



NATIONAL
COUNCIL
FOR HIGHER
EDUCATION

2023 NAMIBIA HIGHER EDUCATION STATISTICS

SYNOPSIS

Introduction

NCHE is a statutory body established under section 4 of the Higher Education Act, 2003 (Act No. 26 of 2003) to advise the Minister responsible for Higher Education on issues pertaining to higher education.

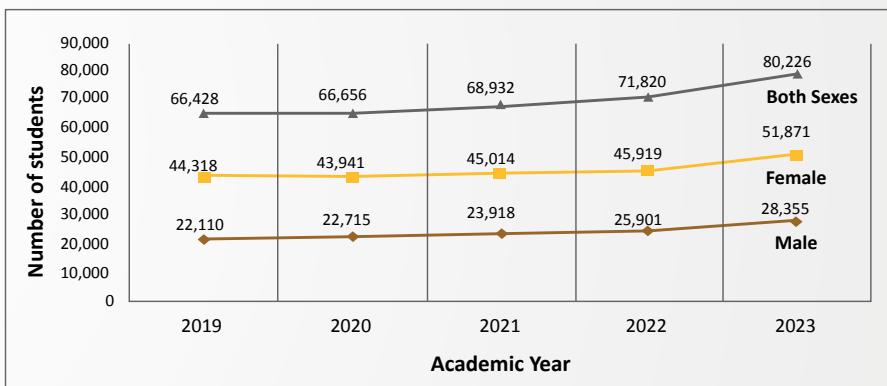
NCHE is therefore responsible for promoting a coordinated higher education system, assuring the quality of higher education, enhancing students' access to higher education and advising on the allocation of state funds to public higher education institutions.

This synopsis provides a condensed overview of the 2023 Namibia higher education statistics. The complete statistics are contained in the 2023 Namibia Higher Education Statistical Yearbook, accessible online at www.nche.org/publications.

You can also engage us at hemis@nche.org.na for all your higher education statistical needs.

Student enrolment growth

Enrolment in higher education surged to 80,226 students in 2023—an increase of over 13,000 students since 2019. Women now make up nearly two-thirds of all students, with 64.7% female and 35.3% male enrolment. This means there are roughly two female students for every male student, highlighting a strong gender imbalance in favour of women.



Namibians' participation in higher education, last five years

The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) measures the total enrolment in higher education - regardless of age - as a percentage of Namibia's population aged 19 to 23. Namibia's GER rose from 27.6% in 2019 to 30.6% in 2023, reflecting a 3.0 percentage point increase and signalling improved participation in higher education. The age category of 19 – 23 is essential as it is the ideal age of higher education attendance.

Year	Population Group			Student Enrolment in Local HEIs			Gross Enrolment Ratio		
	Aged 19–23 Years*			Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
2019	118,739	121,873	240,612	22,110	44,318	66,428	18.6%	36.4%	27.6%
2020	118,717	121,317	240,034	22,715	43,941	66,656	19.1%	36.2%	27.8%
2021	118,245	120,263	238,508	23,918	45,014	68,932	20.2%	37.4%	28.9%
2022	117,467	118,859	236,326	25,901	45,919	71,820	22.0%	38.6%	30.4%
2023	132,277	129,648	261,925	28,355	51,871	80,226	21.4%	40.0%	30.6%

Higher Education Institutional enrolment growth, last five years

Between 2019 and 2023, Welwitchia Health Training Centre experienced drastic growth in enrolment, rising by 257%, followed by Triumphant College with a 124% increase, and the International University of Management with 66% growth. The other Seven Private HEIs, Namibia University of Science and Technology, Namibia College of Open Learning, and River Higher Institute of Technology, also saw increases ranging from 59% to 15%. In contrast, the University of Namibia, International Training College-Lingua, and Institute of Learning recorded declines, with the Institute of Learning showing the sharpest drop at 36%.

Higher Education Institution	2019	2023	% Change	Trend Indicator
Welwitchia Health Training Centre	1,719	6,130	+257%	significant increase
Triumphant College	1,233	2,766	+124%	major growth
International University of Management	9,905	16,416	+66%	strong growth
Seven Other Private HEIs**	722	1,150	+59%	moderate growth
Namibia University of Science and Technology	12,227	15,996	+31%	steady increase
Namibia College of Open Learning	4,571	5,410	+18%	modest growth
River Higher Institute of Technology	542	625	+15%	slight increase
ITC-Lingua	635	609	-4%	slight decline
University of Namibia	30,069	26,164	-13%	noticeable decline
Institute of Open Learning	4,805	3,064	-36%	significant decline
I-Care Health Training Institute	-	1,268	-	new institution
Shiramed Medical Institute	-	624	-	new institution
Total	66,428	80,226	+21%	overall growth

