

Pazardzhik District

▶ Population (2019)	252,776
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,456.9
▶ Number of settlements	118
▶ Share of urban population (%)	62.8



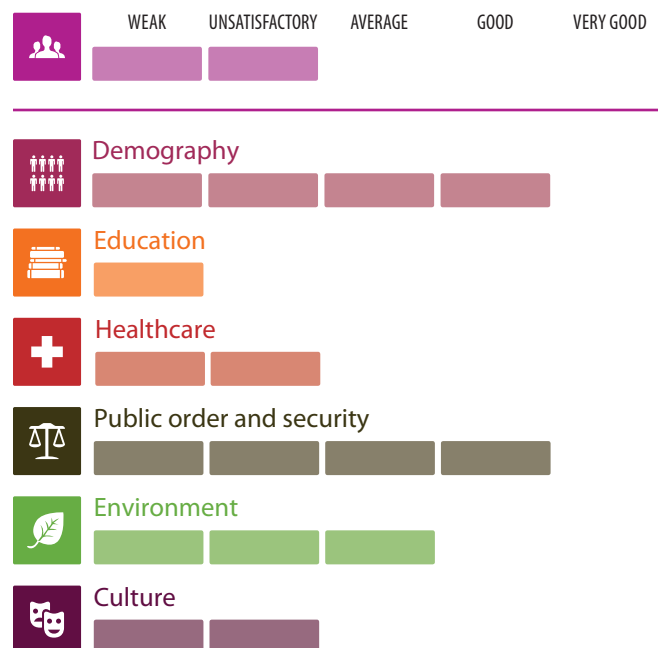
Both GDP and salaries in Pazardzhik district have recorded an increase, but they still remain below the national average. As a result, poverty levels in the region are high. In 2019, economic activity in Pazardzhik district went up significantly, which was accompanied by a leap in employment and a slight rise in unemployment. The local labor market is still facing the challenge presented by the educational profile of the workforce. Investment activity in the district is not very strong. The density of the road network, as well as the share of first-class roads and highways, is lower than the national average. The average rate of local taxes in the

municipalities of Pazardzhik district is relatively low. Age dependency ratios in the district continue to be more favorable than the national average, although over the past few years they keep rising. The performance of Pazardzhik district as regards the indicators for education is weak. The number of hospital beds is relatively high. Registered crimes are relatively few and the detection rate is high. The amount of household waste generated by the population in the past two years is less than in the country average. At the same time, the share handed over for treatment and recycling is extremely small. The intensity of the district's cultural life is low.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Income and living standard ■■

After five years of fluctuating growth, in 2017 and 2018 GDP per capita in Pazardzhik district recorded a considerable and stable increase and reached 9,200 BGN, though it still remained far lower than the national average of 15,600 BGN. Salaries also rose considerably and in 2018 went up to 10,500 BGN per annum, compared to 13,800 BGN in the country on average. In 2019, however, incomes in the district registered a decrease and they fell to 4,180 BGN, which is far below the average of 6,013 BGN nationally.

The consequence of all this is the high poverty level of the local population. In 2019, the share of people living with material deprivation was 26.5%, compared to 19.9% in the country, and those living below the national poverty line made up 37.0% of the residents, versus the national average of 22.6%.

Labor market ■■■■

In 2019, the economic activity in Pazardzhik district increased considerably (by 7 p.p.) and reached the national average of 74%. This rise was accompanied by high employment growth rates and a slight increase in unemployment. In 2019, the employment rate in the district reached 69.1%, compared to 70.1% in the country, and the unemployment rate went up to 5.1%, versus the national average of 4.2%.

The educational profile of the workforce remains a persistent challenge for the local labor market. In 2019, the share of people with a university education decreased for the second consecutive year and came down to 17.5%, against an average of 28.0% in the country, while those with primary education or lower constituted 22.8%, versus 17.6% nationally.

The demographic replacement ratio of people aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64 reached 66.1%, but it remained slightly higher than the national average. This means that for every 100 people who will leave the workforce in the next few years, there are 66 people who could enter the labor market.

Investment and economy ■■■

Investment activity in Pazardzhik district is not particularly strong. In 2018, the number of enterprises remained low – 45 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 59 per 1,000 persons. FTA acquisition expenditures in the same year marked an increase by over 1/3, but at 2,237 BGN/person, they remained lower than the national figure of 2,750 BGN/person. Foreign investment has registered only a negligible rise in the past few years and its relative amount remains relatively low – 2,020 EUR/person versus 3,560 EUR/person nationally.

Production value in Pazardzhik district continues to sustain relatively low levels – 14,800 BGN/person in 2018, against 25,900 BGN/person as the national average.

As regards utilization of EU funding, Pazardzhik district is also lagging behind. By 15 June 2020 the payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,195 BGN/person, while the national average was 1,976 BGN/person. Within the district, the municipality with the highest rate of utilization was that of Panagyurishte.

Infrastructure ■■■

In spite of Pazardzhik district's geographic location and the high density of its railroad network, the development of its infrastructure is below the national average. Smaller than the national average figures for 2019 are those for the road network density – 16.2 km/100 sq.km, compared to an average of 17.9 km for the country, and for the share of motorways and first-class roads – 15.2%, against the national average of 18.6%. However, after three years of deterioration, the quality of the roads in the district has been improving so that the road surface in good condition already constitutes 44.4%, compared to 41.4% across the country on average.

The access of the population to the internet is gradually improving, though it still remains relatively limited. In 2019, 68.3% of the households in Pazardzhik district were connected to the internet, compared to the average of 75.1% nationwide.

