	Museum visits
DEM0032	Cinema visits
DEM0033	Theater performance visits
DEM004	Number of days spent by tourists
DEM005	Number of tourists
DEM006	National identity of tourists

The structure of this report follows the initial Baseline report, thus it presents the situation for the regional level (Nordland County) and the administrative center level (Bodø city) (comprehensive overview may be found in Baseline report). In this report we will not be explaining the same concepts that were explained in the Baseline report. The purpose is to update those figures, where new data for 2024 is available, and discuss the contribution of Bodø2024 to the new status of Bodø and Nordland. Some clauses of the initial report, especially in part 4 – Demand, are addressed in the dedicated reports, as Peoples’ Jury, Social Media analysis, etc. (see Appendix I). In the discussion chapter we elaborate on the changes that have happened after Bodø2024 and argue on how well it responds to Bodø2024 and European Commission’s objectives.

By the time of publishing, data for 2024 is not yet available for the following sub-sections of the Baseline report: 2.1.5 – Income inequality, 3.2.1 – the part on Cultural strategies (still valid), 3.3 – Creative industries, 3.5.1 – Cultural Heritage, 3.5.6 – National Parks and Zoos, 3.5.7 – the part on Outdoor Activities (addressed in Monitor2024’s “Understanding Impacts Through Program Events” report), 3.5.8 – Impact of Covid-19 (no need to update), 3.6 – Lottery, 3.7 – Voluntary work (addressed in Monitor2024’s “Volunteers” and partly in “Cultural Projects as Pathways to Legacy” reports), 3.8 – Religion and philosophy of life, 3.9 – Retail, Restaurants, Pubs, 3.10 – Perceived quality and external recognition by users of the cultural system.

## 2. Basic Economy

The Baseline report presents a comprehensive overview over the economic strength of Nordland County. In this report we present available data for the composition of the labour market, employment trends and job vacancies, education level, workforce by occupation

### 2.1. The economic strength of Nordland County

#### 2.1.1. The labour market

This sub-section examines changes in the labour market composition between 2022 and 2024. Figure 3 and Figure 4 present employment shares by industry for Nordland (excluding Bodø) and Bodø in 2024. Human health and social work activities remain the dominant sector, employing around 23% of workers in both regions, similar to 2022. Overall, the structure of the labour market has remained relatively stable.

Accommodation and food services show increase, with Nordland and Bodø experienced a net increase of 131 (4.58%) and 49 (4.01%) employees respectively. This suggests that increased regional activity has benefited both, Bodø and the wider county. Total employment grew modestly: by 0.9% in Bodø and 0.4% in Nordland.

Table 2 provides a detailed breakdown of changes by industry. The largest declines in percentage occurred in the “Unspecified” category for both, Nordland and Bodø (-11.51% and -11.76% respectively), which might be attributed to a changed approach of data recording. Other industries that showed a decline were “Administrative and support service activities” and “Information and communication” for Nordland (-8.38% and -6.93% respectively) and the largest decline in Bodø occurred in “Information and communication” sector (-7.52%). Conversely, the “Financial and insurance activities” sector saw the largest increase in Nordland (+10.07%), followed by “Electricity, water supply, sewerage, waste management” and “Other service activities” sector (+7.86% and +6.15% respectively), while Bodø’s growth was attributed to “Agriculture, forestry, fishing” (+18.67%), “Electricity, water supply, sewerage, waste management” (+14.42%), and “Manufacture” (+11.03%) sectors.

### Employment by industry in Nordland county excluding Bodø municipality, by number of employees

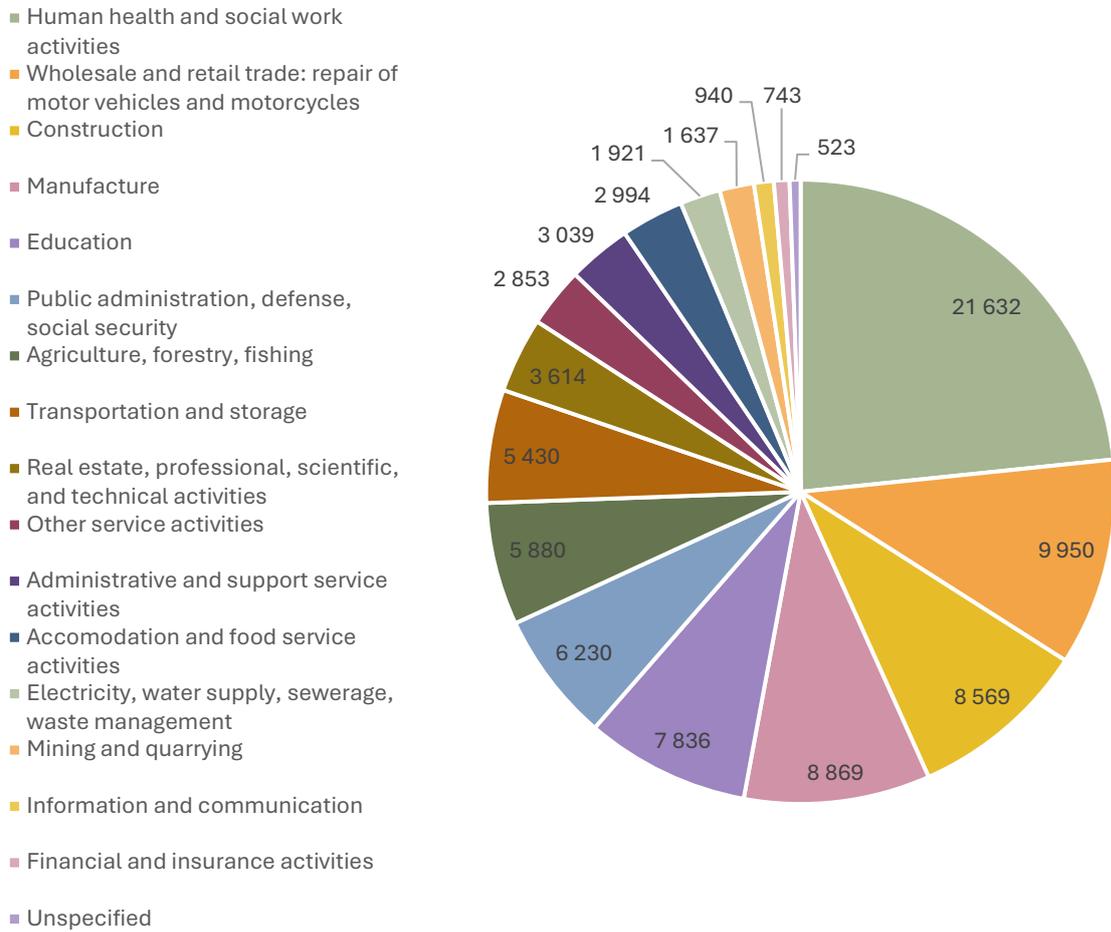


Figure 3. Employment by industry in Nordland County excluding Bodø municipality in 2024 (SSB, 2025, Table 07984)

### Employment by industry in Bodø municipality, by number of employees

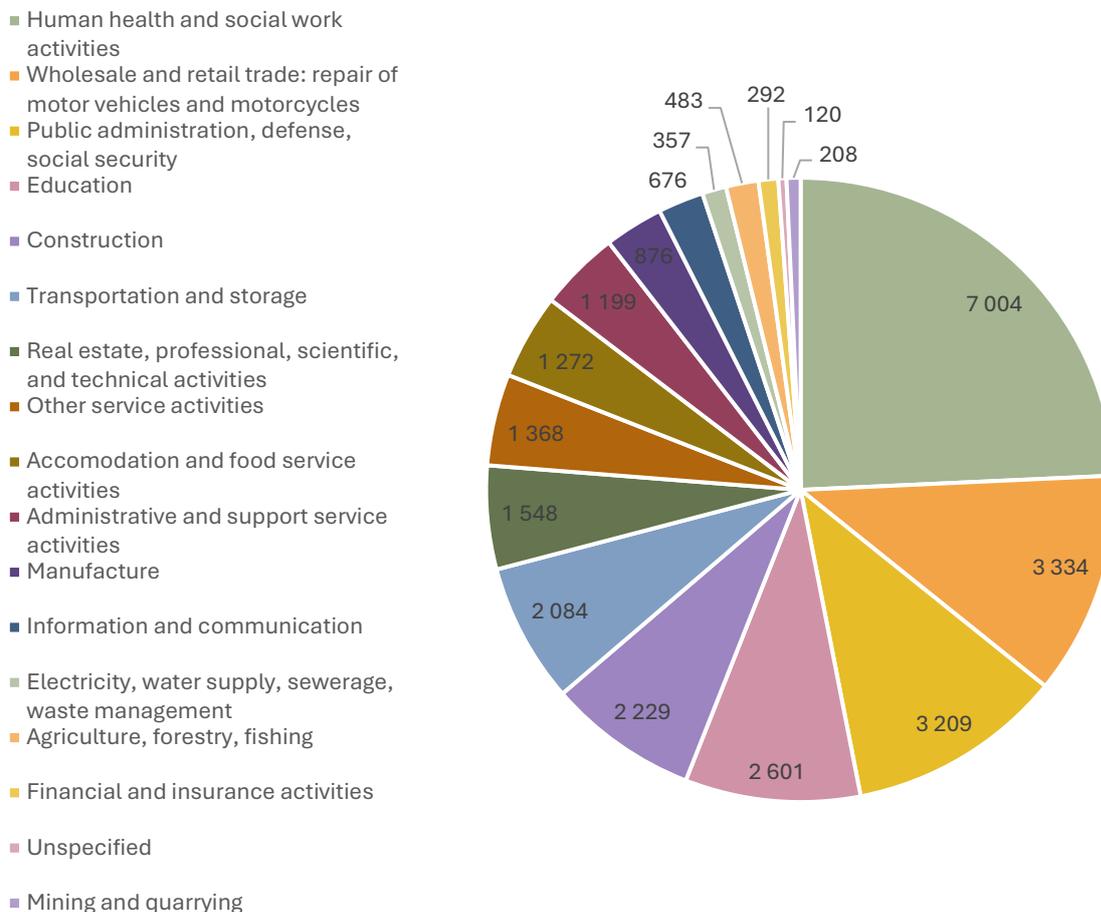


Figure 4. Employment by industry in Bodø municipality in 2024 (SSB, 2025, Table 07984)

Table 2. Changes in employment by industry (SSB, 2025, Table 07984)

	Nordland	change, %, Nordland	Bodø	change, %, Bodø
Human health and social work activities	291	1.36%	88	1.27%
Wholesale and retail trade: repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	-345	-3.35%	-48	-1.42%
Construction	-261	-2.96%	-116	-4.95%
Manufacture	156	1.79%	87	11.03%
Education	95	1.23%	15	0.58%
Public administration, defense, social security	-50	-0.80%	-83	-2.52%
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	125	2.17%	76	18.67%
Transportation and storage	127	2.39%	84	4.20%
Real estate, professional, scientific, and technical activities	116	3.32%	11	0.72%
Administrative and support service activities	-75	-8.38%	20	1.70%

Other service activities	-10	6.15%	62	4.75%
Accommodation and food service activities	131	4.58%	49	4.01%
Electricity, water supply, sewerage, waste management	140	7.86%	45	14.42%
Mining and quarrying	34	2.12%	1	0.48%
Information and communication	-70	-6.93%	-55	-7.52%
Financial and insurance activities	68	10.07%	18	6.57%
Unspecified	-68	-11.51%	-16	-11.76%

Figure 5 illustrates changes in employment by industry in Bodø between 2022 and 2024 in more detail, measured in the number of employees. Service-related industries and accommodation, which could be influenced by increased cultural activity in the city, show modest employment growth, while wholesale and retail trade experienced a slight decline.

The Baseline report presented unemployment rates for Norway and Nordland for 2011–2021, highlighting the record-high levels during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. Updated figures for 2022–2024 (Table 3) show that unemployment rates in Norway have stabilized at historically low levels, and Nordland follows the same trend.

Table 3. Unemployed, thousands (NAV, 2025, Helt ledige; SSB, 2025, Table 13563)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Norway	74.2	65.5	63.4	141.9	88.8	52.2	53.1	59.8
Nordland	2.6	2.4	2.3	4.6	2.7	1.7	1.6	1.9
% of total workforce (Nordland)	1.44	1.33	1.28	2.57	1.51	0.93	0.91	1.07

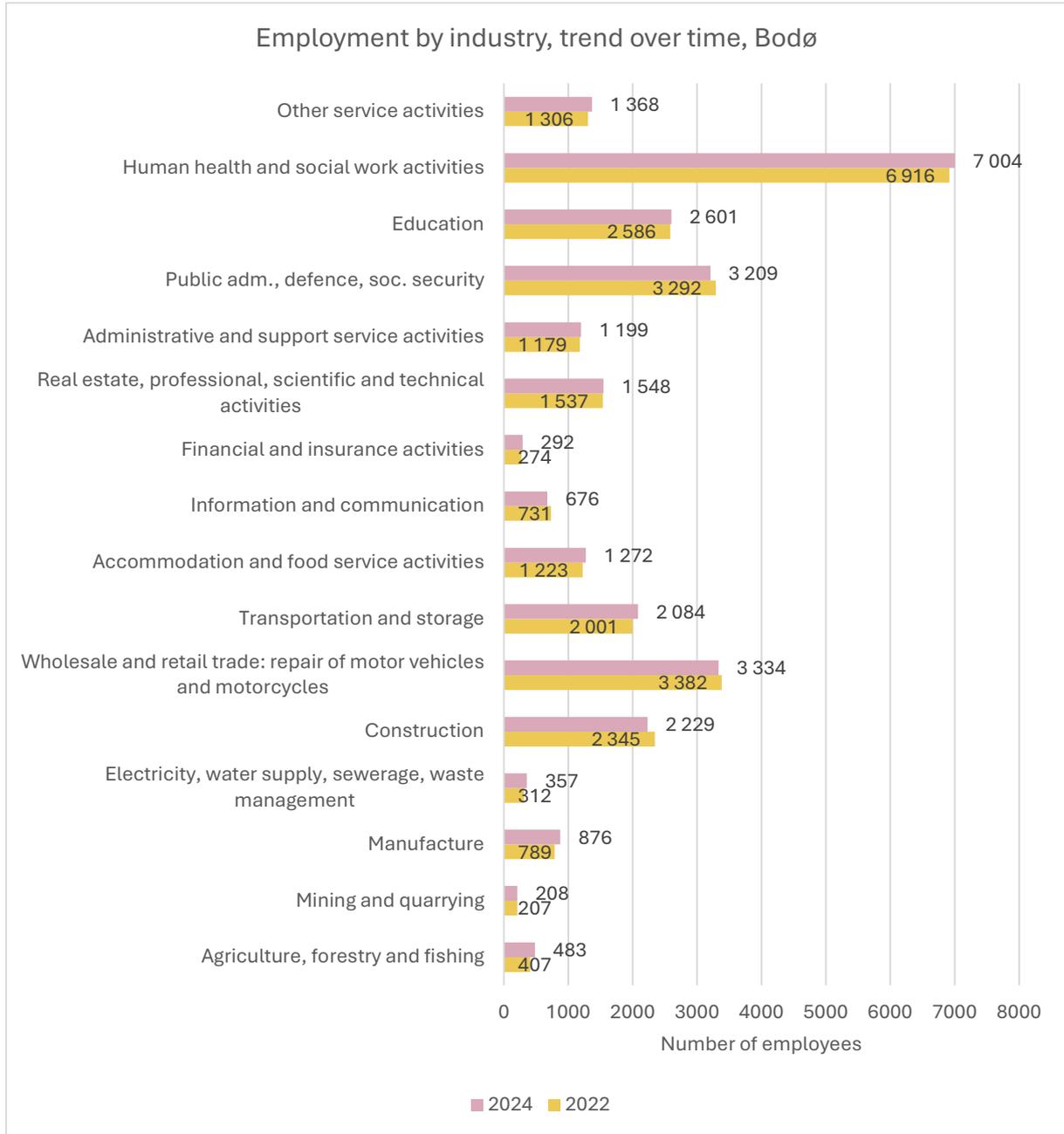


Figure 5. Employment by industry over time, Bodø (SSB, 2025, Table 07984)

Table 4 and Figure 6 present data on publicly advertised job vacancies in Norway and Nordland, alongside two other counties for comparison, as well as vacancies in arts, sports, and culture occupations in Nordland and Troms og Finnmark. Overall, the total number of vacancies remains higher than pre-pandemic levels, indicating sustained labour demand despite a decline from the 2022 peak (575,000) to 491,000 in 2024.

Table 4. Job vacancies, thousands (NAV, 2025, Ledige stillinger)

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Norway	280,360	413,047	420,370	418,530	544,981	575,165	468,233	491,431

Nordland	14,482	16,694	16,011	15,332	23,361	28,138	25,265	24,544
Troms and Finnmark	16,318	19,784	20,251	19,444	28,305	31,738	30,415	30,632
Vestfold and Telemark	18,963	25,299	25,739	24,451	36,403	39,468	33,618	33,982

For arts, sports, and culture occupations, Nordland experienced a sharp increase leading up to the title year: vacancies more than doubled from 71 in 2020 to 156 in 2022, nearly matching Troms og Finnmark (162). This surge likely reflects temporary demand related to Bodø2024 preparations. Although vacancies declined after 2022, Nordland’s 2024 level (101) remains above pre-Bodø2024 figures, while Troms og Finnmark stayed relatively stable over the six-year period (180 in 2019 vs 164 in 2024). At the national level, the number of vacancies in these occupations followed a similar pattern, peaking at 4,198 in 2022 - up from 2,066 in 2020 - before easing to 3,246 in 2024, which still represents a higher demand than before the pandemic.

The ECoC year has led to a 40% increase in culture-related job vacancies in Nordland. However, most of this growth occurred in 2022, and longer-term tracking is needed to determine whether the trend will be sustained. While the isolated growth rate appears impressive, it seems modest when viewed in relation to the overall increase in job vacancies. In 2024, culture-related vacancies accounted for only 0.4% of total job vacancies in Nordland—down from 0.49% in 2019. In comparison, the decline in neighbouring Troms and Finnmark was even more pronounced, with culture-related vacancies dropping from 1.1% to 0.5% of total job vacancies in 2024.

