



REGIONAL PROFILES

INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT
2023



IME
INSTITUTE FOR MARKET ECONOMICS

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Abbreviations used

| | |
|-------|--|
| AIP | Access to Information Program |
| APIA | Access to Public Information Act |
| BLL | Bulgarian Language and Literature |
| EA | Employment Agency |
| EU | European Union |
| EUMIS | Information System for Management and Monitoring of EU Funds in Bulgaria |
| FDI | Foreign Direct Investment |
| FTA | Fixed Tangible Assets |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| GP | general practitioner |
| GVA | Gross Value Added |
| MES | Ministry of Education and Science |
| MF | Ministry of Finance |
| MI | Ministry of Interior |
| NEA | National External Assessment |
| NRA | National Revenue Agency |
| NSI | National Statistical Institute |
| p. | point(s) |
| p.p. | percentage point / percentage points |
| RES | Renewable Energy Sources |
| RIA | Road Infrastructure Agency |
| SEDA | Sustainable Energy Development Agency |
| SJC | Supreme Judicial Council |

Preface

For over a decade the Institute for Market Economics has presented the annual issue of Regional Profiles: Indicators of Development, the only almanac of regional development in Bulgaria of its kind. The book, better known as The Regional Profiles, has now become an established trademark of IME.

The study is based on 73 indicators evaluating the economic and social environment in the country's 28 districts. All data presented in it is also available at www.regionalprofiles.bg, the Institute's specialized web page. Being organized around specific indicators allows data to be observed in its dynamics, as well as to make comparisons between individual districts. Access to the most complete recent statistical data at the regional level is thus facilitated.

Thanks to the work of the institutions collecting and providing statistics, with each successive year, we have been able to include more relevant and wide-ranging data on each district's socio-economic environment. In the present edition, most figures are for 2022. Exceptions are few in number and are limited to several indicators which get published with a delay of over a year: data on GDP per capita per district, those on salaries, as well as some indicators in investment, the environment, and infrastructure. Where possible, in fields such as administration, education and local taxes, analysis also rests on figures for 2023.

This study can benefit national and local government, business and the media, as well as academics, experts and people in the non-governmental sector, in their work on regional development. We also believe that everyone could find something of interest regarding the performance of their own district in comparison with other districts in various spheres of economic and social life.

The IME team wishes to express their gratitude to the America for Bulgaria Foundation for their partnership and lasting support in preparing and publishing The Regional Profiles.

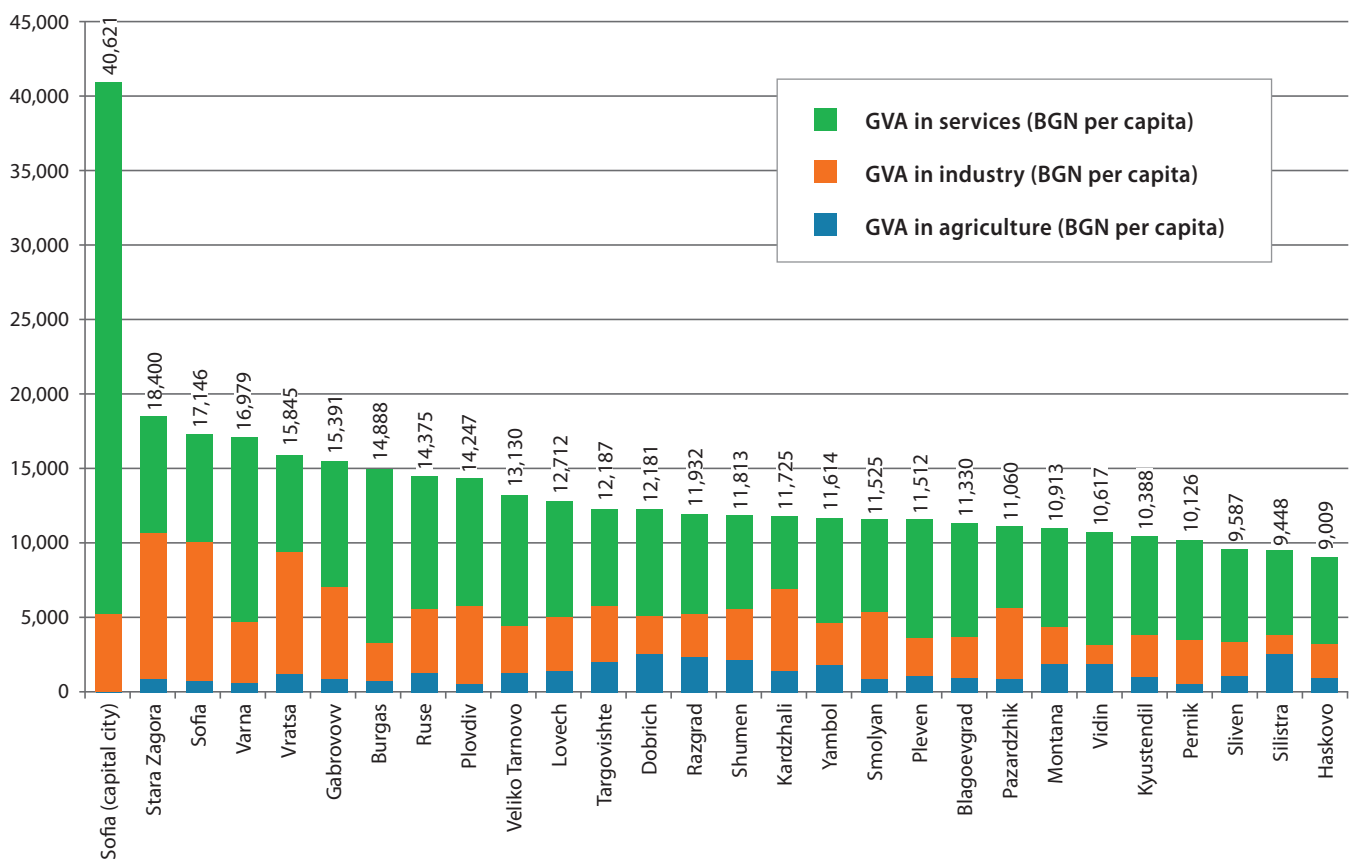
We hope this year's edition will be once again interesting and beneficial to all readers. Enjoy reading it!

The IME team

The uneven distribution of GDP per capita clearly shows the large gap between the capital and all other districts. In 2021, it was 45,000 BGN in Sofia (capital), which is the only district whose relative GDP is higher than the national average (20,200 BGN per capita). Close to the average GDP are Stara Zagora (20,200 BGN per capita), Sofia district (19,300 BGN per capita) and Varna (17,900 BGN per capita). However, there are some shifts at the bottom of the ranking, with Haskovo being the district with the lowest level of economic development in the country (9,800 BGN per capita), preceded by Silistra (10,000 BGN per capita) and Sliven (10,500 BGN per capita). The differences between the less developed districts are relatively small, with as many as 17 districts with GDP per capita below 13,000 BGN. The small margin means that the current ranking is a reflection of the varying growth rates in the recovery year after the pandemic, and it seems very likely that it will undergo another change in the coming years.

Gross value added (GVA) per capita¹ by district varies from over 41,000 BGN in Sofia (capital) to slightly over 9,000 BGN in Haskovo district. Its sectoral distribution makes it possible to clearly differentiate the development patterns of the individual districts. Sofia's economy is strongly dominated by the services which bring nearly 87% of value added, while the agricultural sector is practically absent. The other districts which also have a high share of services, partly due to the rapid recovery of tourism after the lockdowns, are those of Burgas (78%) and Varna (72%).

Fig 2. Gross value added per capita by sector in 2021 (BGN)



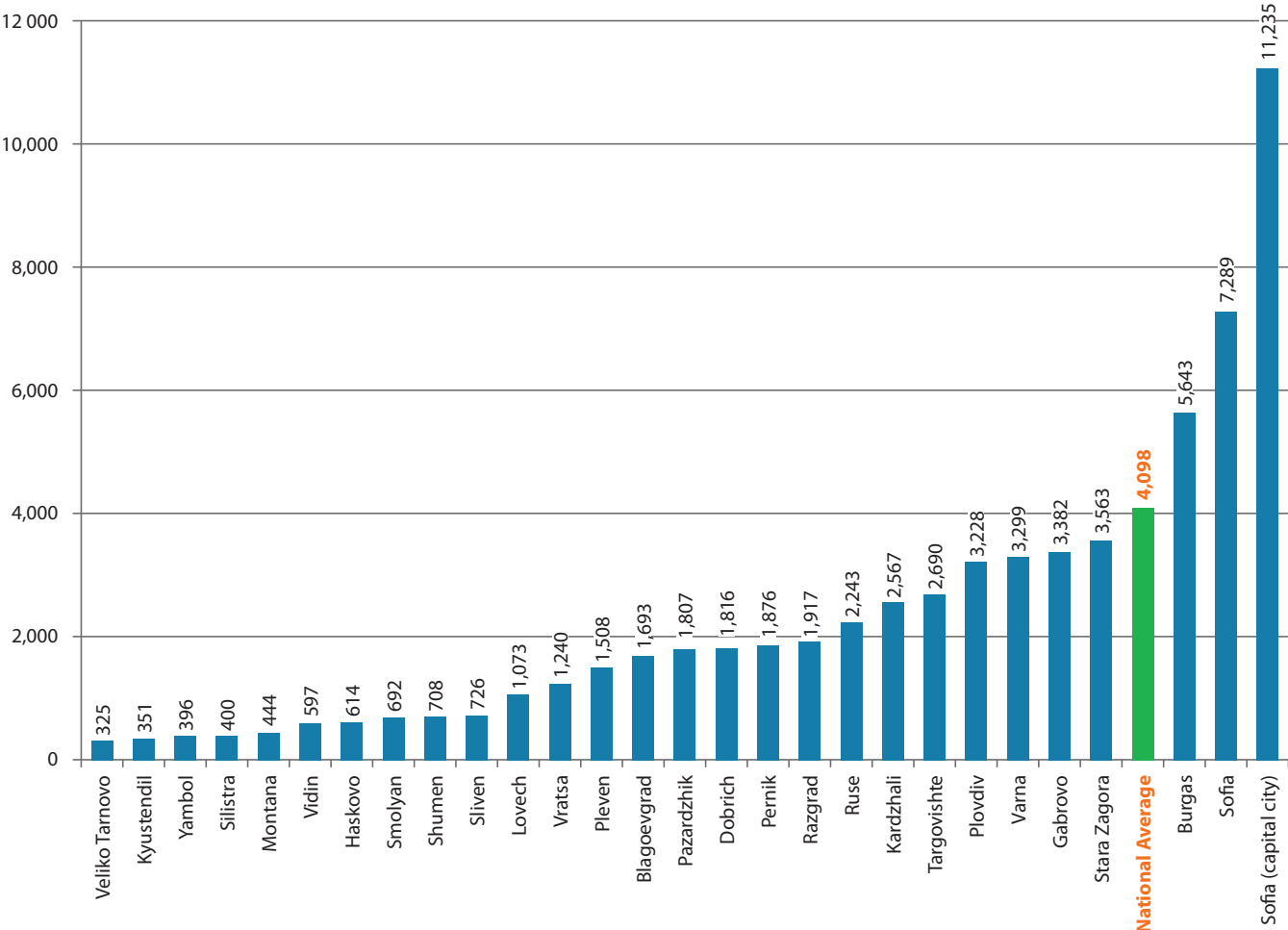
Source: NSI, calculation by IME.

¹ Estimation recalculated based on the results of the 2021 census.

In the districts with the highest value added per capita ranked below the capital, a significant role is played by industry. In Stara Zagora (53% value added in industry) and Vratsa (52%), this is primarily electricity production. The district with the highest share of industry (54%) is Sofia, which is home to the fast-growing industrial zones around the capital, as well as the strong local economies of the Sredna Gora region. At the same time, the less economically developed districts are characterized by higher shares of agriculture – in Silistra it accounts for 27% of value added, in Dobrich – 21%, and in Razgrad – 20%.

Visibly linked to the scale of economic development is the investment activity in the different districts. By 2021, accumulated flows of foreign direct investment (FDI) were up on the previous year in almost all districts, but remained concentrated mostly in the leading regional economies. On a per capita basis, FDI was highest in the capital (11,200 EUR), followed by Sofia district (7,300 EUR) and Burgas (5,600 EUR). In a number of districts – Veliko Tarnovo, Kyustendil, Yambol, Silistra and Montana – the level of foreign investment remained below 500 EUR per capita. Although at the national level there has been a significant decline in FTA acquisition expenditure, this is primarily due to a contraction in investment activity in the capital in 2021. Nevertheless, Sofia (capital city) remains the district with the highest investment expenditure for that year (7,800 BGN per capita), followed by the districts of Plovdiv (3,300 BGN) and Sofia with 3,200 BGN. The recovery of regional labor markets continued apace in 2022, with 24 of the 28 districts seeing increases in the employment rate of

Fig. 3. FDI – accumulated flows per capita, 2021 (EUR)

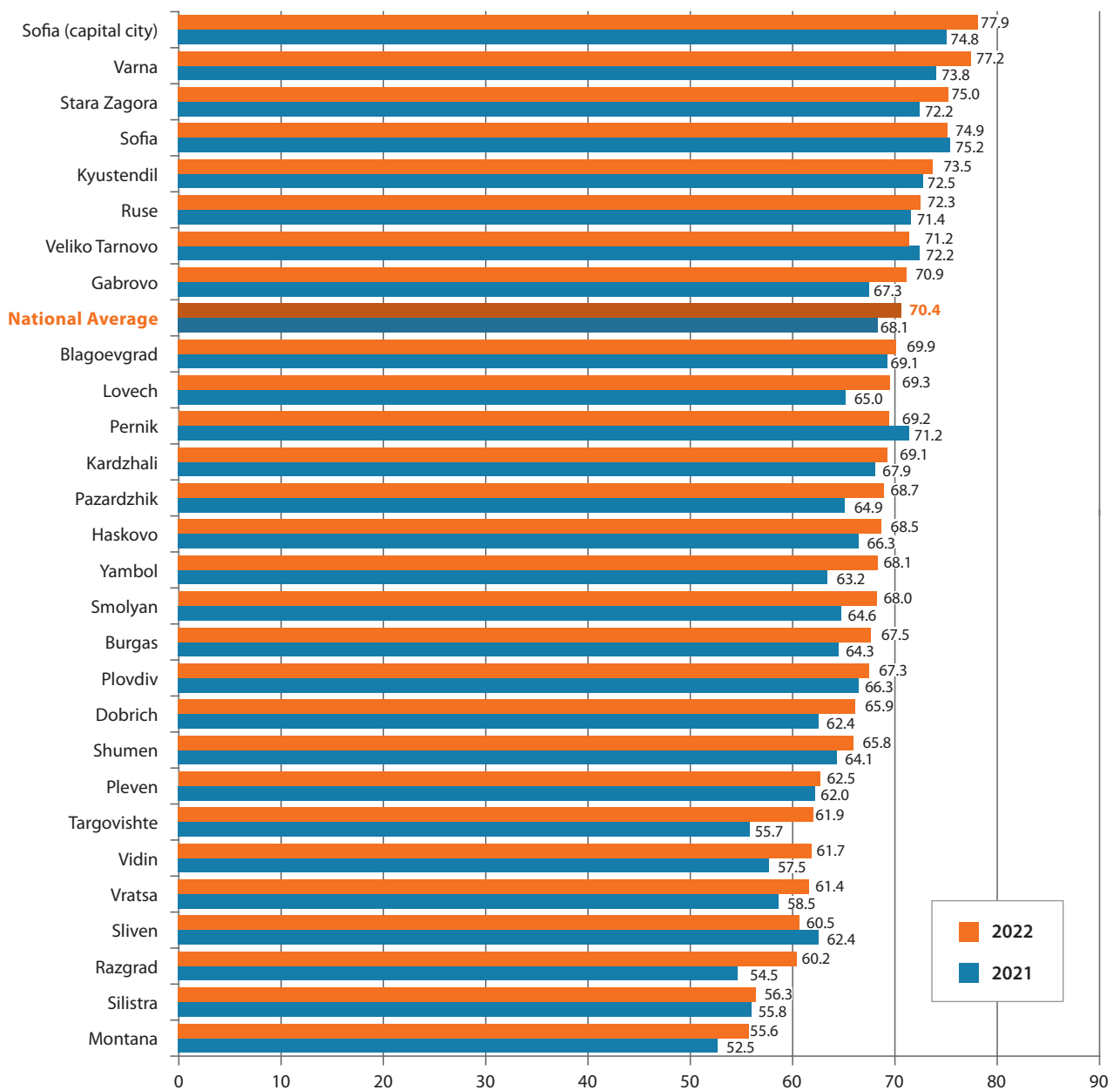


Source: NSI.

people aged 15–64. In several districts, employment already exceeded even the levels of the pre-pandemic 2019, which set a record in labor market development – in the capital, employment reached 77.9%, in Varna – 77.2%, and in Stara Zagora – 75.0%. Varna also saw the largest increase in employment rates compared to 2019 – by as much as 7.6 points, and unlike most districts, there were no visible declines during the course of the pandemic and the lockdowns.

The districts of Veliko Tarnovo, Gabrovo, Kyustendil, Ruse and Sofia district have already reached employment rates of over 70%. However, employment in the economically less developed districts remains low – in Montana and Silistra it is only 56% of the working-age population, in Razgrad – 60%, in Sliven and Vratsa – 61%, in Targovishte and Pleven – 62%. It is also worrying that against the backdrop of the expansion of the labor

Fig. 4. Employment rate of the population aged 15–64, 2021 and 2022 (%)



Source: NSI.

market in almost the entire country, there are districts where employment is shrinking. This is most noticeable in Pernik (–2 p.p. compared to 2021), where competition with the large labor market in Sofia makes it difficult to create new jobs locally, as well as in Sliven (–1.9 p.p.) and Veliko Tarnovo (–1 p.p.).

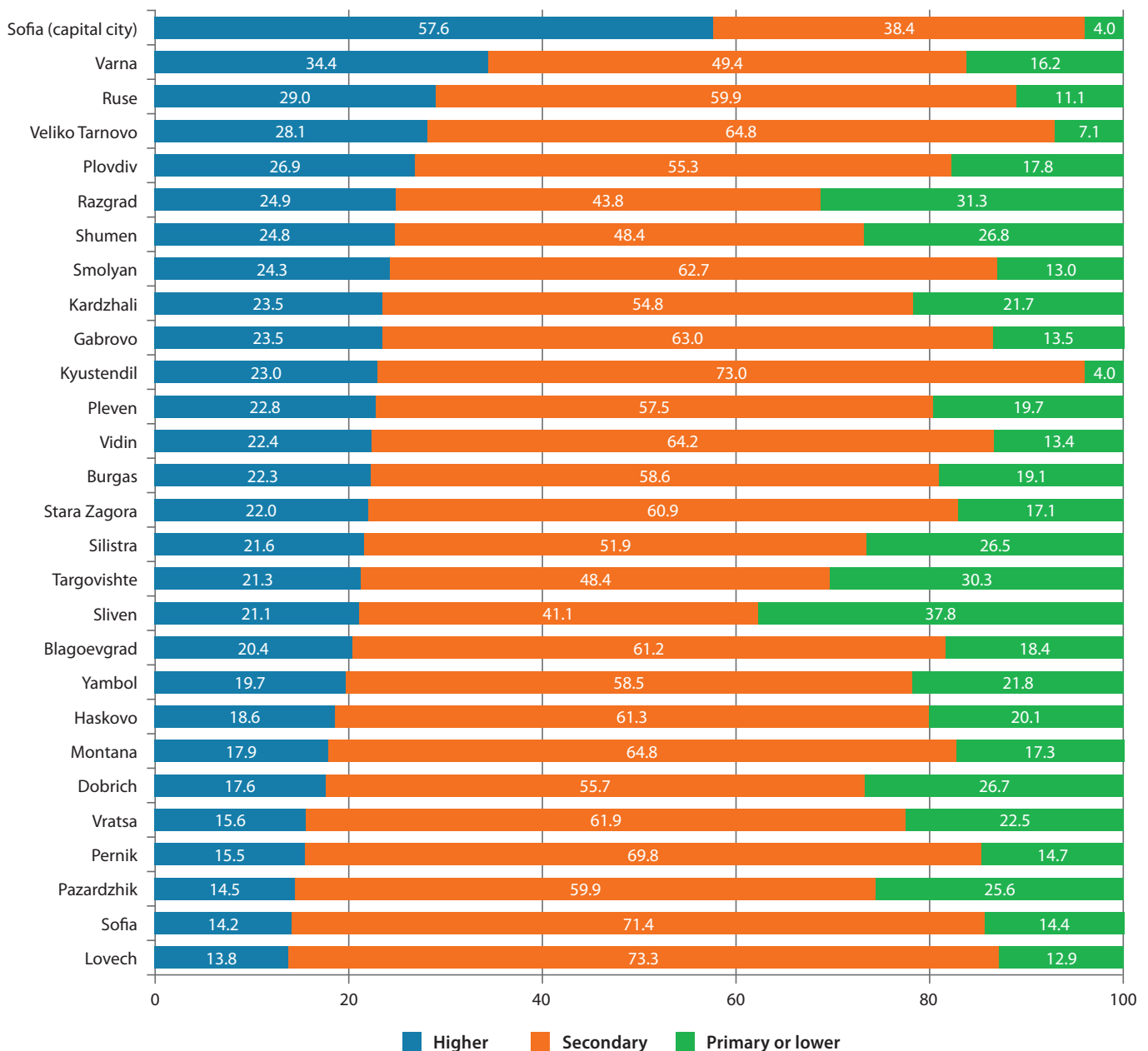
The unemployment rate measured by the Employment Agency points to a stabilization of the labor market in most districts. After the brief shock of 2020, in 2022 there were no major changes in almost any district compared to the previous year. The most serious increase in unemployment registered by the employment offices is in Vidin (1.8 p.p.), Smolyan (1.4 p.p.) and Dobrich (1.3 p.p.), while the fastest shrinking is in Varna and Burgas (–0.7 p.p.), mainly as a result of increased demand for workers in tourism. In terms of unemployment, too, there are also big differences between the districts – while in the capital it has already shrunk to 1.6% of the population aged 15–64, and in Varna – to 3.2%, in Vidin the share of the unemployed is over 14% and in Montana – almost 12%.

As of the second quarter of 2023, the gap between the leader in salary levels Sofia (capital) and the districts with the lowest salaries remained almost double. While the average salary in the capital was close to 2,700 BGN, the average monthly salaries in Vidin, Kyustendil, Blagoevgrad, Silistra and Haskovo were around 1,300 BGN. Relatively high – around 1,800 BGN per month – were the salaries in Sofia district, Varna, Stara Zagora and Vratsa, in the latter two a significant role being played by the high salaries in the energy sector. Judging by the current dynamics, the large gaps in average salaries are likely to remain. The districts with the highest annual growth are those with medium to high salaries – up to 16% in Ruse and Pazardzhik, and 14% in the capital. The only exception is Gabrovo, where the annual increase is only 6%. In contrast, pay increases in districts with lower average salaries are more limited – in most cases around 9–10%, with the lowest rate in Silistra – only 4% annually.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: THE CHALLENGES PERSIST

The education and skills of the workforce are among the key factors for economic development. Here too, however, there are significant inequalities between districts. The absolute leader in terms of the share of university graduates is the capital, where they make up 58% of the population aged 25–64. This is over 20 points higher than Varna, which ranks second, and over 40 points higher than the district with the fewest university graduates – Lovech. It is noteworthy that Sofia (district) also ranks at the bottom in this indicator, which once again underlines the close interconnection of the capital with its immediate periphery. However, in Sofia district it is the population with secondary education that has the leading role, reaching 71.4% in 2022. In terms of the need for expanding employment, the share of people with primary and lower education is often more important, as jobs

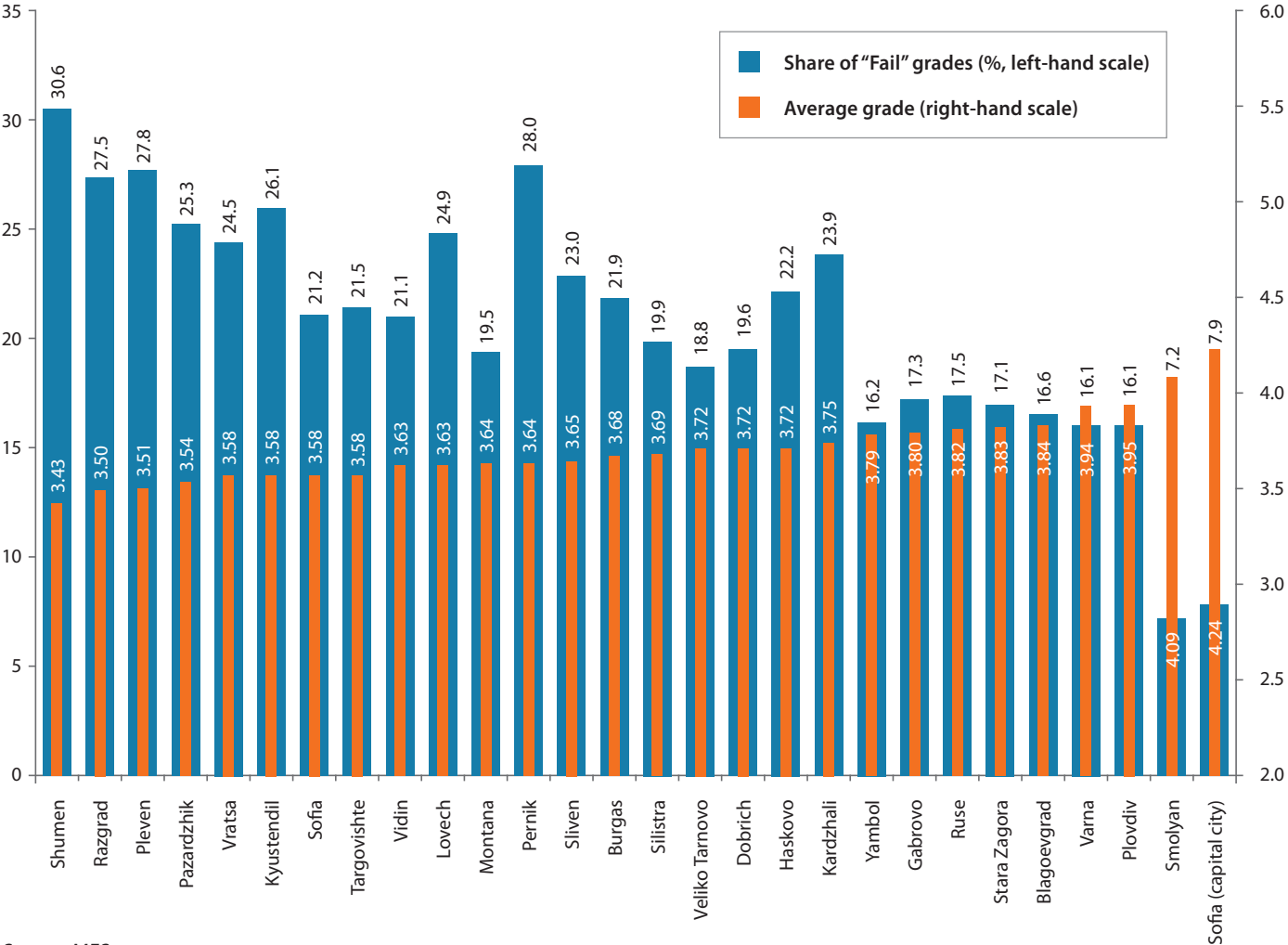
Fig. 5. Population aged 25–64 by highest completed education level, 2022 (%)



Source: NSI.

suitable for them are becoming fewer. There are districts where these people account for a significant share: in Sliven as much as 38%, in Razgrad – 31%, in Targovishte – 30%. This in turn means that improving education and skills, and often literacy, is among the main challenges for the further economic development of these districts. Significant differences are also observed in the academic achievements of students in the different districts. It is noteworthy that the average scores in the State Matriculation Examination (SME) in Bulgarian language and literature (BLL) are significantly lower in 2023 compared to previous years, with only two districts scoring above “Good” 4.00: Sofia (capital), which has the highest concentration of top secondary schools, and Smolyan, which for years has been among the leaders in school education. At the same time, the districts with the poorest results are getting closer and closer to “Average” 3.00 – in Shumen the average score of the SME has dropped to “Average” 3.43 and in Razgrad – to “Good” 3.50. Of greater importance, however, is the share of poor grades, as this indicator covers students who failed to meet the minimum for passing the BLL exam. The smallest number of such students is in Smolyan (7.2%) and the capital (7.9%), while in seven districts – Shumen, Razgrad, Pleven, Pazardzhik, Pernik, Kyustendil and Vratsa – they exceed 1/4 of all students who took the exam. This indicates a low level of general literacy in these districts, which will also have real implications for the future development of the local labor markets, since the demand for workers with low education and skills is increasingly getting smaller.

Fig. 6. Results in the State matriculation exam in BLL, 2023

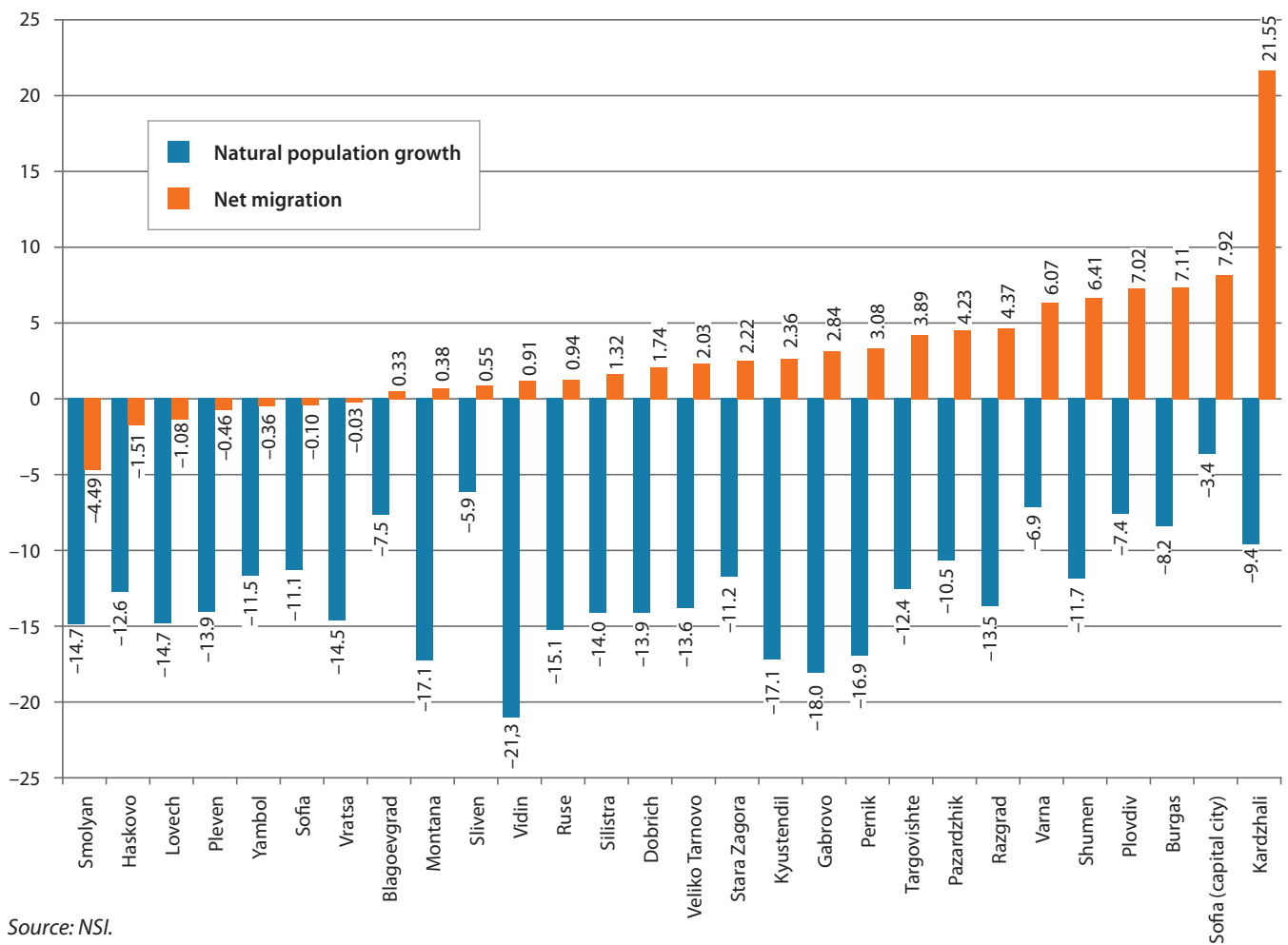


Source: MES.

Even against the background of improvements in most districts, in some of them the coverage of the school education system remains a problem. This is particularly evident in Dobrich and Targovishte, where 85% of children in the junior high school stage attend school, as well as in Sliven, where their share is only 82% with a downward trend. In the post-pandemic years, there has also been an increase in the share of repeaters which make up 3.6% of all pupils in Sliven, 2.5% in Dobrich and 2.0% each in Lovech, Montana and Pazardzhik. These indicators point to a more limited success of retention measures applied in the economically less developed and poorer parts of the country.

Demography remains among the most serious medium-term challenges for regional development. The 2021 census recorded a significant decline in population size across all districts, including the capital, and the COVID-19 epidemic has led to a widespread deterioration in natural growth as a result of the significant rise in mortality.

Fig. 7. Natural population growth and net migration rates by district, 2022 (‰)



Source: NSI.

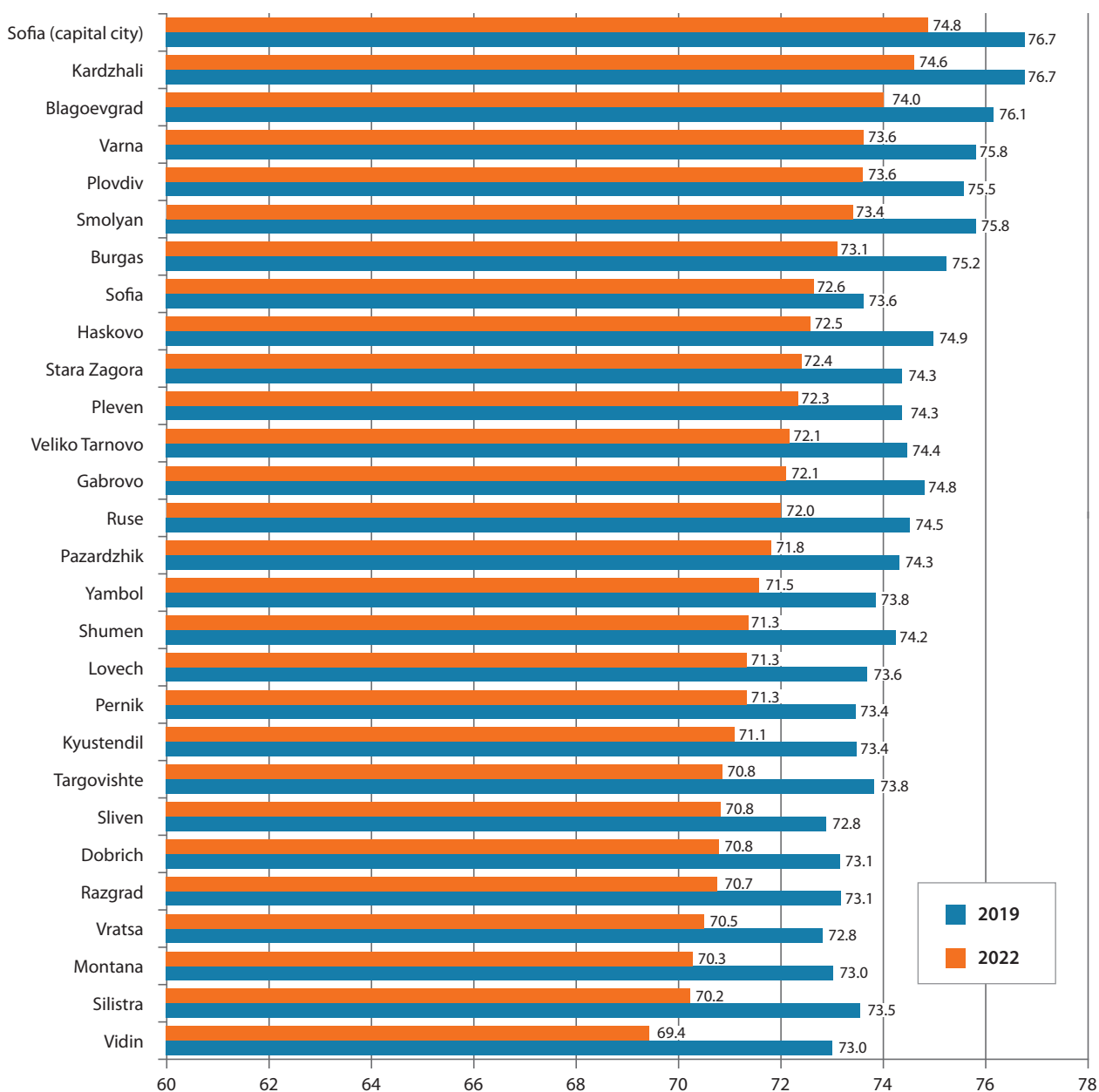
The large differences between districts in the balance of mortality and birth rates persist and are more pronounced in Northern Bulgaria: while in the capital the natural population growth rate has improved to -3.4‰, in Vidin it remains strongly negative (-21.3‰), as is the case in Gabrovo (-18‰). If the current post-pandemic trends towards a reduction in mortality rates are maintained, some districts – Sofia (capital), Sliven, Blagoevgrad, Burgas, Varna – will continue to reduce their negative natural population growth rate.

Traditionally, the district with the highest positive migration is Kardzhali, with its net migration in 2022 reaching 22‰, which is close to the previous records before the pandemic. The districts with a higher degree of eco-

conomic development attract people and have considerable positive migration – in the capital the net migration rate is 8‰, in Burgas and Plovdiv – 7‰. Among the positive demographic trends is the increase in population in almost all districts due to migration processes – most probably increased migration from third countries. Only Smolyan with –4.5‰ remains with significantly negative net migration rate.

A pandemic naturally brings the public health system into the spotlight. While analysis more often focuses on its resources – doctors, hospital beds and infrastructure – indicators of its performance are often sidelined. Increased mortality and declining quality of life have a significant impact on life expectancy as calculated by the NSI. At the national level, the decline between 2019 and 2022 is exactly 3 years, from an average of 74.9 to 71.9 years, and judging by the previous dynamics of this indicator, life expectancy will probably take several years to recover.

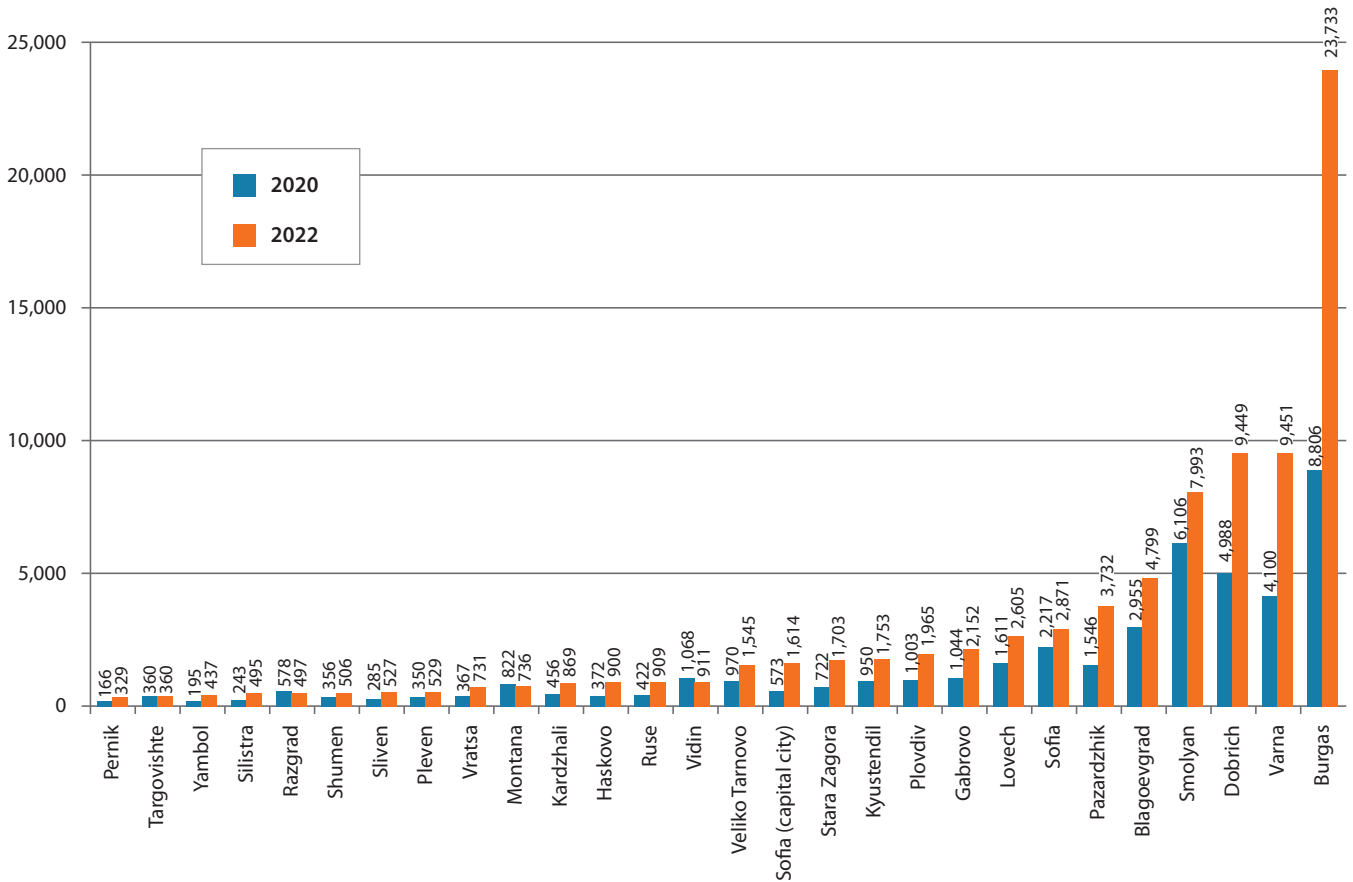
Fig. 8. Average life expectancy in years, 2019 and 2022



Source: NSI.

In all districts, the period between 2019 and 2022 saw a decline in life expectancy, but at different rates. The decrease is more pronounced in districts with older populations, such as in Vidin, where life expectancy decreased by 3.6 years, and in Silistra – by 3.3 years. Only two districts – Sofia (district) and the capital city – saw a decline of less than two years, which reflects the lower mortality rates in these districts compared to the rest. The differences in life expectancy itself also remain significant – while in the capital in 2022 it was 74.8 years and in Kardzhali – 74.6 years, in Vidin it decreased to 69.4 years and in Silistra – to 70.8 years, which once again emphasizes the profound differences in the quality of life between the different regions.

Fig. 9. Overnight stays in accommodation per 1,000 population, 2020 and 2022



Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

Among the important markers of post-pandemic recovery is the gradual return of tourism. It is among the industries most severely affected by the border closures and the pandemic-related restrictions, but a comparison of overnight stays between 2020, with its record lows, and 2022 shows a rapid recovery in almost all districts. This is particularly evident in districts where tourism makes up a significant part of the local economy – overnight stays in Burgas rose from 8,800 per 1,000 population in 2020 to 23,700; in Varna from 4,100 to 9,500, and in Dobrich from 5,000 to 9,500. It is noteworthy that some of the districts less traditionally known as “tourist” destinations – Montana, Razgrad, Vidin – achieved better results for local tourism during the pandemic, which reflects the demand for alternative holiday locations throughout that period. To the extent that in the districts which have been leaders in the tourism industry, overnight stays have come very close to the 2019 numbers, we can conclude that the sector has recovered from the effects of the crisis.

Blagoevgrad district

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 292,227 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 6,449 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 274 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 59.8 |



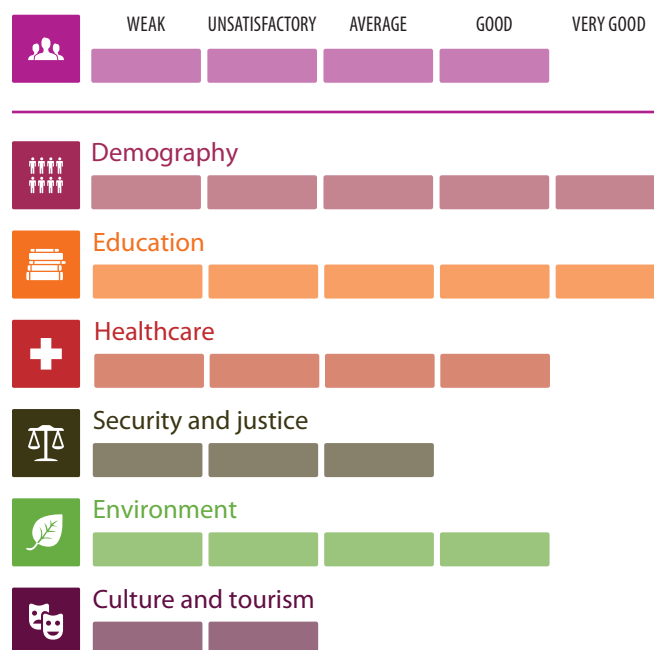
GDP per capita in Blagoevgrad district continues to grow relatively fast. At the same time, the growth rates of salaries and pensions are close to the respective national averages. In 2022, employment declined and unemployment went up. Blagoevgrad is among the districts with the best quality of road surfaces. Contrary to general trends, Blagoevgrad district's economy is relatively well developed and in 2023 the level of local taxes again remained low. In 2022, the share of own revenues of the district's municipalities again remained extremely low.

