

GAIDAR INSTITUTE FOR ECONOMIC POLICY

RUSSIAN ECONOMY IN 2023

TRENDS AND OUTLOOKS

(Issue 45)

**Gaidar Institute Publishers
Moscow / 2024**

UDC 338.1(470+571)"2023"
BBC 65.9(2Poc)"

R95 **Russian economy in 2023. Trends and outlooks. (Issue 45)** / [V. Mau et al; scientific editing by Kudrin A.L., Doctor of sciences (economics), Radygin A.D., Doctor of sciences (economics), Sinelnikov-Murylev S.G., Doctor of sciences (economics)]; Gaidar Institute. – Moscow: Gaidar Institute Publishers, 2024. – 422 pp.: illust.

ISBN 978-5-93255-672-6

The review "Russian economy. Trends and outlooks" has been published by the Gaidar Institute since 1991. This is the 45th issue. This publication provides a detailed analysis of main trends in Russian economy, global trends in social and economic development. The paper contains 5 big sections that highlight different aspects of Russia's economic development, which allow to monitor all angles of ongoing events over a prolonged period: the monetary and budget spheres; financial markets and institutions; the real sector; social sphere; institutional changes. The paper employs a huge mass of statistical data that forms the basis of original computation and numerous charts confirming the conclusions.

Reviewer: *Kiselev S.V.*, Doctor of sciences (Economics), Professor, Head of the Agroecomics Department, Faculty of Economics, Lomonosov Moscow State University.

UDC 338.1(470+571)"2023"
BBC 65.9(2Poc)"

ISBN 978-5-93255-672-6

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Tatiana Klyachko

4.3. The education system in Russia in 2023¹

In 2023, the main trends which emerged during the coronavirus pandemic and largely consolidated with the start of the special military operation in 2022 continued in the Russian education system. In the higher education, the Russian Federation announced its withdrawal from the Bologna system, and that has already led to the shrinkage of partner relations with European universities and termination of academic mobility of teachers and students, while in school education Russia found itself cut off from international comparative studies of the quality of general education conducted by the OECD – PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS. A shift is observed towards Asian, Arab and Latin American education systems through which, nevertheless, access is also provided to European/American developments in the field of education. At the same time, a new national system is being designed in the higher education system which architecture has been tested since the spring of 2023 in an experimental mode by six universities: the I. Kant Baltic Federal University, the Moscow Aviation Institute (National Research University), the National Research Technological University “MISIS”, The Moscow Pedagogical State University, The St. Petersburg Mining University (NRU) and the Tomsk National Research State University. The experiment on the new higher education system will last for three years, but some higher education establishments will be able to use its outputs in their activities even earlier, i.e.

¹ Authors: *Klyachko T.L.*, Doctor of Economic Sciences, Director of the Center for Economics of Continuous Education (CECE), IAES RANEPa; *Tokareva G.S.*, Researcher at the CECE, IAES RANEPa.

before the end of the pilot project. In 2023, as part of the experiment, about 180 new educational programs were developed and they are expected to form the basis for new federal state educational standards (FSSES) and create the framework of a new higher education system in Russia.

1. General education

In *preschool education* (included in the general education of children), the main emphasis is made on increasing the coverage of children with the services of preschool educational organizations (hereinafter referred to as PEO). From 2018 to 2022, in the Russian Federation as a whole, the coverage of children with preschool education services picked up as follows: children under 3 years old – an increase of 6.1 p.p. (from 22.2% to 28.3%) and children of 3–6 years old – an increase of 4.6 p.p. (from 84.2 to 88.8%).¹ At the same time, for example, in Moscow in 2018–2022 the coverage of preschool children under 3 years of age decreased by 2.8 p.p. (from 19.7% to 16.9%), and children of 3–6 years old increased by 3.3 p.p. (from 67.8% to 71.1%) in 2018–2021, while in 2022 it was even below the level of 2018 (67.6%). It is unlikely that Moscow cannot provide children with places in preschool educational organizations; it is more likely that parents prefer to educate preschoolers at home and have financial resources for this purpose. The situation is quite different in St. Petersburg.

The coverage of children under 3 years of age and children of 3–6 years of age, including children aged 7, with PEO services has increased: the coverage of children under 3 years old with preschool education services rose from 21.4% in 2018 to 29.7% in 2022, and for children of 3–6 years old, from 90.6% to 110.1% (many 7-year-old children attend preschool classes). The lowest coverage of children with preschool education is observed in the Republic of Dagestan: in 2022 covered by appropriate services were only 7.6% of children under the age of 3 and 47.7% of children aged 3–6 year old, i.e. less than a half.² It is usually believed that the population of the Republics of the North Caucasus does not strive to send their children to preschool education, but in other regions of the North Caucasian Federal Okrug there is a rapid increase in the enrollment of children in preschool education, and for children at the age of 3–6 years old this figure approaches or exceeds 2/3 of the total number of preschoolers of this age.

