

EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA FOR 2021/2022 SCHOOL YEAR

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

- In 2021/2022 school year in pre-primary education (kindergartens and preparatory groups at schools) were enrolled 214.8 thousand children.
- In 2021, the number of basic education graduates was 58.3 thousand students and graduates from general and vocational schools were respectively 25.2 and 17.8 thousand students.
- In 2021/2022 academic year, there were 220.4 thousand students enrolled at the different tertiary education levels (professional bachelor, bachelor and master's).
- As of 31.12.2021, for acquiring a doctor's educational and scientific degree in the country were trained 6 542 persons, of whom 679 were foreign citizens.

Pre-primary education

As of 1.12.2021, in the country were functioning 1 817 independent kindergartens with director. In pre-primary education, conducted in kindergartens and preparatory groups at schools, there were enrolled 214.8 thousand children, of which 110.5 thousand or 51.4% were boys. In comparison with the previous year the number of children decreased by 0.4% (Figure 1).

The coverage of children at this education level estimated by the group net enrolment rate¹ for the 2021/2022 school year was 79.1% and compared to the previous school year increased by 1.0 percentage points.

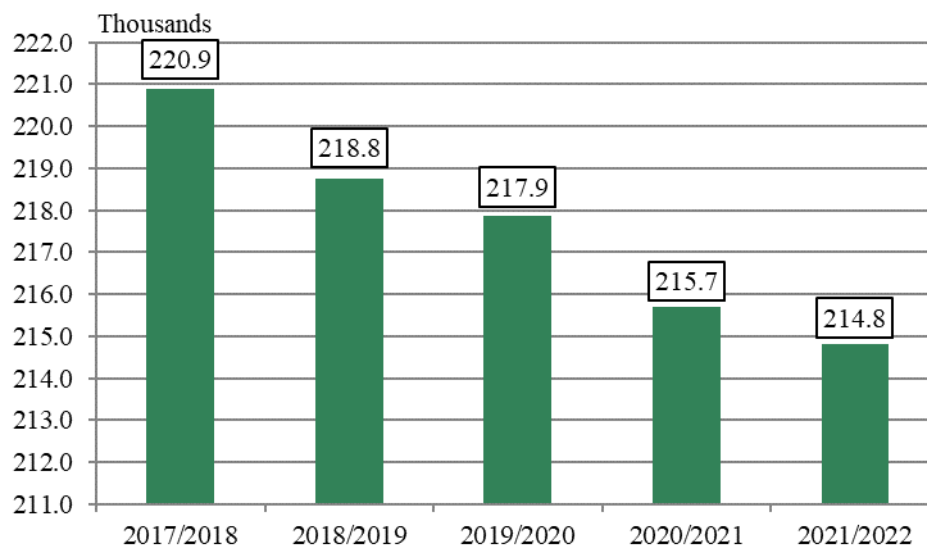
The average number of children in a kindergarten in the country was 120 as in the urban areas was significantly larger (155) than in the rural areas (61). A group was formed by average 24 children, respectively - 25 in urban and 20 in rural areas.

The teaching personnel employed in kindergartens were 20.0 thousand and in comparison with the previous school year decreased by 119 persons. Kindergarten teachers were 18.7 thousand, or 93.7% of all personnel in kindergartens.

In 2021/2022 school year in the country were functioning 116 licensed private kindergartens or with 6 more than in the previous year. There were enrolled 5 569 children or 2.6% of the total number of children in kindergartens.

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 population in the same age group.

Figure 1. Children enrolled at kindergartens and preparatory groups at schools



General education

As of 1.10.2021 there were classes in 1 948 general education schools¹. Out of them 126 were primary schools, 1 136 - basic schools, 75 - integrated schools, 116 upper secondary and 495 - secondary schools. In comparison with the previous school year remained unchanged. The students enrolled in general programmes were 556.8 thousand, of which 78.6 thousand in rural areas. There were 21 pupils on average for one class in the daily general education schools.

