

Kardzhali district

- ▶ Population (2021)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

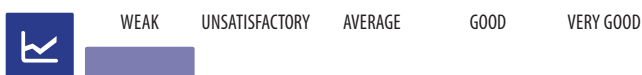
141,177
3,209
468
41.8



Salaries and incomes in Kardzhali district have been rising considerably, though their levels are still below the respective national averages. Economic activity and employment rates have registered some growth, though they still remain below the average ones in the country. Investment and business activity again remains limited. The density of the rail network is also low. The level of local taxes in the municipalities of Kardzhali district remains relatively low. The indicators for the performance of the local administrations place Kardzhali among the country's bottom three districts.

The rate of natural population growth is relatively high. In 2023, the performance of the students in the district again remained poor. Healthcare suffers from a chronic shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The number of registered crimes against the person and property is among the lowest in the country. The amount of household waste generated in the district is low, but at the same time, a relatively small proportion of this waste is handed over for treatment and recycling. Cultural life in the district is among the least active in the country.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Income and living conditions



Labor market



Investment and business



Infrastructure



Local taxes



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Demography



Education



Healthcare



Security and justice



Environment



Culture and tourism



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

After a few years of a relatively significant growth, the rate of increase of GDP per capita in Kardzhali district slowed down and in 2021 its level remained relatively low. At the same time, salaries and pensions have also registered a considerable growth, though their levels are still relatively low. The average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract is 14,500 BGN/person, against the national average of 18,700 BGN/person. The average monthly pension is the second lowest in the country, preceding only that in Razgrad district.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality remains low. The proportion of people living below the poverty line has registered a slight increase and is again above the national average – 25.9%, versus 22.9% in the country.

Labor market

The working-age population is declining and remains below the national average – 57.0% in the district, compared to 58.5% in the country. Economic activity continues to grow, reaching 69.8%, versus 73.6% nationally. This increase is accompanied by a growth in both employment and unemployment. The employment rate has reached 69.1%, compared to 70.4% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 9.5%, against 5.2% in the country.

The educational structure of the workforce has also improved considerably, but it too continues to be less favorable than the national average. The share of population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education has decreased to 21.7%, compared to 16.0% in the country, while that of people with a university degree has gone down to 23.5%, versus 29.8% nationally.

The aging of the population affects the labor market as well. Kardzhali is one of the two districts (along with Smolyan) in which the demographic replacement rate is lower than 50%. In 2022, the ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 was 46.6%, compared to 65.7% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are half as many young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and business

In 2021, investment and business activity in Kardzhali remained relatively slack and placed the district among the bottom three in that category, along with Sliven and Kyustendil. Kardzhali was also once again the district with the lowest number of non-financial enterprises – 32 per 1,000 people, against the national average of 60 per 1,000 people. FTA expenditures marked a slight increase to 1,400 BGN/person, compared to 3,100 BGN/person in the country, while FDA registered a more serious growth, reaching 2,600 BGN/person. Production in the district is increasing, although it remains significantly below

the national average relative to the population – 12,600 BGN in Kardzhali, against 31,200 BGN in the country.

Research and development expenditures per capita in the district remained low in 2021.

Utilization of EU funding has increased but is still lagging behind the country's average. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 2,161 BGN/person, compared to 2,836 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the municipalities with the highest rate of utilization were those of Kardzhali and Momchilgrad but neither of them utilized funding above the national average.

Infrastructure

In 2022, the density of the railroad network in Kardzhali district remained among the lowest in the country. The road network density is higher than the national average but the share of highways and first-class roads is relatively low – 11.2%, against 18.5% in the country. The share of road surfaces in good condition is close to the national average – 40% in the district, compared to 41% across the country.

The share of households with internet access in the district continued to rise in 2022.

Local taxes

The municipalities in Kardzhali district kept local tax rates low in 2022. The difference is especially large as regards the retail trade tax and the tax rate on immovable non-residential property for legal entities. The tax rates on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and motor vehicles are higher than the respective national averages. Within the district, the local tax rates are lowest in the municipality of Chernoochene, and highest in the municipality of Ardino.

Administration

The performance of the municipalities in Kardzhali district in this category places it among the three districts with the lowest scores in the country (alongside Vidin and Smolyan).

In 2023, the local authorities' self-assessments on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services remained relatively low. The transparency rating of the local administration is also low – 66.0%, compared to the national average of 70.3% for 2023.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities in 2022 rose slightly to 21.6%, against 29.0% in the country, while the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues shrank to 57.2%, against 84.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth rate in Kardzhali district is more favorable than the national average of -9.7% , although at -9.4% it too is markedly negative. The district continues to attract new residents and the net migration rate of 21.6% is the highest in the country.

Age dependency ratios have continued to rise to reach levels above the national average. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 205.5% , compared to 165.9% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it is 41.9% , against 37.7% in the country.

Kardzhali remains the district with the smallest proportion of urban population – 41.8% , versus the national average of 73.6% . Nevertheless, the average density of the population living in the urban areas is relatively high – $1,753$ persons/sq. km, against $1,404$ persons/sq. km on average nationwide.