As regards the availability of places in preschool educational organizations, the acute situation remains in the Chechen Republic where in 2022 there were 131 children per 100 places in urban areas and 118 children in rural areas. The situation in the cities of the Republic of Tyva is even more dramatic: 133 children per 100 places. In addition, an acute shortage of places in preschool educational institutions is observed in the Tyumen region (without autonomous national areas): 124 children per 100 places in cities, but 100 children for 100 places in

¹ At the time of preparation of the review, the data on the coverage of children with the services of preschool educational organizations in 2023 were unavailable.

² Rosstat. URL: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Frosstat.gov.ru%2Fstorage%2Fmediabank%2Fpokazateli_DO.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

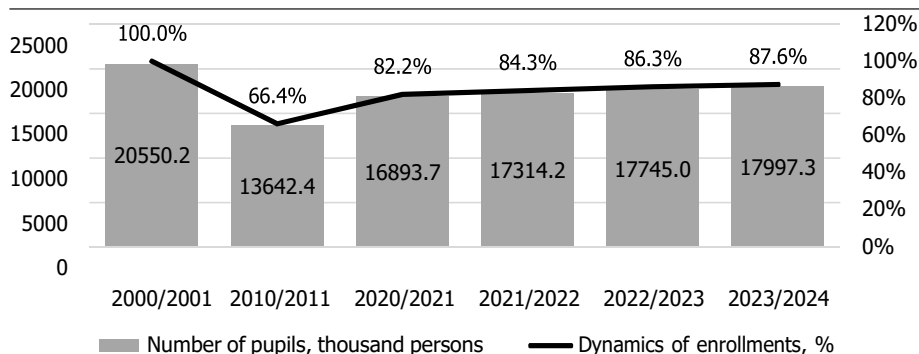


Fig. 1. The number of schoolchildren in 2000/2001–2023/2024 academic years (left-hand axis) and its dynamics (right-hand axis)

Source: Calculations based on the data of Rosstat and OO-1 2023.

villages, i.e. the situation is quite good. In other regions where there is an excess of the number of children relative to the available places, this situation is mainly typical of urban areas and amounts maximum to 112 children per 100 places.¹

In *school education*, after a significant decline in the number of pupils in the 2000s, the 2020s saw a steady increase in enrollments (Fig. 1).

After a decrease in the number of schoolchildren by a third during 2000–2010, it began to grow and in the 2023/2024 academic year amounted to 87.6% of the level of the 2000/2001 academic year (Fig. 1). At the same time, the school-age population could have been even larger in recent years, but the growing outflow of 9th grade pupils into the system of secondary vocational education continues. In the 2022/2023 academic year, 1,535,700 schoolchildren left the 9th grade, while only 663,900 schoolchildren, the 10th grade. Accordingly, after the end of the main schooling in recent years more than 850,000–870,000 pupils (i.e., approximately 55%–57%) leave it (depending on the year).

In 2023, 1,549,300 schoolchildren took the main state exam (MSE) and 1,512,500 pupils passed it (97.5%), receiving the certificate of the basic general education.

In 2023, 612,400 schoolchildren were admitted to the Unified State Exam (USE) of whom 605,200 pupils or 98.8% passed it and received a certificate of the general secondary education. At the same time, the number of 11th grade pupils who took specialized mathematics and physics exams decreased again. So, in 2022 45% and 15% of 11th grade school leavers took specialized mathematics and physics USE exams, respectively, while in 2023, 42% and 12%, respectively. Thus, the decrease over the year was equal to 3 p.p. for each of these disciplines. At the same time, the share of 11th grade pupils who choose specialized mathematics and physics when passing the unified state exam has decreased by 11p.p. and 9 p.p., respectively, since 2018, with simultaneous growth in admission to state-funded places in higher education establishments specializing in engineering specialties where

¹ Rosstat. URL: https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Frosstat.gov.ru%2Fstorage%2Fmediabank%2Fpokazateli_DO.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK

the passing of exams in these particular disciplines is required for admission. This leads to the fact that either the average USE scores, sufficient for an applicant to become a student in the specified educational programs, are clearly reduced or there is a gradual devaluation of the results of the unified state exam.

In many ways, the situation with the comprehension of mathematics and physics at school, other natural science disciplines as well as the choice of these subjects for passing the Unified State Exam is associated with a shortage of teachers in these subjects, especially in rural schools. Problems with the shortage of teaching staff in the general education system are associated in public opinion almost exclusively with low wages, especially, when it comes to young teachers. At the same time, according to Rosstat's data, the average salary of school teaching staff in most subjects of the Russian Federation amounts at least to 100% of the average salary in the relevant region.

In January – September 2023,¹ for Russia as a whole the salary of school teachers was on average equal to Rb53,637.