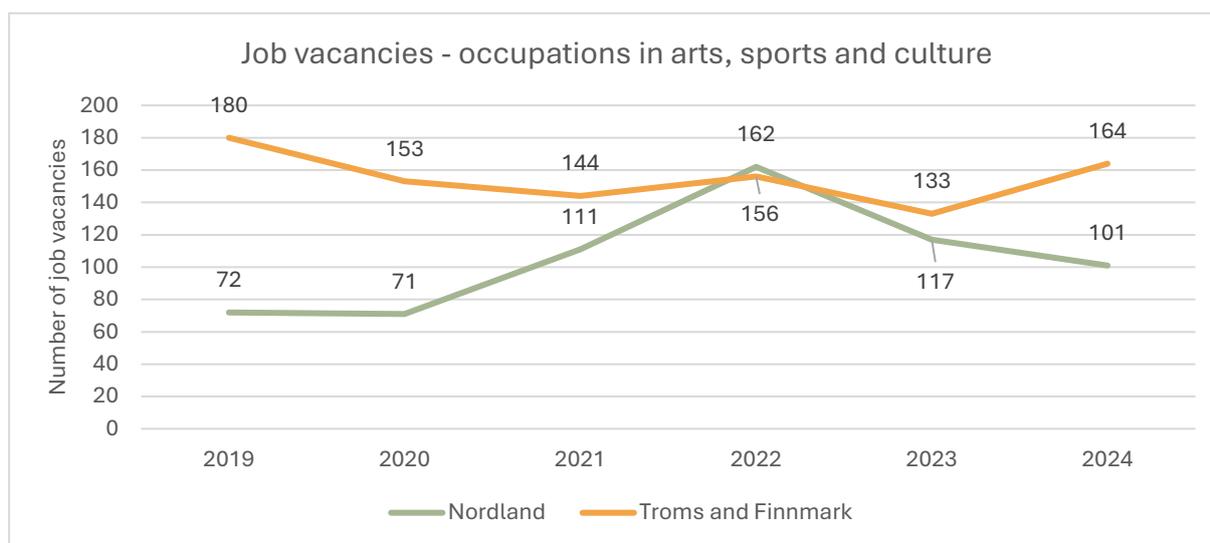


Figure 6. Job vacancies in arts, sports and culture (NAV, 2025, Ledige stillinger)

### 2.1.2. The level of education

This sub-section examines changes in educational attainment among Nordland's adult population (16+ years old) between 2022 and 2024. Figure 7 and Figure 8<sup>1</sup> illustrate the comparison for Nordland (excluding Bodø) and Bodø.

In both regions, the share of people with higher education increased: in Nordland from 23.6% in 2022 to 25.3% in 2024, and in Bodø from 39.8% to 41%. Correspondingly, the proportion of individuals with only school-level education (basic and upper secondary) declined.

The increase in higher education is driven mainly by growth in long higher education programs, particularly in Bodø, where the share rose from 11.8% to 12.8%. Nordland also saw a similar trend, though from a lower base (4.9% to 6%). This suggests that while both regions are moving toward higher educational attainment, Bodø maintains a significant lead, reflecting the major role of Nord University. The decline in upper secondary education in both areas indicates a shift toward more advanced qualifications, which may have implications for regional labor market dynamics and skill availability.

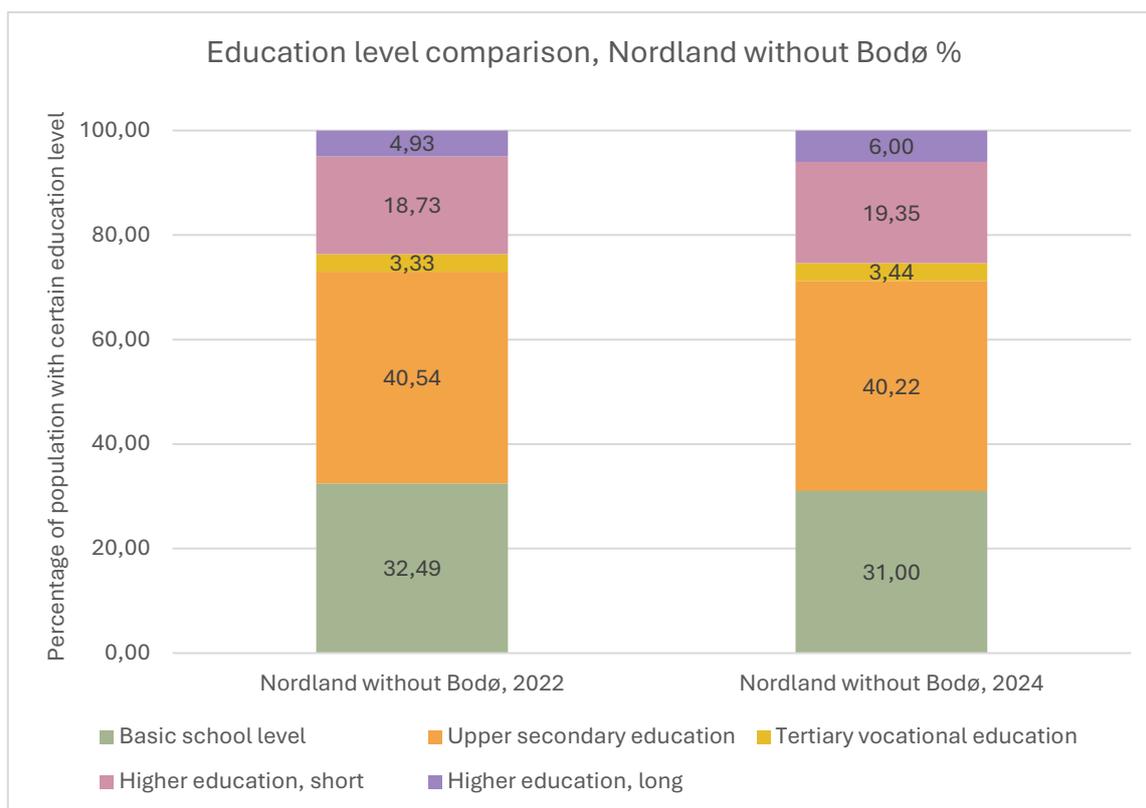


Figure 7. Education level in Nordland (SSB, 2025, Table 09429)

<sup>1</sup> Minor differences in numbers between Baseline report figure 2.3 and the present report's figures 7 and 8 are due to changes in SSB calculations

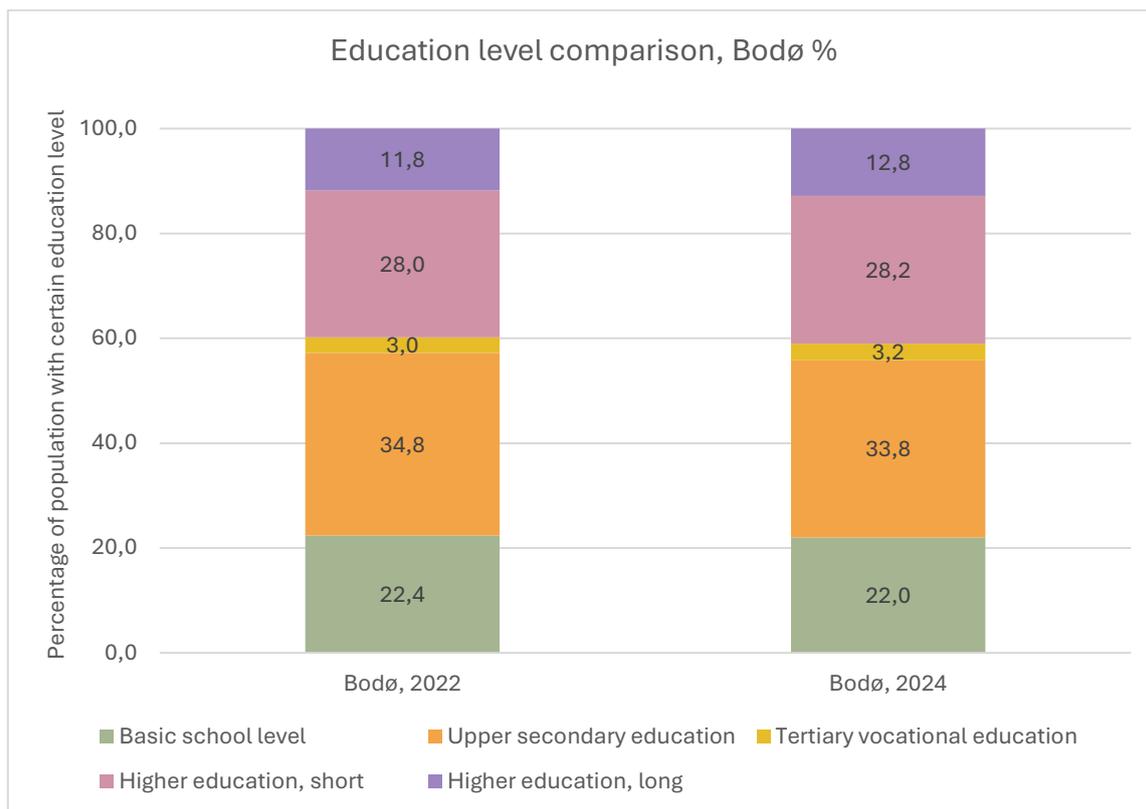


Figure 8. Education level in Bodø (SSB, 2025, Table 09429)

Comparison of the dynamics of educational attainment between men and women shows that in 2024, more individuals of both genders pursued higher education compared to 2022 (Figure 9). However, the patterns differ by gender: the proportion of men remaining at the basic school and upper secondary levels increased compared to 2022, while the proportion of women at these levels decreased. This overall growth may partly be explained by an increase of 937 adults in the population during this period.

Table 5 provides a detailed breakdown of these changes, comparing 2022 with 2024. The largest increase in absolute numbers is among men enrolled in long higher education programs (more than four years), with 326 more participants in 2024 than in 2022. The second and third largest increases are among women in short and long higher education programs, with 295 and 228 more participants, respectively. In contrast, the largest decrease is among women in upper secondary education, with 180 fewer participants compared to 2022.

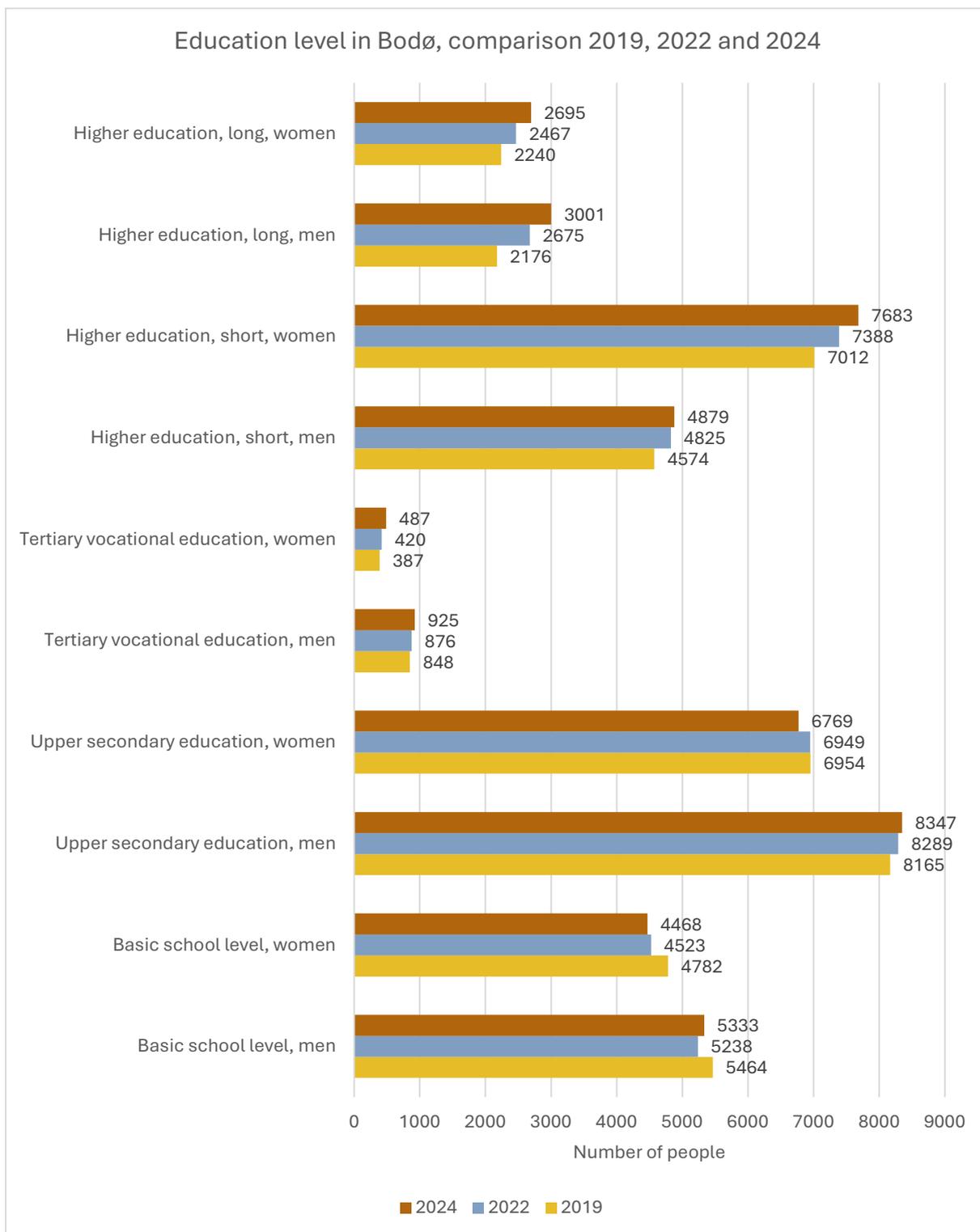


Figure 9. Dynamics of education level in Bodø, 2019, 2022 vs. 2024 (SSB, 2025, Table 09429)

Table 5. Dynamics of educational attainment between men and women in Bodø (SSB, 2025, Table 09429)

Education level	Change, number of people, 2022 - 2024	Change, %, 2022 - 2024
Basic school level, men	95	1.81%
Basic school level, women	-55	-1.22%

Upper secondary education, men	58	0.70%
Upper secondary education, women	-180	-2.59%
Tertiary vocational education, men	49	5.59%
Tertiary vocational education, women	67	15.95%
Higher education, short, men	54	1.12%
Higher education, short, women	295	3.99%
Higher education, long, men	326	12.19%
Higher education, long, women	228	9.24%

### 2.1.3. Occupational sector

Figure 10 and Figure 11 compare the occupational distribution of the workforce in Nordland (excluding Bodø) and in Bodø for 2022 and 2024, based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO). Overall, the composition of the workforce has remained relatively stable, with only minor shifts between categories.

In Nordland (excluding Bodø), the largest increases are observed among Professionals (+0.42%, +471 people) and Technicians and Associate Professionals (including Military) (+0.27%, +297 people). Managers also show a modest rise (+0.20%, +216 people). The most notable declines occur in Craft and Related Trades Workers (-0.32%, -258 people) and the Unspecified/Unidentifiable category (-0.42%, -362 people), likely reflecting improved reporting rather than actual job loss.

In Bodø, the strongest growth is among Professionals (+0.66%, +258 people), followed by a smaller increase in Service and Sales Workers (+0.18%, +104 people). The largest reductions are seen in Elementary Occupations (-0.31%, -78 people), Clerical Support Workers (-0.27%, -63 people), and Craft and Related Trades Workers (-0.25%, -54 people).

These patterns suggest a gradual shift away from manual and low-skilled roles toward knowledge-based and service-oriented occupations, consistent with broader structural changes in the labour market.

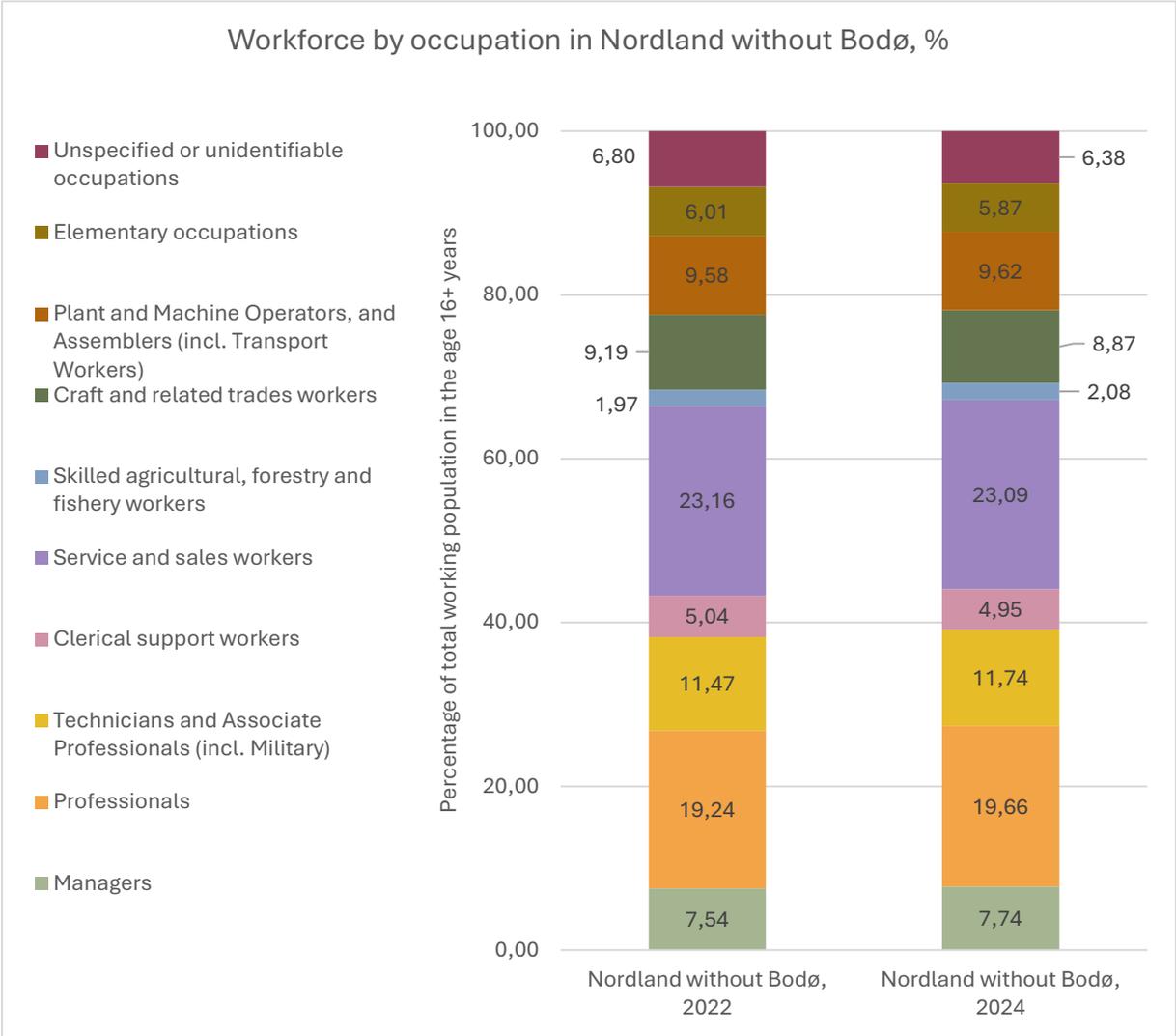


Figure 10. Workforce by occupation in Nordland (SSB, 2025, Table 11619)

