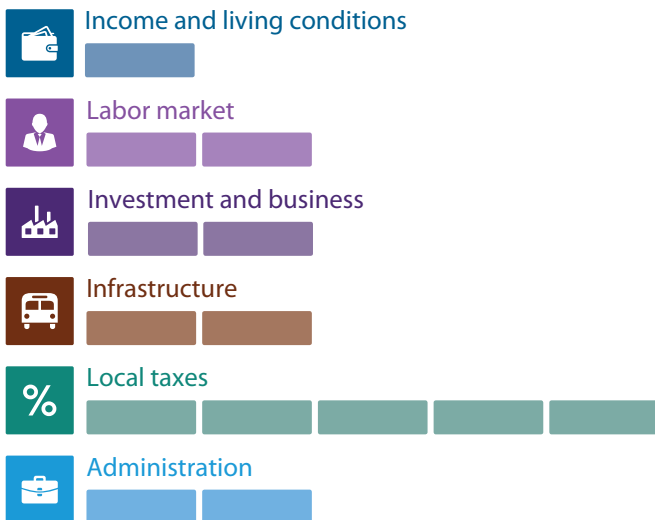# Montana District

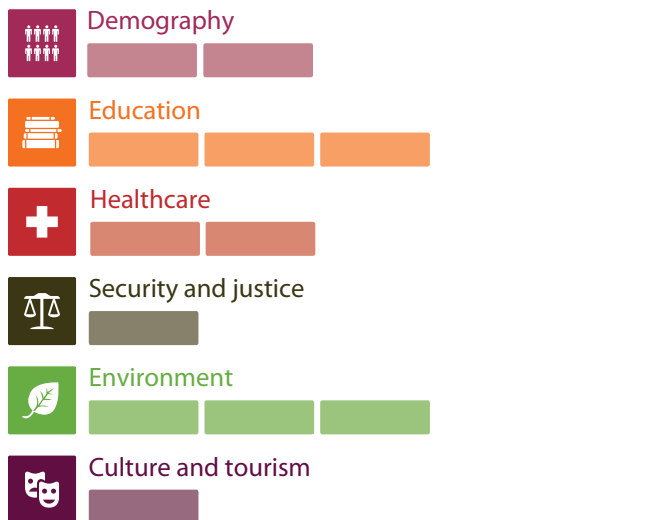|	
▶ Population (2021)	119,950
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,636
▶ Number of settlements	130
▶ Share of urban population (%)	64.2

Montana is among the districts with relatively low incomes and quality of life. Trends in the labor market are unfavorable but there is a noticeable improvement in the educational structure of the workforce. Investment activity in the district is relatively low. The density of the road and rail networks remains lower than the national average. The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of the district is the lowest in the country. The share of own revenue in the total revenues of the municipalities of the district is very limited.

The continuing tendency towards population aging in the whole of Bulgaria remains particularly conspicuous in Montana district. Students' results are low. Access to GPs is relatively good. The number of beds in the local general hospitals remains significantly higher than the national average. Delivery of justice in the district is the slowest in the country. The amount of household waste in the district is low, and its management is good. Cultural life and tourism in Montana district are among the least active in the country.

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

Montana is among Bulgaria's districts with relatively low incomes and quality of life. GDP per capita in the district has been increasing but its value remains relatively low – 12,100 BGN, compared to 20,200 BGN in the country for 2021. Salaries and pensions have also increased but remain relatively low. The average gross annual salary of employed people has reached 14,000 BGN, against 18,700 BGN nationally, and the monthly pension is 481 BGN on average, compared to 537 BGN in the country.

These indicators are the main prerequisite for the high poverty level in the district. Montana has outpaced Vidin and is now the district with the highest share of population living below the poverty line – 41.0%, compared to 22.9% nationally.