The fact that within "their" region the average salary of teachers has reached the approved target is not regarded by the pedagogical community as a breakthrough. At the same time, an interregional comparison of teacher salaries gives rise to a feeling of serious inequality: the average teacher salary of more than Rb53,637 was seen in 21 regions of the country, while in the rest of Russia it was lower, sometimes even significantly. Thus, in 7 subjects of the Russian Federation it ranged from 40% to 60% of the specified average salary in Russia and in other 16 subjects it was above 60%, but below 70%. Therefore, both teachers themselves and deputies of the Legislative Assemblies of the subjects of the Russian Federation and the State Duma constantly raise the question: "Why do teachers in different regions of Russia receive a different pay for equal work?" It is widely accepted that regional differences in living standards should not be reflected in the salaries of teachers with the same qualifications.

The fact that such an approach opens a "Pandora's box" and raises a large number of questions is not taken into account. At the same time, during its implementation it will be necessary to develop the nationwide criteria for the efficiency of teachers' work and this may lead to a revision of qualification categories and, quite possibly, to the deprivation of some teachers of these categories and to a decrease, and not an increase, in wages for many elderly teachers, on whom the certain stability of school education relies on. Further, efforts to eliminate interregional differences under the slogan "equal pay for equal work" will quickly entail the need to revise wages and approaches to the establishment thereof in all social sectors, which situation can destabilize many regional budgets and require a revision of the system of intergovernmental fiscal transfers.

The experiment which is currently carried out in 5 subjects of the Russian Federation to introduce a new system of remuneration for teachers is practically not commented either on the content or results, although the news on its initiation

¹ The latest official data available: URL: <https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Frosstat.gov.ru%2Fstorage%2Fmediabank%2F03-23-02.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK>

was greeted enthusiastically by teachers. However, in 2023 the widely discussed initiatives of individual State Duma deputies focused mainly on the issue of retaining young teachers in schools by switching over either to the distribution of graduates of pedagogical universities or to the introduction of special supplement payments to wages of young specialists. Also, it is proposed to overcome the shortage of teaching staff by using the labor of senior students of pedagogical universities and colleges.

Meanwhile, in 2023 8.6% of school teachers had less than 3 years of experience, while 57.8% of teachers had 20 years or more of pedagogical experience. At the same time, the lowest share of 4.9% is made up of teachers whose pedagogical experience varied from 3 to 5 years. This means that young teachers come to school, but after a rather short period leave it because they are unable to withstand the working conditions (high academic load and much paperwork associated with their activities, as well as relations in the teaching staff, with pupils' parents or pupils themselves). Despite all the declared efforts to reduce the "load of paperwork," it still remains quite high.

The distribution of teachers by age in 2023 is shown in Fig. 2.

The number of teachers under 35 years old (i.e. the youth) and over 50 years old is currently equal to 23.0% and 43.6%, respectively. Thus, in a few years, the general education system may quite objectively face the challenge of replacing the elder generation of teachers with a younger one.

The rapid development of remote educational technologies and e-learning also sets the task of rejuvenating the teaching staff.

If we consider the issue of the quality of school education, it is to be noted that the use of private tutors in preparing schoolchildren not only for the Unified State Exam, but also for everyday classes has increasingly grown in the past few years (Fig. 3, 4).

As seen from Fig. 3, almost all school leavers who were planning to enter higher education establishments studied with tutors (individually or in a group)

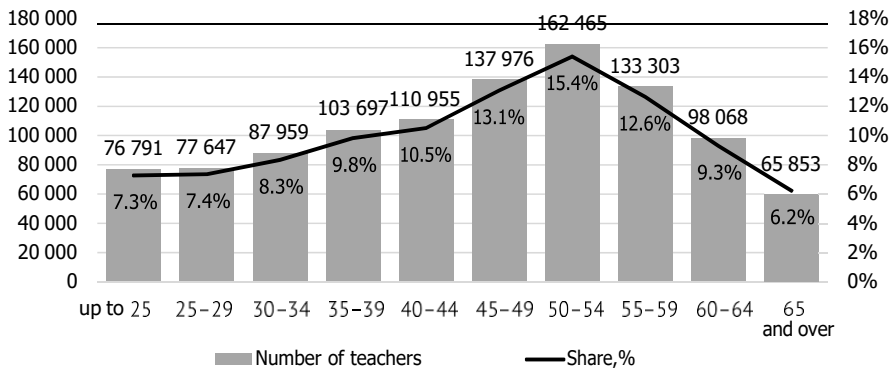


Fig. 2. The distribution of teachers by age (left-hand axis) and the share of teachers of particular age (right-hand axis)

Source: The Ministry of Education. URL: <https://edu.gov.ru/activity/statistics/>

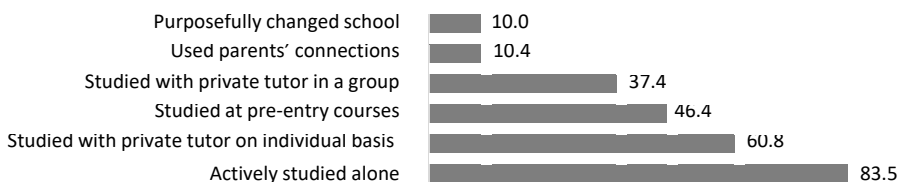


Fig. 3. Methods of preparation of 11th grade pupils for the Unified State Exam, % (maximum two answers were allowed)

Source: The sociological study carried out by the CECE of IAES RANEPA into the models of education and labor behavior of graduates from higher education establishments (May-June 2023).