Blagoevgrad is among the districts with relatively good results in terms of demographic development. The share of children in kindergartens is high. Students' results for 2023 are below the national average. Healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. Crime rates in the district are low and detection rates relatively high, but the delivery of justice remains sluggish. The share of forest area is high. The intensity of cultural life in Blagoevgrad district is traditionally not very high, but tourism is well developed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Blagoevgrad district continued to grow relatively fast in 2021 and reached 12,600 BGN. At the same time, the growth rates of salaries and pensions are close to the national averages. The gross annual salary of persons employed in labor or service contract in the district is 12,200 BGN, against 18,700 BGN in the country, and the average pension is 490 BGN, versus 537 BGN nationally.

The relative share of the population living below the national poverty line has been rising, reaching 22.9% and equaling the national average in 2022. The Gini coefficient, which measures the extent of income inequality in the district, has continued to decline for the third consecutive year and in 2022 it stood at 32.1%, compared to 38.4% nationally.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Blagoevgrad district continues to decrease, falling to 59.8% in 2022, compared to 58.5% in the country. The economic activity of the population has declined for the third consecutive year, but remains, albeit by a small margin, above the national average – 74.0% in the district, compared to 73.6% in the country in 2022. This decrease has been accompanied by both a drop in employment and a rise in unemployment. The employment rate has risen to 69.9%, but is now lower than the national average (70.4%), while the unemployment rate has reached 9.4%, compared to 5.2% nationally.

The educational structure of the workforce remains relatively unfavorable. In 2022, the share of the population aged 25–64 with university education was 20.4%, compared to 29.8% in the country, while the share of people with primary or lower education was 18.4%, versus 16.0% nationally.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of the people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 has decreased and in 2022 it remained below average at 63.2%, 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 63 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and business

The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population in the district remained high in 2021, with 70 companies per 1,000 people, compared to 60 per 1,000 people nationally. The relative volume of investment and production value remains below the national average. FTA acquisition expenditure has increased to 1,800 BGN per capita, while FDI shrank slightly to 1,700 BGN. Production value per capita has reached 19,200 BGN per capita and is around the median value for the

country. Expenditure on research and development is declining and remains relatively low.

Utilization of EU funds has continued to increase, now exceeding the national average. By 30 June 2023, payments made in Blagoevgrad district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached 4,100 BGN/person, placing it third in the country after Gabrovo and Sofia (capital city). The largest recipient in the district is Bansko municipality.

Infrastructure

Due to the district's geographic location at the country's periphery and the relatively large proportion of mountainous terrain, the density of its road and railroad network is low. For the same reason, its share of highways and first-class roads in the country's road network is small. Nevertheless, Blagoevgrad remains among the districts with the best road quality, second only to Sliven district as regards the share of road surfaces in good condition – 64% in 2022, compared to 41% in the country.

The relative share of households with internet access in Blagoevgrad district in 2022 again remained below the national average.

Local taxes

Contrary to general nationwide trends, the district is relatively well developed economically, while in 2023 the level of local taxes again remained quite low. Within the district, Blagoevgrad municipality levies the highest local taxes. Rates in Satovcha municipality are among the lowest not only on a district but also on a national scale.

Administration

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the municipalities in Blagoevgrad district continued to decline in 2022, remaining extremely low at 19.4% on average, compared to 29.0% nationally. Similarly, the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues also remained low at 59.9%, versus 84.2% nationally.

In 2023, both the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services in Blagoevgrad's municipalities placed the district below the national average.

The AIP transparency rating of the local administration in Blagoevgrad's municipalities is also below the national average – 61.2% in the district, versus 70.3% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In regard to demographic indicators, Blagoevgrad has achieved relatively good results, although similar to all other districts in the country, the trend towards fast population aging is in evidence here as well.

In 2022, the natural population growth rate in the district was -7.5% , against the national average of -9.7% . The district continues to attract new residents and its net migration rate is positive, albeit a bare 0.3% .

Population aging in the district again remained below the national average in 2022. The ratio of the age dependency of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 148.1%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 33.8%, versus 37.7% nationwide.

A relatively small share of the population lives in urban settlements – 59.8%, against the national average of 73.6%. At the same time, the population density in the district's urban settlements remains relatively high at 2,166 persons/sq. km, versus 1,404 persons/sq. km on average in the country.

Education

Blagoevgrad is among the districts with the highest share of children attending kindergarten (second only to Smolyan district) and in 2022 it was 92.6%, compared to the national average of 87.3%.

Blagoevgrad is also among the districts with the highest rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade – 94.5% in 2022, compared to 90.7% countrywide. The share of school year repeaters remains considerably lower than the respective national average. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy is relatively weak.

In 2023, students' achievement in Blagoevgrad district again remained close to but below the national averages. The district's average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 33.3 p., compared to 35.3 p. in the country. For its part, the average result in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.84, versus 3.93 nationally. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades was 16.6%, against 17.9% nationwide.

The number of university students as a share of the total population has been on the decline, reaching 28.5 per 1,000 people, against 33.2 per 1,000 people in the country.

Healthcare

The percentage of people with health insurance in Blagoevgrad district is 93%, against 93.5% nationally for 2022. The healthcare system in the district keeps suffering from shortages of medical staff – both GPs and specialist physicians – and of hospital beds. The number of beds in the local general hospitals is 3.8 per 1,000 people, compared to 5.9 beds per 1,000 people as the national average.

The number of patients treated in the local hospitals remains relatively low but having in mind the shortage of doctors and beds in the local general hospitals, the assumption is that the

local people seeks medical care in other districts. Infant mortality rates remain among the lowest in the country – 2.9‰, versus 4.8‰ nationwide in 2022. Life expectancy in the district continues to decline but remains relatively high at 74.0 years, compared to 71.9 nationwide.

Security and justice

The workloads of Blagoevgrad district's criminal judges in 2022 again remained relatively low – below 9 cases a month per one criminal judge, compared to over 10 cases nationally. Nevertheless, delivery of justice is not speedy enough. The share of pending cases is 14%, compared to 12% as the national average.

The number of crimes in the district remained relatively low in 2022, and detection rates – relatively high. Registered crimes against the person and property in Blagoevgrad district amounted to 8.9 per 1,000 people, with 11.6 per 1,000 people as the national figure. 57% of those crimes were cleared, against 49% on average for the whole country.

Environment

The amount of household waste generated in the district continues to be relatively low – an annual of 360 kg/person in 2021, against 445 kg/person on a national scale. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling has gone up considerably but remains low – 41%, against 74% as the national average.

A relatively large share of the district's people lives in settlements with a public sewerage network – 83.7%, versus 74.8% countrywide. However, in 2021 connectivity to waste water treatment plants was low – 37.4%, against the national average of 66.8%.

By 30 June 2023, the relative volume of installed RES capacities in Blagoevgrad district was above the national average. The share of forest areas is high – 51.5%, compared to 33.4% nationally, and that of degraded land low – 0.11%, versus 0.43% nationally in 2022.

Culture and tourism

The intensity of cultural life in Blagoevgrad district is traditionally not very high in a national context and this is evident from the data for 2022. Cinema visits increased, reaching 333 per 1,000 people, against 590 per 1,000 people nationwide. The number of museum visits rose to 454 per 1,000 people, against 619 per 1,000 people nationwide. Numbers for library visits stood at 619 per 1,000 people, compared to 584 per 1,000 people nationwide. The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector is half the national average.

At the same time, the district performs relatively well on tourism-related indicators. The number of beds in accommodation facilities increased to 70.7 per 1,000 people, versus 54.9 per 1,000 people in the country, and the number of overnight stays to 4,799 per 1,000 people, compared to 3,739 per 1,000 people countrywide.

Key indicators for the district of Blagoevgrad

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 10,381 | 12,629 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 10,881 | 12,226 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 25.1 | 19.1 | 22.9 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 61.1 | 61.0 | 59.8 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 71.5 | 69.1 | 69.9 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 11.4 | 9.1 | 9.4 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 17.9 | 18.8 | 18.4 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 21.1 | 21.0 | 20.4 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 17,251 | 19,181 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 1,509 | 1,795 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 1,715 | 1,693 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 75.8 | 80.6 | 84.8 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 64.1 | 65.6 | 63.9 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 67.4 | 61.3 | 59.9 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 69.0 | 61.3 | 61.2 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -7.5 | -9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 0.3 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.19 | 3.91 | 3.84 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 37.1 | 35.0 | 33.3 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 92.4 | 92.9 | 94.5 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 75.5 | 74.3 | 74.0 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 89.6 | 90.2 | 93.0 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,755 | 1,775 | 1,742 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 7.3 | 7.3 | 8.9 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 15.2 | 15.1 | 14.0 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 83.3 | 83.7 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 324 | 360 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 6.7 | 41.2 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 114 | 258 | 333 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 2,955 | 3,047 | 4,799 | 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.

Burgas District



| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 380,286 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 7,748 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 249 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 76.4 |

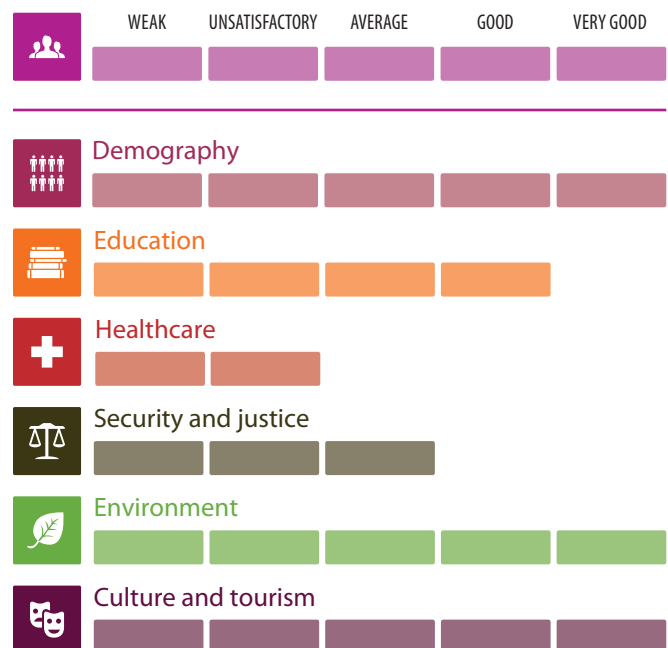
GDP per capita in the district of Burgas registered a considerable increase in 2021. Levels of income inequality and poverty remain relatively low. In 2022, employment went up and unemployment went down. Investment and business activity in Burgas district is once again among the highest in the country. The share of highways and first-class roads is high, but the quality of the road surface remains low. In 2022, Burgas again ranked among the districts with the highest local tax rates in the country. The demographic indicators place Burgas district

among the top four in the country. In 2023, the results of the students in the district in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade were relatively high. However, the average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature continues to be relatively low. Healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. Crime rates are rising and remain at levels above the national average. The share of forest areas is high. Burgas is the district with the highest rating in the culture and tourism sector.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

After a momentary decrease in the volume of GDP per capita in 2020, in 2021 it registered a record growth of 41%, compared to 17% in the country, and reached 15,000 BGN/person. However, salaries have continued to grow relatively slowly and remain below the national average. The growth of pensions in the district is also relatively weak, although their average amount is high – 600 BGN, versus 537 BGN in the country.

Levels of income inequality and poverty remained relatively low in 2022. The Gini coefficient for Burgas district is 38.0, against 38.4 in the country. The relative share of the population living below the national poverty line is 22.1%, against 22.9% nationally, and for the second consecutive year has continued to decline.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Burgas district has decreased to 58.9%, but remains above the national average of 58.5%. Economic activity grew in 2022, although it remained relatively low – 71.0% in the district, compared to 73.6% in the country. This increase has been accompanied by a rise in employment and a fall in unemployment. The employment rate has reached 67.5%, versus 70.4% nationally, and the unemployment rate – 4.0%, against 5.2% countrywide.

The educational status of the workforce in the district is relatively low. The share of people aged 25–64 with higher education has dropped to 22.3%, against 29.8% on a national level, but the share of people with primary or lower education has also dropped to 19.1%, compared to the national average of 16.0%.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is decreasing and is among the most favorable ones in the country – 72.0%, versus 65.7% countrywide. Thus, for every 100 people who will leave the workforce in the next few years, there are 72 young people who will enter the labor market.

Investment and business

In 2021, investment and business activity in Burgas district again remained relatively high. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population remained at 71 per 1,000 people, second only to the capital district. Burgas continues to be among the districts with the highest relative volume of FDI, again ranking third (after the capital and Sofia district) with 5,600 EUR/person. There has been an increase in FTA acquisition expenditure per capita, but the output per capita has shrunk to 22,600 BGN.

Payments made to beneficiaries of EU projects have grown as well, albeit by 30 June 2023 they still remained below the national average levels. Within the district, the largest sums were utilized by the municipalities of Primorsko, Sozopol and Malko Tarnovo – over 5,000 BGN/person.

Infrastructure

The density of the road and railroad networks in the district of Burgas again remained relatively low in 2022. The share of highways and first-class roads is high (26%) but the quality of the road surfaces remains low. The share of good quality road surfaces is 29.4%, against the national average of 41.1%.

The share of households with internet access has risen to 90.8%, versus the national average of 87.3%.

Local taxes

In 2023, Burgas remained one of the districts with the highest level of local taxation. The margin is particularly large in the taxation on motor vehicles, retail trade and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property. Burgas is indeed the district with the highest motor vehicle taxation rates – 1.82 BGN/kW on average, versus the national average of 1.56 BGN/kW. The average annual tax for taxi transportation is also among the highest – 547 BGN, compared to 471 BGN in the country.

Sozopol is the municipality levying the highest local taxes not only in the district but also in the whole of the country. Municipalities with relatively higher tax rates also include the tourist towns of Pomorie, Primorsko and the city of Burgas. Karnobat and Aitos impose the lowest rates within the district.

Administration

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of municipalities in the district is the second highest in the country, after that of the capital – 38%, compared to the national average of 29% in 2022. The district is also among the leaders in covering municipal expenditures with local revenues, probably due to good tourism and property market development.

The local authorities' self-assessment ratings on the development of e-government went up in 2023 and are also among the highest in the country. At the same time, however, the self-assessments on their provision of one-stop shop administrative services lag behind the national average.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration rose slightly in 2023 and remains relatively high at 72.7%, versus the national average of 70.3%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The demographic indicators place Burgas district among the top four in the country, after Sofia (capital city), Varna and Plovdiv. The rate of natural population growth is still negative, though at -8.2% in 2022 it is still among the highest in the country, against the national average of -9.7% . Burgas district also attracts many new residents and its net migration rate of 7.1% is the third highest in the country, after Kurdzhali district and the capital. This also reflects on the age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 145.6%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it is 35.1%, versus 37.7% nationwide.

The share of urban population and the population density in urban areas in Burgas district remain above the respective national averages.

Education

The share of children enrolled in local kindergartens has been increasing and in 2022 it was above the national average – 88.4% in the district, compared to 87.3% in the country.

The enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade has continued to rise, though in 2022 it still remained below the national average. The share of school year repeaters also rose to 0.9%, against the national average of 1.2%. The index for the alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy is rising, but it still remains below the national average.

In 2023, the results in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade were relatively high – 37.2 points on average, compared to the national average of 35.3 points. However, the average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature remained relatively low. The average grade in 2023 was “Good” 3.68, compared to 3.93 in the country, and the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was 21.9%, against 17.9% on average in the country.

The number of university students in the district relative to the population decreased in 2022 to 6.5 per 1,000 people, versus 33.2 per 1,000 people in the country.

Healthcare

In 2022, the share of people with health insurance in Burgas district rose considerably to reach 90.3%, compared to the national average of 93.5%, but it still remained among the lowest in the country. Healthcare in the district also suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. There are 2,037 people per one GP, compared to 1,678 people per one GP in the country. The number of hospital beds is 4.7 per 1,000 people, against 5.9 hospital beds per 1,000 people countrywide. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals also remains significantly lower than the national average.

The infant mortality rate has risen and in 2022 it still remained relatively high -7.5% , compared to the national average of 4.8% . At the same time, the average life expectancy of the lo-

cal population is decreasing, though it remains relatively high at 73.1 years, compared to 71.9 years in the country.

Security and justice

Court workloads in Burgas district were close to but above the national average in 2022. There were on average 11.0 cases a month per one criminal judge, compared to 10.1 nationally. The speed of delivery of justice was also close to the national average. The share of cases closed within 3 months was 89% and equaled the national average, and the share of pending cases – 13%, against 12% in the country.

The crime rate in the district has been rising and remains above the national average. In 2022, the registered crimes against the person and property in Burgas district amounted to 12.5 per 1,000 people, with 11.6 per 1,000 people as the national figure. At the same time, detection rates have gone down to 48%, versus the national average of 49%.

Environment

In 2021, Burgas was once again among the districts with high amounts of waste generated by the households – an annual of 481 kg/person, against 445 kg/person on a national scale. At the same time, however, a large share of this waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 94%, against 74% as the national average.

With its high share of urban people, a relatively large part of them live in settlements with a public sewerage network – 78.5%, versus 74.8% countrywide, and in settlements with a sewerage system connected to a waste water treatment plant – 71.1%, against the national average of 66.8%.

By 30 June 2023, the relative volume of installed RES capacities in Blagoevgrad district was 0.43 kW/person, against the national average of 0.85 kW/person. The share of forest areas is high – 41%, compared to 33% nationally, and that of degraded land low – 0.25%, versus 0.43% nationally in 2022.

Culture and tourism

Burgas is the district with the highest score in the culture and tourism indicator. Visits to cinemas and libraries increased in 2022 and are above the national average relative to the population. Visits to theatres and museums are also increasing but remain, albeit slightly, below the national average.

Burgas is actually the district with the highest relative number of beds in accommodation facilities (375 per 1,000 people, versus 55 per 1,000 people in the country), as well as the number of overnight stays (23,733 per 1,000 people, versus 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country) in 2022. The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector in the district is also relatively high.

Key indicators for the district of Burgas

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|-------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 11,181 | 15,815 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 13,473 | 14,852 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 26.5 | 24.6 | 22.1 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 60.1 | 60.2 | 58.9 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 64.6 | 64.3 | 67.5 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 6.6 | 4.7 | 4.0 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 19.6 | 19.5 | 19.1 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 24.2 | 24.4 | 22.3 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 24,365 | 22,628 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 2,381 | 2,893 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 5,888 | 5,643 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 79.8 | 82.9 | 90.8 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 26.4 | 31.0 | 29.4 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 87.9 | 101.3 | 101.8 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 73.8 | 72.4 | 72.7 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|--------|--------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | –8.2 | –9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 7.1 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.12 | 3.85 | 3.68 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 39.3 | 36.9 | 37.2 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 85.5 | 84.8 | 90.2 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 75.0 | 73.8 | 73.1 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 84.3 | 83.9 | 90.3 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 2,058 | 2,129 | 2,037 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 11.5 | 11.3 | 12.5 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 10.4 | 12.2 | 13.0 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 79.2 | 78.5 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 392 | 481 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 91.9 | 93.6 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 193 | 402 | 674 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 8,806 | 15,447 | 23,733 | 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.

Dobrich district

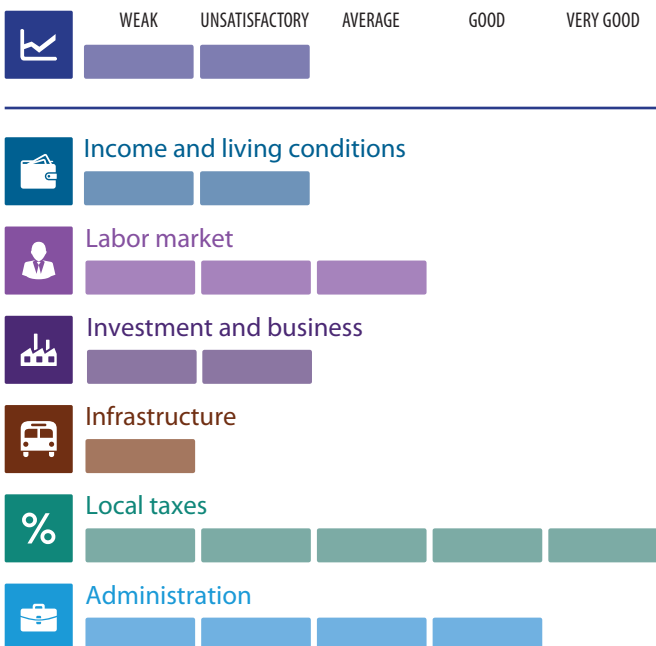
| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 150,146 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 4,720 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 216 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 70.9 |



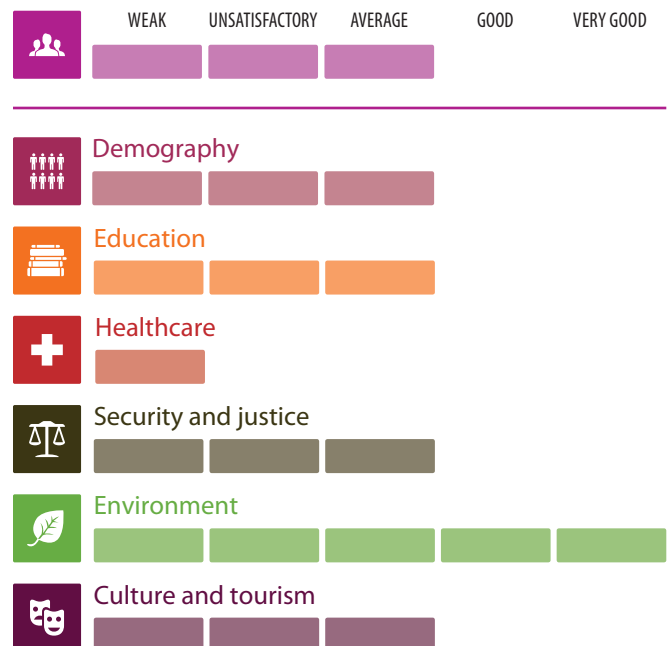
GDP per capita in Dobrich district has continued to grow but its value remains relatively low. At the same time, the relative poverty rate remains high. The low educational status of the workforce continues to be a major challenge facing the labor market. Investment in the district has been shrinking, but production value has increased. The road surface quality is extremely poor. The level of local taxes in the district's municipalities is relatively low. The transparency rating of the local administration remains high. The share and the density of urban population re-

main low. The alignment of vocational education and the economy is high. Students' results are relatively low. The shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds may account for the relatively low number of patients treated in the local general hospitals. The number of registered crimes in the district is low and detection rates – relatively high. The share of public sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants remains high. Dobrich is one of the districts with the highest number of beds in places of accommodation.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Dobrich district has continued to grow and in 2021 its rate of increase was again higher than the national average, though its volume remained relatively low at 12,400 BGN.

Salaries and pensions have also registered a growth but remain below the respective national averages. The gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract in the district has reached 14,100 BGN, and the average pension – 483 BGN.

These indicators account for the relatively high poverty level in Dobrich district. In 2021, the share of people living below the poverty line went up to 31.0%, compared to the national average of 22.9%.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Dobrich district is relatively low and in 2022 it decreased to 56.5%, compared to 58.5% in the country. Over the last decade, economic activity in the district has seen ups and downs, but in the last few years it has settled consistently below the national average. In 2022, the rate of economic activity went up to 71.8%, against 73.6% in the country. This increase was accompanied by a rise in employment and a shrinking of unemployment. The employment rate reached 65.9%, compared to 70.4% in the country on average, and that of unemployment – 4.8%, versus the national average of 5.2%.

In 2022, the relatively low educational status of the workforce continued to be a major challenge before the labor market in the district. The share of employed people aged 25–64 with a university degree was 17.6%, against the national average of 29.8%, while those with primary or lower education made up 26.7%, versus 16.0% nationally, and their share continues to rise.

The labor market continues to be affected by population aging as well. The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 in the district has decreased to 57.7%, compared to 65.7% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who will have to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 58 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and business

Investment in the district shrank in 2021, but production value increased, though remaining relatively limited. Expenditure on FTA acquisition decreased to 1,800 BGN per capita, versus 3,100 BGN per capita in the country, and FDI shrank to 1,800 BGN per capita, against 4,100 BGN per capita in the country. Production value recorded the second highest growth in the country compared to the previous year (after that in

Vratsa district) and reached 17,900 BGN per capita, against 31,200 BGN per capita nationwide.

Utilization of European funds in the district has continued to grow but both its increase and its volume remain below the national average relative to the population. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 2,219 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 2,836 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded in Dobrich city municipality, while the lowest ones were in the greater Dobrich municipality, where its value per person was nearly 2.4 times lower.

Infrastructure

The density of the infrastructure in Dobrich district, and especially that of its railroad network, remains quite low. In 2022, the share of highways and first-class roads remained nearly half the national average – 10.1%, against 18.5% respectively. Road surface is of extremely poor quality.

The access of households to internet again remains relatively low – 75.4%, against the average of 87.3% nationwide.

Local taxes

In 2022, local tax rates in Dobrich district again remained relatively low. The margin with the national average rates was especially significant as regards the average local rates on immovable non-residential property for legal entities and on taxi transportation – 1.59‰ (versus 2.08‰ in the country) and 300 BGN (versus 471 BGN in the country), respectively. However, the tax on non-gratuitous transfer of property remains higher than the national average.

Within the district, tax rates as a whole are lowest in the municipalities of Tervel and greater Dobrich, and highest in the municipality of Shabla.

Administration

The indicators for the functioning of the local administration rank the municipalities in Dobrich district among the good performers in the country. The major reason for this is the high AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration – 81.3% in 2022, against 70.3% nationwide, thus ranking Dobrich at the top place in the whole country for the third year in a row.

The 2023 district municipalities' self-assessments on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services are close to the national average.

The share of own revenues in the district's total revenues decreased in 2022 to 26.1%, compared to 29.0% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues was 75.2%, compared to 84.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth rate again remained relatively low in 2022 at -14.0% , compared to -9.7% as the national average. The net migration rate has a positive value of 1.7% , but it cannot compensate for population decline in the district as a persistent trend. In addition, population aging is visible in the age dependency ratios. In 2022, the ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 years increased to 204.2%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to that aged 15–64 – to 43.5%, against 37.7% nationally.

The share of urban population remains below the national average – 70.9%, versus 73.6% in the country, and Dobrich continues to be the district with the lowest population density in its urban settlements – 573 persons/sq. km, versus 1,404 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

In 2022, the enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade went up, but at 84.5% it remained relatively low, compared to 90.7% country-wide. At the same time, the shares of school year repeaters rose to become the second highest in the country, after that of Sliven district. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy remained high in 2023, especially in the agricultural sector, with a high number of students enrolled in agricultural degree courses, and a relatively high number of people employed with vocational qualifications in the sector, as also observed in other districts (Silistra and Razgrad in particular) in Dobrudja.

In 2023, students' results for the district remained relatively low. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 29.0 p., compared to 35.3 p. in the country on average. The average score in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.72, compared to the national average of 3.93. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 19.6%, versus 17.6% nationwide.

Higher education in the district is poorly represented, only by branches of Shumen University and Varna Technical University. The share of university students is 4 per 1,000 people, against 33 per 1,000 people nationwide.

Healthcare

The share of people with health insurance in Dobrich district went up in 2022 and outstripped the national average. The healthcare system in the district suffers from an acute shortage of specialist physicians, although the number of GPs relative to the population is relatively high. Dobrich is also among the districts with the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals – 3.2 beds per 1,000 people, against the national average of 5.9 beds per 1,000 people.

The shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds, as well as the district's proximity to Varna, may account for the relatively low number of hospitalizations in Dobrich – 114 per 1,000 people, compared to 235 per 1,000 people across the country.

The infant mortality rate in the district has gone up and remains considerably higher than the national average. At the same time, the average life expectancy is relatively low.

Security and justice

The workloads of the criminal judges in Dobrich district remained relatively low in 2022, which affected the speed of delivery of justice. There were on average 6.5 cases a month per judge, compared to 10.1 cases per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months remained relatively high at 91%, against 89% as the national average.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property has been rising but remains lower than the national average – 9.9 per 1,000 people in the district, versus 11.6 per 1,000 people nationwide, while detection rates have decreased, though remaining higher than the national average – 58%, versus the national figure of 49%.

Environment

The share of population living in settlements with access to a public sewerage system is still below the national average – 70.6%, versus 74.8% countrywide, though the share of sewerage systems in the district connected to wastewater treatment plants remains above the country's average – 70.6%, versus 66.8% countrywide for 2021.

The average annual amount of waste generated by households is 450 kg/person, compared to the national average of 445 kg/person. At the same time, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains among the highest in the country – 95%, versus 74% nationwide.

The share of forest areas is relatively low – 12%, compared to the national average of 33%, but the share of degraded land is also relatively limited – 0.15%, versus 0.43 nationally. Dobrich is among the leaders in installed RES capacities per capita.

Culture and tourism

Museum visits have registered a slight decrease but remain considerably higher than the national average – 988 per 1,000 people, versus 619 per 1,000 people nationwide for 2022. At the same time, visits to the cinema remained relatively few, while the number of visits to libraries is around the national average relative to the population.

Dobrich is among the districts with the highest number of beds in accommodation facilities relative to the population (outranked only by the districts of Burgas and Varna) – 197 per 1,000 people, compared to 55 per 1,000 people in the country. The number of overnight stays is also high – 9,449 per 1,000 people, against 3,739 per 1,000 in the country. However, the share of those employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector is low.

Key indicators for the district of Dobrich

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 10,195 | 12,385 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 12,548 | 14,099 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 25.0 | 26.0 | 31.0 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 59.2 | 59.3 | 56.5 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 63.2 | 62.4 | 65.9 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 7.0 | 4.9 | 4.8 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 25.6 | 25.6 | 26.7 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 22.3 | 20.3 | 17.6 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 12,795 | 17,922 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 2,235 | 1,822 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 2,159 | 1,816 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 70.4 | 68.1 | 75.4 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 45.4 | 40.3 | n.a. | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 83.3 | 83.0 | 75.2 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 83.6 | 81.2 | 81.3 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | –14.0 | –9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 1.7 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.08 | 3.68 | 3.72 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 30.5 | 29.2 | 29.0 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 73.4 | 70.6 | 84.5 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 73.0 | 71.6 | 70.8 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 85.3 | 86.0 | 96.3 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,500 | 1,507 | 1,411 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 9.4 | 8.1 | 9.9 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 8.1 | 6.1 | 10.0 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 70.7 | 70.6 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 401 | 450 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 97.0 | 95.3 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 40 | 70 | 118 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 4,988 | 7,205 | 9,449 | 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.

Gabrovo district

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

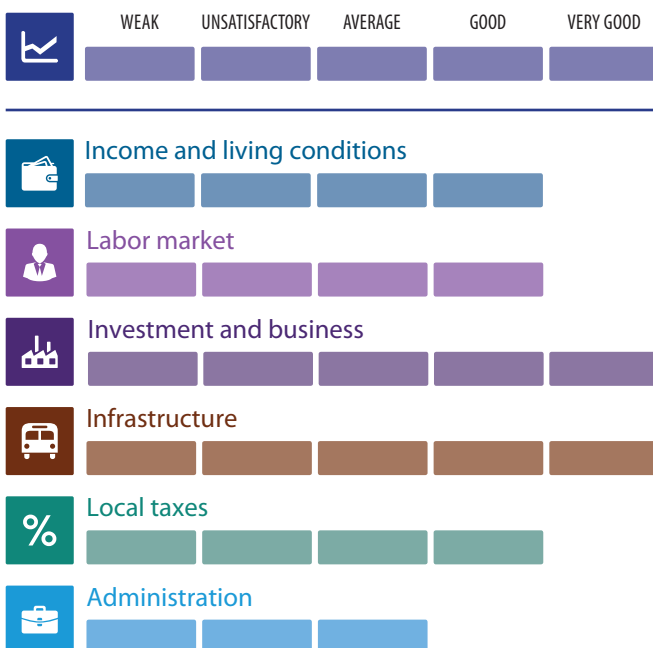
98,387
2,023
349
79.6



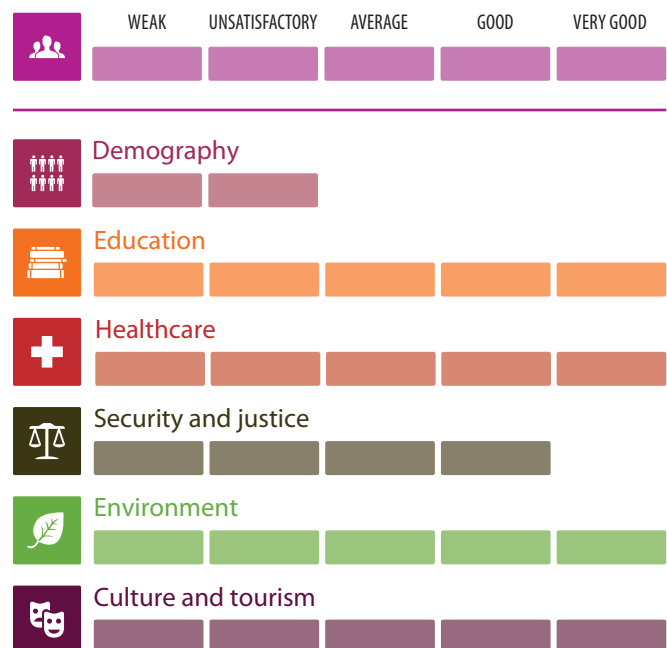
GDP, salaries and incomes in Gabrovo district have continued to grow and the poverty level remains relatively low. The share of the working-age population has declined for yet another year. Business and investment activity in the area is high. Gabrovo has overtaken the capital and is now the district with the highest amount of utilized EU funds per person. Despite the high density of the road network, the share of highways and first-class roads is relatively small. In 2023, the level of local taxes was again relatively low. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is low.

Gabrovo is one of the districts with the most unfavorable demographic pictures. Results in the field of education are good. The indicators evaluating health-care place the district among the top performers in the country. Gabrovo is among the districts with the highest share of health-insured persons. The district continues to be the leader as regards the share of cleared crimes. The considerable number of urban residents accounts for the large share of population living in settlements with a public sewerage network. Cultural life and tourism in Gabrovo district remain among the most active in the country.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2021, GDP in Gabrovo district continued to grow, reaching 16,500 BGN per capita and was the sixth highest in the country. Salaries and incomes have also gone up. The average gross annual salary of employed people reached 15,800 BGN, and the average monthly pension – 510 BGN.

The Gini coefficient of income inequality remains low at 30.8, versus 38.4 nationally. Poverty increased in 2022 but is still below average. The share of the population living below the national poverty line is 21.9%, against 22.9% in the country.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population continues to decline and in 2022 it was the third lowest in the country (after Vidin and Yambol). The economic activity rate has grown considerably and now stands consistently above the national average – 77.0% in the district, against 73.6% in the country. This growth is accompanied by both a large increase in employment and a slight rise in unemployment. The employment rate has reached 70.9%, compared to 70.4% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 4.1%, compared to 5.2% in the country.

Gabrovo is among the districts with the highest share of employed people with secondary education – 63.0%, compared to 54.2% in the country – which corresponds to its industrial profile. At the same time, the shares of both university graduates and people with primary or lower education are relatively low – 23.5%, compared to 29.8% in the country, and 13.5%, compared to 16.0% in the country, respectively.

A persisting challenge facing the labor market is the aging of the population. In 2022, the demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 was 55.9%, versus 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 will be 56 young people joining the work force.

Investment and business

Business and investment activity in the district again remained high in 2021, ranking the district third in the country in this category (after the capital and Sofia district). The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population was 56 per 1,000 people, against the national average of 60 per 1,000 people. FTA acquisition expenditures went considerably up to reach 2,500 BGN/person. FDI also increased and reached 3,400 EUR/person, thus placing the district among the top five in the country. Production value also increased to 30,200 BGN/person.

Gabrovo outstripped the capital district in the utilization of EU funds per capita and now ranks first in this category. By

30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached 4,333 BGN/person, versus 2,836 BGN per capita nationally. The top place in the district was held by Gabrovo city municipality with 4,900 BGN/person.

Infrastructure

The infrastructural development of Gabrovo district is very good. Gabrovo is the district with the highest road network density in the country – 25.6 km/100 sq. km of territory, compared to 18.0 km/100 sq. km in the country, although in 2022 the share of highways and first-class roads was lower than the national average – 16.6%, compared to 18.5% in the country. The quality of the road surfaces was also lower, though in 2022 it increased to 33.7%, versus 41.1% in the country. Households' access to the internet continues to increase and now exceeds the national average.

Local taxes

Although Gabrovo is among the districts with a relatively highly developed economy, in 2023 the level of local taxes again remained relatively low. The margin is especially big as regards the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, where the rate is 2.53% on average across all the municipalities in Gabrovo district, versus 2.76% nationally. The retail trade tax rate is also considerably lower in the district compared to that in the country.

Within the district, Gabrovo city municipality levies the highest local taxes, while the lowest rates are those of Tryavna municipality.

Administration

In 2023, the self-assessments of the local authorities on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services went up but while the self-assessment on e-government continues to be relatively high, that on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services still lags considerably behind the average ones in the country.

In 2023, the AIP active transparency ratings of the local administration in Gabrovo district remained the same as in the previous year and was relatively high at 72.9%, compared to the national average of 70.3%.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the municipalities in the district is relatively low – 23.3%, compared to 29.0% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is also low at 61.0%, versus 84.2% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Gabrovo is among the districts whose demographic condition in 2022 was once again among the most unfavorable ones in the country, ranking immediately above the bottom three (Vidin, Smolyan and Silistra). The natural population growth rate of -18.0% is the second worst in the country, after that of Vidin, against the national average of -9.7% . The net migration rate is positive (2.8%) but it cannot compensate for the low rate of natural population growth.

The trend towards population aging is clearly discernible in the age dependency ratios. The age dependency of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 is 255.3%, compared to 165.9% nationally, and is the third highest in the country, after those in the districts of Vidin and Smolyan. At the same time, the age dependency of the population aged 65+ to that aged 15–64 is 51.6%, versus 37.7% nationally, and is the second highest in the country, after that in Vidin district.

Most of the population of the district is urban – 79.6%, compared to a national average of 73.6%, but its density is relatively low, with 1,105 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,404 persons/sq. km countywide.

Education

The performance of Gabrovo district in the education category is good. In 2022, it was once again one of the districts with a very high rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade. The percentage of school year repeaters has gone up but remains relatively low. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy is 44.7%, against 53.6% in the country for 2023.

In 2023, the district's average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 31.3 points, compared to 35.3 points in the country. The average result in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was below the national average – “Good” 3.80, versus 3.93 nationally, but the share of “fail” (below 3.00) grades continues to be below the national average – 17.3%, against 17.9% countrywide.

Gabrovo remains among the districts with the highest number of university students – 43.9 per 1,000 people, against 33.2 per 1,000 people in the country.

Healthcare

The indicators evaluating healthcare place the district among the top performers in the country, where it is preceded only by the districts of Smolyan and Pleven.

The average life expectancy of the district's residents continues to decline, but is still higher than the national average. In 2022, Gabrovo remained among the districts with the highest share of health-insured persons. The relative number of GPs is higher than the national average, but specialist physicians are scarce. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has continued to rise but it still stands below the national average.

The number of patients treated in the local hospitals remains relatively low – 217 per 1,000 people, compared to 235 per 1,000 people countrywide. The infant mortality rate in the district has been decreasing and is below the national average.

Security and justice

Although court workloads in Gabrovo district are relatively low, in 2022 this again had little significant effect on the speed of delivery of justice. One local judge heard an average of 8.2 criminal cases per month, compared to 10.1 cases per judge in the country, while the share of cases closed within 3 months was 88%, versus 89% nationally.

In 2022, the number of registered crimes against the person and property decreased and fell below the national average, with 9.6 crimes per 1,000 people in the district, compared to 11.6 per 1,000 people in the country. At the same time, however, Gabrovo continues to be the country's leader in the crime detection rate, with 72% of detected crimes, versus 49% on average for the whole country.

Environment

The relatively high share of urban population in Gabrovo district accounts for the high number of households living in settlements with access to a public sewerage network – 83.3%, compared to 74.8% in the country, and to a sewerage network connected to a wastewater treatment plant – 72.8%, versus 66.8% nationwide.

The volume of generated household waste in the district remains relatively high – an annual of 427 kg/person, against 445 kg/person in the country. At the same time, however, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is also high at 87%, compared to 74% in the country.

The share of forest areas is above the national average, but that of degraded land is considerably smaller. The installed RES capacities, however, remain limited.

Culture and tourism

Gabrovo district's cultural life remains among the most active in the country and ranks fourth, below Burgas, the capital district and Varna. The main reason for this is the extremely high number of visits to museums – 3,340 per 1,000 people in 2022, against the national average of 619 per 1,000 people. The number of theatre visits is also relatively high. The numbers of visits to libraries and cinemas have increased but have not yet reached the respective national averages.

The number of beds in accommodation facilities in the district is 38 per 1,000 people, against 55 per 1,000 people in the country, and the number of overnight stays is 2,152 per 1,000 people, against 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country in 2022. The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector remains high.

Key indicators for the district of Gabrovo

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 14,651 | 16,549 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 13,902 | 15,771 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 22.3 | 12.3 | 21.9 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 55.2 | 55.4 | 54.3 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 67.7 | 67.3 | 70.9 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 5.4 | 3.9 | 4.1 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 10.6 | 11.7 | 13.5 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 23.1 | 24.6 | 23.5 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 24,891 | 30,226 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 1,892 | 2,460 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 3,273 | 3,382 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 77.5 | 83.7 | 88.8 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 26.5 | 26.5 | 33.7 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 62.8 | 57.4 | 61.0 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 78.9 | 72.9 | 72.9 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|---------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | –18.0 | –9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 2.8 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.19 | 3.87 | 3.80 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 33.4 | 30.9 | 31.3 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 100.0 | 90.5 | 92.9 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 74.4 | 73.2 | 72.1 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 96.3 | 96.9 | (100.0) | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,609 | 1,567 | 1,535 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 9.6 | 10.1 | 9.6 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 9.1 | 11.4 | 8.1 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 84.1 | 83.3 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 419 | 427 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 73.7 | 87.3 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 109 | 209 | 336 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 1,044 | 1,406 | 2,152 | 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.

Haskovo district

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

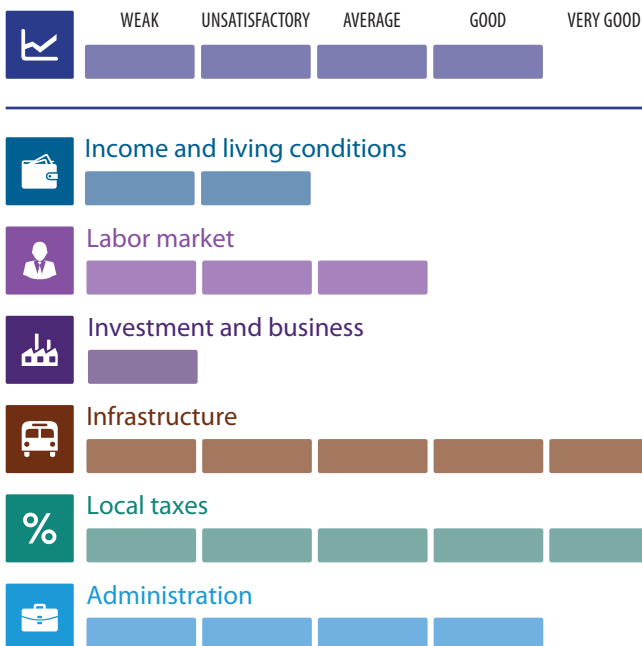
211,565
5,533
261
72.2



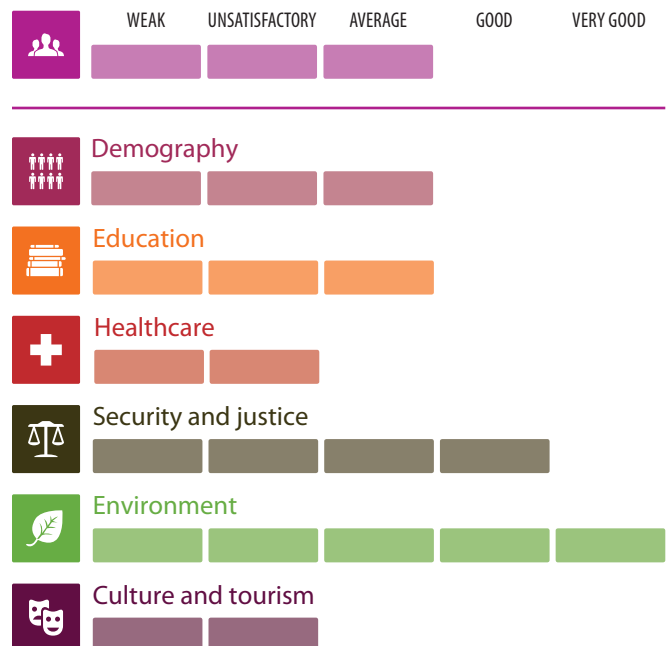
Both the value and the growth rate of GDP per capita in Haskovo district are low. Poverty is declining but is still relatively high. Employment and unemployment are both increasing. Investment activity in the district remains slack. The density of the road and railway networks in the district is above the national average. Local tax rates in the district's municipalities are close to, but below the respective averages countrywide. The self-assessments of the local administrations on the development of e-government have recorded a further increase and have settled above the country's average.