Local taxes ■■■■■

The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Pazardzhik district remained relatively low in 2020. Out of the five monitored taxes, the only exception was the tax rate on the transfer of immovable non-residential property of legal entities, which was higher, albeit slightly, than the national average.

The local rates on retail trade and taxi transportation were lower by over 30%, while in the tax on transport vehicles the difference with the average national rate was nearly 20%.

Administration ■■■

The local authorities' self-evaluation on the development of e-administration and on the provision of one-stop shop services showed practically no change in 2020 and its results were considerably lower than they were in the country on average. The performance of the district's e-government was rated at 2.80 p. out of 5 p., versus the national average of 3.22 p., and the provision of one-stop shop services – at 2.78 p. out of 5 p., compared to 3.09 p. nationally.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration also remained relatively low in 2020, with 65.4% against the national average of 70.7%. Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipalities of Peshtera and Panagyurishte.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Although in Pazardzhik district the natural population growth rate has been traditionally higher than the country's average, in 2019 it recorded rates equal to the national figure of -6.7% . The number of people moving out of the district registered a slight decrease, with the net migration figure for 2019 at -3.9% .

Age dependency ratios continue to be more favorable than in the country on average, although over the past few years they have been steadily rising. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 for 2019 reached 138%, compared to 150% in the country, and of people aged 65+ to those aged 15-64 – 32.6%, against 33.8% nationally.

The proportion of urban population in Pazardzhik district remains relatively low – 62.8%, versus the national average of 73.7%. Nevertheless, the average density of the population living in urban areas is about 1/4 higher – 2,081 persons/sq.km, against 1,510 persons/sq.km on average nationwide.

Education

The performance of Pazardzhik district on the indicators in the education category is poor. In 2019 enrolment in 5th-8th grade remained relatively low at 82%, against the national average of 87%. At the same time, the percentages of repeaters and drop-outs from primary and secondary education reached figures higher than the national averages.

The relative number of primary and secondary school teachers has shown no increase from 2018, though it is still higher than the average one in the country, with 92 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to the national average of 89 teachers per 1,000.

The 2020 figures for the average results of the students in the district were also considerably below the national averages. The average score in the 2020 external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 31.3 points, versus 36.3 points in the country. The average score in the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.07 in the district, compared to 4.20 nationally, while the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was 13.2%, against 8.2% nationwide.

Healthcare

The relative number of GPs in the district is close to the national average – 1,631 persons are cared for by 1 GP, compared to 1,688 persons per 1 GP as the country's average. In 2019, the district still suffered from a relative shortage of specialist physicians.

The provision of beds in the local general hospitals is relatively good. In 2019, there were 654 beds per 100,000 persons, versus the national average of 550 beds per 100,000 persons.

Child mortality continues to be relatively high. The proportion of people treated in the local hospitals in 2019 was also con-

siderable – 264 per 1,000 persons, compared to 254 per 1,000 nationally.

Public order and security

The workloads of the local criminal judges are comparatively larger than average, but in 2019 delivery of justice again remained relatively speedy. In 2019 one judge heard an average of 10.4 cases a month, compared to 9.1 cases nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is falling but still remains relatively high – 92%, 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 dropped to around 8.8 per 1,000 persons, versus 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate was 61.2%, compared to the national figure of 52.1%.

Environment

Carbon dioxide emissions in the district of Pazardzhik continue to be many times lower than the average ones in Bulgaria – in 2018 they were 31.3 t/sq.km, compared to the national average of 274.8 t/sq.km.

The share of the population in Pazardzhik district with access to public sewerage systems has changed very little in the past few years, even though it remains slightly below the national average – 72%, compared to 76% in the country. The share of the population with sewerage connected to wastewater treatment plants is as small as 44%, compared to the average of 64% nationally.

Over the past two years, the amounts of waste generated annually by households have been lower than the national average. At the same time, the proportion handed over for treatment and recycling is extremely small – 13%, against 71% countrywide.

Culture

Cultural life in Pazardzhik district is not particularly active. Visits to the local cinemas began to be recorded again in 2019, but their number was relatively low – 190 per 1,000 persons, against the average of 659 per 1,000 persons for the country. Interest in the local theaters and libraries was also low. Theatre visits amounted to 261 per 1,000 persons, with a national average of 362 per 1,000 persons, and to libraries – 321 per 1,000 persons, against an average of 683 per 1,000 persons.

The only indicator that presents Pazardzhik district more favorably in the area of culture is that of museum visits. In 2019 the local museums attracted 864 visits per 1,000 persons, compared to 770 visits per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Key indicators for the district of Pazardzhik

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,123	9,213	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,592	4,592	4,180	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,468	10,513	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	41.4	37.0	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	64.6	63.8	69.1	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	6.2	4.7	5.1	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	22.9	23.2	22.8	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	19.1	17.8	17.5	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	13,152	14,754	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,654	2,237	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,950	2,020	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	67.8	67.8	68.3	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	45.6	41.1	44.4	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	16.3	16.2	16.2	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	62.4	68.0	65.4	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-7.0	-5.6	-6.7	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-4.1	-4.1	-3.9	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.84	3.95	4.07	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	27.6	30.4	31.3	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	83	92	92	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	84.2	82.5	82.4	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	84.4	84.7	85.8	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,572	1,667	1,631	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	9.4	9.1	8.8	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	11.5	10.8	10.4	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	72.2	72.3	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	338	339	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	5.4	13.4	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	61	0	190	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	267	246	261	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.