Lovech district

▶ Population (2021)	116,394
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,129
▶ Number of settlements	110
▶ Share of urban population (%)	61.9

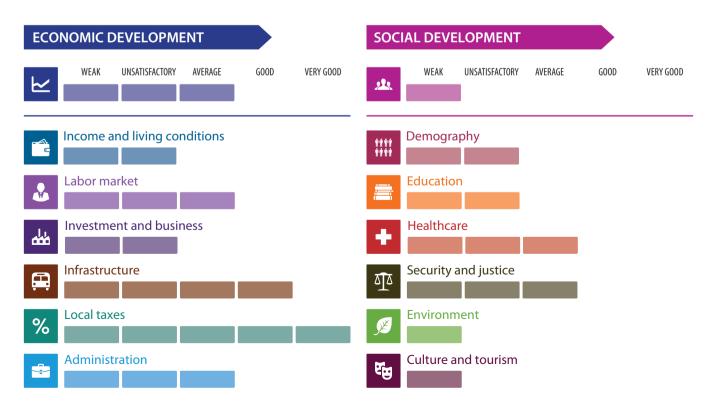GDP per capita, pensions and salaries in Lovech district have been rising but still remain relatively low. Poverty is on the rise. Although the rate of unemployment continues to be below the national average, it has reached record levels for the district. There has been an increase in domestic and a contraction in foreign investment. Road surface quality is improving and is above the country's average. The average level of local taxes in the district's municipalities is relatively low. The share of own revenue in the total revenue of the district's municipalities is decreasing and remains relatively low.

Due to the strongly negative natural population growth rate, Lovech is among the districts with a high rate of population aging. Students' results are relatively low and vocational education does not meet the demands of the economy. The number of GPs remains higher than the national average. The availability of beds in the local general hospitals again remains relatively low. Delivery of justice is relatively fast. The amount of generated household waste is not considerable, but the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains extremely small. Cultural life and tourism in Lovech district are not very active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	WEAK	UNSATISFACTORY	AVERAGE	GOOD	VERY GOOD

Income and living conditions

Labor market

Investment and business

Infrastructure

Local taxes

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	WEAK	UNSATISFACTORY	AVERAGE	GOOD	VERY GOOD

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and justice

Environment

Culture and tourism

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ▪▪▪

💳 Income and living conditions ▪▪

In 2021, GDP per capita in Lovech district registered considerable growth, but remained relatively low – 14,000 BGN, against the average of 20,200 BGN in the country. Salaries and pensions have grown at rates close to the respective national averages but nevertheless remain relatively low. The average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor and service contract has reached 14,200 BGN, compared to 18,700 BGN nationwide. The average monthly pension is 485 BGN, against 537 BGN in the country.

Poverty in the district is on the increase. The share of population living below the poverty line remains high – 30.3%, versus 22.9% in the country for 2022.

👤 Labor market ▪▪▪

Economic activity in Lovech district continued to rise in 2022, though with a rate of 71.6%, it remained below the national average of 73.6%. This increase has been accompanied by a growth of both employment and unemployment. Although the employment rate is still lower than average, it has reached a record level for the district – 69.3%, and compared to the national average (70.4%), for the first time its margin of just over 1 p.p. is so small. At the same time, the unemployment rate continues to be considerably less favorable than the national average – 9.1% in the district, compared to 5.2% nationally.

A relatively high share of the population aged 25–64 in the district has secondary education – 73.3%, compared to 54.2% in the country, while the shares of both university graduates and those with primary or lower education are lower than the national averages – 13.8%, against 29.8% in the country, and 12.9%, against 16.0% in the country respectively.

The share of the working-age population continues to decline, reaching 54.8%, compared to 58.5% nationally. The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 for 2022 is 63.4%, compared to 65.7% nationally. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 63 young people who will join the workforce.

🏭 Investment and business ▪▪

The relative number of enterprises in the district is 45 per 1,000 people, versus the national average of 60 per 1,000 people. An increase in domestic investment flows was registered in 2021 and a contraction in foreign investment. FTA expenditures reached 1,400 BGN/person, against 3,100 BGN/person nationally, and FDI in the district amounted to 1,100 EUR/person, against 4,100 EUR/person on a national level. Production value increased to 17,000 BGN/person, while the national average was 31,200 BGN/person.

Utilization of EU funds is relatively high. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached 2,876 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipalities of Apriltsi, Troyan and Yablanitsa – over 3,000 BGN/person.

Spending on research and development is increasing and is above that in most districts – 66 BGN/person.

🚌 Infrastructure ▪▪▪▪▪

The railroad network density in Lovech district in 2021 again remained close to the country's average. The road network density is higher than the national average, albeit slightly, but the share of highways and first-class roads remains relatively limited – 16.2%, versus 18.5% in the country. The share of road surfaces in good condition has increased and is now above the national average – 46.7%, versus 41.1% in the country.

The share of households with internet access continued to rise in 2022, reaching 87.5%, and is above the national average.

% Local taxes ▪▪▪▪▪

The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Lovech district remained relatively low in 2023. An exception was the tax rate on non-residential immovable property of legal entities. In Lovech district it was 2.23‰ on average, compared to 2.08‰ in the country. Considerably lower than the national averages were the tax rates on motor vehicles – 1.28 BGN/kW, versus 1.56 BGN/kW in the country, and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property – 2.34%, compared to 2.76% nationally.

Within the district, the lowest local taxes are levied by the municipalities of Ugarchin and Letnitsa, and the highest are those in Yablanitsa and Apriltsi.

💼 Administration ▪▪▪

In 2023, the local administrations' self-assessment on the development of e-government was comparable to the national average, while that on the provision of one-stop shop services settled above the national average.