Education

Enrolment in 5th–7th grade in Kardzhali district has marked an increase but in 2022 and in spite of a considerable rise to 86.6% , it was again among the lowest in the country against the national average of 90.7% . At the same time, the proportion of school year repeaters is still relatively small. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy in the district is below the national average for 2023. In 2023, the educational results of the students from the district were once again low. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 29.4 p., compared to 35.3 p. in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was “Good” 3.75 , compared to 3.93 nationally. The share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature again remained among the highest ones in the country – 23.9% , compared to the national average of 17.9% .

Higher education in the district is poorly represented, with 4 university students per $1,000$ people, compared to 32 per $1,000$ people countrywide.

Healthcare

In 2022, the health insurance system in Kardzhali district again covered practically the whole of its population. Life expectancy is among the highest in the country (along with that in the capital). At the same time, healthcare in Kardzhali district suffers from a chronic shortage of doctors and of hospital beds. Kardzhali is the district with the lowest number both of GPs and of specialist physicians relative to the population. There is 1 GP per $2,777$ people, whereas nationally it is 1 GP per $1,678$ people on average.

The relative number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals remains extremely low, although for the first time in the past few years it has marked a slight increase, reaching 3.9 beds per $1,000$ people, compared to the national average of 5.9 beds per $1,000$ people.

Hospitalization figures in Kardzhali district are relatively low – 137 per $1,000$ people, compared to the national average of 235 per $1,000$ people, which suggests that residents seek medical health outside the district.

Security and justice

Kardzhali’s performance in this category is very good. In 2022, the workloads of the local criminal judges remained low, which affected the speed of delivery of justice. There were on average 7.6 cases a month per judge, compared to 10.1 cases per judge nationally, while 93% of criminal cases were closed within 3 months, against the national average of 89% .

In 2022, the number of registered crimes against the person and property in Kardzhali district rose slightly, though it fell below that of Smolyan district and became the lowest in the country – 5.1 crimes per $1,000$ people, versus 11.6 per $1,000$ people nationwide. The detection rate is higher, reaching 65% , versus the national figure of 49% .

Environment

In 2021, the amount of household waste in the district was the lowest in the country – 239 kg/person, compared to 445 kg/person nationally. At the same time, however, a relatively small portion of this waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 12% , against 74% in the country.

The extremely small share of population living in urban settlements in the district accounts for the low share of households connected to a public sewerage system – 42.7% , against 74.8% in the country. Connectivity with wastewater treatment plants is similarly low – 37.2% , compared to the national average of 66.8% .

Kardzhali is among the districts with the largest forest areas in the country – 54% , compared to 33% in the country. The degraded land, on the other hand, is relatively limited – 0.14% , compared to 0.43% in the country for 2022. The installed RES capacities in the district in relation to the population are higher than the national average.

Culture and tourism

Cultural life in Kardzhali district remained among the least active in the country in 2022. Kardzhali district has the lowest number of visits to local cinemas – 40 per $1,000$ people, against the average of 590 per $1,000$ people in the country, as well as visits to museums – 82 per $1,000$ people, against the national average of 619 per $1,000$ people. Visits to the local theatres and libraries are also relatively few in number.

Tourism retained its poor performance in 2022. The number of beds in accommodation facilities has been increasing but remains low, with 17 beds per $1,000$ people, compared to 55 per $1,000$ people nationally. Overnight stays are also relatively low at 869 per $1,000$ people, versus $3,739$ per $1,000$ people nationally. The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector is close to but below the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Kardzhali

Economic Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,034	11,760	n.a.	20,212
Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN)	12,705	14,508	n.a.	18,733
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	30.8	25.5	25.9	22.9
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.8	59.6	57.0	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	61.9	67.9	69.1	70.4
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	9.7	8.2	9.5	5.2
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	34.3	26.6	21.7	16.0
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	17.6	24.2	23.5	29.8
Production value per capita (BGN)	11,191	12,601	n.a.	31,242
Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,352	1,449	n.a.	3,097
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR)	1,608	2,567	n.a.	4,098
Share of households with broadband internet access (%)	77.3	85.6	86.3	87.3
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	35.3	40.9	40.0	41.1
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	57.0	71.5	57.2	84.2
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	59.4	66.0	66.0	70.3

Social Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	–9.4	–9.7
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	21.6	4.2
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.98	3.73	3.75	3.93
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	31.7	30.5	29.4	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	77.2	76.0	86.6	90.7
Average life expectancy (years)***	76.7	75.5	74.6	71.9
Share of people with health insurance (%)	(100.0)	(100.0)	(100.0)	93.5
Population per one GP (persons)	3,067	3,097	2,777	1,678
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	5.0	4.7	5.1	11.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	4.5	13.3	6.0	11.6
Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%)	44.3	42.7	n.a.	74.8
Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	221	239	n.a.	445
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	9.8	12.1	n.a.	74.0
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	18	27	40	590
Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population)	456	837	869	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.