The district's rate of natural population growth is relatively low and the trend towards population aging is continuing. Students' results are low. Healthcare in Haskovo district suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. Morbidity and infant mortality are relatively low and life expectancy is high. The workloads of the criminal judges are not high, but this does not reflect on the speed of delivery of justice. Haskovo district ranks among the top three in the category assessing the environment. Cultural life and tourism in the district have a relatively weak presence.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2021, both the value and the growth rate of GDP per capita in Haskovo district were low. GDP grew by only 8%, compared to 17% in the country, and its value is now the lowest in the country – 9,800 BGN, versus 20,200 BGN in the country. Salaries and pensions are increasing, but also at a slow pace. The average annual gross salary of people employed in a labor or service contract in 2021 was 12,900 BGN, versus 18,700 BGN in the country. The average monthly pension is 521 BGN, against 537 BGN nationally.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality in the district was again relatively low in 2022. Poverty is declining but remains relatively high, with 30.2% of the population living below the national poverty line, compared to 22.9% nationally.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in the district is decreasing and remains relatively low at 56.3%, compared to 58.5% in the country. Economic activity is increasing, but also remains low with a rate of 69.2%, versus 73.6% nationally. This increase has been accompanied by a rise in both employment and unemployment. The employment rate has reached 68.5%, compared to the national average of 70.4%, and the unemployment rate is 6.4%, against 5.2% in the country.

The local labor market continues to face the challenge posed by the educational structure of the workforce and the aging population. The share of university graduates among the 25–64 age group was 18.6% in 2022, compared to 29.6% in the country, and the share of people with primary or lower education is 20.1%, compared to the national average of 16.0%. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 has decreased to 63.5%, 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 will be 64 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and business

Investment activity in Haskovo district again remained slack in 2021. The number of non-financial enterprises in the district was 52 per 1,000 population, compared to 60 per 1,000 population in the country. FTA acquisition expenditures went up but nevertheless remained low at 1,400 BGN/person, compared to 3,100 BGN/person nationally. FDI stock decreased for a second year in a row to 614 EUR/person and also remained considerably below the national average of 4,100 EUR/person. These indicator values also account for the relatively limited production value, in spite of a considerable increase compared to the year before.

Utilization of EU funds is also relatively low. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,910 BGN/person, which is half the national average of 2,836 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Svilengrad.

Infrastructure

The density of the road and railway network in Haskovo district is above the national average. The share of first-class roads and highways is also higher than the national average – 21.5%, compared to 18.5% in the country in 2022. The quality of the roads has been improving, but remains below the country's average. The share of road surfaces in good condition was 39.5% in 2022, compared to 41.1% countrywide.

Households' access to the internet in the district increased in 2022 to 91.8%, versus 87.3% in the country.

Local taxes

In 2023, the levels of the monitored local taxes in the municipalities on the district's territory again remained close to, though below the national average. The taxes on immovable non-residential property for legal entities and motor vehicles were practically equal to the respective national averages. Lower than the average ones were the tax rates on retail trade (12.84 BGN/sq. m, versus 13.04 BGN/sq. m in the country), on non-gratuitous acquisition of property (2.61%, against 2.76% nationally) and on taxi transportation (312 BGN, compared to 471 BGN countrywide). Within the district, the lowest local taxes are levied by the municipalities of Simeonovgrad and Ivaylovgrad, and the highest – by those of Madzharovo and Haskovo city.

Administration

In 2023, the self-assessment of the district's municipalities on the development of e-government continued to rise and has now settled above the national average. The self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services was also relatively high. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administrations remained above the national average – 72.4% in the district, versus 70.3% in the country.

The share of own revenues in the municipalities' total revenues in 2022 was 24.5%, compared to 29.0% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues – 72.6%, compared to 84.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth in the district is relatively low at -12.6% , compared to -9.7% nationally. The net migration rate is also negative at -1.5% .

The trend towards population ageing in the district is continuing. In 2022, the population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 179.7%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 42.0%, against 37.7% in the country.

The share of urban population is comparable to the country's average – 72.2%, versus 73.6% nationally. At the same time, population density is relatively low – 968 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,404 persons/sq. km nationally.

Education

The coverage of the education system has improved but is nevertheless lagging further behind the national average, which has been growing at a faster rate. In 2022, the net enrolment in 5th–7th grade was 86.1%, against 90.7% nationally. The share of school year repeaters is above the national average, albeit slightly. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is at a relatively high level due to the high share of both students and employees with vocational qualifications in the manufacturing sector and their low share in construction.

Students' results again remained low in 2023. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 31.5 points, versus 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.72, compared to 3.93 in the country. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) has recorded a significant decrease, though remaining relatively high – 22.2%, against 17.9% nationally.

Healthcare

The healthcare system in Haskovo district suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The number of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – is below the national average. There is one GP per 1,849 people, compared to 1,678 people per doctor nationally. The number of beds in the district's general hospitals remains extremely low, with 3.8 beds per 1,000 people, compared to 5.9 beds per 1,000 people in the country. Population morbidity and infant mortality in the district are relatively low, and life expectancy – relatively high. The average life expectancy is 72.5 years, against 71.9 years nationwide. The number of hospitalizations is 165 per 1,000 people, compared to the national average of 235 per 1,000 people in the country, which suggests that the population may be seeking health care outside the district, given the limited number of doctors and hospital beds.

The number of people with health insurance continued to increase in 2022 and now equals the national average of 93.5%.

The number of people with health insurance increased slightly in 2021 and remains above the national average – 89.6% in the district, against 88.7% in the country.

Security and justice

The workloads of criminal judges in the district again remained low in 2021, with an average of 8.6 cases a month per one local judge, compared to the national average of 10.1 cases per judge. This, however, does not reflect on the speed of delivery of justice. The relative share of criminal cases closed within 3 months increased slightly to 89%, thus equaling the national average, while the share of pending cases remained unchanged at 9.0%, against 12% countrywide.

The number of crimes in Haskovo district has gone up, but remains below the national average, while the detection rate is considerably higher. In 2022, the registered crimes against the person and property amounted to 10.5 per 1,000 population, compared to 11.6 per 1,000 population nationally. The proportion of cleared crimes was 60%, against 49% nationally.

Environment

Haskovo district ranks among the country's top three (after Smolyan and Pazardzhik) in the environment category. Its high assessment is mainly due to the relatively low volumes of generated household waste and their management. In 2021, the annual amount of generated waste was 319 kg/person, compared to the national average of 445 kg/person, while 98% of all generated household waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to 74% in the country.

There has been little change in the share of households with access to a public sewerage network, which in 2021 was 71.3%, against 74.8% in the country. The share of households whose sewerage system is connected to a wastewater treatment plant was 53.2%, compared to 66.8% countrywide.

The share of forest areas is close to the national average – 32% in the district, compared to 33% in the country, but degraded land is significantly more limited – 0.15% in the district, compared to 0.43% in the country in 2021.

Culture and tourism

Cultural life in Haskovo district has a relatively minor presence. Although after the serious decline of 2020, caused by the pandemic-induced restrictions, in 2021 the country recorded an increase in the attendance to cultural events, in Haskovo district some of the indicators even showed a decline. Cinema visits dropped to 51 per 1,000 people, against 590 per 1,000 people nationally, and visits to the local libraries also decreased to 211 per 1,000 people, against 584 per 1,000 people in the country.

Tourism is also not particularly intensive, although Haskovo is the district with the highest share of employees in the culture, sports and entertainment sector – 2.41%, compared to 1.02% in the country. The number of beds in accommodation facilities in the district is 13 per 1,000 people, versus 55 per 1,000 people in the country, and the number of overnight stays – 900 per 1,000 people (vs. 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country).

Key indicators for the district of Haskovo

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 9,100 | 9,817 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 11,642 | 12,906 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 38.9 | 32.9 | 30.2 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 57.9 | 58.1 | 56.3 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 67.4 | 66.3 | 68.5 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 7.7 | 5.7 | 6.4 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 25.8 | 19.9 | 20.1 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 17.8 | 18.5 | 18.6 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 11,793 | 14,447 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 1,230 | 1,399 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 794 | 614 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 78.6 | 81.1 | 91.8 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 36.0 | 38.9 | 39.5 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 80.8 | 79.8 | 72.6 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 73.7 | 72.2 | 72.4 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -12.6 | -9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -1.5 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.00 | 3.62 | 3.72 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 32.4 | 29.4 | 31.5 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 84.9 | 85.6 | 86.1 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 74.3 | 73.1 | 72.5 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 89.2 | 89.6 | 93.5 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,871 | 1,932 | 1,849 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 9.9 | 9.1 | 10.5 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 13.5 | 9.0 | 8.9 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 72.3 | 71.3 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 303 | 319 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 99.4 | 98.3 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 13 | 91 | 51 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 372 | 501 | 900 | 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.

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.

Kyustendil district

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 111,736 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 3,052 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 182 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 68.6 |



GDP per capita in Kyustendil district has been growing but remains below the national average. Economic activity and employment rates have registered a considerable increase. Investment activity in the district is among the lowest in the country. The density of the road and railway networks in Kyustendil remains higher than the national average. The average rate of local taxes in the district's municipalities is relatively low. Kyustendil is the district with the worst performance in the indicators assessing the transparency of the local administrations.

Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest rate of population aging. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy remains low, and students' results are unsatisfactory. Healthcare in Kyustendil district has the highest number of GPs, and the lowest infant mortality rate. The workloads of the local criminal judges are the highest in the country. The amounts of generated household waste are low. At the same time, however, only a small portion of this waste is handed over for treatment and recycling. Cultural life and tourism in the district remain characterized by their low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Kyustendil district has continued to grow but its increase in 2021 again remained lower than in the country – 11,500 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 20,200 BGN/person. Salaries have also gone up, but they also remain below the national average. The gross annual salary of people employed in a labor and service contract reached 12,700 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 18,700 BGN/person and is the second lowest in the country, after that in Blagoevgrad district. At the same time, pensions continue to stay close to the national average.

Over the past three years, the poverty rate has settled below the national average. The share of population living below the national poverty line in 2022 was 19.9%, versus 22.9% in the country.

Labor market

The labor market in the district showed a number of positive trends in 2022. Economic activity and employment rates grew significantly and for the second year in a row exceeded the respective national averages. The rate of economic activity increased to 75.4%, against 73.6% in the country, and that of employment reached 73.5%, versus 70.4% in the country. The unemployment rate remained stable at 7.8%, compared to 5.2% nationally.

Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest share of workforce with secondary education – 73%, compared to 54% in the country, which is in line with the district's industrial profile. The proportion of people aged 25–64 with a university degree is 23%, versus 30% nationally, while the share of those with primary or lower education is among the lowest in the country.

The labor market in the district continues to face the challenge of population aging. The share of working-age population continues to decline and has reached 55.7%, compared to 58.5% in the country. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 is 55.7%, compared to 65.7% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labour market in the next few years, there will be only 56 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and business

Investment activity in Kyustendil district again remained among the lowest in the country in 2021. The number of non-financial enterprises was 53 per 1,000 people, against the national average of 60 per 1,000 people. In 2021, the district registered a slight increase in domestic investment, as well as in production volumes. FTA acquisition expenditures per person reached 1,200 BGN, versus the national figure of 3,100 BGN/

person, while FDI amounted to 351 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 4,100 EUR/person. Production value in Kyustendil district went up to reach 13,800 BGN/person, against 31,200 BGN/person as the national average.

Utilization of European funds is also lagging behind. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,768 BGN/person, against 2,836 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the municipality with the highest amount of utilized EU funding was that of Rila.

Infrastructure

The density of the road and railway networks in the district again remains higher than the national averages for 2022. The share of highways and first-class roads is also higher – 20.8%, compared to 18.5% in the country, and so is the share of road surfaces in good condition – 56%, compared to the average of 41% nationwide.

Households' internet access in the district has gone up considerably and in 2022 it was 87.4%, thus even surpassing by a small margin the national average of 87.3%.

Local taxes

In 2023, the average level of the local taxes in the municipalities of Kyustendil district again remained relatively low. The biggest margin is in the annual rates for non-gratuitous acquisition of property and for taxi transportation.

The average tax rate on retail trade in the municipalities of the district is 10.14 BGN/sq. m, versus 13.04 BGN/sq. m in the country.

Within the district, the lowest rates are those levied by Nevesitino municipality, and the highest – those of the municipalities of Rila and Boboshevo.

Administration

The self-assessment of the local administrations for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services has gone up to surpass the respective country's averages for 2023. At the same time, the AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has retained its value from the previous year and is again the lowest one in the country – 50%, compared to the national average of 70.3%.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities increased to 24.9% in 2022, compared to 29.0% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues – to 76.8%, versus 84.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The demographic development in Kyustendil district is among the worst in the country. The rate of natural population growth continues to be considerably below the national average with a value of -17.1% , against -9.7% nationally for 2022. However, the net migration rate is positive, though relatively low at 2.4% .

Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest rate of population aging, preceded only by Vidin, Gabrovo and Smolyan in this indicator. The age dependency ratio in the district, calculated as the ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14, has reached 228.6% , compared to 165.9% in the country on average, and that of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 is 46.9% , versus the national average of 37.7% .

The share of urban population is 68.6% , which is below the national average of 73.6% , and population density is relatively low – $1,033$ persons/sq. km, against $1,404$ persons/sq. km in the country on average.

Education

The share of children attending kindergarten is increasing, although it remains below the national average – 86.3% in the district, against 87.3% in the country.

In 2022, the rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade went down to 90.2% , slightly lower than the national average of 90.7% . The number of school year repeaters has gone up and is equal to the national average of 1.2% . The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is extremely low, mainly due to the inflated enrolment in courses providing workers for the ICT and hospitality sectors, as well as the relatively reduced enrolment for the transport sector.

The performance of the students in Kyustendil district in 2023 again remained unsatisfactory. Their average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 28.3 points, compared to 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was “Good” 3.58 , compared to the average of 3.93 nationally. The number of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was 26.1% , versus 17.9% as the national average.

Kyustendil is among the few districts without a university or university branch on its territory.

Healthcare

The performance of Kyustendil district in the field of healthcare is among the best in the country. The share of people with health insurance in the district is traditionally high – in 2022 it was 99.3% , compared to 93.5% in the country. The number of beds in the local general hospitals remained similar to the national average. Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest relative number of GPs, with one GP per $1,460$ people, versus one GP per $1,678$ in the country, but there is a relative shortage of specialist physicians.

The infant mortality rate remains low, and life expectancy is close to, though slightly below the national average. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals also remains below average – 191 per $1,000$ people, compared to 235 per $1,000$ people in the country.

Security and justice

The workloads of the criminal judges in Kyustendil district are the heaviest in the country, with an average of 13.1 cases a month per judge, compared to 10.1 cases nationally in 2022. This affects the speed of delivery of justice. Thus, the proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 83% , against the national average of 89% .

Both the crime rate and the share of cleared crimes in the district are below the national average. In 2022, the registered crimes against the person and property were 19.2 per $1,000$ people, versus 11.6 per $1,000$ people on average nationwide. The detection rate in the district reached 48% , versus the national figure of 49% .

Environment

The amount of household waste in Kyustendil district is among the lowest in the country – 312 kg/person per annum, compared to the average of 445 kg/person in the country for 2021. At the same time, the share handed over for treatment and recycling is also low – 47% , versus the national average of 74% .

Close to, though slightly below the national average, is the proportion of population with access to a public sewerage network – 70.3% , versus the national average of 74.8% , and to a sewerage system connected to a wastewater treatment plant – 62.0% , versus 66.8% countrywide for 2021.

The share of forest areas is relatively high – 42% , against 33% in the country, but the share of degraded land is also above the national average – 0.63% , against 0.43% in the country for 2022. The installed RES capacities are above the national average relative to the population.

Culture and tourism

In 2022, cultural life in Kyustendil district again retained its low intensity. The relative number of cinema visits reached 288 per $1,000$ people, against 590 per $1,000$ people nationwide, and visits to libraries – 322 per $1,000$ people, against 584 per $1,000$ people as the national average. Museums attracted more interest and visits to them again remained above the national average. In 2022, their relative number was 699 per $1,000$ people, versus the national average of 619 per $1,000$ people.

The number of beds in accommodation facilities have increased to 39 per $1,000$ people, versus 55 per $1,000$ people in the country) and the number of overnight stays – to $1,753$ per $1,000$ people, against $3,739$ per $1,000$ people in the country. The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector is extremely low.

Key indicators for the district of Kyustendil

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 9,616 | 11,535 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 11,519 | 12,719 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 21.8 | 17.9 | 19.9 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 56.0 | 56.0 | 55.7 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 66.0 | 72.5 | 73.5 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 9.2 | 7.8 | 7.8 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 7.1 | 6.4 | 4.0 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 24.0 | 23.9 | 23.0 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 12,473 | 13,868 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 807 | 1,194 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 350 | 351 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 78.6 | 77.3 | 87.4 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 54.0 | 55.3 | 56.0 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 67.4 | 63.7 | 76.8 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 61.9 | 50.0 | 50.0 | 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. | 2.4 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.04 | 3.76 | 3.58 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 31.4 | 28.2 | 28.3 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 88.6 | 92.9 | 90.2 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 73.1 | 72.0 | 71.1 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 95.6 | 96.8 | 99.3 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,478 | 1,493 | 1,460 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 9.6 | 9.3 | 10.2 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 11.0 | 8.2 | 9.9 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 72.3 | 70.3 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 241 | 312 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 31.9 | 46.6 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 43 | 48 | 288 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 950 | 1,265 | 1,753 | 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.

Lovech district

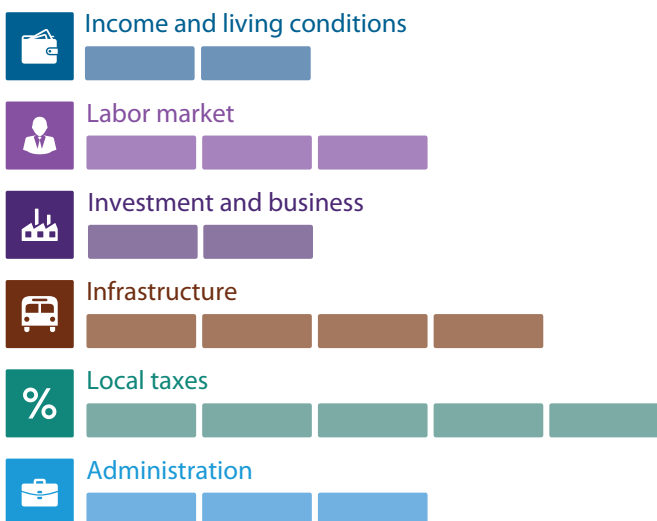
| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 116,394 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 4,129 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 110 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 61.9 |



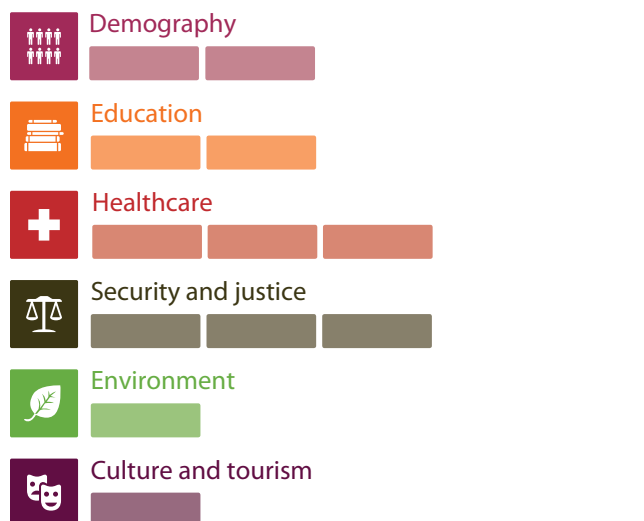
GDP per capita, pensions and salaries in Lovech district have been rising but still remain relatively low. Poverty is on the rise. Although the rate of unemployment continues to be below the national average, it has reached record levels for the district. There has been an increase in domestic and a 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



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



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.

Montana District

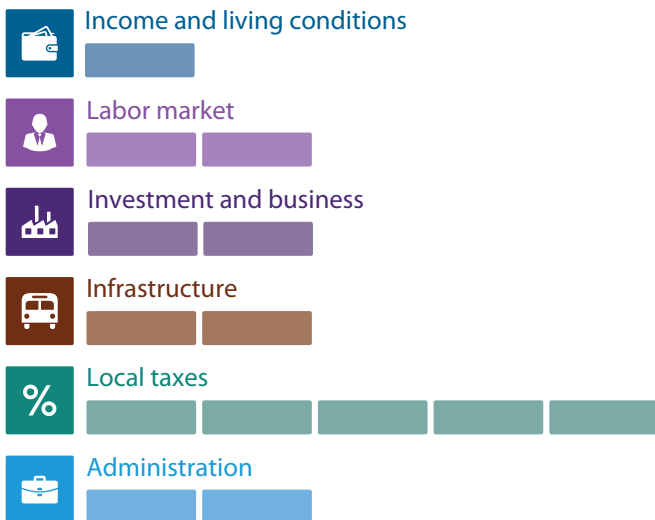
| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 119,950 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 3,636 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 130 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 64.2 |



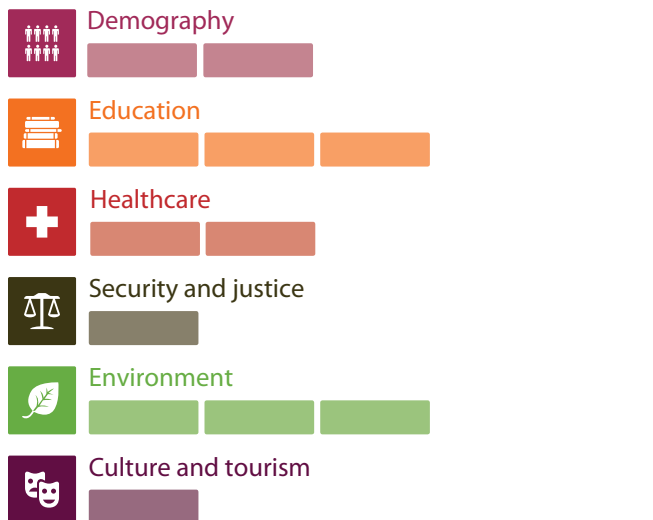
Montana is among the districts with relatively low incomes and quality of life. Trends in the labor market are unfavorable but there is a noticeable improvement in the educational structure of the workforce. Investment activity in the district is relatively low. The density of the road and rail networks 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



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



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, Valchedrum 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.

Pazardzhik district

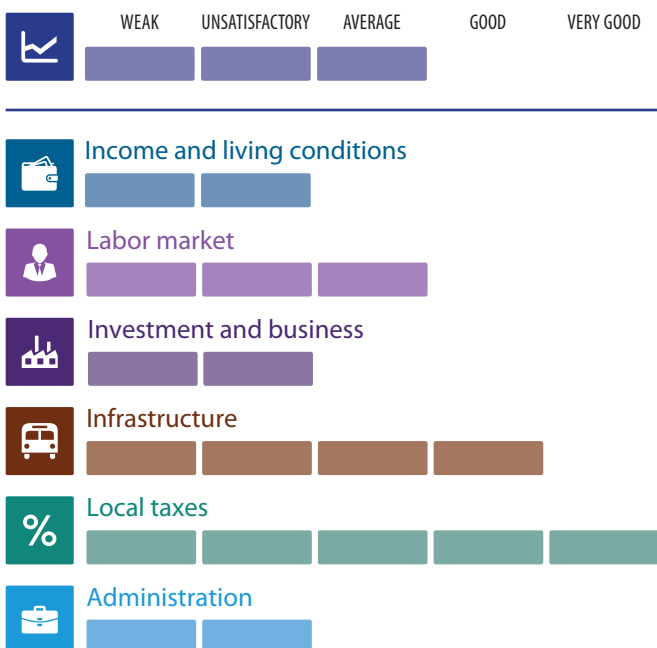
| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 229,814 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 4,457 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 118 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 61.4 |



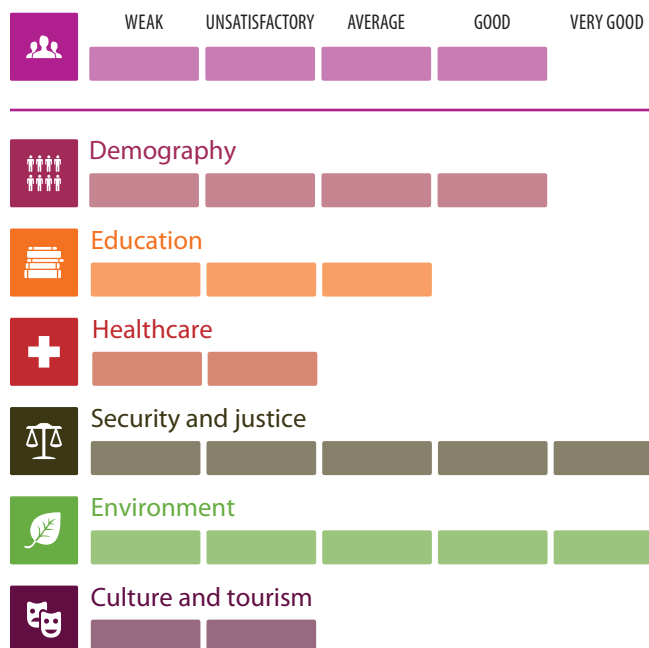
GDP, salaries and pensions in Pazardzhik district have continued to grow, but remain relatively low. 2022 marked a considerable rise of the employment rate, while the unemployment rate remained steady. The educational profile of the workforce remains a challenge for the local labor market. Investment and business activity in the district is not particularly brisk. The quality of the road surface remains relatively high. The average level of local taxes is relatively low. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administration has registered a slight decrease and remains relatively low.

Age dependency ratios in the district continue to worsen, but are still more favorable than the national average. Students' results remain relatively low. Access to GPs in the district is better than in the country on average, but there is an obvious shortage of specialist physicians. The workloads of the local criminal judges are comparable to the national average, but the delivery of justice is significantly faster. Pazardzhik district retains its place as the country's leader in installed RES capacities. Cultural life in the Pazardzhik region is among the less active ones in the country.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2021, GDP, salaries and pensions in Pazardzhik district continued to grow, though remaining relatively low. GDP per capita reached 11,700 BGN, compared to 20,200 BGN in the country on average. The gross annual salary of persons employed in a labor or service contract was 14,800 BGN, compared to 18,700 BGN in the country. Pensions are growing at a rate above the national average and their average monthly amount has reached 488 BGN, compared to 537 BGN in the country.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality is close to but below the national average for 2022. The share of people living below the national poverty line has shrunk but remains above the national average – 27.0% in the district, versus 22.9% nationally.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in the district continues to decline and is moving away from the national average – in 2022 it was 57.8% in the district, compared to 58.5% in the country. The economic activity rate has risen to 72.7%, against 73.6% in the country. This increase has been accompanied by a significant rise in employment and a stabilization of the unemployment rate, with both rates being less favorable than the respective national averages. The employment rate has reached 68.7%, compared to 70.4% nationally, and that of unemployment remains 7.3%, versus the national average of 5.2%.

The educational profile of the workforce remains a persistent challenge facing the local labor market. In 2022, the share of people with a university degree continued to decrease and came down to 14.5%, against an average of 29.8% in the country, while the share of those with primary or lower education shrank to 25.6%, versus 16.0% nationally.

The demographic replacement ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 57.2%, compared to the national average of 65.7%. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the workforce in the next few years, there are 57 young people who will join the labor market.

Investment and business

Investment and business activity in Pazardzhik district was not particularly brisk in 2021, although there have been some noticeable positive developments. The number of enterprises remained low – 44 per 1,000 people, against the national average of 60 per 1,000 people. There was an increase in foreign and domestic investment to levels above those in most districts. FTA acquisition expenditures have reached 2,400 BGN/person, and FDI – 1,800 EUR/person. Production value in Pazardzhik district has continued to rise, reaching 20,400 BGN/person.

As regards utilization of EU funding, Pazardzhik district has also recorded some increase, though the amounts remain relatively

low. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,904 BGN/person, against 2,836 BGN/person nationwide. Within the district, the municipality with the highest rate of utilization was that of Panagyurishte, and the one with the lowest – the municipality of Rakitovo.

Relative research and development expenditure is increasing.

Infrastructure

In 2022, the density of railroad network in Pazardzhik district again remained higher than the national average. The road network density and the share of highways and first-class roads were lower than the respective national average figures but road surface quality remained relatively high. The share of road surface in good condition increased to 57.7%, compared to 41.1% in the country.

In 2019, the district population's access to the internet retained its level of 85.1% of the households and remained below the national average of 87.3%.

Local taxes

The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Pazardzhik district remained relatively low in 2023. Of the five monitored taxes, the only exception was the tax rate on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, which was higher, albeit slightly, than the national average. Considerably lower than the average ones in the country were the local tax rates on non-residential immovable property for legal entities, on motor vehicles, taxi transportation and retail trade.

Within the district, the municipalities of Sarnitsa and Bratsigovo levy the lowest local taxes, while the highest rates are in the municipalities of Pazardzhik, Velingrad and Lesichovo.

Administration

In 2023, the local authorities' self-assessments on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services retained in general their levels and remained below the respective national averages. The performance of the district's e-government was rated at an average of 3.22 p. out of 4 p., versus the national average of 3.35 p., and the provision of one-stop shop services – at 3.1 p. out of 4 p., compared to 3.4 p. nationally. In 2023, the AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration dropped slightly to 65.2%, against the national average of 70.3%, and remained relatively low.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the municipalities in the district remains at a level of 22.6%, versus 29.0% in the country for 2022, while the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues has decreased to 66.2%, against 84.2% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth rate of -10.5% is close to but below the national average of -9.7% . At the same time, Pazardzhik manages to attract new residents and the net migration rate is positive at 4.2% .

Age dependency ratios remain more favorable than in the country on average. In 2022, the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 167.9%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 it was 38.5%, against 37.7% nationally.

The proportion of urban population in Pazardzhik district remains relatively low – 61.4%, versus the national average of 73.6%, while the average density of the population living in urban settlements is relatively high – 1,867 persons/sq. km, against 1,404 persons/sq. km on average nationwide.

Education

Pazardzhik is among the districts with the worst performance in the indicators for the education category. The net rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade has increased but still remains relatively low – 88.9% in the district, against the national average of 90.7%. School year repeaters make up an excessively high percentage – 2.0%, versus 1.2% nationally. The misalignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is worsening – there is a shortage of manufacturing-related courses at the expense of a disproportionate number of trainees in ICT courses.

The average results of the district's students in 2023 again remain relatively low. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 29.5 p., versus 35.3 p. in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.54 in the district, compared to 3.93 nationally, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) – 25.3%, versus the average of 17.9% nationwide.

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

Healthcare

Life expectancy in the district continues to decline, but remains close to the national average. However, the infant mortality rate is increasing and is relatively high. The district's health insurance coverage rate increased in 2022 and came close to the national average.

Access to GPs in the district is better than the national average but there is a definite shortage of specialist physicians. The availability of beds in the local general hospitals is traditionally higher than average and in 2022 there were 7.3 beds per 1,000 people, versus the national average of 5.9 beds per 1,000 people. Hospitalization figures are extremely high – 302 per 1,000 people, versus 235 per 1,000 people nationally.

Security and justice

Pazardzhik is among the districts with the best performance in the category assessing security and justice in 2022.

The workloads of the local criminal judges are comparable to the national average of 10.1 cases per judge per month, but delivery of justice is considerably speedier. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 95%, against the national average of 89%, and pending cases amount to 7%, compared to the national average of 12%.

The number of crimes in the district remains relatively small, while their detection rate is above the country's average. In 2022, the registered crimes against the person and property amounted to 7.7 per 1,000 people, versus 11.6 per 1,000 people nationwide. The detection rate was 52%, against 49% nationally.

Environment

Pazardzhik's performance in this category places the district almost at the top (second only to Smolyan). The main reason for this is that Pazardzhik continues to be the leader in terms of installed RES capacities – 5.51 kW per person, compared to 0.85 kW per person in the country.

Although in districts with a relatively high share of rural population connectivity to public sewerage systems is usually limited, in Pazardzhik district such access in 2021 was close to the country's average – 71.1%, compared to 74.8% nationally. However, connectivity to wastewater treatment plants lags significantly behind, with 43.7%, versus 66.8% nationally.

The amount of household waste generated in the district is above average. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling has registered a considerable increase, reaching 72% in the district, versus 74% nationally.

Pazardzhik is the district with the second highest share of forest areas, where it is outranked only by Smolyan – 54% in the district, versus 33% countrywide. The share of degraded land, for its part, is close to the national average – 0.4%.

Culture and tourism

In 2022, cultural life in Pazardzhik district again remained among the least active in the country. Cinema visits went up to reach 169 per 1,000 people, but their number remains considerably lower than the national average of 590 per 1,000 people. The trend in visits to libraries is similar. Visits to local museums increased at a rate faster than the national average and reached 705 per 1,000 people, compared to 619 per 1,000 people nationwide.

The number of beds in accommodation facilities has reached 36 per 1,000 people, versus 55 per 1,000 people in the country, and the number of overnight stays – 3,732 per 1,000 people, versus 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country. The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector as a share of all employed people in the district is half the average figure.

Key indicators for the district of Pazardzhik

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 10,995 | 11,653 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 13,090 | 14,842 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 32.9 | 30.6 | 27.0 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 59.5 | 59.5 | 57.8 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 67.4 | 64.9 | 68.7 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 9.7 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 24.2 | 27.2 | 25.6 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 15.6 | 15.2 | 14.5 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 17,006 | 20,367 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 1,911 | 2,372 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 1,710 | 1,807 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 81.7 | 85.1 | 85.1 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 49.6 | 54.7 | 57.7 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 66.6 | 68.8 | 66.2 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 70.4 | 65.3 | 65.2 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | –10.5 | –9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 4.2 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.03 | 3.80 | 3.54 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 30.9 | 30.1 | 29.5 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 79.8 | 78.4 | 88.9 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 73.8 | 72.4 | 71.8 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 85.1 | 85.8 | 93.0 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,669 | 1,671 | 1,598 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 7.3 | 7.2 | 7.7 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 10.4 | 7.0 | 6.6 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 72.6 | 71.1 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 358 | 480 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 5.9 | 72.3 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 43 | 121 | 169 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 1,546 | 2,032 | 3,732 | 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.

Pernik district

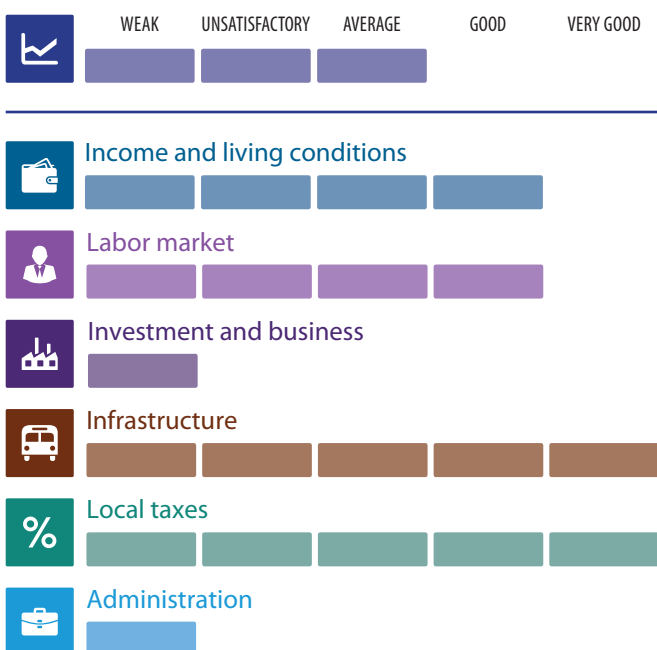
| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 114,162 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 2,394 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 171 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 78.4 |



Salaries and pensions in Pernik district continue to rise and the poverty level remains low. The workforce is characterized by a relatively high share of people with secondary education. Investment activity in the district is relatively slack. Pernik is among the districts with the highest density of road networks, although the share of highways and first-class roads remains low. The average rate of the taxes levied by the local municipalities is relatively low. The AIP active transparency rating of the district's municipalities is among the lowest in the country. Age dependency continues to deteriorate. Stu-

dents' results in the district are traditionally lower than the national average. Pernik has the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals. The relative number of registered crimes in Pernik district is close to the national average, while the detection rate is slightly higher. The amount of generated household waste is the highest in the country, though practically all of this waste is handed over for treatment and recycling. Cultural life and tourism in the district are characterized by their low intensity, which is probably related to Pernik's proximity to the capital.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2021, GDP per capita in Pernik district registered an increase, but although it was higher than the national average, it remained relatively low. Salaries and pensions have also continued to rise. The average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract has reached 14,100 BGN and is relatively low, compared to 18,700 BGN on average nationwide. At the same time, the average pension is among the highest in the country – 591 BGN, against 537 BGN countrywide. The explanation for this is that a number of the district's residents have had jobs in the capital and were paid higher salaries, with the result that their pensions are now relatively higher.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality in the district is relatively low. The poverty rate remains relatively limited.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Pernik district continues to decline and is lower than the national average – 57.1% in the district, compared to 58.5% in the country in 2022. Economic activity is increasing and its rate is among the highest in the country (only below that in the capital) – 78.1%, versus 73.6% in the country. This increase is accompanied by a simultaneous decrease in both employment and unemployment. The employment rate has reached 69.2%, against 70.4% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 4.3%, compared to 5.2% in the country.

A characteristic of the workforce in Pernik district is the relatively large share of people with secondary education. While on a national scale 54% of the population have secondary education, in Pernik district they constitute 70%, with lower shares of both university graduates and people with primary or lower education. A major challenge facing the local labor market continues to be population aging.

Investment and business

Investment activity in Pernik district again remained relatively slack in 2021. Its proximity to the capital affects both the number of enterprises and the investment flows attracted into the district. There are 46 enterprises per 1,000 people, compared to 60 per 1,000 people in the country. Both foreign and domestic investment flows have been rising but remain relatively low. FTA acquisition expenditures have reached 1,600 BGN/person, against 3,100 BGN/person countrywide, while FDI amounts to 1,900 EUR/person, compared to 4,100 EUR/person nationally. Production value in Pernik district has also gone up to 19,5200 BGN/person, compared to an average of 31,200 BGN/person nationwide.

Utilization of European funds has been on the increase but its figures still rank Pernik among the worst performing districts in the country. By 30 June 2023, payments made to beneficiar-

ies under EU operational programs amounted to 1,721 BGN/person, compared to 2,836 BGN on average nationally.

Infrastructure

In 2022, the density of the road and railroad networks in Pernik district again remained considerably higher than the national average: the density of the road network is 24 km/100 sq. km (versus 18 km/100 sq. km in the country) and is the second highest in the country (after Gabrovo district), and that of the railway network is 4.8 km/100 sq. km (versus 3.6 km/100 sq. km in the country). The share of highways and first-class roads remains lower – 15.9%, against 18.5% in the country; however, the quality of the roads is close to the national average, with a share of road surfaces in good condition of 40.7%, against 41.1% countrywide.

Households' access to internet access has registered a considerable increase over the past few years, though in 2022 it again remained below the national average – 84.9% in Pernik district, versus 87.3% nationally.

Local taxes

The average level of the local taxes in Pernik district's municipalities again remained relatively low in 2023. The one exception is the average rate of the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, which is higher than the national average. The reason for this is that half of the municipalities in the district have increased the rate of this tax for 2023. Considerably lower are the average rates of the taxes on motor vehicles, taxi transportation and those on immovable non-residential property for legal entities.

Within the district, the lowest taxes are levied by the municipalities of Breznik and Zemen, and the highest ones – by the municipality of Kovachevtsi.

Administration

The local authorities' self-assessments on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services rose slightly in 2023, though they again remained below the country's average.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration in Pernik's municipalities retained its level and in 2023 it was the second lowest in the country, followed only by the municipalities in Kyustendil district – 52.4% in Pernik, compared to the national average of 70.3%.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of municipalities in the district was 25.4% in 2022, compared to 29.0% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues reached 69.0%, against 84.2% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth rate in Pernik district again remained considerably below the national average, reaching -22.1‰ in the district, versus -9.7‰ countrywide in 2022. The net migration rate is positive (3.1‰), though it cannot compensate for the considerable population decrease.

The rapid rate of population aging in the district is also evident in the age dependency ratios. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 is 196.0%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to that aged 15–64, it is 42.1%, against 37.7% nationally.

The share of urban population is relatively high – 78.4%, versus 73.6% countrywide, but its density is low – 856 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,404 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

The share of children attending kindergarten is above average – 88.6% in the district, compared to 87.3% in the country. The rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade in 2022 was comparable to the national average, while the share of school year repeaters remained relatively low. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is close to the national average. Pernik is the district with the highest share of trainees in the ICT sector and in transport, storage and postal services, although neither sector provides enough opportunities for regional employment.

The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade is relatively low – 29.2 p., compared to 35.3 p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature is traditionally below the national average – “Good” 3.64, versus 3.93 respectively. However, the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) in the district has risen considerably to 28.0%, against 17.9 in the country, and is the second highest nationwide, only after that in Shumen district.

The small number of university students in the district can be explained with the presence of one single small university on Pernik district’s territory – the European Polytechnical University.

Healthcare

The share of people with health insurance in Pernik district has increased but is lagging behind the national average. The district is relatively well provided with GPs, but in 2022 there were again relatively few specialist physicians.

Pernik continues to be the district with the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals – 2.6 beds per 1,000 people, which is half the average number in the country (5.9 beds per 1,000 people). The relative number of hospitalizations is also among the lowest compared to the other districts – 61 per 1,000 people, compared to 235 per 1,000 people nationwide. These figures suggest that Pernik’s population seeks medical care outside the district, most probably in hospitals in the capital.

Life expectancy in the district is close to but below the national average. The infant mortality rate in the district has fallen considerably and is among the lowest in the country.

Security and justice

The workloads of the local criminal judges in Pernik district are comparable to the national average – one local criminal judge hears an average of 9.6 cases per month, compared to 10.1 cases per month per judge in the country. The speed of delivery of justice is also comparable to the national average, with 89% of cases completed within 3 months.

The crime rate in Pernik district is close to the national average, while the detection rate is slightly higher. Registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 11.4 per 1,000 people in 2022, versus an average of 11.6 crimes per 1,000 people nationwide. The detection rate was 51%, against 49% for the country on average.

Environment

The relatively high share of urban population accounts for the large share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network – 79.4%, compared to 74.8% in the country in 2021. Connectivity to wastewater treatment plants is also high – 74.3%, against 66.8% countrywide. In 2021, Pernik was once again the district with the highest volume of generated household waste – 531 kg/person per annum, compared to 445 kg/person in the country. At the same time, however, practically all waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, against 74% nationally.

The share of forest areas in Pernik district is relatively high – 41% in the district, versus 33% countrywide. However, the share of degraded land is twice the national average – 0.96%, compared to 0.42% in the country in 2022. The installed RES capacities relative to the population remain relatively small.

Culture and tourism

Pernik is among the districts with a relatively stagnant cultural life, which is probably due to its proximity to the capital. In 2022, cinema visits rose fast and amounted to 625 per 1,000 people, exceeding the national average of 590 per 1,000 people. Visits to the local museums and libraries, however, are lagging very much behind.

Tourism activity is also of low intensity. The number of beds in accommodation facilities is 5 per 1,000 people, compared to 55 per 1,000 people in the country. The number of overnight stays is 329 per 1,000 people, compared to 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country. The share of employees in the sector is also relatively low.

Key indicators for the district of Pernik

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 9,352 | 11,084 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 12,359 | 14,074 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 16.8 | 19.1 | 19.0 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 57.9 | 58.2 | 57.1 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 69.8 | 71.2 | 69.2 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 5.8 | 4.6 | 4.3 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 11.3 | 11.3 | 14.7 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 25.1 | 18.0 | 15.5 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 15,202 | 19,468 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 1,432 | 1,641 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 1,872 | 1,876 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 83.4 | 82.8 | 84.9 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 49.7 | 41.3 | 40.7 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 53.8 | 63.7 | 69.0 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 59.6 | 52.4 | 52.4 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -16.9 | -9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 3.1 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.06 | 3.79 | 3.64 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 32.0 | 28.4 | 29.2 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 89.6 | 91.0 | 90.4 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 72.9 | 71.4 | 71.3 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 89.6 | 89.3 | 92.9 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,536 | 1,595 | 1,563 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 11.0 | 9.5 | 11.4 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 13.3 | 8.8 | 11.0 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 78.9 | 79.4 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 455 | 531 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 82.1 | 99.9 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 19 | 99 | 625 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 166 | 143 | 329 | 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.

Pleven district

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

226,120
4,653
123
67.5



In 2022, GDP per capita in Pleven district continued its significant growth. Salaries and pensions have been rising relatively fast. Economic activity in the district is extremely slack. Investment is rising. The density of the road and rail network is higher than the national average. The rates of local taxes in the municipalities of Pleven district are close to the national averages. Pleven ranks among the districts with relatively high ratings in the indicators measuring the performance of the administration. The process of population aging is worsening. The

district does not perform well in the indicators assessing education. Pleven is a district with strong traditions in the field of healthcare and is among the leaders in this category. The workloads of the local criminal judges are relatively low, but this does not reflect on the speed of delivery of justice. Pleven is the district with the lowest share of forest area. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling continues to be relatively high. Cultural life and tourism are characterized by a relatively low intensity.

