



EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA FOR 2024/2025 SCHOOL YEAR

The main results from the annual comprehensive surveys of the National Statistical Institute (NSI) characterizing the activity of educational institutions are as follows:

- In 2024/2025 school year in pre-primary education (kindergartens and preparatory groups at schools) were enrolled 217.2 thousand children.
- As of 31.12.2024, there were 2 329 schools operating in the country, with 713.5 thousand students enrolled.
- In 2024, the number of basic education graduates was 59.8 thousand students and the number of upper-secondary education graduates was 43.4 thousand students.
- In 2024/2025 academic year, there were 203.5 thousand students enrolled at the different tertiary education levels (professional bachelor, bachelor and master's).
- As of 31.12.2024, for acquiring a doctor's educational and scientific degree in the country, 5 029 persons were trained, of whom 574 were foreign citizens.

Pre-primary education

As of 31.12.2024, in the country were functioning 1 830 independent kindergartens, of which 125 private. In pre-primary education, conducted in kindergartens and preparatory groups at schools, there were enrolled 217.2 thousand children, of whom 51.4% were boys.

The coverage of children at this education level estimated by the group net enrolment rate¹ for the 2024/2025 school year was 88.6%. The highest was in Smolyan district (98.7%) and the lowest - in Sliven district (72.7%).

The average number of children in an independent kindergarten in the country was 119, as in the urban areas it was significantly larger (152) than in the rural areas (62).

In 2024/2025 school year, 6 596 children were enrolled in private educational institutions, or 3.0% of the total number of children in pre-primary education.

The teaching personnel employed in pre-primary education were 20.9 thousand persons. Kindergarten teachers were 86.2% of all personnel in pre-primary education.

¹ The group net enrollment rate of children in kindergartens is calculated as a percentage of the number of children in kindergartens in the age group 3 - 6 years to the number of the population in the same age group.

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School education

As of 31.12.2024, there were 2 329 schools operating in the country, including 129 primary schools, 1 110 basic schools, 70 integrated schools, 114 upper secondary schools, 505 secondary schools, 21 schools of arts, 25 sports schools, and 355 vocational gymnasiums. Compared with the previous year, the total number of schools decreased by 12.

The number of students enrolled in all types of schools was 713.5 thousand, of which 15.3 thousand were enrolled in private schools. On average, there were 21 students per class in public schools and 14 in private schools.

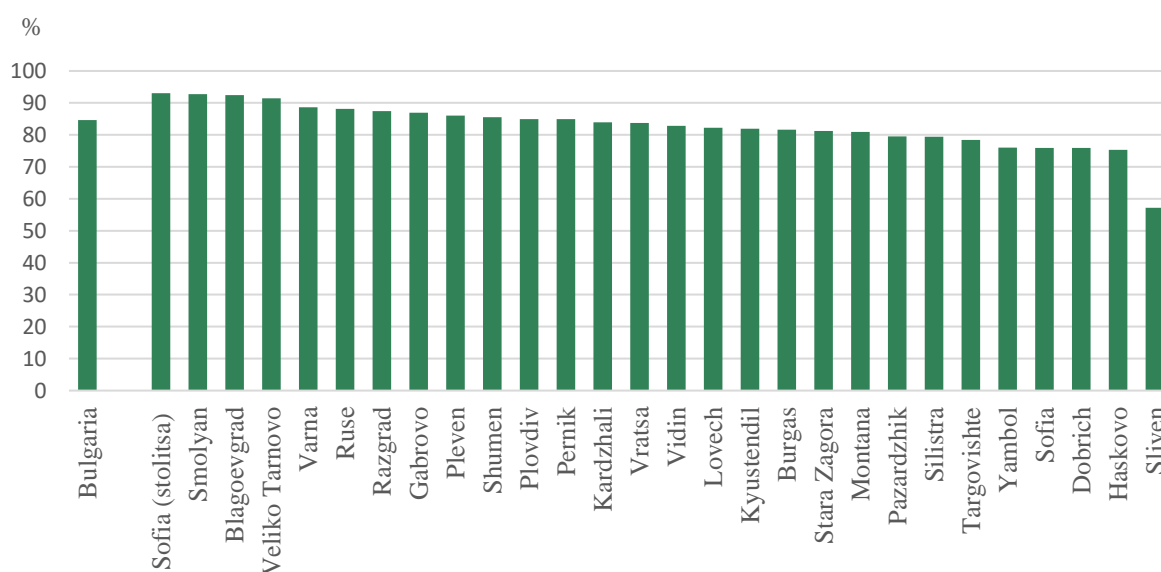
A total of 169.4 thousand students were enrolled in vocational programmes, with boys accounting for the majority - 58.4% of the total.