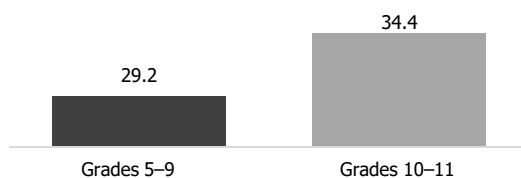


Fig. 4. Classes with private tutors of 5th-9th grade pupils with the aim of "pulling up school subjects", %

Source: The sociological survey by the CECE of IAES RANEPA of schoolchildren's parents (September 2023).

to get prepared for the Unified State Exam. As for the use of tutors for everyday classes, such involvement of schoolchildren of the secondary and higher secondary schools is shown in Fig. 4.

In the secondary school (grades 5–9), almost 30% of pupils study with tutors in school subjects, while in the higher secondary school, slightly less than 35%. It can be assumed that those who study with tutors in the secondary school are pupils who expect to continue their studies in the 10th and 11th grades, and therefore have to study hard and use external help. At the same time, according to the study by the CECE of IAES RANEPA, 24.1% of 9th grade pupils (i.e., approximately a quarter) prepare with tutors for the OGE exam. Here the motivation for classes with a tutor to pass the OGE exam well in order to get enrolled in prestigious programs at secondary vocational education establishments (primarily ICT, medicine, design, economics, management and law), including colleges at higher education establishments and/or budget-funded places, and also transfer from a regular school to the 10th grade of a lyceum or gymnasium (the best school in the city), get into the 10th grade in the desired profile of study, etc. At the same time, it is noteworthy that the number of cases of turning to private tutors when preparing for the Unified State Exam has been decreasing in recent years, as the choice in favor of secondary vocational education establishments after completion of the 9th grade is growing, and some families prefer to pay for a college education rather than tutors because tuition fees in this case are not high and, most importantly, spread over time.

2. Additional education for children

The statistical data on additional education for children (hereinafter referred to as AEC) for 2022 and 2023 are unavailable. Therefore, the main trends can only be traced through sociological studies. A sociological survey of schoolchildren's parents carried out by the CECE of IAES RANEPa in 2023 in three Russian regions – the Sverdlovsk region, the Stavropol Krai and the Altai Krai – made it feasible to identify some important points related to the development of AEC.

Involvement of children in AEC was noted by 63% of surveyed parents. More often, such involvement is indicated by families whose level of material well-being (73%), social status (74%) and living conditions (73%) is characterized as high or above average. In other words, families with a high level of social capital pay a great attention to the development of children and are not limited to the opportunities provided by compulsory schooling.

At the same time, in the elite segment of school education the level of attendance at additional classes is higher: in 2023 it amounted to 78% in schools with an advanced curriculum in certain subjects, gymnasiums and lyceums.

More than half (56%) of those who reported that their child participated in the additional education system spoke about free attendance of additional classes. A fifth (19%) of parents indicated only paid classes and a quarter (25%), a combined option (both free and paid classes) (*Fig. 5*).

It is noteworthy that within the scope of the "Education" national project, they have started in recent years to issue special certificates (certificates of personalized financing of additional education – PFAE) for visiting AEC organizations. This measure increased the attendance of extracurricular activities by children from low-income families. At the same time, families with above-average incomes often prefer to pay for additional education of their children rather than use the certificate, trying to provide their children with a higher quality of teaching.

Thus, paid additional classes are more often attended by children at schools with an advanced curriculum in certain subjects, gymnasiums and lyceums (28%) and from families whose level of material well-being, social status and living conditions is above average (28%, 28% and 29%, respectively).

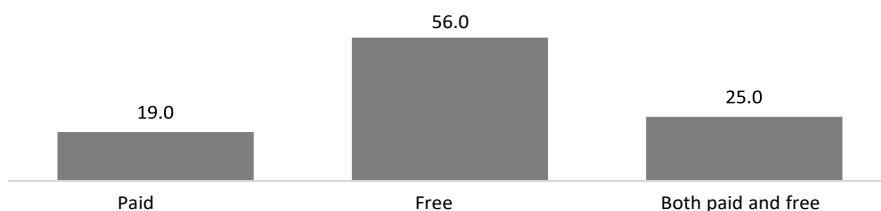


Fig. 5. The distribution of answers to the question about their children's paid/free additional classes, %

Source: The sociological survey by the CECE of IAES RANEPa of schoolchildren's parents (September 2023).

