

## EDUCATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA FOR 2022/2023 SCHOOL YEAR

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

- In 2022/2023 school year in pre-primary education (kindergartens and preparatory groups at schools) were enrolled 216.5 thousand children.
- In 2022, the number of basic education graduates was 61.1 thousand students and the number of upper-secondary education graduates from general and vocational programmes were respectively 23.2 and 13.2 thousand students.
- In 2022/2023 academic year, there were 214.8 thousand students enrolled at the different tertiary education levels (professional bachelor, bachelor and master's).
- As of 31.12.2022, for acquiring a doctor's educational and scientific degree in the country were trained 6 548 persons, of whom 764 were foreign citizens.

### Pre-primary education

As of 1.12.2022, in the country were functioning 1 817 independent kindergartens. In pre-primary education, conducted in kindergartens and preparatory groups at schools, there were enrolled 216.5 thousand children, of whom 111.2 thousand or 51.4% were boys. In comparison with the previous year the number of children increased by 0.7% (Figure 1).

The coverage of children at this education level estimated by the group net enrolment rate<sup>1</sup> for the 2022/2023 school year was 87.3%. The highest it was in Smolyan district (95.0%) and the lowest - in Sliven district (71.7%).

The average number of children in an independent kindergarten in the country was 119 as in the urban areas was significantly larger (153) than in the rural areas (62). A group was formed by average 23 children, respectively - 24 in urban and 20 in rural areas.

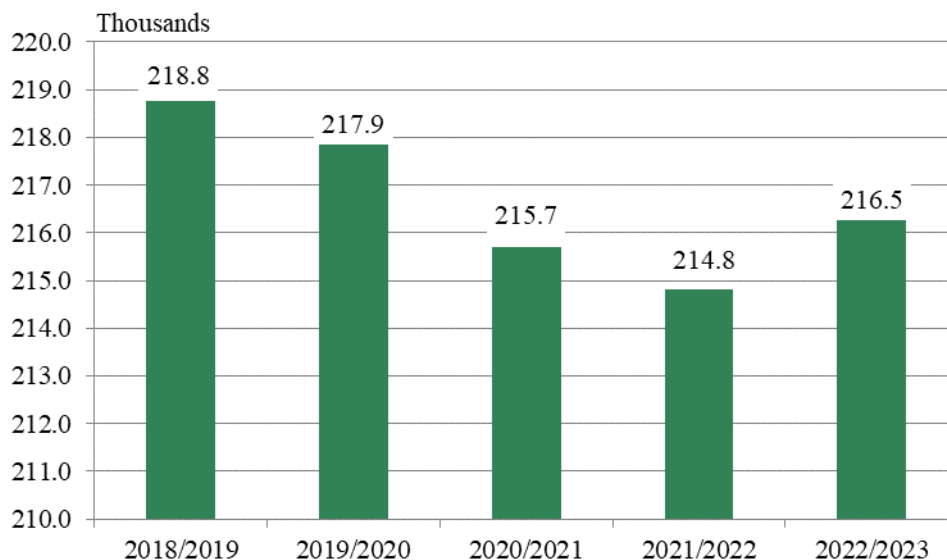
The teaching personnel employed in kindergartens were 19.7 thousand persons and in comparison with the previous school year decreased by 347 persons. Kindergarten teachers were 18.8 thousand, or 95.4% of all personnel in kindergartens.

In 2022/2023 school year in the country were functioning 119 licensed private kindergartens or with 3 more than in the previous year. There were enrolled 5 977 children or 2.8% of the total number of children in kindergartens.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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



### General education

As of 1.12.2022 in the country, general education and special profile education was conducted in 1 942 general education schools<sup>2</sup>. Out of them 127 were primary schools, 1 128 - basic schools, 75 - integrated schools, 116 - upper secondary and 496 - secondary schools. In comparison with the previous school year the number of general education schools decreased by 6. The students enrolled in general education programmes were 549.9 thousand, of which 76.3 thousand in rural areas. There were 22 pupils on average for one class in the day general education schools.