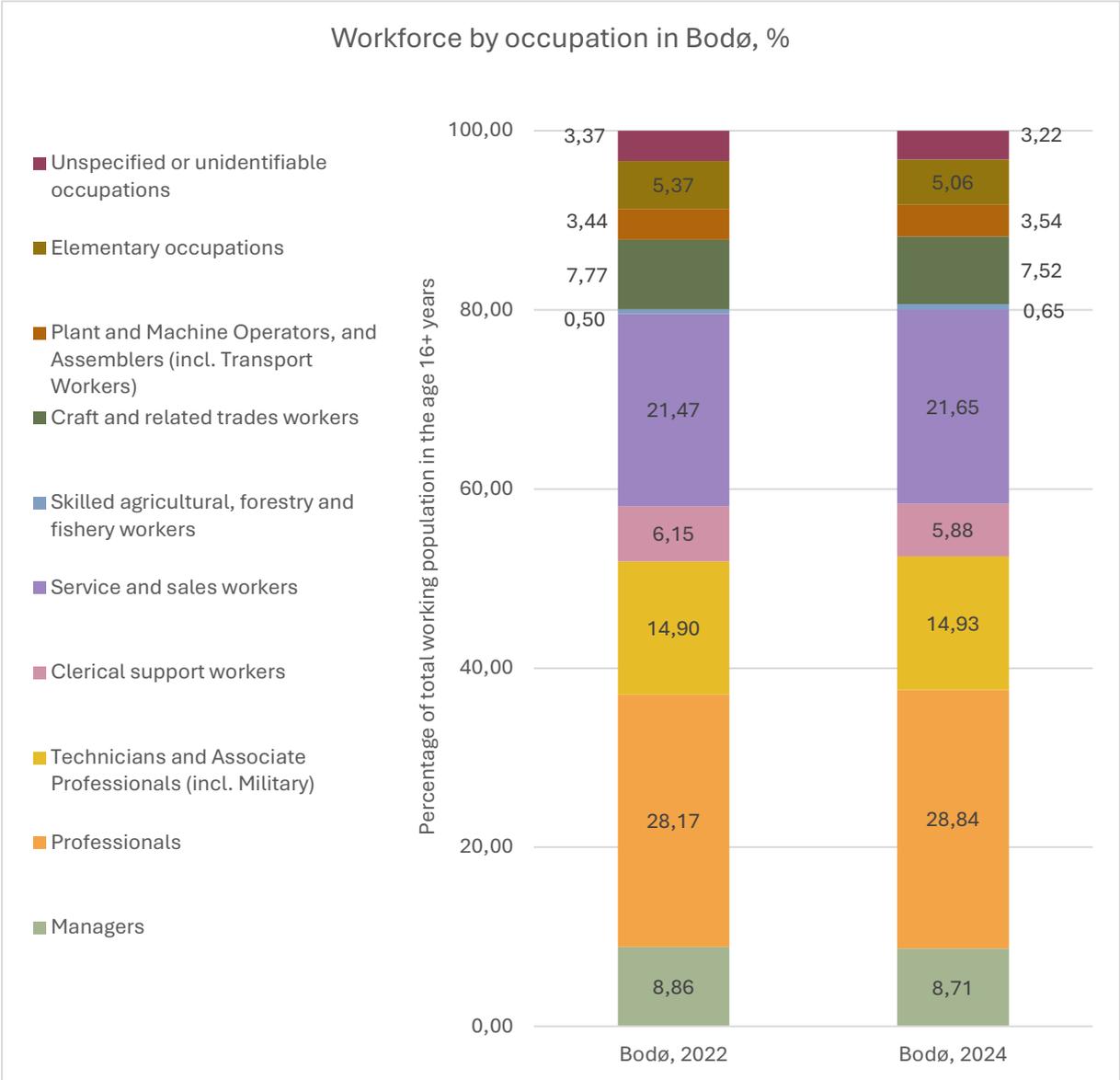


Figure 11. Workforce by occupation in Bodø (SSB, 2025, Table 11619)

Figure 12 below illustrates updated employment trend by occupation in Bodø for the years 2017, 2022 and 2024.

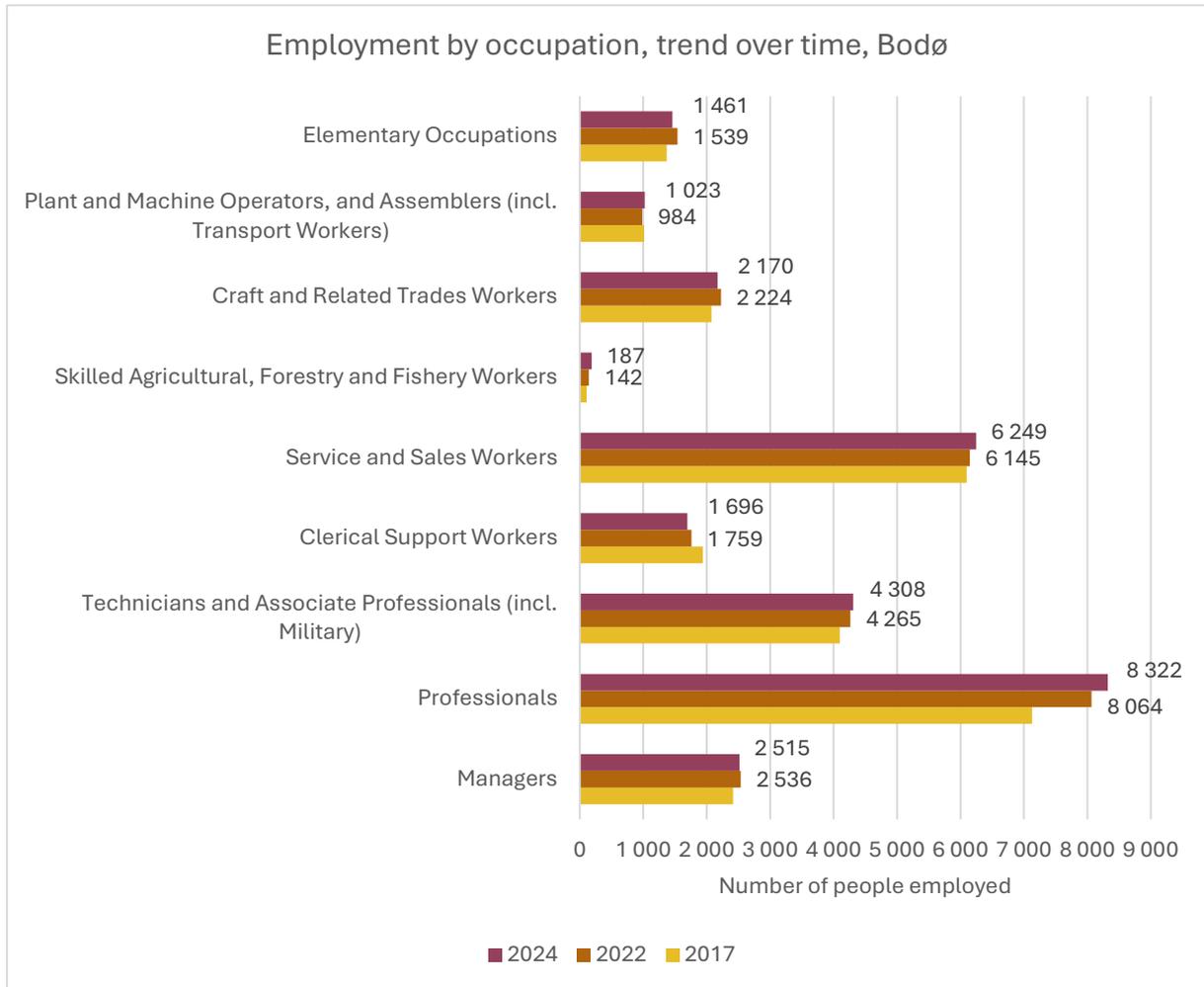


Figure 12. Employment trend by occupation in Bodø (SSB, 2025, Table 11619)

#### 2.1.4. Tourism

This sub-section presents detailed statistics from the tourism sector in Nordland and compares them with other counties. The figures below show the number of incoming Norwegian and international tourists, both annually and by selected months, statistics regarding guest nights, national identity of tourists.

Figure 13 indicates that growth in Norwegian tourist numbers is not uniform across the country but concentrated in specific regions. For example, Agder and Troms and Finnmark experienced slight declines between 2022 and 2024, while Oslo grew by about 4.8% and Nordland by 24.6%. In contrast, the increase in international tourists (Figure 14) is a nationwide trend. Compared with 2022, Nordland saw an increase of nearly 44%, and Troms og Finnmark grew by about 38.5%.

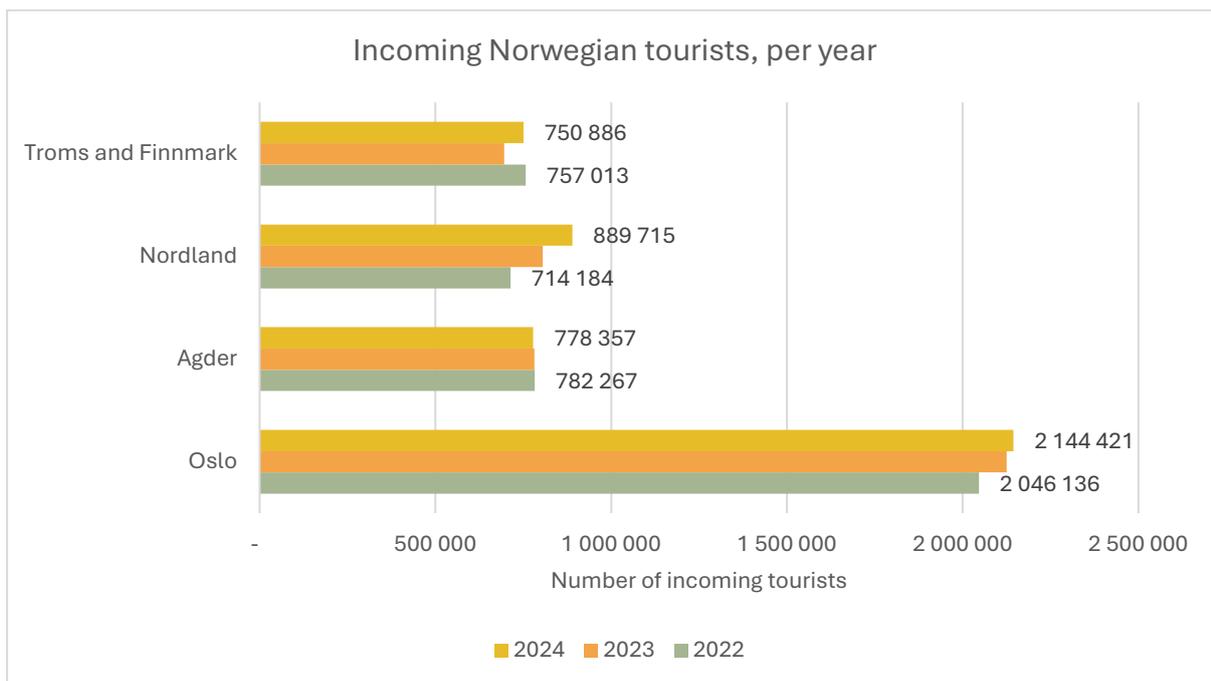


Figure 13. Incoming Norwegian tourists per year (SSB, 2025, Table 14165)

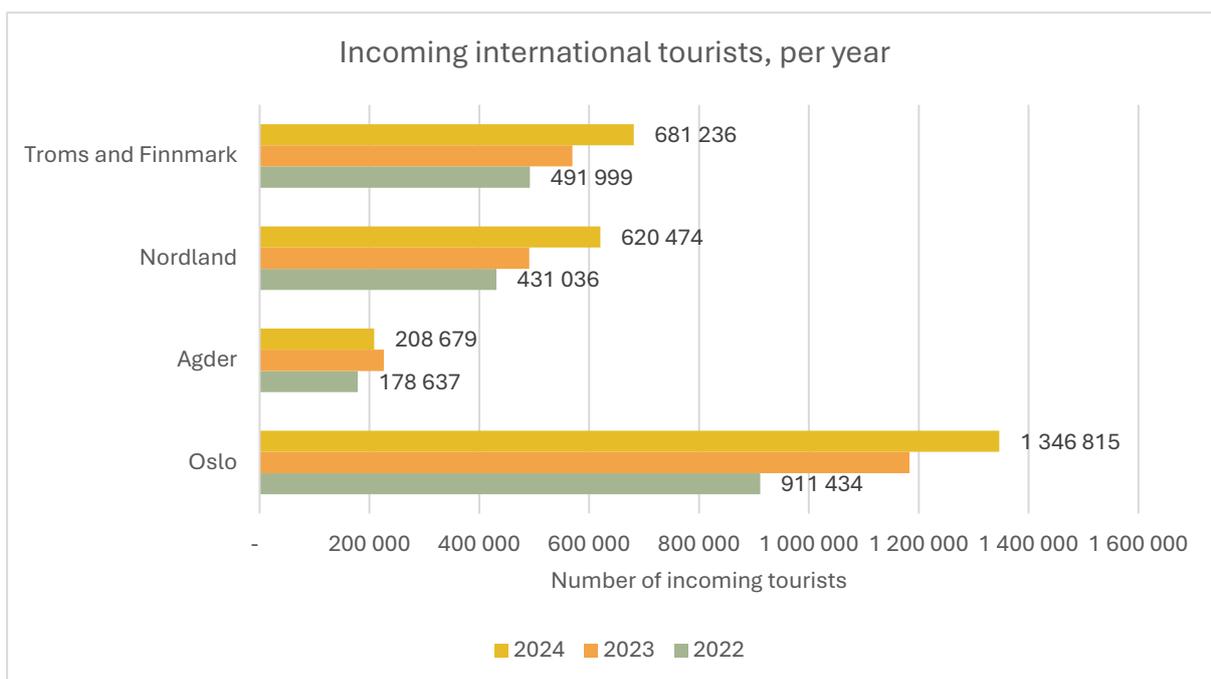


Figure 14. Incoming international tourists per year (SSB, 2025, Table 14165)

To understand when growth is most pronounced, Figure 15 and Figure 16 present monthly data for Norwegian and international tourists. In February 2022, Nordland received significantly fewer Norwegian tourists than Troms og Finnmark. However, by February 2024—the opening month of Bodø2024—Nordland surpassed its northern neighbour. Even before Bodø2024, Nordland attracted more Norwegian tourists during summer: in August 2022, Nordland had about 15% more visitors than Troms og Finnmark, and by August 2024, the gap widened to 24%.

The pattern for international tourists differs. Troms og Finnmark consistently attracts large numbers in winter, likely due to Northern Lights tourism, and the number of visitors in February 2025 was about 190% higher than in February 2022. For Nordland, February remains a low season, but the growth is striking: February 2025 saw almost 300% more international tourists than February 2022. Summer remains strong for both regions, with August visits increasing by roughly 25% in Nordland and 26% in Troms og Finnmark between 2022 and 2024.

These trends suggest that Bodø2024 amplified winter tourism in Nordland while reinforcing its strong summer position, whereas Troms og Finnmark continues to dominate Northern Lights tourism.

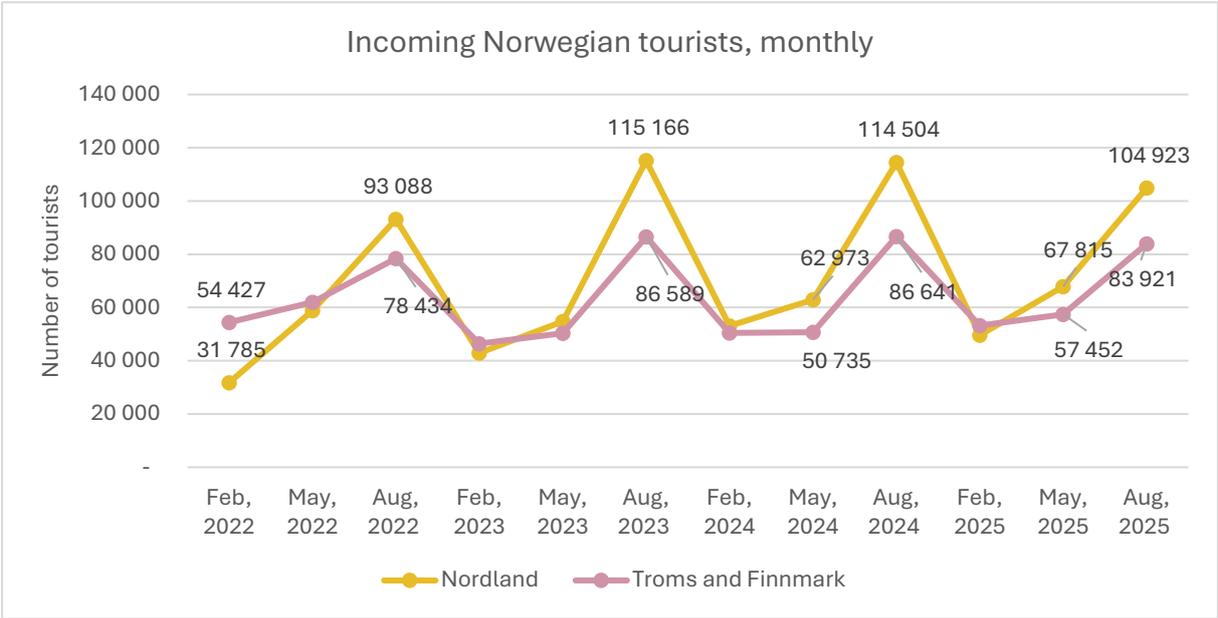


Figure 15. Incoming Norwegian tourists, monthly (SSB, 2025, Table 14165)



Figure 16. Incoming international tourists, monthly (SSB, 2025, Table 14165)

The figures and table below present the number of overnight stays (guest nights) in hotels for Nordland, Troms og Finnmark, Oslo, and selected other counties. Figure 17 illustrates the trend for Norwegian tourists, Figure 18 for international tourists, and Table 6 summarizes the percentage change in overnight stays between 2019 and 2024.