** Only HEIs that enroled more than 500 students in 2023 presented separately.

Enrolment by qualification field of learning

A notable share of students (31.5%) pursued studies in STEM-related fields, with male students showing higher participation (35.7%) than females (29.2%), indicating a gender gap in technical disciplines. In contrast, non-STEM fields attracted a larger proportion of students (68.5%), where female representation was significantly higher (70.8%) than male (64.3%), particularly in Education (46.1% vs. 34.7%) and Health Sciences (20.7% vs. 10.4%).

Qualification field of Learning	Number			Number		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Health Sciences and Social Services	2,951	10,715	13,666	10.4%	20.7%	17.0%
Physical, Mathematical and Computer Sciences	3,259	1,968	5,227	11.5%	3.8%	6.5%
Manufacturing, Engineering and Technology	2,205	886	3,091	7.8%	1.7%	3.9%
Agriculture and Nature Conservation	991	1,123	2,114	3.5%	2.2%	2.6%
Physical Planning and Construction	730	458	1,188	2.6%	0.9%	1.5%
Total STEM fields	10,136	15,150	25,286	35.7%	29.2%	31.5%
Education, Training and Development	9,851	23,902	33,753	34.7%	46.1%	42.1%
Business, Commerce and Management Studies	5,866	8,739	14,605	20.7%	16.8%	18.2%
Law, Military Science and Security	1,300	1,352	2,652	4.6%	2.6%	3.3%
Communication Studies and Language	505	1,089	1,594	1.8%	2.1%	2.0%
Human and Social Studies	369	897	1,266	1.3%	1.7%	1.6%
Culture and the Arts	198	498	696	0.7%	1.0%	0.9%
Services and Life Sciences	130	244	374	0.5%	0.5%	0.5%
Total non-STEM fields	18,219	36,721	54,940	64.3%	70.8%	68.5%
Grand Total	28,355	51,871	80,226	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Enroled students' Age groups by qualification type

The official theoretical age for tertiary education, as defined by UNESCO, refers to the age range typically expected for students to be enroled in higher education programmes. In Namibia, the official theoretical age is 18 years, making the five-year theoretical ages 19 to 23 years. Namibia's higher education student population is much older, as only 43% were within the official theoretical age, and 57% of the students were above the age of 23 years. The higher education system is experiencing low completion and high repetition rates, which result in prolonged studies.

Age group (years)	Other Undergraduates	Bachelors/Honours	Postgraduates	Total
23 and below	29.4%	53.7%	0.9%	43.2%
24 - 29	31.0%	30.0%	24.9%	30.0%
30 and above	39.6%	16.4%	74.2%	26.8%
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

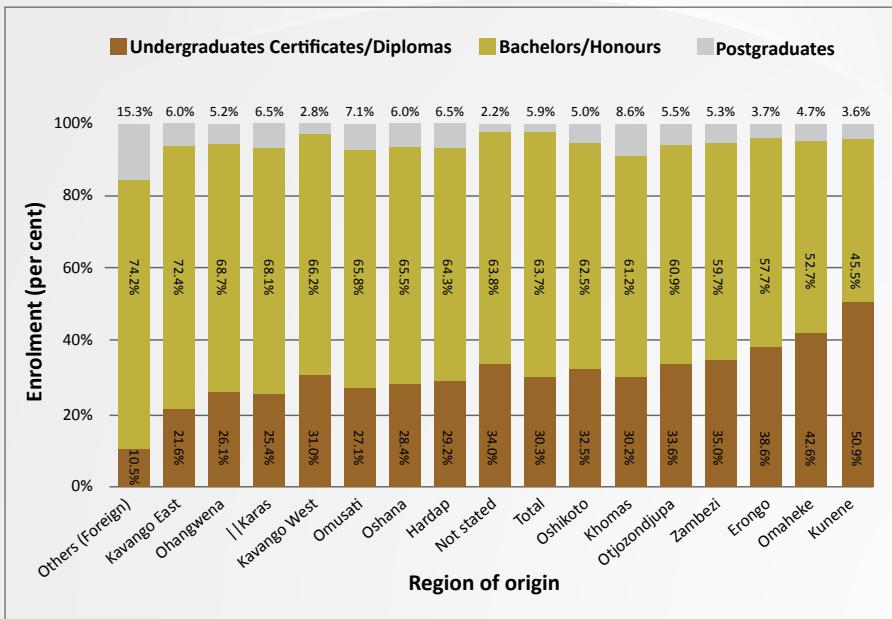
Enroled students' NQF qualification type by Sex