Labor market

The unfavorable trends in the local labor market rank Montana at the bottom in the country in this category for 2022. The share of the working-age population continues to decline and is down to 55.2%, compared to 58.5% nationally. Economic activity in the district has been rising but still remains the lowest in the country with a rate of 61.8%, compared to 73.6% nationwide. This increase has been accompanied by a rise in both employment and unemployment. The employment rate in the district has reached 55.6%, compared to 70.4% nationwide, and is the lowest in the country. The unemployment rate is 11.7%, compared to the country's average of 5.2%.

There is a noticeable improvement in the educational status of the workforce, though it still stands as a challenge facing the labor market. The share of people aged 25–64 with a university degree has gone up to 17.9%, against 29.8% nationally. The share of the workforce with primary or lower education has shrunk to 17.3%, whereas on a national scale it is 16.0%.

The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 has decreased to 57.4%, 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 57 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and business

Investment activity in Montana district remained comparatively slack in 2021. The relative number of enterprises was among the lowest in the country – 36 per 1,000 people, compared to the national average of 60 per 1,000 people. Domestic and foreign investment is growing but also remains limited. FTA acquisition has reached 1,500 BGN/person, versus 3,100 BGN/person nationally, and FDI amounts to 444 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 4,100 EUR/person.

Production value in the district has gone up to 17,600 BGN/person, against the national average of 31,200 BGN/person.

Utilization of EU funding in Montana district has been accelerating fast and is relatively high. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs reached 3,027 BGN/person, compared to 2,836 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the top place in the utilization of EU funds is occupied by the municipality of Montana city – 4,231 BGN/person, and the bottom place – by the municipalities of Brusartsi, Valchedrum and Yakimovo.

Infrastructure

Montana district's performance in this category is among the worst in the country. The density of the road and railroad networks remains below the national average. The share of highways and first-class roads is half that in the country – 9.1%, against 18.5% nationally. This can also explain the relatively poor condition of the roads – in 2022, only 23% of the road surface was in good condition, compared to 41% in the country.

Internet access in the district is increasing, but remains relatively low – it is available to 83.9% of the households, compared to 87.3% in the country.

Local taxes

The average level of municipal taxes place Montana at the top in the country in this category for 2023. The average tax rate on motor vehicles is the lowest in the country – 1.22 BGN/kW, compared to 1.56 BGN/kW nationwide, and the tax on retail trade is the second lowest – 5.06 BGN/sq. m, compared to 13.04 BGN/sq. m countrywide. The tax on non-residential immovable property of legal entities is the third lowest – 1.72‰, versus 2.08‰ nationwide.

Within the district, Medkovets is the municipality levying the lowest local taxes, while the municipalities of Chiprovtsi, Valchedram and Lom levy the highest.

Administration

In 2023, the local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government registered a considerable increase and the district's average is now above that in the country. However, the self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop services remains at last year's relatively low level. The AIP transparency rating of the local administration is also lower, albeit slightly, than the country's average – 69.4%, against 70.3% in the country.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is decreasing and remains among the lowest in the country – 16.7%, versus 29.0% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is also low – 56.9%, against 84.2% in the country.

👥 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

♟ Demography

The continuing tendency towards population aging is particularly conspicuous in Montana district. The natural population growth rate is once again among the five worst in the country at −17.1‰, versus −9.7‰ nationally. The net migration figure is positive, though remaining low at 0.4‰

The trend towards population aging is also visible in the district's age dependency ratios. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 is 216.3%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to that aged 15–64 it is 47.2%, compared to 37.7% in the country.

A relatively low share of the population of Montana district lives in urban settlements – 64.2%, versus the national average of 73.6%. Population density in the urban settlements is relatively low – 824 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,404 persons/sq. km countrywide.

🖨 Education

The share of children in the district attending kindergarten is increasing, but remains relatively limited at 85.3%, compared to 87.3% nationally. In the past few years, the rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade has been lagging behind the country's average. In 2022, it was 86.9%, against 90.7% in the country. The percentage of school year repeaters is higher than the national average. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is poor.

The average results of the students from Montana district were again relatively low in 2023. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 27.7 p., which ranked it far behind the national average of 35.3 p. The average result in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language was "Good" 3.64, compared to 3.93 nationally. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades was close to the national average – 19.5% in the district, versus 17.9% nationally.