The figures show that the number of guest nights by Norwegian tourists grew slightly in most counties, with more significant increases in Vestland (+19%) and Nordland (+31%). Oslo and Troms og Finnmark saw only marginal growth (+2%). The trend for international tourists varies more across counties: Akershus and Vestland recorded declines (-6% and -3%), Trøndelag saw a modest increase (+16%), while Nordland experienced a sharp rise of 79%, the highest among all counties. Troms og Finnmark also grew strongly (+28%), and Oslo increased by +17%. Table 6 confirms these patterns and highlights that Nordland had the largest increase in guest nights for both Norwegian and international tourists.

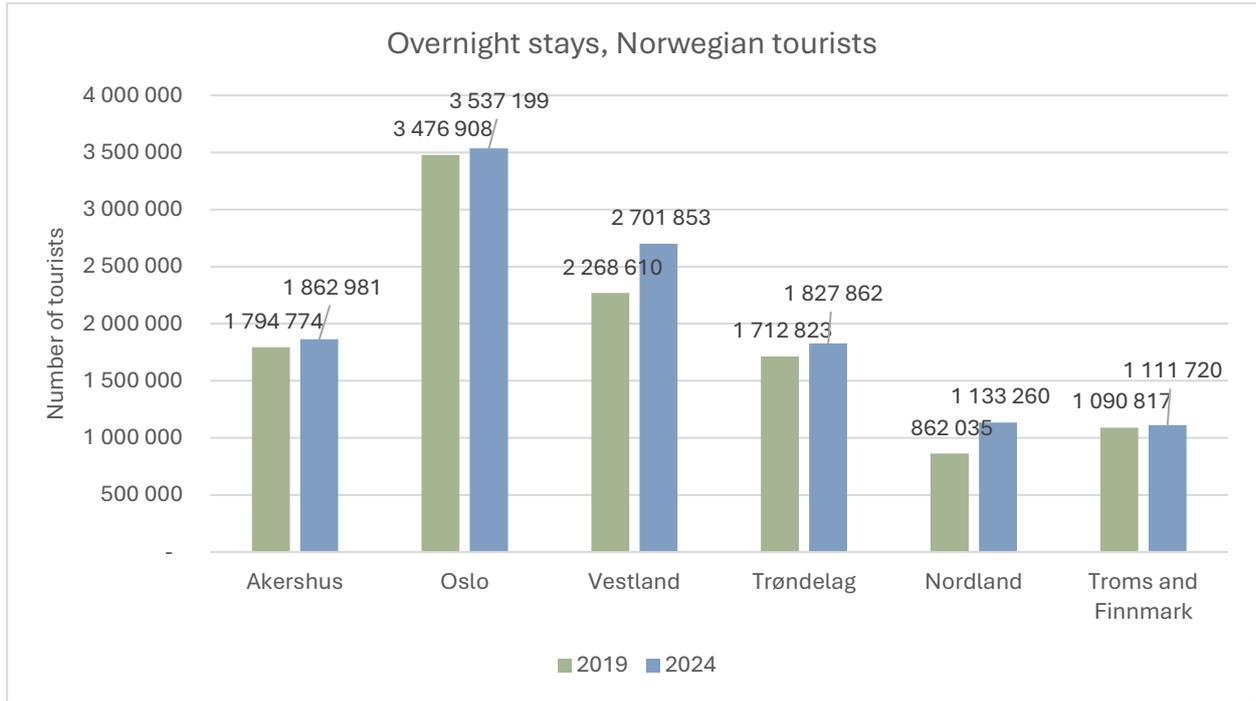


Figure 17. Overnight stays by Norwegian tourists (SSB, 2025, Table 14163)



Figure 18. Overnight stays by international tourists (SSB, 2025, Table 14163)

Table 6. Percentage change in overnight stays between 2019 and 2024 (SSB, 2025, Table 14163)

	Norwegian guests	International guests
Akershus	4%	-6%
Oslo	2%	17%
Vestland	19%	-3%
Trøndelag	7%	16%

Nordland	31%	79%
Troms and Finnmark	2%	28%

Finally, Figure 19 below presents statistics on national identity of tourists and compares 2022 with 2024. The top 10 countries of origin remained unchanged, but their shares shifted. In 2024 there were less German, French, Danish and Dutch tourists coming to Nordland, but the share of tourists from the United States, Finland, and the UK increased.

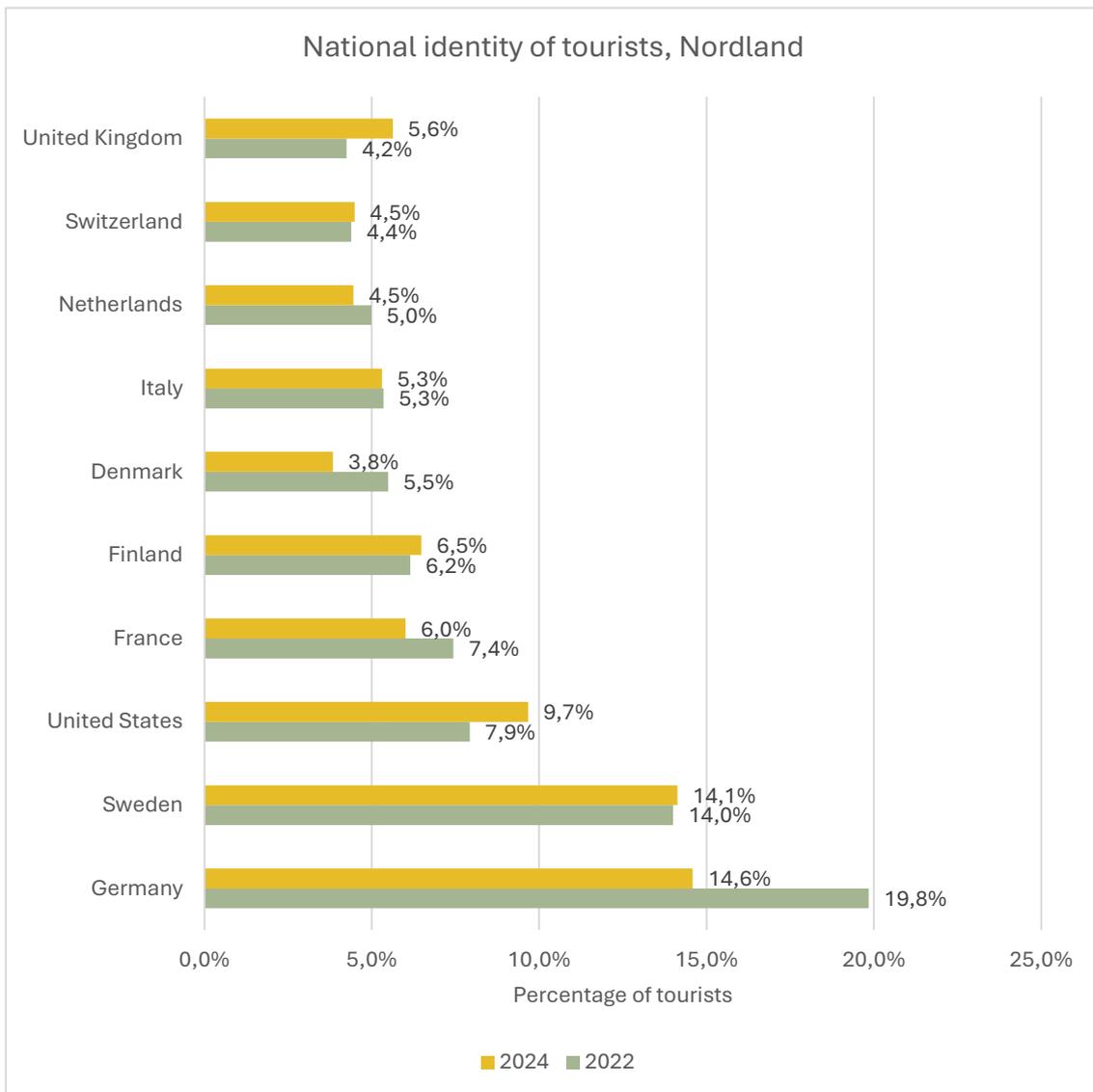


Figure 19. National identity of tourists, Nordland (SSB, 2025, Table 14163)

### 3. Status of the cultural system in Nordland after Bodø2024

This section of the report highlights changes in the cultural offer (supply) in Nordland and its capital city, Bodø, after Bodø2024. Figure 20 below provides an overview of how we define the Cultural System. The illustration has not been modified, compared to the Baseline report, published in January 2024, highlighting the state of the cultural system in Nordland before Bodø2024, as there are no significant structural changes in the composition of the cultural system. It still includes: Creative industries; County, region, and city attractions; Visitor infrastructure; Retail; Cultural education capacity and cultural strategies of cities, and religion and philosophy of life. While some culture-related activities clearly fall under one of these sectors, others can be placed between two sectors. For example, historic buildings are city attractions, but theaters are both city attractions and a part of the creative industry.

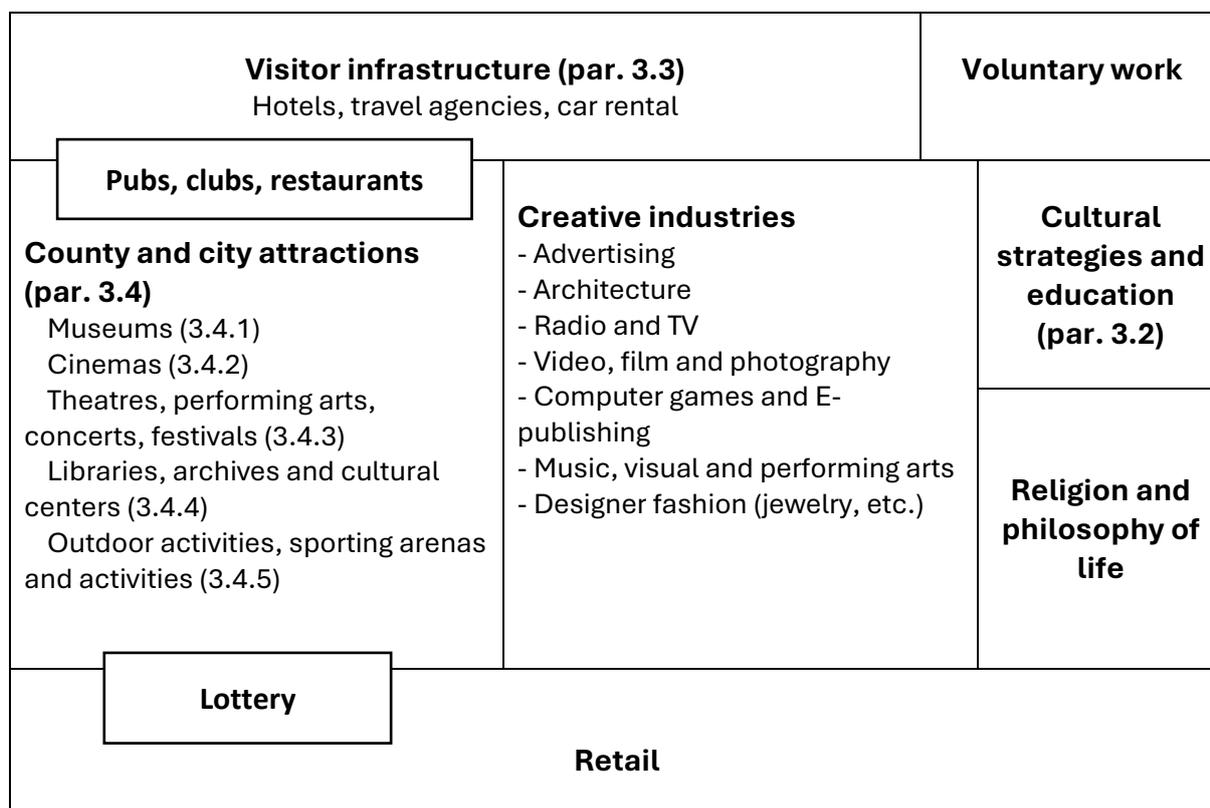


Figure 20. Sectors composing the cultural system of Nordland

In the following section of the report, we would like to give an overview of the cultural system in Nordland. First, we provide some background information about how the cultural system in Norway is financed and what major components it has, and what cultural strategies are adopted. Further, we provide an overview over major Nordland County and Bodø city attractors, describe visitor infrastructure, creative industries, and retail (based on the Figure 20 above).

### 3.1. Public spending on culture (Norway vs. Nordland)

According to SSB.no (SSB, Table 13135), Net operating expenses for the cultural sector as a percentage of the municipality's total net operating expenses slightly decreased to 4,2% in 2024, down by 0.1 percentage points from 2021. For Nordland the share remained unchanged at 3,9% of the municipality's total expenses. Total municipal net operating expenses increased by around 14% for both, Norway as a whole and Nordland. However Net operating expenses for the cultural sector per capita grew for the whole country (from 2897 kr in 2021 to 3364 kr in 2024) and for Nordland (from 2972 kr in 2021 to 3508 kr in 2024), considering that Nordland experienced a small population growth between 2021 and 2024. This means that total municipal spending grew significantly faster than cultural spending, which reduced culture's share of the total budget, even though cultural spending per capita increased.

Total net operating expenses for cultural purposes in Norway rose by 16% in 2024 compared to 2021 (Figure 21). The only categories showing a decline were art production (-2%) and other cultural purposes (-10%).

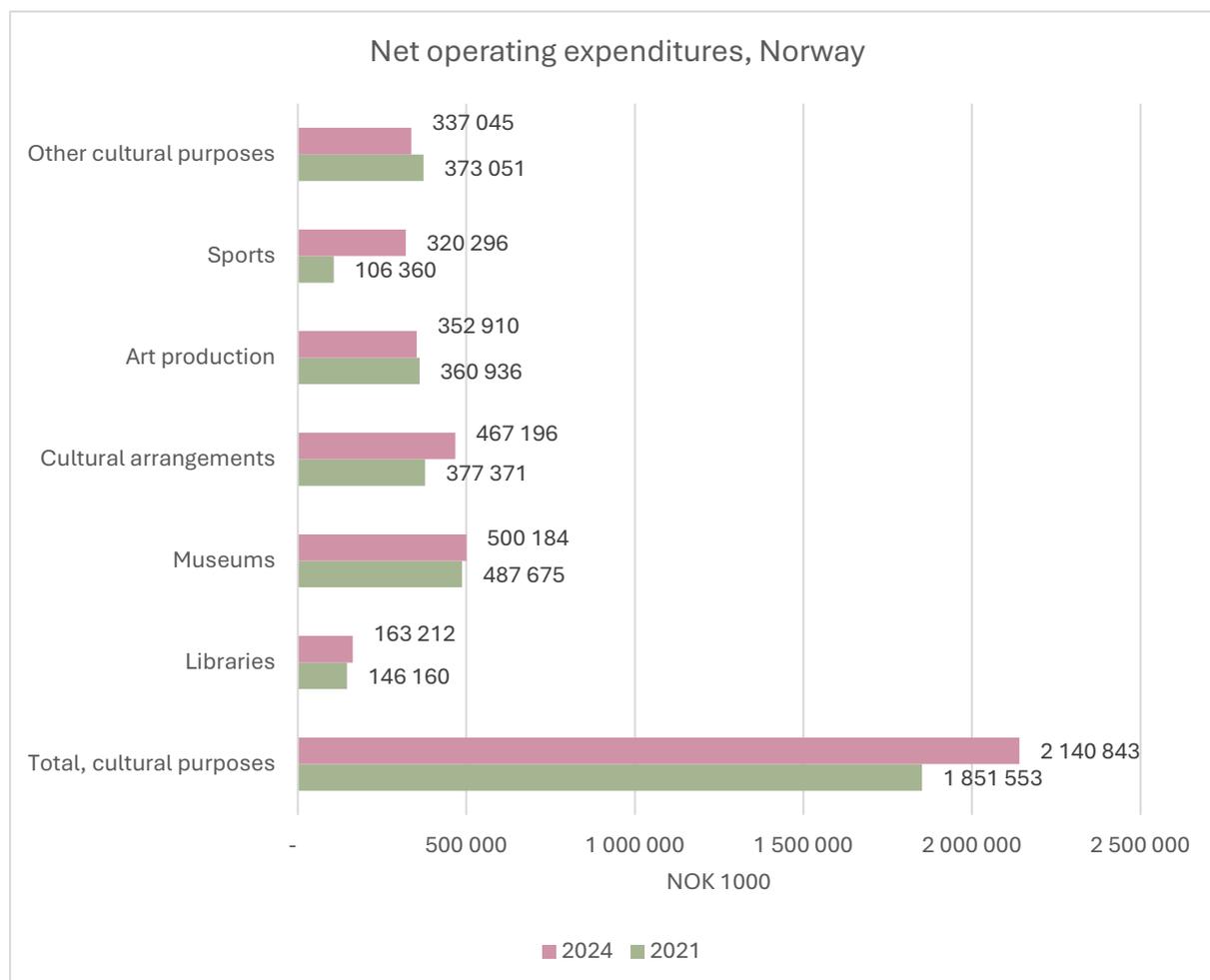


Figure 21. Net operating expenses for cultural purposes in Norway (SSB, 2025, Table 12064)

Table 7 presents percentage changes in net operating expenses for cultural purposes by county between 2021 and 2024. Some counties, such as Innlandet, show large fluctuations, which may reflect changes in reporting practices. Overall, Nordland’s total cultural spending decreased slightly (−1.2%), while Troms and Finnmark saw an increase of 18%. However, according to SSB numbers per capita (SSB, 2025, Table 12264), Nordland County is among the highest in Norway, yet decreased compared to 2019, which does not comply with the country’s overall growing trend.