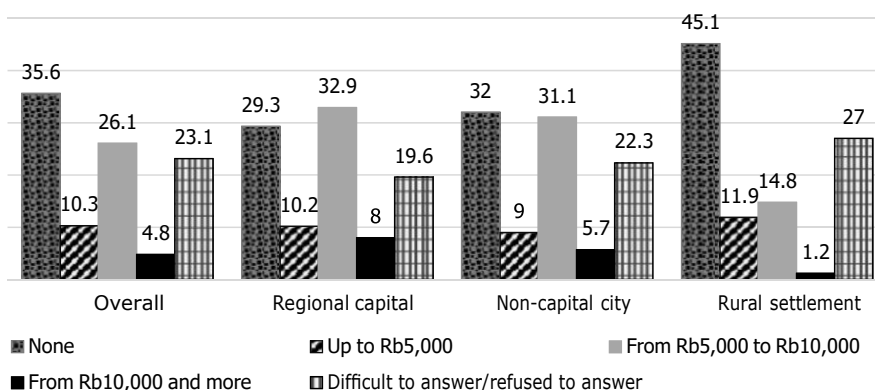


Fig. 6. The distribution of the respondents' answers to the question: "Which sum do you spend a month on all additional classes of your child?" (an open question) and the "Type of Settlement" (the question was put to parents whose child attended additional classes), %

Source: The sociological survey by the CECE of IAES RANEPА of schoolchildren's parents (September 2023).

Free classes are more often attended by children studying in rural areas (70%), at regular schools without specialization (62%), pupils in grades 5–9 (66%), as well as children from families whose level of material well-being, social status and living conditions is characterized as average and below.

Among respondents whose children attend extracurricular activities, 36% of the respondents indicated no monthly expenses for these purposes. Expenses in the amount of up to Rb5,000, from Rb5,000 to Rb10,000 and above Rb10,000 were reported by 10%, 26% and 5% of the respondents. Higher costs are observed in regional centers, lower costs in rural settlements (Fig. 6).

Most parents surveyed (61%) whose child attended additional classes noted that in 2023 there were no changes in the dynamics of family expenses on these purposes. At the same time, 39% of the respondents reported an increase in costs, and less than 1% of the respondents, a decrease. The absence of changes was more often noted by residents of rural settlements (71% of them mentioned



Fig. 7. The distribution of the answers to the question: "Have family expenses on your child's additional classes changed as compared with the previous academic year?", %

Source: The sociological survey by the CECE of IAES RANEPА of schoolchildren's parents (September 2023).

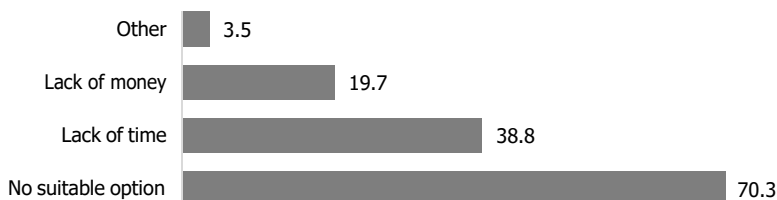


Fig. 8. The distribution of respondents' answers to the question: "For what reasons the child cannot receive the desired additional education?", % (multiple answers were allowed for parents who encountered the unavailability of additional education for their child)

Source: The sociological survey by the CECE of IAES RANEPa of schoolchildren's parents (September 2023).

this); a considerable or insignificant increase in costs was more often reported by parents in non-capital cities (46%) (*Fig. 7*).

More than a quarter of the respondents (28%) found themselves in a situation where additional education was unavailable; this was primarily due to the fact that it was not possible to choose a suitable option (70%). At the same time, 39% of the respondents who faced the unavailability of additional education explained this by lack of time and a fifth (20%), by lack of money (*Fig. 8*).

In general, in 2023 the availability of organizations specializing in additional education for children remained at approximately the same level as a year before, but some children were not involved in additional education owing to various types of deficits: a shortage of supply of activities in which children (families) were interested in, lack of time to attend additional education organizations (classes) or lack of money in the family to pay for relevant services.

3. The secondary vocational education (SVE)

In 2023 in the Russian Federation there were 4,653 organizations (independent and affiliated) that carried out secondary vocational education programs (programs on training skilled workers and employees and training programs for mid-level specialists) (*Fig. 9*).

In 2023, among independent SVE organizations, public organizations accounted for 87%, while private ones, for 13%; among branches of independent organizations the figures were close: 84% and 16%, respectively. A similar situation is typical for colleges at higher education establishments: they are mainly a part of public higher education establishments, and there are few of them in private ones.

The dynamics of the number of students in secondary vocational education organizations, including by type of education, is presented in *Fig. 10*.

