

Veliko Tarnovo district

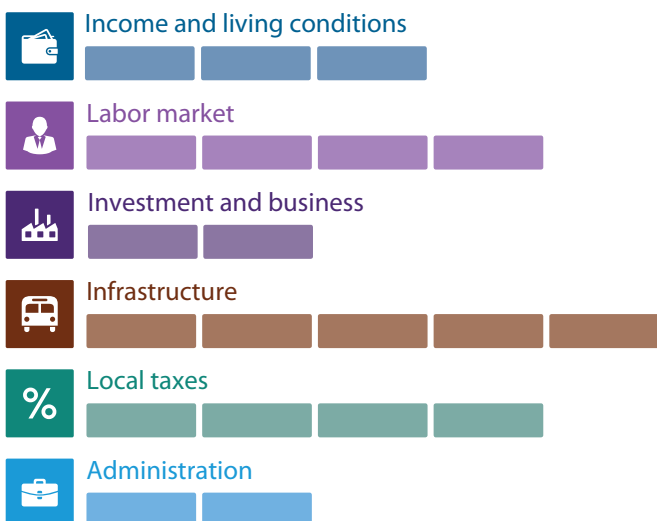
▶ Population (2021)	207,371
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,662
▶ Number of settlements	336
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.8



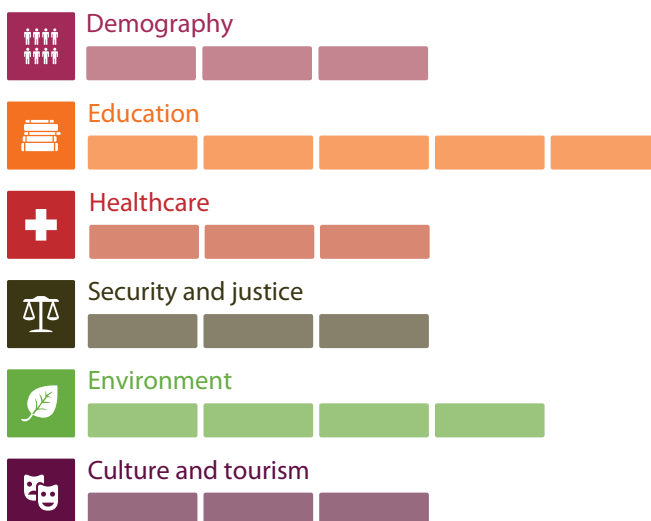
GDP in Veliko Tarnovo district has been growing at a rate higher than the national average relative to the population. The workforce is among the most highly educated in the country, but population aging is a challenge for the labor market. Investment and business activity in Veliko Tarnovo district is unsatisfactory. The share of highways and first-class roads is low. The average rates of the monitored local taxes in the district remain relatively high. The active transparency rating of the local administration is lagging behind.

The general trend towards population aging is particularly conspicuous in Veliko Tarnovo district. The indicators in the area of education give it a relatively good ranking. The number of university students relative to the population is among the highest in the country. The number of beds in the local general hospitals is still extremely low. Detection rates remain high but registered crimes have been on the rise. The district has performed quite well in the environment indicators. Veliko Tarnovo district's cultural life is quite intensive.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2021, GDP in Veliko Tarnovo district grew at a rate faster than the national average relative to the population and reached 13,700 BGN per capita. Salaries and pensions in the district have increased at the national average rate. The average gross annual salary of employed people is 14,500 BGN, and the average monthly pension – 506 BGN. The Gini coefficient for income inequality decreased in 2022 and remained low at 30.8, versus 38.4 nationally. The relative share of the population living below the national poverty line is also falling – 20.7% against 22.9% nationally for 2022.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in the district is declining and remains relatively low at 56.4%, compared to 58.5% nationally for 2022. Economic activity has also registered a decrease and for the first time in three years is equal to the national average – 73.6%. This decrease is accompanied by shrinking employment and increased unemployment. Nevertheless, the employment rate remains relatively high at 71.2%, versus 70.4% nationally, and the unemployment rate is close to the national average at 5.7%, versus 5.2% nationally.