Table 7. Changes in net operating expenses for cultural purposes between 2021 and 2024 (SSB, 2025, Table 12064)

	Total, cultural purposes	Libraries	Museums	Cultural arrangements	Art production	Sports	Other cultural purposes
Innlandet	-9.0%	22.2%	6.4%	494.6%	-92.8%	-115.0%	-65.9%
Trøndelag	1.2%	13.0%	4.6%	17.4%	21.5%	23.2%	-47.4%
Nordland	-1.2%	19.5%	21.0%	-43.6%	10.7%	-1.9%	1.3%
Troms and Finnmark	18.0%	18.0%	7.6%	-9.2%	15.5%	85.1%	38.3%

If compared with the national level, Nordland County’s cultural spending remains among the lowest in Norway (Figure 22):

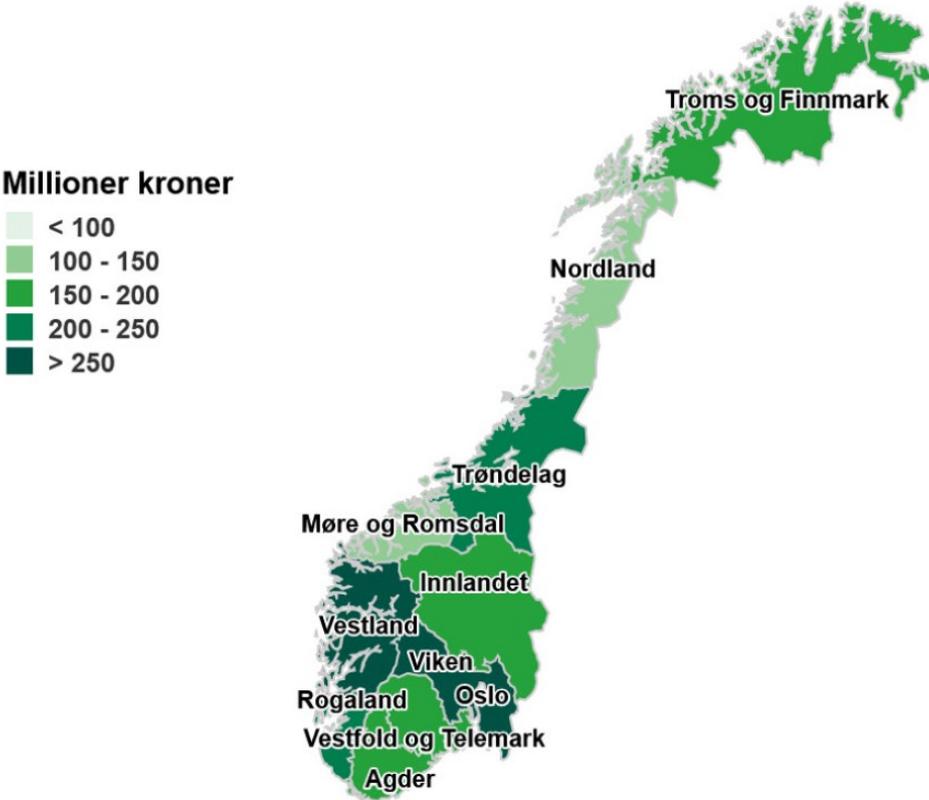


Figure 22. Net operating expenses for cultural purposes in the county municipalities, million Kroner (SSB, 2025, Kulturstatistikk, Offentlige utgifter til kultur)

In 2024, 2.8% of all employed persons in Norway had their main job in cultural and creative industries, down 0.2 percentage points from 2021. Table 8 below illustrates the number of people employed in cultural and creative industries by county, including self-employed people. The total number of employed in these industries increased by 4.7% between 2021 and 2024, but growth varied by county. For example, Nordland recorded a 5.2% increase, slightly above the national average of 4.7%.

Figure 23 presents detailed employment statistics within the cultural and creative industries in Norway. The highest growth by sub-sector was observed in Video Games (+124%), Visual Arts (+80%), and Music (+69%). Meanwhile, Literature, Cultural Education, and Architecture showed the lowest growth rates.

Table 8. The number of employees in cultural and creative industries by county (SSB, 2025, Table 9, Kulturstatistikk)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Change, %, 2021-2024
Total	84980	88630	92978	93560	92831	4.7%
Viken	11668	12113	12695	13076	13036	7.6%
Oslo	34482	36293	38131	37805	37012	2.0%
Innlandet	3689	3711	3878	3901	3846	3.6%
Vestfold and Telemark	4064	4224	4430	4436	4321	2.3%
Agder	3263	3446	3576	3596	3672	6.6%
Rogaland	5131	5317	5636	5914	5963	12.1%
Vestland	8600	9047	9422	9602	9540	5.4%
Møre and Romsdal	2353	2488	2542	2590	2660	6.9%
Trøndelag	6193	6340	6727	6793	6814	7.5%
Nordland	2647	2726	2928	2872	2868	5.2%
Troms and Finnmark	2855	2891	2981	2942	3061	5.9%

### Employment within the cultural and creative industries, Norway

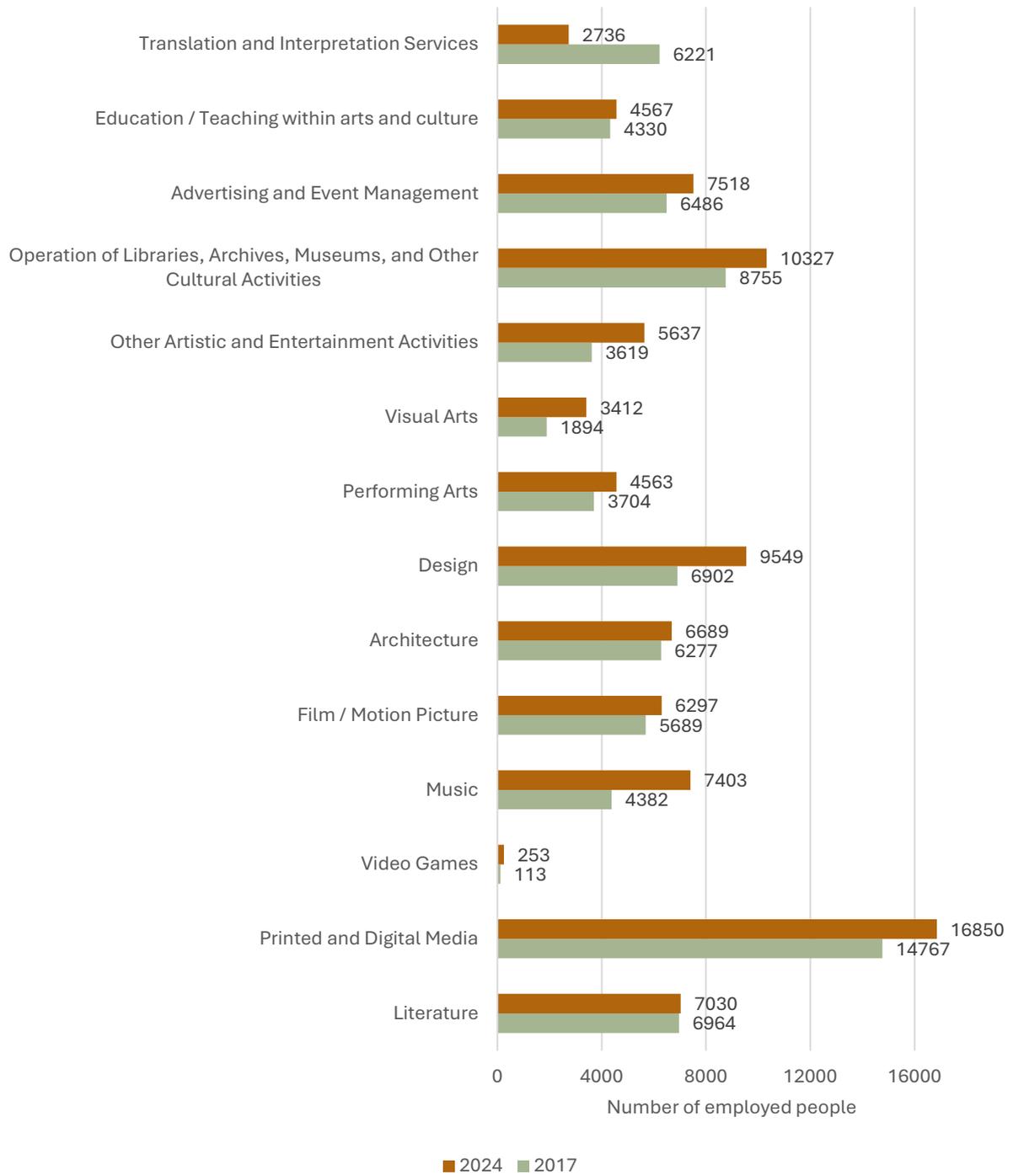


Figure 23. Employment within the cultural and creative industries, 2017 vs. 2024 (SSB, 2025, Table 6, Kulturstatistikk)

Specific numbers for Nordland are given in Figure 24 (based on tables 10-23, Kulturstatistikk). The highest growth by sub-sector was observed in Other Artistic and Entertainment Activities (+38.7%), Advertising and Event Management (+22.1%), and Design (+16.9%). Meanwhile, Architecture, and Printed and Digital Media showed the highest decrease rates.

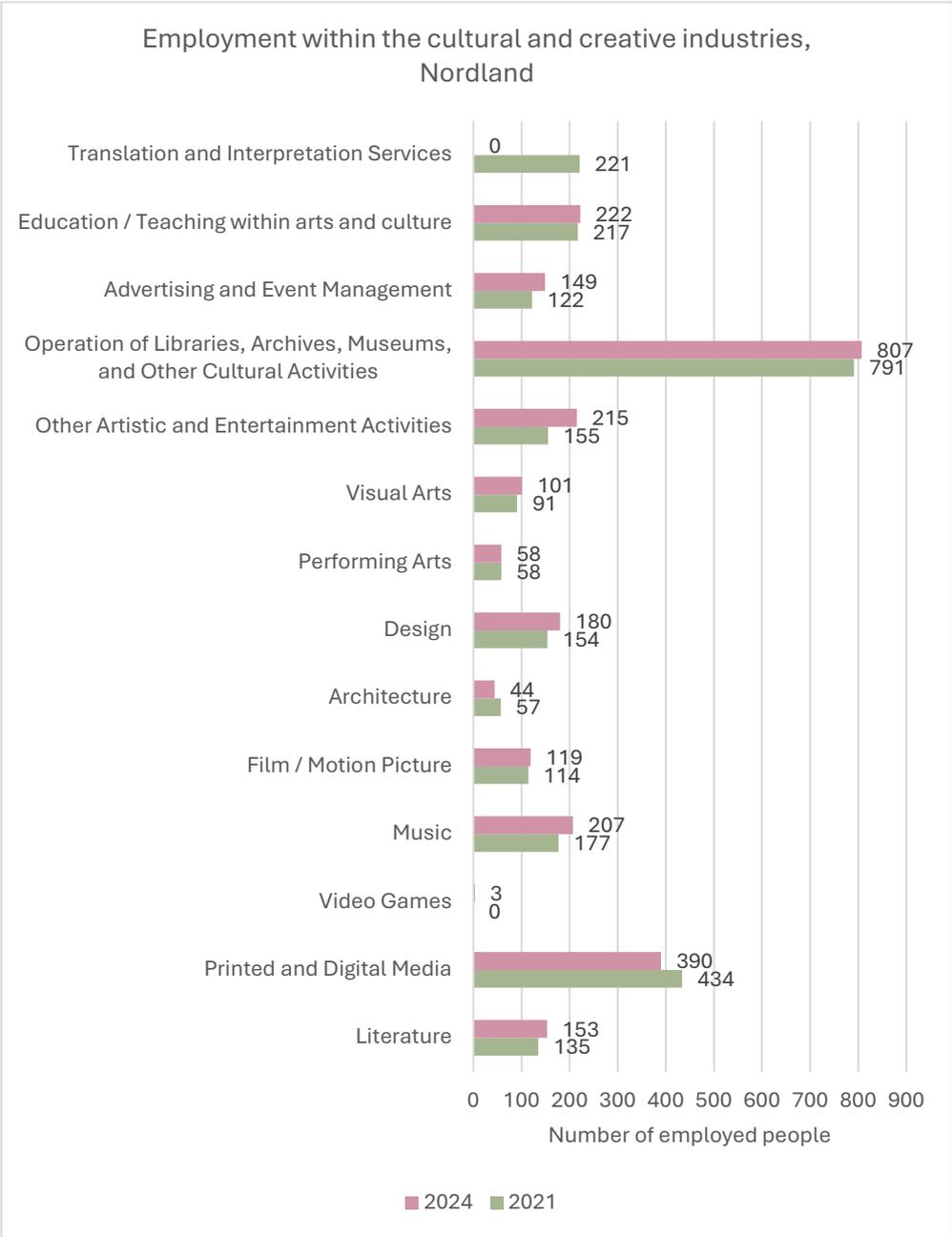


Figure 24. Employment within the cultural and creative industries, 2017 vs. 2024 (SSB, 2025, Tables 10-23, Kulturstatistikk)

### 3.2. Cultural education

### *3.2.1. University level education*

The educational offer in culture and arts at Nord University is rather limited. In 2023 the Faculty of Education and Arts mainly provided teacher training; the only artistic study programs (music, arts and aesthetics) were located at the Levanger campus in Trøndelag, not in Nordland. Campuses in Nordland continued to concentrate on sport and outdoor life and on media-related subjects, which together made up only about 10% of the faculty's program portfolio. In 2025 this is still the same pattern. The campuses in Bodø, Nesna and other parts of Nordland still do not offer dedicated bachelor programs in performing arts, fine arts or design, as the artistic programs are still located in Levanger.

### *3.2.2. Applicants to higher education*

Statistics from the Norwegian Agency for Higher Education and Competence (HKdir) show that the total number of applicants to universities and colleges through the national joint admission (Samordna opptak) fell slightly in 2025. After a peak of 142,004 first choice applicants in 2024 (across all study programmes), the 2025 main admission registered 140,700 applicants. The number of available study places was 64,513 in 2025.

Tables from HKdir for 2023 and 2024 indicate that the education areas "estetiske fag" (aesthetic subjects), "idrettsfag" (sports-related subjects) and "mediefag" (media-related subjects) together accounted for about 6.8 percent of all first-choice applicants. For example, aesthetic subjects had 1,616 planned study places and 2,752 first choice applicants in 2024 (approximately 1.7 applicants per place), while sports-related subjects had 1,675 places and 2,383 applicants and media-related subjects had 1,437 places and 4,659 applicants. Because HKdir has not yet published tables by education field for 2025, the 2024 distribution is used as the latest evidence. The slight drop in total applicants from 2024 to 2025 implies that interest in higher education has stabilized rather than grown, and there is no indication of a surge in arts related applications.

### *3.2.3. Students in arts programs*

Nationally, the share of students enrolled in art related programs remains between 12-13% of all students. In 2018 there were slightly more than 36,000 students in arts programs out of 275,610 students in total. At Nord University the number of students in art related faculties was marginal, about 0.3 % of arts students in 2018 and 0.2 % in 2023, reflecting the absence of regional programs. As of the 2024 to 2025 academic year there has been no significant expansion of art related student capacity at Nord University.

### *3.2.4. Upper secondary (VG1) programs*

Nordland county records the number of applicants (with youth rights) to VG1 programs each year. The total number of applicants has increased steadily: from 7,426 in 2023, to 7,637 in 2024 and to 7,856 in 2025. Cultural and creative programs remain niche choices

compared with vocational or general study programs. The statistics of the county for 2024 and 2025 (Table 9) show the following changes:

Table 9. Applicants to cultural and creative vocational programs in Nordland (NFK, 2025, Flere søker yrkesfag i Nordland)

Programme (VG1)	Applicants 2024	Applicants 2025	Change
Sports	370	345	-7%
Art, design and architecture	44	43	-2%
Music, dance and drama	87	89	+2%
Information technology and media production	72	78	+8%

The number of applicants to sports oriented programs declined slightly from 370 to 345 (about 7% reduction), while there was a modest increase in music, dance and drama (about 2% growth) and a more notable rise in IT and media production (about 8% growth). These figures indicate that cultural programs remain relatively small but stable components of Nordland’s upper secondary education, with digital media subjects gaining slightly more popularity. Figure 25 compares the applicant numbers for selected programs in 2024 and 2025.

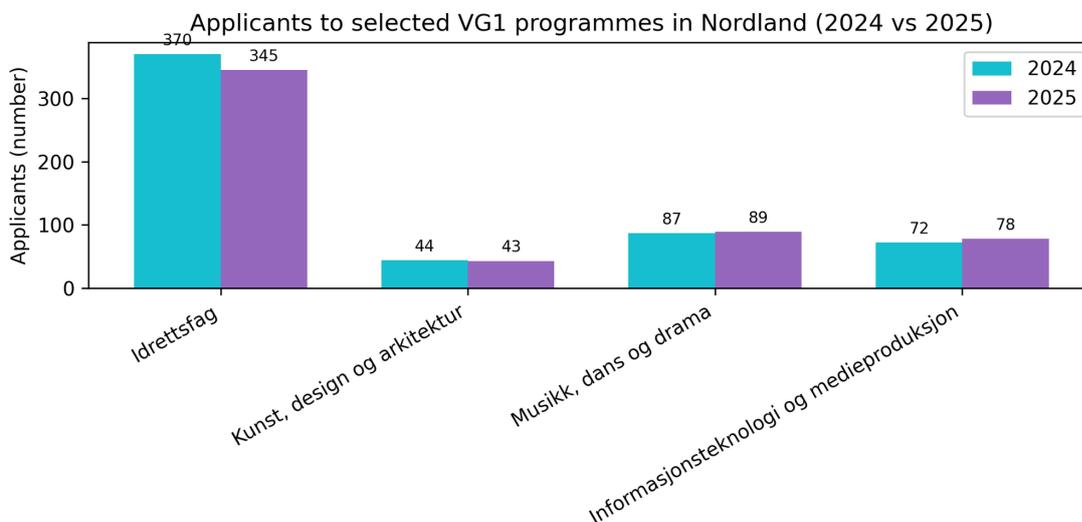


Figure 25. Applicants to cultural and creative vocational programs in Nordland (NFK, 2025, Flere søker yrkesfag i Nordland)

### 3.2.5. Municipal culture schools

Statistics Norway’s StatBank table 12061 was last updated in June 2025 and provides data through 2024. The table shows the number of pupils enrolled in municipal culture schools (kulturskole), the percentage of children aged 6 – 15 participating, and the number of available student places for each county. Table 10 below shows the figures for Nordland (EKA18) and reveals continued decline in participation:

Table 10. Cultural facilities in Nordland (SSB, 2025, Table 12061)

Year	Children aged six to fifteen in the municipal culture school (%)	Pupils in the municipal culture school (number)	Student places in the municipal culture school (number)
2015	14.7	4,869	5,765
2016	14.2	4,727	5,444
2017	13.5	4,497	5,499
2018	13.3	4,390	5,440
2019	13.6	4,740	5,634
2020	13.3	4,222	5,102
2021	13.4	4,220	5,130
2022	12.9	4,311	5,153
2023	12.9	4,029	4,981
2024	12.5	4,148	4,981

The participation rate fell from 14.7 % in 2015 to 12.5 % in 2024. The number of pupils dropped from 4,869 in 2015 to 4,148 in 2024. Student places also declined, from 5,765 in 2015 to 4,981 in 2023 and 2024. Figure 26 shows the long-term development in pupil numbers and participation rate, while Figure 27 visualizes the trend for student places.

