Silistra District

- ▶ Population (2019) — 108,018
- ▶ Territory (sq. km) — 2,846.3
- ▶ Number of settlements — 118
- ▶ Share of urban population (%) — 44.2

Despite the low base, GDP per capita in Silistra district has been growing at a relatively slower pace compared to the rest of the country. Salaries, too, remain below average. The development of the local labor market is unsatisfactory. Economic activity has been going up, but this has been accompanied by a parallel drop in employment and a rise in unemployment. Silistra is among the districts with the lowest investment activity in the country. The quality of the road surfaces is relatively good. As is typical of the less economically developed districts, the average level of local taxes in Silistra district is relatively low. The ratings of the local administration's self-assessment on the development of e-government went up considerably in 2020 and for the first time rose above the country's average.
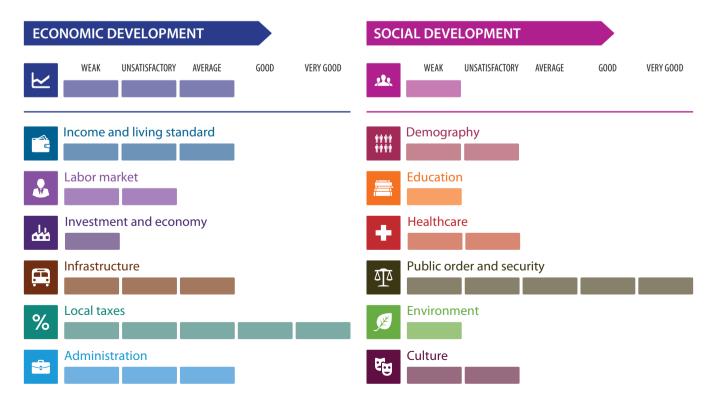
The natural growth rate in Silistra grew in 2019, but it still remains very low. Silistra is among the districts with the smallest share of urban population. The district's performance in the field of education is poor. The healthcare system in Silistra suffers from a shortage of both doctors and hospital beds. Silistra is among the highest ranking districts in terms of public order and security, but also in the last place as regards the environmental indicators. One major reason for this is the extremely small share of household waste submitted for treatment and recycling. Cultural life in the region is relatively poorly developed.

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 ▬▬▬

Despite the low base, GDP per capita in Silistra district has been growing at a relatively slower pace and in 2018 it reached 7,000 BGN/person, which is twice as low as the national average of 15,600 BGN/person. Salaries in the district have remained relatively low. The average gross annual salary in 2018 amounted to 9,400 BGN, compared to 13,800 BGN in the country. Household incomes have made a more significant increase and in 2019 they reached 5,729 BGN/household member, compared to 6,013 BGN in the country.

The relative share of the population in Silistra district living with material deprivation remained relatively small in 2019 – 15.5%, compared to 20% in the country, while the share of those living below the national poverty line was slightly above average at 24.0%, versus 22.6% nationwide.

👤 Labor market ▬▬

In 2019, the development of the labor market still remained unsatisfactory. Economic activity went up, but this was accompanied by a parallel drop in employment and a rise in unemployment. The rate of economic activity rose by almost 4 p.p. to reach 71.5%, compared to 74.3% in the country. The rate of employment shrank by 2 p.p. to 58.2% and remained very much below the national average of 70.1%. The same rate, this time upward, applies to the unemployment rate, which reached 13.3%, versus 4.2% nationally.

The labor market in Silistra district also suffers from the negative effects of the extremely poor educational structure of the workforce, even though 2018 witnessed some improvement. In 2019 the share of the population with a university degree constituted 20% of the workforce, compared to 28% countrywide, and of those with primary education or less – 30%, versus 18% nationally.

The population replacement ratio of those aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64 has been on the rise, but it still remains below the national average.