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

In 2022, GDP per capita in Pleven district continued its significant growth, reaching 12,900 BGN and outstripping that in most other districts.

Salaries and pensions are also rising relatively fast, though they lag behind the respective national averages. The average annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract has reached 14,600 BGN, and the average monthly pension – 499 BGN.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality is relatively low. An increase is visible in the poverty level in the district. In 2022, the proportion of the population living below the national poverty line reached 31.4%, compared to 22.9% nationally.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Pleven district has continued to decline and remains relatively low – 54.9%, compared to 58.5% in the country in 2022. Economic activity is also extremely sluggish (65.8% in the district versus 73.6% in the country) and has declined for the second year in a row. At the same time, employment has increased slightly but remains low, while unemployment has declined slightly but remains high. The employment rate has reached 62.5%, st 70.4% nationally, and the unemployment rate – 7.6%, compared to 5.2% countrywide.

In 2022, the share of the population aged 25–64 with a university degree dropped to 22.8%, st 29.8% in the country, though the share of those with primary or lower education also decreased to 19.7%, compared to 16.0% nationally.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 remains relatively low – 59.2% in Pleven district, st 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 59 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and business

In 2021, the relative number of non-financial enterprises remained unchanged at 42 per 1,000 people, versus 60 per 1,000 people nationally. Investment has registered a considerable rise. FTA acquisition expenditures have reached 2,200 BGN/person, and FDI stocks – 1,500 EUR/person.

Production value in the district has continued to rise considerably, reaching 19,200 BGN/person.

Expenditure on research and development is 94 BGN per capita, higher than that in most districts.

Utilization of European funds in Pleven district remains below the national average. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs

amounted to 2,562 BGN/person, compared to 2,836 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded by Belene municipality.

Infrastructure

Pleven district is characterized by a higher than average density of the road and railroad network. However, the share of highways and first-class roads remains relatively limited – 12.2% in 2022, versus 18.5 in the country. Nevertheless, road quality is commensurable with the national average – 40% of the roads are in good condition, compared to the national average of 41%.

The share of households with internet access is rising but remains relatively low – 80.8%, st the average of 87.3% nationally.

Local taxes

In 2022, Pleven district kept local taxes at levels comparable to the national average rates, though the local rates were significantly higher than the average ones in northwestern Bulgaria.

Two of the monitored rates in the district were on average considerably higher than the respective national averages – the tax on non-residential immovable property for legal entities and the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property. For their part, the average taxes on motor vehicles and retail trade are relatively low. Within the district, Pleven city municipality levies the highest local taxes, while the lowest rates are in the municipalities of Dolni Dubnik and Pordim.

Administration

Pleven is among the districts with relatively high ratings in the indicators assessing the work of the local administration. In 2023, the local administrations' self-assessments on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services continued to exceed the respective national averages.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has been lagging behind and it is lower, albeit slightly, than the national average – 70.0% in Pleven district, versus 70.3% nationally.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is relatively low – 22.7%, compared to 29.0% in the country, but the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is higher than average – 84.9%, compared to 84.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2022, the natural population growth rate remained strongly negative at -13.9% , against the national average of -9.7% . Pleven district also fails to attract new residents and the net migration rate is also negative (-0.5%).

These processes are the main prerequisite for the high level of population aging in the district. In 2022, the age dependency rate as a ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 years reached 211.1%, compared to 165.9% in the country on average, and to those aged 15–64 years – 47.4%, versus 37.7% nationwide.

The share of urban population remains relatively small – 67.5%, compared to 73.6% in the country, and population density in urban areas is also relatively low – 1,010 persons/sq. km, versus 1,404 persons/sq. km nationwide.

Education

The enrolment ratio in 5th–7th grades went up to 90.4% in 2022, though it failed to reach the national average of 90.7%. The share of school year repeaters remains relatively high. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is close to the national average.

Students' performance in Pleven district remained poor in 2023. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 28.0 p., compared to 35.3 p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was among the lowest in the country – “Good” 3.51, versus 3.93 in the country, and “fail” grades (below 3.00) made up 27.8%, against the national average of 17.9%.

Pleven is one of the few districts in Bulgaria registering a steady increase in the number of university students over the past few years, though relative to the population it remains half the national average.

Healthcare

Pleven district has strong traditions in the sphere of healthcare and in 2022 it held one of the top places in the country in the indicators for this category. The share of people with health insurance in the region remains at levels above the national average – 93.8% in the district, compared to 93.5% in the country. Indeed, Pleven is the district with the highest number of both GPs and specialist physicians. One local GP cares for 1,233 persons on average, compared to 1,678 persons per doctor in the country. The presence of a medical university in the city of Pleven is one of the prerequisites for the large number of doctors and the well-developed network of medical institutions in the district.

Pleven is also the district best provided with hospital beds. In 2022, their number continued to increase, reaching the unprecedented 11.6 beds per 1,000 people, compared to 5.9 beds per 1,000 people in the country. The relative number of

patients treated in the local general hospitals remains considerably higher than in the country – 398 per 1,000 people, compared to 235 per 1,000 people nationwide.

Security and justice

The workloads of the criminal judges in Pleven district are relatively small, which, however, has little effect on the speed of delivery of justice. In 2022, one local judge heard an average of 7.5 cases a month, compared to 10.1 cases nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 93%, against the national average of 89%.

The number of crimes registered in Pleven district, as well as their detection rate, is comparable to the national average. The total number of crimes against the person and property is 11.5 per 1,000 people, versus the average of 11.6 per 1,000 people nationwide, while the detection rate is 50%, against 49% in the country.

Environment

The share of population living in settlements with access to a public sewerage network amounted to 57.3% in 2021, while connectivity to wastewater treatment plants was available to 53.3% of the households, against 66.8% in the country. Both indicators place Pleven district behind the respective national averages, which is also an effect of the relatively low share of urban population.

The average amount of household waste generated in the district is comparable to the national average, while the share of that waste handed over for treatment and recycling also remains relatively high – 83%, versus 74% nationally.

Pleven is the district with the lowest share of forest areas – 7%, compared to 33% nationally for 2022. However, the share of degraded land is also low – 0.18%, versus 0.43% nationally. The installed RES capacities relative to the population are close to the national average.

Culture and tourism

In 2022, Pleven district's cultural life remained characterized by relatively low intensity. There was a significant increase in the number of visits to the local cinemas and museums – 392 per 1,000 people, versus 590 per 1,000 people nationwide, and 612 per 1,000 people, versus 619 per 1,000 people nationwide respectively. Visits to libraries have decreased and their number remains relatively low.

The tourism sector has a weak presence in the district. The number of beds in accommodation facilities is 6 per 1,000 people (compared to 55 per 1,000 people in the country) and the number of overnight stays is 529 per 1,000 people (compared to 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country). The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector is also relatively low.

Key indicators for the district of Pleven

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 10,268 | 12,889 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 12,660 | 14,608 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 28.3 | 21.6 | 31.4 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 55.4 | 55.6 | 54.9 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 61.6 | 62.0 | 62.5 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 10.1 | 7.8 | 7.6 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 19.1 | 19.9 | 19.7 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 25.4 | 24.7 | 22.8 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 15,499 | 19,194 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 1,799 | 2,201 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 1,285 | 1,508 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 68.9 | 76.3 | 80.8 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 37.2 | 41.3 | 40.0 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 85.5 | 89.8 | 84.9 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 71.7 | 69.8 | 70.0 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -13.9 | -9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -0.5 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 3.97 | 3.61 | 3.51 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 31.8 | 28.0 | 28.0 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 87.3 | 85.6 | 90.4 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 73.8 | 72.6 | 72.3 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 91.0 | 92.0 | 93.8 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,243 | 1,214 | 1,233 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 10.8 | 10.9 | 11.5 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 9.9 | 10.0 | 9.2 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 60.2 | 57.3 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 450 | 438 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 87.1 | 82.7 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 93 | 247 | 392 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 350 | 322 | 529 | 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.

Plovdiv district

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 634,497 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 5,973 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 212 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 74.4 |



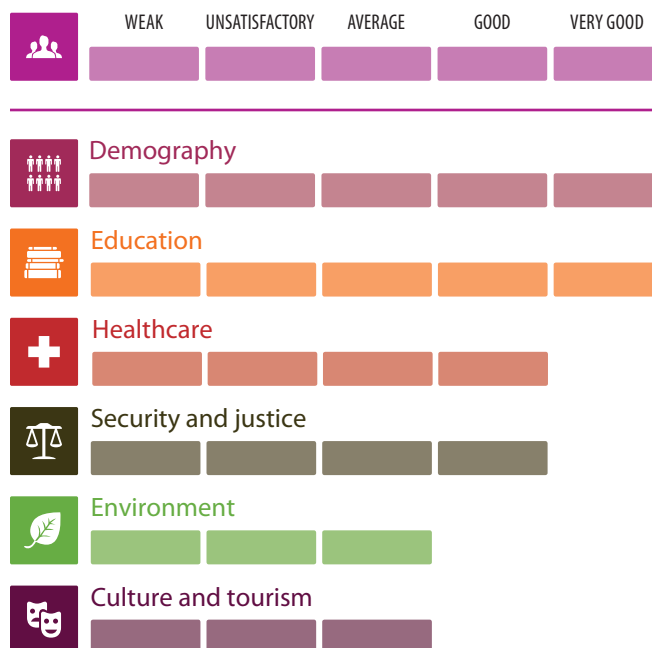
GDP per capita in Plovdiv district has continued to grow. The share of the working-age population is relatively high, but while the unemployment rate is significantly more favorable than the national average, the employment rate is lagging behind. Investment and business activity has registered a significant growth. The infrastructural development in the district can be assessed as very good. The level of the taxes on retail trade and taxi transportation in Plovdiv district is below the national average. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administration is above the country's average.

Against the general trend towards population aging in the country, Plovdiv performs relatively well. The age dependency ratios are favorable. Students' results are high. Plovdiv is also among the districts with the largest relative numbers of doctors and hospital beds. The relative number of patients treated in the local hospitals is the highest in the country. The workloads of the criminal judges in Plovdiv district are among the heaviest in the country but the speed of delivery of justice is relatively high. The share of forest areas is equal to the country's average, but that of degraded land is considerably lower. Cultural life in the district is relatively active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Plovdiv district has continued to grow, though at a slower rate than the national average for 2021. It reached 15,500 BGN, but dropped a place in the ranking (outstripped by Burgas) and is now the eighth highest in the country. Salaries and pensions in the district are also increasing. In 2021, the average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract reached 15,900 BGN per year, compared to 18,700 BGN in the country, and the average monthly pension – 525 BGN, versus 537 nationally.

The poverty level remains above the national average. The share of the population living below the national poverty line is 29.4%, versus 22.9% countrywide.

Labor market

In 2022, the share of the working-age population in Plovdiv district was relatively high – 59.2%, compared to 58.5% countrywide. Economic activity in Plovdiv district went up but with a rate of 69.1%, it remained below the average level of 73.6% in the country. The increase in economic activity was accompanied by a rise in employment and a drop in unemployment, but while the unemployment rate was considerably more favorable than the national average – 4.1 in the district, versus 5.2% in the country, the employment rate is lagging behind – 67.3% in the district, against 70.4% in the country.

The educational structure of the workforce continues to be a major challenge facing the local labor market. It improved in 2022 but again remained slightly less favorable than the country's average. The share of population with a university degree was 26.9%, against 29.8% in the country on average, while the share of those with primary or lower education was 17.8%, compared to 16.0% nationally. The population replacement ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 66.9%, 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 will be 67 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and business

In 2021, economic and business activity in Plovdiv district registered a considerable rise. The number of non-financial enterprises increased to equal to the national average – 60 per 1,000 people in 2021. FTA acquisition expenditures grew considerably to reach 3,400 BGN/person, which is the second highest figure in the country, below only that of the capital. FDI stock also registered an increase, reaching 3,200 EUR/person. Production value has gone up to 32,300 BGN/person, ranking Plovdiv district fourth in the country in this indicator (below the capital, Sofia district and Stara Zagora). Research and development expenditure per capita in the district has registered a slight decline, but remains second only to that in the capital.

However, Plovdiv district has been lagging behind in the utilization of European funds. By June 30th 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,165 BGN/person, compared to 2,836 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were registered in the municipalities of Hissarya and Krichim.

Infrastructure

The level of development of the district's infrastructure can be assessed as very good. The density of its road network is close to the average one in the country, but the density of its railroads is considerably higher, with 5.4 km/100 sq. km of territory, versus 3.6 km/100 sq. km nationally. The share of highways and first-class roads is 17.5%, compared to the national average of 18.5%. The quality of the roads in the district is relatively good and is improving – in 2022, 54.7% of the road surface was in good condition, compared to the average of 41.1% countrywide.

The relative share of households with internet access went up in 2022 and remained above the average one nationwide – 89.1%, versus 87.3% respectively.

Local taxes

In 2023, the local tax burden in Plovdiv district displayed wide variations between the different taxes. The average rates of the taxes on non-residential immovable property for legal entities and on motor vehicles were higher than the respective national averages, though the margin was not large. The local tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property also remained high. At the same time, the tax rates on retail trade and taxi transportation were lower than the country's averages.

Within the district, the municipalities of Kaloyanovo and Maritsa levy the lowest local taxes, while the highest rates are in those of Plovdiv city and Karlovo.

Administration

The local authorities' self-assessments on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services for 2023 went up and exceeded the respective national averages.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has retained its relatively high level – 72.4% in the district, versus 70.3% in the country.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities decreased slightly, but remains high at 30.2%, compared to 29.0% nationally. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is also higher than average – 85.4%, versus 84.2% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Contrary to the nationwide trend towards population ageing, Plovdiv district has been performing relatively well and the data for 2022 place the district among the top three (after the capital and Varna district). The natural growth rate of the population still exceeds the national average with -7.4% in the district, versus -9.7% in the country. In 2022, Plovdiv continued to attract new residents and its net migration rate of 7.0% is among the highest in the country.

These processes have once again left their relatively beneficial impact on the age dependency ratios in the district for 2022. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 years is 151.4%, compared to 165.4% in the country on average, and to those aged 15–64 years – 35.5%, versus 37.7% nationwide.

A relatively large share of the district's population lives in urban areas – 74.4% in 2022, compared to 73.6% in the country. Plovdiv ranks third after the capital and Sliven as regards population density in its settlements – 2,372 persons/sq. km, against 1,404 persons/sq. km nationally.

Education

The net enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade in Plovdiv district rose in 2022 and remained above the national average. The share of children attending kindergarten is close to but above the national average. Worse figures, however, have been recorded for the shares of school year repeaters, and the alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is lower than average.

In 2023, students' results in Plovdiv district remained good. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 35.3 points and equal to the national average. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.95, versus the average of 3.93 in the country. "Fail" grades (below 3.00) made up 16.1%, against the national average of 17.9%.

Plovdiv is among the districts with long and stable traditions in higher education. The number of university students is the third largest in the country, outranked only by those in Veliko Tarnovo and the capital.

Healthcare

Plovdiv is among the districts with the largest relative number of doctors and hospital beds. In 2022, one local GP cared for 1,599 persons on average, compared to 1,678 persons per doctor in the country. The index for access to specialist physicians is also more favorable than the national average. The local general hospitals provide 8.4 beds per 1,000 people, compared to 5.9 per 1,000 people in the country, which ranks Plovdiv second in the country after Pleven district. Plovdiv also retains its top place as regards the relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals – 419 per 1,000 people, compared to 235 per 1,000 people nationwide.

Life expectancy is significantly higher than the national average – 73.6 years, compared to 71.9 years in the country, and the infant mortality rate is around the national average.

Security and justice

The workloads of the criminal judges in Plovdiv district are among the heaviest in the country; however, this does not impede the speedy delivery of justice. One local judge hears an average of 11.4 cases a month, compared to 10.1 cases a month per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 90%, compared to the average of 89% nationwide, and pending cases make up 7%, against 12% in the country.

The number of crimes registered in Plovdiv district remains low, and crime detection relatively high. In 2022, the registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 8.1 per 1,000 people, versus the average of 11.6 per 1,000 people nationwide, thus ranking Plovdiv district third in the country in this indicator. The detection rate has decreased to 51%, but it remains above the national average of 49%.

Environment

The concentration of the district's population in towns and cities is a prerequisite for a relatively high share of households with access to a public sewerage network – 75.9%, versus 74.8% nationally for 2021, and equally, for a high share of people with accessibility to a public sewerage network connected to a wastewater treatment plant – 73.8%, against the national average of 66.8%.

The amounts of household waste generated in the district remain high – 495 kg/person per annum, against an average of 445 kg/person nationally. At the same time, the amounts of this waste handed over for treatment and recycling have dropped to 61%, which is below the national average of 74%.

The share of forest areas in Plovdiv district is comparable to the national average of 33%, though the share of degraded land, is considerably lower – 0.17%, against 0.43% in the country for 2022. The installed RES capacities are above the national average.

Culture and tourism

Cultural life in Plovdiv district is relatively active. In 2022, cinema visits recorded a considerable increase, reaching 705 per 1,000 people, against 590 per 1,000 people nationally. Visits to the local libraries also recorded an increase, though they remained below the national average.

The number of beds in accommodation facilities in Plovdiv district was 22 per 1,000 people for 2022, and the number of overnight stays – 1,965 per 1,000 people, both of which values are relatively high, with the exception of those in the seaside districts.

Key indicators for the district of Plovdiv

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 14,648 | 15,547 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 14,171 | 15,937 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 25.8 | 26.8 | 29.4 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 60.4 | 60.6 | 59.2 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 68.7 | 66.3 | 67.3 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 6.2 | 4.6 | 4.1 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 19.7 | 19.2 | 17.8 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 26.4 | 26.0 | 26.9 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 27,188 | 32,293 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 2,560 | 3,379 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 2,986 | 3,228 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 79.9 | 88.9 | 89.1 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 40.9 | 46.5 | 54.7 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 99.0 | 103.1 | 85.4 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 71.1 | 72.4 | 72.4 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -7.4 | -9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 7.0 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.30 | 4.10 | 3.95 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 38.7 | 35.0 | 35.3 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 87.4 | 87.6 | 91.8 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 75.0 | 73.9 | 73.6 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 87.4 | 87.1 | 91.5 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,618 | 1,637 | 1,599 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 8.1 | 7.5 | 8.1 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 7.7 | 7.6 | 7.3 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 82.4 | 75.9 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 469 | 495 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 64.6 | 61.5 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 234 | 438 | 705 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 1,003 | 1,385 | 1,965 | 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.

Razgrad district

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

103,223
2,488
103
47.8



GDP in Razgrad district continues to grow. The average monthly pension is the lowest in the country. The performance of the labor market in the district is poor, though in the past year there have been some positive trends. Investment activity remains low. The density of the road network is relatively high, but the share of highways and first-class roads, as well as that of road surfaces in good condition, is extremely low. The average level of local taxes levied by the local municipalities is lower than the national average. The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is decreasing and remains low.

Razgrad is among the three districts with under 50% of the population living in urban areas. Students' results are extremely low. Razgrad is one of the districts with the most acute shortage of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians. The number of crimes in the district is relatively low and their detection rate is high. Razgrad ranks last among all the districts in terms of the indicators for the environment. The share of population living in settlements with a public sewerage network is the lowest in the whole country. Cultural life and tourism in Razgrad district retain their relatively low intensity.

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

GDP per capita in Razgrad district has continued to grow at an increasing rate, reaching 12,900 BGN/person in 2021. Salaries and pensions in the district are also rising. The average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor and service contract has reached 15,500 BGN. The average monthly pension in Razgrad district has recorded the highest growth rate but remains the lowest in the country – 441 BGN, versus 537 BGN countrywide.

In 2022, the Gini coefficient for income inequality in the district continued to decline and became the lowest in the country. Poverty, on the other hand, has been rising. The share of the population living below the national poverty line is 27.7%, compared to 22.9% nationally.

Labor market

The performance of the labor market in Razgrad district is traditionally relatively poor, though in 2022 the indicators show some improvement. The share of the working-age population is decreasing but is still close to the national average. The economic activity rate has recorded a significant increase, although it remains among the lowest in the country with a rate of 67.5%, compared to 73.6% nationally. This increase has been accompanied by growth in both employment and unemployment. The employment rate has gone up to 60.2%, and although it remains relatively low (compared to 70.4% nationally), it has managed to eliminate the huge drop of the previous year. The unemployment rate has risen to 9.4%, versus 5.2% nationally.

The educational structure of the workforce has also shown some improvement, though it remains a challenge still facing the local labor market. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education continues to be the second highest in the country, after that in Sliven district, though it has decreased to 31.3%, against 16.0% in the country on average. At the same time, the share of those with a university degree has gone up, but remains relatively low – 24.9% in Razgrad, against 29.8% in the country.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 57.4%, compared to the national average of 65.7%. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 57 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and business

Investment activity in Razgrad district remained low in 2021. Razgrad is among the districts with the lowest relative number of enterprises – 39 per 1,000 people, compared to the national average of 60 per 1,000 people. FTA acquisition expenditures amount to 2,000 BGN/person, compared to the average of 3,100 BGN/person in the country, and FDI stock – to 1,900 EUR/

person, versus 4,100 EUR/person nationally. Production value, however, has risen to 19,200 BGN/person, compared to 31,200 BGN/person in the country.

Utilization of European funds has been lagging behind. By June 30th 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,165 BGN/person, compared to 2,836 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded by the municipalities in Isparih and Kubrat.

Infrastructure

The density of the district's railroad network is close to, though slightly below the country's average. The road network density is higher, but the share of highways and first-class roads is extremely low – 11.1%, compared to 18.5% countrywide, and so is the share of road surfaces in good condition – 26%, versus 41% nationally in 2022.

The relative share of households with internet access went further up in 2022 to reach 86.1%, though it remained lower than the average of 87.3% nationwide.

Local taxes

In 2023, the average level of local taxes in Razgrad district's municipalities again remained lower than the national average. Among the five monitored local taxes, only the tax rate on non-residential immovable property of legal entities was higher in Razgrad district than the average one in the country. Significantly lower than the national average were the local taxes on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, taxi transportation and retail trade.

Within the district, the lowest taxes are levied by the municipalities in Samuil and Tsar Kaloyan, and the highest – by those in Isparih and Loznitsa.

Administration

The local authorities' self-assessments on the development of e-government went down in 2023 and continue to lag behind the national average. However, the assessments on the provision of one-stop shop services have gone up and now exceed the country's average.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration is 68.2% and is again below the national average of 70.3%.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is decreasing and in 2022 it remained low at 21.3%, compared to 29.0% nationally. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is 75.3%, compared to 84.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth rate in Razgrad district is relatively low and in 2021 it was -13.5% , versus the national average of -9.7% . At the same time, the district has managed to attract new residents and the net migration rate is also positive (4.4%), but it cannot compensate for the population decrease.

Population aging in the district is reflected in the age dependency ratios as well. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 has reached 186.3%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it is 39.4%, versus the national average of 37.7% in 2022.

Razgrad is one of the three districts, along with those of Kardzhali and Silistra, where less than 50% of the residents live in urban areas. In 2022, 47.8% of the population was urban, compared to 73.6% in the country. Its density is also among the lowest in the country – 768 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,404 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

The share of children in the district attending kindergarten is relatively high – 90.3%, compared to 87.3% in the country. The enrolment rate in 5th–7th grades increased in 2022 and outpaced the national average, reaching 92.7%, against 90.7% nationally. The share of school year repeaters is growing but remains below the national average. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy is close to, but below the national average.

Students' results for 2023 were extremely low in Razgrad district. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 25.9 points, versus 35.3 points nationally, and was the third lowest in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was the second lowest in the country – “Good” 3.50, compared to 3.93 in the country, while the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was one of the highest – 27.5%, against the national average of 17.9%.

The single provider of higher education in Razgrad district is a branch of Ruse University. This accounts for the small number of university students in the district – the 2022 data show just 2 students per 1,000 people, compared to 33 students per 1,000 people nationally.

Healthcare

The share of people with health insurance in Razgrad district remains extremely high, covering practically the whole population. At the same time, Razgrad is among the districts with the most acute shortage of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians. In 2022, one local GP cared for 2,362 persons on average, compared to 1,678 persons per doctor in the country. The relative number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals is also relatively small – 5.2 beds per 1,000 people, compared to 5.9 per 1,000 people in the country. The relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is low

– 138 hospitalizations per 1,000 people, compared to 235 per 1,000 people nationwide.

The average life expectancy in the district is relatively low and the infant mortality rate – high.

Security and justice

The workloads of criminal judges in Razgrad district are below the average ones in the country and the speed of delivery of justice – higher. In 2022, one local judge heard an average of 8.0 criminal cases a month, compared to 10.1 cases per judge nationally, while the proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 90%, compared to the average of 89% nationwide. Pending cases constituted 7%, against 12% in the country.

The number of crimes registered in Razgrad district is relatively low, and crime detection is high. In 2022, the registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 9.2 per 1,000 people, versus the average of 11.6 per 1,000 people nationwide. The detection rate dropped slightly to 65%, which was again considerably above the national average of 49%.

Environment

Among all of Bulgaria's districts, Razgrad ranks last as regards the environmental indicators. Due to the low concentration of people in urbanized areas, it is one of the districts with the worst results for the share of population with access to a sewerage network connected to a wastewater treatment plant, while it held the bottom place as regards the share of population living in settlements with a public sewerage network – 41.5%, compared to the national figure of 74.8% in 2021.

Razgrad is also among the districts generating very high amounts of household waste. Its average volume reached 481 kg/person annually, compared to 445 kg/person in the country on average. At the same time, the amounts handed over for treatment and recycling were a mere 10%, versus the national average of 74%.

The share of forest areas is relatively low – 22%, against 33% in the country, but the share of degraded land is also small – 0.16%, against 0.43% countrywide.

Culture and tourism

Cultural life in the district was not particularly active in 2022. Visits to cinemas and museums relative to the population increased, but remained relatively small in number. For its part, the number of visits to libraries went down.

Razgrad is among the districts with the lowest number of beds in accommodation facilities – 6 per 1,000 people, compared to 55 per 1,000 people in the country. Overnight stays are also limited – 497 per 1,000 people, versus 3,739 per 1,000 people nationally in 2022. The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector of all people employed is four times lower than the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Razgrad

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 10,634 | 12,942 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 13,902 | 15,517 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 23.1 | 16.7 | 27.7 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 59.8 | 59.9 | 58.2 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 60.8 | 54.5 | 60.2 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 10.8 | 8.8 | 9.4 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 30.7 | 34.1 | 31.3 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 19.5 | 21.1 | 24.9 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 15,552 | 19,195 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 2,294 | 2,046 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 1,901 | 1,917 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 73.4 | 76.6 | 86.1 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 15.6 | 16.9 | 26.2 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 74.0 | 78.1 | 75.3 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 73.8 | 68.1 | 68.2 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|---------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | –13.5 | –9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 4.4 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 3.96 | 3.53 | 3.50 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 31.2 | 29.1 | 25.9 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 85.5 | 85.5 | 92.7 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 72.4 | 71.3 | 70.7 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 95.4 | 96.3 | (100.0) | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 2,298 | 2,293 | 2,362 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 8.0 | 7.3 | 9.2 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 7.8 | 7.2 | 7.3 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 41.6 | 41.5 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 425 | 481 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 12.0 | 10.1 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 36 | 85 | 215 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 578 | 468 | 497 | 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.

Ruse district

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 193,483 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 2,803 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 83 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 77.8 |



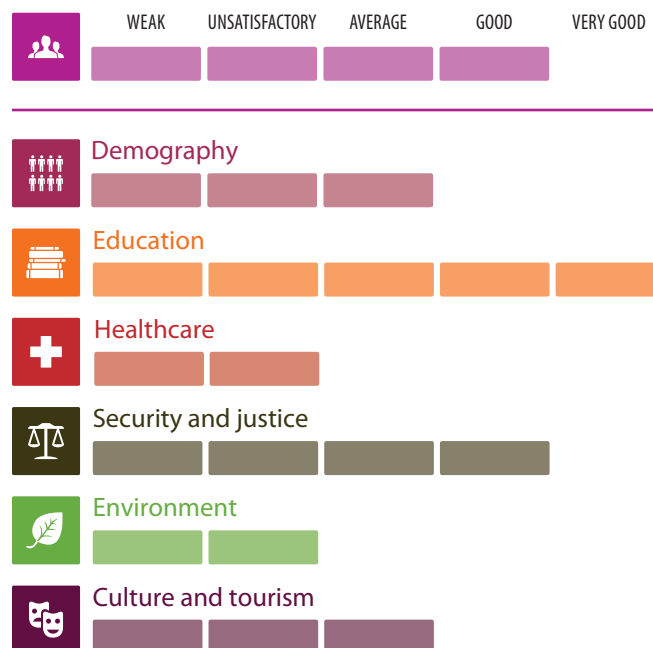
GDP per capita in the district has increased and is now the ninth highest in the country. Both employment and unemployment figures remain relatively favorable. Production value per capita in the district has risen and remains relatively high. Ruse is the district with the highest railway network density in the country. The average level of the tax rates levied by the municipalities in Ruse district is close to the national average. The local authorities' self-assessments on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services achieved high scores.

The age dependency ratios in the district remain above the country's average. Students' performance in the district is close to the average one in the country. The healthcare system continues to suffer from a shortage of GPs. The number of crimes is increasing but remains relatively low, and crime detection is above the national average. The share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains low. Ruse is among the districts with an intensive cultural life, but the tourism sector is not particularly active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Ruse district has increased to 15,100 BGN, which was the ninth highest in the country in 2021. Salaries and pensions have also been rising. The average annual gross salary of people employed in a labor and service contract has reached 15,400 BGN, and the average monthly pension – 505 BGN.

The Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality, was below the national average in 2022. Poverty is declining and the share of the population living below the national poverty line stands at 18.5%, compared to 22.9% nationally.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in the district has decreased to 57.2%, versus 58.5% in the country.

Economic activity in the district has registered a slight increase and continues to be higher than the national average, reaching in 2022 75%, compared to 73.6% in the country. This increase has been driven by a rise in both employment and unemployment, though their figures remain relatively favorable. The employment rate is 72.3%, higher than the national average of 70.4%, while the unemployment rate is 5.6%, compared to 5.2% nationwide.

Ruse is also among the districts with the most highly educated workforce. The share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 is the third highest in the country (after the capital and Varna district), even though in 2022 it shrank slightly to 29.0%. The share of people with primary or lower education is only 11.1%, versus 16.0% in the country.

The local labor market continues to face the challenge of population aging. In 2022, the replacement ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 was 57.3%, 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 will be 57 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and business

In 2021, investment activity in Ruse district came close to the national average. The number of enterprises reached 55 per 1,000 people, compared to 60 per 1,000 people in the country. FTA acquisition expenditures continue to rise and have reached 2,700 BGN/person. FDI flows have gone up to 2,200 EUR/person. Production value per capita in the district has also grown and remains relatively high – 32,100 BGN/person.

Utilization of European funds in Ruse has registered a significant increase and for the first time exceeds the average level in the country. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district

to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,862 BGN/person, against 2,836 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the leader in utilization of EU funding is Byala municipality.

Infrastructure

Ruse is the district with the highest railway network density in the country. The density of the road network and the share of highways and first-class roads are also higher than average. Road quality has improved dramatically and in 2022 47.2% of road surfaces were in good condition, against 41.1% nationwide.

The share of households in the district with internet access has also continued to increase and remains higher than the national average – 88.8% compared to 87.3% in the country.

Local taxes

In 2022, the average level of the tax rates in Ruse district was close to the country's average. Among all monitored taxes, the only one where there was a significant margin with the national average was the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, which in Ruse district's municipalities was lower. For its part, the local tax on retail trade was higher, but it did not differ much from the average levels.

Within the district, the municipality of Ruse city levies the highest local taxes, while the lowest rates are in the municipalities of Tsenovo, Slivo Pole and Vetovo.

Administration

In 2022, the local authorities' self-assessments on the development of e-government showed no change and again failed to reach the national average. However, the self-assessments on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services again achieved high scores.

The AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies rose slightly and again exceeded the country's average.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities has been decreasing and is below average (26.5% in the district versus 29.0% in the country), but the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is high – 101.7% in the district versus 84.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Natural population growth in Ruse district is in serious decline, with a rate of -15.1% in 2022, against the national average of -9.7% . However, Ruse manages to attract new residents, although its net migration rate is low -0.9% .

The age dependency ratios in the district remain higher than the national average. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 years has reached 215.3%, compared to 165.9% in the country on average, and to those aged 15–64 years – 43.8%, versus 37.7% nationwide.

Ruse is among the districts with a high level of urbanization – in 2022 77.8% of the population were living in urban settlements, compared to 73.6% nationally, while the population density was 1,467 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,404 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

The proportion of children in the district attending kindergarten is increasing and is higher than average. The enrolment ratio in 5th–7th grade in 2022 was also relatively high, having increased to 92.4%, against 90.7% nationally. The share of school year repeaters, on the other hand, is less than half the national average. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy is relatively good, mainly because of the high number of students and employees in the manufacturing and transport sectors

Students' results for 2023 again remained close to the average ones in the country. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade dropped, albeit slightly, to 35.6 points, compared to 35.3 points nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.82, whereas the national average was 3.93. "Fail" grades (below 3.00) made up 17.5%, against the national average of 17.9%.

The number of university students is 28.2 per 1,000 people, compared to 33.2 per 1,000 people nationally.

Healthcare

In 2022, the healthcare system in Ruse district continued to suffer from a shortage of GPs. One local GP was caring for an average of 2,178 people, compared to 1,674 people per doctor in the country. The number of specialist physicians, however, was close to the national average.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the relative number of beds in the local general hospitals, and in 2021, which reached 6.2 beds per 1,000 people, compared to 5.9 per 1,000 people in the country. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals was higher than the national average – 269 per 1,000 people, compared to 235 per 1,000 people in the country.

The average life expectancy in the district is close to the national average, though the infant mortality rate in the district rose in 2022 to become relatively high. The share of people with health insurance is above the national average.

Security and justice

Although the workloads of the criminal judges in Ruse district are close to the national average, the speed of delivery of justice is higher than in the country. One local judge hears an average of 10.2 cases a month, compared to 10.1 cases per judge countrywide. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 90%, compared to the average of 89% nationwide, and that of pending cases – 8%, versus 12% nationally.

The crime rate in Ruse district has increased but remains relatively low, and the detection rate is above the average one in the country. In 2022, the registered crimes against the person and property in the district constituted 9.3 per 1,000 people, versus the average of 11.6 per 1,000 people nationwide. The detection rate, for its part, increased to 53%, against 49% for the country on average.

Environment

The amounts of household waste generated in the district are close to the national average – 442 kg/person in the district per year, versus 445 kg/person in the country. At the same time, the share handed over for treatment and recycling is growing, though remaining low – 68%, compared to the national average of 74% for 2021.

The share of population with access to a public sewerage system remains relatively low – 67.3%, versus 74.8% in the country on average. Nevertheless, in 2021 the whole sewerage network was already connected to wastewater treatment plants, compared to the national average of 66.8%.

The share of forest areas in Ruse district is relatively small – 15%, versus 33% countrywide. The share of degraded land, however, is higher – 0.53 %, against 0.43% in the country.

The installed RES capacities are extremely small – 0.16 kW/person, compared to 0.85 kW/person countrywide.

Culture and tourism

In 2022, Ruse remained among the districts with relatively active cultural life. Cinema visits reached 688 per 1,000 people, against 590 per 1,000 people nationally. Visits to the local theatres and museums also recorded a significant increase. Local libraries attracted 440 visits per 1,000 people, against 589 per 1,000 people nationally.

The tourism sector does not have a strong presence in the district. The number of beds in accommodation facilities is 13 per 1,000 people, compared to 55 per 1,000 people in the country. Overnight stays are also relatively few in number, at 909 per 1,000 people in the district, versus 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country), although they increased by 46% compared to the previous year. The share of people employed in the culture, sports and entertainment sector is half the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Ruse

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|-------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 12,592 | 15,075 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 13,591 | 15,443 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 22.8 | 24.0 | 18.5 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 59.3 | 59.6 | 57.2 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 71.4 | 71.4 | 72.3 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 7.6 | 5.4 | 5.6 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 11.7 | 11.6 | 11.1 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 31.2 | 30.9 | 29.0 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 24,562 | 32,084 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 2,101 | 2,723 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 2,079 | 2,243 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 80.0 | 87.9 | 88.8 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 20.0 | 40.5 | 47.2 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 93.2 | 98.4 | 101.7 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 74.9 | 72.2 | 72.4 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -15.1 | -9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 0.9 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.19 | 3.88 | 3.82 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 39.1 | 35.9 | 35.6 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 84.5 | 83.8 | 92.4 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 74.0 | 72.9 | 72.0 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 87.7 | 88.2 | 95.5 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 2,254 | 2,248 | 2,170 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 8.8 | 8.5 | 9.3 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 7.2 | 8.3 | 8.4 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 68.0 | 67.3 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 426 | 442 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 59.0 | 68.4 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 224 | 395 | 688 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 422 | 622 | 909 | 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.

Shumen district

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 151,465 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 3,390 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 151 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 62.5 |



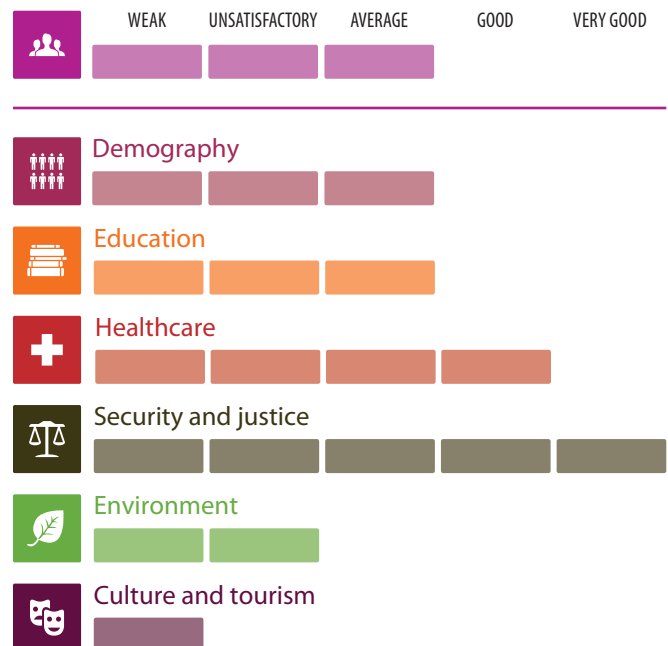
GDP, incomes and pensions in Shumen district are continuing to grow. Economic activity is traditionally high and has been increasing further. This increase has been accompanied by a rise in both employment and unemployment. Investment activity remains relatively slack. Shumen is among the best performing districts in the category assessing infrastructure. The municipalities in the district have kept local taxes relatively low. The self-assessments of the local administrations on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services have gone up.

The natural population growth rate is less favorable than average, but the district has managed to attract new residents. Students' results continue to be among the poorest in the country. Healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The workloads of the local criminal judges remain low and this has a favorable effect on the speed of delivery of justice. The number of crimes in the district is low and the detection rate is high. The share of degraded territory is limited. Tourism in the district also has a relatively limited presence.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

The growth of GDP per capita in Shumen district has continued, reaching 12,000 BGN/person and placing the district around the middle but still in the lower half of the 2021 ranking scale for this indicator. The trend towards rising incomes and pensions is also maintained. The average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract is 15,100 BGN, versus 18,700 BGN in the country, and the average monthly pension – 473 BGN, versus 537 BGN nationally.

The share of the population living below the national poverty line has gone up but remains below the national average – 22.5% in the district, compared to 22.9% in the country for 2022.

Labor market

In 2022, the share of the working-age population was close to, but below the national average – 57.8% in the district, compared to 58.5% in the country. Economic activity in the district is traditionally high and in 2022 it rose further to reach 76.4%, compared to 73.6% in the country. This increase has been accompanied by a rise in both employment and unemployment, with both rates remaining less favorable than the country's average. The employment rate has reached 65.8%, against 70.4% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 9.4%, versus 5.2% nationally.

A challenge still facing the labor market in Shumen district is the educational structure of the workforce. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education has decreased slightly to 26.8%, against the national average of 16.0%. The share of those with a university degree has increased slightly, reaching 24.8%, compared to 29.8% in the country.

In 2021, the population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 was 61.8%, compared to 65.7% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market, there are 62 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and business

Investment activity in Shumen district again remained relatively slack in 2021. The number of enterprises in Shumen district is small – 40 per 1,000 people, against 60 per 1,000 people nationally. FTA acquisition expenditures have gone up but remain considerably low – 1,897 BGN/person, versus 3,097 BGN countrywide. The volume of attracted FDI has stagnated and remains significantly lower than the national average – 708 EUR/person in the district, compared to 4,100 EUR/person in the country. Production has grown significantly (by 27%) to 21,100 BGN/person.

Research and development expenditure has generally remained at a level higher than in most other districts.

Shumen is also among the districts with relatively low utilization of European funds. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 2,285 BGN/person, against 2,836 BGN/person nationwide. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Novi Pazar, which is also the only one in Shumen district where the utilized funds exceed the national average.

Infrastructure

Shumen is among the best performing districts in the category assessing infrastructure, where it is preceded only by Varna district. The density of the road and railway networks is higher than the national average. Shumen was also once again the district with the largest share of first-class roads and highways in the country in 2022 – 36.4%, compared to 18.5% in the country. Road quality has also improved but remains below the national average, with road surfaces in good condition making up 37.8% in 2022, versus 41.1% in the country.

Household access to the internet has increased to 86.8% but remains lower than the country's average of 87.3%.

Local taxes

The municipalities in Shumen district again kept the levels of local taxes relatively low in 2023. The average rates were slightly higher than the respective national averages for immovable non-residential property for legal entities and for motor vehicles. At the same time, the taxes on taxi transportation, on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and retail trade were significantly lower.

Within the district, the highest local taxes are levied by the municipalities of Novi Pazar and Kaolinovo, and the lowest – by those of Hitrino and Nikola Kozlevo.

Administration

The self-assessments of the local administrations on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services went up in 2023 and for the first time exceeded the national average. The AIP active transparency rating of the municipalities in the district also recorded a rise and remained above the country's average – 76.5% in the district, compared to 70.3% nationally.

The share of own revenues of the district's municipalities remained low in 2022 at 20.9%, versus 29.0% nationally, while the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues was 71.7%, against 84.2% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth is less favorable than the country's average but Shumen district manages to attract new residents. In 2022, the natural population growth rate was -11.7‰, compared to -9.7‰ nationally. The net migration rate was positive and relatively high at 6.4‰.

The age dependency rate as a ratio between the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 186.7%, compared to the national average of 165.9%, and to the 15–19 age group – 40.3%, versus 37.7% in the country.

The share of urban population, as well as population density, again remained low in 2022. The share of the population living in urban settlements was 62.5%, versus the national average of 73.6%; population density was 771 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,404 people/sq. km on average countrywide.

Education

Kindergarten and school coverage in the district went significantly up in 2022. The share of children attending kindergarten reached 88.7%, compared to 87.3% nationwide. The net enrolment in 5th–7th grade was 90.3%, against 90.7% nationally. The share of school year repeaters equals the national average. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is relatively weak, mainly due to the inflated enrolment in ICT courses unmatched by the local job opportunities.

In 2022, students' results again remained among the lowest in the country. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 26.2 points, versus 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was the lowest in the country – “Good” 3.43, compared to 3.93 in the country, while the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was the highest – 30.6%, against 17.9% nationally.

The number of university students has gone up to 45 per 1,000 people, remaining higher than the national average of 33 students per 1,000 people.

Healthcare

The healthcare system in Shumen district suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The number of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – is below the national average. In 2022, there was one GP per 1,705 persons, compared to 1,678 persons per doctor nationally. The number of beds in the district's general hospitals remains extremely low, with 3.0 beds per 1,000 people, compared to 5.9 beds per 1,000 people in the country. The number of hospitalizations is half the national average – 115 persons per 1,000 people, compared to the national average of 235 per 1,000 people. This suggests that the residents may be seeking medical care outside the district.

Infant mortality registered a significant decline in 2022. However, the average life expectancy is below the national average. The share of population with health insurance again went up in 2022 to exceed the national average.

Security and justice

The workloads of criminal judges in the district remained low in 2022, with a favorable effect on the speed of delivery of justice. One criminal judge heard an average of 7.3 cases per month, compared to an average of 10.1 cases per judge in the country. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months reached 97%, against 89% nationally, while that of pending cases was among the lowest in the country – 5%, against 12% nationwide.

The number of crimes in Shumen district is low, and the detection rate is high. The crimes against the person and property registered in 2022 amount to 9.0 per 1,000 people, compared to 11.6 per 1,000 people nationally. The proportion of cleared crimes is 64% against 49% nationally.

Environment

The volumes of household waste in Shumen district have been rising but remain relatively low, while its management is deteriorating. In 2021, the amount of household waste generated in the district was 370 kg/person, compared to the national average of 445 kg/person; however, a relatively low share was handed over for treatment and recycling.

There has been little change in the share of households with access to a public sewerage network and it remains low – 56.7% in 2021, against 74.8% in the country. The share of households whose sewerage system is connected to a wastewater treatment plant is 53.0%, compared to 66.8% countrywide. The installed RES capacities are relatively small.

The share of forest areas is close to the national average, but that of degraded land is rather more limited.