Approximately two-thirds (63.7%) of the students were enroled in undergraduate Bachelor degree programmes (Bachelor, Bachelor Honours and Professional Bachelor, followed by other undergraduate (Certificates/ Diplomas qualifications at 30.2%. Male students were predominantly enroled in Bachelor, Professional Bachelor, and Bachelor Honours degrees, with 71.5% of male students pursuing these qualifications, compared to 59.5% of female students. Regarding Other undergraduate qualifications (Certificates and Diplomas as well as Access and Foundation Programmes), female students represented a substantial proportion, 34.7%, compared to their male counterparts (22.3%).

NQF Qualification Type	Number			Per Cent		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Undergraduate Certificates & Diplomas	6,327	18,014	24,341	22.3%	34.7%	30.3%
Bachelor and or Honours	20,269	30,847	51,116	71.5%	59.5%	63.7%
Postgraduates	1,759	3,010	4,769	6.2%	5.8%	5.9%
Total	28,355	51,871	80,226	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

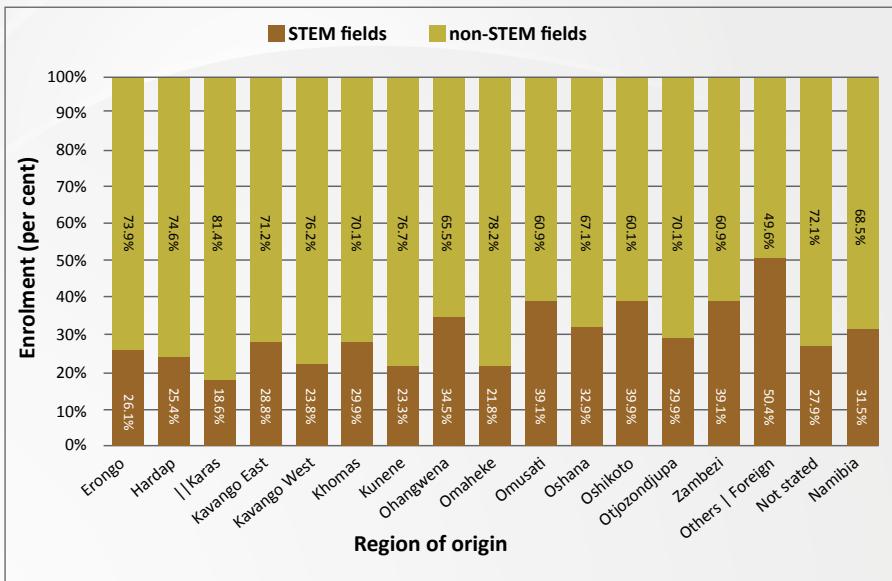
Enrolment by region of origin and by grouped qualification types

Substantive proportions of students from Kunene (50.9%), Omaheke (42.6%) and Erongo (38.6%) were mainly enroled in undergraduate Certificate and Diploma programmes. Kavango East (72.4%), Ohangwena (68.7%) and ||Karas (68.1%) had the highest proportions of students enroled for Bachelor or Honours programmes. Higher percentages of students whose area of origin is foreign countries enroled for postgraduate studies (15.3%).



Enrolment by region of origin by STEM and non-STEM fields of Learning

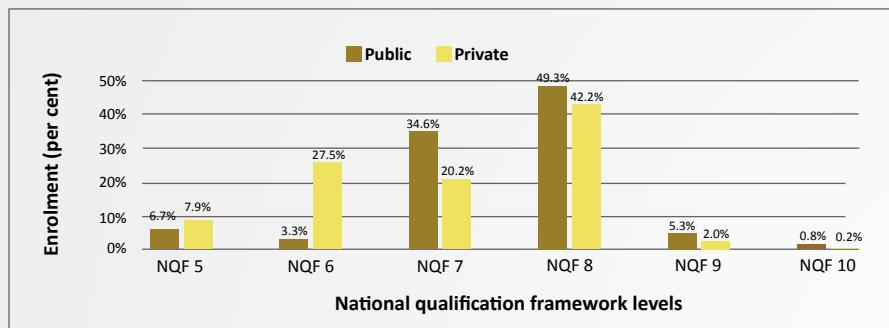
STEM fields are more popular for students whose area of origin is outside Namibia as well as for students from Oshikoto, Omusati and Zambezi regions. While students from ||Karas, Omaheke, Kunene and Kavango West highly prefer non-STEM fields.



