

REGIONAL PROFILES



indicators of development 2020

REGIONAL PROFILES

INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT

2020

IME

Institute for Market Economics

Sofia • 2020



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Abbreviations used

AIP	Access to Information Program
APIA	Access to Public Information Act
BLL	Bulgarian Language and Literature
EU	European Union
EUMIS	Information System for Management and Monitoring of EU Funds in Bulgaria
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTA	Fixed Tangible Assets
GAV	Gross Added Value
GCCA	Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GP	general practitioner
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MI	Ministry of Interior
NEE	National External Examination
NRA	National Revenue Agency
NSI	National Statistical Institute
p.	point(s)
p.p.	percentage point / percentage points
RIA	Road Infrastructure Agency
SJC	Supreme Judicial Council

Preface

For the ninth consecutive year the Institute for Market Economics presents the annual issue of Regional Profiles: Indicators of Development, the only almanac of its kind on regional development in Bulgaria. The book, better known as The Regional Profiles, has now become an established trade mark of the IME. This year its scope comprises the social and economic conditions in the regions on the eve of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The study is based on 64 indicators evaluating the economic and social environment in the country's 28 districts. All data presented in it are also available at www.regionalprofiles.bg, the Institute's specialized web page. Being organized around specific indicators allows data to be observed in their dynamics as well as to make comparisons between individual districts. Access to the most complete recent mass of 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 statistics for each district's socio-economic environment. In the present edition most data are for 2019. Exceptions are few in number and are limited to several indicators which get published with a delay of over a year: district figures on GDP per capita, those on salaries, and some indicators in investment, the environment, infrastructure, and education. Where possible, for example, in fields such as administration, local taxes and fees, as well as matriculation exam results, analysis also rests on 2020 figures.

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 on the performance of their own district in comparison with other districts in a variety of 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

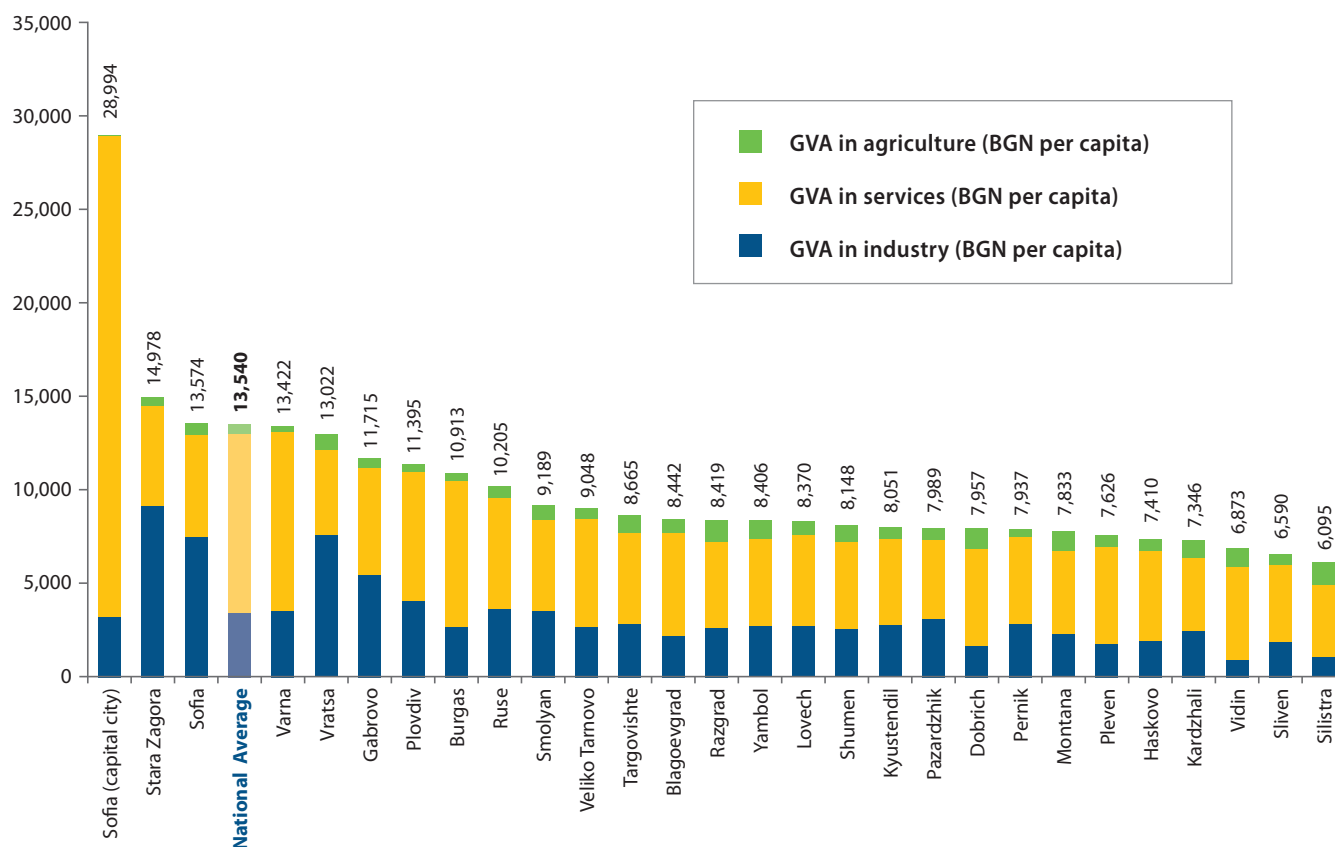
Regional profiles 2020: Indicators on the Eve of the Pandemic