🏭 Investment and economy ▬

Silistra is among the districts with the lowest investment activity in the country (alongside Sliven district). Cumulative FDI per capita remains the lowest in the whole country and by the end of 2018 amounted to 257 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 3,560 EUR/person. At the same time, FTA expenditures have registered some increase to 1,589 BGN/person, compared to 2,750 BGN/person nationally, but this cannot compensate for their plunge in 2016.

The weakness of the economic activity in Silistra district is also manifested in the relatively small number of enterprises in the region. In 2018 they were 37 per 1,000 persons, compared to 59 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

The above tendencies are also reflected in the weak growth of production value in the district. In 2018 it was three times

as low as the country's average – 8,900 BGN/person, against 25,900 BGN/person respectively.

The municipalities in Silistra district are also lagging behind as regards the utilization of European funds. By 15 June 2020, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,406 BGN/person, compared to 1,976 BGN/person nationally.

🚌 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 highways and first-class roads is considerably below average – 11.3% in 2019, against 18.6% countrywide. Nevertheless, the quality of the road surface is relatively high – 60.2% of the roads are in good condition, versus 41.4% in the country.

In northern Bulgaria the density of railroads is typically lower, and Silistra district is no exception – its railroad density is lower than average, with 2.5 km/100 sq.km of territory, compared to 3.6 km/100 sq.km in the country.

Access of households in the district to the Internet has been rising and has reached a relatively high percentage – 76.6%, compared to the average of 75.1% nationwide.

% Local taxes ▬▬▬▬▬

As is typical of the less economically developed districts, the average level of local taxes in Silistra is relatively low. In 2020, all monitored local taxes were lower than the national averages. The biggest margin of over 1/3 occurs in the rates for retail trade and taxi transportation. The retail trade patent tax in the municipalities in Silistra district is 7.98 BGN/sq.m on average, compared to 12.93 BGN/sq.m nationally. The annual patent tax on taxi transportation is 328 BGN, versus 498 BGN in the country.

💼 Administration ▬▬▬

Along with most other districts in the country, Silistra has made a quick progress with cadastral map coverage and in 2019 it already included 97% of the district's territory, compared to 91.4% nationally.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government considerably improved in 2020 and for the first time its ratings rose above the national average – 3.44 p. out of 5.00 p. against 3.22 p. respectively. The self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop services, however, achieved lower ratings – 2.31 p. out or 5.00 p. and remained considerably below the national average of 3.09 p.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration in Silistra district remained unchanged in 2020 at 63%, versus 71% countrywide. Within the district, the highest rating was given to the municipality of Alfatar.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2019, the natural population growth rate in Silistra district went up, but it still remained very low at –9.5 ‰, compared to –6.7 ‰ in the country. The district is also losing population due to out-migration. Although for the third consecutive year the net migration rate has sustained levels that are relatively high for this district, in the last two years it has remained negative.

These processes have their effect on the age dependency ratios. In 2019 the ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 years was 178%, compared to 150% in the country, and to those aged 15-64 – 40%, versus the national average of 34%.

Silistra is one of the districts with the smallest share of urban population, with only Kardzhali recording even lower figures. In 2019, 44% of the population was living in urban areas, against 74% countrywide. Population density was twice as low as the national average.

Education

The district's performance as regards the indicators for education is poor. The enrolment rate in 5th to 8th grade continued to decline in 2019 and again remained considerably below the national average. The share of repeaters was still comparatively small, but that of dropouts from primary and secondary school remained relatively high.

The average score received by the students in Silistra district in the 2020 external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade was the lowest in the whole of Bulgaria – 26.7 p., versus 36.3 p. nationally. Similarly, the average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was among the worst in the country, with only Targovishte district achieving lower results. In Silistra the average grade was 3.86, compared to the national average of 4.20 in the country, and the share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades made up 15%, against the national average of 8%.

The relative number of teachers in primary and secondary education has continued to rise and in 2019 it reached proportions considerably higher than the national average. There are now 95 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 89 teachers per 1,000 students nationwide.

Higher education is provided only by a branch of Ruse University, with a very small number of university students in the district – just 2 students per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 students per 1,000 persons nationally.

