



TERTIARY EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA - ACADEMIC YEAR 2025/2026

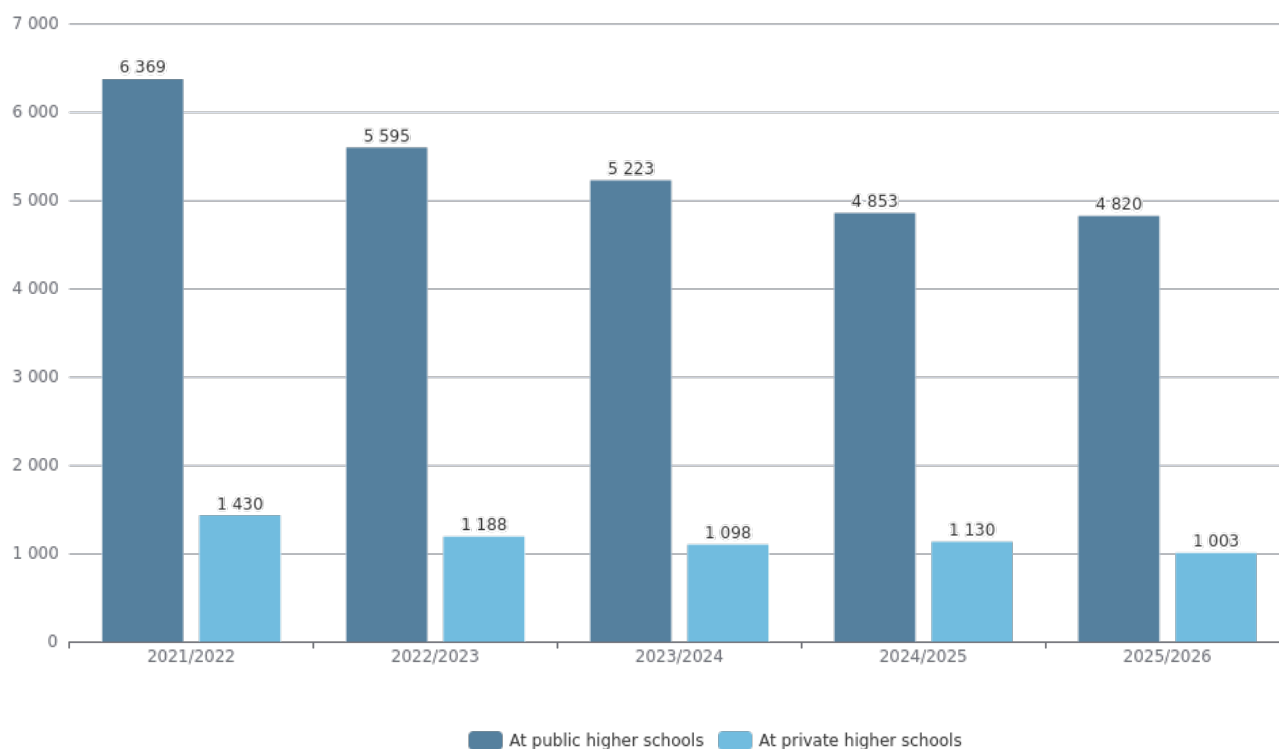
The main results from the annual comprehensive surveys conducted by the National Statistical Institute (NSI) on tertiary education are as follows:

- In 2025/2026 academic year, there were 202.9 thousand students enrolled at the different tertiary education levels (professional bachelor, bachelor and master's).
- As of 31.12.2025, for acquiring a doctor's educational and scientific degree in the country, 5 936 persons were trained, of whom 715 were foreign citizens.

Colleges (Professional bachelor's educational-qualification degree)

In 2025/2026 academic year, for acquiring a professional bachelor's educational-qualification degree, at colleges, there were enrolled 5 823 students, of whom 90.8% were Bulgarian citizens. Out of the total number of students at colleges, 1 003 persons, or 17.2%, were enrolled at private institutions (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Students enrolled at colleges¹



In 2025, with a professional bachelor's educational-qualification degree graduated 1 542 students, of whom 66.1% were women. The highest number of graduates was in specialities within the following fields of education²:

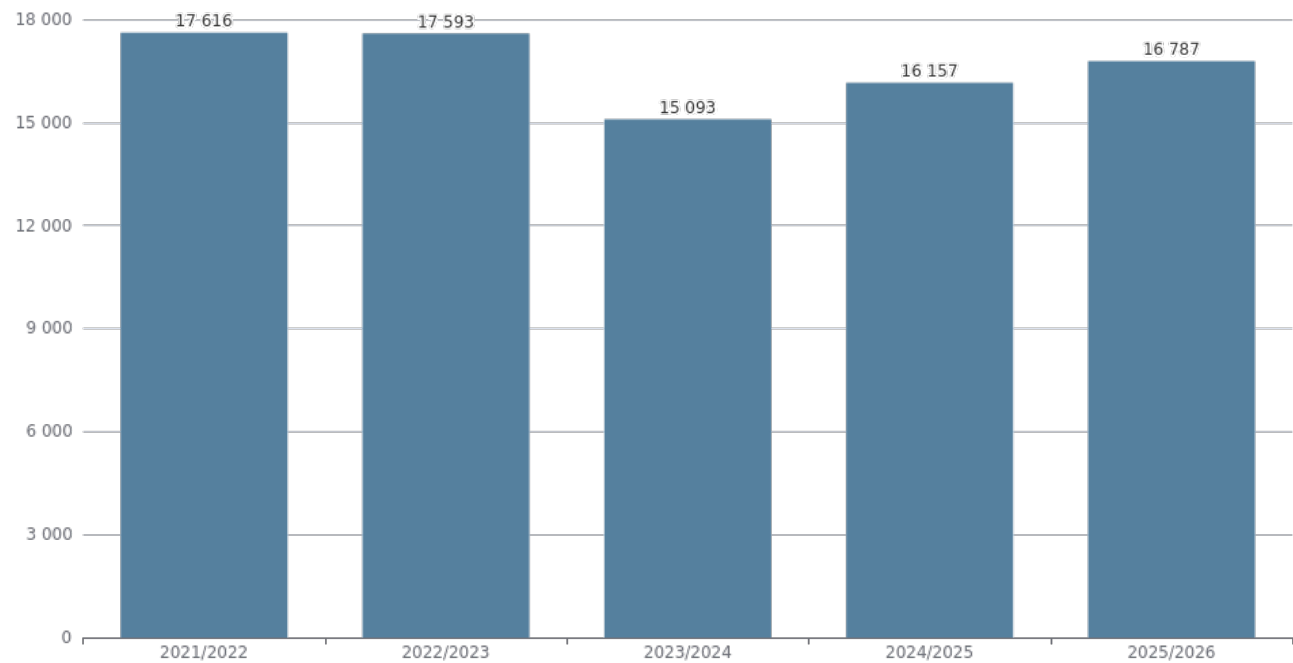
- Health - 733 persons (47.5%);
- Business and administration - 210 persons (13.6%);
- Engineering and engineering trades - 191 persons (12.4%);
- Personal services - 132 persons (8.6%);
- Education - 106 persons (6.9%).

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

In 2025/2026 academic year, there were 197.0 thousand students at universities and specialized higher schools studying for bachelor’ and master’s educational-qualification degrees. In private educational institutions were enrolled 23.1 thousand, or 11.7% of the students.

Students - Bulgarian citizens were 180.2 thousand, or 91.5% of all students enrolled at universities and specialized higher schools. Foreign students were 16.8 thousand (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Foreign students at universities and specialized higher schools³



The largest share of foreign students came from Greece (17.0%), followed by the United Kingdom (13.6%), Ukraine (12.4%), Germany (8.9%) and Italy (5.7%). The foreign students in the country choose mainly health-related studies, as 59.8% of them were studying specialties in this field and 46.1% of the total number were studying Medicine.