Culture and tourism

Visits to the local museums and libraries rose considerably in 2022 to exceed the respective national averages. Museums attracted 966 persons per 1,000 people, versus 619 per 1,000 people in the country. Visits to libraries reached 1,307 per 1,000 people, which is the highest number for the whole country, where the average is 584 per 1,000 people. The number of cinema visits has registered a slight decline and remains exceptionally low – 66 per 1,000 people, compared to 590 per 1,000 people nationally.

Tourism in the district also has a relatively weak presence. The number of beds in accommodation facilities in 2022 was 12 per 1,000 people, compared to 55 per 1,000 people in the country, and the number of overnight stays – 506 per 1,000 people, compared to 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country. Shumen is also the district with the lowest share of people employed in the culture, sports and entertainment sector – 0.07%, compared to 1.02% in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Shumen

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 10,475 | 11,989 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 13,345 | 15,105 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 21.5 | 15.4 | 22.5 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 60.0 | 60.0 | 57.8 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 66.5 | 64.1 | 65.8 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 11.0 | 9.2 | 9.4 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 27.1 | 27.8 | 26.8 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 24.6 | 24.2 | 24.8 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 16,613 | 21,145 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 1,777 | 1,897 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 686 | 708 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 82.5 | 84.6 | 86.8 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 34.6 | 37.6 | 37.8 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 80.5 | 78.1 | 71.7 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 66.4 | 76.1 | 76.5 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -11.7 | -9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 6.4 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 3.98 | 3.58 | 3.43 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 30.4 | 27.0 | 26.2 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 82.4 | 79.6 | 90.3 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 73.7 | 72.4 | 71.3 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 87.9 | 88.1 | 98.9 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,911 | 1,862 | 1,705 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 7.9 | 8.6 | 9.0 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 4.7 | 2.7 | 4.9 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 57.3 | 56.7 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 303 | 370 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 94.4 | 45.4 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 22 | 68 | 66 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 356 | 372 | 506 | 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.

Silistra district

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

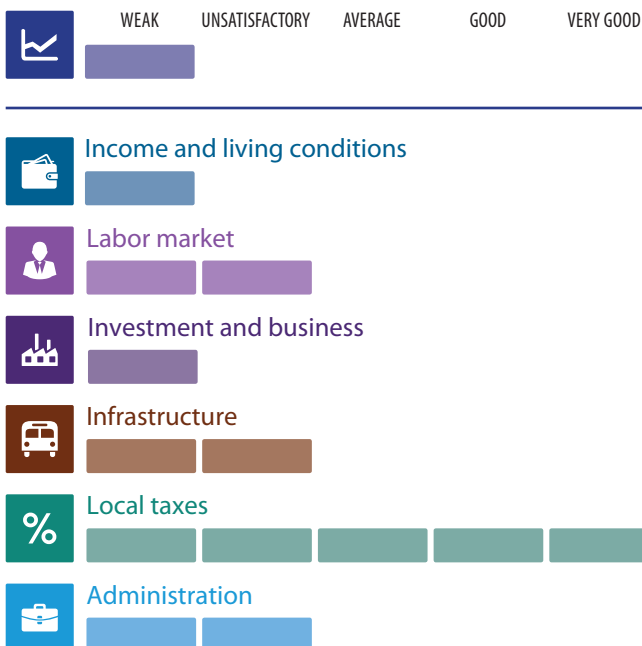
97,770
2,846
118
44.8



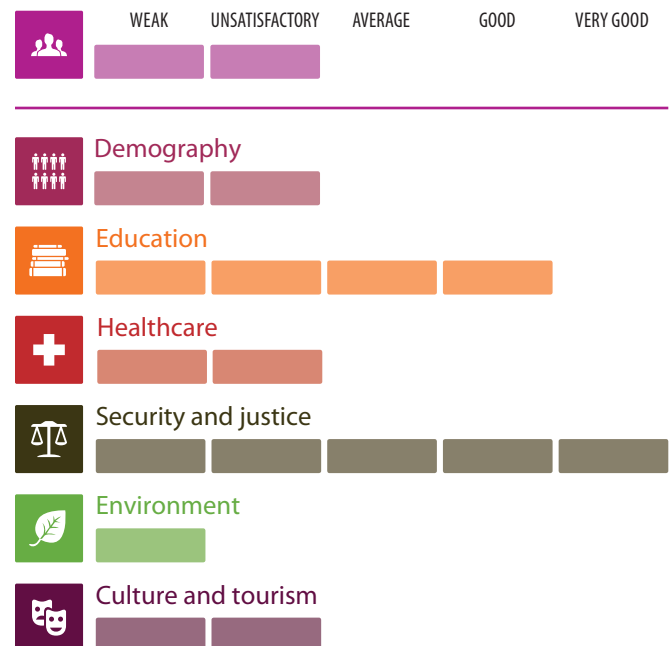
Silistra is once again the district with the lowest GDP per capita, despite its relatively high growth rate. The local labor market is still facing the challenge of a disadvantageous educational structure of the workforce and population aging. Silistra is among the regions with very low investment activity. The quality of the road surface is relatively high. All monitored local taxes are lower than the respective national averages. The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government has registered a considerable increase and is relatively high. The average rating for the trans-

parency of the local government is lagging behind. Silistra is among the districts with the worst demographic profile. Students' results are relatively low. Healthcare in Silistra district suffers from a shortage of both doctors and hospital beds. The workloads of the criminal judges in Silistra district are close to the national average, but the speed of delivery of justice is considerably higher. Silistra is among the districts with the worst performance as regards the environment indicators. Cultural life in the district is intensifying. The number of library visits is above the national average. Tourism in the district is poorly developed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■

Income and living conditions ■■

Silistra is the district with the lowest rating in this category. Although in 2021 GDP per capita continued to grow relatively fast, Silistra is among the districts with the lowest GDP per capita – 10,000 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 20,200 BGN/person. Salaries and pensions continue to increase, but are still relatively low. The average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract has reached 13,300 BGN, compared to 18,700 BGN in the country. The average monthly pension is growing at a record rate for the country, but is among the three lowest nationwide (before those in the districts of Kardzhali and Razgrad).

These indicators are a prerequisite for a high poverty level in the district. In 2022, the relative share of the population living below the national poverty line was the third highest (after that in the districts of Montana and Vidin) – 34.4%, versus 22.9% nationwide.

Labor market ■■■

In 2022, the development of the local labor market remained unsatisfactory, ranking Silistra in the second lowest place (only before Montana). The share of the working-age population has dropped to 55.6%, against 58.5% in the country.

Economic activity is declining and is the second lowest in the country, with a rate of 64.0% (compared to 73.6% in the country). This decrease has been accompanied by a parallel rise in both employment and unemployment. The employment rate reaches 56.3%, against the national average of 70.4. Unemployment is up to 10.4%, which is double the national average. The educational structure of the workforce continues to be a major challenge facing the labor market. In 2022, the share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education decreased to 26.5% of the workforce, compared to 16.0% nationwide, while the share of those with a university degree went down to 21.6%, versus 29.8% countrywide,

Population ageing is another negative factor for the local labor market.

Investment and business ■■

Silistra is among the country's districts with low investment activity. In 2021, the number of nonfinancial enterprises was 38 per 1,000 population in 2020, compared to 60 per 1,000 population countrywide. Foreign and domestic investment also remains relatively low. FTA expenditures have increased to 2,100 BGN/person (versus 3,100 BGN/person nationally), and FDI stock – to 400 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 4,100 EUR/person. Silistra is also one of the districts with the lowest production value – 12,500 BGN/person, against 31,200 BGN/person respectively.

The municipalities in Silistra district are also lagging behind as regards the utilization of European funds. By June 30th 2023,

payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,557 BGN/person, versus 2,836 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Tutrakan.

Spending on research and development is extremely low – 6 BGN per capita (compared to 156 BGN per capita in the country).

Infrastructure ■■■

The density of the road network in Silistra district is almost identical to the average one in the country – 18 km/100 sq. m of territory. At the same time, the share of first-class roads is considerably below average – 11.3% in 2021, against 18.5% countrywide. Nevertheless, the quality of the road surface is relatively high – 44% of the roads are in good condition, versus 41% in the country.

In most northern Bulgarian districts, railroad density is typically lower, and in Silistra district it is 2.5 km/100 sq. km of territory, compared to 3.6 km/100 sq. km in the country.

Access to the internet is available to 70.6% of the households in the district, compared to the average of 87.3% nationwide in 2022, which is the second lowest figure (only before Sliven) in this category for 2022.

% Local taxes ■■■■■■

As is typical of the less economically developed districts, the average level of local taxes in Silistra is relatively low. In 2023, all monitored local taxes were lower than the respective national averages. The biggest margin occurred in the rates for retail trade, motor vehicles and taxi transportation.

Within the district, the municipalities of Kainardzha, Alfatar and Sitovo levy the lowest local taxes, while the highest rates are in Dulovo municipality.

Administration ■■■

In 2023, the local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government registered a considerable increase and was relatively high. The local authorities' self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop services, was again equal to the national average.

The average AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration is lagging considerably behind the national average – 58.8% in Silistra district, versus 70.3% in the country.

In 2022, the share of own revenues in the district's municipalities was 17.5%, against 29.0% nationally, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues was 74.2%, versus 84.2% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Demography ■■■

Silistra is among the districts (alongside Vidin and Smolyan) with the worst demographic profile for 2022. The natural population growth rate in Silistra district was -14.0% , compared to -9.7% in the country. The net migration rate was positive but relatively low -1.3% .

These developments affect the age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 210.6%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 – 45.9%, versus the national average of 37.7%.

Silistra is one of the districts with the smallest share of urban population, after Kardzhali district. In 2022, 44.8% of the population were living in urban settlements, against 73.6% countrywide. Population density is twice as low as the national average – 700 persons/sq. km, against 1,404 persons/sq. km countrywide.

Education ■■■■

The share of children in the district attending kindergarten increased in 2022 and is now close to the national average. The rate of enrolment in 5th to 7th grade also went up but remained below the national average – 88.8% in Silistra district, compared to 90.7% nationally. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is relatively high due to the relatively high share of agriculture in the economy, which is also linked to the higher share of admissions to agricultural courses in vocational education. At the same time, the ICT sector is not represented in either employment or education.

Students' results in Silistra district were again relatively poor in 2023.

The only provider of higher education in the district is a branch of Ruse University, with a very small number of university students – just 3 students per 1,000 persons, compared to 33 students per 1,000 people nationally.

Healthcare ■■■

Life expectancy in the district is the second lowest in the country (after Vidin district).

The healthcare system in Silistra district continues to suffer from a shortage of specialist physicians, while in 2022 the number of beds in the local general hospitals was again below the national average. One local GP cares for 1,964 persons on average, compared to 1,678 persons per doctor in the country. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has consistently increased in the past few years, but their proportion to the population remains relatively low – 5.0 beds per 1,000 people, compared to 5.9 beds per 1,000 people in the country. The relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is 198 per 1,000 people, compared to 235 per 1,000 people nationwide. The infant mortality rate has fallen considerably.

Security and justice ■■■■■■

Silistra is among the top performers in the indicators assessing security and justice. The workloads of the local criminal judges in the district are close to the national average, but the speed of delivery of justice was considerably higher in 2022. One local judge hears an average of 9.8 criminal cases a month, compared to 10.1 cases per judge nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 96%, against the national average of 89%, and the share of pending cases – 19%, versus 12% in the country.

The crime rate has been going up but remains relatively low, while the detection rate is high. In 2022, registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 8.5 per 1,000 population, versus the average of 11.6 per 1,000 population nationwide. The detection rate stood at 62.0%, compared to the national average of 49%.

Environment ■■

Silistra is also among the worst performing districts as regards the environmental indicators. One major factor for the low figures is the extremely small amount of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling – a bare 19%, versus 74% nationally. At the same time, the amount of generated household waste is similar to the national average – an annual of 413 kg/person in the district, versus 445 kg/person in the country for 2021.

Due to the low level of urbanization, a relatively small share of the population lives in settlements with a public sewerage network – 51.0%, compared to 74.8% in the country. Nevertheless, the whole public sewerage network is connected to wastewater treatment plants.

The share of forest areas in Silistra district is low – 15%, versus 33% countrywide. The share of degraded land, however, is close to the national average – 0.41%, against 0.43% in the country. The installed RES capacities are small – 0.40 kW per person, compared to 0.85 kW per person in the country.

Culture and tourism ■■■

Cinema visits have gone up but remain low – 100 per 1,000 people, against 5901 per 1,000 people nationally. Visits to the local museums number 336 per 1,000 people, against 619 per 1,000 people in the country. Visits to the local theatres are also relatively few. Only visits to the local libraries exceed the national average.

Tourism in the district is not well developed. The number of beds in accommodation facilities is 8 per 1,000 people, versus 55 per 1,000 people, and the number of overnight stays is 495 per 1,000 people, against 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country in 2022. The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector is five times lower than in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Silistra

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 8,307 | 9,975 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 11,727 | 13,272 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 32.4 | 23.4 | 34.4 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 57.5 | 57.6 | 55.6 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 54.1 | 55.8 | 56.3 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 12.3 | 9.4 | 10.4 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 30.7 | 28.2 | 26.5 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 20.8 | 22.6 | 21.6 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 9,979 | 12,523 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 1,388 | 2,078 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 385 | 400 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 80.7 | 79.0 | 70.6 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 67.4 | 59.6 | 44.0 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 62.4 | 63.2 | 74.2 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 66.4 | 58.6 | 58.8 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -14.0 | -9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 1.3 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 3.94 | 3.65 | 3.69 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 30.3 | 26.9 | 26.8 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 80.2 | 77.8 | 88.8 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 72.9 | 71.0 | 70.2 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 87.6 | 88.3 | 95.4 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 2,193 | 2,097 | 1,964 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 8.1 | 7.4 | 8.5 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 9.3 | 5.4 | 9.8 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 51.2 | 51.0 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 420 | 413 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 18.2 | 19.5 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 25 | 80 | 110 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 243 | 297 | 495 | 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.

Sliven district



| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 172,690 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 3,544 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 110 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 65.4 |

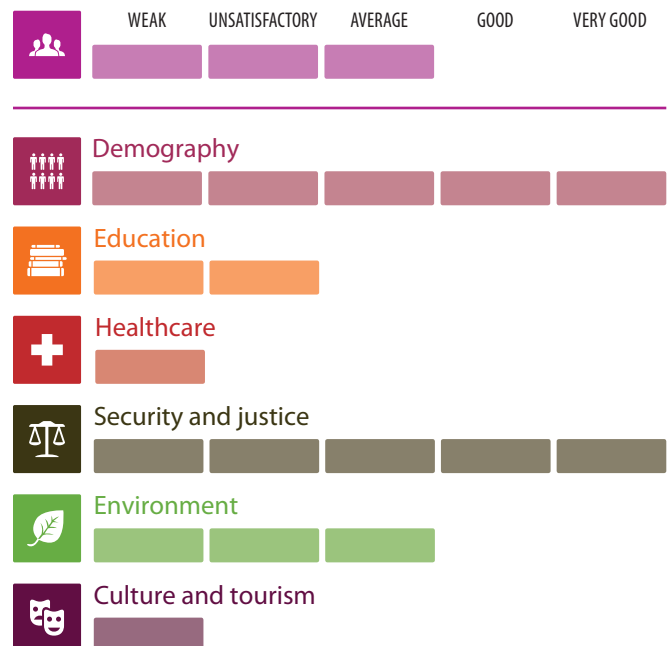
Although GDP per capita in Sliven district has been growing, it is among the lowest in the country. The contraction in economic activity is accompanied by a decrease in both employment and unemployment. The labor market continues to face the challenge posed by the educational structure of the workforce. Investment activity is extremely slack. The basic physical infrastructure retains its relatively good level. The tax rates on retail trade and taxi transportation are significantly lower than the respective national averages. The transparency of the work of the municipalities in the district remains high.

The demographic conditions of the district rank it among the country's leaders in this indicator. At the same time, Sliven is among the districts with the lowest performance as regards the indicators for education and healthcare. Most notably, there is an acute shortage of both GPs and specialist physicians. The relative number of crimes in the district is close to the average one in the country, while the detection rate remains considerably higher. The low proportion of the population in housing with access to public sewerage remains a challenge. The culture and tourism sectors show relatively low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Although GDP per capita in Sliven district has been growing and its rate of increase is even higher than average, in 2021 it remained among the lowest in the country (alongside Silistra and Haskovo) – 10,400 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 20,200 BGN/person. Salaries and pensions in the district are also increasing. The average annual gross salary of people employed in a labor or service contract has reached 14,000 BGN, against 18,700 BGN in the country. The average monthly pension has reached 503 BGN, compared to 537 nationally.

The share of the population living below the national poverty line is significantly higher than the average value – 29.2% in the district, compared to 22.9% in the country for 2022.

Labor market

The share of working-age population in the district is relatively low – 55.0% in 2022, compared to 58.5% nationally. In 2022, economic activity in Sliven district decreased for the second year in a row and its rate fell to 65.9%, compared to the national average of 73.6%. This reduction in activity has been accompanied by a decrease in both employment and unemployment. The employment rate stands at 60.5%, versus the national average of 70.4%, and the unemployment rate – at 7.9%, compared to 5.2% nationally.

The labor market still faces the challenge posed by the educational structure of the workforce. In 2022, the share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education went down to 37.8%, against 16.0% nationally, which was again the highest in the country for that year. However, the share of those with higher education went up to 21.1%, versus the national average of 29.8%.

At the same time, the district's demography presents a rather favorable picture – the population replacement rate as a ratio of the people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is the highest in the country – 87.4% in the district, against the national average of 65.7%. This means that for every 100 adults who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are about 87 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and business

Investment activity in Sliven is extremely slack and the district ranks last in the whole country in this category. The number of non-financial enterprises in the district for 2021 is 39 per 1,000 people and remains relatively low, compared to the national average of 60 per 1,000 people. Domestic and foreign investment also remains low. FTA acquisition expenditure amounts to 1,200 BGN/person, versus the average of 3,100 BGN/person nationally. FDI stock in the district is 726 EUR/person, which marks a decrease from the year before and an increase of almost five times against the national average. Production in the

district is worth 14,200 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 31,200 BGN/person.

Sliven is also the district with the lowest utilization rate of European funds. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,598 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of the city of Sliven, though even those payments were far below the national average.

Infrastructure

The basic physical infrastructure in Sliven district retains its relatively high level. The density of the road and railroad networks is comparable to the national average. In 2022, the share of highways and first-class roads again remained relatively high – 22.2%, compared to 18.5% in the country.

Sliven continues to be the district with the largest share of road surfaces in good condition – 68%, against 41% in the country in 2022. The share of households with internet access has decreased and is relatively low.

Local taxes

In 2023, the average rates of the tax on non-residential immovable property for legal entities and non-gratuitous acquisition of property were higher than the average figures in the country. At the same time, the rates of the taxes on retail trade and taxi transportation were considerably lower than the respective national averages. The tax on motor vehicles was comparable to the average one in the country.

Within the district, the highest average taxes are levied by Sliven municipality and the lowest ones by Tvarditsa municipality.

Administration

Sliven is among the districts with relatively good performance in the category representing the work of the administration. Over the past two years, the local authorities' self-assessments on the development of e-government have been very high. Those on the provision of one-stop shop services remain lower than the national average, though they too marked an increase in 2023.

The transparency of the municipal bodies in the district has continued to improve and in 2023 its average rating reached 80.5%, versus 70.3% countrywide, which again places Sliven district second in the country, after Dobrich district.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is 21.6%, compared to 29.0% in the country for 2022, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is 87.4%, against 84.2% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Sliven's demographic conditions for 2022 place the district among the country's leaders in this category. The natural population growth rate is the second highest in the country (after the capital) at -5.9% , versus -9.7% nationally. At the same time, the district has managed to attract new residents and the net migration rate is positive, though not too high -0.6% . The age dependency ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 has increased, but at 117.4%, it still ranks Sliven district at the top place in the country, where that ratio is 165.9%. The ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 is also lower than the national average -37.5% , compared to 37.7% in the country. The share of population living in urban areas is relatively low -65.4% , compared to 73.6% in the country, but the population density measured as the average number of people per unit urban area remains the second highest in the country after that in the capital.

Education

Sliven is the district with the lowest score as regards the indicators for education. The share of school year repeaters is the highest in the whole country -3.6% in 2022, which is triple the national average of 1.2% for that year. The rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade has gone down and is the lowest in the whole country.

The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is high -61.9% , compared to 53.6% nationally, which is due the high share of admissions and employment in manufacturing and the low share in the ICT and construction sectors.

Students' performance in 2023 remained poor. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 25.3 points, compared to the average of 35.3 points nationally, and was the lowest in the whole country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was also relatively low – “Good” 3.65, versus the national average of 3.93, and the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was 23%, compared to the national average of 17.9%.

Healthcare

Sliven is the district with the lowest score as regards the indicator for healthcare due to an acute shortage of both GPs and specialist physicians. One local GP cares for 1,859 persons on average, compared to 1,678 persons per doctor countrywide. The number of beds in the local general hospitals continues to be relatively low -4.9 beds per 1,000 people, compared to 5.9 beds per 1,000 people in the country for 2022.

At the same time, the number of people treated in the local general hospitals is also low -180 per 1,000 people, compared to 235 per 1,000 people countrywide, which suggests that the local residents seek health services outside the district. The share of people with health insurance is 90.3%, versus 93.5% in the country. The average life expectancy is also low.

Security and justice

The workloads of criminal judges in the district are close to the national average, but in 2022 the speed of delivery of justice again remained considerably higher. One local judge hears an average of 9.8 criminal cases a month, compared to 10.1 cases per judge nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 93%, against the national average of 89%, and the share of pending cases -7% , versus 12% in the country.

The number of crimes in the district is close to the average one in the country, but the detection rate is considerably higher. In 2022, registered crimes against the person and property in Sliven district amounted to 11.3 per 1,000 people, against 11.6 per 1,000 people nationwide. The detection rate was 60%, versus the average of 49% in the country.

Environment

The relative volume of generated household waste is close to, but below the national average -403 kg/person per year in the district, compared to 445 kg/person in the country for 2021. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is almost equal to the national average -73% in the district, compared to 74% nationally.

A persisting challenge facing the district is the limited share of population with access to a public sewerage network -62.6% , compared to 74.8% countrywide, while the share of sewerage systems connected to wastewater treatment plants is 56.7% in Sliven district, against the national average of 66.8%.

The share of forest areas is relatively high -42% , compared to 33% in the country, and that of degraded land $-$ around the national average. The figures for installed RES capacities relative to the population are also close to the national average.

Culture and tourism

Cultural life in Sliven district shows relatively low intensity. Cinema visits have increased but their number remains many times lower than the country's average -70 per 1,000 people in 2022, against 590 per 1,000 people nationally. Visits to the local theatres are also considerably lower in number -81 per 1,000 people, against 129 per 1,000 people in the country. Only visits to the local libraries exceed the national average, albeit slightly -605 per 1,000 people in the district, against 584 per 1,000 people in the country.

The tourism sector also continued to underperform in 2022. The number of beds in accommodation facilities was 13 per 1,000 people, compared to 55 per 1,000 people in the country, and the number of overnight stays -527 per 1,000 people, versus 3,739 per 1,000 people nationally. The share of people employed in culture, sport and entertainment is three times lower than the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Sliven

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 8,616 | 10,439 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 12,370 | 14,033 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 34.4 | 32.0 | 29.2 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 57.0 | 57.2 | 55.0 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 65.0 | 62.4 | 60.5 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 11.0 | 8.4 | 7.9 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 36.2 | 38.2 | 37.8 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 21.4 | 20.1 | 21.1 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 11,974 | 14,238 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 1,075 | 1,234 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 867 | 726 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 83.4 | 83.3 | 67.8 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 72.9 | 68.0 | 68.0 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 83.0 | 83.8 | 87.4 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 79.8 | 80.1 | 80.5 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | –5.9 | –9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 0.6 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.08 | 3.79 | 3.65 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 27.5 | 25.8 | 25.3 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 86.4 | 85.3 | 82.1 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 72.4 | 71.2 | 70.8 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 86.4 | 86.7 | 90.3 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,930 | 1,916 | 1,859 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 9.4 | 9.5 | 11.3 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 7.7 | 9.5 | 6.7 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 64.8 | 62.6 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 420 | 403 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 76.1 | 72.8 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 14 | 53 | 70 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 285 | 419 | 527 | 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.

Smolyan district

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

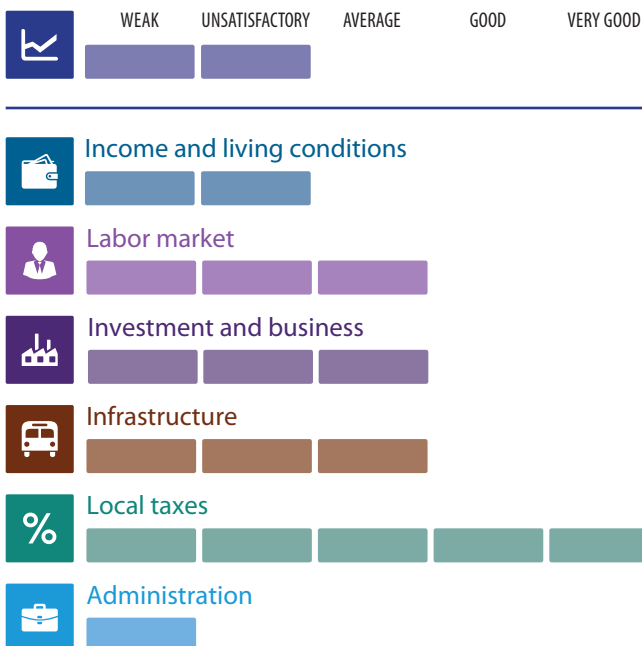
96,284
3,193
240
57.4



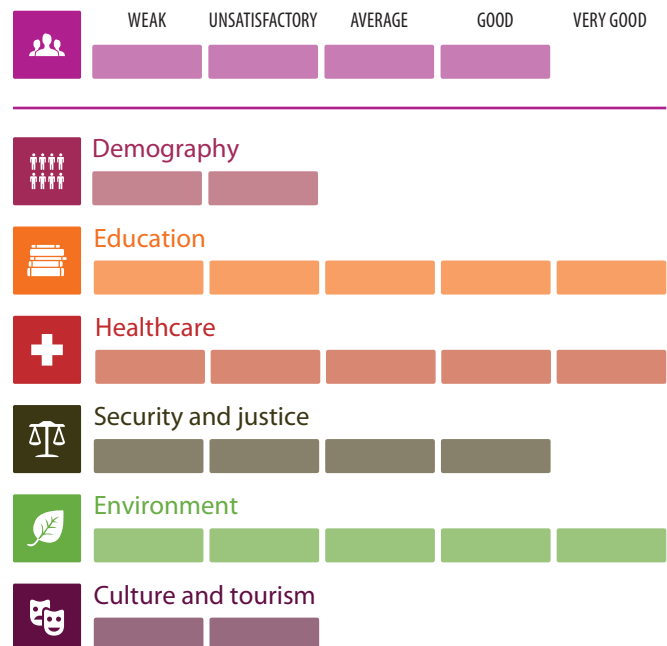
GDP, salaries and pensions in Smolyan district continue to rise. The poverty level is above average. Employment and unemployment are rising, with both indicators remaining relatively unfavorable. Business and investment activity has been showing some improvement. There are no railways, highways and first-class roads in the district. Local taxes in the district are relatively low. Smolyan has the second lowest share of own revenues in the total municipal revenues and is the district with the lowest coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues.

The population of the district is among the fastest aging in the country. Smolyan continues to rank among the districts with the highest educational results. The share of people with health insurance is high. The health insurance system covers practically the entire population of the district. Smolyan is the district with the lowest workloads of the local judges and among those with the smallest number of registered crimes. The district also ranks first with the highest share of forest areas and the lowest share of degraded land. The intensity of its cultural life remains weak, but tourism is strongly represented.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Smolyan district continued its growth in 2021, reaching 12,600 BGN, though its rate of increase is extremely small. Salaries and pensions are also rising and their rate of increase is comparable to the average one in the country. The average annual gross salary of people employed in a labor or service contract reaches 13,400 BGN, while remaining below the national average. The average monthly pension is 524, close to the national average.

The poverty level in the district is above the national average. The share of population living below the national poverty line is 28.7%, against 22.9% countrywide.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Smolyan district continues to decline and is lower than the national average – 56.5% in the district, compared to 58.5% in the country for 2022. Economic activity has increased, reaching 72.2%, versus 73.6% nationally. This increase has been accompanied by a rise in both employment and unemployment, with the two indicators remaining less favorable than the respective national averages. The employment rate is 68.0%, compared to 70.4% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 10.0%, against 5.2% nationwide.

The educational structure of the workforce in the district remains relatively good. In 2022, the share of the people aged 25–64 with primary or lower education declined to 13%, versus the national average of 16.0%, while the number of those with a university degree is 24.3%, against 29.8% nationally.

A huge challenge for the future development of the local labor market continues to be population aging. Smolyan is the district with the lowest population replacement rate as a ratio of the people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64, which in 2022 was 42.2%, compared to 65.7% nationwide. This means that for every 100 adults who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 42 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and business

In 2021, business and investment activity in the Smolyan region showed a clear upward trend, as the number of enterprises, production value and domestic and foreign investment went up and in general managed to make up for the downturn of the previous year. The number of non-financial enterprises in the district reached 52 per 1,000 people, compared to 60 per 1,000 people in the country. FTA acquisition expenditure per capita increased by nearly 1/4 to reach 2,700 BGN, and FDI – by over 1/5 to 692 EUR per capita. Production value grew to 17,600 BGN, though it remained below the country's average. Research and development expenditure per capita is also lower than average.

Utilization of European funds in Smolyan district is relatively good. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 3,300 BGN/person, against 2,800 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Smolyan city.

Infrastructure

The specific geographic location of the district as a border region and its mountainous terrain account for its relatively poorly developed infrastructure. Smolyan lacks railroads, highways and first-class roads. The density of its road network remains below the national average. Road surface quality remained relatively high in 2022, with the share of roads with surfaces in good condition reaching 56.5%, against the country's average of 41.1%.

Households' access to the internet has registered an increase and is above the national average.

Local taxes

In 2023, Smolyan again ranked among the districts with relatively low local taxes. The biggest differences with the respective national averages can be observed in the taxes on retail trade and motor vehicles. The average retail trade tax in the municipalities in Smolyan district for that year was 7.71 BGN/sq. m, versus 13.04 BGN/sq. m in the country. The tax on motor vehicles and passenger cars was 1.37 BGN/kW, compared to 1.56 BGN/kW nationally. Among the monitored taxes, the rate was higher for the tax on immovable non-residential property for legal entities.

Within the district, the municipalities levying the lowest average taxes are those of Smolyan city, Nedelino and Borino, and the highest – of Dospat municipality.

Administration

The self-assessments of the local administration on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services again remained low in 2023 and were below the respective national averages. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration also remained below the national average – 66.9% in the district, compared to 70.3% in the country.

Smolyan is the district with the second lowest share of own revenues in the municipalities' total revenues – 15.4%, versus 29.0% in the country, as well as the district with the lowest coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues – 43.6%, versus 84.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Smolyan's population is among the fastest aging in the country and its demographic picture places the district in the penultimate place (only before Vidin). Both the natural growth and the net migration rates for 2022 remain strongly negative. The natural population growth rate is -14.7% , versus -9.7% nationwide, and the net migration rate is the lowest in the country with a value of -4.5% .

The district's age dependency ratios have been deteriorating fast and are considerably less favorable than in the country on average. In 2022, the ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 256.4%, compared to 149.3% nationally, and was the second highest, after that in Vidin district. The ratio to the 15–64 age group was 45.3%, versus 37.7% countrywide.

The share of urban population in the district is relatively low – 57.4%, against the national average of 73.6%. At the same time, the density of the population remains relatively high – 1,614 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,404 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

Smolyan continues to rank among the districts with the best performance in the education category, where it is outranked only by Sofia (capital city) and Varna. The district ranks first in the share of children attending kindergarten – 95%, compared to the national average of 87.3%. The net enrolment rate of schoolchildren in 5th–7th grade is also the highest in the country – 95.7%, compared to the average of 90.7% nationally, while the share of school year repeaters is the lowest countrywide – 0.3%, against 1.2% nationally. The index of the alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is low – 37.5 points, compared to 53.6 points in the country. The main reason for this is the low interest in manufacturing-related courses at the expense of a relatively high number of students enrolled in ICT courses.

The performance of the district's students in 2023 was again much better than the country's average. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 37.6 points, against 35.3 points nationwide, and was the third highest in the whole country, preceded only by that in the capital and Varna district. The average result in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature reached "Good" 4.09 in the district, versus 3.93 nationally, which ranked Smolyan district second only to the capital. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 7.2%, against 17.9% nationwide, and was the lowest nationwide.

Healthcare

The healthcare insurance system covers practically the whole of the district's population. The average life expectancy is among the highest in the country and the infant mortality rate – among the lowest. Access to GPs is relatively easy, though the number of specialist physicians is still considerably lower than the average one in the country.

Bed capacity in the local general hospitals equals the country's average – 5.9 beds per 1,000 people. The relative number of

patients treated in the local general hospitals is 189 per 1,000 people, versus 235 per 1,000 people countrywide.

Security and justice

In 2022, Smolyan district was once again among good performers in the security and justice category. The workloads of the local criminal judges were the lowest in the country, with a monthly average of 3.5 cases per judge, compared to 10.1 cases per judge nationally. This has had a beneficial effect on the speed of delivery of justice. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was among the highest in the country – 95%, against 89% nationally.

Smolyan is also among the districts with the lowest number of crimes. Registered crimes against the person and property number 5.1 per 1,000 people, against 11.6 per 1,000 people as the national average. At the same time, the detection rate in the district is high – 63% in the district, compared to 49% countrywide.

Environment

Smolyan is among the districts with very good performance. Smolyan is the district with the best performance in the environment indicators. It is the district with the highest share of forest areas – 71%, against 33% in the country, and with the lowest share of degraded land – 0.09%, versus 0.43% nationwide for 2022.

In 2021, 72.9% of the population were living in settlements with a public sewerage network, compared to 74.8% in the country, which is a comparatively high figure, given the low level of urbanization in the district. However, Smolyan district is still lagging behind in terms of the connectivity of sewerage networks to waste water treatment plants, with a coverage of only 44.0% of the local population, compared to the national average of 66.8%.

The amounts of household waste generated in the district are relatively small – 349 kg/person per year, against 445 kg/person on a national scale. At the same time, the share of this waste which has been handed over for treatment and recycling is also low – 52%, compared to 74% in the country.

Culture and tourism

In 2022, cultural life in the district remained not particularly active, although after the sharp decline caused by the pandemic-related restrictions and for the second year in a row, interest in such activities has been growing. Cinema visits numbered 137 per 1,000 people, against 590 per 1,000 people nationally. Visits to the local museums amounted to 266 per 1,000 people, against 619 per 1,000 people in the country. Local libraries attracted 181 visits per 1,000 people, against 584 visits per 1,000 people nationally.

In 2022, tourism in the district was again strongly represented. The number of beds in accommodation facilities continued to grow and reached 135 per 1,000 people, which is the fourth highest number relative to the population after that in the seaside districts (Burgas, Dobrich and Varna). The number of overnight stays in the district also ranks the district fourth in the country with 7,993 per 1,000 people, compared to 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Smolyan

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 12,028 | 12,609 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 12,037 | 13,379 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 24.4 | 23.0 | 28.7 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 58.1 | 57.7 | 56.5 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 65.2 | 64.6 | 68.0 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 10.6 | 8.6 | 10.0 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 14.0 | 12.9 | 13.0 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 23.5 | 24.3 | 24.3 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 15,649 | 17,612 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 2,197 | 2,714 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 565 | 692 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 73.6 | 76.3 | 90.3 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 55.1 | 50.1 | 56.5 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 48.6 | 52.3 | 43.6 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 72.2 | 66.9 | 66.9 | 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. | –4.5 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.44 | 4.12 | 4.09 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 42.6 | 39.4 | 37.6 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 90.8 | 91.8 | 95.7 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 75.0 | 74.0 | 73.4 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 95.6 | 97.5 | (100.0) | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,605 | 1,552 | 1,450 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 5.1 | 4.3 | 5.1 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 8.7 | 14.0 | 9.6 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 73.4 | 72.9 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 315 | 349 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 43.5 | 52.4 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 38 | 95 | 137 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 6,106 | 6,045 | 7,993 | 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.

Sofia district

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 231,989 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 7,062 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 284 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 60.3 |



Sofia district has recorded the lowest growth rate of GDP per capita, thus losing its second place in the ranking. Salaries and pensions remain relatively high. The development of the local labor market continues to be good. The good economic development in the district is accompanied by high investment activity. The density of its road network is high. The average level of the local taxes levied by the district's municipalities is generally high. The transparency in the work of the local administrations remains poor. The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is the lowest in the country.

The rate of natural population growth in Sofia district remains below the national average. The district is among those with relatively low level of urbanization. The performance of its students is poor. Access to doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians in the district – is slightly below the national average. Delivery of justice is slow. The volume of generated household waste is among the country's highest, while the share of that waste which has been handed over for treatment and recycling is among the lowest. Cultural life in Sofia district retains its low intensity. At the same time, its tourism is better developed than in most other districts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Sofia district recorded the lowest growth rate of GDP per capita for 2021 (5% versus 17% nationally), thus ceding its second place to Stara Zagora in the ranking along this indicator. However, salaries and pensions have been rising at the national average rate and remain relatively high. The average annual gross salary of people employed in a labor and service contract has reached 17,700 BGN and continues to be the second highest in the country (again after the capital). The average monthly pension amounts to 552 BGN.

The relatively high values of GDP and salaries in the district have kept the poverty level relatively low in the past few years. In 2022, the share of the population living below the national poverty line was 23%.

Labor market

The development of the local labor market in 2022 continued to be good, which once again shows the deep interrelation between the economies of the capital and of Sofia district. Economic activity in the district decreased slightly but continued to be considerably above the national average – 75.7% in the district, compared to 73.6% in the country. This growth was accompanied by a decrease both in employment and in unemployment. The employment rate dropped to 74.9%, against 70.4% nationally, and the unemployment rate – to 4.9%, versus 5.2% countrywide.

The profile of the workforce in Sofia district is characterized by a large number of people with secondary education – 71.4%, compared to 54.2% in the country, while the shares of people with a university degree and of those with primary or lower education are both relatively low. This structure can be accounted for by the proximity of most of the district's settlements to the capital, the latter attracting the university graduates and naturally leaving the process industry to develop in its geographical periphery.

A persisting challenge facing the local labor market is population ageing. The population replacement rate as a ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 63.3% for 2022, versus the national average of 65.7%.

Investment and business

The positive economic development of the district is associated with high investment activity. In 2021, the district reported FTA acquisition expenditures of 3,200 BGN/person, which were the third highest figures in the country (after those in the capital and Plovdiv). FDI amounted to 7,300 EUR/person and was the third highest nationally. Production value has been growing at a fast rate and almost equals that of the capital district, thus increasing even more (almost twice) the distance between these two districts and the rest of the country.

The number of enterprises in the district remains relatively low, while the share of large enterprises among them is relatively high.

Utilization of EU funds has recorded a slight increase. By June 30th 2023, payments made in Sofia district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,770 BGN/person. Within the district, the leader in the utilization of EU funds was the municipality of Kostinbrod.

Infrastructure

Sofia district has a very well-developed infrastructure. The density of the road network is higher than the national average, and with 30.2%, the share of highways and first-class roads is the second largest in the country after that in Shumen district, compared to the national average of 18.5%. At the same time, however, road quality remained relatively low, with only 30.5% of the road surfaces in good condition, versus 41.1% in the country, for 2022.

Access to the Internet in the district remains relatively limited, with 75.0% of the households connected to it, compared to 87.3% on average in the country.

Local taxes

In 2023, the average level of local taxation in Sofia district was among the highest in the country. Higher than average continued to be the taxes on non-residential immovable property for legal entities and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property. By contrast, significantly lower than the average rates were the taxes on taxi transportation and retail trade.

Within the district, the highest average tax rates are levied by the municipalities of Samokov and Botevgrad, and the lowest ones – by the municipalities of Mirkovo and Chelopech.

Administration

The performance of the municipal administrations in Sofia district is unsatisfactory. The self-assessments of the municipal administrations on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services in 2023 also remained below the respective national averages.

In 2023, Sofia district continued to be among those with the lowest assessment of the transparency in the work of its local administrations, with a rating of 57.7%, compared to 70.3% on average in the country.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is the lowest in the country – 14.7%, compared to 29.0% nationwide. At the same time, the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is above average at 102.2%, versus 84.2% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■■■

The rate of natural population growth in Sofia district remains below the national average at -11.1‰ in 2022, against -9.7‰ nationwide. The net migration rate is also slightly negative at -0.1‰.

Population aging in the district is similar to that nationwide. In 2022, the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 166.3%, compared to 165.9% nationally, and to those aged 15–64 it was 38.4%, versus 37.7% nationwide.

Sofia is among Bulgaria's districts with a relatively low level of urbanization – 60.3% of its population is urban, against 73.6% countrywide, and with a low population density of 740 persons/sq. km, compared to the national average of 1,404 persons/sq. km.

Education ■■■■

The proportion of children in Sofia district attending kindergarten is lower, but close to the national average. The net enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade in the district has continued to decline and in 2022 it remained below the national average – 87.6%, compared to 90.7% in the country. The district has relatively few students and employees with professional qualifications in agriculture and construction, while the number of those in manufacturing is relatively high.

The performance of the district's students in 2023 remained relatively poor. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 28.3 p., versus 35.3 p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.58, compared to the average of 3.93 countrywide, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) reached 21.2%, against the national average of 17.9%.

The number of university students in Sofia district is relatively small – 5.6 students per 1,000 population, compared to the national average of 33.2 students per 1,000 population in 2022.

Healthcare ■■■■

Access to doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians in the district – is slightly below the national average. In 2022, one GP cared for an average of 1,788 people, compared to 1,678 people per GP in the country. The share of people with health insurance has increased slightly, though in 2022 it still remained the lowest one nationally – 84.2% in the district, against 93.5% in the country.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals relative to the population in the district is close to the national average.

The infant mortality rate has continued to fall and in 2022 it was below the national average. The average life expectancy is already above the country's average, with Sofia being the only district where the average life expectancy increased in 2022.

Security and justice ■■

Sofia's performance regarding the provision of security and justice in 2022 remained poor and ranked the district among the bottom three in the country, together with Montana and the capital district. That was mostly a consequence of the relatively slow delivery of justice, although the workloads of the local criminal judges were below the national average. One criminal judge in Sofia district heard an average of 8.6 cases a month, compared to 10.1 cases per judge in the country. At the same time, the number of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 78%, compared to the average of 89% nationwide, and pending cases amounted to 20%, which is the highest figure for this indicator countrywide, where the average was 12%. For their part, the indicator values for security in Sofia district are higher, albeit slightly, than the national average. The number of registered crimes against the person and property is 9.7 per 1,000 population, compared to the national average of 11.6 per 1,000 population. The detection rate is 54%, versus 49% in the country.

Environment ■■

Sofia is among the three districts (together with Razgrad and Silistra) with the lowest score in this category. The main reason for this is the volume of household waste and its management. The annual volume of waste generated in Sofia district is among the highest in the country – 501 kg/person, versus 445 kg/person nationwide, while the share of this waste handed over for treatment and recycling is among the lowest – 16.7%, compared to 74% in the country for 2021.

In spite of the relatively low level of urbanization, the share of households in the district with access to public sewerage networks is high – 77.0%, compared to the national average of 74.8%. At the same time, access to sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants is lower – 41.3%, against the average share of 66.8% in the country.

The share of forest areas is relatively high (47%, compared to 33% in the country), and that of degraded land is close to the national average (0.46%, against 0.43% in the country).

Culture and tourism ■■

In 2022, cultural life in Sofia district still sustained its low intensity, probably due to the region's proximity to the capital, which allows a large part of the population a relatively fast and easy access to the biggest city in the country. No visits to libraries and theaters have been reported for the district, while cinema visits numbered 65 per 1,000 people versus 590 per 1,000 people nationwide. Visits to museums went up and their relative number is among the highest in the country, although they could not yet recover their pre-pandemic level.

At the same time, tourism is better developed than in most districts. The number of beds in accommodation facilities is 38 per 1,000 people, ranking Sofia district eighth in the country. The number of overnight stays is 2,871 per 1,000 people for 2022.

Key indicators for the district of Sofia

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|-------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 17,146 | 19,263 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 15,857 | 17,697 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 22.8 | 21.8 | 23.0 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 59.1 | 59.2 | 58.2 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 78.8 | 75.2 | 74.9 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 7.5 | 5.5 | 4.9 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 13.6 | 14.2 | 14.4 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 11.3 | 12.4 | 14.2 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 49,856 | 57,137 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 3,430 | 3,157 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 6,704 | 7,289 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 73.0 | 74.1 | 75.0 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 30.2 | 35.4 | 30.5 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 77.9 | 98.8 | 102.2 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 65.3 | 57.9 | 57.7 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -11.1 | -9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -0.1 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 3.99 | 3.77 | 3.58 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 31.8 | 29.6 | 28.3 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 89.8 | 90.0 | 87.6 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 73.1 | 72.1 | 72.6 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 87.3 | 82.9 | 84.2 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,846 | 1,839 | 1,788 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 10.0 | 9.5 | 9.7 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 22.3 | 21.6 | 20.3 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 76.2 | 77.0 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 488 | 501 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 9.8 | 16.7 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 32 | 30 | 65 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 2,217 | 2,306 | 2,871 | 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.