Enrolment among public and private Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) across NQF levels

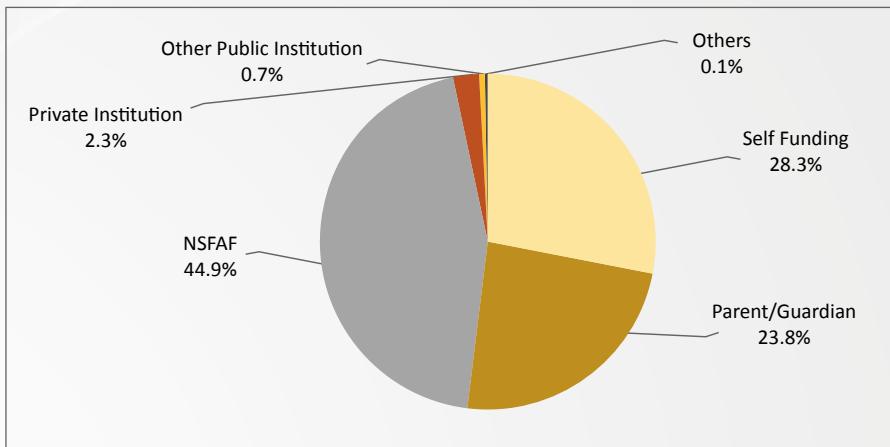
Public HEIs have a more substantial presence across most NQF levels, especially at levels 7 and 8, where their percentages are significantly higher than those of private HEIs. Private HEIs show slightly higher representation at levels 5 and 6, but also maintain a notable share at level 8.

Across NQF levels, level 8 has the highest concentration of institutions from both sectors. Representation drops sharply at levels 9 and 10, indicating limited institutional offerings at the highest qualification levels. Overall, the data suggest that while public institutions lead in academic breadth and depth, private institutions are carving out niches in accessible and career-oriented education, with both sectors responding to different educational needs and market dynamics.



Enrolment by financial sponsor

For student funding, the Namibia Student Financial Assistance Fund (NSFAF) supported the largest share of students in higher education, covering 44.9% of total enrolments. Meanwhile, self-funded students (28.3%) and parents or guardians' support (23.8%) were also prevalent. While NSFAF plays a critical role in enabling access, over half of students still depend on personal or family resources. This suggests a growing financial pressure on households and highlights the importance of sustained and diversified funding mechanisms to support equitable access to higher education.



Enrolment by citizenship

Of the 80,226 students, only 2,159 (2.7%) were international students, mainly from neighbouring countries. Higher Education Institutions in Namibia should invest in attracting international students to promote internationalisation, diversity and student mobility as per the SADC Protocol on Education and Training.

Citizenship	Number			Per Cent		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Namibia	27,254	50,813	78,067	96.1%	98.0%	97.3%
Zimbabwe	401	438	839	1.4%	0.8%	1.0%
Angola	218	170	388	0.8%	0.3%	0.5%
DR Congo	145	85	230	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%
Zambia	71	61	132	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%
South Africa	46	58	104	0.2%	0.1%	0.1%
Eswatini	24	37	61	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Botswana	12	26	38	0.0%	0.1%	0.0%
Tanzania	10	9	19	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Lesotho	4	6	10	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Mozambique	3	1	4	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Comoros	1	0	1	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other African Countries	134	119	253	0.5%	0.2%	0.3%
Europe, USA & Asia	32	48	80	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%
Total	28,355	51,871	80,226	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Examination results

The examination results reveal notable sex differences in academic performance. Female candidates had a significantly higher pass rate (76.7%) compared to males (70.2%), indicating stronger overall academic success among women. Conversely, males exhibited a higher failure rate (22.8%) than females (17.5%), suggesting greater academic challenges for male students. These differences highlight a consistent trend of better academic outcomes among female students.