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economic development in each of Bulgaria's districts during 2020 was shaped by the impact of the pandemic. The country entered the year of COVID-19 with very good economic indicators. A stable growth of 3-4% between 2015 and 2019 had brought about record employment rates, as well as stable salary increases in practically all of the country's districts. Gross added value in the country's largest districts – Sofia (capital city), Plovdiv and Varna – rose by nearly 10% (2018 data). On the eve of the pandemic the processes of transformation of the country's economy were stimulated by the transformations in industry, which moved in a direction towards higher added value, and by the growth of the digital sphere in the largest economic centers.

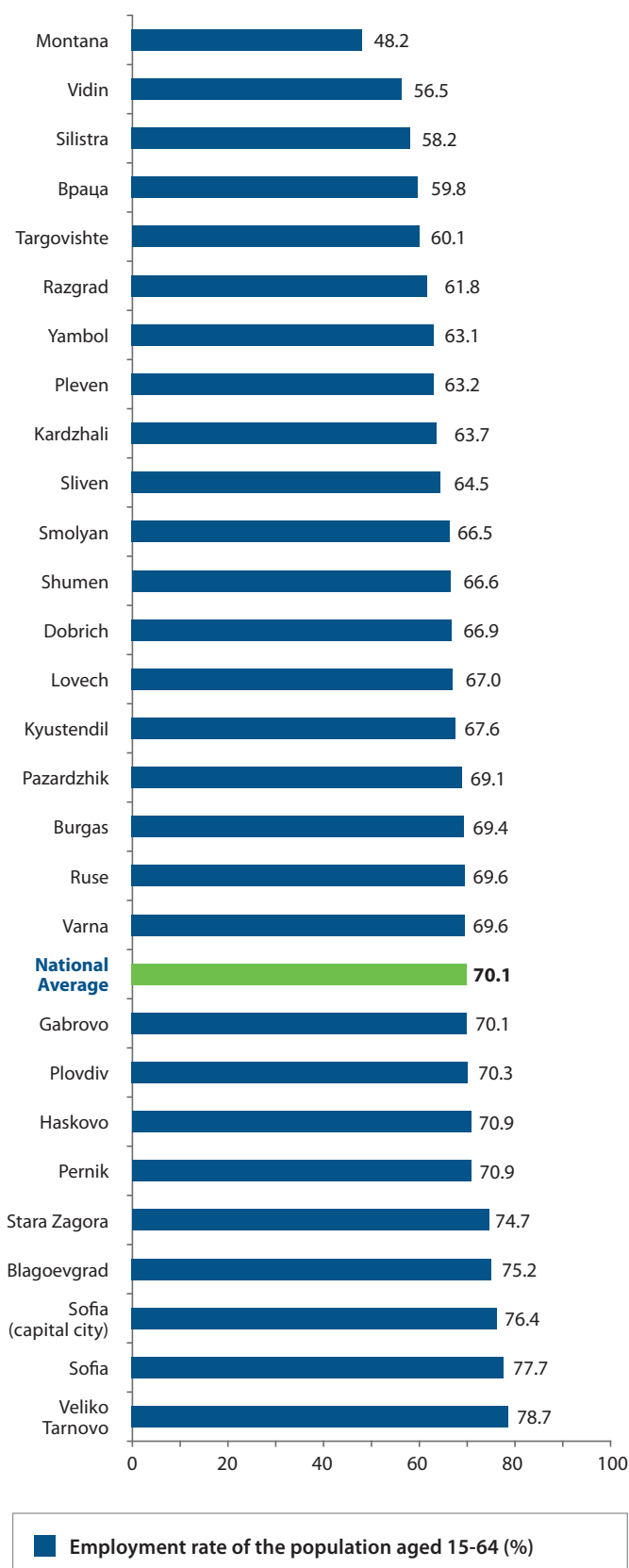
Gross value added (GVA) per capita varied between nearly 29,000 BGN in Sofia (capital city) and under 7,000 BGN in Silistra, Sliven and Vidin (Figure 1). The difference between Sofia (capital city) and the lowest ranking districts was four-fold, while across the country (minus the capital city) it could be more than two-fold. There were differences in the districts' economic profiles. Sofia (capital city) was dominated by the service economy which generated 89% of the added value. The tourist focus of Varna and Burgas also entailed serious dominance of the services in these leading seaside districts, which accounted for a whole 71% of the value added there. In terms of industry's contributing share to the value added, the strongest industrial regions in Bulgaria were Stara Zagora, Vratsa, Sofia and Gabrovo.