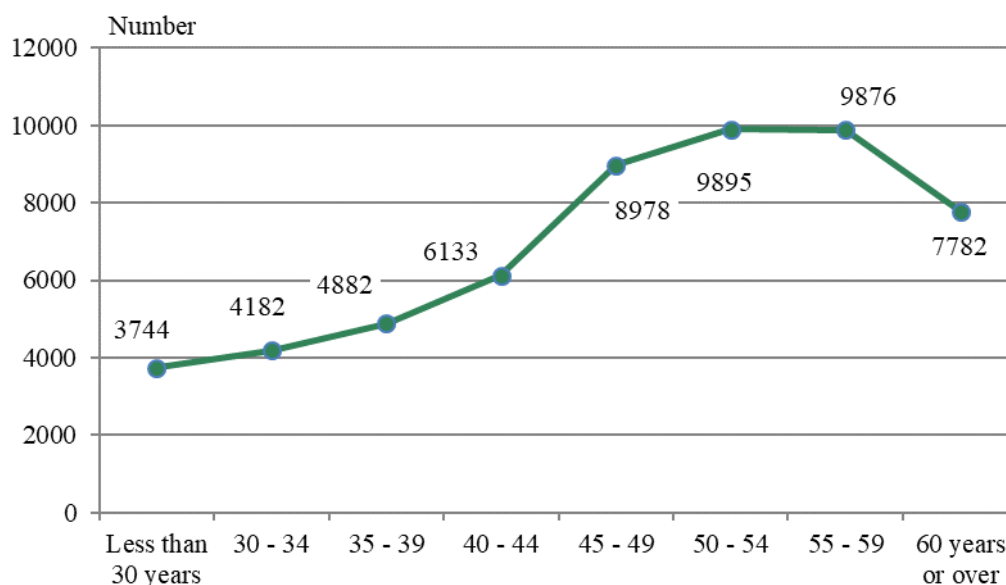
In 2022, from general education schools with basic education graduated 60.0 thousand students and with upper secondary education - 23.2 thousand students.

The relative share of children in general education schools who studied foreign languages in primary grades (I - IV) was 83.7%, as the largest share was of those who studied English - 91.9%.

The total number of teachers (incl. directors and deputy directors with teaching activity) employed in general education schools during 2022/2023 school year was 55.5 thousand. Of whom 95.5% with bachelor's or master's educational qualification degree, 3.7% were with professional bachelor's degree or an equivalent level in the past and 0.9% were with upper secondary education. In teaching profession women were predominant - 85.8% of the total number of teachers.

<sup>2</sup> Incl. the Bulgarian schools abroad, financed by the state.

**Figure 2. Teaching staff in general education schools by age groups in 2022/2023 school year**



As of 1.12.2022 there were 99 active private general education schools in the country, out of them 8 primary schools, 35 basic, 19 special profile gymnasiums and 33 secondary schools. There were enrolled totally 13 629 students or 2.5% of the total number of students in general education.

### **Vocational education and training (VET)**

Vocational education and training during the school year 2022/2023 was carried out in 21 art schools, 25 sport schools, 351 vocational gymnasiums and 22 vocational colleges with enrolment after upper secondary education. The total number of students enrolled in vocational programmes was 159.3 thousand.

Boys were predominant in vocational education and were 59.1% of the total number of students in this education programme.

In 2022, 13.2 thousand persons graduated with upper 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 - 402 students;
- Second and third level of professional qualification - respectively 1.2 and 16.0 thousand students;
- Fourth level of professional qualification from vocational colleges with enrolment after upper secondary education - 464 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 field<sup>3</sup> of ‘Engineering’ (23.0%), followed by those in the field of ‘Personal services’ (19.1%).

The relative shares of students who acquired fourth level of professional qualification were highest in the fields of ‘Public security services’ - 46.3% and ‘Health’ - 21.3%.

During the 2022/2023 school year, 1 391 students were enrolled in 28 private vocational gymnasiums and private vocational colleges with enrolment after upper secondary education, or 0.9% 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 12.4 thousand, of them 94.6% 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 2022 were enrolled 8.3 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 - 2.1 thousand and third level - 2.5 thousand persons.

### **Tertiary education**

In 2022/2023 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 221.3 thousand and compared to the previous academic year their number decreased by 5.7 thousand or by 2.5%.