Sofia (capital) district

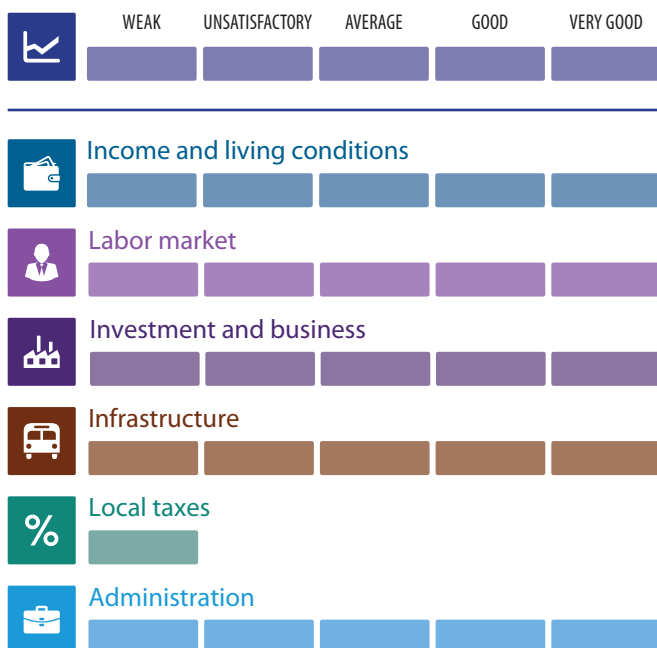


| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 1,274,290 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 1,341 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 54 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 95.1 |

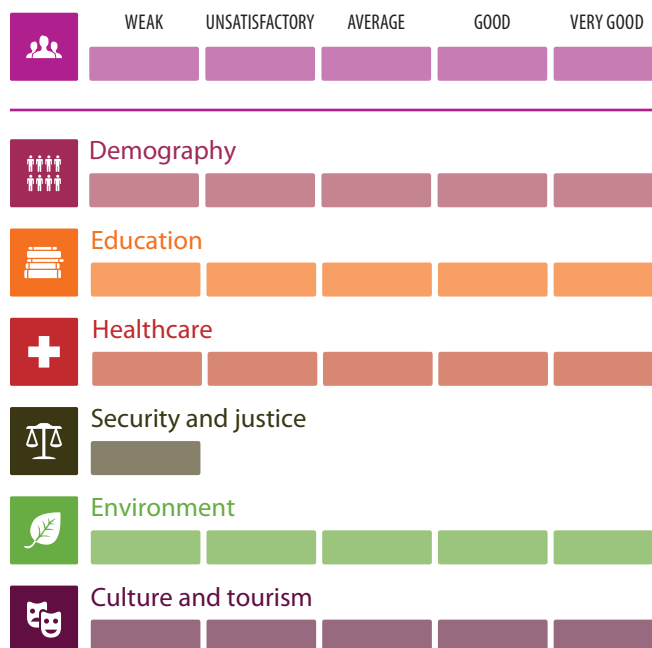
Sofia (capital) has the highest GDP per capita, with a value of more than double the national average and double that of the district ranking second in this indicator – Sofia district. Its labor market is well developed. Sofia is also the undisputed leader in investment activity. The share of households with access to high-speed internet continues to increase. The capital is the district with the highest local taxes in the country. It is the district with the highest share of own revenues in the total revenues, as well as with the highest coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues.

Sofia is the district with the most favorable demographic conditions. The capital is once again the leader in the education indicators, with a high rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade, a low share of repeaters, good student performance and a high number of university students. The number of specialist physicians is among the highest in the country. Delivery of justice is relatively slow, and the crime detection rate – low. The district’s high level of urbanization accounts for the large share of population with access to public sewerage networks. Sofia remains the district with the most intensive cultural life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

The capital is the district with the highest GDP per capita, with a volume more than twice larger than both the national average and that of Sofia district, the second-ranking district in this category. In 2021, GDP per capita in Sofia reached 45,200 BGN, against 20,200 BGN in the country.

Salaries and pensions have also been growing and their amounts are significantly higher. The average annual gross salary or people employed in a labor or service contract has reached 25,700 BGN, against 18,700 BGN in the country, and the average monthly pension – 650 BGN, versus 537 BGN in the country.

The capital is also the district with the lowest poverty level. The share of population living below the national poverty line is 11.7%, compared to 22.9% nationally for 2022.

Labor market

The capital's good performance in the indicators for economic development is again manifested in the favorable dynamics of the local labor market in 2022. Although declining, the share of the working-age population remains the highest in the country at 62.9%, compared to 58.5% nationally. Economic activity has registered a considerable increase and the capital heads the ranking in this category with a rate of 79.9%, compared to 73.6% nationally. Parallel to this increase there has been an increase in employment and a decrease in unemployment. The employment rate has reached 77.9%, against 70.4% nationally, and the unemployment rate – 1.6%, versus 5.2% nationally.

The capital is once again the district with the best educational structure of its workforce. The share of the population aged 25–64 with a university degree is 57.6%, against 29.8% in the country, while employed people with primary or lower education make up 4.0%, compared to 16.0% nationally.

Sofia has the second highest (after Sliven) population replacement ratio as a ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 – 80.3%, compared to 65.7% nationwide. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 80 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and business

In 2021, Sofia remained the undisputed leader in investment activity. The district has the largest number of enterprises relative to its population – 95 per 1,000 population, compared to an average of 60 per 1,000 population in the country. After the huge rise of the previous year in FTA acquisition expenditures, in 2021 they recorded a decrease but nevertheless remained the highest in the country and far ahead of the district ranked second in this category (Plovdiv). The increase in production value is below the average rate and the margin with the second-ranking district (Sofia district) is narrowing. Significantly

higher than the average national figures is also cumulative FDI – 11,200 EUR/person, against 4,100 EUR/person in the country.

The capital's dominance in research and development expenditure is massive – in 2021 it was 618 BGN/person. By comparison, there is no other district in the country where it exceeds 100 BGN/person.

By 30 June 2023, the capital occupied the top place as regards utilization of EU funds. Payments made in Sofia (capital) district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 4,264 BGN/person, versus 2,836 BGN/person in the country.

Infrastructure

There are no roads from the national road network within Sofia (capital) district, but its territory is bordered directly by several highways. In addition, Sofia Central Railway Station is one of the main railway hubs in the country and the capital district's density of the railway network of 12.7 km/100 sq. km territory significantly exceeds the national average of 3.6 km/100 sq. km.

The share of households with access to high-speed internet is very high, reaching 94.7% in 2022, compared to 87.3% in the country.

Local taxes

The level of local taxation in Sofia (capital) district in 2023 again remained the highest in the whole country. The biggest differences in comparison to the national figures were recorded in the retail trade tax (20.00 BGN/sq. m, compared to 13.04 BGN/sq. m in the country), the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property (3.00% versus 2.76% in the country), and on taxi transportation (850 BGN annually against 471 BGN in the country).

Of all the monitored taxes, the only one that remained below the average nationwide rate was the tax on immovable non-residential property for legal entities (1.88‰, against 2.08‰ in the country).

Administration

Sofia has ceded to Varna the top place in this category. The provision of one-stop shop administrative services received the maximum points in 2023. There has been a decline in the self-assessment on the development of e-government. The AIP active transparency rating of the district's local administration bodies has sustained its value and remains higher than the national average –74.8%, against the national average of 70.3%.

The capital is the district with the highest share of own revenues in the total revenues (44.7% versus 29.0% in the country), as well as the highest coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (113.3% versus 84.2% in the country) in 2022, despite a slight deterioration in both indicators.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2022, Sofia (capital) was once again the district with the most favorable demographic conditions in the country. Although even in the capital the natural population growth rate is negative, it still occupies the top place nationwide with a value of -3.4% , compared to the national average of -9.7% . Sofia (capital) continues to attract new residents and the net migration rate is 7.9% .

The age dependency ratios in Sofia remain significantly more favorable than the average ones for the country. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 130.4% , compared to 165.9% nationally, with the capital being outranked only by Sliven district. At the same time, Sofia is the leader in attracting working-age population and the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 is 29.1% , compared to 37.7% in the country.

The district's specificity accounts for the almost total urbanization of its territory, and its population density is three times the country's average.

Education

The capital remains the country's leader in the education category, with a high rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade, a low share of repeaters, good student performance and a high number of university students.

The share of school year repeaters is 0.5% – the third lowest in the country (after the districts of Smolyan and Ruse). The capital is the district with the best alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy, mainly because of the high numbers of students and employees with vocational qualifications in the ICT sector and the low numbers in agriculture.

The students from the capital achieved an average score of 46.6 points in the 2023 NEA in mathematics after 7th grade, which is far above the national average of 35.3 points. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.24, compared to the average of "Good" 3.93 countrywide, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was a bare 7.9% , against the national average of 17.9% .

Healthcare

In 2022, the capital remained among the country's districts with good healthcare, characterized by easy access to specialist physicians, high life expectancy and low infant mortality.

The average life expectancy in the capital is the highest in the country, although in the last two years it has been falling (mainly due to the pandemic and increased mortality rates after 2020) – 74.8 years, compared to 71.9 years in the country.

The indicator for access to GPs is less favorable than the national average. However, the number of specialist physicians relative to the population is the second highest in the country, after that in Pleven district. The hospital bed capacity is slightly more limited than the country's average. The number of hospitalizations is 308 per 1,000 people, against 235 per 1,000 people countrywide. The infant mortality rate is almost half the national average.

Security and justice

The capital's poor results and its bottom place in the whole country in the indicator for security and justice is a consequence of the heavy workloads of the local judges and the low detection rates.

In 2022, one criminal judge in Sofia (capital) heard an average of 12.4 cases a month (with only Kyustendil recording a higher number), compared to 10.1 cases per judge nationally. These heavy workloads have a negative impact on the speed of delivery of justice. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 85% , compared to the average of 89% nationwide, and pending cases constitute 19% , versus less than 12% countrywide.

The number of crimes against the person and property registered in the capital district increased in 2021 to reach 11.7 per 1,000 population and almost equaled the national average of 11.6 per 1,000 population. This does not, however, provide an adequate explanation for the exceptionally low share of cleared crimes – a bare 33% , versus 49% in the country.

Environment

The capital remained among the districts with the highest annual volume of generated household waste in 2021, with 522 kg/person, compared to 445 kg for the country. However, almost all waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to 74% on average in the country.

The high degree of urbanization in the district also accounts for the high share of population with access to a public sewerage network – 96.6% of the population, versus 74.8% nationally, while practically the whole sewerage network is connected to a waste water treatment plant – 96.4% compared to 66.8% on average countrywide.

The share of degraded land is high – 1.43% , versus 0.43% nationally, while the figures for installed RES capacities relative to the population are among the lowest in the country.

Culture and tourism

In 2022, the capital was once again the district with the second most active cultural life after Burgas. Visits to cinemas, theaters and museums grew fast, though their numbers failed to reach their 2019 levels. With the exception of the relative number of museum visits, the values recorded for the other indicators were considerably above the average ones nationwide. Cinema visits were over twice the national average.

Tourism in the capital is less well represented. In 2022, the number of beds in accommodation facilities was 12 per 1,000 people, versus 55 per 1,000 people in the country, and the number of overnight stays was 1,614 per 1,000 people, versus 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Sofia (capital city)

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|-------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 38,891 | 45,241 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 22,950 | 25,724 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 9.2 | 11.3 | 11.7 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 64.0 | 64.4 | 62.9 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 74.4 | 74.8 | 77.9 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 3.3 | 2.0 | 1.6 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 3.9 | 4.2 | 4.0 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 56.8 | 57.7 | 57.6 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 57,800 | 61,866 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 9,214 | 7,757 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 10,604 | 11,235 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 90.8 | 90.3 | 94.7 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | n.a. | n.a. | n.a. | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 97.8 | 114.5 | 113.3 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 78.3 | 74.8 | 74.8 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | –3.4 | –9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 7.9 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.58 | 4.42 | 4.24 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 50.1 | 47.3 | 46.6 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 88.8 | 89.1 | 93.4 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 76.3 | 74.9 | 74.8 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 87.1 | 89.0 | 91.6 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,728 | 1,755 | 1,767 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 11.3 | 10.3 | 11.7 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 17.2 | 20.7 | 18.7 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 96.3 | 96.6 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 524 | 522 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 95.9 | 99.7 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 473 | 814 | 1,315 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 573 | 896 | 1,614 | 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.

Stara Zagora district

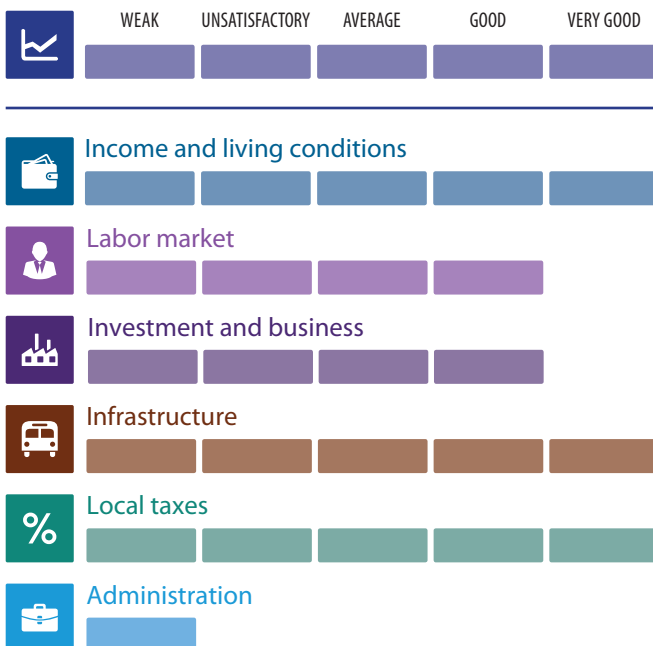
| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 296,507 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 5,151 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 206 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 71.3 |



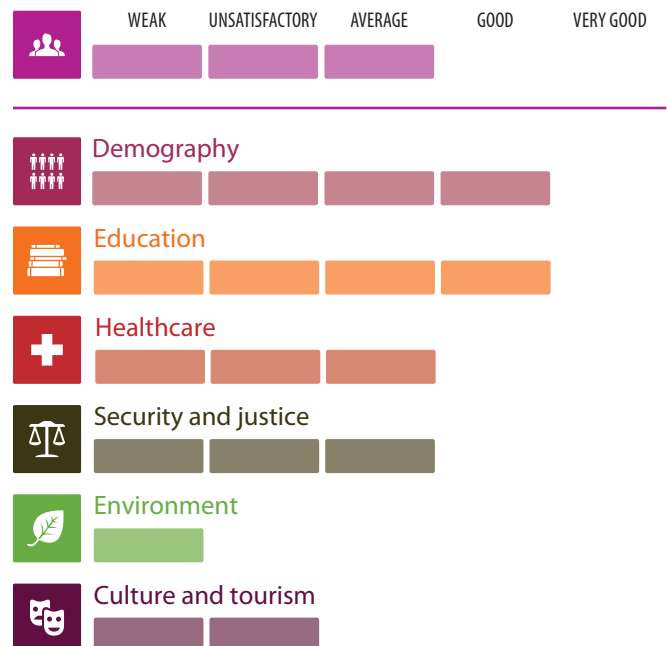
GDP per capita in the district has grown significantly and Stara Zagora now ranks second in this indicator. The performance of the local labor market is relatively good. The figures for investment and business activity place the district among the country's leaders. The share of highways and first-class roads is relatively high. Unlike most districts with a high degree of economic development, Stara Zagora maintains relatively low local taxes. The self-assessments of local administrations on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services are the lowest in the whole country.

The natural population growth in Stara Zagora remains below the national average. Students' results are close to the country's average. Average life expectancy has declined, though relatively modestly, and for the first time is above the national average. Criminal judges in the district have relatively heavy workloads, but this does not have an adverse effect on the speed of delivery of justice. Stara Zagora's low score in the environmental category is primarily due to the extremely high proportion of degraded land. Cultural life in the district is relatively active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Stara Zagora rose considerably in 2021 to reach 20,200 BGN, ranking the district second in this category and immediately below the capital. Salaries and pensions also continue to rise. The average annual gross salary of people employed in a labor or service contract has reached 16,700 BGN, compared to 18,700 BGN nationally, and the average monthly pension – 567 BGN, against 537 BGN nationally.

The poverty level in Stara Zagora district continues to rise and exceeds the national average. In 2022, the share of population living below the national poverty line reached 29.1, versus 22.9% in the country.

Labor market

The performance of the local labor market is relatively good and places Stara Zagora among the top three in this category (after the capital and Varna) for 2022. Economic activity has increased to 75.9%, versus 73.6% countrywide. This increase has been accompanied by a rise in employment and a drop in unemployment. The employment rate has reached 75.0%, compared to 70.4% nationally, while the unemployment rate is 4.3%, versus 5.2% in the country.

The educational structure of the workforce in the district has undergone a slight improvement. In 2022, the population aged 25–64 with higher education retained its share of 22.0% and remained below the national average of 29.8%. However, the share of population with primary or lower education was relatively small – 17.1%, compared to 16.0% in the country. The relatively high share of the workforce with secondary education is therefore in line with the district's industrial profile.

The population replacement rate of those leaving the labor market by those joining it – that is, the ratio of the population aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64, is 67.3%, versus 65.7% in the country, which indicates an impending contraction of the labor force.

Investment and business

Stara Zagora district has a relatively small number of enterprises, retaining in 2021 the rate of 49 per 1,000 people, compared to 60 per 1,000 people in the country. However, production value in the district is high and with 34,000 BGN/person reported for that year, Stara Zagora ranked among the top three performers and was preceded only by Sofia (capital) and Sofia district. Accumulated FDI flows by the end of 2021 amounted to 3,600 EUR/person, placing the district fourth in the country in this indicator. FTA acquisition expenditures increased to 2,800 BGN/person.

Stara Zagora also ranks fourth in the country in terms of spending on research and development – 81 BGN/person in 2021.

The district's performance as regards the utilization of European funds is not so good. By 30 June 2023, payments made to beneficiaries of EU projects amounted to 2,358 BGN/person, compared to 2,836 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the leader in utilization of EU funds is the municipality of Gurkovo (with over 4,000 BGN/person, and the bottom place is held by the municipalities of Galabovo, Bratya Daskalovi and Opan (with less than 1,000 BGN/person).

Infrastructure

The density of the railway network in Stara Zagora district is considerably higher than average. The density of the road network is slightly lower, but the share of highways and first-class roads is 28.7%, compared to 18.5% for the country for 2022. Nevertheless, the share of roads with good quality surface has been lagging behind the average figures – 39.4%, versus the national average of 41.1% for 2022.

Households' access to the internet has been rising, but remains below the national average – 86.5%, against 87.3% in the country.

Local taxes

Unlike most districts with a high degree of economic development, in 2023 Stara Zagora kept its municipal tax rates relatively low. The biggest differences compared to the respective national averages concern the tax on non-residential immovable property for legal entities and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property. Taxes on taxi transportation are also considerably lower. Conversely, the tax on retail trade is higher than average, while that on motor vehicles is close to the national average.

Within the district, the lowest average tax rates are those levied by the municipalities of Bratya Daskalovi and Chirpan, and the highest ones – by the municipality of Stara Zagora city.

Administration

In 2023, the self-assessment of the local administration on the development of e-government improved slightly, though remaining low. However, the self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop services has declined and is the lowest in the country. The average AIP Active transparency rating of the local municipalities also remained relatively low in 2023 – 65.0% in the district, compared to 70.3% nationally.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is 24.5% (versus 29.0% in the country) for 2022, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is 74.9% (versus 84.2% in the country).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth rate of -11.2‰ in Stara Zagora district remains below the national average of -9.7‰ for 2022. At the same time, Stara Zagora continues to attract population and its net migration rate is positive at 2.2‰ .

In 2022, the district's rate of population ageing was similar to the national average. The age dependency rate as a ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 165.2%, compared to 165.9% nationally, and to the 15–64 age group it was 40.0%, versus 37.7% countrywide.

The share of urban population and the density of the population in the district are also close to the country's average – 71.3% of the population live in urban areas, against the national average of 73.6%. Population density is 1,384 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,404 persons/sq. km nationally in 2022.

Education

The net enrolment rate of schoolchildren in 5th–7th grade has gone up and in 2022 it was close to the national average. The share of school year repeaters has increased to 1.6%, versus 1.2% nationally. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is among the worst in the country, mainly due to a significant shortage of students in industry-related courses, given that manufacturing has such a strongly presence in the local economy.

In 2023, students' results in the district were close to the national average. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 33.7 points, against 35.3 points nationwide. The average result in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.83, compared to 3.93 nationally, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) amounted to 17.1%, against 17.9% nationwide.

The number of university students in the district has increased to 19 students per 1,000 people, versus 33 students per 1,000 people nationally.

Healthcare

The share of people with health insurance has gone up to 92.5%, against 93.5% nationwide. Life expectancy has been declining, but at a relatively limited rate, and in 2022 for the first time it exceeded the national average with 72.4 years, compared to 71.9 years nationally. Infant mortality has also declined but remains relatively high.

Access to doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – in Stara Zagora district is relatively good, with 1,430 people on average per one GP, compared to the national average of 1,678 people per doctor. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has gone up but has not yet reached the national average. In 2022, the available hospital beds in the district amounted to 5.2 per 1,000 population, versus 5.9 beds per 1,000 population nationwide. Hospitalization numbers are close to but below the

national average – 201 per 1,000 people, against 235 per 1,000 people countrywide.

Security and justice

The workloads of criminal judges in Stara Zagora district have remained relatively heavy, but in 2022 once again this did not have a negative impact on the speed of delivery of justice. One local judge heard an average of 11.5 cases per month, compared to 10.1 cases monthly per judge in the country. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 89%, which equaled the national average, and that of pending cases – 11%, compared to 12% in the country.

The number of crimes in Stara Zagora district is relatively high, and the detection rate – relatively low. The registered crimes against the person and property constitute 12.3 per 1,000 people in the district, compared to 11.6 per 1,000 people in the country, while the detection rate is 48%, versus 49% in the country.

Environment

The poor rating given to Stara Zagora in the environment category is based predominantly on the excessively high share of degraded land – 3.34% in 2022, against 0.43 in the country, which was once again the highest figure for the whole country that year. At the same time, the share of forest areas is close to the national average – 32% in the district, against 33% in the country.

The household waste generated by the district's residents in 2021 was close to the national average – 422 kg/person per year, compared to 445 kg/person nationally. However, the share of that waste handed over for treatment and recycling was low – 57%, compared to 74% in the country.

The district is lagging behind as regards the share of population living in settlements with a public sewerage network – 66.3% in 2021, compared to 74.8% nationally. 64.1% of the households have access to a public sewerage network connected to a wastewater treatment plant, against 66.3% in the country. The installed RES capacities relative to the population are twice the national average.

Culture and tourism

Stara Zagora has a relatively active cultural life. In 2022, visits to the local cinemas, museums and libraries continued to increase, though their numbers failed to reach their pre-pandemic levels. Visits to the local theaters also went up to 751 per 1,000 people and again exceeded the national average of 619 per 1,000 people.

The number of beds in accommodation facilities in Stara Zagora district is 17 per 1,000 people, compared to 55 per 1,000 people in the country), and the number of overnight stays has reached 1,703 per 1,000 people, compared to 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country for 2022.

Key indicators for the district of Stara Zagora

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 16,233 | 20,165 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 15,010 | 16,673 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 25.9 | 28.1 | 29.1 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 58.2 | 58.4 | 57.0 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 73.3 | 72.2 | 75.0 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 6.2 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 16.4 | 15.8 | 17.1 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 21.6 | 22.0 | 22.0 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 25,415 | 34,039 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 2,500 | 2,757 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 3,111 | 3,563 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 76.0 | 78.8 | 86.5 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 37.3 | 38.9 | 39.4 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 79.4 | 80.0 | 74.9 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 69.3 | 63.8 | 65.0 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -11.2 | -9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 2.2 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.12 | 3.96 | 3.83 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 33.9 | 31.9 | 33.7 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 91.4 | 89.6 | 90.9 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 74.0 | 72.7 | 72.4 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 89.3 | 89.4 | 92.5 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,502 | 1,463 | 1,430 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 10.3 | 10.6 | 12.3 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 8.6 | 9.1 | 10.7 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 70.6 | 66.3 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 386 | 422 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 78.8 | 56.6 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 168 | 307 | 489 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 722 | 1,032 | 1,703 | 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.

Targovishte district

| | |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 98,144 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 2,710 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 194 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 56.2 |



In 2021, both the value and the growth rate of GDP in Targovishte district were relatively low. The share of the working-age population has been decreasing and moving away from the national average. A huge challenge for the labor market in the district is the deteriorating educational status of the workforce. Investment and production have recorded some growth. The local taxes levied by the district municipalities have sustained their relatively low levels. The AIP transparency rating of the local administrations has gone up and is now higher than the national average.

The district's population is aging at a faster rate than in the country. The coverage of the education system in the district is the lowest on a national scale. The relative number of GPs has gone up but remains low. The workloads of the district's criminal judges are among the lowest in the country and this affects the speed of delivery of justice. The share of forest areas is lower than nationally, but so is the share of degraded land. Cultural life in the district retains its low intensity and tourism is poorly represented.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2021, both the value and the growth rate of GDP in Targovishte district was relatively low. Its amount per person was 12,500 BGN per capita, compared to 20,200 BGN per capita in the country. Salaries and pensions have been rising at a rate higher than the one in the country but they too remain considerably lower than average. The annual gross salary of people employed in a labor and service contract was 15,100 BGN, against 18,700 BGN in the country. The average monthly pension remained among the four lowest in the country with an amount of 451 BGN, versus 537 nationally.

The poverty level in the district has been increasing and exceeds the country's average, although by a small margin. The share of population living below the poverty line was 24.7% in 2022, versus 22.9% nationally.

Labor market

The share of the working age population in the district has registered a decline and is moving away from the national average for 2022. Economic activity has recorded a sharp increase, although remaining relatively low, and its rate has reached 69.5%, compared to 73.6% nationally. This increase has been accompanied by a rise in both employment and unemployment, with both indicators remaining less favorable than in the country on average. The employment rate has reached 61.9%, compared to 70.4% in the country, and the unemployment rate is 8.7%, versus 5.2% countrywide.

A huge challenge for the labor market in the district is the deteriorating educational structure of the workforce, even though 2022 again saw a significant improvement. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education dropped by 2 p.p. to 30.3%, compared to 16.0% in the country. The share of university graduates increased to 21.3%, against 29.8% nationally.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to the 60–64 age is 60.0%, against 65.7% in the country in 2022. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 60 young people joining the work force.

Investment and business

Due to the markedly industrial profile of the local economy and the significant role played by big business, Targovishte has a relatively small number of enterprises – 37 per 1,000 population. At the same time, investment and production in the district have been recording an increase. FTA acquisition expenditures per person have reached 1,800 BGN/person, against 3,100 BGN/person in the country. FDI amounts to 2,700 EUR/person, compared to 3,100 EUR/person in the country, and production value to 20,300 BGN/person, against 31,200 BGN/person in the country.

Utilization of European funds in the district remains low. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,719 BGN/person, versus 2,836 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by Popovo municipality, but even they failed to reach the national average.

Relative research and development expenditures in the district are extremely low, ranking Targovishte last in this indicator.

Infrastructure

The density of the railway network again remained relatively low in 2022. The average density of the road network is generally above the country's average, but the share of highways and first-class roads is relatively low – 14.7%, compared to the national average of 18.5%. Nevertheless, the quality of road surfaces is high. In 2022, 47.9% of the roads in the district were in good condition, compared to 41.1% in the country.

Household access to the internet has been increasing and over the past few years has exceeded the national average, reaching 89.1% in 2022, compared to 87.3% in the country.

Local taxes

In 2023, local taxes in the municipalities of Targovishte district again retained their relatively low levels, ranking the district right after the top three with the lowest taxes (Montana, Blagoevgrad and Vidin). None of the monitored taxes was higher than the respective national average. The lowest tax rates were those on the immovable non-residential property for legal entities and on taxi transportation –1.91‰ (versus 2.08‰ in the country), and 303 BGN (against 471 BGN in the country) respectively.

Within the district, the average local taxes are the lowest in the municipality of Antonovo and the highest – in the municipality of Omurtag.

Administration

The municipalities' average self-assessment on the development of e-government remains above the national average. However, the 2023 self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop services is again below the national average. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations has gone up and now exceeds the national average.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the municipalities in the district again remained relatively low in 2022 – 19.1%, compared to 29.0% nationally. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues in the district is also low – 57.4%, versus 84.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2022, natural population growth remained relatively low at -12.4‰, compared to -9.7‰ nationally. At the same time, net migration was positive at 3.9‰.

The population in the district is aging faster than in the country on average. In 2022, the population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 186.4%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 40.7%, against 37.7% in the country.

The degree of urbanization in the district remains among the lowest in the country – 56.2% in Targovishte, compared to 73.6% in the country. Population density in the urban settlements is also relatively low – 935 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,404 people in the country on average.

Education

Targovishte is among the districts with the lowest coverage of the education system. In 2022, the net enrolment in 5th–7th grade went up to 85.0%, versus 90.7% nationally, but remained the third lowest in the country, after those in Dobrich and Sliven districts. The share of school year repeaters has registered a slight increase and is close to the average one in the country. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is close to, but below the national average.

Students' results again remained unsatisfactory in 2023. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 31.3 points, versus the average of 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.58, compared to 3.93 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 21.5%, against 17.9% nationally.

Healthcare

The average life expectancy in Targovishte district is about a year lower than the national average – 70.8 years, compared to 71.9 years in the country. The number of people served by one GP decreased significantly in 2022, although it remains high – 2,056 people per GP, compared to 1,678 people per GP in the country. The relative number of specialist physicians remains lower. Over the past few years, the number of beds in the district's general hospitals has been gradually increasing and in 2022 it exceeded the national average – 6.2 beds per 1,000 people, compared to 5.9 beds per 1,000 people in the country. The health system coverage in the district has been rising and in 2022 it reached 97.3% of the population, thus exceeding the national average of 93.5%.

Population morbidity, measured by the number of hospitalizations, is relatively low – 171 per 1,000 people, compared to the national average of 235 per 1,000 people.

Security and justice

Criminal judges in the district are among the least busy in the country, preceded in this category only by those in Smolyan, and in 2022 once again this affected the speed of delivery of justice. One local criminal judge heard an average of 4.7 cases per month, compared to an average of 10.1 cases per judge in the country. The relative share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 92%, against 89% nationally, and pending cases made up 6%, against 12% countrywide.

The crime rate in Targovishte remains below the country's average and the detection rate is high. The crimes against the person and property registered in 2022 amount to 8.6 per 1,000 people, compared to 11.6 per 1,000 people nationally. For its part, the detection rate is among the highest in the country, only after that in Gabrovo – 68%, against 49% nationally.

Environment

The volumes of waste generated by the households in Targovishte district are considerably smaller than in the country on average – 319 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 445 kg/person. At the same time, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is high – 83% in 2021, versus 74% countrywide. However, the share of households connected to a public sewerage network remains low – 52.7%, compared to 74.8% in the country. A bare 44.9% of the sewerage networks are connected to a wastewater treatment plant, which is considerably below the national average of 66.8%.

The share of forest areas is lower than the country's average – 27% in the district, against 33% in the country, but the share of degraded land is also small – 0.13%, against 0.43% in the country.

Culture and tourism

Cultural life in Targovishte district retains its low intensity, though after the sharp decline caused by the pandemic-induced restrictions, in 2022 intensity continued to increase. Cinema visits reached 134 per 1,000 people, against 590 per 1,000 people nationally, and visits to museums numbered 205 per 1,000 people, against 619 per 1,000 people in the country.

Tourism is has a weak presence in the district. The number of beds in accommodation facilities is 6 per 1,000 people, against 55 per 1,000 people in the country. The number of overnight stays in 2022 reached 360 per 1,000 people, versus 3,739 per 1,000 people nationwide and is one of the lowest in the country (after Pernik district). The share of people employed in the culture, sports and entertainment sector is four times lower than the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Targovishte

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 11,013 | 12,536 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 13,368 | 15,110 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 22.7 | 21.4 | 24.7 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 59.2 | 59.5 | 57.4 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 56.5 | 55.7 | 61.9 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 11.2 | 8.3 | 8.7 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 38.3 | 32.2 | 30.3 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 15.8 | 17.1 | 21.3 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 16,471 | 20,301 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 1,525 | 1,795 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 2,477 | 2,690 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 82.4 | 88.0 | 89.1 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 65.4 | 60.0 | 47.9 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 60.3 | 62.0 | 57.4 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 76.0 | 70.1 | 70.7 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -12.4 | -9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 3.9 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 3.96 | 3.63 | 3.58 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 34.5 | 30.2 | 31.3 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 75.7 | 74.4 | 85.0 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 73.1 | 71.8 | 70.8 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 86.9 | 87.5 | 97.3 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 2,402 | 2,300 | 2,056 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 8.9 | 9.1 | 8.6 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 8.7 | 6.4 | 5.8 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 54.2 | 52.7 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 273 | 319 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 80.7 | 83.3 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 12 | 19 | 134 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 360 | 260 | 360 | 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.

Varna district

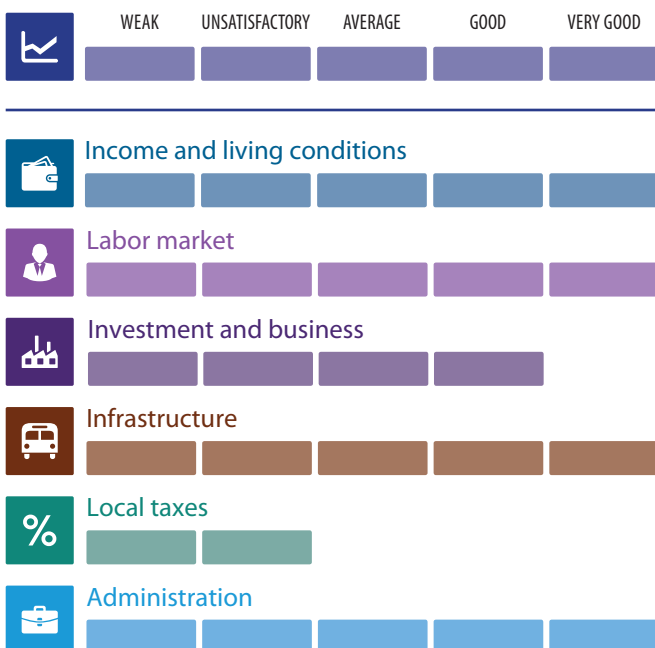
| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 432,198 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 3,819 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 159 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 84.2 |



In 2021, Varna remained among the top-ranking districts in terms of GDP per capita. Salaries and incomes have continued to grow. Trends in the labor market in 2022 ranked the district second in the country. Investment and business activity again remain relatively high. Utilization of European funding is lagging behind. The district's infrastructure is well developed. The average levels of the monitored local taxes again remained high in 2023. On average, the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues for the municipalities of the district is nearly total.

Varna is among the districts with a relatively favorable demographic development. In the field of education, trends are moving in a positive direction. The performance of students in 2023 was very good. Compared to the national average values, Varna district has more doctors but hospital beds are insufficient. The crime rate is relatively high, and the detection rate – relatively low. With its high share of urban population, a relatively large part of its citizens live in settlements with public sewerage. Cultural life in the district is active, and tourism – well developed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP in Varna has been rising and in 2021 it ranked the district immediately below the top three (the capital and the districts of Stara Zagora and Sofia). Salaries and pensions have been growing at a rate close to the national average and are relatively high. The average annual gross salary of persons employed in a labor or service contract reached 17,200 BGN in 2021, and the average monthly pension was 569 BGN.

Inequality and poverty in the district remained at relatively low levels in 2022. The Gini coefficient for income inequality is 33.5, compared to 38.4 nationally. The share of the population living below the national poverty line declined to 14.2%, versus 22.9% nationally, and is the second lowest in the country, below that in the capital.

Labor market

In this category, Varna's score is the second highest in the country (below that of the capital) and on a number of indicators the district also ranks second with the most favorable results for 2022. The share of the working-age population is decreasing, but remains relatively high at 60.3%, compared to 58.5% in the country. Economic activity has increased significantly to 78.0%, versus 73.6% nationally. At the same time, employment is increasing and unemployment is decreasing. The employment rate has reached 77.2%, against 70.4% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 3.2%, compared to 5.2% in the country.

The educational status of the work force in the district also remained good in 2022. The share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 increased by 4.2 p.p. to 34.4% and is now consistently above the national average of 29.8%. The share of the workforce with primary or lower education has increased slightly and is already higher than the national average – 16.2% in the district, compared to 16.0% in the country.

The relatively good demographic trends in Varna district are also an important factor for a more favorable development in the labor market. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 is 77.1%, which is the third highest in the country after Sliven and the capital.

Investment and business

Investment and business activity in the district remained relatively high in 2021. The number of non-financial enterprises continues to be relatively high, maintaining the level of 69 per 1,000 people, compared to 60 per 1,000 people in the country. Domestic and foreign investment is growing. The amount of FTA acquisition expenditures has reached 2,700 BGN/person, and FDI – 3,300 EUR/person. Production value in the district also increased to 26,700 BGN/person in 2021.

Utilization of European funding nevertheless remains relatively low. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district under EU operational programs amounted to 1,980 BGN/person, compared to 2,836 BGN/person nationally.

Expenditure on research and development is relatively high.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure of Varna remained relatively well developed in 2022, placing the district at the top in the whole country in this category. The density of the road and railway networks is high. The share of highways and first-class roads is also considerable – 27.4%, compared to 18.5% in the country. The quality of the road surface has remained high. 57% of the roads in the district are in good condition, versus 41% countrywide.

The relative share of households with internet access is close to the country's average – 87.7%, against the national average of 87.3%.

Local taxes

Within Varna district, the average level of the monitored local taxes levied by the municipalities again remained high in 2022, ranking the district second only to the capital. The margin is particularly large in the taxation on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, retail trade and taxi transportation. Within the district, Varna city is the municipality levying the highest local taxes, and the municipalities of Dolni Chiflik and Vetrino – the lowest.

Administration

Varna district ranks first in the country in this category as well. In 2023, the self-assessments of the local administrations on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services again remained high. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has gone up and also remains among the best in the country, ranking Varna district third with 76.8 p., against 70.3 p. nationally.

The relatively high share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities in 2022 puts Varna in third place in the country with an average of 35.2%, versus 29.0% nationally. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is also almost complete.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2022, Varna remained among the districts with very good demographic development, where it ranks second after the capital city in this indicator. The rate of natural increase is -6.9% , which is among the highest in the country and far above the national average of -9.7% . Varna district continues to attract population and at 6.1% , the net migration rate retains its positive value.

This also reflects on the age dependency ratios, which in Varna district remain relatively favorable. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 143.8%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it is 33.5%, versus 37.7% in the country.

Varna is among the districts with the highest share of urban residents and population density in the urban areas.

Education

Varna is among the districts with the best performance in the field of education, coming second in the country only below Sofia (capital city). The share of children attending kindergarten was 90.3% in 2022, against 87.3% nationally, and the enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade – 92.8%, compared to 90.7% countrywide. The percentage of school year repeaters remains relatively low – 0.8%, versus 1.2% nationally. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy in the district is relatively weak.

In 2023, the performance of students in Varna district in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was relatively good, with an average of 42.6 points, compared to 35.3 points in the country. The average result in the Matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was “Good” 3.94 – very close to the average grade nationwide of 3.93. The share of “fail” (below 3.00) grades was 16.1%, against 17.9% nationwide. Although these scores remain above the national averages, student performance in the district has shown a significant decline.

The number of university students remains relatively high.

Healthcare

In 2022, Varna remained among the districts with a relatively low share of people with health insurance – 91.2%, compared to 93.5% nationwide. Compared to the national averages, the district has more doctors but it suffers from a shortage of hospital beds. The number of hospital beds in the general hospitals is 4.7 per 1,000 people, against 5.9 per 1,000 people countrywide. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is also low – 173 per 1,000 people, versus 235 per 1,000 people countrywide. The infant mortality rate has been decreasing and remains relatively low. The average life expectancy of the district’s residents is among the highest in the country at 73.6 years, compared to 71.9 years nationally.

Security and justice

The workloads of criminal judges in Varna district remain relatively low. In 2022, there were 7.7 cases a month per one local judge, compared to 10.1 per judge nationally. The smaller workloads affect the speed of delivery of justice. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 91%, compared to under 89% as the national average, and that of pending cases – 7%, compared to 12% nationally.

The crime rate in the district went up in 2022 and is among the highest in the country, second only to Vratsa district. At the same time, detection rates have been decreasing. Registered crimes against the person and property in Varna district amount to 14.5 per 1,000 people, with 11.6 per 1,000 people as the national figure. The detection rate of 39% is below the national average of 49% and is the second lowest in the country, after that of the capital district.

Environment

With Varna district’s large share of urban population, a large part of it lives in settlements with a public sewerage network – 85.8%, versus 74.8% countrywide, and in areas with a sewerage system connected to a waste water treatment plant – 85.6%, against the national average of 66.8% for 2021.

In 2021, Varna remained among the districts with the highest amounts of waste generated by the households – an annual of 512 kg/person, against 445 kg/person on a national scale. At the same time, however, a relatively large share of this waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 85%, against 74% as the national average.

The share of forest areas in Varna district is lower than the national average, and the share of degraded land is higher. The installed RES capacities relative to the population are significantly lower than the average for the other districts.

Culture and tourism

In the assessment related to the indicators for culture and tourism, Varna district ranks in the top three (after Burgas and the capital). Cinema visits increased significantly in 2022 and remain above the national average. The trends are similar for visits to theatres and libraries.

The number of beds in accommodation facilities is 144 per 1,000 people, compared to 55 per 1,000 people nationally. Varna district ranks second (after Burgas) as regards the relative number of overnight stays and also second (after Haskovo) in the share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector.

Key indicators for the district of Varna

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|-------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 15,629 | 17,872 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 15,299 | 17,201 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 22.9 | 17.3 | 14.2 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 61.7 | 62.0 | 60.3 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 70.2 | 73.8 | 77.2 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 5.6 | 3.9 | 3.2 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 14.4 | 15.8 | 16.2 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 24.8 | 30.2 | 34.4 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 21,397 | 26,672 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 2,247 | 2,692 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 3,166 | 3,299 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 77.5 | 91.1 | 87.7 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 46.2 | 56.5 | 56.8 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 93.9 | 100.0 | 101.2 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 78.7 | 76.5 | 76.8 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | –6.9 | –9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 6.1 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.39 | 4.11 | 3.94 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 44.4 | 43.3 | 42.6 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 83.6 | 83.0 | 92.8 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 75.4 | 74.2 | 73.6 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 83.9 | 83.8 | 91.2 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,685 | 1,710 | 1,567 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 12.5 | 11.8 | 14.5 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 7.4 | 8.4 | 6.7 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 86.1 | 85.8 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 391 | 512 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 86.6 | 84.8 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 306 | 568 | 963 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 4,100 | 7,106 | 9,451 | 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.

Veliko Tarnovo district

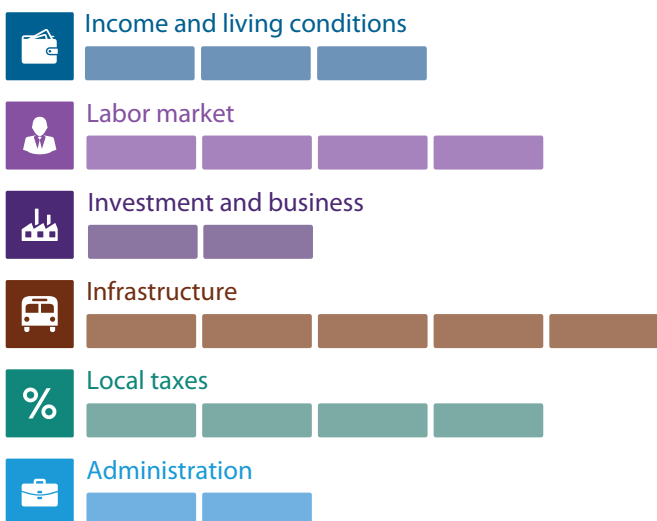
| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 207,371 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 4,662 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 336 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 69.8 |



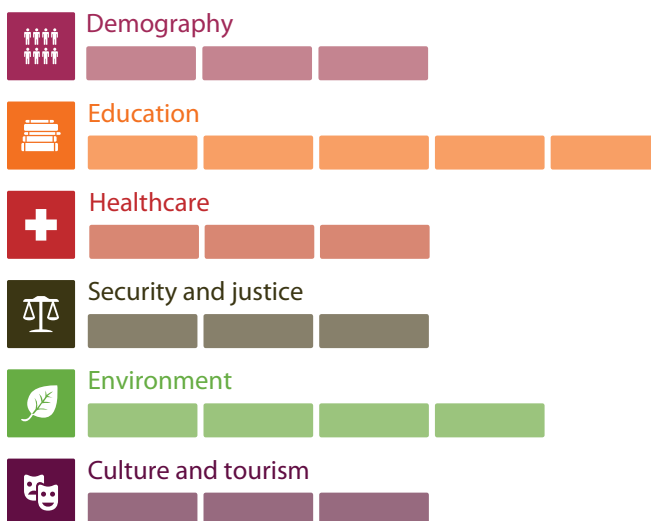
GDP in Veliko Tarnovo district has been growing at a rate higher than the national average relative to the population. The workforce is among the most highly educated in the country, but population aging is a challenge for the labor market. Investment and business activity in Veliko Tarnovo district 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.