There are no universities or branches of universities in the district of Montana.

✚ Healthcare

Life expectancy in Montana continues to decline and is the second lowest in the country (after Vidin). Infant mortality has been decreasing but remains above the national average.

Access to GPs in Montana district remained relatively good in 2022. The proportion of population cared by GPs is 1,521 persons to 1 GP, compared to 1,678 persons to 1 GP as the country's average. However, the relative number of specialist physicians is relatively low. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has been rising and remains considerably higher than in the country, with 7.5 beds per 1,000 people, versus the national average of 5.9 beds per 1,000 people.

Higher than the national average are also the hospitalization figures – 252 per 1,000 people in the district, compared to 235 per 1,000 people nationally.

⚖ Security and justice

Montana remains among the regions with the worst performance in the sphere of security and justice for 2022. Although the workloads of the criminal judges are among the lowest in the country, the delivery of justice is extremely slow. One local judge hears an average of 6.4 criminal cases per month, compared to 10.1 cases per judge per month in the country. Montana is the district with the lowest share of cases closed within 3 months – 77%, versus 89% nationally, and with the highest share of pending cases – 15%, against 12% in the country.

The registered crimes against the person and property have decreased but their number remains relatively high – 12.3 per 1,000 people, compared to 11.6 per 1,000 people in the country. Despite this, the share of cleared crimes is relatively high – 52%, compared to 49% in the country.

🌱 Environment

The amount of household waste is relatively low, and its management – relatively good. In 2021, the average amount of household waste generated annually was 333 kg/person, against the average of 445 kg/person nationwide. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling was 92%, compared to 74% as the national average.

The relatively low share of urban population accounts for the relatively low share of households living in settlements with a public sewerage network – 59.6%, compared to 74.8% in the country. Montana is also the district with the lowest number of public sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants – available to 35.3% of the households, compared to 66.8% in the country.

The share of forest areas is relatively low – 23%, against 33% in the country, but the share of degraded land is also relatively low – 0.11%, against 0.43% in the country. Installed RES capacities relative to the population in the district are lower than average.

🎭 Culture and tourism

The indicators in this category rank Montana last in the country. In 2022, cultural life in Montana was once again among the least active in the country. Cinema visits went up to 164 per 1,000 people, versus 590 per 1,000 people nationwide. The local museums managed to attract 128 persons per 1,000 people, compared to the national average of 619 persons per 1,000 people. Since 2015, there has been no library in the district large enough to be included in the official NSI statistics.

The relative number of beds in accommodation facilities is relatively low and overnight stays are few. The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector is also limited.

Key indicators for the district of Montana

Economic Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,027	12,088	n.a.	20,212
Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN)	12,487	13,983	n.a.	18,733
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	46.3	42.0	41.0	22.9
Share of the working-age population (%)	55.8	56.2	55.2	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	52.1	52.5	55.6	70.4
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	13.0	10.8	11.7	5.2
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	28.2	24.1	17.3	16.0
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	11.3	14.0	17.9	29.8
Production value per capita (BGN)	15,717	17,649	n.a.	31,242
Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,267	1,514	n.a.	3,097
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR)	288	444	n.a.	4,098
Share of households with broadband internet access (%)	58.2	70.2	83.9	87.3
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	35.2	27.0	23.0	41.1
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	54.6	59.8	56.9	84.2
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	72.0	69.5	69.4	70.3

Social Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	−17.1	−9.7
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	0.4	4.2
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.94	3.78	3.64	3.93
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.1	27.8	27.7	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	83.0	81.8	86.9	90.7
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.3	70.6	70.3	71.9
Share of people with health insurance (%)	87.7	88.5	91.1	93.5
Population per one GP (persons)	1,502	1,547	1,521	1,678
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	13.7	13.2	12.3	11.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	13.3	15.6	15.0	11.6
Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%)	61.0	59.6	n.a.	74.8
Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	306	333	n.a.	445
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	78.3	92.2	n.a.	74.0
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	96	123	164	590
Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population)	822	520	736	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.