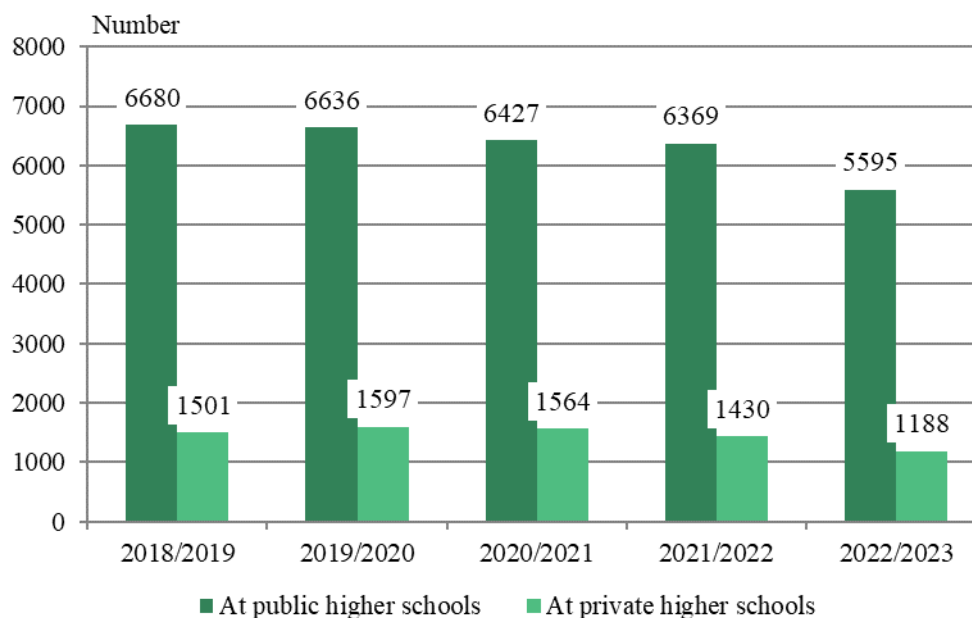
#### ***Colleges (Professional bachelor’s educational-qualification degree)***

In 2022/2023 academic year, for acquiring a professional bachelor’s educational-qualification degree, at colleges there were enrolled 6 783 students. In comparison with the previous year, their number decreased by 1 016 persons or by 13.0%. Out of the total number of students at colleges, 1 188 persons or 17.5% were enrolled at private institutions.

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<sup>3</sup> For 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 № 09-4493/18.11.2021 of the Minister of Education and Science).

**Figure 3. Students enrolled at colleges**



In 2022, with a professional bachelor's educational-qualification degree graduated 1 795 students, of whom 59.5% were women. The highest number of graduates was in specialities within the following fields of education<sup>4</sup>:

- 'Health' - 675 persons (37.6%);
- 'Engineering and engineering trades' - 288 persons (16.0%);
- 'Business and administration' - 268 persons (14.9%);
- 'Personal services' - 235 persons (13.1%);
- 'Education' - 139 persons (7.7%).

The number of teaching staff in colleges was 622, of them 313 persons or 50.3% were on a full time employment.

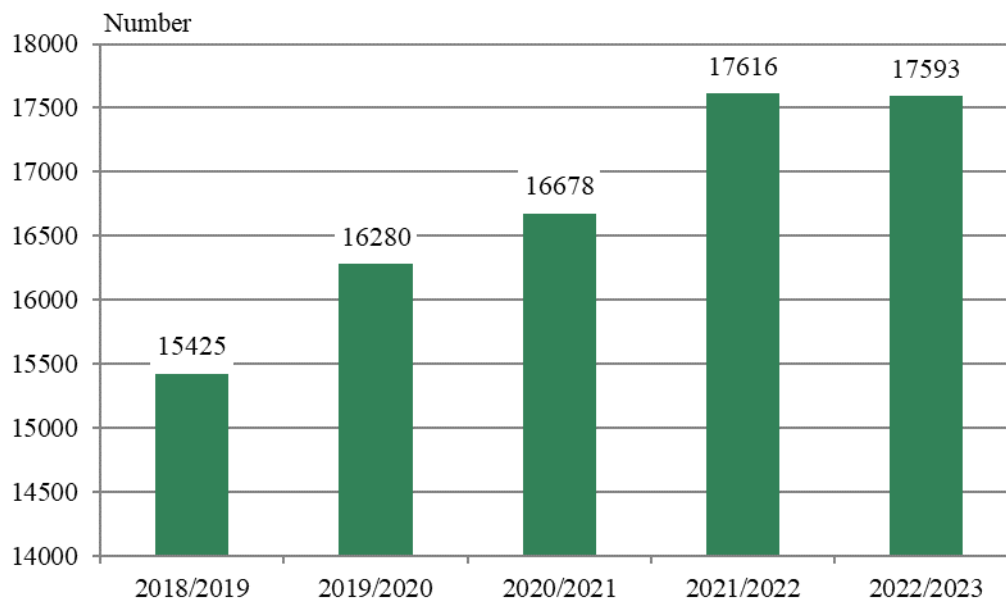
#### ***Universities and equivalent higher schools (Bachelor and master's educational-qualification degrees)***

In 2022/2023 academic year, there were 208.0 thousand students at universities and specialized higher schools studying for bachelor and master's educational-qualification degrees. In private educational institutions were enrolled 25.4 thousand or 12.2% of the students.

Students - Bulgarian citizens were 190.4 thousand or 91.5% of all students enrolled at universities and specialized higher schools and in comparison to the previous year, their number decreased by 4.6 thousand. Foreign students were 17.6 thousand and in comparison to the previous year, their number remained almost unchanged.