From 2016/2017 to 2023/2024 academic year, the number of students in the secondary vocational education system increased by 30.1%, while from 2020/2021 to 2023/2024 academic year, by 11.2% (*Fig. 11*).

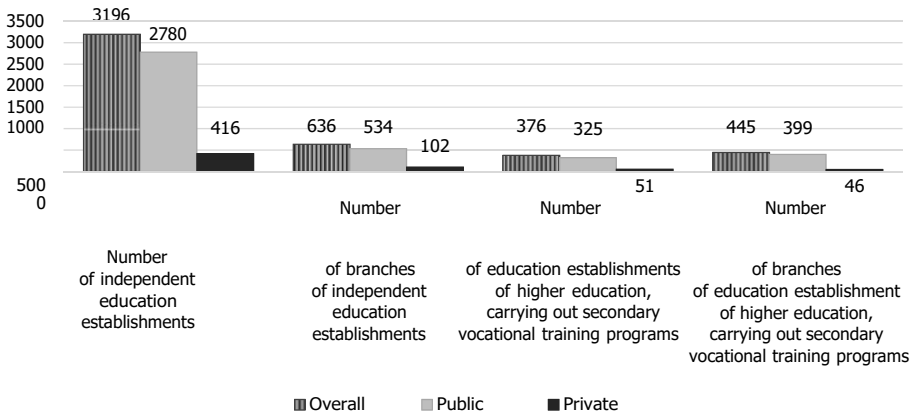


Fig. 9. The number of secondary vocational education establishments in 2023, units

Source: The Ministry of Education, statistical observation form SPO-1 for 2023. URL: https://edu.gov.ru/activity/statistics/secondary_prof_edu

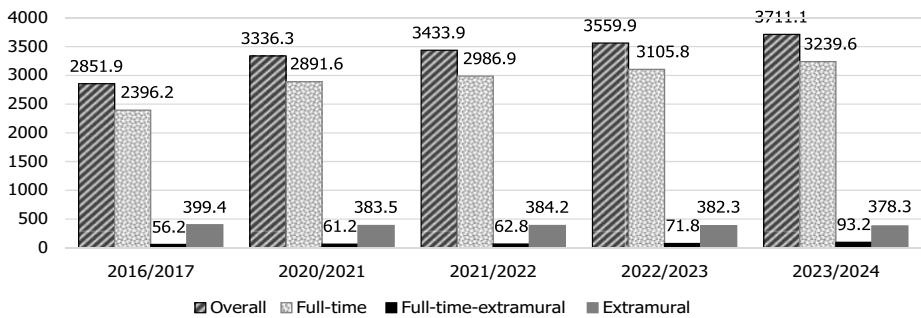


Fig. 10. The number of students in SVE organizations in 2016/2017, 2020/2021–2023/2024 academic years, thousand persons

Source: statistical observation form SPO-1 for 2017 and 2020–2023.

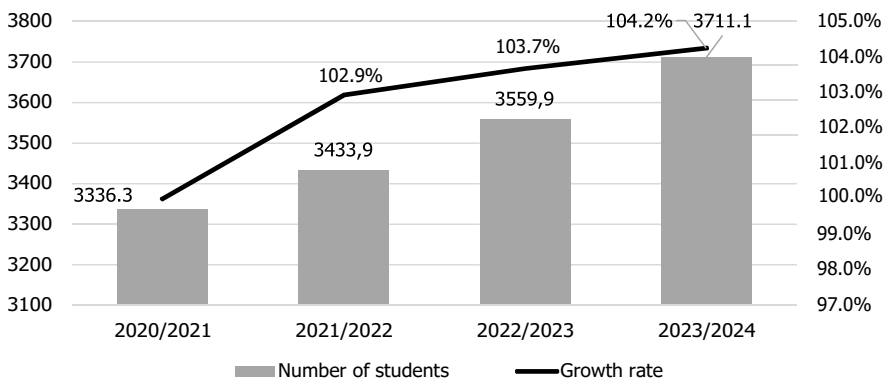


Fig. 11. The number of students in SVE organizations (left-hand axis, thousand persons) and its growth rate (right-hand axis, %, 2020/2021 academic year = 100%)

Source: Calculations based on statistical observation forms SPO-1 for 2020–2023.

In 2023, the bulk of students (85.1%) of secondary vocational education organizations took training programs for mid-level specialists (TPMLS). In recent years, 9th grade pupils leave school in large numbers to enter the secondary vocational education system, which is considered as the educational policy's great achievement. However, the problem is that young people go to colleges not for training programs for workers, but for specialties and that actually repeats the lines of training in BA courses at higher education establishments. This is explicitly seen in colleges that are part of higher education establishments.

At the same time, higher education establishments and their branches take 9th and 11th grade school leavers to their secondary vocational education organizations largely in order to provide themselves with a contingent of students in BA and SD (specialist's degree) courses.