Vidin district

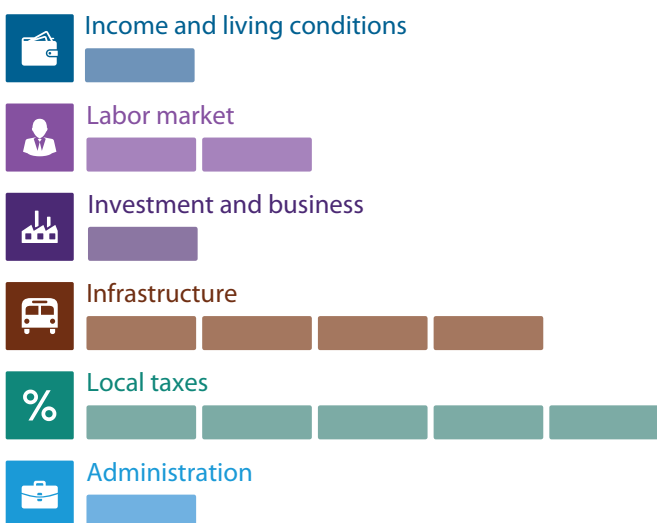
| | |
|---------------------------------|--------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 75,408 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 3,033 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 140 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 63.7 |



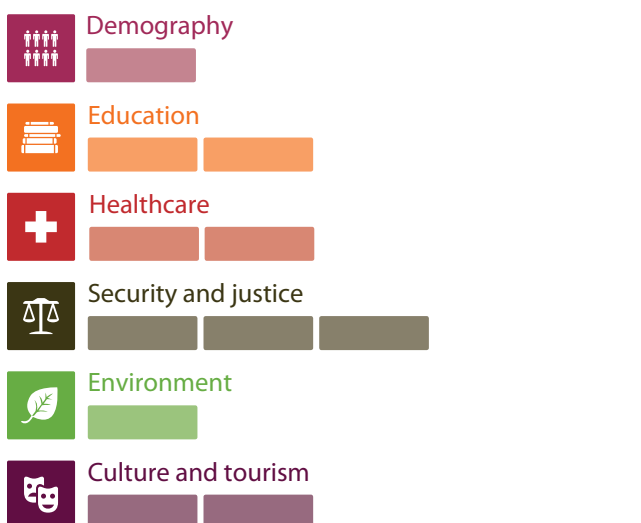
Vidin is among the districts with the worst indicators for incomes and quality of life. The educational structure of the workforce is improving, but unemployment remains extremely high. Investment and business activity is relatively weak, and the infrastructure is not sufficiently developed. In 2023, Vidin retained its place as the district with the lowest average rates of the monitored local taxes. The results of the local administration's self-assessments rank Vidin at the bottom of the scale. In 2022, Vidin was once more the district with the most

unfavorable demographic conditions in the country. Students' performance in 2023 remained relatively poor. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. The workloads of criminal judges in the district are low, which affects the speed of delivery of justice. The relatively low share of population living in urban settlements accounts for the relatively limited share of households connected to a public sewerage network. The intensity of cultural life and tourism in Vidin district improved in 2022.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Vidin is among the districts with the worst indicators for incomes and quality of life, where it ranks only before Silistra. GDP per capita in the district of Vidin rose considerably in 2021 to reach 11,400 BGN, but this growth could not compensate for its low amount. Salaries and pensions have also been rising at an above-average rate, but they too remain relatively low. The average annual salary of people employed in labor or service contract has reached 12,900 BGN and is the third lowest in the country (after those in Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil), while the monthly pension is 475 BGN.

Income inequality is close to the national average, but poverty levels remains high. In 2022, the share of the population living below the national poverty line was 39.2%, against 22.9% in the country, which is the second highest share after that of Montana district.

Labor market

Vidin is the district with the lowest share of working-age population – 53.6% (compared to 58.5% in the country) in 2022. Economic activity in the district continues to decrease, falling to 68.4%, compared to 73.6% in the country. This decrease has been accompanied by a rise both in employment and unemployment. The employment rate is 61.7%, compared to 70.4% in the country, and the unemployment rate is 14.1%, which is the highest one in the country.

2022 marked an improvement in the educational structure of the workforce. The share of the population aged 25–64 with university education reached 22.4%, compared to 29.8% in the country, and the share of people with primary or lower education dropped to 13.4%, versus 16.0% nationwide.

One of the major challenges facing the local labor market is population aging. The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 is 59.5%, compared to 65.7% nationwide. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be fewer than 60 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and business

Investment and business activity in Vidin district remained relatively slack in 2021. The number of enterprises relative to the population was among the lowest in the country – 36 per 1,000 people, compared to 60 per 1,000 people in the country. FTA acquisition expenditures per person in Vidin district have continued to rise but they remain among the lowest nationwide – 1,300 BGN/person, compared to 3,100 BGN/person in the country. For the second year in a row, the district has witnessed a drop in FDI stocks, which have fallen to 598 EUR/person. Production value has increased slightly to 8,200 BGN/person, which is again the lowest figure in the country.

Utilization of EU funds remains intensive. By 30 June 2022, the amounts paid to beneficiaries under EU operational programs relative to the population in the district reached 2,996 BGN/person, compared to 2,836 BGN/person nationally, with the municipalities of Belogradchik and Vidin taking the top places within the district.

Infrastructure

The density of the railway network in the district is close to the national average. The density of the road network is relatively high (over 20 km per 100 sq. m territory, against 18 km in the country), but the share of first-class roads and highways remains low – 11.3%, compared to 18.5% in the country. Road surface quality has been improving, but remains at a relatively low level – 36.1% of the roads in the district are in good condition, compared to 41.1% in the country in 2022.

The share of households with access to the Internet has been increasing and for the first time has risen above the national average.

Local taxes

In 2023, Vidin was once again among the districts with the lowest rates of the monitored local taxes, ranking only below Montana and Blagoevgrad. The difference was especially big as regards the taxation on retail trade – 4.60 BGN/sq. m on average for the district, against 13.04 BGN/sq. m in the country. The level of taxation on motor vehicles was also extremely low (1.25 BGN/kW versus 1.56 BGN/kW in the country), as well as that on taxi transportation (300 BGN, against 471 BGN in the country).

Vidin city continues to be the municipality levying the lowest average taxes in the district.

Administration

Vidin is the district with the worst performance of the local administrations. In 2023, the district municipalities' self-assessment on the development of e-government remained the lowest in the country. The self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop services has improved but continues to be lower than the country's average. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations also remains relatively low.

The share of own revenues in Vidin district's municipalities decreased in 2022 and remained low at 17.5%, compared to 29.0% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues was also relatively limited – 73.9%, against 84.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■

In 2022, Vidin again remained the district with the most unfavorable demographic profile in the country. The natural population growth rate was extremely low, with a value of -21.3‰ , which is almost half the national average of -9.7‰ . The net migration rate had a slightly positive value (0.9‰).

The long period of rapid population aging also finds its reflection in the extremely unfavorable age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 269.8% in 2022, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 54.3%, versus 37.7% in the country.

The share of urban population remained relatively low in 2022 (63.7%, compared to 73.6% nationally), and its density is almost half the national average.

Education ■■

In 2022, the proportion of children attending kindergartens in the district was close to the national average. The enrolment rate in 5th–7th grades is increasing but remains low at 87.3%, compared to 90.7% nationally. The share of school year repeaters, on the other hand, is decreasing but remains at a higher level than the national average.

The alignment index between vocational education and the profile of the economy in the district is rising but in 2023 it remained low.

The performance of students in the 2023 NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was again extremely poor. With an average score of 25.4 p. (against 35.3 p. in the country), the district occupied the second lowest place nationwide, outranking only Sliven district. The performance of high-school graduates was better but also below the national average. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was “Good” 3.63, compared to 3.93 nationally, while the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was relatively high – 21.1%, against 17.9% nationwide.

In the academic year 2022/2023, the branch of the University of Ruse, which opened in Vidin in 2017, had an enrolment of nearly 400 students.

Healthcare ■■

Vidin is the district with the lowest life expectancy – 69.4 years, compared to 71.9 years in the country for the period 2020–2022.

The proportion of people with health insurance reached 97.5% in 2022 and again exceeded the national average of 93.5%. The proportion of GPs remains relatively high but healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has been rising in the past few years but remains relatively low nevertheless – 4.6 beds per 1,000 people, compared to 5.9 beds per 1,000 people in the country. This probably explains

why in 2022 hospitalization figures were again relatively low – 145 per 1,000 people, versus 235 per 1,000 people country-wide.

The infant mortality rate in Vidin district is above the national average.

Security and justice ■■■■

In 2022, the workloads of the criminal judges in Vidin district remained below the national average, which affects the speed of delivery of justice. There were on average 7.7 cases a month per one judge, compared to 10.1 cases per judge nationally, and the number of cases closed within 3 months reached 96%, compared to 89% in the country.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property relative to the population has been rising and in 2022 it was the third highest in the country – 14.1 per 1,000 people, against 11.6 per 1,000 people nationally. At the same time, however, the detection rate has dropped, although at 55% it still exceeds the national average of 49%.

Environment ■■

The amount of household waste generated in 2021 remained relatively low – 355 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 445 kg/person. At the same time, however, the share handed over for treatment and recycling also continues to be very small – 18%, versus 74% countrywide.

The relatively low share of population living in urban settlements can account for the relatively limited share of households connected to a public sewerage network in 2021 (54.8% of the population, compared to 74.8% in the country) and to a wastewater treatment plant (49.8%, against 66.8% in the country). The shares of both forest areas and degraded land are low. Installed RES capacities relative to population are lower than average.

Culture and tourism ■■

The relative numbers of visits to cinemas and libraries in the district have been increasing but in 2022 they remained lower than the national average. There has been a slight decrease in visits to local museums, which are themselves also relatively few in number.

Despite a weak growth, the number of beds in accommodation facilities remains very limited (14 per 1,000 people, compared to 55 per 1,000 people nationally), but the relative number of overnight stays also remains low (911 per 1,000 people, compared to 3,739 per 1,000 people nationally). The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector also remains low at 0.17%, compared to 1.02% nationally.

Key indicators for the district of Vidin

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 8,847 | 11,438 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 11,253 | 12,855 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 43.3 | 43.3 | 39.2 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 54.2 | 54.6 | 53.6 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 55.7 | 57.5 | 61.7 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 14.8 | 12.3 | 14.1 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 18.5 | 17.6 | 13.4 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 18.0 | 19.8 | 22.4 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 7,209 | 8,237 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 1,065 | 1,260 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 968 | 597 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 44.8 | 74.8 | 88.5 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 24.6 | 28.3 | 36.1 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 64.1 | 61.4 | 73.9 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 60.2 | 57.4 | 57.5 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -21.3 | -9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 0.9 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 4.12 | 3.83 | 3.63 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 28.4 | 21.6 | 25.4 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 80.8 | 78.8 | 87.3 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 71.8 | 70.5 | 69.4 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 91.2 | 92.4 | 97.5 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,465 | 1,433 | 1,361 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 12.4 | 10.0 | 14.1 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 15.2 | 4.3 | 9.4 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 57.7 | 54.8 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 371 | 355 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 46.5 | 18.3 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 102 | 232 | 320 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 1,068 | 626 | 911 | 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.

Vratsa district

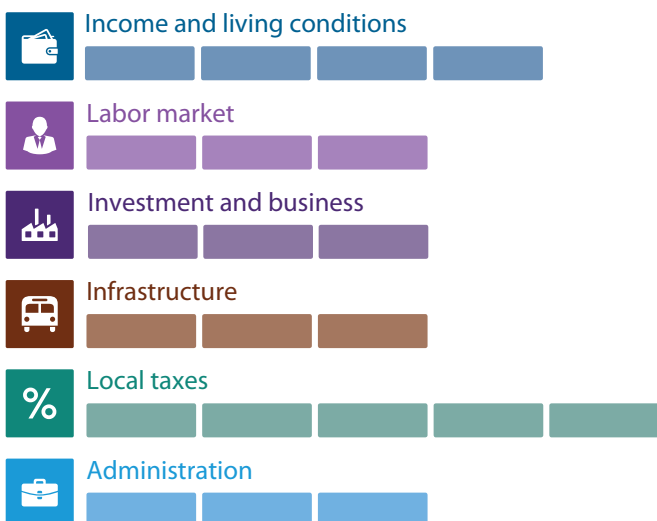
| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 152,813 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 3,620 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 123 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 59.9 |



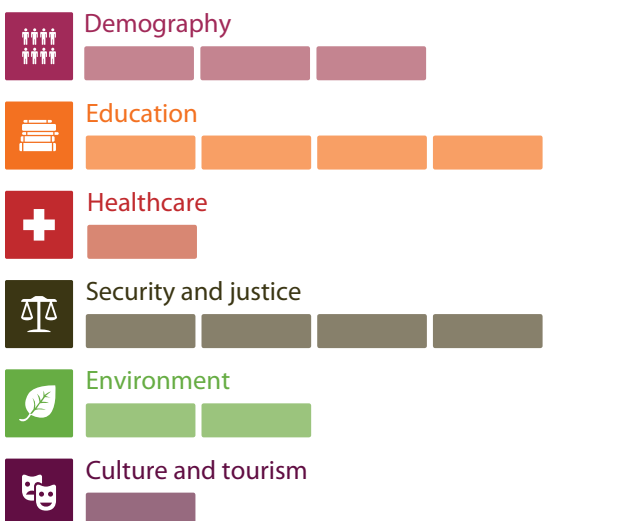
GDP per capita in Vratsa district continues to grow. The average gross annual salary of employees is the third highest in the country. In 2022, employment and unemployment rates went up simultaneously. Vratsa is among the districts with a strong industrial profile and the share of the workforce with secondary education is relatively high. Economic and investment activity in the district remains relatively limited. Road quality is not improving. Local taxes are low. The transparency in the work of municipal administrations is declining.

Age dependency ratios are still significantly less favorable than the national averages. The indicators in primary and secondary education remain relatively good, but students' results are relatively low. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. The number of registered crimes against the person and property in Vratsa district is the highest in the country. Access to public sewerage networks is limited. The share of forest areas is low. Cultural life and tourism in the district are insufficiently developed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2021 and after the record increase of the previous year, GDP per capita in Vratsa district continued to grow, reaching 17,800 BGN/person. Salaries and pensions also increased at the average national rate. The gross annual salary of employees has gone up to 17,300 BGN and is the third highest in the country (after those in the capital and Sofia district), mainly on account of the employees in the Kozloduy nuclear power station. The average monthly pension is 529 BGN and is also higher than in most districts. However, the general level of poverty in the district remains high. In 2022, the share of the population living below the national poverty line was 31.5%, versus 22.9% countrywide.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in the district is decreasing and is lower than the national average – 57.3% in 2022, compared to 58.5% in the country. Economic activity continues to grow but is still significantly lower than the national average – 67.8% in the district, compared to 73.6% in the country. This increase has been accompanied by a simultaneous rise in employment and unemployment, both of whose figures are significantly less favorable than the respective national averages. The employment rate in Vratsa district is 61.4%, against 70.4% in the country, while the unemployment rate is 10.7%, against 5.2% in the country.

Vratsa is among the districts with a pronounced industrial profile and the share of the workforce with secondary education is relatively high. In 2022, the share of the population aged between 25 and 64 with a university degree dropped to 15.6%, versus 29.8% in the country, while that of people with primary or lower education decreased to 22.5%, compared to 16.0% in the country.

Population aging has a major effect on the local labor market. The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 in the district is 65.0%, compared to 65.7% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who will have to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 65 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and business

Economic and investment activity in Vratsa district again remained relatively limited in 2021. The relative number of non-financial enterprises was 38 per 1,000 people, against 60 per 1,000 people as the national average. FTA acquisition expenditure shrank. FDI stock, however, rose considerably in 2021 to reach 1,240 EUR/person.

In 2021, production value in Vratsa district continued to rise and reached a record rate of increase of 65%, reaching 29,000 BGN/person.

Vratsa is also among the top-ranking districts as regards utilization of EU funding. By 30 June 2023, payments made to beneficiaries of EU operational programs reached 3,545 BGN/person, versus 2,836 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the municipalities of Vratsa city, with over 5,000 BGN/person, and Mezdra, with over 3,000 BGN/person take the top places for utilization of EU funding.

Infrastructure

The density of the road and railroad networks in Vratsa district nearly equals the national averages but road quality remains extremely low. The share of highways and first-class roads in the district is 9.9%, against 18.5% in the country. In 2022, the share of roads with surfaces in good condition was 34.3%, compared to the national average of 41.1%.

Households' internet access in Vratsa district also lags behind the country's average.

Local taxes

In 2023, the average rate of the local taxes in the district's municipalities again remained relatively low. The average retail trade tax rate in the district is almost half the national average – 6.84 BGN/sq. m, against 13.04 BGN/sq. m nationally. Also lower are the rates for the motor vehicle tax, the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and taxi transportation.

Of the monitored tax rates, in 2023 only the average one on non-residential immovable property of legal entities remained higher than its average counterpart in the country.

Within the district, the highest local taxes are levied by Kozloduy municipality, and the lowest ones – by Mizia municipality.

Administration

The average share of own revenues in the total revenues in the district's municipalities is relatively low – 20.4%, compared to 29.0% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is also lower than the national average – 80.7%, against 84.2% in the country.

The 2023 self-assessment of Vratsa district's local municipalities regarding the development of e-government remains relatively low but that on the provision of one-stop shop services is relatively high. The transparency ratings of the local administration have fallen and lag behind the national average

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth rate in the district remains considerably lower than the national average level, with -14.5% in the district, against -9.7% in the country on average. At the same time, the net migration rate is nil. The age dependency ratios remain significantly less favorable than the national average. In 2022, the ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 174.9%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 40.3%, against 37.7% in the country.

The share of urban population remains low – 59.9%, compared to 73.6% in the country, and its density is half the national average.

Education

The indicators of Vratsa district in the field of primary and secondary education remain relatively good, but the results are relatively low. The share of children attending kindergarten is high – 90.6% (compared to 87.3% in the country). In 2022, Vratsa again remained among the districts with the highest net enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade – 91.7%, compared to 90.7% in the country. The share of school year repeaters has decreased slightly and equals the national average of 1.2%. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy in the district has improved and in 2023 it was close to the national average.

Students' results in 2022 were again relatively poor. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 26.7 p., compared to 35.3 p. nationally. The average score in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.58, versus 3.93 nationally. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades was 24.5%, compared to 17.9% in the country.

The number of university students in the district is 8.3 per 1,000 people, compared to 33.2 per 1,000 people countrywide in 2022.

Healthcare

Vratsa ranks among the districts with the least developed healthcare (outranking only Yambol and Sliven) in 2022.

The average life expectancy is 70.5 years, compared to 71.9 years in the country. The share of health-insured population in Vratsa district is traditionally higher than the national average – 95.2%, versus 93.5% in the country in 2021. Healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – and of hospital beds. In 2022, the number of beds in the local general hospitals was 4.7 per 1,000 people, while the national average was 5.9 beds per 1,000 people. The small number of doctors and hospital beds explains the relatively low hospitalization figures – 188 per 1,000 people, versus 235 per 1,000 people countrywide. In 2022, the infant mortality rate went up and was among the three highest in the country.

Security and justice

The workloads of the criminal judges in Vratsa district have continued to rise and in 2022 they were slightly above the national average. One local judge heard an average of 10.7 cases a month, compared to 10.1 cases per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months continues to be the highest in the country – 97%, against the national average of 89%, while the share of pending cases is the lowest in the country – 4%, compared to 12% nationally.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property has continued to rise and Vratsa is now the district with the highest relative number in the country, outpacing only Montana district – 16.4 per 1,000 people in Vratsa, versus 11.6 per 1,000 people nationwide. Still, the detection rate in 2022 remained higher than the national average – 55%, versus 49% nationally.

Environment

In 2021, the amounts of waste generated by households remained relatively small – 332 kg/person per annum, versus 445 kg/person in the country. However, the share handed over for treatment and recycling was again lower than the national average – 54%, versus 74% respectively.

The relatively low share of population living in urban settlements and the small population density in Vratsa district can account for the limited access of the households to a public sewerage system – 55.7%, compared to the national average of 74.8%. Access to public sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants is also relatively low – available to 51.1% of the population, compared to the average of 66.8% countrywide.

Installed RES capacities in the district are close but below the national average per capita. The share of forest areas is low – 15% in 2022, versus 33% in the country, while degraded land makes up 0.22% of the district's territory, compared to 0.43% in the country.

Culture and tourism

Cultural life and tourism are not strongly represented and in 2022 the district was still lagging behind the national average. Cinema visits increased but remained relatively low at 303 per 1,000 people, compared to 590 per 1,000 people nationally. Visits to local museums numbered 143 per 1,000 people, compared to 619 per 1,000 people nationally, and visits to libraries were 542 per 1,000 people, compared to 584 per 1,000 people in the country.

The number of beds in accommodation facilities relative to the population in the district is extremely low at 9 per 1,000 people, compared to 55 per 1,000 people nationally in 2022. Overnight stays are also relatively low at 731 per 1,000, against 3,739 per 1,000 nationally in the country. The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector is 0.40%, against 1.02% countrywide.

Key indicators for the district of Vratsa

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 15,572 | 17,781 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 15,537 | 17,324 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 33.2 | 33.5 | 31.5 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 57.4 | 57.6 | 57.3 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 57.1 | 58.5 | 61.4 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 12.5 | 10.3 | 10.7 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 22.4 | 24.1 | 22.5 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 22.9 | 18.8 | 15.6 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 17,615 | 29,013 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 1,839 | 1,788 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 769 | 1240 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 71.5 | 67.9 | 79.6 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 34.5 | 27.2 | 34.3 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 70.3 | 72.5 | 80.7 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 73.9 | 64.7 | 64.6 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | –14.5 | –9.7 |
| Net migration rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | 0.0 | 4.2 |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature** | 3.99 | 3.75 | 3.58 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 30.3 | 26.4 | 26.7 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 91.8 | 92.3 | 91.7 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 72.5 | 71.4 | 70.5 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 92.6 | 93.8 | 95.2 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,762 | 1,727 | 1,724 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 12.9 | 13.0 | 16.4 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 4.5 | 3.6 | 3.9 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 57.7 | 55.7 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 306 | 332 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 50.1 | 54.4 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 111 | 228 | 303 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 367 | 473 | 731 | 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.

Yambol district

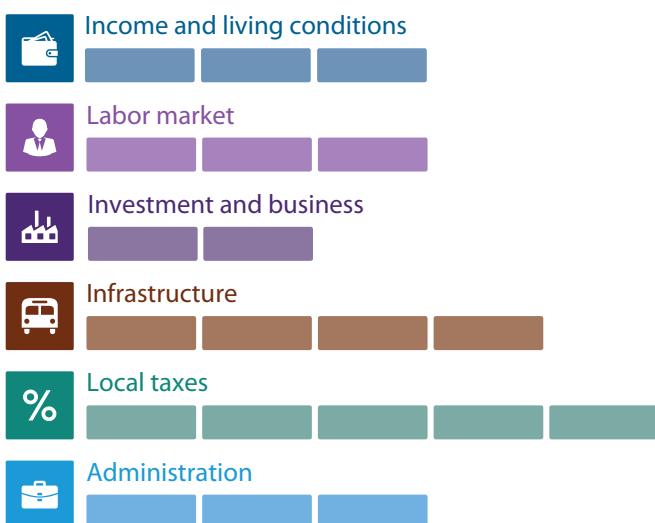


| | |
|---------------------------------|---------|
| ▶ Population (2021) | 109,693 |
| ▶ Territory (sq. km) | 3,355 |
| ▶ Number of settlements | 109 |
| ▶ Share of urban population (%) | 70.1 |

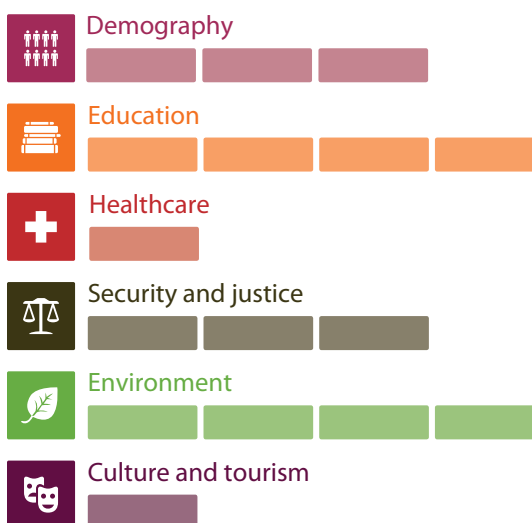
GDP in Yambol district continues to grow at a fast pace. The rate of increase in incomes and pensions also remains stable. The share of the working-age population in the district is one of the lowest in the country. Investment activity remains slack. Yambol is characterized by a high density of the road network, but the railway network is among the least developed in the country. The average levels of local taxes are close to the national averages. The self-assessments of the local administrations on the development of e-government have gone up and now exceed the national average.

Both natural population growth and the net migration rates are unfavorable. The district's students are not among the good performers but their results indicate an improvement compared to the rest of the districts and last year's results. Healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and high infant mortality. The workloads of the local criminal judges are considerably below the national average, but delivery of justice is relatively slow. The volume of household waste is low. Tourism in Yambol district has an exceptionally weak presence.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP in Yambol district has continued to grow at a fast pace, reaching 12,600 BGN per capita in 2021. The rate of increase in incomes and pensions also remains stable. The average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract has gone up to 14,800 BGN, compared to 18,700 BGN nationally. The average monthly pension is 521 BGN, versus 537 BGN nationally.

The poverty level in the district continues to fall. The share of population living below the poverty line is 20.2% and for the first time has fallen below the national average of 22.9%. Income inequality also remains below the national average.

Labor market

In 2022, the share of the working-age population in the district was one of the lowest in the country (only above that in Vidin district). The economic activity on the labor market has risen considerably and with a rate of 73.3%, it almost equals the national average of 73.6%. This increase has been accompanied by a big surge in employment and a decrease in unemployment. The employment rate has reached 68.1% and for the first time in five years has come so close to the national average of 70.4%.

A challenge still facing the labor market in Yambol district is the educational structure of the workforce. In 2022 it deteriorated once again, reversing the more favorable trend of the preceding few years. The share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 is 19.7%, compared to 29.8% in the country, and that of people with primary or lower education – 21.8%, against the national average of 16.0%.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that of the 60–64 age group remains below the country's average – 63.9% in the district, compared to 65.7% in the country for 2022. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 64 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and business

In 2021, investment activity in the Yambol district remained low. Due to the relative dominance of the process industry, Yambol is among the districts with a relatively small number of enterprises – only 47 per 1,000 population, compared to 60 per 1,000 population nationally. FTA acquisition expenditures have gone up considerably, reaching 2,200 BGN/person. FDI, however, has registered a negligible increase and remains among the lowest in the country at 396 EUR/person, versus 4,100 EUR/person nationally. At the same time, production value has increased rapidly to reach 18,100 BGN/person.

Research and development expenditure relative to the population is comparatively low.

There has been an increase in the utilization of European funds and their amounts are getting much closer to the national average. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs reached 2,765 BGN/person, compared to 2,836 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the largest amounts were utilized by Yambol city municipality.

Infrastructure

Yambol district is characterized by a high density of the road network. However, its railway network is among the least developed in the country, after that of Dobrich district. In 2022, the share of first-class roads and highways again exceeded the national average – 20.6%, compared to 18.5% nationally. The quality of the road surface in the district is traditionally close to or above the country's average, but in 2022 and for the second year in a row, the share of roads in good condition decreased to reach 30.4%, thus lagging well behind the national average of 41.1%.

In 2022, the share of households connected to high-speed internet continued to increase.

Local taxes

The average rates of local taxes in Yambol district in 2023 again remained close to the average ones in the country. Among the monitored taxes, relatively higher than average were those on the immovable non-residential property for legal entities and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property. At the same time, the rates on retail trade and taxi transportation remained well below average. The tax rate for retail trade in Yambol district was 8.17 BGN/sq. m on average, compared to 13.04 BGN/sq. m in the country.

Within the district, the highest local taxes are levied by the municipality of Yambol city, and the lowest – by that of Elhovo.

Administration

The self-assessment of the local administrations in Yambol district regarding the development of e-government went up in 2023 to exceed the national average. However, the self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services went down and remained below average. The AIP active transparency rating achieved by the local administration fell slightly, but continued to exceed the country's average – 72.4% in the district, compared to 70.3% in the country.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities in 2022 was 25.1%, versus 29.0% nationally, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues – 87.2%, against 84.2% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2022, both the natural population growth and the net migration rate in Yambol district again remained less favorable than nationally. The natural population growth rate was -11.5‰, compared to -9.7‰ nationally. The net migration rate was negative at -0.4‰.

The age dependency ratios remain relatively high. The ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 174.6%, compared to 165.9% nationally, and to the 15–64 age group – 45.4%, versus 37.7% countrywide.

The share of urban population in Yambol district is lower than in the country on average – 70.1%, against 73.6% nationally, and so is population density – 985 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,404 persons/sq. km countrywide.

Education

The share of children attending kindergarten again remained relatively low in 2022. The net enrolment in 5th–7th grade went up but for the first time remained below the national average, albeit slightly. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is relatively good, especially in the industrial and agricultural sectors.

The 2023 students' results again failed to place the district among the country's good performers, but they nevertheless indicate an improvement compared to the rest of the districts and to last year's results. The average score in the NAE in mathematics after 7th grade was 30.8 points, versus 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.79, compared to 3.93 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) – 16.2%, against 17.9% nationally.

The number of university students has gone up to 7 per 1,000 people, against 32 per 1,000 people nationwide.

Healthcare

The district's poor performance in the sphere of healthcare is due primarily to the low relative number of specialist physicians (where Yambol ranks only before Dobrich and Kardzhali), as well as to the high child mortality rate of 2022 (11.6‰, against 4.8‰ in the country). At the same time, the number of GPs relative to the population in the district is close to the national average. The life expectancy of the district's residents is also close to the country's average. The number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals has increased, but remains relatively low – 3.8 beds per 1,000 people, compared to the national average of 5.9 beds per 1,000 people.

These figures probably account for the low number of hospitalizations in 2022 – 129 per 1,000 people, versus 235 per 1,000 people countrywide. It can be assumed, therefore, that the residents seek medical care outside the district.

The share of people with health insurance has gone up but remains below the national average.

Security and justice

The workloads of the local criminal judges are considerably lower than in the country, but the delivery of justice is relatively slow. In 2022, one local criminal judge heard an average of 8.4 cases per month, compared to 10.1 per judge in the country. The share of pending cases was 13%, versus the national average of 12%. 88% of criminal cases were closed within 3 months, versus the national average of 89%.

The number of crimes in the district is close to, though below the country's average but the detection rate is relatively high. In 2022, the registered crimes against the person and property amounted to 11.0 per 1,000 people, versus 11.6 per 1,000 people nationally. The detection rate was 61%, compared to 49% nationwide.

Environment

The relatively good results of Yambol district in the environment category are mainly due to the small volumes of generated household waste and its management. In 2021, the amount of household waste generated in the district was 371 kg/person, against the national average of 445 kg/person. 91% of the generated waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to 74% on average countrywide.

There has been little change in the share of households with access to a public sewerage network, which in 2021 again remained below the national average – 70.9%, against 74.8% in the country. At the same time, the share of households whose sewerage system is connected to a wastewater treatment plant is above the national average – 68.7% compared to 66.8% countrywide.

The share of forest areas is low – 15%, versus 33% in the country, but that of degraded land is also limited – 0.18% against 0.43% countrywide. The installed RES capacities are above the national average relative to the population.

Culture and tourism

Visits to the local cinemas and libraries registered a considerable increase in 2022. Cinema visits were three times higher and reached 391 per 1,000 people. However, there has been a decrease in the number of museum visits and it is five times lower than the national average relative to the population.

Tourism has an extremely weak presence in Yambol district. In 2022, the number of beds in accommodation facilities increased to 7 per 1,000 people, versus 55 per 1,000 people in the country. Overnight stays, on the other hand, numbered 437 per 1,000 people, against 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country. The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector in the district is over five times lower than the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Yambol

| Economic Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|--|--------|--------|------|------------------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices) | 10,410 | 12,617 | n.a. | 20,212 |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | 13,055 | 14,779 | n.a. | 18,733 |
| Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) | 31.4 | 24.0 | 20.2 | 22.9 |
| Share of the working-age population (%) | 56.1 | 56.1 | 54.2 | 58.5 |
| Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | 63.2 | 63.2 | 68.1 | 70.4 |
| Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | 7.0 | 5.5 | 5.4 | 5.2 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | 21.3 | 20.6 | 21.8 | 16.0 |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | 23.5 | 23.0 | 19.7 | 29.8 |
| Production value per capita (BGN) | 15,177 | 18,105 | n.a. | 31,242 |
| Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN) | 1,639 | 2,165 | n.a. | 3,097 |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR) | 339 | 396 | n.a. | 4,098 |
| Share of households with broadband internet access (%) | 63.1 | 83.5 | 86.3 | 87.3 |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | 41.0 | 36.3 | 30.4 | 41.1 |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) | 92.5 | 93.2 | 87.2 | 84.2 |
| Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)* | 72.7 | 72.5 | 72.4 | 70.3 |

| Social Development Indicators | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | National average |
|---|-------|-------|-------|------------------|
| Natural population growth rate (‰) | n.a. | n.a. | -11.5 | -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 | 3.79 | 3.79 | 3.93 |
| Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)** | 35.0 | 30.7 | 30.8 | 35.3 |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | 89.8 | 89.1 | 90.0 | 90.7 |
| Average life expectancy (years)*** | 73.1 | 72.3 | 71.5 | 71.9 |
| Share of people with health insurance (%) | 88.4 | 88.6 | 92.6 | 93.5 |
| Population per one GP (persons) | 1,771 | 1,733 | 1,662 | 1,678 |
| Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population | 9.0 | 10.0 | 11.0 | 11.6 |
| Share of pending criminal cases (%) | 7.7 | 12.6 | 13.2 | 11.6 |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%) | 71.3 | 70.9 | n.a. | 74.8 |
| Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year) | 305 | 371 | n.a. | 445 |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | 94.6 | 90.8 | n.a. | 74.0 |
| Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population) | 8 | 130 | 391 | 590 |
| Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population) | 195 | 240 | 437 | 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.

Categories of Indicators

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

| Indicator | Description | Period | Unit | Source |
|---|--|-----------|----------------|--------|
| Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita | The indicator measures the standard of living in a district and the degree of development of the local economy. A higher GDP per capita in a district is indicative of a strong local economy and a higher standard of living for local residents. | 2012–2021 | BGN per capita | NSI |
| Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract | Income earned from salaries and wages is one of the key factors determining the level of household income. | 2012–2021 | BGN | NSI |
| Average monthly pension | The indicator provides a broad measure of the well-being and standard of living of local pensioners. | 2014–2021 | BGN | NRA |
| Gini coefficient | The coefficient provides a measure of income inequality on a scale of 1 to 100 points, where 100 points indicates perfect inequality. | 2012–2022 | points | NSI |
| Relative share of the people living below the national poverty line | A key poverty indicator. It shows the share of people with an equivalent disposable income below the so-called “poverty line” which is set at 60% of the national median equivalized disposable income. | 2019–2022 | % | NSI |

Labor market

| Indicator | Description | Period | Unit | Source |
|---|---|-----------|------|--------|
| Share of the working-age population | The age limit for the distribution of the population in this category is determined in accordance with the retirement age in the relevant year, adopted by a Decree of the Council of Ministers. The indicator is closely related to the local labor market. | 2012–2022 | % | NSI |
| Average annual economic activity rate of the population | The economic activity rate shows what share of the population is employed or actively seeking employment. The economically active population forms the labor force in each district. | 2012–2022 | % | NSI |
| Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 and above | Low unemployment rates in a district are indicative of a vibrant and job-creating local economic environment. | 2012–2022 | % | EA |
| Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15–64 | The employment rate is a leading indicator of the labor market showing what proportion of the working-age population is actually employed. | 2012–2022 | % | NSI |
| Demographic replacement rate (ratio of the number of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64) | The demographic replacement rate shows the ratio of the number of people aged 15–19 (who are about to enter the labor market) to those aged 60–64 (who are about to leave it). The demographic replacement rate is used as an indicator of the reproductive capacity of the labor force in each of the country's districts. | 2012–2022 | % | NSI |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education | A large share of population with a university degree in a district creates prerequisites for increased competitiveness, labor productivity, and economic growth. | 2012–2022 | % | NSI |
| Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education | An indicator of the educational structure of the workforce. The higher the share of people with primary or lower education, the lower the potential of the local labor market to fill newly created jobs. A lower level of education is a precondition for lower economic activity, lower productivity, and thus lower incomes. | 2012–2022 | % | NSI |



Investment and business

| Indicator | Description | Period | Unit | Source |
|---|---|------------------|--|-----------|
| Number of non-financial enterprises | The indicator shows entrepreneurial mindsets and investment activity in the local economy. | 2012–2021 | number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 population | NSI |
| Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (FTA) per capita | The level of expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (FTA) per capita in a district is the leading indicator of investment in the local economy. | 2012–2021 | BGN per capita | NSI |
| Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (accumulated flows) | The indicator of foreign direct investment (FDI) in non-financial enterprises shows the cumulative investment flows to the district and its attractiveness to foreign investors. | 2012–2021 | EUR per capita | NSI |
| Utilization of EU funds by the municipalities as beneficiaries under operational programs | A high level of utilization of EU funds under operational programs creates preconditions for improving a district's competitiveness. It is an indicator of the successful functioning of the local administration and its willingness and ability to create better working and living conditions in the district with the help of EU funds. | As of 30.06.2023 | BGN per capita | ISMM 2022 |
| Production value | Production value per capita shows the relative productivity of the enterprises in the district. | 2012–2021 | BGN per capita | NSI |
| Expenditure for research and development | Research and development includes all creative and systematic work carried out with the aim of expanding the body of knowledge, including knowledge about people, culture and society, and of developing new applications for existing knowledge. | 2012–2021 | BGN per capita | NSI |

Infrastructure

| Indicator | Description | Period | Unit | Source |
|--|---|-----------|---|--------|
| Road network density | The indicator measures the total length of highways and roads (first-, second-, and third-class) relative to the territory of the respective district. The national road network is essential for the transportation of goods and passengers in the country. The indicator does not include streets in urban and rural settlements. | 2012–2022 | length of the road network km/100 sq. km territory | NSI |
| Railway network density | The indicator represents all railway lines between stations or places indicated as independent points of departure and arrival of trains carrying passengers and freight. It excludes urban railway lines. The greater the density of the railway network in a district, the easier the transportation of passengers and freight. | 2012–2022 | length of the railway network in km/100 sq. km territory | NSI |
| Share of highways and first-class roads | The indicator provides additional information on the characteristics of the road infrastructure in a district. A larger share of motorways and first-class roads points to a better developed local infrastructure. | 2012–2022 | % | NSI |
| Share of households with broadband internet access | Households' access to the internet is indicative of the spread of new information and communication technologies in the country's districts. | 2012–2022 | % | NSI |
| Share of road surfaces in good condition | In addition to the road network density, the quality of road surfaces is also of considerable importance for the infrastructural profile of the districts. This indicator shows the share of roads the condition of whose surface has been assessed as "good" by the Road Infrastructure Agency (RIA). | 2012–2022 | % | АПИ |

% Local taxes

| Indicator | Description | Period | Unit | Source |
|---|--|-----------|---------------|--|
| Tax rate on immovable non-residential property for legal entities | Property taxes are the biggest source of own revenue for municipalities. Taxation on immovable property is indeed the major factor influencing the business environment and the burden on businesses. | 2012–2023 | per mille (‰) | Request for access to information under APIA |
| Motor vehicle tax (commercial and passenger vehicles, 74 kW to 110 kW) | Taxation on vehicles is another major source of own revenue for municipalities. This type of tax is a burden mainly on small companies, since the engine power basis has been chosen specifically for its relevance to such companies. After 2019, the indicator also takes into account the newly introduced environmental component in the total tax rate. | 2012–2023 | BGN/kW | Request for access to information under APIA |
| Annual patent tax for retail trade on up to 100 sq. m of retail space at the most favorable business location | Patents are a type of taxation different from those mentioned above. They are a tax burden on specific businesses. The retail trade patent tax has been selected as the most common and recognizable type of taxation. | 2012–2023 | BGN/sq. m | Request for access to information under APIA |
| Tax rate on non-gratuitous acquisition of property | The tax rate on non-gratuitous acquisition of property is relevant both to foreign investors entering the local market and to local investors expanding their activities. | 2012–2023 | per mille (‰) | Request for access to information under APIA |
| Tax rate on taxi transportation of passengers | The tax rate on taxi transportation of passengers is set by each municipality and affects the final price of the service. | 2017–2023 | BGN | Request for access to information under APIA |

| Indicator | Description | Period | Unit | Source |
|---|---|-----------|--------------------|---|
| Active transparency rating of local government bodies | The active transparency ratings of local government bodies are assigned by the AIP Foundation based on the results of its annual studies of municipal web pages and electronic submission of requests to various administrative structures within the executive branch. The rating assigned to each district is the average of all the ratings given to the municipalities within it. | 2016–2023 | % | Access to Information Program Foundation (AIP Foundation) |
| Level of development of local government e-services | The indicator shows the results of local governments' self-assessment regarding the degree and scope of the electronic services they provide. A low rating indicates a complete lack or rudimentary development of e-services, while a high rating shows a capacity for carrying out two-way transactions between the local administration and citizens/businesses. | 2013–2023 | Rating from 1 to 4 | Request for access to information under APIA |
| Level of development of one-stop shop services | The indicator shows the results from the local governments' self-assessment regarding their readiness to operate a one-stop shop. | 2013–2023 | Rating from 1 to 4 | Request for access to information under APIA |
| Share of own revenues in the municipalities' total revenues | This ratio shows to what extent each municipality can meet its own needs without relying on the state budget. | 2015–2022 | % | MF |
| Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues | The indicator shows the dependence of municipal budgets on transfers from the state budget. | 2015–2022 | % | MF |

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

| Indicator | Description | Period | Unit | Source |
|--|---|--------|--------------------------|--------|
| Age dependency rate – the ratio of population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 | The indicator shows the aging rate in a given district – the higher the indicator value, the more clearly expressed the population aging process. | 2022 | % | HCI |
| Age dependency rate – the ratio of population aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 | The age dependency ratio shows the ratio of those aged 65 years and above, who are mostly economically inactive, and those of working age. A higher age dependency ratio indicates a deterioration of the population age structure, which affects the labor market, economic growth, etc. | 2022 | % | NSI |
| Relative share of urban population | The relative share of urban population provides information on the degree of urbanization of each district. | 2022 | % | NSI |
| Population density relative to the area of the settlements and other urban areas | The population density indicator gives information on the number of people per unit area. Density is influenced by the rate of natural increase and net migration flows, as well as by the urbanization processes. | 2022 | number of persons/sq. km | NSI |
| Natural population growth rate | The natural population growth rate is the difference between the number of registered live births and the number of deaths during the year. The indicator shows the increase or decrease of the population of the district per 1,000 of its average annual population; a positive value is considered a favorable demographic indicator. | 2022 | per mille (‰) | NSI |
| Net migration rate | The net migration rate shows an increase or decrease of the population per 1,000 of its average annual population due to migration. The ratios are calculated based on statistics for the number of persons who have changed their usual residence within a given period. Net migration is the difference between the numbers of immigrants to and emigrants from a given district. | 2022 | per mille (‰) | NSI |

Education

| Indicator | Description | Period | Unit | Source |
|--|---|-----------|--|--------------------------|
| Number of students at colleges and universities | The indicator includes students in universities, colleges, and specialized higher education institutions, excluding students in vocational training after high school. A large number of students in any district is a prerequisite for a better educated local workforce and increases the attractiveness of the respective district. | 2012–2022 | number of university students per 1,000 population | NSI |
| Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) | The net enrolment rate of the population is the ratio between the total number of enrolled students in the official school age range for a given level of education and the total population of the same age group. The rate is calculated as a percentage by 31 December of the respective year. The number of students in primary and secondary education is established by 1 October of the respective year. The selection of 5th to 7th grade is based on the fact that this is the lowest educational stage where a relatively low coverage of the education system is registered. | 2018–2022 | % | NSI |
| Relative share of repeaters | The share of repeaters shows the number of students who were enrolled in the same grade for the second year in a row. This indicator points to the quality of educational institutions, at least in terms of their ability to create optimal learning conditions. | 2012–2022 | % | NSI |
| Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature | A high average grade in the annual State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature indicates a high quality of secondary education in the district. Despite differences in exam difficulty across years, results allow comparisons between the districts for each year. | 2012–2023 | grade 2 to 6 | MES |
| Share of “fail” (below 3.00) grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature | A high percentage of students who have passed the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature indicates a high quality of secondary education in the district. | 2012–2023 | % | MES |
| Average grade in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade | A high result in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade indicates a high quality of junior high school education in the district. The indicator is also used as a counterpoint to the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature, as very few high-school students choose to sit the elective matriculation exam in mathematics. | 2018–2023 | Average number of points out of a possible 100 | MES |
| Index of the alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy | The indicator shows the alignment between students in vocational education by specialization and employees with acquired vocational qualifications by sector. This alignment is also an important dimension for the labor market as it shows the link between education and employment at local level. | 2022–2023 | Average number of points out of a possible 100 | IME based on MES and NSI |
| Share of children attending kindergarten | The indicator is in direct relation to the coverage of pre-school education offered in kindergartens | 2012–2022 | % | IME |