The AIP transparency rating of the local administrations remains above the national average – 74.2% in the district, against 70.3% nationally.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is decreasing and remains relatively low at 19.7%, compared to 29.0% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures by local revenues is increasing, but is also far from the average – 69.9% in the district versus 84.2% in the country for 2022.

⚒ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ▪

⛨ Demography ▪▪

The natural population growth rate for 2022 was –14.7‰, remaining considerably lower than the national average of –9.7‰. Lovech also fails to attract new residents and the net migration rate is negative at – 1.1‰.

These developments further worsen the trend toward population aging in the district. As before. this is clearly visible in the age dependency rates for 2022. The ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 205.7%, compared to 165.9% in the country on average, and to those aged 15–64 – 47.4%, versus the national average of 37.7%.

The share of the district's population living in urban areas is relatively low – 61.9%, compared to 73.6% in the country, while the population density in those areas is considerably lower – 774 persons/sq. km, while nationally it is 1,404 persons/sq. km.

▤ Education ▪▪

The district's performance in the education category is unsatisfactory and the district ranks immediately before the last one in this category (Sliven district). The share of children attending kindergarten is increasing but in 2022 it remained below average. The enrolment ratio in 5th–7th grade registered a decrease to 86.3% in 2022 and fell below the national average of 90.7%. The percentage of school year repeaters has risen and continues to be considerably higher than the national average.

Lovech is also the district with the lowest alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy, which is mainly due to the fact that it has the highest share of trainees in the hospitality and catering sector (almost double the national average) and at the same time a relatively low share of persons employed in this economic activity.

Students' results in the district are low. The average score in the 2022 NAE in mathematics after 7th grade is 27.5 points, versus 35.3 points in the country on average. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature is "Good" 3.62, compared to 3.93 in the country, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) has gone up to 24.9%, against the national average of 17.9%.

The number of university students in Lovech district again remained extremely low in 2022, with only the Technical College, which is a branch of Gabrovo Technical University, on its territory.

✚ Healthcare ▪▪▪

The average life expectancy in Lovech district continues to decline and is lower than the national average. The infant mortality rate is also significantly less favorable than average.

The number of GPs in 2022 again remained higher than the national average. Specialist physicians, however, are relatively scarce. The share of people with health insurance remains above the national average.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals has gone up but remains relatively low – 4.5 beds per 1,000 people in the district, versus 5.9 beds per 1,000 people in the country.

The number of hospitalizations in the district – 144 per 1,000 people – is below the national average of 235 per 1,000 people, and it is highly possible that some of the residents choose to seek medical care in the hospitals in Pleven district.

⚖ Security and justice ▪▪▪

The workloads of criminal judges are below the national average, which reflects on the speed of delivery of justice. In 2022, one local judge in Lovech district heard an average of 8.7 cases a month, versus 10.1 cases per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was equal to the national average, but the number of pending cases was relatively low.

In 2022, the relative number of registered crimes against the person and property in Lovech district went up to 11.9 per 1,000 people and remained above the national average of 11.6 per 1,000 people. However, the detection rate was higher than the national average – 54%, against 49% in the country.

❧ Environment ▪

The share of waste generated by the households in Lovech district is relatively low – 379 kg/person per annum, compared to 445 kg/person nationally, but the share of this waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains extremely low – 7%, compared to the national average of 74% for 2021.

The share of population with access to public sewerage networks in 2021 again continued to lag behind the national average, falling to 59.9%, compared to 74.8% countrywide. The share of sewerage networks connected to a waste water treatment plant is 56.0%, against 66.8% in the country.

The share of forest areas in 2022 was close to the national average and that of degraded land – relatively limited.

⧉ Culture and tourism ▪

Cultural life in Lovech district again showed little intensity in 2022. The number of cinema visits continues to increase, but remains relatively small relative to the population. The same trend can be observed regarding library visits. Visits to museums have shown a more significant increase and continue to be above the national average – 930 per 1,000 people in the district, compared to 619 per 1,000 people nationally.

The relative number of beds in accommodation facilities, as well as the number of overnight stays in the district remains lower than the national average. The share of people employed in culture, sport and entertainment is also lower.

Key indicators for the district of Lovech

Economic Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,865	13,963	n.a.	20,212
Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN)	12,594	14,244	n.a.	18,733
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	28.9	28.1	30.3	22.9
Share of the working-age population (%)	55.3	55.5	54.8	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	64.1	65.0	69.3	70.4
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	11.2	8.3	9.1	5.2
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	14.9	15.2	12.9	16.0
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	20.5	17.5	13.8	29.8
Production value per capita (BGN)	14,312	16,976	n.a.	31,242
Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,151	1,407	n.a.	3,097
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR)	1,136	1,073	n.a.	4,098
Share of households with broadband internet access (%)	77.2	78.1	87.5	87.3
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	40.9	40.1	46.7	41.1
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	71.0	68.1	69.9	84.2
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	76.9	74.3	74.2	70.3

Social Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	−14.7	−9.7
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	−1.1	4.2
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.13	3.82	3.63	3.93
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.5	26.1	27.5	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	86.7	87.1	86.3	90.7
Average life expectancy (years)***	73.5	72.1	71.3	71.9
Share of people with health insurance (%)	90.4	90.6	93.9	93.5
Population per one GP (persons)	1,531	1,556	1,523	1,678
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	10.5	10.8	11.9	11.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	7.8	8.7	8.1	11.6
Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%)	68.8	59.9	n.a.	74.8
Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	358	379	n.a.	445
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	9.2	7.3	n.a.	74.0
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	43	145	192	590
Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population)	1,611	2,122	2,605	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.