Kardzhali District

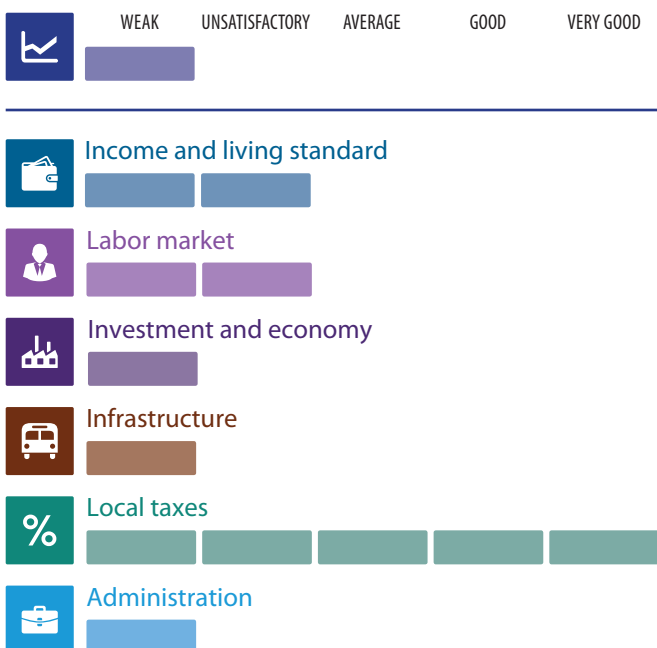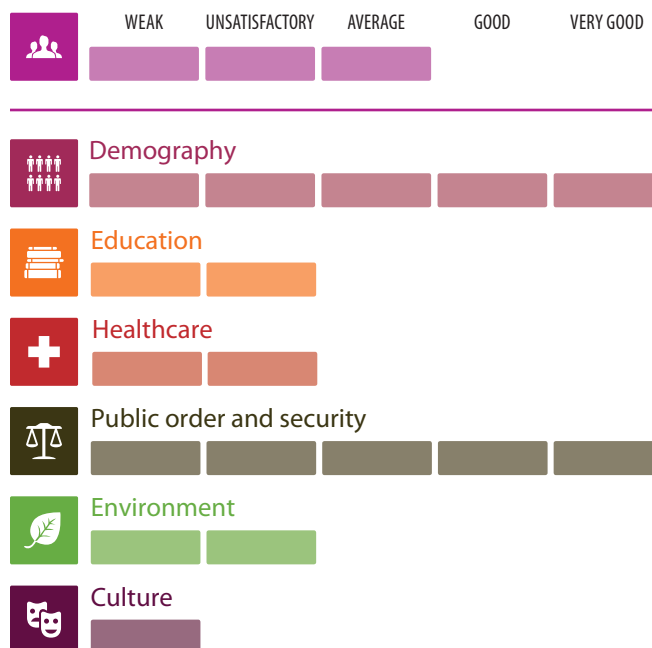|	
▶ Population (2019)	158,204
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,209.1
▶ Number of settlements	468
▶ Share of urban population (%)	40.4

In 2018, GDP in Kardzhali district registered a considerable increase, but it still remained far below the national average. Salaries had also been rising at a fast rate, yet they too remained relatively low. On a national scale, Kardzhali continues to be the district with the lowest economic activity and the most unfavorable educational structure of the workforce. In 2018, investment activity again remained weak. Utilization of European funds in the district is low. Kardzhali is among the districts with relatively low taxation. The performance of the district in the indicators for local administration and the services it provides remained extremely weak in 2020. Against the general background of population ageing in the country, the demographic situation in Kardzhali district looks favorable. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education remain low. In 2020, the educational results of the students from the district were once again among the lowest in the country. Healthcare in Kardzhali suffers from a serious shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The workloads of the local criminal judges are small and this affects the speed of delivery of justice. The number of registered crimes is small and their detection rate is high. A relatively small share of the population of Kardzhali district lives in settlements with public sewerage. The intensity of the district's cultural life is weak.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WEAK	UNSATISFACTORY	AVERAGE	GOOD	VERY GOOD

- Income and living standard
- Labor market
- Investment and economy
- Infrastructure
- Local taxes
- Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

WEAK	UNSATISFACTORY	AVERAGE	GOOD	VERY GOOD

- Demography
- Education
- Healthcare
- Public order and security
- Environment
- Culture

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

In 2018, GDP in Kardzhali district registered a considerable increase, yet it still remained far below the national average – 8,500 BGN/person, versus the national average of 15,600 BGN/person. Salaries have also been rising at rates above the national averages, yet staying relatively low in absolute terms. The gross annual salary in 2018 was 10,400 BGN, whereas the average nationwide was 13,800 BGN. Some growth, albeit weaker, was also noted in 2019 in household incomes, which reached 4,173 BGN/person against the average of 6,013 BGN/person in the country.