The coverage of school education, calculated through the group net enrolment rate² for the 2024/2025 school year, was:

- 92.7% for the primary education;
- 89.6% for the lower secondary;
- 84.7% for the upper secondary.

The rate for the upper secondary education was 85.8% for boys and 83.5% for girls, with regional variations ranging from 93.1% in district Sofia (stolitsa) to 57.2% in district Sliven. Bulgaria.

Figure 1. Group net enrolment rate for the upper secondary education by districts, 2024/2025 school year



² The group net enrollment rate in school education is calculated as a percentage, representing the ratio of the number of students aged 7-10 in primary education, 11-13 in lower secondary education, and 14-18 in upper secondary education to the population in the respective age groups.

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In 2024, 59.8 thousand students graduated from basic education, and 43.4 thousand graduated from secondary education.

A professional qualification level was obtained as follows:

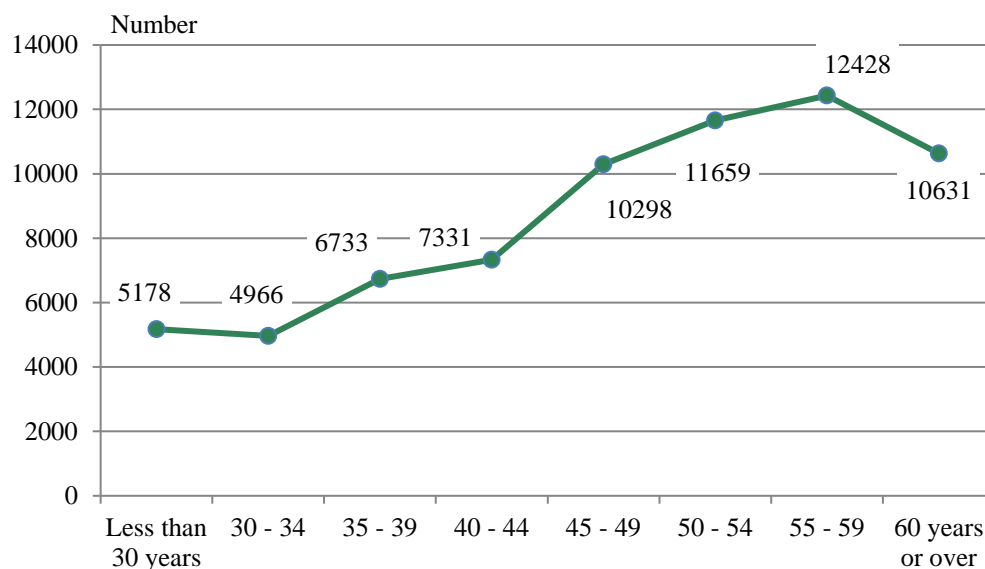
- First level - by 481 students;
- Second and third levels - by 2.5 thousand and 18.7 thousand students, respectively.

Among those who completed programs for acquiring a third-level professional qualification, the highest relative shares of students studied specializations in the following fields³:

- Engineering - 24.1%;
- Informatics and Personal services - each with 16.8%;
- Business management and administration - 13.2%;
- Arts - 11.0%.

During the 2024/2025 school year, there were 69.2 thousand teachers (including principals and deputy principals with teaching responsibilities) across all types of schools. Of these, 69.6% held a master's degree. The teaching profession is predominantly female, women accounting for 82.1% of all teachers. One-third of the teaching staff were aged 55 or above.

Figure 2. Teaching staff by age groups in 2024/2025 school year



³ For vocational education and training, the fields of education are presented according to the List of Occupations for Vocational Education and Training.