Figure 1. Gross value added per capita by district in 2018



Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

Figure 2. Employment rate of the population in 2019 by district (%)



Source: NSI.

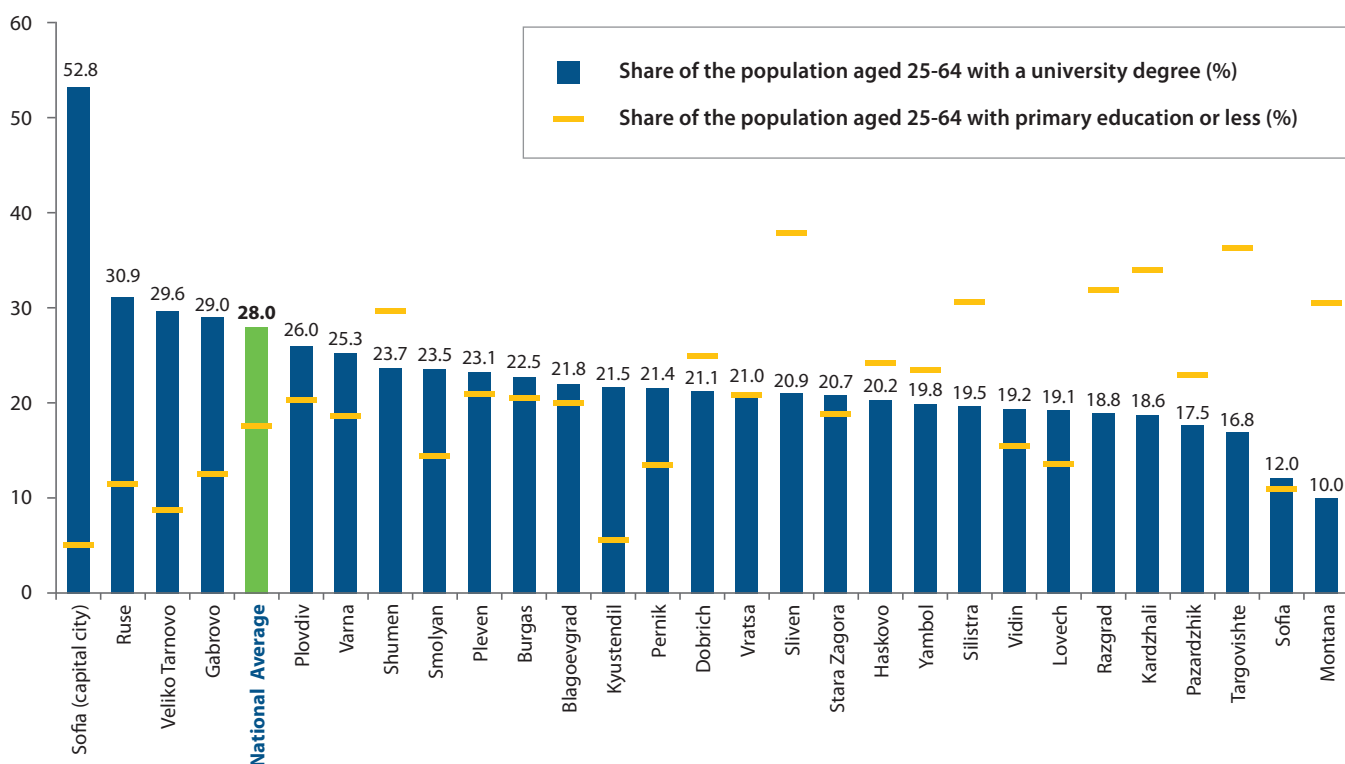
In Stara Zagora and Vratsa this was due to the presence of the largest energy companies, in Sofia – that of industrial enterprises in its wider periphery, and in Gabrovo – its traditional industrial profile.