In the regional context, in 2023 the situation was as follows: 7.5% of all students who were trained in TPMLS programs studied in Moscow, 3.4% in St. Petersburg, 4.2% in the Krasnodar Krai, 3.5% in the Moscow region, 3.0% in the Rostov region and 3.4% in the Sverdlovsk region. In other regions these shares were below 3.0%. The lowest level in TPMLS was observed in the Far Eastern Federal Okrug: in the Jewish Autonomous Okrug and the Magadan region – 0.1% each.¹

In 2023, the training of the workforce in the secondary vocational education system was equal to less than 15%, namely 577,200 persons out of 3,711,100 persons. In Moscow, 4.0% of all students in these programs in Russia studied in programs for training skilled workers and employees (PTSWE), in St. Petersburg – 3.6%. The leaders were also the Krasnodar Krai (4.2%), Rostov region (3.8%), Moscow region (3.3%), Sverdlovsk region (3.2%). As for the lowest share, the Jewish Autonomous Okrug and the Magadan region again stood out, but with 0.2% (the Chukotka Autonomous Okrug does not train personnel either in TPMLS or PTSWE).²

The low number of students in programs for training skilled workers was particularly acute in 2022 and 2023 when the Russian economy experienced a growing shortage of workers of this level. At the same time, it is highly unlikely to considerably increase the number of workers as was expected to be done within the scope of the "Specialist's Degree" federal project by reducing the time required for training workers by approximately 50%. Firstly, employers are already talking about a decrease in the standard of education due to such an "acceleration"; secondly, many graduates of the "specialist's degree" programs for training skilled workers do not reach the age of 18 and, therefore, cannot work at many enterprises and entities where the labor of only young adults is allowed. Moreover, for graduates of "specialist's degree" programs the question arises about their future educational trajectories: it is not clear whether they will be able to enter, for example, higher education establishments, which option was available to graduates of traditional programs for training skilled workers

¹ Calculations based on statistical observation form SPO-1 for 2023. URL: https://edu.gov.ru/activity/statistics/secondary_prof_edu

² Ibid.

and employees, although these graduates generally continued their education in programs for training mid-level specialists.

As for the shortage of workers, especially blue-collar workers, in the coming years their shortage will become a significant constraint on Russian economic growth and, as seen from the experience of 2023, it will not be possible to make up for this deficit by means of training them in the secondary vocational education system.

4. The higher education

As mentioned above, an experiment was started on transition to a new national higher education system in 2023. This pilot project is expected to last for 3 years. Within its framework, as noted, new educational programs and the Federal State Educational Standard (FSES) are being developed.

The experiment demonstrates the main innovations: the introduction of basic and specialized levels of higher education. At the same time, the specialized level is aimed at deepening and expanding the range of knowledge and skills acquired at the basic level. Accordingly, the profile of training is maintained, but due to the interdisciplinarity of the programs, an attempt is made to ensure their certain flexibility. Another important change is associated with a greater practice-oriented nature of main educational programs because the share of work practice in them considerably increased (not only practical exercises or modeling of practical situations with the development of practical skills on simulators, but also training practices), namely, gaining hands-on experience in production conditions (at specific enterprises and entities: for example, design bureaus or research laboratories).

The transformation of a specialized level of higher education – a master's degree – not only into an academic track, but also into a professional one (after 5 years of basic training and work experience) should become an important component of continuous professional education, not necessarily associated with a scientific career (it must be said that, at present, master's degree programs do not automatically lead to postgraduate studies or a scientific degree). In many ways, professional master's degree programs (one-year rather than two-year long) are more equal to modern MBA business education programs which take longer to complete.

At the same time, in the experiment in which the new architecture of the Federal State Educational Standard and main educational programs is being tested, many organizational, economic and financial issues, as well as reactions (or assessments) of the population to the proposed changes, are not approbated. The linking of educational programs to their financial support is substantiated by the mechanism of budgetary financing of the educational process in Russian higher education establishments and, in addition, tuition fees for fee-paying students (Russian and foreign citizens). The mechanism of normative per capita financing used in Russia quite strictly links the educational program and budget-funded students enrolled in it with the volume of budget funds allocated to the

higher education establishment. As for fee-paying students, tuition fees are, to one degree or another, tied to budget funding ratios.

A change in the length of study in main educational programs and the structure of training may lead to a change in the volume of budget funds that will be required for their implementation, as well as to a redistribution of budget funding between higher education establishments. Another outcome may be a revision of the size of budget funding and, accordingly, tuition fees for a particular program. At the same time, an increase or decrease in fees for higher education will lead to a transformation in the behavior of various income groups of the population.

At the same time, while the experiment is underway, the Russian higher education system will actually function as before, with the exception of those few higher education establishments that would like to join the mentioned experiment on their own initiative.

The only thing that will really happen at this time is a continued shift in admission targets (budget-funded places and, accordingly, budget funding) in favor of regional higher education establishments, and the structure of training will increasingly change towards engineering and technical specialties and ICT.

