

How schools in Azerbaijan's regions have lost students over the past 20 years

written by BRI Economic Team BAI İqtisadi Qrupu

Looking at the dynamics of student migration over the past 20 years provides a clearer picture of the true scale of population movement from Azerbaijan's regions to Baku and the Absheron Peninsula. For example, in the 2004–2005 period, when rapid migration was only beginning to accelerate, just 29,5% of all secondary-school students in the country were studying in the Greater Baku region.[\[1\]](#) According to the latest data released by the State Statistical Committee, covering the end of 2024, that figure has risen to nearly 42%.[\[2\]](#) In absolute terms, the number of students nationwide increased by 111.500, or 7%, over the period in question. In Baku alone, the number of students enrolled in secondary education increased by 161.000, or 42%, reaching 551.000. Over the same period, however, the number of students in the country's provinces declined by 120.000, or 11%.

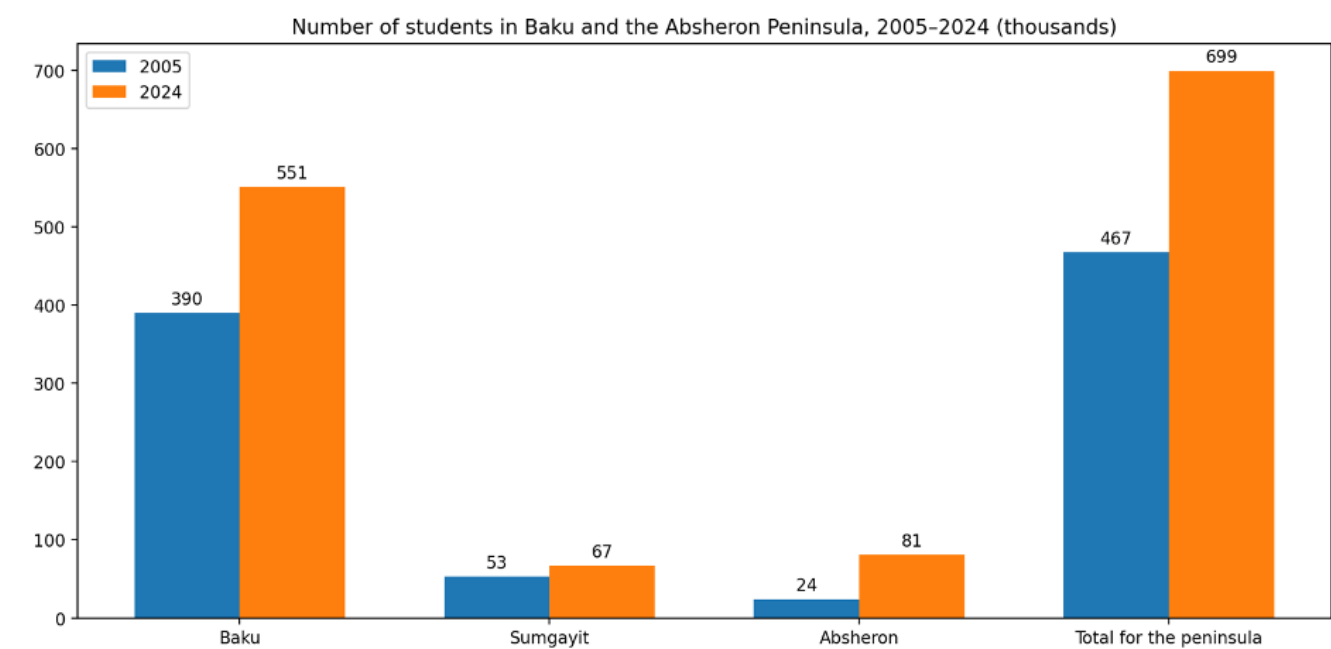
Looking at individual regions, the decline in student numbers has been considerably sharper in some districts. Admittedly, demographic statistics show that between 2005 and 2024, the number of children aged 6–17 nationwide also fell by approximately 170.000, or 8,5%, to 1,9 million.[\[3\]](#) Clearly, this demographic decline affected all regions, including Baku. While student numbers would otherwise be expected to fall as a result of the natural decline in the school-age population, the opposite trend is evident in Greater Baku: student numbers there continue to rise rapidly, driven by migration.

How has the number of students in the Greater Baku region changed?

In 2005, the number of secondary-school students stood at

390.000 in Baku, 24.000 in the Absheron district, and 53.000 in Sumgayit, bringing the total for the peninsula to 467.000. By the beginning of 2025, the total number of students in the region had increased by 232.000, or 50%, to nearly 700.000.

