

Vidin district

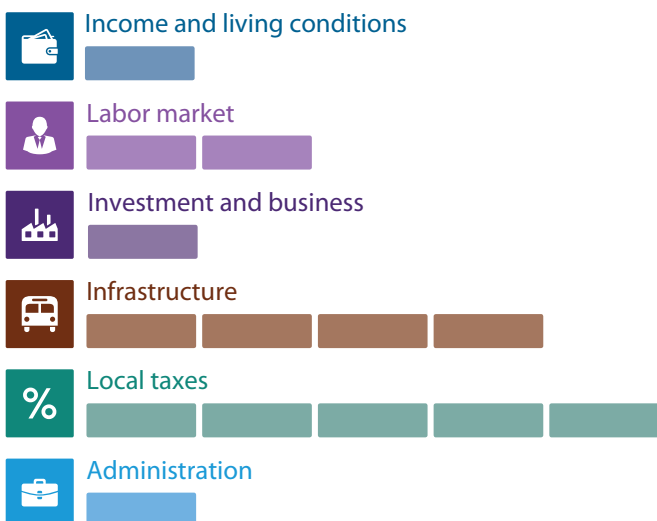
▶ Population (2021)	75,408
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,033
▶ Number of settlements	140
▶ Share of urban population (%)	63.7



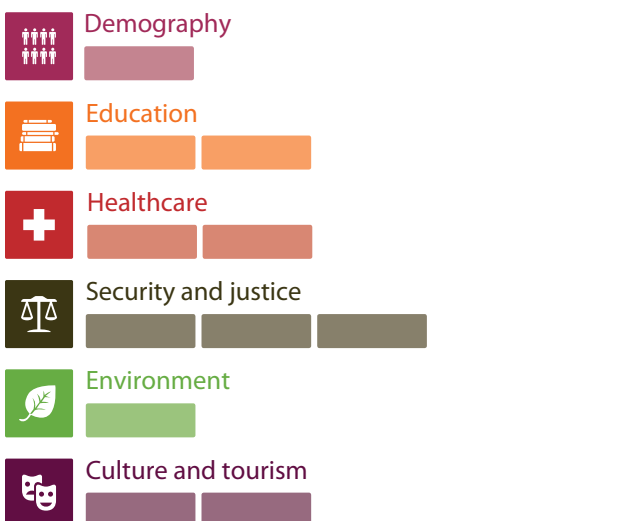
Vidin is among the districts with the worst indicators for incomes and quality of life. The educational structure of the workforce is improving, but unemployment remains extremely high. Investment and business activity is relatively weak, and the infrastructure is not sufficiently developed. In 2023, 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.