<sup>4</sup> According to Classification of fields of education and training, 2015 (State Gazette, No. 46/17.06.2016)

**Figure 4. Foreign students at universities and specialized higher schools**



The largest share of foreign students came from Greece (22.0%), followed by the United Kingdom (14.4%), Germany (9.8%), Ukraine (9.1%) and the Republic of North Macedonia (5.5%). The foreign students in the country choose mainly health-related studies, as 62.4% of them were studying specialties in this field and 48.8% of the total number were studying Medicine.

In 2022, a total of 45.9 thousand persons graduated from universities and specialised higher schools in the country, of whom 23.3 thousand with a bachelor's and 22.6 thousand with a master's degree.

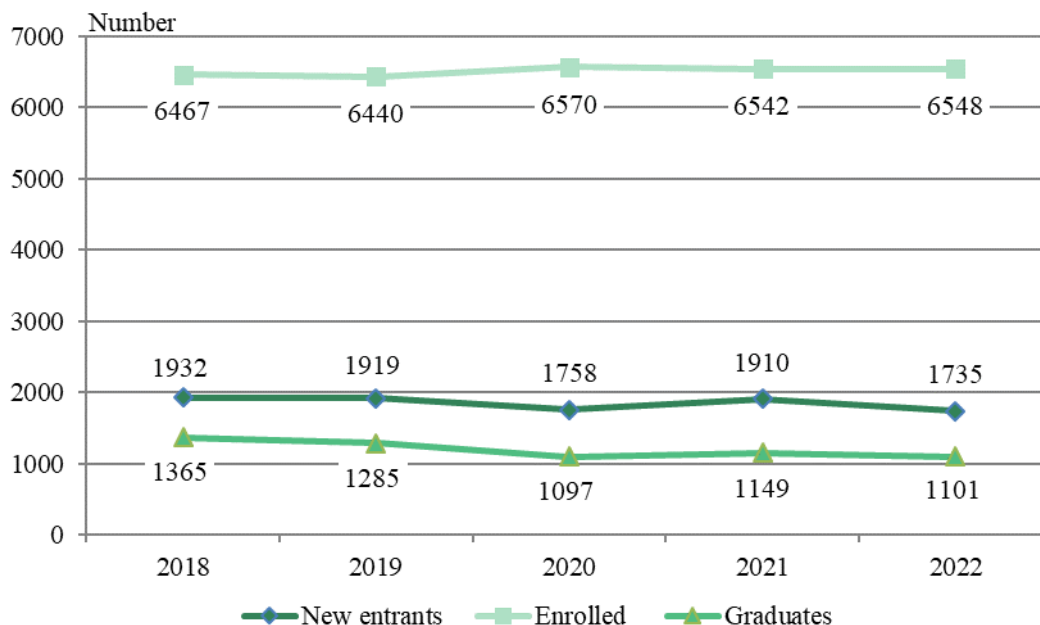
The number of graduates was highest in the following fields of education: 'Business and Administration' (22.6%), 'Education' (16.3%), 'Health' (9.6%), 'Social and behavioural sciences' (9.5%) and 'Engineering and engineering trades' (8.6%).

In 2022/2023 academic year, the number of academic staff in universities and specialized higher schools was 20.3 thousand, of which 51.5% were women. On a full time employment were 12.8 thousand or 63.0% of the total.

#### ***Doctor's educational and scientific degree***

As of 31.12.2022, there were 6 548 Ph.D. students enrolled in the country (Figure 5), of them 52.3% were women. Full-time students were 3 629 persons, or 55.4% of the total. The largest share of Ph.D. students was observed in Sofia (stolitsa) district - 54.9%, followed by Varna (9.6%), Plovdiv (9.5%) and Veliko Tarnovo (8.5%) districts.

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



The foreign Ph.D. students were 764 or 11.7% of the total number. The largest share came from Greece - 18.8%, followed by those from China (16.1%), Germany (11.1%), Kosovo (7.9%), Israel (6.5%) and the Republic of North Macedonia (6.0%).

In private institutions were trained 4.4% of the Ph.D. students. Out of them 108 persons, or 37.4%, were foreigners.

In 2022, doctor's degree was acquired by 1 101 persons, of whom 601, or 54.6%, were women. The largest shares of graduates were recorded in the following fields of education:

- 'Health' - 175 persons (15.9%);
- 'Social and behavioural sciences' - 120 persons (10.9%);
- 'Business and administration' - 105 persons (9.5%);
- 'Engineering and engineering trades' - 89 persons (8.1%);
- 'Education' - 78 persons (7.1%).



## 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 № 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](https://infostat.nsi.bg/infostat/pages/module.jsf?x_2=42)).