Examination Results	Number			Per Cent		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Pass	19,915	39,775	59,690	70.2%	76.7%	74.4%
Fail	6,468	9,070	15,538	22.8%	17.5%	19.4%
Continuing (Master and PhD)	997	1,647	2,644	3.5%	3.2%	3.3%
Absent/ dropouts	975	1,379	2,354	3.4%	2.6%	2.9%
Grand Total	28,355	51,871	80,226	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

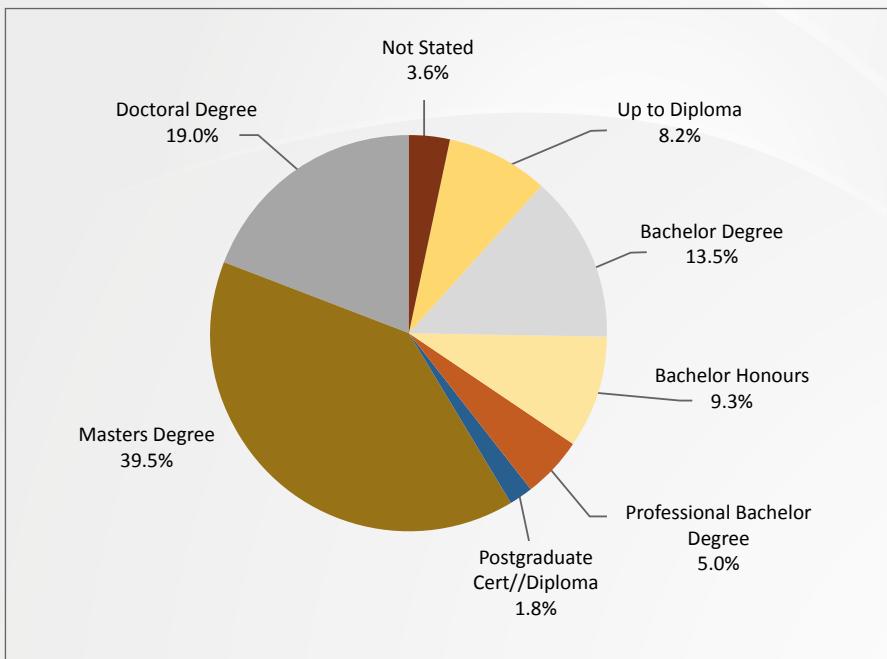
Graduation rate

For all qualifications at NQF level 5 and above, 40.4% (12,926 students) of the 32,022 students in the final year completed studies and obtained qualifications.

Progression Status	Number of students	Graduation rate
Students who completed their studies	12,926	40.4%
Final year students	32,022	

Academic staff members' qualification

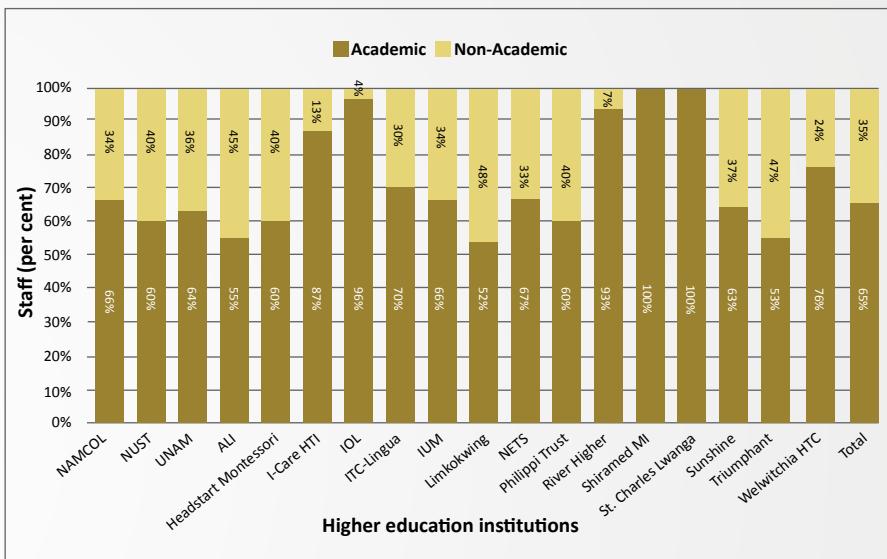
Most academic staff in higher education institutions had Master degrees (39.5%), followed by Doctoral (19%) degrees as their highest qualifications.



Staff members by Higher Education Institutions

Across the higher education institutions, academic staff make up 65.2% of the total workforce, while non-academic staff account for 34.8%. The institution with the highest proportion of academic staff is Shiramed Medical Institute, with a complete 100% academic workforce, followed closely by Institute of Open Learning (96%) and River Higher Institute of Technology (93%). On the other end, Limkokwing has the lowest academic representation at 52.4%, indicating a nearly equal split between academic and non-academic roles. These figures suggest that some institutions prioritise academic staffing, leaving out support staff, which is also critical for a functional higher education institution.

When comparing institutions, a clear contrast emerges between those without academic staff and those with more balanced staffing. Diversity in staffing patterns may reflect differences in institutional missions, administrative needs, or educational delivery models.





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