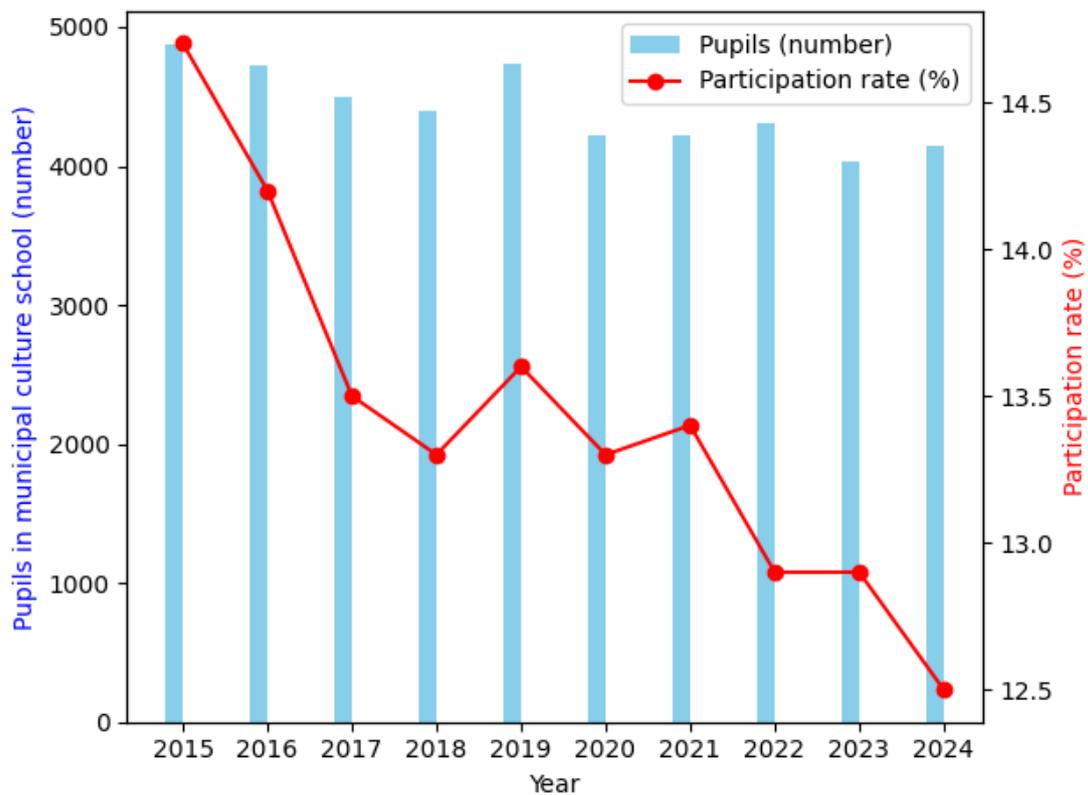


Figure 26. Trend in pupil numbers and participation rate, Nordland (SSB, 2025, Table 12061)

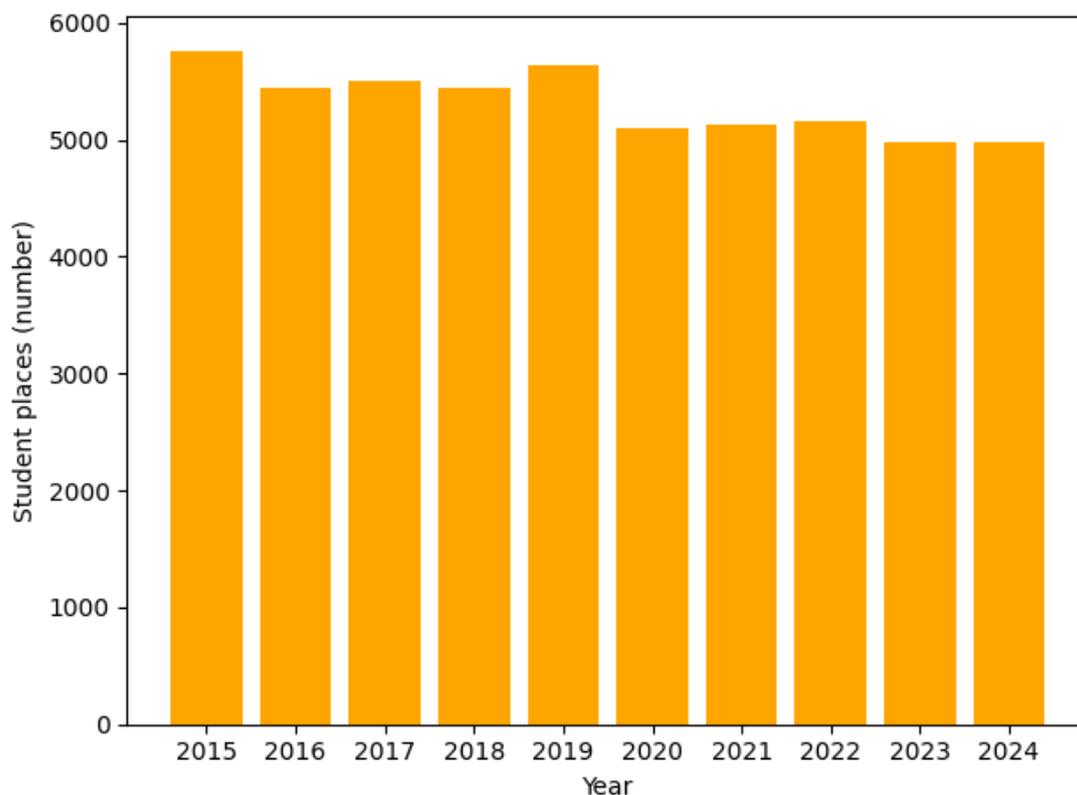


Figure 27. Trend for student places in cultural schools in Nordland (SSB, 2025, Table 12061)

The available data show a decline in participation and the number of student places over the period. There are no official statistics explaining the reasons for this development, so the report does not speculate about causes.

### 3.2.6. Other cultural infrastructure

Nordland has a network of 24 municipal culture schools and Bodø School of Music and Performing Arts. In 2025 this network remains in place and continues to offer lessons in music, dance, theatre and visual arts for children and adults. The county has also invested in new cultural infrastructure; the new Bodø Public Library opened a digital media laboratory in 2024, and several municipalities have upgraded their culture school facilities. These improvements may help to stabilize participation rates in the coming years.

### 3.3. Visitor infrastructure

Nordland’s visitor infrastructure has not changed dramatically over two years, as large infrastructure projects take many years to plan and implement.

Construction of the new Bodø airport began in May 2024 with an expected official opening in late 2029 or early 2030 (Avinor, 2025). The new airport is designed to handle 2.3 million passengers annually, with room for future expansion; new runway and terminal,

improved energy efficiency and sustainability standards (COWI, 2025). Most importantly, the relocation of the runway into the sea will free up about as much space as the current city centre of Bodø, making room for a whole new city district, with new housing, business, and cultural spaces (Life in Norway, 2025).

Total passenger traffic of 3,504,238 passengers at airports in Nordland in 2024 is an increase of 5.2% compared to 2023, while Norway as a whole has an increase of 4.1%. Regarding direct international connections, Bodø airport, with its 4 seasonal direct flights (Figure 28), is still far behind its northern neighbour – Tromsø, which has connections to 20+ international destinations in 15 counties (FlightsFrom, 2025).

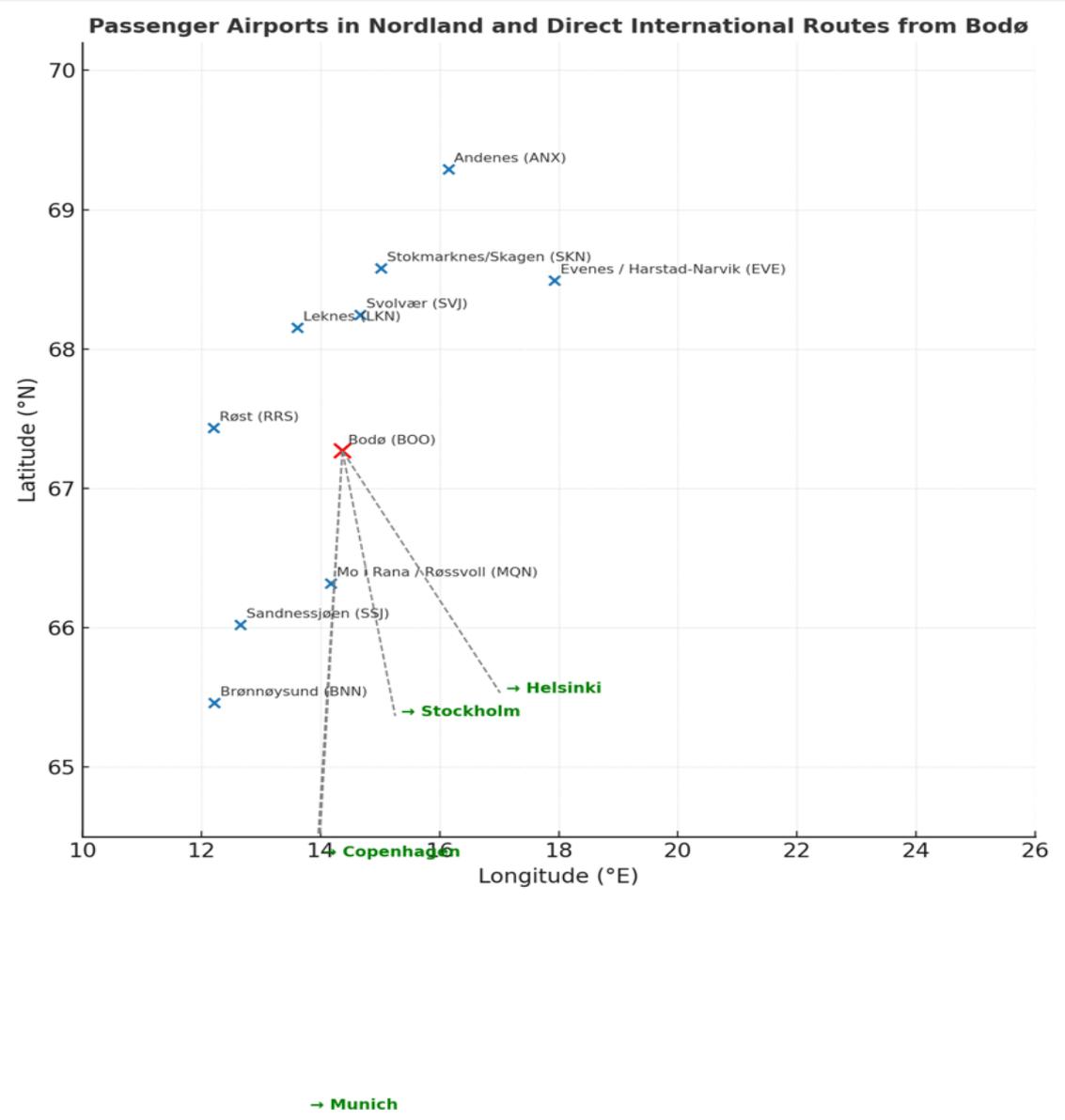


Figure 28. Direct international connections from Bodø (FlightsFrom, 2025)

Nordland and Bodø offer a variety of accommodations, with a new 5-star Wood Hotel opened in May, 2024. Total number of beds in hotels in Nordland has increased from 9,706 in the end of 2022 to 13,032 in summer of 2025 (SSB, 2025, Accomodation). Increase in number of hotels and number of rooms in Nordland is stronger than in neighboring Troms and Finnmark, and higher than average in Norway (Table 11 and Table 12).

Table 11. Number of hotels (SSB, 2025, Table 14164)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Change, %, 2023-2024
Nordland	80	89	95	96	101	5.2%
Troms and Finnmark	66	72	81	83	84	1.2%
Norway	877	906	980	992	1005	1.3%

Table 12. Number of rooms (SSB, 2025, Table 14164)

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Change, %, 2023-2024
Nordland	4072	4622	4763	5159	5801	12.4%
Troms and Finnmark	4708	4925	5478	5453	5619	3.0%
Norway	75404	76609	86399	87379	88608	1.4%

### 3.4. County and city attractions

According to NHO Reiseliv and their annual travel statistics report from 2024 (NHO Reiseliv, 2025), the number of visitors to different Nordland's attractions increased by almost 37% in 2024 compared to 2023. The major growth happened for Narvikfjellet ski resort in Narvik (+129%), Nordlandsbadet [swimming pool and spa] in Bodø (+114%), and Torghatten [mountain top] in Brønnøysund (+99%). This sub-section presents detailed statistics on various Nordland attractions based on available data from Kulturstatistikk, SSB.

#### 3.4.1. Museums

Among the changes that happened in Bodø is the major renovation of Bymuseet [City Museum], completed in June, 2024 (Nordlandsmuseet, 2025). The renovation modernized the building, ensured universal accessibility, and expanded exhibition space. The museum was reopened as Bådådjo/Buvvda Musea and focused on Sámi art and culture. Total funding for the project was close to 11 million NOK (Bodøposten, 2024).

In 2024 in Nordland there were 211 open museum-venues, that is 15% more than in 2023. Total museum visits equal 583,315, that is 9% higher than in 2023. The visit amounts to 2.40 visits per capita and is the third highest in Norway and 16% above the national average. Museums in Nordland offered 1025 events, that is 12% lower than in 2023, and

the number is still lower than pre-covid years. Figure 29 and Figure 30 illustrate these numbers.



Figure 29. Total Museum visits in Nordland (Norsk kulturindeks, 2025)

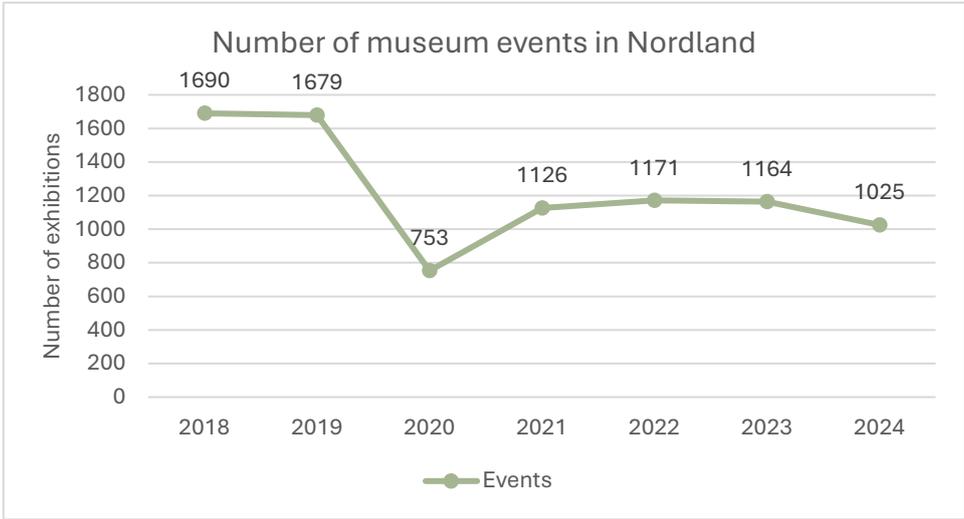


Figure 30. Number of museum events in Nordland (Norsk kulturindeks, 2025)

Regarding Nordland, there are few distinct municipalities that raise the overall score for museum visits in Nordland. Norwegian Fishing Village Museum in Moskenes has had a particularly high number of visits in the last three years, with a further +18% increase in total visits in 2024 compared to 2023. It makes Moskenes ranked as the municipality with the most visits relative to the population. The second most visits relative to the population is Vestvågøy. Here, the Lofotr Viking Museum accounts for the majority of visits, with over 138,000 visits (+16% increase from 2023). The municipalities with the most events in total in 2024 were Bodø (182), Hamarøy (99) and Narvik (97).

### 3.4.2. Cinemas

Visits to cinema in Norway dropped during the pandemic and are still lower than pre-Covid levels: more than 12 million visits in 2018 and a bit over 8 million in 2024 (12,6% decrease from 2023). The average cinema visit per capita is 1.5 for 2024, compared to 2.3 for 2018. Nordic Film and TV Fund explains that box office declined in other Western markets as well due to the US writers and actors strikes in 2023, which meant thinner supply in 2024 (Nordisk Film & TV fond, 2025).

For Nordland the decrease in number of visits to cinema is higher than county average and constitutes -30% compared with 2023 (Figure 31).

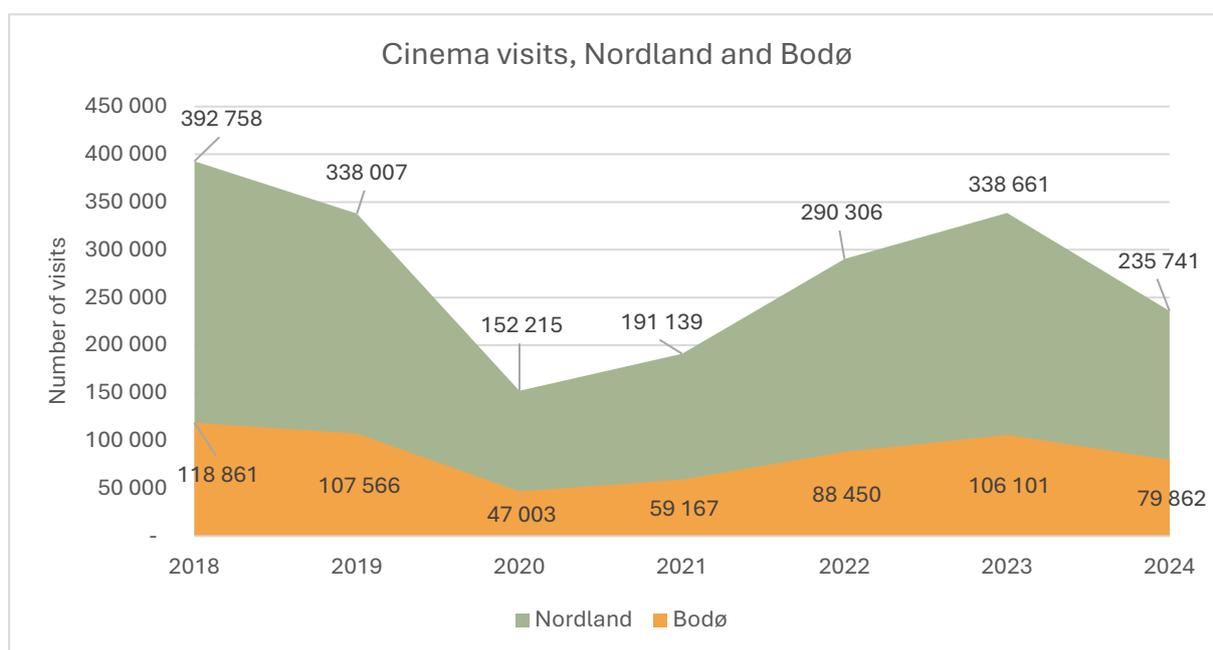


Figure 31. Number of cinema visits in Nordland and Bodø (SSB, 2025, Table 11817)

A total of 12,804 performances were shown at cinemas in Nordland in 2024. This amounts to 52.7 cinema performances per thousand inhabitants. This is 27% below the national average. The performances were visited by 235,741 people. This amounts to 1.0 visits per inhabitant, 34% below the national average.