The annual employment rate of the population aged 15-64 averaged over 70% in 2019 (Figure 2). In Sofia (capital city) the employment rate rose slightly to reach 76.4%. The effect of the upsurge in and around the capital is visible in the data for the district of Sofia which registered record growth in employment over the previous three years to reach 77.7% in 2019. The other district with very strong dynamics is Veliko Tarnovo, which reported the highest employment rate in the whole country for 2019 – 78.7%. At the opposite end are some of the poorer northern districts. The lowest employment rate in 2019 was registered in Montana – 48.2%, with the district even marking a drop between 2017 and 2019. The employment rate remained low in Vidin (56.5%), Silistra (58.2%) and Vratsa (59.8%).

The unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ during 2019 was below 5%. Among the various districts, however, unemployment varied from 2-3% in Sofia (capital city), Plovdiv and Varna to around 20% in Vidin and Montana. In all of the country's districts, however, unemployment rose in 2020 due to the pandemic and the enforced restrictions. Recovery of the economic activity and the jobs lost in the pandemic is one of the major challenges facing the regions in the current year. The workforce profile will be the key factor both in the economic recovery and the processes of transformation of the national economy. The districts with the better qualified workforce will be better placed for a return to the pre-pandemic trajectory of growth and for moving towards a higher value-added economy (Figure 3).

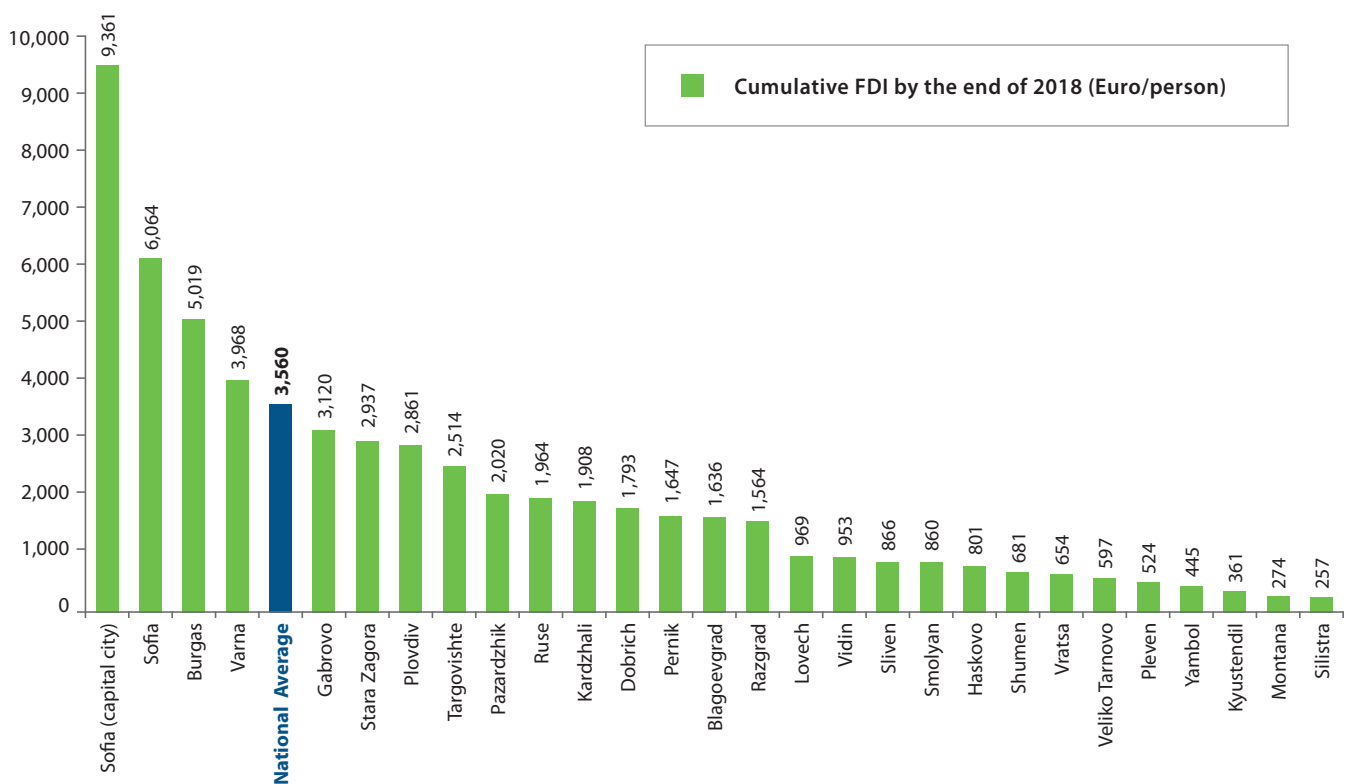
Investment activity remains concentrated in the leading economic centers. Thus, over 70% of cumulative FDI and over 60% of FTA acquisition expenditure by non-financial enterprises have been recorded in Sofia (capital city), Plovdiv, Varna, and Burgas. Though to a lesser extent, the districts of Sofia, Gabrovo and Stara Zagora were also well placed in terms of FDI. In spite of the large differences, the so-called secondary centers have also shown a strong dynamic trend over the past few years. Industrial investment in districts such as Shumen and Targovishte in the north-east and Kardzhali and Haskovo in the south, as well as the arrival of IT companies in the Ruse and Veliko Tarnovo districts have raised the level of economic activity outside the large centers (Figure 4).