Although the economy and incomes in Kardzhali district had picked up somewhat, in 2019 poverty levels still remained relatively high. The proportion of people living in material deprivation was 23%, compared to 19.9% for the country, while those living below the poverty line made up 35.2%, versus the national average of 22.6%.

Labor market

On a national scale, Kardzhali continued to be the district with the lowest economic activity in the country, although it registered a considerable improvement compared to the year before. In 2019 the rate of economic activity reached 65.7%, against the national average of 74.3%. The rise in this indicator was also accompanied by a considerable increase in employment, yet at 63.7%, it still remained far below the national average rate of 70.1%.

Kardzhali is also among the districts with the most unfavorable educational characteristics of the workforce, even though in the past few years there has been some improvement. In 2019 the share of people with a university degree was 18.6%, against 28% as the national average. Those with primary or lower education made up a whole 33.7%, compared to the national figure of 17.6%.

Investment and economy

In 2018, investment activity in Kardzhali district still remained relatively weak. It was also the district with the lowest number of enterprises, and figures even showed a decline to 32 per 1,000 persons, far below the national average of 59 per 1,000 persons. Foreign and local investment was also extremely limited. FTA expenditures amounted to 1,313 BGN/person, half the national figure of 2,750 BGN/person. Cumulative FDI also registered levels twice as low as the national average – 1,908 EUR/person, versus 3,560 EUR/person respectively.

The dynamics of the above indicators accounts for the low levels of production value in Kardzhali district. In 2018 it amounted to only 9,000 BGN/person, against 25,900 BGN/person as the national average.

As regards utilization of EU funding, Kardzhali district has also been lagging behind. By 15 June 2020 payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,313 BGN/person, while the national average was 1,976 BGN/person. Within the district, even in the municipality with the highest rate of utilization – that of the city of Kardzhali – the relative amounts of such payments were lower than the average ones nationwide.

Infrastructure

Kardzhali district does not have a particularly well developed infrastructure. The density of the railroad network is considerably below average – 2.1 km/100 sq.km, against 3.6 km/100 sq.km respectively. Although the road network is denser (20.2 km/100 sq.km, compared to an average of 17.9 km for the country), in 2019 the share of highways and first-class roads remained lower than the national average – 11.2%, against 18.6%. These statistics may explain the lower quality of roads in the district – 33.3% of road surfaces were in good condition, compared to 41.4% across the country.

Internet access in the district is limited. In 2019, 67.5% of households were connected to the internet, compared to the average of 75.1% nationwide.

Local taxes

In 2020, the municipalities in Kardzhali district again kept most local tax rates unchanged. Kardzhali is among the districts with relatively low taxation. The average rates of all monitored local taxes are lower than the respective national averages. The difference is especially large as regards the retail trade tax rate. In Kardzhali district it is 8.04 BGN/sq.m on average, compared to 12.93 BGN/sq.m. for the country.

The average rate for taxi transportation in the district is also significantly lower than the national one – 322 BGN per year, compared to 498 BGN respectively.

Administration

In 2020, Kardzhali district again registered extremely poor results on the indicators for its local administration and the services it provides.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-administration and on the provision of one-stop shop services continued to show worse results than in the country on average. The 2020 ratings for the performance of the district e-government were even lower than in 2019, with 2.56 out of 5 p., whereas the national average was 3.10 p.

The Active transparency ratings of the local administration showed no progress either and in 2020 they were 54.1%, compared to the national average of 70.7%. Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipalities in Chernoochene and Dzhebel, which got ratings of over 70%, while the lowest ones below 50% were registered by the municipalities of Kardzhali city and Momchilgrad.

▣ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ▬▬▬

▦ Demography ▪▪▪▪▪

Against the general background of population ageing in the country, the demographic conditions in Kardzhali district again looked favorable in 2019.

The district remained among those with the highest natural growth rate, despite its negative value. In 2019 there was again a slight increase, taking this rate to –3.6‰ against –6.7‰ in the country. Kardzhali is also one of the few districts to attract new residents and its positive net migration figure went sharply up in 2019 for the second year in a row to reach 37.2‰.

Age dependency ratios continue to rise but they still remain below the country average.

Kardzhali remains the district with the smallest proportion of urban population – 40%, versus the national average of 74%. Nevertheless, the average density of the population living in urban areas is considerably higher – 1,957 persons/sq.km, against 1,510 persons/sq.km on average nationwide.

▤ Education ▬▬

In 2019, the figures for enrolment in 5th-8th grade in Kardzhali district again remained lower than the national averages – 80,3%, against 86,6% respectively. At the same time, the proportions of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education were still comparatively small. The numbers of primary and secondary school teachers continued their increase in 2019 and reached 100 per 1,000 students, versus the national average of 89 per 1,000 students.