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Vocational training for adults

In vocational training programmes against payment for acquiring a level of professional qualification at vocational training centres and vocational gymnasiums in 2024 were enrolled 12.1 thousand students aged 16 years or more. According to the level of professional qualification, their distribution was as follows: first level - 3.7 thousand, second level - 2.9 thousand and third level - 5.5 thousand persons.

A total of 787 students were enrolled in professional colleges to acquire a fourth-level professional qualification. The most numerous were those studying specialties in the field of Public security services (272 students) and Personal services (251).

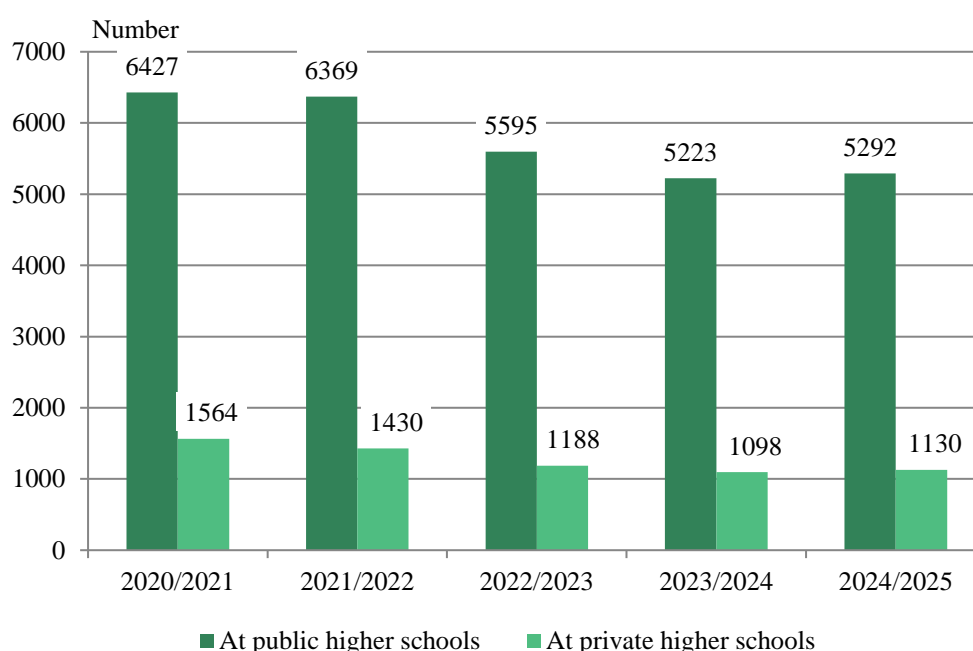
Tertiary education

In 2024/2025 academic year, the number of students enrolled in Bulgaria for all educational-qualification degrees (professional bachelor's, bachelor's, master's and doctor's) was 208.5 thousand.

Colleges (Professional bachelor's educational-qualification degree)

In 2024/2025 academic year, for acquiring a professional bachelor's educational-qualification degree, at colleges, there were enrolled 6 422 students of whom 89.2% were Bulgarian citizens. Out of the total number of students at colleges, 1 130 persons or 17.6% were enrolled at private institutions.

Figure 3. Students enrolled at colleges⁴



⁴ 2023/2024 - break in the time series due to a change of the data source and the methodology.

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In 2024, with a professional bachelor's educational-qualification degree graduated 1 601 students, of whom 66.2% were women. The highest number of graduates was in specialities within the following fields of education⁵:

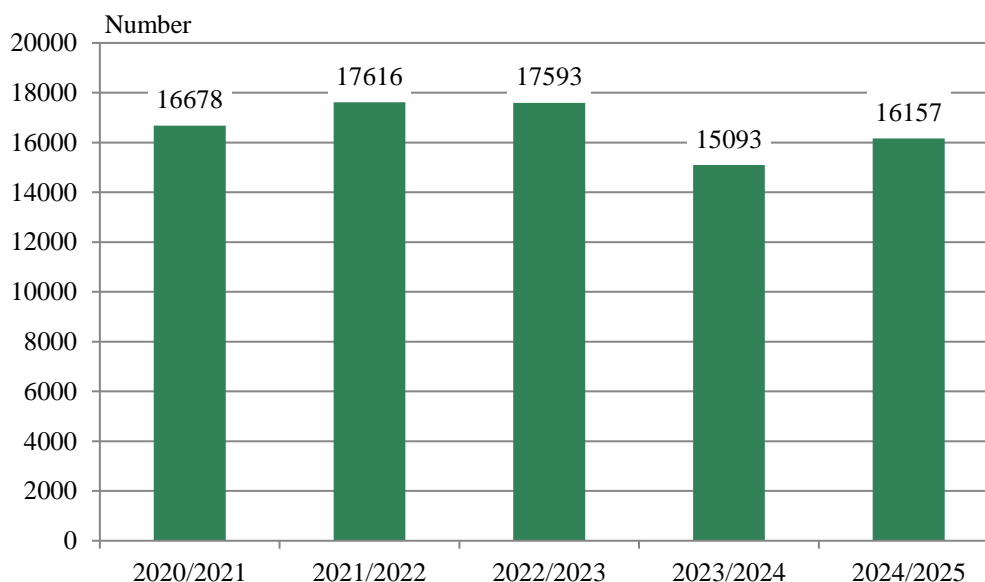
- Health - 832 persons (52.0%);
- Engineering and engineering trades - 229 persons (14.3%);
- Business and administration - 174 persons (10.9%);
- Personal services - 117 persons (7.3%);
- Education - 108 persons (6.7%).

Universities and equivalent higher schools (bachelor's and master's educational-qualification degrees).

In 2024/2025 academic year, there were 197.1 thousand students at universities and specialized higher schools studying for bachelor' and master's educational-qualification degrees. In private educational institutions were enrolled 21.9 thousand or 11.1% of the students.

Students - Bulgarian citizens were 180.9 thousand or 91.8% of all students enrolled at universities and specialized higher schools. Foreign students were 16.2 thousand.

Figure 4. Foreign students at universities and specialized higher schools⁶



The largest share of foreign students came from Greece (20.0%), followed by the United Kingdom (13.7%), Ukraine (10.7%), Germany (9.5%) and Italy (6.3%). The foreign

⁵ According to Classification of fields of education and training, 2015 (State Gazette, No. 46/17.06.2016)

⁶ 2023/2024 - break in the time series due to a change of the data source and the methodology.

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students in the country choose mainly health-related studies, as 61.5% of them were studying specialties in this field and 45.8% of the total number were studying Medicine.

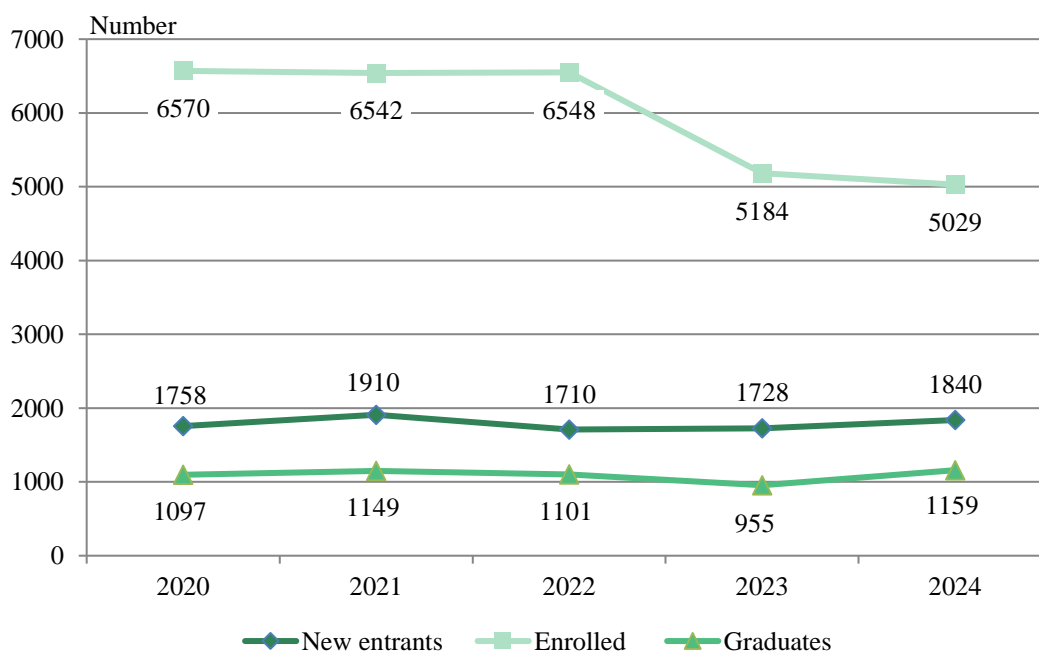
In 2024, a total of 46.2 thousand persons graduated from universities and specialised higher schools in the country, of whom 23.0 thousand with a bachelor's and 23.2 thousand with a master's degree.