Figure 3. Educational structure of the workforce by district in 2019



Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

Figure 4. Foreign direct investment in the non-financial sector by region in 2018



Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

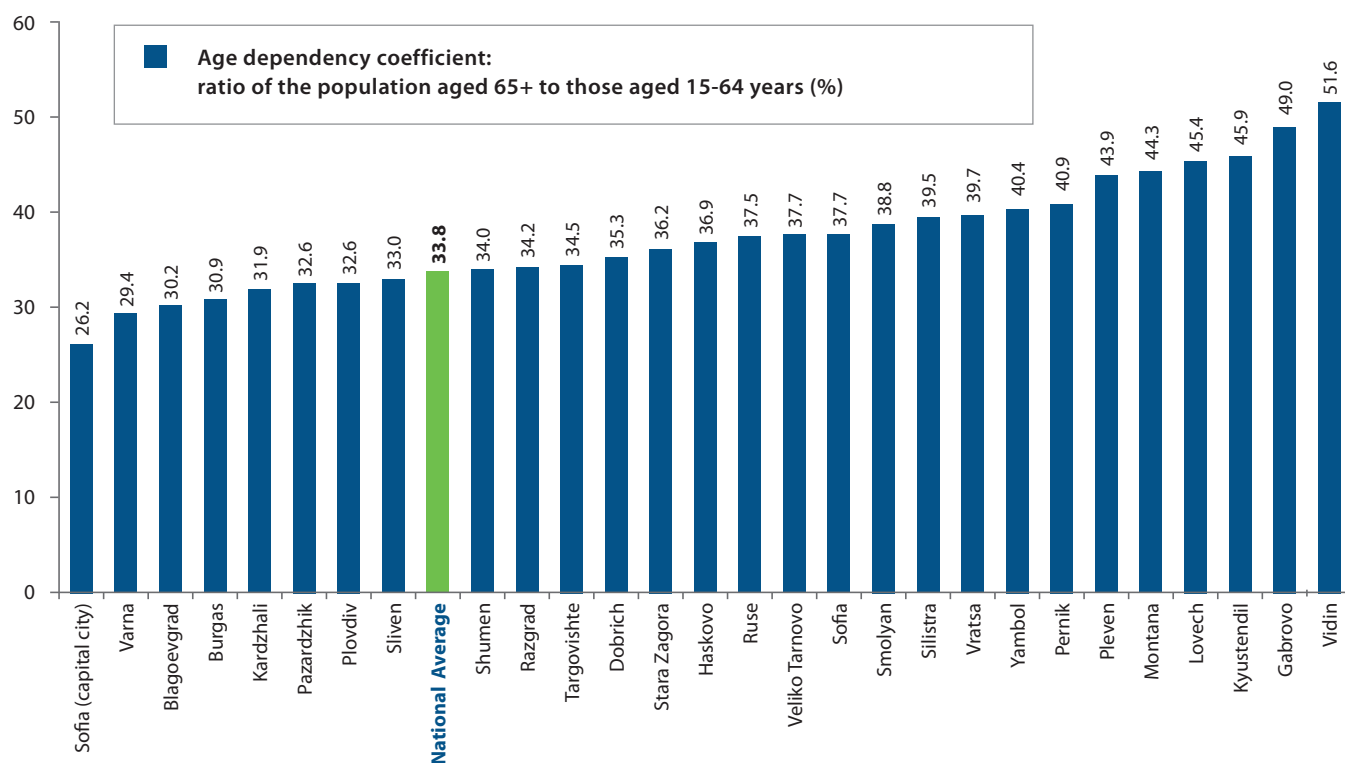
Demographic processes in Bulgaria continue to function as a factor limiting development. Population numbers are still on the decline, with the elderly (aged 65+) already reaching over 1/3 of the working-age population (aged 15-64). In Sofia (capital city) people aged 65+ are 26.2% of the total working-age population, while in Vidin and Gabrovo the elderly constitute 51.6% and 49.0% respectively of those aged between 15 and 64. Almost every region has registered negative demographic indicators, with only two exceptions. One is that of Sofia (capital city) where population is still growing thanks to the immigration of active young people. The other is Kardzhali district which has managed to increase its population over the past few years, not only in the district center but also in almost all the municipalities across its territory (Figure 5).