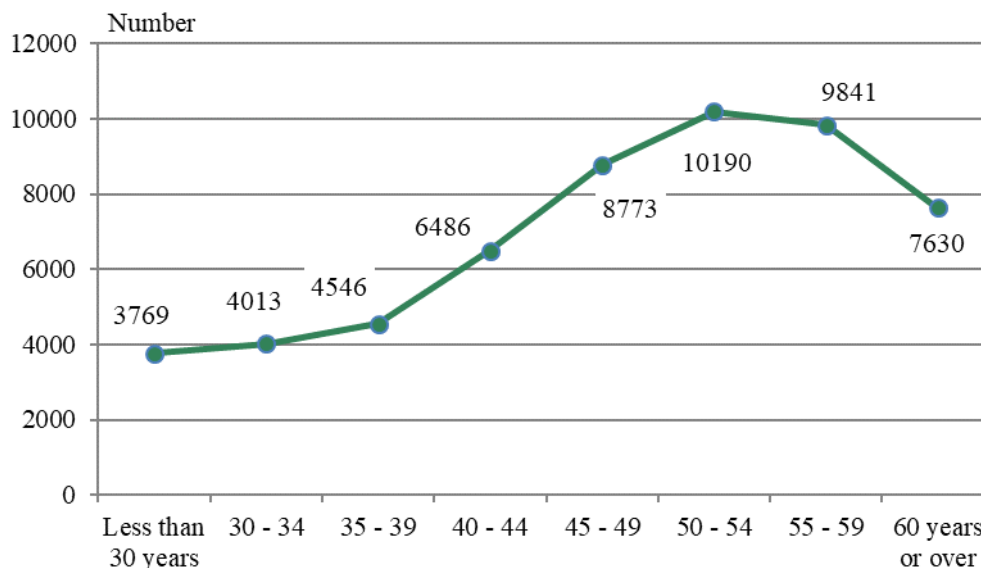
In 2021, from general education schools with basic education graduated 58.3 thousand students and with upper-secondary education - 25.2 thousand students.

The relative share of children in general education schools who studied foreign languages in primary grades (I - IV) was 73.5%, as the largest share came from those who studied English - 92.8%.

The total number of teaching staff (incl. directors and deputy directors with teaching activity) employed in general education schools during the 2021/2022 school year was 55.2 thousand. Of which 94.4% with education-qualification degree 'Bachelor' or 'Master', 4.4% were with education-qualification degree 'Professional Bachelor' or an equivalent degree in the past and 1.2% were with secondary education. In the teaching profession, women were predominant - 86.2% of the total number of teachers.

¹ Incl. the Bulgarian schools abroad, financed by state.

Figure 2. Teaching staff in general schools by age groups in 2021/2022 school year



As of 1.10.2021 there were 96 active private general education schools in the country, out of them 7 primary schools, 34 basic, 20 high schools and 35 secondary schools. There were enrolled totally 12 688 students or 2.3% from the total number of students in general education.

Vocational education and training (VET)

Vocational education and training during the school year 2021/2022 was carried out in 21 art schools, 25 sport schools, 350 vocational gymnasiums and 21 vocational colleges with enrolment after secondary education. The total number of students in there was 151.8 thousand.

Boys were predominant in vocational education and training and were 59.6% of the total number of students at this education level.

In 2021, 17.8 thousand persons graduated with secondary education from art schools, sport schools and vocational gymnasiums. Level of professional qualification was acquired by:

- First level of professional qualification from vocational classes - 461 students;
- Second and third level of professional qualification - respectively by 2.7 and 13.5 thousand students;
- Fourth level of professional qualification in vocational colleges with enrolment after secondary education - 345 students.

From the total number of students who acquired third level of professional qualification, the highest relative share was of those who studied specialties in the field¹ of 'Engineering and engineering trades' (24.1%), followed by those in the field of 'Personal services' (18.6%).

¹ About vocational education and training the fields of education are presented in accordance to the List of Occupations for Vocational Education and Training (approved by Order No. 09-413/12.05.2003 of the Minister of Education and Science).

The relative shares of students who acquired fourth level of professional qualification were highest in the fields of ‘Security services’ - 60.3% and ‘Arts’ - 15.7%.

During the 2021/2022 school year, 1 123 students were enrolled in 28 private vocational gymnasiums and private vocational colleges with enrolment after secondary education, or 0.7% of the total number of students in vocational education.

During the present school year the total number of teachers (incl. directors and deputy directors with teaching activity) in vocational education was 12.3 thousand, of them 93.9% were with bachelor’s or master’s educational qualification degree.

In vocational training programmes against payment for acquiring a level of professional qualification at vocational training centres, vocational gymnasiums and vocational colleges in 2021 were enrolled 8.5 thousand students aged 16 years or more. According to the level of professional qualification, their distribution was as follows: first level - 3.4 thousand, second level - 2.4 thousand, third level - 2.6 thousand and forth level - 127 persons.