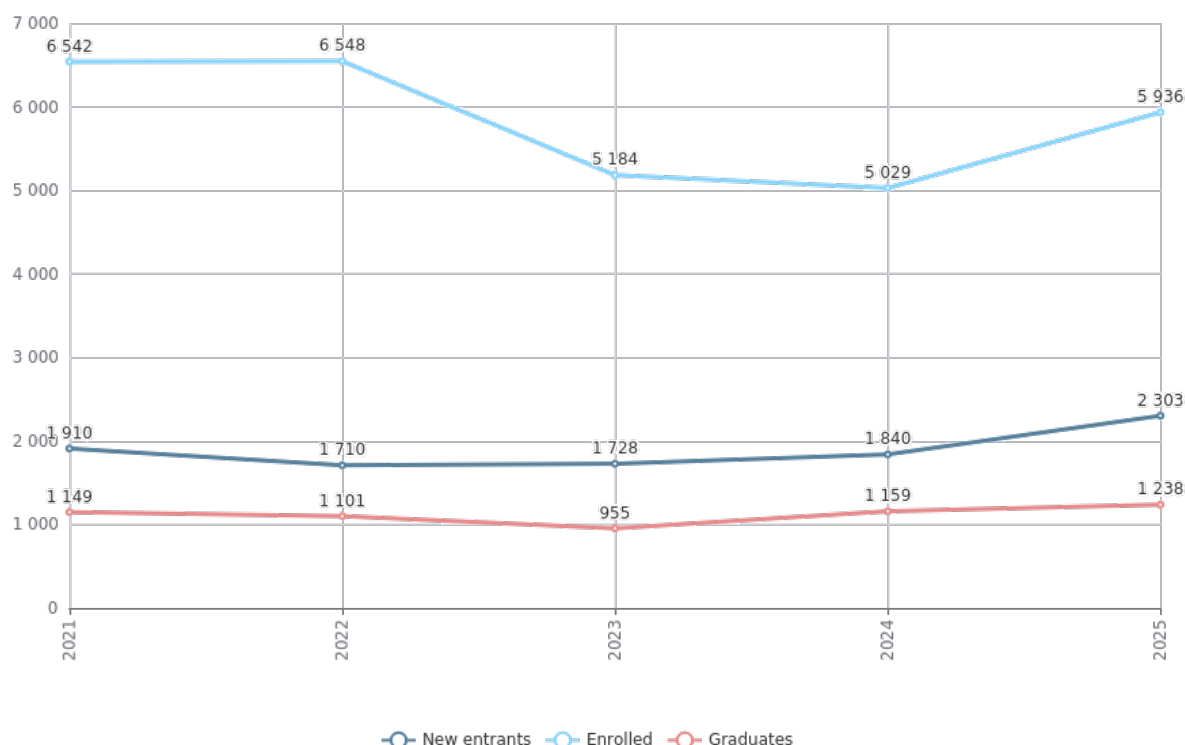
In 2025, a total of 48.1 thousand persons graduated from universities and specialised higher schools in the country, of whom 24.2 thousand with a bachelor’s and 23.9 thousand with a master’s degree.

The number of graduates was highest in the following fields of education: Business and Administration (23.1%), Education (15.5%), Health (9.4%), Engineering and engineering trades (9.0%) and Social and behavioural sciences (8.8%).

Doctor's educational and scientific degree

As of 31.12.2025, there were 5 936 PhD students enrolled in the country (see Figure 3), 52.2% of them were women. Full-time students were 3 846 persons, or 64.8% of the total. The largest share of PhD students was observed in Sofia (stolitsa) district - 57.0%, followed by Plovdiv (11.8%), Varna (9.4%) and Veliko Tarnovo (6.1%) districts.

Figure 3. New entrants, enrolled and graduates at doctoral level⁴



The foreign PhD students were 715, or 12.0% of the total number. The largest share came from China - 35.7%, followed by those from Germany (12.7%) and Greece (11.7%).

In private institutions were trained 4.7% of the PhD students. Out of them, 187 persons, or 66.5%, were enrolled in independent mode of attendance.

In 2025, doctor's degree was acquired by 1 238 persons, of whom 663, or 53.6%, were women. The largest shares of graduates were recorded in the following fields of education:

- Health - 169 persons (13.7%);
- Social and behavioural sciences - 148 persons (12.0%);
- Business and administration - 128 persons (10.3%);
- Arts - 102 persons (8.2%);
- Education - 101 persons (8.2%);
- Engineering and engineering trades - 92 persons (7.4%).

¹ 2023/2024 - break in the time series due to a change of the data source and the methodology.

² According to Classification of fields of education and training, 2015 (State Gazette, No. 46/17.06.2016).

³ 2023/2024 - break in the time series due to a change of the data source and the methodology.

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

Methodological notes

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.