In the field of education, interesting trends are still noticeable. Despite the impact of the pandemic and the temporary transition to online learning in schools, the same general tendencies and regional differences apply. The districts of Sofia (capital city)

and Smolyan still register the best performance of school graduates at the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature, with average grades in 2020 of 4.63 and 4.53 respectively. Ranked below them are Varna, Plovdiv, Gabrovo and Veliko Tarnovo. The bottom of the scale, with average grades below 4.00, is occupied by Shumen, Kardzhali, Silistra, and Targovishte. In 12 districts over 10% of those who sat the matriculation exam scored grades below 3.00 (Figure 6).

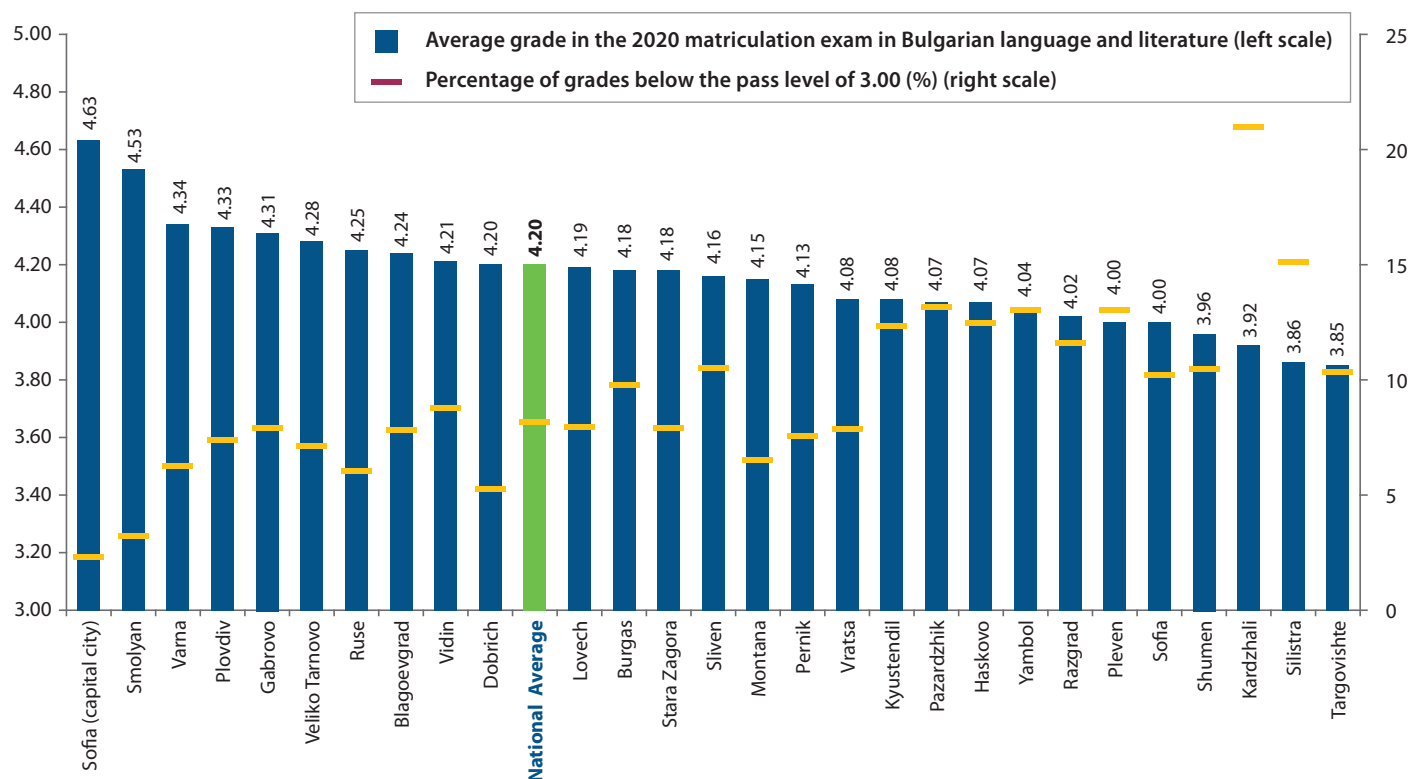
The 2020 pandemic gave special prominence to the area of healthcare. Data such as the number of hospital beds and access to physicians became the crucial indicators for the quality of life in the different regions. Regional differences in the area of healthcare are especially visible when seen through the perspective of access to specialist physicians (Figure 7). While in some regions – Pleven, Sofia (capital city), Plovdiv and Varna – under 400 persons were served by one specialist doctor, in others – Kardzhali, Yambol and Dobrich – one specialist physician served some 700 persons (2018 statistics). The number of hospital