The workforce in Veliko Tarnovo district is among the most highly educated in the country. The share of people aged 25–64 with primary or lower education is 7.1%, compared to the national average of 16.0%. Those with a university degree make up 28.1%, against the national average of 29.8%.

One major challenge still facing the labor market in Veliko Tarnovo district is population aging. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 58.0%, versus 65.7% countrywide. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 58 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and business

Investment and business activity in Veliko Tarnovo district remained unsatisfactory in 2021. The number of non-financial enterprises was still low – 46 per 1,000 people, compared to 60 per 1,000 people in the country on average. FTA acquisition expenditures have gone up but FDI has shrunk and remains extremely low – 325 EUR/person. Production value per person also remains below the national average.

By June 30th 2023, payments made in Veliko Tarnovo district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,258 BGN/person, versus 2,836 BGN/person nationally. The

top place in the district was held by Svishtov municipality (2,400 BGN/person), though it too failed to reach the national average.

The relative values of research and development expenditure remain relatively low.

Infrastructure

Veliko Tarnovo's central position in northern Bulgaria accounts for the great density of its road and railroad networks. Nevertheless, the share of highways and first-class roads in the total network is low – 16.3% in 2022, against 18.5% as the country's average. Road quality continues to improve and the share of road surfaces in good condition has now considerably outpaced the national average – 46% in the district, compared to 41% countrywide. In 2022, the relative share of households with internet access registered a rapid increase and for the first time equaled the national average of 87.3%.

Local taxes

The average tax rates in the Veliko Tarnovo municipalities remained relatively high in 2023. The greatest margin was in the non-residential immovable property tax for legal entities – 2.50‰, compared to 2.08‰ in the country, and the tax on non-gratuitous transfer of property – 2.89‰, compared to 2.76‰ in the country. Relatively high are also the rates of the taxes on motor vehicles and retail trade. However, the taxi transportation tax rate is relatively low – 387 BGN annually, compared to 471 BGN nationally.

Within the district, Veliko Tarnovo city is the municipality levying the highest local taxes, while the municipalities of Suhindol and Elena levy the lowest.

Administration

In 2023, the district municipalities' self-assessments on the development of e-government and the provision of one-shop-stop services were lower than the national averages. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations is also lagging behind – 68.2% in the district, compared to 70.3% nationally.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of municipalities in the district is 23.8% on average, compared to 29.0% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues also remains lower at 73.0%, versus 84.2% nationally for 2022.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The trend towards fast population aging in Veliko Tarnovo district again remained particularly conspicuous in 2022. The net migration rate was positive (2.0‰) but this failed to compensate for the markedly negative natural population growth rate of -13.6‰, compared to the national average of -9.7‰. These are trends that reflect on the district's age dependency ratios. The ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 reached 215.8%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to those aged 15-64 it was 45.0%, versus 37.7% nationwide.

A relatively small share of the population lives in urban territories - 69.8%, against the national average of 73.6%. At the same time, the population density of the district's urban settlements remains low at 925 persons/sq. km, versus 1,404 persons/sq. km on average for the country.

Education

In the education indicators, Veliko Tarnovo is very well placed among the rest of the districts. The share of children attending kindergarten is relatively high (90.6%, against 87.3% nationwide), while in 2022 the net enrolment rate in 5th-7th grade went up to 92.8%, compared to 90.7% countrywide. There has been a downward trend in the share of school year repeaters, though it remains worse the national average.

In 2023, the performance of students in the district again remained below the national average. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 31.2 points, compared to 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.72, versus 3.93 nationally. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 18.8%, against 17.9% nationally.

The number of university students in the district has gone up, placing Veliko Tarnovo district at the top of the ranking scale and outpacing Sofia (capital city) with 75.5 per 1,000 people, compared to 33.2 per 1,000 people nationwide.