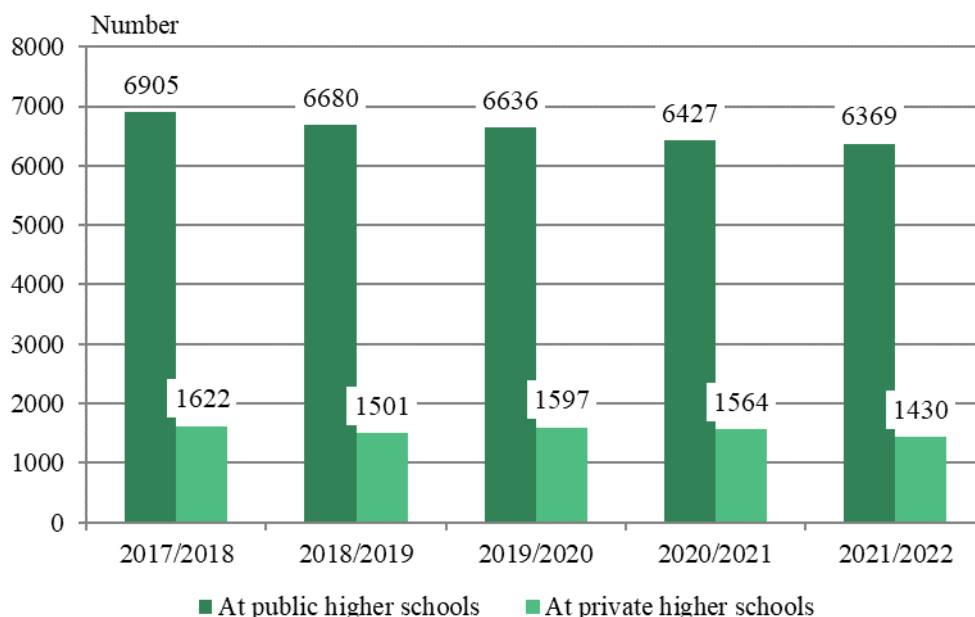
Tertiary education

In 2021/2022 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 227.0 thousand and compared to the previous academic year, their number remained almost the same.

Colleges (Professional bachelor’s educational-qualification degree)

In 2020/2021 academic year, for acquiring a professional bachelor’s educational-qualification degree, at colleges there were enrolled 7 799 students. In comparison with the previous year, their number decreased by 192 persons or by 2.4%. Out of the total number of students at colleges, 1 430 persons or 18.3% were enrolled at private institutions.

Figure 3. Students enrolled at colleges



In 2021, with a professional bachelor's educational-qualification degree graduated 1 864 students, of whom 59.3% were women. The highest number of graduates was in specialities within the following fields of education¹:

- 'Health' - 747 persons (40.1%);
- 'Personal services' - 304 persons (16.3%);
- 'Engineering and engineering trades' - 288 persons (15.5%);
- 'Business and administration' - 225 persons (12.1%);
- 'Information and Communication Technologies' - 109 persons (5.8%).

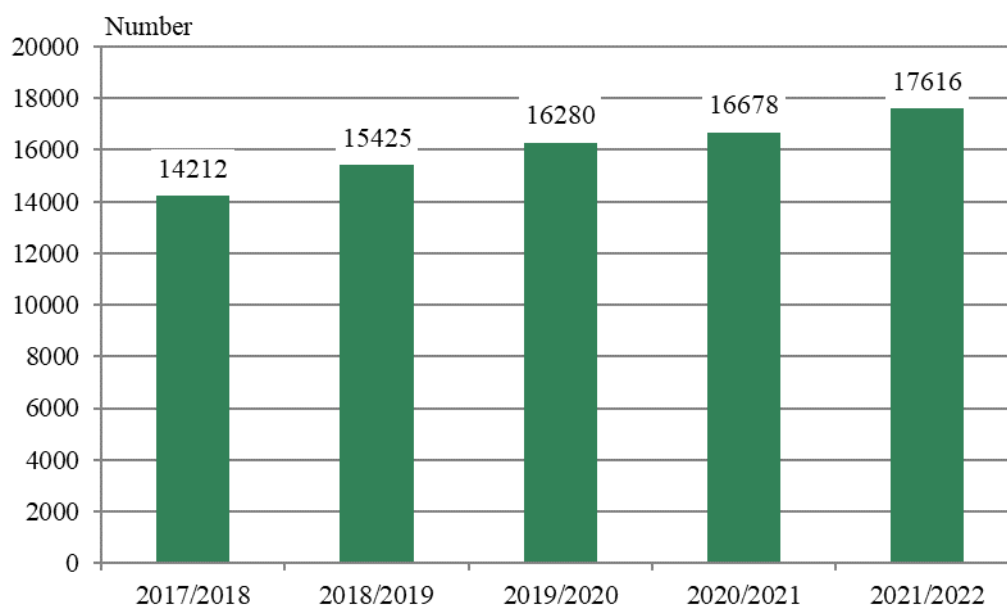
The number of teaching staff in colleges was 672, of them 294 persons or 43.8% were on a full time employment.

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

In 2021/2022 academic year, there were 212.6 thousand students at universities and specialized higher schools studying for bachelor and master's educational-qualification degrees. In private educational institutions were enrolled 25.5 thousand or 12.0% of the students.

Students - Bulgarian citizens were 195.0 thousand or 91.7% of all students enrolled at universities and specialized higher schools and in comparison to the previous year, their number remained almost unchanged. Foreign students were 17.6 thousand, which is 5.6% more than in the previous year and 24.0% more than in 2017/2018 academic year.