Figure 5. Age dependency ratio by district in 2019



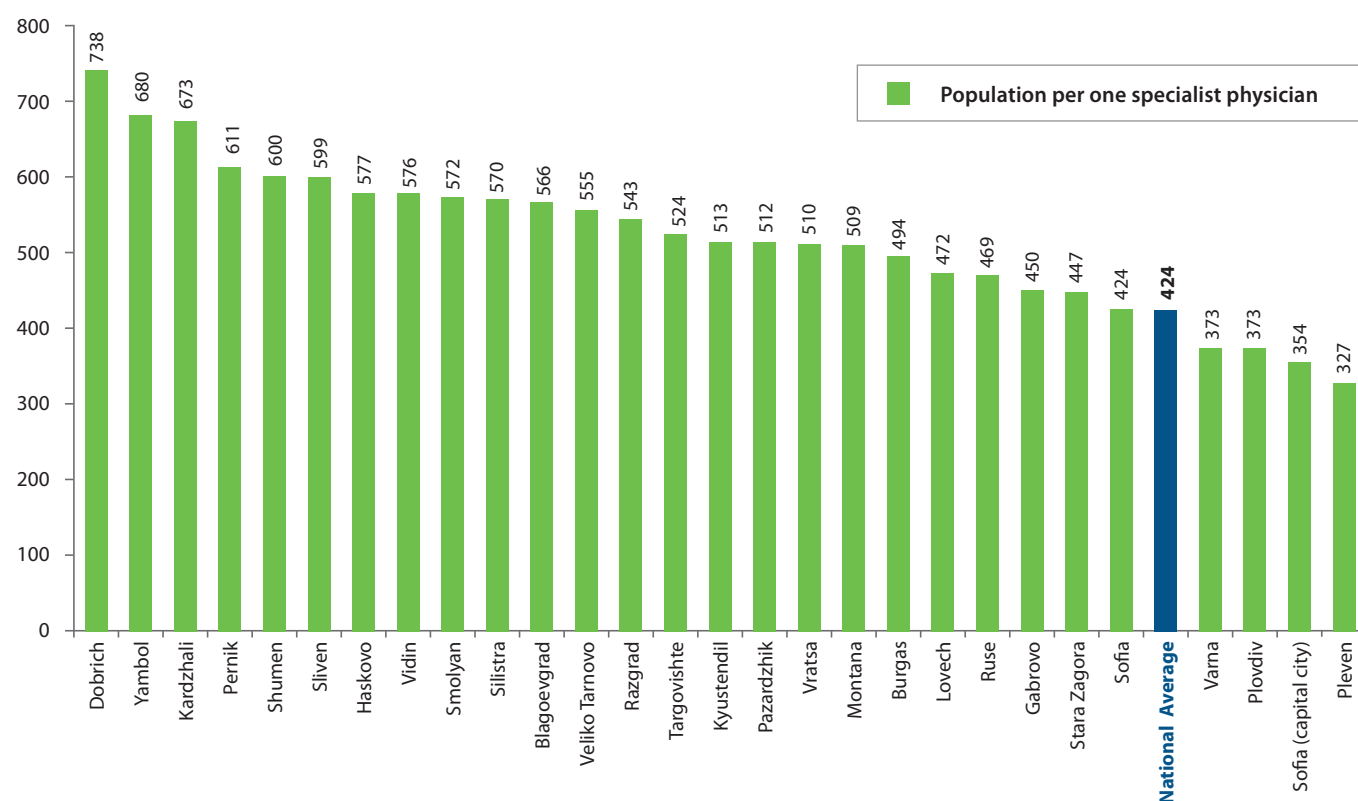
Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

Figure 6. Average grade in the 2020 matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature



Source: MES, calculations by IME.