Healthcare

In 2022, the percentage of people with health insurance went up to 92.7%, but remained below the national average of 93.5%. The relative number of GPs is above the country's average, but that of specialist physicians is significantly lower.

The number of beds in the general hospitals remains extremely low - 3.7 per 1,000 people, compared to 5.9 per 1,000 people in the country, and its growth over the past few years has been very slow. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is considerably below the national average - 136 per 1,000 people, compared to 235 per 1,000 people countrywide. This may mean that the residents are seeking medical care outside the district (mostly in Pleven district).

The average life expectancy in the district is close to but above the national average - 72.1 years, versus 71.9 years respectively.

Security and justice

In 2022, court workloads in Veliko Tarnovo district remained relatively low - 8.1 cases a month per one criminal judge on average, compared to 10.1 cases per judge nationally. This affects the speed of delivery of justice. Thus, the share of cases closed within 3 months totaled 91%, compared to 89% as the national average.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property in Veliko Tarnovo district rose in 2022 to 10.8 per 1,000 people but remained below the national average of 11.6 per 1,000 people. At the same time, the share of cleared crimes marked a slight increase to 58%, remaining well above the national average of 51.7%.

Environment

The performance of Veliko Tarnovo district in the environment indicators is relatively good. In 2021, the amount of household waste generated in the district was close to but below the national average - an annual of 426 kg/person, against 445 kg/person in the country. However, practically the entire amount of household waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, against 74% as the national average.

The relatively low share of population living in urban areas reflects on the households' access to public sewerage networks. In 2021, 68.3% of the population was living in settlements with a public sewerage network, compared to 74.8% nationwide, and 61.8% of the networks were connected to a wastewater treatment plant, versus 66.8% in the country.

The share of forest areas is relatively low - 23%, compared to 33% in the country, but the share of degraded land is also relatively low at 0.24%, versus 0.43 nationally. The installed RES capacities are relatively small.

Culture and tourism

In 2022, visits to the district's cinemas, museums and libraries increased considerably. Relative to population, Veliko Tarnovo district ranks second for museum visits (after Gabrovo district) and third for library visits (after Silistra and Shumen).

The number of beds in accommodation facilities relative to the population is increasing, but remains relatively low - 25 per 1,000 people, compared to 55 per 1,000 people in the country. The number of overnight stays in the district is also relatively low, as is the share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector.

Key indicators for the district of Veliko Tarnovo

Economic Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,492	13,669	n.a.	20,212
Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN)	13,008	14,545	n.a.	18,733
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	30.8	22.5	20.7	22.9
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.1	59.4	56.4	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	75.9	72.2	71.2	70.4
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	6.9	5.3	5.7	5.2
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	10.1	6.7	7.1	16.0
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	29.7	28.6	28.1	29.8
Production value per capita (BGN)	16,145	18,655	n.a.	31,242
Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	2,022	2,195	n.a.	3,097
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR)	401	325	n.a.	4,098
Share of households with broadband internet access (%)	67.3	81.7	87.3	87.3
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	40.0	44.1	45.9	41.1
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	76.0	76.5	73.0	84.2
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	75.1	68.3	68.2	70.3

Social Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	-13.6	-9.7
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	2.0	4.2
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.12	3.83	3.72	3.93
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	35.4	32.7	31.2	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	85.1	83.9	92.8	90.7
Average life expectancy (years)***	74.2	72.8	72.1	71.9
Share of people with health insurance (%)	84.7	85.3	92.7	93.5
Population per one GP (persons)	1,738	1,710	1,591	1,678
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	10.1	10.0	10.8	11.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	9.4	11.8	10.8	11.6
Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%)	69.5	68.3	n.a.	74.8
Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	357	426	n.a.	445
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	100.0	99.8	n.a.	74.0
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	195	182	529	590
Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population)	970	1,228	1,545	3,739

* The 2022 data are included in the 2023 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2022-23 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2023. The same is valid for the previous years.

*** Data are for three-year periods and are updated annually.