### 3.4.3. Theatres, Performing arts, Concerts, Festivals

First, we present total numbers for cultural events, that include concerts, performing arts (dance and theater), entertainment (revue, musical, show), festivals and other types of events, produced by Kulturindeks (Norsk kulturindeks, 2025).

Total turnover from cultural events in Nordland was NOK 159.3 million in 2024. This amounts to NOK 655.3 per capita, 18% below the national average. In 2023 Nordland was even further away from the national average, with total turnover of NOK 107.7 million. By

the number of events, there was not a big change compared to 2023, and in 2024 Nordland is above the country average, with 1411 events and 5.8 events per inhabitant.

Kulturindeks presents more detailed statistics for theatre and opera performances, which shows that a total of 7,519 performances were shown in Norway in 2024, with 1.4 million audiences who saw these performances. This corresponds to 1.35 performances per 1,000 inhabitants. Compared with 2023, there were 7,166 performances produced that attracted 1.37 million audiences.

In 2024 in Nordland there were 443 theatre performances, which is 3.2% more than in 2022. This equals 1.82 performances per inhabitant and is 35% above the national average. This is the second highest of the counties. At the 443 theatre performances, there were a total of 44,069 visits, which gives 0.18 visits per inhabitant. This is 27% below the national average, yet 6390 visits more than in 2022. Figures below illustrate performances and audience visits in Nordland from the four main theatres (Figure 32 and Figure 33).

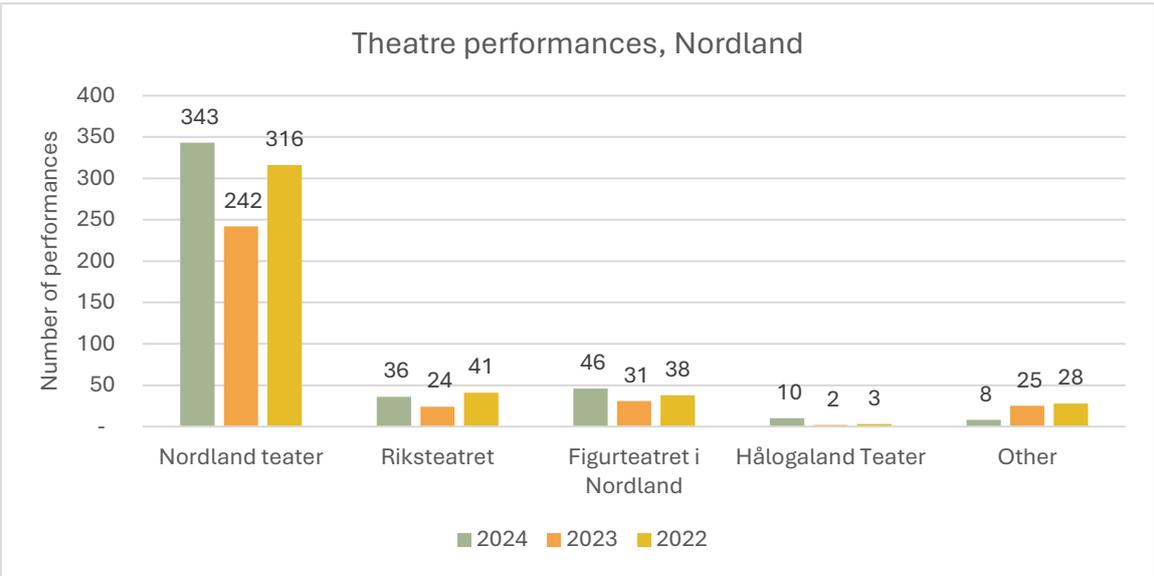


Figure 32. Theatre performances in Nordland (Norsk kulturindeks, 2025)

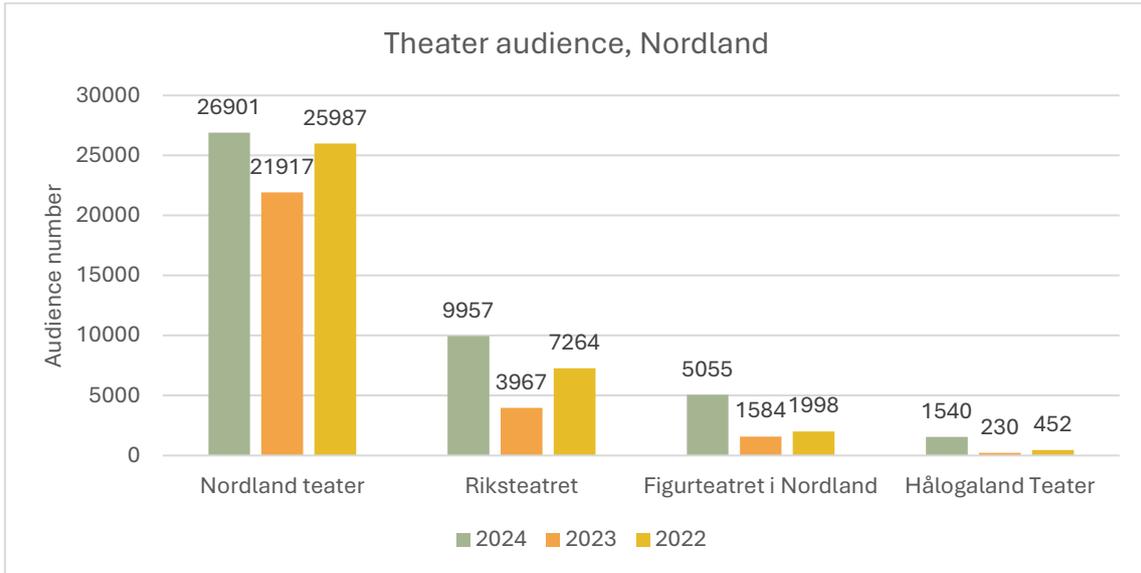


Figure 33. Audience numbers for theatre performances in Nordland (Norsk kulturindeks, 2025)

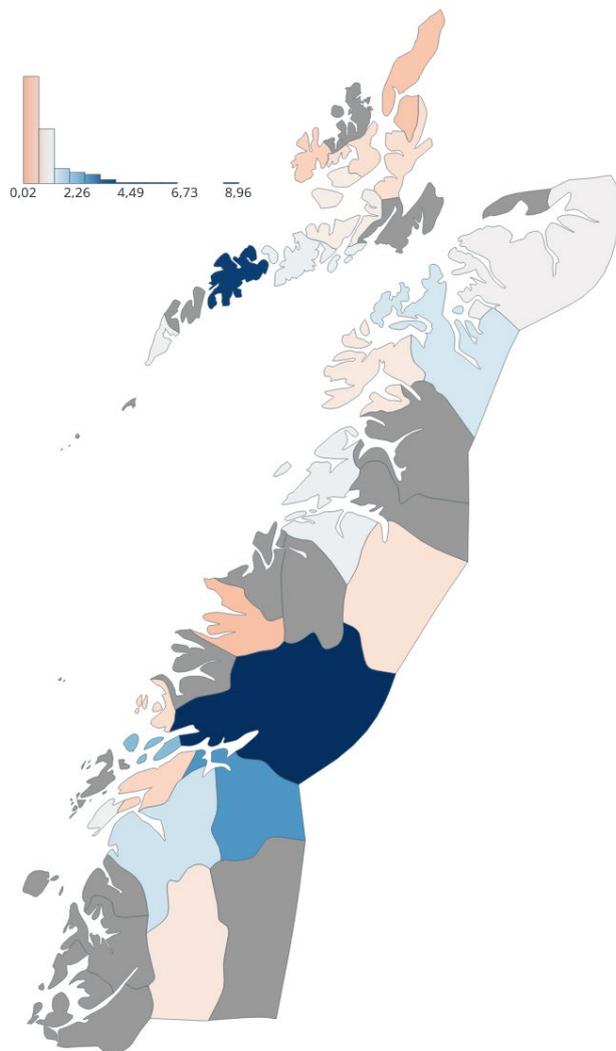


Figure 34. Performing arts offer in Nordland (Norsk kulturindeks, 2025)

Another important contributor to theatre performances' offer is Scenekunstbruket - a national provider of professional performing arts for children and young people. According to their statistics for Nordland, their number of performances and audience grew by more than 200% since 2022 (41 vs 128 performances and 4112 vs 12420 visitors) (Scenekunstbruket, 2025).

Figure 34 visually illustrates Performing arts offers in the municipalities of Nordland, going from dark blue, which is the highest to peach-pink, which is the lowest. Rana municipality, which is the base for Nordland theatre, had the highest number of theatre performances per 1,000 inhabitants (8.96). Vestvågøy and Hemnes follows Rana with 3.7 and 2.68 respectively. Bodø is 7<sup>th</sup> in Nordland in 2024, with 1.12 theatre

performances per 1,000 inhabitants. Compared with 2023, we see that the number of theatre performances increased in most of the municipalities (Figure 35), with the highest increase in Hemnes, Nesna, and Narvik.

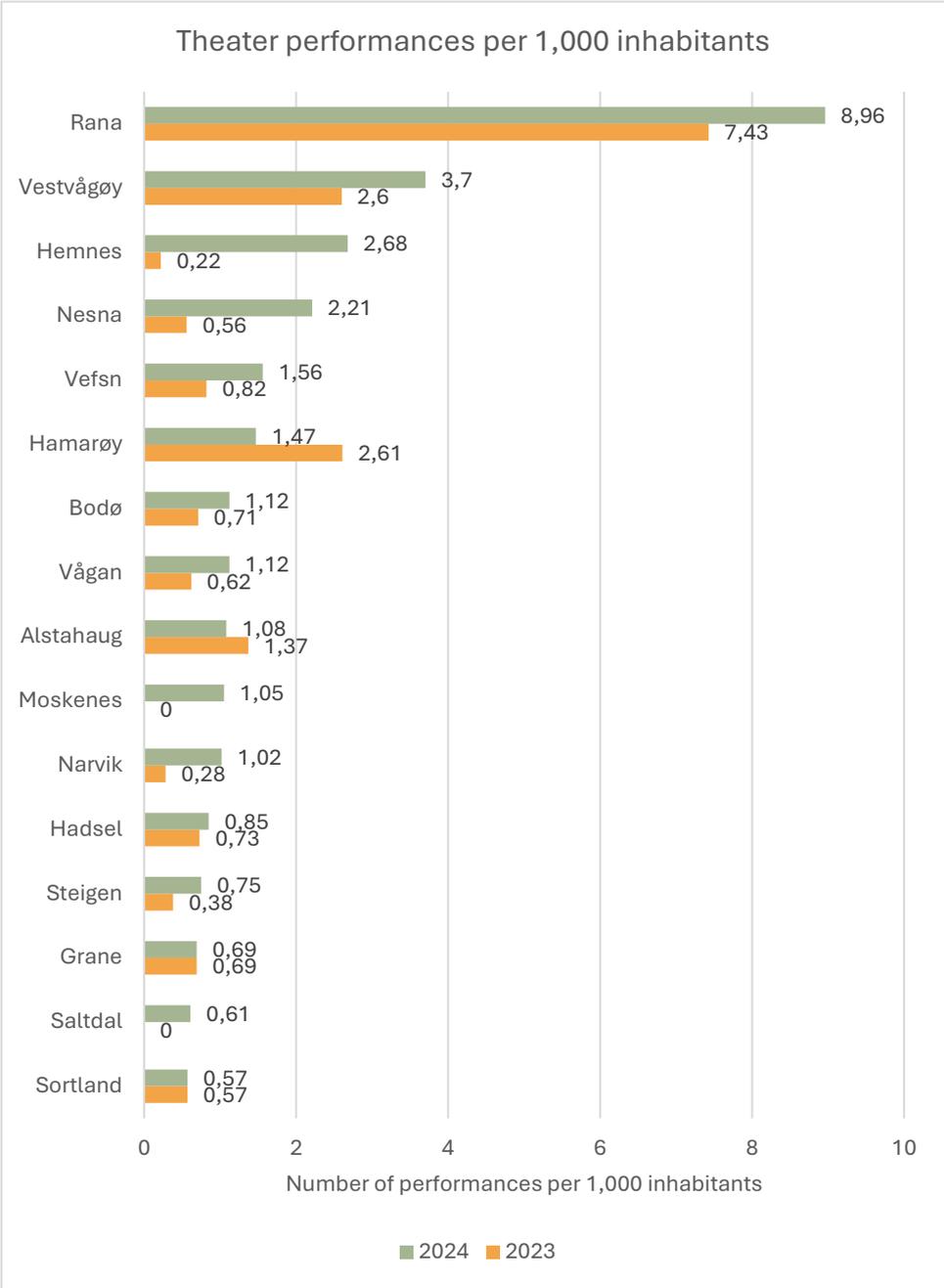


Figure 35. Theatre performances in Nordland’s municipalities (Norsk kulturindeks, 2025)

3.4.4. Libraries, archives, cultural centres

In 2024, public libraries in Norway welcomed 26.8 million visitors (18% increase from 2022), who loaned out 14.2 million books (11% increase from 2022). Public libraries in Nordland were visited by 1.16 million people (14% increase from 2022), while the trend for book loans is negative – around 467000 books in 2024, which is 2% decrease from

2022. The book stock in Nordland is among the highest in Norway: the libraries in Nordland had approximately 1.0 million books and media in 2024, that corresponds to 4.0 books per inhabitant. This is 64% above the national average (Norsk kulturindeks, 2025).

The number of public libraries continues to fall in Nordland, which corresponds to the country’s trend (Figure 36). However, the number of participants in public libraries’ activities is growing and in 2024 exceeds pre-Covid years (Figure 37).

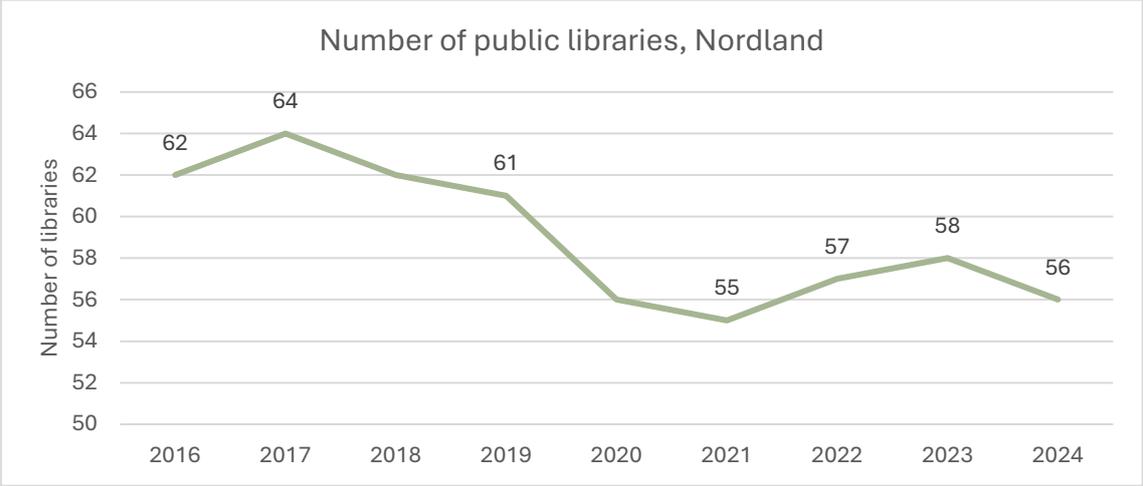


Figure 36. Number of public libraries in Nordland (SSB, 2025, Table 11758)

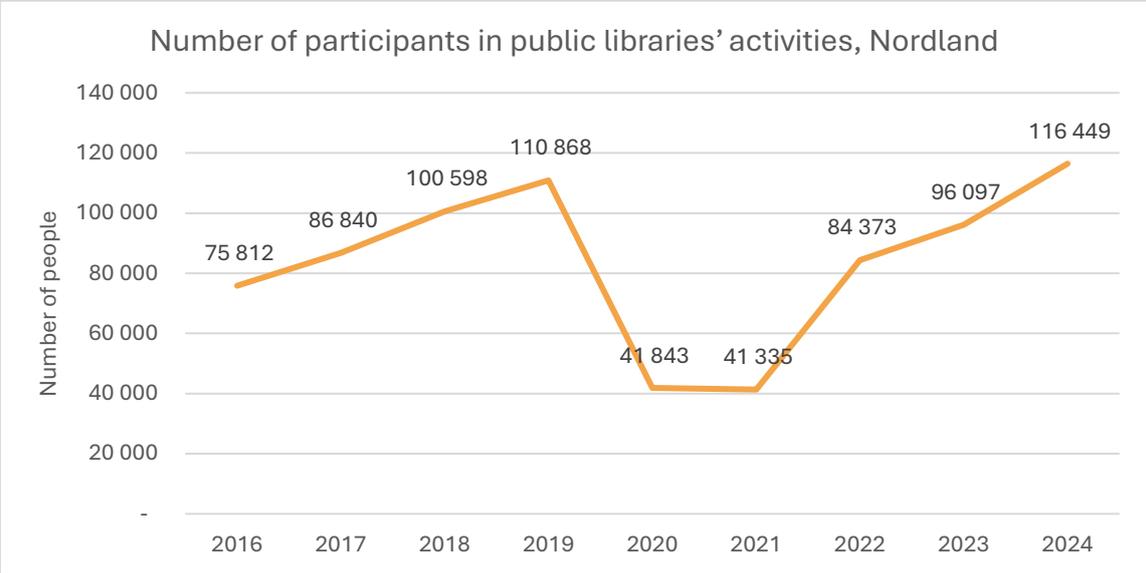


Figure 37. Number of participants in public libraries’ activities in Nordland (SSB, 2025, Table 11758)

3.4.5. Outdoor activities and sports

The Baseline report presented an overview of outdoor activities in Nordland, cultural heritage routes, hiking destinations, etc. Since there was not any statistical data presented there, we are not updating it in the present report. Yet, it needs to be mentioned

that during the title year, a lot of attention was driven to outdoor life and sport, with Bodø hosting several major national and international tournaments. Program events report gives an extensive overview about it (Appendix I). We are also presenting statistics on net operating expenses for sports in Norway (Figure 38). We observe a growing trend for both, expenses and subsidies for sports and expenses for municipal sports buildings and facilities – 15.8% and 16.6% respectively compared to 2021. In 2024 31.5% of Nordland’s total net operating expenses for the cultural sector was used for sports, which is slightly below the country’s average of 33%.