In 2020, the educational results of the students from the district were once again among the lowest in the country. The average grade in the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was 3.92, compared to 4.20 nationally, and the district again registered the highest share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades – 21%, whereas the national figure was 8%. Scores in the 2020 external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade were also relatively low – 31.9 points for the district on average, compared to 36.3 points in the country.

✚ Healthcare ▬▬

In 2019, the healthcare system in Kardzhali district again registered a serious shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The average proportion of GPs was 1 GP per 2,985 persons, whereas nationally it was 1 GP per 1,688 persons on average. Access to specialist physicians was severely limited.

The number of hospital beds in local general hospitals was as low as 351 beds per 100,000 persons, while the national average was 550 per 100,000 persons.

It is indeed the lack of access to doctors and hospital beds that probably accounts for the relatively low hospitalization figures in Kardzhali district. In 2019 they were 143 per 1,000 persons, versus the national average of 254 per 1,000 persons. The assumption is that the population seeks medical care outside the area.

⚖ Public order and security ▪▪▪▪▪▪

In 2019, Kardzhali district continued to perform relatively well in the field of justice, and the indicators regarding security showed equally good results.

The workloads of the local criminal judges are smaller than average and this affects the speedy delivery of justice. In 2019 there were on average 7.5 cases a month per one judge, compared to 9.1 cases nationally. 94% of criminal cases were closed within 3 months, against the national average of 90%.

The number of crimes in the district is relatively low, and detection rates are high. In 2019, the registered crimes against the person and property amounted to 5.1 per 1,000 persons, versus 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate was 66.7%, versus the national figure of 52.1%.

☘ Environment ▬▬

The volumes of carbon dioxide emissions in the district of Kardzhali are tens of times lower than the average ones in Bulgaria – in 2018 they amounted to 5.8 t/sq.km, compared to the national average of 274.8 t/sq.km.

A relatively low share of the population in Kardzhali district lives in areas with public sewerage networks – 45.3%, compared to the national average of 76.2%. The share of the population living in settlements with sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants is as small as 38.7%, compared to the average of 63.9% countrywide. These figures find their explanation in the low proportion of urban population.

The amounts of waste generated annually by households were small in 2018 – 253 kg/person, versus the national average of 409 kg/person. At the same time, the proportion handed over for treatment and recycling was also relatively small – 12.8%, compared to the national average of 70.9%.

▣ Culture ▬

Cultural life in Kardzhali district retained its weak intensity in 2019. What is more, all indicators in the category show a decline compared to the year before. Visits to the local cinemas numbered 90 per 1,000 persons, against the average of 659 per 1,000 persons for the country. Visits to the local theaters and museums dropped respectively to 154 per 1,000 persons, with a national average of 362 per 1,000 persons, and 100 per 1,000 persons, against an average of 770 per 1,000 persons in the country.

Interest in the local libraries is relatively low. In 2019 Kardzhali district reported 296 visits per 1,000 persons, versus 683 per 1,000 persons in the country on average.

Key indicators for the district of Kardzhali

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,485	8,472	n.a.	**15,615**
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,057	4,057	4,173	**6,013**
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,285	10,419	n.a.	**13,775**
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	37.7	35.2	**22.6**
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	60.5	58.6	63.7	**70.1**
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	1.6	3.4	2.0	**4.2**
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	33.1	35.7	33.7	**17.6**
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	13.8	16.8	18.6	**28.0**
Production value (BGN/person)	7,687	9,028	n.a.	**25,855**
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	984	1,313	n.a.	**2,750**
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,697	1,908	n.a.	**3,560**
Share of households with Internet (%)	67.3	84.4	67.5	**75.1**
Share of roads in good condition (%)	30.4	30.5	33.3	**41.4**
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	20.5	20.2	20.2	**17.9**
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	55.4	54.0	54.1	**70.7**

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	−3.9	−3.7	−3.6	**−6.7**
Net migration rate (‰)	5.7	15.3	37.2	**−0.3**
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.56	3.78	3.92	**4.20**
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7th grade (points)**	33.7	34.8	31.9	**36.3**
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	84	94	100	**89**
Net enrolment of the population in 5th-8th grade (%)	87.0	83.5	80.3	**86.6**
Share of people with health insurance (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	**88.8**
Population per one GP (number of people)	2,475	2,576	2,985	**1,688**
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	5.3	5.2	5.1	**11.1**
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	7.6	5.1	7.5	**9.1**
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	44.8	45.3	n.a.	**76.2**
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	253	253	n.a.	**409**
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	5.1	12.8	n.a.	**70.9**
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	41	100	90	**659**
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	165	164	154	**362**

* The data for 2019 are included in the 2020 study. The same also applies for the previous years.
** The data refer to the 2019-2020 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2020. The same also applies for the previous years.