Healthcare

In 2019, the healthcare system in Silistra district continued to suffer from a shortage of both doctors and hospital beds in the local general hospitals. The data for 2019 show one local GP caring for 2,077 persons on average, compared to 1,688 persons per doctor in the country. The shortage of specialist physicians is also acute.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals has continued to increase in the past few years, but their relative proportion remains comparatively low – 447 beds per 100,000 persons, compared to 550 per 100,000 persons in the country. The relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is 201 per 1,000 persons compared to 254 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Public order and security

In 2019, Silistra remained among the districts with the best performance in the area of public order and security. One judge heard an average of 8.1 cases a month, compared to 9.1 cases nationally, 94% of criminal cases closed within 3 months versus the average of 90% nationwide, and the share of pending cases was 6%, while in the country it was 10% on average.

Silistra district ranks third after only Smolyan and Kurdzhali as regards the number of registered crimes. In 2019 the crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 7.8 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate marked a decrease from that in 2018 but at 60% it still remained above the national average of 52%.

Environment

In 2018, Silistra was also among the worst performing districts as regards the environmental indicators (alongside Razgrad and Vidin). One major reason for the low figures is the extremely small amounts of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling – a bare 4% versus the national average of 71%. At the same time, the amounts of generated household waste were similar to the average ones countrywide – 400 kg/person annually, compared to 409 kg/person respectively.

Due to the low level of urbanization, a relatively small share of the population lives in areas with a public sewerage network – 52%, compared to the national figure of 76%. Similarly low is the share of the population whose sewerage is connected to waste water treatment plants – 44%, versus 64% nationally.

Considerably lower than in the country as a whole are the carbon dioxide emissions, which have remained stable at 12 t/sq.km, compared to 275 t/sq.km nationally.

Culture

Cultural life in Silistra district again sustained its relatively low intensity in 2019. National statistics did indeed register cinema visits in the region, after none in 2018, but their number was very much lower than in the country on average – 119 per 1,000 persons respectively. Considerably lower were also the visits to museums and libraries – 309 per 1,000 persons, compared to 770 per 1,000 persons for museums, and 485 per 1,000 persons, compared to 683 per 1,000 persons for libraries. There has been an increase in the number of visits to the local theaters over the past few years.

Key indicators for the district of Ruse

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	6,687	7,029	n.a.	**15,615**
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,201	4,201	5,729	**6,013**
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	8,672	9,434	n.a.	**13,775**
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	19.8	24.0	**22.6**
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	57.0	60.2	58.2	**70.1**
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	12.5	11.1	13.3	**4.2**
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	35.1	32.7	30.4	**17.6**
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	17.7	16.9	19.5	**28.0**
Production value (BGN/person)	8,508	8,927	n.a.	**25,855**
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,376	1,589	n.a.	**2,750**
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	324	257	n.a.	**3,560**
Share of households with Internet (%)	71.7	69.4	76.6	**75.1**
Share of roads in good condition (%)	53.2	62.1	60.2	**41.4**
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	17.8	17.8	17.8	**17.9**
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	56.2	63.0	63.0	**70.7**

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	−8.8	−10.5	−9.5	**−6.7**
Net migration rate (‰)	−3.8	−1.2	−2.1	**−0.3**
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.65	3.77	3.86	**4.20**
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7th grade (points)**	27.0	26.2	26.7	**36.3**
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	80	85	95	**89**
Net enrolment of the population in 5th-8th grade (%)	82.3	80.3	79.8	**86.6**
Share of people with health insurance (%)	87.1	87.2	88.7	**88.8**
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,712	1,998	2,077	**1,688**
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	9.2	7.1	7.8	**11.1**
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.6	6.9	8.1	**9.1**
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	51.5	51.5	n.a.	**76.2**
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	402	400	n.a.	**409**
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	1.2	4.0	n.a.	**70.9**
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	90	0	119	**659**
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	189	236	235	**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.