Healthcare

| Indicator | Description | Period | Unit | Source |
|---|--|-----------|---|--|
| Population per one GP | GPs are usually the first point of contact in the healthcare system. The indicator for the number of people cared for by one GP shows both the availability of medical staff in a district and medical doctors' workloads. | 2012–2022 | Number of persons per 1 GP | NSI |
| Access to specialist physicians index | The index measures access to specialist physicians relative to the country's district with the best access. A lower index value points to better access. Specialist physicians include internists, cardiologists, pediatricians, surgeons, orthopedists/traumatologists, urologists, infectionists, obstetricians/gynecologists, ophthalmologists, neurologists, psychiatrists, x-ray specialists, and others. | 2018–2022 | composite index | IME based on NSI |
| Numbers of hospitalization in general hospitals | The indicator provides information on the morbidity of the population and the workloads of general hospitals. Here, it is used to measure the level of morbidity in each district – the higher its value, the higher morbidity on its territory. | 2020–2022 | number of persons treated in the local general hospitals per 1,000 population | NSI |
| Share of people with health insurance | The relative share of persons with health insurance indicates the accessibility of health services to the population in a given district; it can be used as an indirect indicator of the health status of the population. | 2012–2022 | % | NRA (request for access to information under APIA) |
| Number of beds in general hospitals | The indicator shows the number of beds in general hospitals per 1,000 population. The availability of hospital beds serves as a relative indicator of the physical resources of the district's healthcare system. | 2012–2022 | number of hospital beds per 1,000 population | NSI |
| Infant mortality rate | The infant mortality rate shows the number of deaths of infants under the age of 1 year for every 1,000 live births during the respective year. A high rate indicates both inadequate public healthcare and low health culture of the local population. | 2012–2022 | per mille (‰) | NSI |
| Average life expectancy | The indicator shows the average life expectancy of the population and is used as a function of the quality of life. | 2012–2022 | years | NSI |



Security and justice

| Indicator | Description | Period | Unit | Source |
|---|---|-----------|---------------------------------------|---------|
| Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months | A higher share of criminal cases in a district's courts closed within 3 months indicates relatively faster delivery of justice (all other factors being equal). | 2012–2022 | % | SJC |
| Share of pending criminal cases | The share of pending criminal cases in a district's courts is an indicator of the local judiciary's efficiency. | 2012–2022 | % | SJC |
| Workloads of criminal judges in office | The indicator shows the deviation from the actual average workloads of criminal judges in the district courts for the respective year. | 2012–2022 | composite index | SJC |
| Crimes against the person and property | Crimes against the person and property are an indicator of the crime rate in a given area. Officially registered crimes do not always faithfully represent the level of criminality in a district but provide a good basis for evaluation and comparison between districts. | 2012–2022 | Number of crimes per 1,000 population | NSI, MI |
| Share of cleared crimes against the person and property out of all crimes registered throughout the respective year | The higher the share of cleared crimes, the more efficient the work of law enforcement in the district. The indicator covers only the clearance rates of registered crimes and complements the overall security picture in each district. | 2012–2022 | % | NSI, MI |

Environment

| Indicator | Description | Period | Unit | Source |
|---|---|-----------------|----------------|--------|
| Generated household waste | The amount of generated household waste per person of the serviced population is a standard indicator for the cleanliness of the environment. For the purposes of this study, it is assumed that the higher the value of this indicator, the more endangered the environment in a given district. | 2012–2021 | kg/person/year | NSI |
| Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling | The share of recycled and treated household waste is important in that the rest of the waste is sent to landfills which carry serious environmental and health risks. A higher share of recycled and treated waste means a cleaner environment. | 2013–2021 | % | NSI |
| Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network connected to a waste water treatment plant | The availability of municipal waste water treatment plants is a precondition for lower environmental pollution from sewage and higher utilization of water resources in a given district. The larger the share of public sewerage networks connected to waste water treatment plants, the more reduced the effect of sewage on the environment. | 2012–2021 | % | NSI |
| Share of population living in settlements with a public sewerage network | The indicator shows the percentage of residents in a district living in areas with a public sewerage system. The coverage of public sewerage has an impact on both the social and the environmental characteristics of the districts. | 2012–2021 | % | NSI |
| Share of forest areas relative to the total area of the district | The indicator measures the proportion of real estate – timber forests and nontimber forest areas | 2021–2022 | % | NSI |
| Share of degraded land relative to the district's territory | The indicator measures the proportion of real estate used for extractive activities and real estate used as landfills for industrial and household waste: degraded land | 2021–2022 | % | NSI |
| Installed RES capacities | Provides information on the installed capacities of photovoltaic, wind, hydroelectric and other power plants. | By 30 June 2023 | kW/person | SEDA |



Culture and tourism

| Indicator | Description | Period | Unit | Source |
|---|--|-----------|--|--------|
| Visits to theaters | An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities. It shows the average annual number of registered visits to the theaters on the territory of a given district. | 2012–2021 | number of visits per 1,000 population | NSI |
| Visits to cinemas | An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities. It shows the average annual number of registered visits to the cinemas on the territory of a given district. | 2012–2022 | number of visits per 1,000 population | NSI |
| Visits to museums | An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities. It shows the average annual number of registered visits to the museums on the territory of a given district. | 2012–2022 | number of visits per 1,000 population | NSI |
| Visits to libraries | An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities. It shows the average number of registered visits to libraries with a collection of a minimum 200,000 items on the territory of a given district. | 2012–2022 | number of visits per 1,000 population | NSI |
| Number of beds in accommodation facilities | The indicator shows the district's potential for the development of tourism | 2012–2022 | number of beds per 1,000 population | NSI |
| Number of overnight stays in accommodation facilities | The indicator shows the actual intensity of tourism in the district. | 2012–2022 | number of overnight stays per 1,000 population | NSI |
| Share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector | The indicator shows the share of the people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector relative to the total number of employed people in the district. | 2021 | % | NSI |

Appendix

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

| Indicator | GDP per capita (BGN) | Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN) | Average monthly pension (BGN) | Gini coefficient of income inequality (points) | Share of people living below the national poverty line (%) |
|-------------------------|----------------------|---|-------------------------------|--|--|
| District | 2021 | 2021 | 2021 | 2022 | 2022 |
| Blagoevgrad | 12,629 | 12,226 | 490 | 32.1 | 22.9 |
| Burgas | 15,815 | 14,852 | 600 | 38.0 | 22.1 |
| Varna | 17,872 | 17,201 | 569 | 33.5 | 14.2 |
| Veliko Tarnovo | 13,669 | 14,545 | 506 | 30.8 | 20.7 |
| Vidin | 11,438 | 12,855 | 475 | 37.5 | 39.2 |
| Vratsa | 17,781 | 17,324 | 529 | 44.5 | 31.5 |
| Gabrovo | 16,549 | 15,771 | 510 | 30.8 | 21.9 |
| Dobrich | 12,385 | 14,099 | 483 | 33.6 | 31.0 |
| Kardzhali | 11,760 | 14,508 | 441 | 31.6 | 25.9 |
| Kyustendil | 11,535 | 12,719 | 563 | 36.8 | 19.9 |
| Lovech | 13,963 | 14,244 | 485 | 33.9 | 30.3 |
| Montana | 12,088 | 13,983 | 481 | 43.2 | 41.0 |
| Pazardzhik | 11,653 | 14,842 | 488 | 37.4 | 27.0 |
| Pernik | 11,084 | 14,074 | 591 | 32.6 | 19.0 |
| Pleven | 12,889 | 14,608 | 499 | 36.9 | 31.4 |
| Plovdiv | 15,547 | 15,937 | 525 | 34.5 | 29.4 |
| Razgrad | 12,942 | 15,517 | 441 | 27.6 | 27.7 |
| Ruse | 15,075 | 15,443 | 505 | 34.2 | 18.5 |
| Silistra | 9,975 | 13,272 | 447 | 32.5 | 34.4 |
| Sliven | 10,439 | 14,033 | 503 | 35.8 | 29.2 |
| Smolyan | 12,609 | 13,379 | 524 | 36.9 | 28.7 |
| Sofia | 19,263 | 17,697 | 552 | 30.3 | 23.0 |
| Sofia (capital city) | 45,241 | 25,724 | 650 | 38.8 | 11.7 |
| Stara Zagora | 20,165 | 16,673 | 567 | 37.8 | 29.1 |
| Targovishte | 12,536 | 15,110 | 451 | 30.7 | 24.7 |
| Haskovo | 9,817 | 12,906 | 52,1 | 31.1 | 30.2 |
| Shumen | 11,989 | 15,105 | 473 | 33.8 | 22.5 |
| Yambol | 12,617 | 14,779 | 52,1 | 33.7 | 20.2 |
| National Average | 20,212 | 18,733 | 537 | 38.4 | 22.9 |

Labor market

| Indicator | Demographic replacement rate (ratio of the number of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64) (%) | Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%) | Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%) | Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%) | Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%) | Average annual economic activity of the population (%) | Share of the working-age population (%) |
|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| District | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 |
| Blagoevgrad | 63.18 | 20.4 | 18.4 | 9.4 | 69.9 | 74.0 | 59.8 |
| Burgas | 71.97 | 22.3 | 19.1 | 4.0 | 67.5 | 71.0 | 58.9 |
| Varna | 77.07 | 34.4 | 16.2 | 3.2 | 77.2 | 78.0 | 60.3 |
| Veliko Tarnovo | 58.01 | 28.1 | 7.1 | 5.7 | 71.2 | 73.6 | 56.4 |
| Vidin | 59.47 | 22.4 | 13.4 | 14.1 | 61.7 | 68.4 | 53.6 |
| Vratsa | 65.02 | 15.6 | 22.5 | 10.7 | 61.4 | 67.8 | 57.3 |
| Gabrovo | 55.85 | 23.5 | 13.5 | 4.1 | 70.9 | 77.0 | 54.3 |
| Dobrich | 57.72 | 17.6 | 26.7 | 4.8 | 65.9 | 71.8 | 56.5 |
| Kardzhali | 46.63 | 23.5 | 21.7 | 9.5 | 69.1 | 69.8 | 57.0 |
| Kyustendil | 55.72 | 23.0 | 4.0 | 7.8 | 73.5 | 75.4 | 55.7 |
| Lovech | 63.38 | 13.8 | 12.9 | 9.1 | 69.3 | 71.6 | 54.8 |
| Montana | 57.44 | 17.9 | 17.3 | 11.7 | 55.6 | 61.8 | 55.2 |
| Pazardzhik | 57.19 | 14.5 | 25.6 | 7.3 | 68.7 | 72.7 | 57.8 |
| Pernik | 53.74 | 15.5 | 14.7 | 4.3 | 69.2 | 78.1 | 57.1 |
| Pleven | 59.23 | 22.8 | 19.7 | 7.6 | 62.5 | 65.8 | 54.9 |
| Plovdiv | 66.89 | 26.9 | 17.8 | 4.1 | 67.3 | 69.1 | 59.2 |
| Razgrad | 57.36 | 24.9 | 31.3 | 9.4 | 60.2 | 67.5 | 58.2 |
| Ruse | 57.27 | 29.0 | 11.1 | 5.6 | 72.3 | 75.0 | 57.2 |
| Silistra | 53.56 | 21.6 | 26.5 | 10.4 | 56.3 | 64.0 | 55.6 |
| Sliven | 87.39 | 21.1 | 37.8 | 7.9 | 60.5 | 65.9 | 55.0 |
| Smolyan | 42.19 | 24.3 | 13.0 | 10.0 | 68.0 | 72.2 | 56.5 |
| Sofia | 63.34 | 14.2 | 14.4 | 4.9 | 74.9 | 75.7 | 58.2 |
| Sofia (capital city) | 80.30 | 57.6 | 4.0 | 1.6 | 77.9 | 79.9 | 62.9 |
| Stara Zagora | 67.33 | 22.0 | 17.1 | 4.3 | 75.0 | 75.9 | 57.0 |
| Targovishte | 59.99 | 21.3 | 30.3 | 8.7 | 61.9 | 69.5 | 57.4 |
| Haskovo | 63.46 | 18.6 | 20.1 | 6.4 | 68.5 | 69.2 | 56.3 |
| Shumen | 61.83 | 24.8 | 26.8 | 9.4 | 65.8 | 76.4 | 57.8 |
| Yambol | 63.88 | 19.7 | 21.8 | 5.4 | 68.1 | 73.3 | 54.2 |
| National Average | 65.70 | 29.8 | 16.0 | 5.2 | 70.4 | 73.6 | 58.5 |

Investment and business

| Indicator | Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 population | Expenditure on the acquisition of FTA per capita (BGN) | Utilization by municipalities of EU funds as beneficiaries under operational programs per capita (BGN) 30.06.2023 | FDI in non-financial enterprises (accumulated flows) per capita (EUR) 2021 | Expenditure on research and development per capita (BGN) 2021 | Production value per capita (BGN) 2021 |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| District | 2021 | 2021 | 30.06.2023 | 2021 | 2021 | 2021 |
| Blagoevgrad | 70 | 1,795 | 4,063 | 1,693 | 13 | 19,181 |
| Burgas | 71 | 2,893 | 2,690 | 5,643 | 26 | 22,628 |
| Varna | 69 | 2,692 | 1,980 | 3,299 | 64 | 26,672 |
| Veliko Tarnovo | 46 | 2,195 | 2,258 | 325 | 19 | 18,655 |
| Vidin | 36 | 1,260 | 2,996 | 597 | 3 | 8,237 |
| Vratsa | 38 | 1,788 | 3,545 | 1,240 | 25 | 29,013 |
| Gabrovo | 56 | 2,460 | 4,333 | 3,382 | 90 | 30,226 |
| Dobrich | 52 | 1,822 | 2,219 | 1,816 | 33 | 17,922 |
| Kardzhali | 32 | 1,449 | 2,161 | 2,567 | (17) | 12,601 |
| Kyustendil | 53 | 1,194 | 1,768 | 351 | (25) | 13,868 |
| Lovech | 45 | 1,407 | 2,876 | 1,073 | 66 | 16,976 |
| Montana | 36 | 1,514 | 3,027 | 444 | 10 | 17,649 |
| Pazardzhik | 44 | 2,372 | 1,904 | 1,807 | 63 | 20,367 |
| Pernik | 46 | 1,641 | 1,721 | 1,876 | 12 | 19,468 |
| Pleven | 42 | 2,201 | 2,562 | 1,508 | 94 | 19,194 |
| Plovdiv | 60 | 765 | 2,165 | 3,228 | 97 | 32,293 |
| Razgrad | 39 | 2,046 | 2,165 | 1,917 | | 19,195 |
| Ruse | 55 | 2,723 | 2,864 | 2,243 | 75 | 32,084 |
| Silistra | 38 | 2,078 | 2,557 | 400 | (6) | 12,523 |
| Sliven | 39 | 1,234 | 1,598 | 726 | 37 | 14,238 |
| Smolyan | 52 | 2,714 | 3,287 | 692 | 22 | 17,612 |
| Sofia | 43 | 3,157 | 2,770 | 7,289 | 48 | 57,137 |
| Sofia (capital city) | 95 | 7,757 | 4,264 | 11,235 | 618 | 61,866 |
| Stara Zagora | 49 | 2,757 | 2,358 | 3,563 | (81) | 34,039 |
| Targovishte | 37 | 1,795 | 1,719 | 2,690 | 2 | 20,301 |
| Haskovo | 52 | 1,399 | 1,910 | 614 | 7 | 14,447 |
| Shumen | 40 | 1,897 | 2,285 | 708 | (76) | 21,145 |
| Yambol | 47 | 2,165 | 2,765 | 396 | 19 | 18,105 |
| National Average | 60 | 3,097 | 2,836 | 4,098 | 156 | 31,242 |



Infrastructure

| Indicator | Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory) | Railway network density (km/100 sq. km territory) | Share of highways and first-class roads (%) | Share of road surfaces in good condition (%) | Share of households with broadband internet access (%) |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|
| District | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 |
| Blagoevgrad | 11.1 | 2.5 | 17.3 | 63.9 | 84.8 |
| Burgas | 15.3 | 2.3 | 26.0 | 29.4 | 90.8 |
| Varna | 18.8 | 5.2 | 27.4 | 56.8 | 87.7 |
| Veliko Tarnovo | 20.1 | 5.1 | 16.3 | 45.9 | 87.3 |
| Vidin | 20.1 | 3.6 | 11.3 | 36.1 | 88.5 |
| Vratsa | 18.2 | 3.1 | 9.9 | 34.3 | 79.6 |
| Gabrovo | 25.6 | 3.7 | 16.6 | 33.7 | 88.8 |
| Dobrich | 17.4 | 1.3 | 10.1 | 5.9 | 75.4 |
| Kardzhali | 20.2 | 2.1 | 11.2 | 40.0 | 86.3 |
| Kyustendil | 20.1 | 3.9 | 20.8 | 56.0 | 87.4 |
| Lovech | 18.3 | 2.6 | 16.2 | 46.7 | 87.5 |
| Montana | 16.9 | 3.1 | 9.1 | 23.0 | 83.9 |
| Pazardzhik | 16.9 | 4.1 | 14.6 | 57.7 | 85.1 |
| Pernik | 24.0 | 4.8 | 15.9 | 40.7 | 84.9 |
| Pleven | 18.3 | 4.7 | 12.2 | 40.0 | 80.8 |
| Plovdiv | 17.1 | 5.4 | 17.5 | 54.7 | 89.1 |
| Razgrad | 19.2 | 3.5 | 11.1 | 26.2 | 86.1 |
| Ruse | 18.2 | 5.5 | 21.6 | 47.2 | 88.8 |
| Silistra | 17.8 | 2.5 | 11.3 | 44.0 | 70.6 |
| Sliven | 16.4 | 3.8 | 22.2 | 68.0 | 67.8 |
| Smolyan | 16.9 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 56.5 | 90.3 |
| Sofia | 21.4 | 4.2 | 30.2 | 30.5 | 75.0 |
| Sofia (capital city) | 0.0 | 12.7 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 94.7 |
| Stara Zagora | 17.6 | 5.1 | 28.7 | 39.4 | 86.5 |
| Targovishte | 19.3 | 2.7 | 14.7 | 47.9 | 89.1 |
| Haskovo | 20.9 | 3.8 | 21.5 | 39.5 | 91.8 |
| Shumen | 18.2 | 4.6 | 36.4 | 37.8 | 86.8 |
| Yambol | 19.1 | 1.6 | 20.6 | 30.4 | 86.3 |
| National Average | 18.0 | 3.6 | 18.5 | 41.1 | 87.3 |

% Local taxes

| Indicator District | Tax rate on immovable non-residential property for legal entities (%) 2023 | Motor vehicle tax (commercial and passenger vehicles, 74 kW to 110 kW) (BGN/kW) 2023 | Annual patent tax for retail trade on up to 100 sq. m of retail space at the most favorable business location (BGN/ sq. m) 2023 | Tax rate on non-gratuitous acquisition of property (%) 2023 | Tax rate on taxi transportation of passengers (BGN) 2023 |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| Blagoevgrad | 1.78 | 1.39 | 11.65 | 2.20 | 322 |
| Burgas | 2.07 | 1.82 | 15.22 | 2.87 | 547 |
| Varna | 2.21 | 1.66 | 16.72 | 2.95 | 596 |
| Veliko Tarnovo | 2.50 | 1.64 | 12.10 | 2.89 | 387 |
| Vidin | 2.19 | 1.25 | 4.60 | 2.90 | 300 |
| Vratsa | 2.22 | 1.25 | 6.84 | 2.67 | 353 |
| Gabrovo | 2.16 | 1.55 | 9.71 | 2.53 | 405 |
| Dobrich | 1.59 | 1.56 | 8.78 | 2.96 | 300 |
| Kardzhali | 1.80 | 1.59 | 8.15 | 2.85 | 322 |
| Kyustendil | 2.57 | 1.77 | 10.14 | 2.56 | 302 |
| Lovech | 2.23 | 1.28 | 10.37 | 2.34 | 392 |
| Montana | 1.72 | 1.22 | 5.06 | 2.56 | 339 |
| Pazardzhik | 1.92 | 1.46 | 8.94 | 2.77 | 300 |
| Pernik | 1.95 | 1.38 | 9.86 | 2.88 | 300 |
| Pleven | 2.99 | 1.30 | 9.26 | 2.83 | 381 |
| Plovdiv | 2.14 | 1.57 | 12.98 | 2.81 | 308 |
| Razgrad | 2.16 | 1.37 | 9.24 | 2.52 | 326 |
| Ruse | 2.00 | 1.56 | 13.60 | 2.33 | 457 |
| Silistra | 2.04 | 1.45 | 8.71 | 2.65 | 329 |
| Sliven | 2.63 | 1.54 | 9.90 | 2.80 | 374 |
| Smolyan | 2.12 | 1.37 | 7.71 | 2.62 | 318 |
| Sofia | 2.51 | 1.69 | 9.61 | 2.89 | 398 |
| Sofia (capital city) | 1.88 | 1.33 | 20.00 | 3.00 | 850 |
| Stara Zagora | 1.67 | 1.53 | 13.91 | 2.39 | 313 |
| Targovishte | 1.91 | 1.52 | 9.05 | 2.61 | 303 |
| Haskovo | 2.09 | 1.54 | 12.84 | 2.61 | 312 |
| Shumen | 2.13 | 1.56 | 9.19 | 2.68 | 300 |
| Yambol | 2.17 | 1.53 | 8.17 | 2.78 | 356 |
| National Average | 2.08 | 1.56 | 13.04 | 2.76 | 471 |

Administration

| Indicator District | Share of own revenues in the municipalities' total revenues (%) 2022 | Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%) 2022 | Development of local government e-services (Rating from 1 to 4) 2023 | Development of one-stop shop services (Rating from 1 to 4) 2023 | Active transparency rating of local government bodies (%) 2023 |
|-------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| Blagoevgrad | 19.4 | 59.9 | 3.28 | 3.26 | 61.2 |
| Burgas | 38.0 | 101.8 | 3.82 | 3.11 | 72.7 |
| Varna | 35.2 | 101.2 | 3.65 | 3.69 | 76.8 |
| Veliko Tarnovo | 23.8 | 73.0 | 3.11 | 3.32 | 68.2 |
| Vidin | 17.5 | 73.9 | 2.89 | 3.01 | 57.5 |
| Vratsa | 20.4 | 80.7 | 3.18 | 3.66 | 64.6 |
| Gabrovo | 23.3 | 61.0 | 3.83 | 2.83 | 72.9 |
| Dobrich | 26.1 | 75.2 | 3.49 | 3.2,1 | 81.3 |
| Kardzhali | 2,1.6 | 57.2 | 2.92 | 2.90 | 66.0 |
| Kyustendil | 24.9 | 76.8 | 3.45 | 3.51 | 50.0 |
| Lovech | 19.7 | 69.9 | 3.36 | 3.88 | 74.2 |
| Montana | 16.7 | 56.9 | 3.64 | 2.85 | 69.4 |
| Pazardzhik | 22.6 | 66.2 | 3.22 | 3.07 | 65.2 |
| Pernik | 25.4 | 69.0 | 3.13 | 3.14 | 52.4 |
| Pleven | 22.7 | 84.9 | 3.58 | 3.46 | 70.0 |
| Plovdiv | 30.2 | 85.4 | 3.56 | 3.39 | 72.4 |
| Razgrad | 21.3 | 75.3 | 3.14 | 3.61 | 68.2 |
| Ruse | 26.5 | 101.7 | 3.17 | 3.80 | 72.4 |
| Silistra | 17.5 | 74.2 | 3.58 | 3.37 | 58.8 |
| Sliven | 21.6 | 87.4 | 3.82 | 3.00 | 80.5 |
| Smolyan | 15.4 | 43.6 | 3.16 | 3.04 | 66.9 |
| Sofia | 14.7 | 102.2 | 3.25 | 2.84 | 57.7 |
| Sofia (capital city) | 44.7 | 113.3 | 3.00 | 4.00 | 74.8 |
| Stara Zagora | 24.5 | 74.9 | 3.06 | 2.48 | 65.0 |
| Targovishte | 19.1 | 57.4 | 3.79 | 3.22 | 70.7 |
| Haskovo | 24.5 | 72.6 | 3.64 | 3.45 | 72.4 |
| Shumen | 20.9 | 71.7 | 3.53 | 3.52 | 76.5 |
| Yambol | 25.1 | 87.2 | 3.54 | 3.09 | 72.4 |
| National Average | 29.0 | 84.2 | 3.35 | 3.41 | 70.3 |

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

| Indicator | Age dependency ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 (%) | Age dependency ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 (%) | Share of urban population (%) | Population density in urban areas (number of persons/sq. km) | Natural population growth (‰) | Net migration rate (‰) |
|-------------------------|--|---|-------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| District | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 |
| Blagoevgrad | 148.1 | 33.8 | 59.8 | 2,166 | -7.5 | 0.3 |
| Burgas | 145.6 | 35.1 | 76.4 | 2,070 | -8.2 | 7.1 |
| Varna | 143.8 | 33.5 | 84.2 | 1,662 | -6.9 | 6.1 |
| Veliko Tarnovo | 215.8 | 45.0 | 69.8 | 925 | -13.6 | 2.0 |
| Vidin | 269.8 | 54.3 | 63.7 | 750 | -21.3 | 0.9 |
| Vratsa | 174.9 | 40.3 | 59.9 | 714 | -14.5 | 0.0 |
| Gabrovo | 255.3 | 51.6 | 79.6 | 1,105 | -18.0 | 2.8 |
| Dobrich | 204.2 | 43.5 | 70.9 | 573 | -14.0 | 1.7 |
| Kardzhali | 205.5 | 41.9 | 41.8 | 1,753 | -9.4 | 21.6 |
| Kyustendil | 228.6 | 46.9 | 68.6 | 1,033 | -17.1 | 2.4 |
| Lovech | 205.7 | 47.4 | 61.9 | 774 | -14.7 | -1.1 |
| Montana | 216.3 | 47.2 | 64.2 | 824 | -17.1 | 0.4 |
| Pazardzhik | 167.9 | 38.5 | 61.4 | 1,867 | -10.5 | 4.2 |
| Pernik | 196.0 | 42.1 | 78.4 | 856 | -16.9 | 3.1 |
| Pleven | 211.1 | 47.4 | 67.5 | 1,010 | -13.9 | -0.5 |
| Plovdiv | 151.4 | 35.5 | 74.4 | 2,372 | -7.4 | 7.0 |
| Razgrad | 186.3 | 39.4 | 47.8 | 768 | -13.5 | 4.4 |
| Ruse | 215.3 | 43.8 | 77.8 | 1,467 | -15.1 | 0.9 |
| Silistra | 210.6 | 45.9 | 44.8 | 700 | -14.0 | 1.3 |
| Sliven | 117.4 | 37.5 | 65.4 | 2,445 | -5.9 | 0.6 |
| Smolyan | 256.4 | 45.3 | 57.4 | 1,614 | -14.7 | -4.5 |
| Sofia | 166.3 | 38.4 | 60.3 | 740 | -11.1 | -0.1 |
| Sofia (capital city) | 130.4 | 29.1 | 95.1 | 4,639 | -3.4 | 7.9 |
| Stara Zagora | 165.2 | 40.0 | 71.3 | 1,384 | -11.2 | 2.2 |
| Targovishte | 186.4 | 40.7 | 56.2 | 935 | -12.4 | 3.9 |
| Haskovo | 179.7 | 42.0 | 72.2 | 968 | -12.6 | -1.5 |
| Shumen | 186.7 | 40.3 | 62.5 | 771 | -11.7 | 6.4 |
| Yambol | 174.6 | 45.4 | 70.1 | 985 | -11.5 | -0.4 |
| National Average | 165.9 | 37.7 | 73.6 | 1,404 | -9.7 | 4.2 |

Education

| Indicator | Number of students at colleges and universities per 1,000 population | Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%) | Relative share of school year repeaters (%) | Relative share of "Fail" (below 3.00) grades in the 2023 State matriculation exam in BLL (%) | Average grades in the State matriculation exam in BLL (2–6) 2023 | Average grade in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade (number of points out of a possible 100) 2023 | Index of the alignment between vocational education and employment (number of points out of a possible 100) 2023 | Share of children attending kindergarten (%) |
|-------------------------|--|---|---|--|--|---|--|--|
| District | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2023 | 2023 | 2023 | 2023 | 2022 |
| Blagoevgrad | 29 | 94.5 | 0.73 | 16.6 | 3.84 | 33.3 | 40.1 | 92.6 |
| Burgas | 17 | 90.2 | 0.90 | 21.9 | 3.68 | 37.2 | 51.1 | 88.4 |
| Varna | 52 | 92.8 | 0.76 | 16.1 | 3.94 | 42.6 | 51.4 | 90.3 |
| Veliko Tarnovo | 75 | 92.8 | 1.06 | 18.8 | 3.72 | 31.2 | 42.6 | 90.6 |
| Vidin | 5 | 87.3 | 1.72 | 21.1 | 3.63 | 25.4 | 40.9 | 87.1 |
| Vratsa | 8 | 91.7 | 1.23 | 24.5 | 3.58 | 26.7 | 53.3 | 90.6 |
| Gabrovo | 44 | 92.9 | 0.87 | 17.3 | 3.80 | 31.3 | 44.7 | 89.7 |
| Dobrich | 4 | 84.5 | 2.47 | 19.6 | 3.72 | 29.0 | 67.2 | 86.9 |
| Kardzhali | 4 | 86.6 | 0.57 | 23.9 | 3.75 | 29.4 | 51.1 | 83.3 |
| Kyustendil | 0 | 90.2 | 1.16 | 26.1 | 3.58 | 28.3 | 36.7 | 86.3 |
| Lovech | 1 | 86.3 | 1.96 | 24.9 | 3.63 | 27.5 | 36.4 | 85.0 |
| Montana | 0 | 86.9 | 2.01 | 19.5 | 3.64 | 27.7 | 43.1 | 85.3 |
| Pazardzhik | 0 | 88.9 | 2.00 | 25.3 | 3.54 | 29.5 | 40.2 | 84.6 |
| Pernik | 1 | 90.4 | 0.68 | 28.0 | 3.64 | 29.2 | 52.4 | 88.6 |
| Pleven | 16 | 90.4 | 1.42 | 27.8 | 3.51 | 28.0 | 54.3 | 85.7 |
| Plovdiv | 54 | 91.8 | 1.48 | 16.1 | 3.95 | 35.3 | 51.3 | 87.5 |
| Razgrad | 2 | 92.7 | 1.07 | 27.5 | 3.50 | 25.9 | 52.4 | 90.3 |
| Ruse | 28 | 92.4 | 0.51 | 17.5 | 3.82 | 35.6 | 58.0 | 90.9 |
| Silistra | 3 | 88.8 | 1.12 | 19.9 | 3.69 | 26.8 | 57.6 | 87.4 |
| Sliven | 9 | 82.1 | 3.59 | 23.0 | 3.65 | 25.3 | 61.9 | 71.7 |
| Smolyan | 14 | 95.7 | 0.31 | 7.2 | 4.09 | 37.6 | 37.5 | 95.0 |
| Sofia | 6 | 87.6 | 1.76 | 21.2 | 3.58 | 28.3 | 54.0 | 85.9 |
| Sofia (capital city) | 73 | 93.4 | 0.45 | 7.9 | 4.24 | 46.6 | 67.3 | 87.6 |
| Stara Zagora | 19 | 90.9 | 1.62 | 17.1 | 3.83 | 33.7 | 39.3 | 86.9 |
| Targovishte | 0 | 85.0 | 1.09 | 21.5 | 3.58 | 31.3 | 52.7 | 85.9 |
| Haskovo | 4 | 86.1 | 1.27 | 22.2 | 3.72 | 31.5 | 56.9 | 85.4 |
| Shumen | 45 | 90.3 | 1.25 | 30.6 | 3.43 | 26.2 | 46.8 | 88.7 |
| Yambol | 7 | 90.0 | 1.94 | 16.2 | 3.79 | 30.8 | 56.5 | 85.4 |
| National Average | 33 | 90.7 | 1.16 | 17.9 | 3.93 | 35.3 | 53.6 | 87.3 |

Healthcare

| Indicator | Population per one GP (persons) | Access to specialist physicians index (lower values are better) | Share of people with health insurance (%) | Number of beds in general hospitals per 1,000 population | Average life expectancy (years) | Infant mortality rate (‰) | Number of hospitalizations in general hospitals per 1,000 people (number of persons) |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|--|---------------------------------|---------------------------|--|
| District | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 |
| Blagoevgrad | 1,742 | 13.55 | 93.0 | 3.84 | 74.0 | 2.9 | 154 |
| Burgas | 2,037 | 10.94 | 90.3 | 4.66 | 73.1 | 7.5 | 178 |
| Varna | 1,567 | 7.69 | 91.2 | 4.67 | 73.6 | 2.5 | 173 |
| Veliko Tarnovo | 1,591 | 12.91 | 92.7 | 3.71 | 72.1 | 6.4 | 136 |
| Vidin | 1,361 | 13.01 | 97.5 | 4.56 | 69.4 | 6.0 | 145 |
| Vratsa | 1,724 | 12.01 | 95.2 | 4.71 | 70.5 | 9.7 | 188 |
| Gabrovo | 1,535 | 10.63 | (100) | 5.61 | 72.1 | 1.5 | 217 |
| Dobrich | 1,411 | 15.62 | 96.3 | 3.15 | 70.8 | 10.2 | 114 |
| Kardzhali | 2,777 | 15.74 | (100) | 3.93 | 74.6 | 0.9 | 137 |
| Kyustendil | 1,460 | 12.77 | 99.3 | 5.77 | 71.1 | 2.5 | 191 |
| Lovech | 1,523 | 11.40 | 93.9 | 4.47 | 71.3 | 7.0 | 144 |
| Montana | 1,521 | 12.83 | 91.1 | 7.46 | 70.3 | 5.6 | 252 |
| Pazardzhik | 1,598 | 11.94 | 93.0 | 7.28 | 71.8 | 6.5 | 302 |
| Pernik | 1,563 | 13.57 | 92.9 | 2.61 | 71.3 | 1.3 | 61 |
| Pleven | 1,233 | 3.19 | 93.8 | 11.60 | 72.3 | 7.1 | 398 |
| Plovdiv | 1,599 | 7.82 | 91.5 | 8.38 | 73.6 | 5.4 | 419 |
| Razgrad | 2,362 | 13.51 | (100) | 5.20 | 70.7 | 6.5 | 138 |
| Ruse | 2,170 | 9.63 | 95.5 | 6.24 | 72.0 | 8.2 | 269 |
| Silistra | 1,964 | 14.03 | 95.4 | 5.02 | 70.2 | 5.2 | 198 |
| Sliven | 1,859 | 14.60 | 90.3 | 4.92 | 70.8 | 8.1 | 180 |
| Smolyan | 1,450 | 13.77 | (100) | 5.90 | 73.4 | 2.1 | 189 |
| Sofia | 1,788 | 11.01 | 84.2 | 5.85 | 72.6 | 1.5 | 216 |
| Sofia (capital city) | 1,767 | 6.94 | 91.6 | 5.69 | 74.8 | 2.5 | 308 |
| Stara Zagora | 1,430 | 11.29 | 92.5 | 5.17 | 72.4 | 7.8 | 201 |
| Targovishte | 2,056 | 12.32 | 97.3 | 6.16 | 70.8 | 7.5 | 171 |
| Haskovo | 1,849 | 13.82 | 93.5 | 3.84 | 72.5 | 4.9 | 165 |
| Shumen | 1,705 | 13.25 | 98.9 | 3.03 | 71.3 | 2.5 | 115 |
| Yambol | 1,662 | 15.53 | 92.6 | 3.83 | 71.5 | 11.6 | 129 |
| National Average | 1,678 | 9.71 | 93.5 | 5.90 | 71.9 | 4.8 | 235 |



Security and justice

| Indicator | Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months (%) | Share of pending criminal cases (%) | Workloads of the criminal judges in office (composite index) | Crimes against the person and property (number of crimes per 1,000 population) | Share of cleared crimes against the person and property (%) |
|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|
| District | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 |
| Blagoevgrad | 87 | 14.0 | 1.1 | 8.9 | 56.9 |
| Burgas | 89 | 13.0 | 0.9 | 12.5 | 48.18 |
| Varna | 91 | 6.7 | 2.4 | 14.5 | 39.02 |
| Veliko Tarnovo | 91 | 10.8 | 2.0 | 10.8 | 58.18 |
| Vidin | 96 | 9.4 | 2.4 | 14.1 | 55.04 |
| Vratsa | 97 | 3.9 | 0.6 | 16.4 | 54.65 |
| Gabrovo | 88 | 8.1 | 1.9 | 9.6 | 72.27 |
| Dobrich | 91 | 10.0 | 3.6 | 9.9 | 57.81 |
| Kardzhali | 93 | 6.0 | 2.5 | 5.1 | 65.45 |
| Kyustendil | 83 | 9.9 | 3.0 | 10.2 | 47.62 |
| Lovech | 89 | 8.1 | 1.4 | 11.9 | 54.46 |
| Montana | 77 | 15.0 | 3.7 | 12.3 | 52.14 |
| Pazardzhik | 95 | 6.6 | 0.1 | 7.7 | 52.41 |
| Pernik | 89 | 11.0 | 0.5 | 11.4 | 51.33 |
| Pleven | 93 | 9.2 | 2.6 | 11.5 | 49.57 |
| Plovdiv | 90 | 7.3 | 1.3 | 8.1 | 51.16 |
| Razgrad | 90 | 7.3 | 2.1 | 9.2 | 65.43 |
| Ruse | 90 | 8.4 | 0.1 | 9.3 | 52.77 |
| Silistra | 96 | 9.8 | 0.4 | 8.5 | 61.88 |
| Sliven | 93 | 6.7 | 0.3 | 11.3 | 59.89 |
| Smolyan | 95 | 9.6 | 6.6 | 5.1 | 62.91 |
| Sofia | 78 | 20.3 | 1.5 | 9.7 | 53.8 |
| Sofia (capital city) | 85 | 18.7 | 2.3 | 11.7 | 32.63 |
| Stara Zagora | 89 | 10.7 | 1.4 | 12.3 | 47.54 |
| Targovishte | 92 | 5.8 | 5.5 | 8.6 | 68.23 |
| Haskovo | 89 | 8.9 | 1.5 | 10.5 | 60.45 |
| Shumen | 97 | 4.9 | 2.9 | 9.0 | 63.67 |
| Yambol | 88 | 13.2 | 1.7 | 11.0 | 61.28 |
| National Average | 89 | 11.6 | 0.0 | 11.6 | 49.15 |


Environment

| Indicator | Generated household waste (kg/person/year) | Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%) | Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage networks connected to waste water treatment plants (%) | Share of population in settlements with public sewerage networks (%) | Share of forest areas in the district's total territory (%) | Share of degraded land in the district's total territory (%) | Installed RES capacities (kW/person) |
|-------------------------|--|--|---|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| District | 2021 | 2021 | 2021 | 2021 | 2022 | 2022 | 2023 |
| Blagoevgrad | 360 | 41.2 | 37.4 | 83.7 | 51.5 | 0.11 | 1.00 |
| Burgas | 481 | 93.6 | 71.1 | 78.5 | 40.9 | 0.25 | 0.43 |
| Varna | 512 | 84.8 | 85.6 | 85.8 | 29.1 | 0.51 | 0.18 |
| Veliko Tarnovo | 426 | 99.8 | 61.8 | 68.3 | 23.4 | 0.24 | 0.44 |
| Vidin | 355 | 18.3 | 49.8 | 54.8 | 26.3 | 0.25 | 0.68 |
| Vratsa | 332 | 54.4 | 51.1 | 55.7 | 15.3 | 0.22 | 0.50 |
| Gabrovo | 427 | 87.3 | 72.8 | 83.3 | 39.7 | 0.11 | 0.10 |
| Dobrich | 450 | 95.3 | 70.6 | 70.6 | 12.1 | 0.15 | 3.70 |
| Kardzhali | 239 | 12.1 | 37.2 | 42.7 | 54.2 | 0.14 | 1.56 |
| Kyustendil | 312 | 46.6 | 62.0 | 70.3 | 41.9 | 0.63 | 1.41 |
| Lovech | 379 | 7.3 | 56.0 | 59.9 | 36.1 | 0.16 | 0.54 |
| Montana | 333 | 92.2 | 35.3 | 59.6 | 23.2 | 0.11 | 0.46 |
| Pazardzhik | 480 | 72.3 | 43.7 | 71.1 | 54.3 | 0.42 | 5.51 |
| Pernik | 531 | 99.9 | 74.3 | 79.4 | 40.6 | 0.96 | 0.11 |
| Pleven | 438 | 82.7 | 53.3 | 57.3 | 7.3 | 0.18 | 0.89 |
| Plovdiv | 495 | 61.5 | 73.8 | 75.9 | 32.7 | 0.17 | 1.00 |
| Razgrad | 481 | 10.1 | 41.9 | 41.5 | 22.4 | 0.16 | 0.04 |
| Ruse | 442 | 68.4 | 67.6 | 67.3 | 14.6 | 0.53 | 0.16 |
| Silistra | 413 | 19.5 | 51.0 | 51.0 | 14.6 | 0.41 | 0.40 |
| Sliven | 403 | 72.8 | 56.7 | 62.6 | 42.4 | 0.38 | 0.89 |
| Smolyan | 349 | 52.4 | 44.0 | 72.9 | 70.6 | 0.09 | 2.79 |
| Sofia | 501 | 16.7 | 41.3 | 77.0 | 47.1 | 0.46 | 0.34 |
| Sofia (capital city) | 522 | 99.7 | 96.4 | 96.6 | 32.9 | 1.43 | 0.06 |
| Stara Zagora | 422 | 56.6 | 64.1 | 66.3 | 31.7 | 3.34 | 1.86 |
| Targovishte | 319 | 83.3 | 44.9 | 52.7 | 26.6 | 0.13 | 0.14 |
| Haskovo | 319 | 98.3 | 53.2 | 71.3 | 32.4 | 0.15 | 1.19 |
| Shumen | 370 | 45.4 | 53.0 | 56.7 | 30.0 | 0.23 | 0.26 |
| Yambol | 371 | 90.8 | 68.7 | 70.9 | 15.2 | 0.18 | 1.25 |
| National Average | 445 | 74.0 | 66.8 | 74.8 | 33.4 | 0.43 | 0.85 |

Culture and tourism

| Indicator | Visits to cinemas (number / 1,000 population) | Visits to theaters (number/ 1,000 population) | Visits to museums (number/ 1,000 population) | Visits to libraries (number/ 1,000 population) | Number of beds in accommodation facilities (number/ 1,000 population) | Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/ 1,000 population) | Share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector (%) |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|--|--|---|--|
| District | 2022 | 2021 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2022 | 2021 |
| Blagoevgrad | 333 | 63 | 454 | 619 | 70.7 | 4,799 | 0.51 |
| Burgas | 674 | 107 | 597 | 651 | 374.5 | 23,733 | 1.17 |
| Varna | 963 | 129 | 390 | 303 | 144.3 | 9,451 | 1.44 |
| Veliko Tarnovo | 529 | 63 | 1,812 | 1,115 | 25.3 | 1,545 | 0.66 |
| Vidin | 320 | 154 | 540 | 484 | 14.4 | 911 | 0.17 |
| Vratsa | 303 | 61 | 143 | 542 | 8.6 | 731 | 0.40 |
| Gabrovo | 336 | 160 | 3,340 | 353 | 38.2 | 2,152 | 1.20 |
| Dobrich | 118 | 118 | 988 | 572 | 196.9 | 9,449 | 0.25 |
| Kardzhali | 40 | 37 | 82 | 257 | 17.3 | 869 | 0.93 |
| Kyustendil | 288 | 50 | 699 | 322 | 39.0 | 1,753 | 0.19 |
| Lovech | 192 | 30 | 930 | 194 | 37.9 | 2,605 | 0.17 |
| Montana | 164 | 49 | 128 | 0 | 12.6 | 736 | 0.42 |
| Pazardzhik | 169 | 152 | 705 | 286 | 36.2 | 3,732 | 0.48 |
| Pernik | 625 | 0 | 399 | 207 | 5.1 | 329 | 0.33 |
| Pleven | 392 | 57 | 612 | 193 | 6.0 | 529 | 0.2,1 |
| Plovdiv | 705 | 118 | 643 | 232 | 21.6 | 1,965 | 0.75 |
| Razgrad | 215 | 164 | 415 | 229 | 6.0 | 497 | 0.25 |
| Ruse | 688 | 178 | 618 | 440 | 13.1 | 909 | 0.51 |
| Silistra | 110 | 65 | 336 | 4,055 | 8.0 | 495 | 0.2,1 |
| Sliven | 70 | 81 | 551 | 605 | 12.7 | 527 | 0.32 |
| Smolyan | 137 | 42 | 266 | 181 | 134.6 | 7,993 | 0.09 |
| Sofia | 65 | 0 | 1094 | 0 | 38.1 | 2,871 | 0.42 |
| Sofia (capital city) | 1,315 | 274 | 490 | 1,059 | 11.9 | 1,614 | 1.42 |
| Stara Zagora | 489 | 161 | 751 | 395 | 17.3 | 1,703 | 0.41 |
| Targovishte | 134 | 165 | 205 | 133 | 6.1 | 360 | 0.28 |
| Haskovo | 51 | 55 | 152 | 211 | 13.2 | 900 | 2.41 |
| Shumen | 66 | 43 | 966 | 1,307 | 11.9 | 506 | 0.07 |
| Yambol | 391 | 128 | 124 | 432 | 6.6 | 437 | 0.19 |
| National Average | 590 | 129 | 619 | 584 | 54.9 | 3,739 | 1.02 |