Figure 4. Foreign students at universities and specialized higher schools



¹ According to Classification of fields of education and training, 2015 (State Gazette, No. 46/17.06.2016)

The largest share of foreign students came from Greece (24.1%), followed by the United Kingdom (15.0%), Germany (9.5%), Ukraine (6.7%) and the Republic of North Macedonia (5.6%). The foreign students in the country choose mainly health-related studies, as 62.0% of them were studying specialties in this field and 47.6% of the total number were studying Medicine.

In 2021, a total of 44.3 thousand persons graduated from universities and specialised higher schools in the country, of whom 23.3 thousand with a bachelor's and 21.0 thousand with a master's degree.

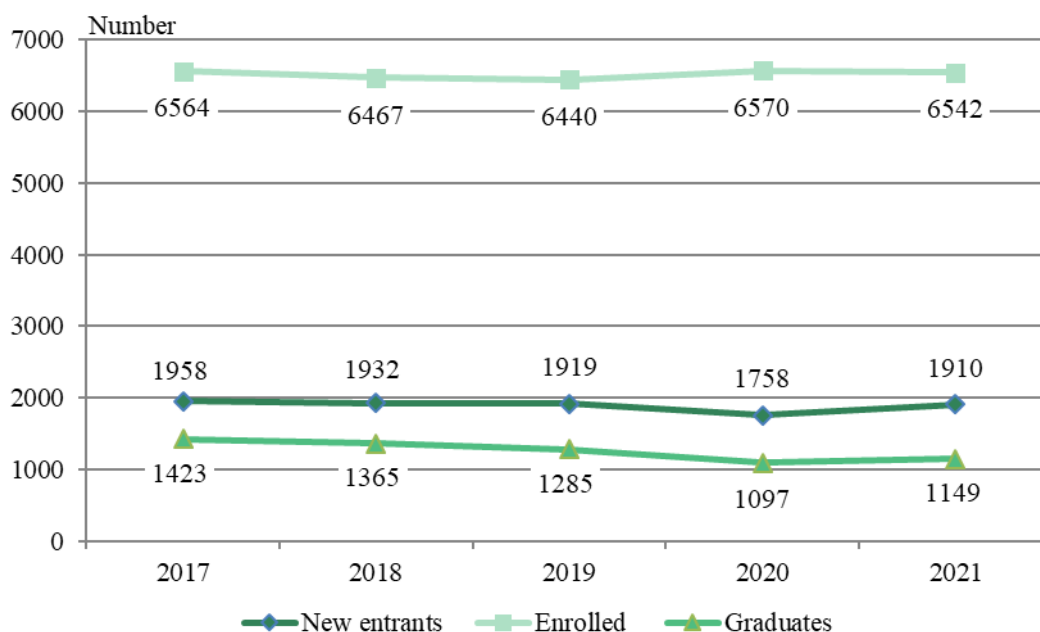
The number of graduates was highest in the following fields of education: 'Business and Administration' (23.6%), 'Education' (14.4%), 'Social and behavioural sciences' (9.9%), 'Engineering and engineering trades' (9.2%) and 'Health' (8.8%).

In 2021/2022 academic year, the number of academic staff in universities and specialized higher schools was 20.0 thousand, of which 51.7% were women. On a full time employment were 12.5 thousand or 62.5% of the total.

Doctor's educational and scientific degree

As of 31.12.2021, there were 6 542 Ph.D. students enrolled in the country (Figure 5), of them 52.0% were women. Full-time students were 3 709 persons, or 56.7% of the total. The largest share of Ph.D. students was observed in Sofia (stolitsa) district - 54.5%, followed by Varna (10.5%), Plovdiv (9.6%) and Veliko Tarnovo (8.0%) districts.

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



The foreign Ph.D. students were 679 or 10.4% of the total number. The largest share came from Greece - 20.0%, followed by those from China (10.0%), Germany (9.0%), Kosovo (8.2%), the Republic of North Macedonia (7.7%) and Albania (7.1%).

In private institutions were trained 4.3% of the Ph.D. students. Out of them 104 persons, or 37.3%, were foreigners.



In 2021, doctor's degree was acquired by 1 149 persons of whom 628, or 54.7%, were women. The largest shares of graduates were recorded in the following fields of education:

- 'Social and behavioural sciences' - 165 persons (14.4%);
- 'Health' - 126 persons (11.0%);
- 'Business and administration' - 97 persons (8.4%);
- 'Engineering and engineering trades' - 93 persons (8.1%);
- 'Education' - 83 persons (7.2%).



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 data 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>).

Education statistics was developed on the basis of the Regulation No 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 the 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 attainment of 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 aiming 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/infostat/pages/module.jsf?x_2=42).