It is noteworthy that these shifts take place amid a decrease in the share of 11th grade school leavers going to higher education establishments (*Table 7*).

Table 7

The share of 11th grade school leavers going to higher education establishments, across federal okrugs, %

	2017/2018 Academic year	2018/2019 academic year	2019/2020 academic year	2020/2021 academic year	2021/2022 academic year	2022/2023 academic year
Russian Federation	54.2	52.6	48.5	44.5	46.5	47.1
Central Federal Okrug	66.1	65.7	62.7	59.1	60.4	62.3
North-Western Federal Okrug	48.9	43.0	43.8	40.9	41.7	42.0
Southern Federal Okrug	67.2	67.8	56.7	51.9	52.4	53.9
North-Caucasian Federal Okrug	41.0	40.5	37.6	32.6	36.2	34.4
Privolzhsky Federal Okrug	69.7	67.3	64.7	61.1	65.7	67.8
Urals Federal Okrug	47.4	48.2	43.0	39.2	41.0	40.9
Siberian Federal Okrug	58.6	56.9	51.2	46.9	48.1	49.4
Far Eastern Federal Okrug	34.4	31.4	28.1	24.1	26.3	26.4

Source: Calculations are based on statistical observation forms OO-1, SPO-1, VO-1 for 2018–2023.

On average in Russia, less than 50% of school leavers have gone to higher education establishments in recent years after completing the 11th grade (*Table 7*). At the same time, as noted above, in 2023, 98% of 11th grade pupils passed the Unified State Exam and received the certificate of secondary education. This means that most of those who received a high school education in 2023 entered vocational education organizations or went to work, interrupting the process of study for some time (it is extremely difficult to assume that they stopped studying

forever, since the modern economy requires continuous additional training and retraining). The lowest share of those going to higher education establishments after leaving a high school has been observed in recent years in the Far Eastern Federal Okrug, while the highest one, in the Privolzhsky Federal Okrug. At the same time, the lowest indicators were seen in all federal districts in the 2020/2021 academic year because of the coronavirus pandemic, when the unified state exam was canceled for those who did not intend to enter higher education establishments.

Under stress conditions caused by the transition to remote learning and problems related with moving to another region to enter a higher education establishment, the choice in favor of continuing education in the secondary vocational education system seemed quite rational. Starting from the 2021/2022 academic year, the share of those entering higher education establishments immediately after leaving school began to grow and thus marked a return to ordinary (normal) life and the usual model of educational behavior. But a complete recovery has not occurred yet. The more so that the worsening of the economic situation of the population in 2017–2022 also stimulated young people to go to secondary vocational education organizations where, as noted above, tuition fees are much lower compared to higher education establishments, if they cannot get to budget-funded places.

The sociological study of graduates of higher education establishments carried out by the CECE of IAES RANEPА showed that in 2023 even those graduating from higher school did not consider it necessary to receive higher education (*Table 8*).¹

Table 8

The idea of graduates of higher education establishment about the need/desire to receive higher education for achieving success in career and life, %

	Required	Desirable	No need	Difficult to answer
Overall	34,2	42,4	11,9	11,6
Type of settlement where higher education is received				
Regional center	32.2	42.9	13.2	11.7
Non-capital city	40.2	40.9	7.9	11.0
Groups of training lines				
Economics and law	45.5	38.4	8.5	7.6
Humanitarian specialties	33.6	44.0	10.8	11.6
Natural science, medicine and engineering specialties	31.3	41.6	15.1	12.0
Services sector	25.5	48.0	7.8	18.6
Parents' education status				
Limited	31.9	45.9	12.2	10.0
Medium	32.7	43.5	11.2	12.6
High	38.6	38.0	11.1	12.2
Parents' material well-being status				
Limited	22,4	47,7	16,8	13,1

¹ The study was carried out in the Sverdlovsk region, Volgograd region and Ivanovo region in May-June 2023.

	Required	Desirable	No need	Difficult to answer
Medium	31.4	45.4	12.5	10.7
High	44.8	34.0	8.7	12.5
Parents' social status				
Limited	26.5	44.9	24.5	4.1
Medium	31.6	45.4	11.8	11.3
High	40.2	36.5	10.3	12.9

Source: The sociological survey of graduates of higher education establishments (carried out by the CECE of IAES RANEPА in May-June 2023).

As seen from *Table 8*, higher education establishment graduates from families with parents' high education status and high material well-being and social status¹ considered it necessary to the greatest extent to receive higher education while students from other families tended to believe that higher education was desirable, but not necessary. At the same time, graduates from families with parents' limited education status and low material well-being and social status denied to the greatest degree the need in higher education. This is quite a serious signal for higher education establishments: if higher education does not provide a high-quality training that meets employers' demand, it cannot be considered as a social lift for young people from the low-income strata of the population.