The number of graduates was highest in the following fields of education: Business and Administration (22.9%), Education (16.8%), Health (10.2%), Engineering and engineering trades and Social and behavioural sciences (by 8.3%).

Doctor's educational and scientific degree

As of 31.12.2024, there were 5 029 PhD students enrolled in the country (Figure 5), of them 52.0% were women. Full-time students were 3 063 persons, or 60.9% of the total. The largest share of Ph.D. students was observed in Sofia (stolitsa) district - 57.0%, followed by Plovdiv (11.3%), Varna (9.2%) and Veliko Tarnovo (7.1%) districts.

Figure 5. New entrants, enrolled and graduates at doctoral level⁷



The foreign PhD students were 574 or 11.4% of the total number. The largest share came from China - 34.1%, followed by those from Greece (14.3%), Israel (7.3%) and the Republic of North Macedonia (6.1%).

In private institutions were trained 3.7% of the PhD students. Out of them 84 persons, or 14.6%, were foreign citizens.

⁷ 2023 - break in the time series due to a change of the data source.

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In 2024, doctor's degree was acquired by 1 159 persons, of whom 640, or 55.2%, were women. The largest shares of graduates were recorded in the following fields of education:

- Health - 166 persons (14.3%);
- Social and behavioural sciences - 162 persons (14.0%);
- Business and administration - 103 persons (8.9%);
- Education - 101 persons (8.7%);
- Engineering and engineering trades - 88 persons (7.6%);
- Arts - 81 persons (7.0%).

Methodological notes

From the 2021/2022 school year, the National Statistical Institute (NSI) has changed the preschool and school education surveys data source, moving entirely to information from the administrative registers of the Ministry of Education and Science, due to which there is a break in the time series. Additional information is published on the NSI's website within the survey's metadata (<https://nsi.bg/bg/node/3415> and <https://nsi.bg/bg/node/3433>).

From the 2023/2024 academic year, NSI has changed the data source for the students in tertiary education, moving entirely to information from the administrative register of the Ministry of Education and Science, due to which there is a break in the time series.

Education statistics was developed on the basis of Regulation № 452/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the production and development of statistics on education and lifelong learning, the current legal basis in Bulgaria in the area of education, the International Standard Classification of Education - revision 2011 (ISCED 2011) and the concomitant methodological instructions.

ISCED was designed to serve as a framework to classify educational activities as defined in programmes and the resulting qualifications into internationally agreed categories.

The National Statistical Institute conducts yearly exhaustive surveys that characterize the activity of educational institutions.

Educational institutions directly conduct teaching via educational programmes to the enrolments in organized classes (groups) or via distance mode of learning. Those programmes lead to the attainment of an education degree and/or level of professional qualification. Non-formal training and informal learning are not covered by the scope of the education system according to the used ISCED 2011 definitions.

With its surveys, NSI aims to determine the number of students in the education system as of a given date of observation. This is the basis for calculating the internationally accepted indicator 'Participation Rate of the Population in the Education System', which represents the relative share of students enrolled from a certain age group in relation to the number of the constant population of the country in the same age group.

For more information and data on education, visit NSI's webpage (<http://www.nsi.bg/en>), section Education and Lifelong Learning as well as information system Infostat (<https://infostat.nsi.bg/>).