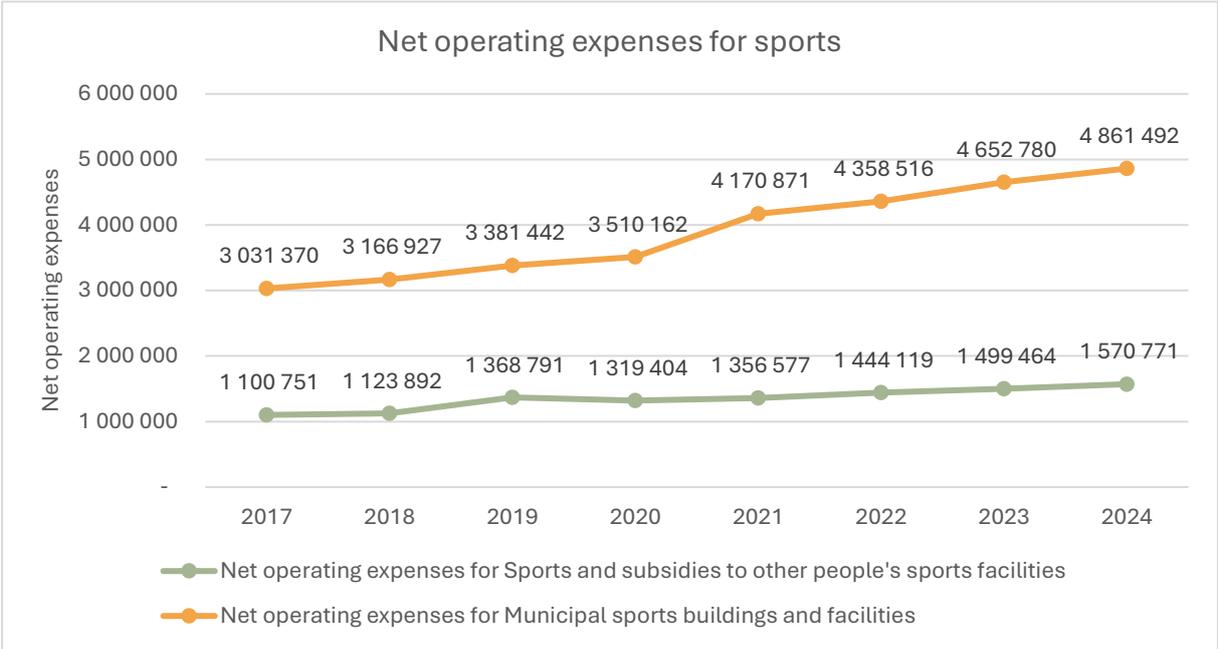


Figure 38. Net operating expenses for sports in Norway (SSB, 2025, Table 7, Kulturstatistikk)

The major change that happened from 2023 is the status of Bodø/Glimt football club and its development. The club continued its dominance in Norwegian football by winning the Eliteserien [Norwegian Premier League - equivalent to La Liga in Spain] in 2023 and again in 2024, securing four league titles in just five years. This success was mirrored in Europe, where Bodø/Glimt made history by reaching the semi-finals of the UEFA Europa League in 2025, becoming the first Norwegian team to achieve this milestone. Even more impressively, the club qualified for the league phase of the UEFA Champions League for the first time in 2025, marking a new era for Norwegian football and positioning Bodø/Glimt as the northernmost team ever to compete at that level.



Figure 39. Project of the new stadium in Bodø (Nordic Office of Architecture, 2025)

Off the field, the most transformative development is the approval of the new stadium project, the Arctic Arena (Figure 39). The stadium will have a capacity of 10,000 seats and is designed to meet full UEFA standards, enabling Bodø/Glimt to host major European matches. Its architecture, inspired by a faceted diamond, will incorporate sustainable materials such as wood and recyclable aluminum, reflecting the club's commitment to environmental responsibility.

The Arctic Arena is planned not only as a football venue but also as a multipurpose space for cultural events, reinforcing Bodø's role as a regional hub. Construction is scheduled to begin in October 2025, with completion expected by August 2027. The project carries an estimated cost of NOK 1.15 - 1.26 billion, with 78% of funding already secured through a mix of club resources, investors, and municipal support (Nordic Office of Architecture, 2025).

## 4. Discussion

This chapter integrates findings from chapters 2 and 3 into a discussion of which changes that happened in Nordland and Bodø in 2024 and beyond can be attributed to Bodø2024's activities and to what extent.

### 4.1. Bodø2024's contribution to basic economy

This report presented updated statistics in the basic economy's chapter related to the labour market in Nordland and Bodø, the level of education, occupational sector, and tourism. Therefore, this part discusses which of the presented changes were induced by Bodø2024 and to what extent.

The main growth that happened in the labour market from 2022 cannot be directly attributed to the cultural capital year, as it happened mostly in technical and manual work sectors as "Agriculture, forestry, fishing", "Electricity, water supply, sewerage, waste management", and "Manufacture sectors". The growth in these sectors most probably stems from sector-specific dynamics. The cultural capital year was aimed to increase cultural offer and the demand for culture and thereby attract tourists to the region. The industry sector that should have benefited from the increased cultural activity in the region for the most is "Accommodation and food services", which showed a modest growth of 4.58% for Nordland and 4.01% for Bodø. The "Other service activities" category includes membership organisations, arts-adjacent personal services, repair/creative micro-enterprises and parts of the events ecosystem, thus should have received spillovers from the cultural year. In both, Nordland and Bodø this category showed a modest growth as well.

The occupational distribution has not faced any big changes and the ECoC status does not seem to induce an increase in culture and arts related professions. The "Craft and Related Trade Workers" in opposite, faced a decline in both, Nordland and Bodø, while "Service and Sales Workers" occupation showed a small increase in Bodø.

The 40% growth in culture-related job vacancies in Nordland appears modest when viewed in the context of overall job market growth. After adjusting for total vacancies, culture-related ones accounted for only 0.4% of all job vacancies in 2024 - lower than the 0.49% recorded in 2019, before the ECoC title was announced. This trend is also mirrored in the number of employees in cultural and creative industries in Nordland, which is just a bit bigger than country's average, and is inferior to neighbouring regions.

Probably the most disturbing county's employment trend relates the "Education/Teaching within arts and culture". This category grew by 5% compared with 2017, however when adjusted for the overall 15% employment growth in the cultural and

creative sector, it effectively represents a decline. The shortage of professionals capable of educating new generations, together with Nordland's marginal number of arts students at both university level and in upper-secondary programmes, and the declining number of student places in municipal culture schools, has long-term consequences for regional development. According to The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, this trend among other things can induce the loss of key developmental skills that are hard to teach elsewhere, alongside with the loss of possibilities for children to discover other perspectives and experiences and decrease of cultural literacy in general (Borgen et al, 2023).

Where we do see major positive changes, is the tourism industry. The data from chapters 3 and 4, show that the cultural capital year has clearly attracted many Norwegian and international tourists, which led to a major increase in hotel guest nights. The difference is especially visible for Norwegian tourists, as when we look at other counties, which experience a slight decline in total number of incoming Norwegian tourists, Nordland outperforms here by 25%. Bodø2024 clearly amplified winter tourism in Nordland, especially around the opening week in February 2024, when Nordland for the first time surpassed its northern neighbour – Troms and Finnmark, by the number of incoming Norwegian tourists. The growth of incoming international tourists is seen around the country, yet Nordland leads far ahead the whole country with exceptional 79% increase. This growth could have probably been even stronger if Bodø had more direct international connections with European hubs. With couple of seasonal direct flights Bodø is far behind its northern neighbour – Tromsø, which is connected with to 20+ international destinations in 15 counties (FlightsFrom, 2025).

#### 4.2. Bodø2024's contribution to cultural system of Nordland

Cultural system of Nordland covered public spending on culture, cultural education, status of creative industries, visitor infrastructure, and county and city attractions, where we updated numbers for museums, cinemas, performing arts, libraries, and sports.

Total net operating expenditures for cultural purposes per capita in Nordland remain among the highest in Norway, yet decreased if compared with 2022 and 2019, which does not follow the country's overall trend of growing per capita cultural expenditures.

The influence of Bodø2024 on the county and city attractions is uneven, showing clear contribution for some systems and no influence on others.

Among the direct influences of the cultural capital status to museum-system of Nordland is that Bodø2024 induced a major renovation project of Bymuseet [City Museum]. In general museums in Nordland enjoyed higher attention from visitors, high above the

national average. Yet, it is a normal situation for Nordland as visits per capita were above the country's average before Bodø2024 as well, showing steady growth after Covid-years.

Bodø2024 induced quite a moderate growth in the number theatre performances in 2024 if we compare it with 2022, yet it remained much higher than the country's average if we look at the number of performances per inhabitant. However, if we compare the situation with 2018 – the year before the title was announced, we see that situation for Nordland's theatre sector changed dramatically. If we look at 2018, Nordland was far below the country's average by number of performances per inhabitant, however already in 2021 it flies to top 3 municipalities and in 2024 was #2, behind only the capital. It is especially great that the growth in the number of performances per inhabitant happened in many small municipalities of Nordland. Where Nordland was lagging behind is attracting visitors to the performances. In 2018 Nordland was among the lowest in the country and in 2024 it was still 27% below the country's average yet showed 18% growth compared to 2022, which can certainly be attributed to the increased attention because of Bodø2024.

Bodø2024 activities seem not to influence activity levels in public libraries, as number of visitors to public libraries in Nordland is comparable to the country's trend.

Attractions that showed decline in spite of Bodø2024 activities are cinemas. Cinema visits in Nordland were not high before Bodø2024, and the cultural year did not change the situation. Nordland is far below the country average by cinema visits and the number of cinema performances.

## 5. Conclusions and implications

Bodø2024 was a tremendous happening for Nordland and Bodø in both scale and investment. This report presents only one pillar of its impact – the impact on the economy and cultural system. Other reports of Monitor2024 complement this perspective with other types of evidence and viewpoints from different groups of stakeholders and are necessary to understand the full extent of the changes that have happened. For example, if we look at Bodø2024's objectives, we see that this report cannot provide any evidence on the impacts for the production base for culture, for connections with not engaged groups and youths specifically, and whether freedom of expression was addressed (Appendix II summarizes KPIs of Monitor2024, Bodø2024, and EC relevant for the report).

First, Bodø2024 activities generated clear tourism impacts – both, domestic and international arrivals increased far beyond the national trends, however structural economic change was limited. Employment growth happened primarily in sectors unrelated to culture, and the cultural and creative sector did not expand in a proportionally meaningful way during the ECoC year. Culture-related job vacancies even declined in relative terms, suggesting no major shift in long-term labour demand. In addition, Nordland's public cultural spending per capita is high but declining, which limits the long-term sustainability of the ECoC year's gains.. Thus, increase in domestic and international tourism suggests that Bodø2024 succeeded in improving external visibility and attractiveness to visitors (the first objective of Bodø2024), but we do not have clear evidence yet that it would translate into long-term attractiveness as a place to study, work, or stay, especially with decreasing national spending on culture.

To consolidate tourism gains into long-term economic growth, the region should:

- continue building international visibility generated in 2024,
- greatly expand international connectivity, which remains a limiting factor especially compared to neighbouring regions,
- enhance tourism-culture links by promoting festivals, cultural heritage routes and seasonal attractions.

Second, despite activity increases in 2024, the underlying structural challenge is the decline in arts education capacity, both in teaching personnel and in student recruitment. This implies risks for cultural literacy and generational renewal and may hinder the region's ability to sustain cultural growth stimulated by Bodø2024.

To reverse deeper structural trends in educational and professional capacity, which are essential for long-term cultural development, the region can:

- reverse the downward trend in arts education capacity,

- implement targeted initiatives to recruit and train arts educators,
- better align education and cultural policy, since cultural literacy and participation depends on early access.

Third, Bodø2024 influenced some cultural infrastructure and activities - especially the renovation of Bymuseet, increased theatre activity, and higher attendance in some performing arts segments. These effects were particularly strong when measured per inhabitant, and distributed across many municipalities, showing broad regional engagement. However, other cultural sectors - such as libraries and cinemas - did not show measurable change, suggesting that the ECoC year was not a major driver of audience behaviour for all cultural arenas. Thus, the cultural system impacts are best described as selective rather than systemic.

To effectively leverage cultural infrastructure impacts:

- municipalities could build on the network effects created during 2024,
- regional cultural institutions should scale collaborations that worked well.

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## Appendix I. List of all reports by Monitor2024

Accessible at: <https://site.nord.no/monitor2024/nyheter/>

1. Baseline Report - Monitor 2024: Effects of Bodø as European Capital of Culture 2024.
2. Inception Report - Conceptual Foundation for the Evaluation and Monitoring of Bodø 2024: Project Monitor 2024.
3. Bodø2024: Simulating Best-case and Worst-case Scenarios.
4. Understanding the Narrative of “Bodø 2024”: An AI-assisted Analysis of the Discourse in Norwegian Media (2023-2025).
5. ECoC Bodø2024: Should I stay, or should I go? - Settlement Intentions Among Adolescents in Nordland.
6. Bodø2024: Understanding Impacts Through Program Events.
7. ECoC Bodø2024: Cultural Projects as Pathways to Legacy.
8. ECoC Bodø2024: Artists and Cultural Workers - Expectations and Experiences.
9. ECoC Bodø2024: Individual and Organisational Perspectives on Volunteering.
10. ECoC Bodø2024: Students settlement intentions and their use of art and culture.
11. Bodø2024 through the voices of the Peoples Jury.
12. When a City Speaks Online: Citizen Discourse on the Bodø2024 Year.
13. Updated Simulation of Potential Effects of Bodø 2024 European Capital of Culture for development of Bodø municipality by 2036.
14. Tracking Change: The Cultural and Economic Impact of Bodø2024.
15. Culture as catalyst: Assessing Bodø2024 European Capital of Culture.
16. Monitor2024 Story and Experience.

## Appendix II. KPIs of Bodø2024, EC, and Monitor2024 relevant for the report

Monitor2024 KPI	Evaluation
Level of higher education (OCE0035)	↗12% more men and 9% more women attain long higher education
Specialize on cultural programs/specializations (OCE004)	In upper secondary education: ↘7% and 2% decrease in applicants to “sports” and “art, design and architecture” programs respectively. ↗2% and 8% increase in applicants to “music, dance and drama” and “IT and media production” programs respectively
Number of culture-related job announcements (OCE0041)	↗40% increase in job announcements in Nordland in arts, sports, and culture from 2019
Employment by industry sector (OCE010)	↗Net increase for accommodation and food sector by 131 employees in Nordland and 49 in Bodø, which equals 4.58% and 4.01% respectively
“% of cultural professionals employed in the regional cultural sector (OCE013)	↗5.2% increase in number of cultural professionals in Nordland
Net operating expenses per county for cultural purposes (OCE0112)	↘1.2% decrease in net operating expenses for cultural purposes in Nordland
Net operating expenses per capita for cultural purposes (OCE0113)	↗Net operation expenses per capita in Nordland grew by 18%
Accommodation capacity (SUP025)	↗5% increase in number of hotels and 12.4% increase in number of rooms, 34% increase in number of beds in hotels in Nordland
Accommodation by reasons to go (SUP026)	↗Increased activity of leisure-tourists in winter
Number of activities in museums (SUP027)	↘12% lower number of events
Number of participants in library activities (OCV014)	↗14% increase in number of visitors in Nordland
Museum visits (DEM0031)	↗Total museum visits in Nordland have increased by 9%; 2.40 visits per capita – third highest in Norway and 16% above the national average
Cinema visits (DEM0032)	↘30% decrease in cinema visits in Nordland; 52.7 cinema performances per thousand inhabitants – 27% below the national average; 1 visit per inhabitant – 34% below the national average
Theater performance visits (DEM0033)	↗3.2% increase in number of theatre performances in Nordland; 1.82 performances per inhabitant – 35% above the national average; 0.18 visit per inhabitant – 15% increase, but 27% below the national average
Number of days spent by tourists (DEM004)	↗31% increase in hotel guest nights in Nordland among Norwegian tourists; 79% increase in hotel guest nights in Nordland among international tourists
Number of tourists (DEM005)	↗24.6% increase in Norwegian tourists in Nordland; 44% increase in international tourists in Nordland
National identity of tourists (DEM006)	The top 10 countries of origin remained unchanged, but with shares shifted
Bodø2024 objectives	Evaluation
To reverse the image of Nordland - More attractive and exciting to visit, and to study, work, and stay in (SO1)	Boost in domestic and international tourism, yet no clear evidence of the region becoming more attractive to study, work, and stay in.
To widen the production base for culture - More producing, co-producing, and cross-working (SO2)	↗ Increased theatre production and activities; Some infrastructure upgrades (e.g., Bymuseet renovation); ↘ No increase in culture-related occupations or job vacancies relative to the overall market; Declining relative share of arts educators and a weak arts student pipeline
To create a connected web of “hotspots” especially for young people - Facilities are improved to create a strong and widely recognised cultural region (SO5)	Increases in performing arts activity across municipalities; Regional visibility increased, but no evidence on youth-specific outcomes

To improve the careers and opportunities for cultural professionals - A major capacity-building focus, which improves skills and experience, and creates jobs (SO7)	<p>↯ Culture-related job vacancies were lower (in share) than before ECoC announcement.</p> <p>No growth in employment in creative industries relative to overall employment.</p> <p>Declining capacity in arts education.</p> <p>No signs of long-term job creation or career enhancement.</p>
<b>EC operational objectives</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
Create new opportunities for a wide range of citizens to attend or participate in cultural events (OO4)	↗ Increased theatre production and activities across municipalities
Improve cultural infrastructure (OO5)	↗ Increased theatre production and activities across municipalities
Develop the skills, capacity and governance of the cultural sector (OO6)	<p>↯ Culture-related job vacancies were lower (in share) than before ECoC announcement.</p> <p>No growth in employment in creative industries relative to overall employment.</p> <p>Declining capacity in arts education.</p> <p>No signs of long-term job creation or career enhancement.</p>
Promote the city and its cultural programme (OO8)	↗ Tourism boost suggests improved international visibility and attractiveness
Improve the international outlook of residents (OO9)	↗ Tourism boost suggests improved international visibility and attractiveness