Number of students in Baku and the Absheron Peninsula, 2005–2024 (thousands)



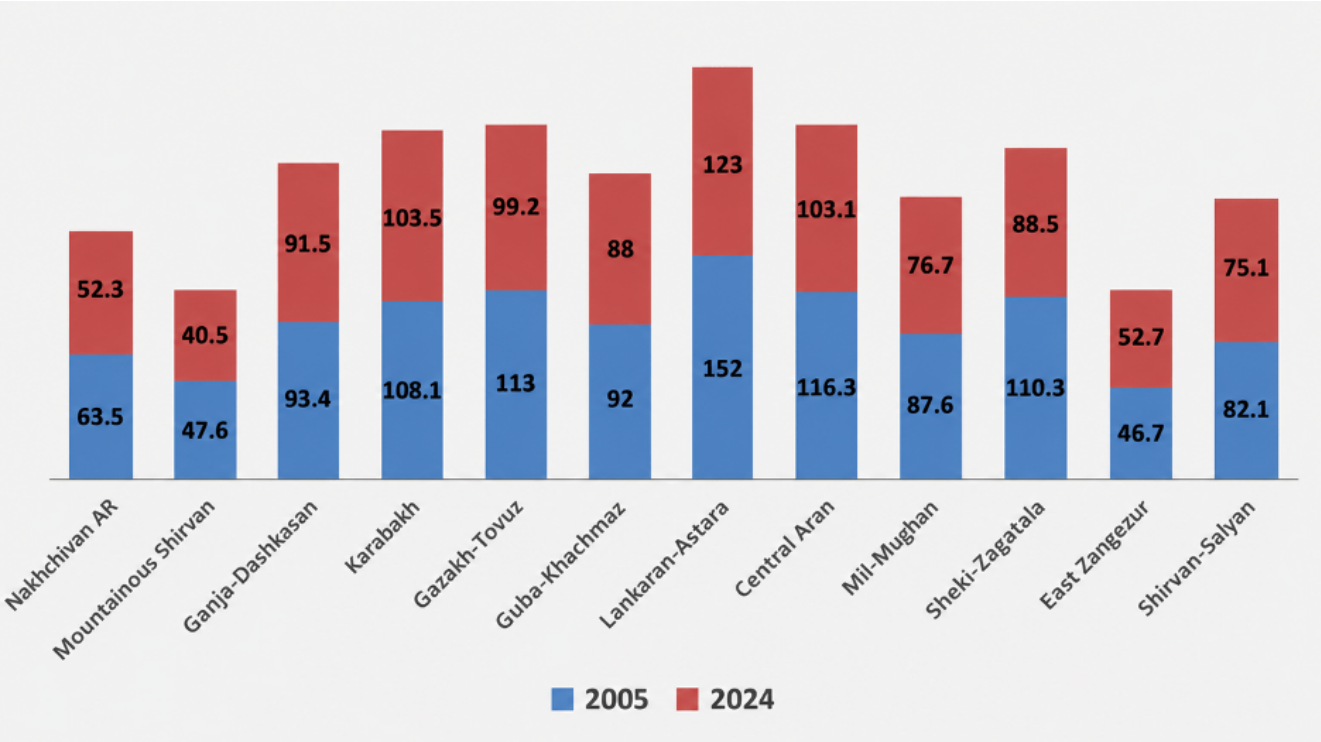
Within the peninsula, the largest increase in student numbers was recorded in the Absheron district. The number of students rose by 57.000, or 3,4 times. In the capital, Baku, the number of students increased by 161.000, or 42%. The smallest increase was recorded in Sumgayit: over 19 years, the number of students in the city rose by 14.000, or 26%.

Official statistics indicate that the total population of the region increased by approximately 800.000, or 33%, over the same period. As the data presented above show, the number of students in Greater Baku grew significantly faster than the population as a whole. This discrepancy suggests that official population statistics may not fully capture the scale of migration to Greater Baku.”

Trends in student numbers across Azerbaijan’s regions

Between 2005 and 2024, the number of students in the regions

outside Greater Baku declined by a total of 120.000. The chart below shows the distribution of secondary-school students across Azerbaijan’s economic regions.



According to official figures, student numbers declined in nearly all regions of the country outside Greater Baku, with East Zangezur being the exception. The sharpest declines were recorded in the Sheki-Zagatala and Lankaran-Astara regions, where student numbers fell by nearly 20% in each case. In absolute terms, the number of students decreased by 22.000 in Sheki-Zagatala and by 29.000 in Lankaran-Astara. Student numbers also declined by 17% in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic, equivalent to about 11.000 students; by 15% in Mountainous Shirvan, or about 7.000 students; and by 12% in Gazakh-Tovuz, or about 13.000 students.

Decline in the number of schools and teachers

Over the period under review, the regions outside Greater Baku continued to see declines not only in student numbers, but also in the number of schools and teachers. Between 2005 and 2024, the number of secondary schools nationwide fell by 193, or 4%, to 4.357. In Greater Baku, however, the number of secondary schools increased from 422 to 488. As with student

numbers, the nationwide decline in the number of schools was therefore entirely attributable to the regions outside Greater Baku. Over the same period, the number of schools in these regions fell by 259 to 3.869.

Unfortunately, official publicly available reports do not provide data on the number of teachers by individual district and city. However, comparable statistics broken down by rural and urban areas suggest that the decline in teacher numbers may have been greater in the regions outside Greater Baku. According to official statistics, between 2005 and 2024, the number of secondary-school teachers in rural settlements declined by 16.000, while the decrease in urban areas was slightly more than 9.000.[\[4\]](#)

Notes and References:

[\[1\]](#) The figures were calculated based on data published in the official statistical reports *Education, Science and Culture in Azerbaijan* for 2004 and 2005.

[\[2\]](#)

https://www.stat.gov.az/menu/6/statistical_yearbooks/source/education_2025.pdf

[\[3\]](#) <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/demography/>

[\[4\]](#) <https://www.stat.gov.az/source/education/>