Figure 7. Access to specialist physicians in 2018 by district



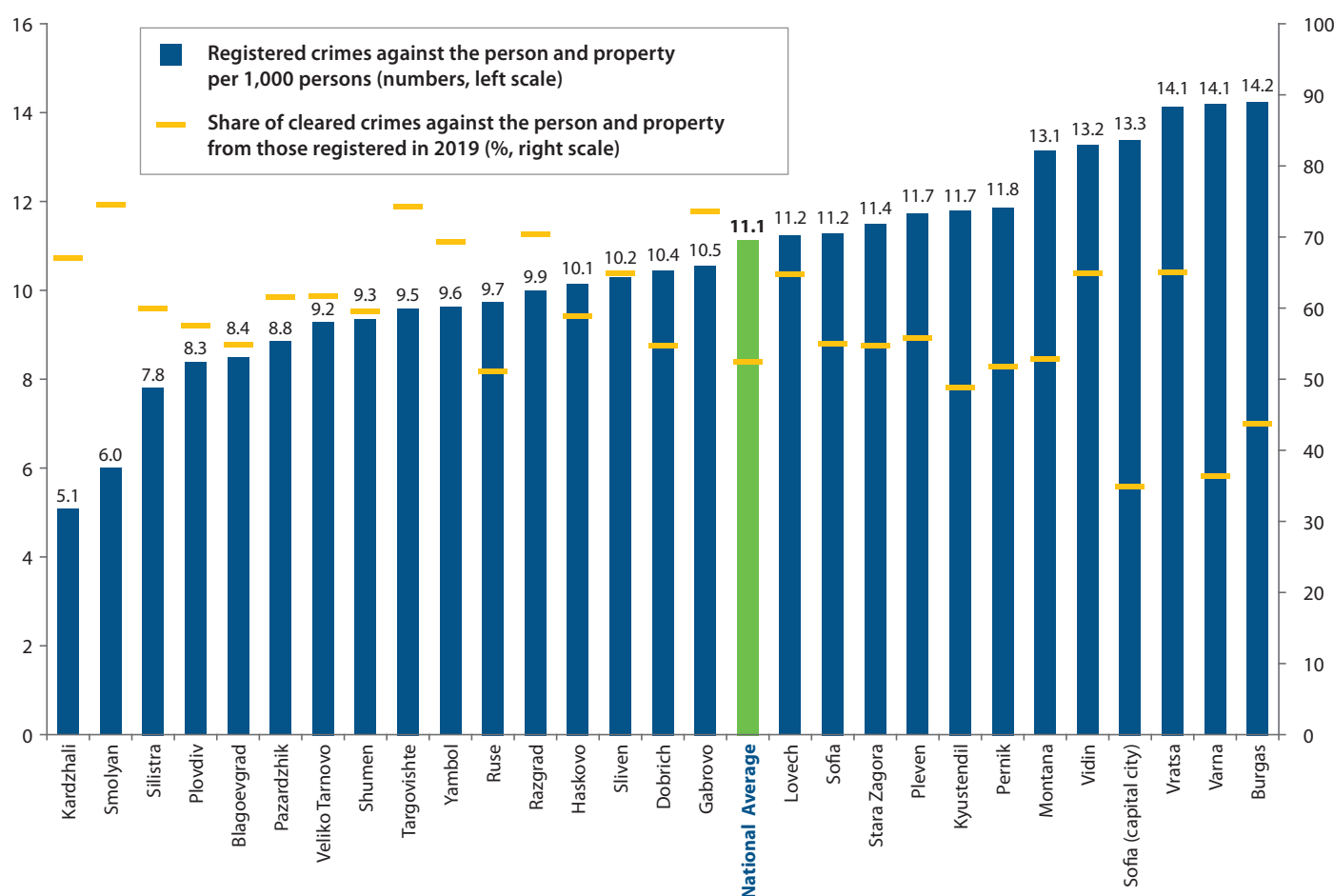
Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

beds also varies from over 9 beds per 1,000 persons in Pleven to some 3 beds per 1,000 people in Dobrich, Shumen and Veliko Tarnovo.

Over the past few years, the country has witnessed a drop in the number of registered crimes against the person and property. In 2019, Kardzhali and Smolyan were the safest districts with some 5-6 crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons. In Smolyan, too, the detection rate was the highest in the country – over 74% of the crimes registered during that same year were cleared. Sofia (capital city), Varna and Burgas are districts notable for the high rate of crimes against the person and property – some 13-14 per 1,000 persons, and for the lowest detection rate: under 50% of the crimes registered throughout the year. It is worth pointing out that some of the country's districts, such as those in the Northwest, traditionally report higher crime rates (Figure 8).

In 2020, the pandemic impacted both the economic and the social indicators of Bulgaria's districts. The decline in economic activity will be reflected in the district-level statistical macro-data for production volume, added value, investment and employment. Regarding social development, changes will inevitably occur in the indicators for healthcare because of its position at the forefront against the corona virus pandemic, as well as in those for demography, mostly because of the higher mortality rates but also due to the return of Bulgarians from abroad and the rise in current address registration in smaller settlements. Changes are also likely to occur in education and culture due to the completely different conditions in which they were functioning in 2020. The next edition of Regional Profiles: Indicators of Development will face the challenge of recording all nuances in the social and economic development of the regions during the pandemic.

Figure 8. Registered crimes against the person and property and detection rate in 2019



Source: SJC, calculations by IME.

Blagoevgrad District

► Population (2019)	302,694
► Territory (sq. km)	6,449.5
► Number of settlements	274
► Share of urban population (%)	60.2



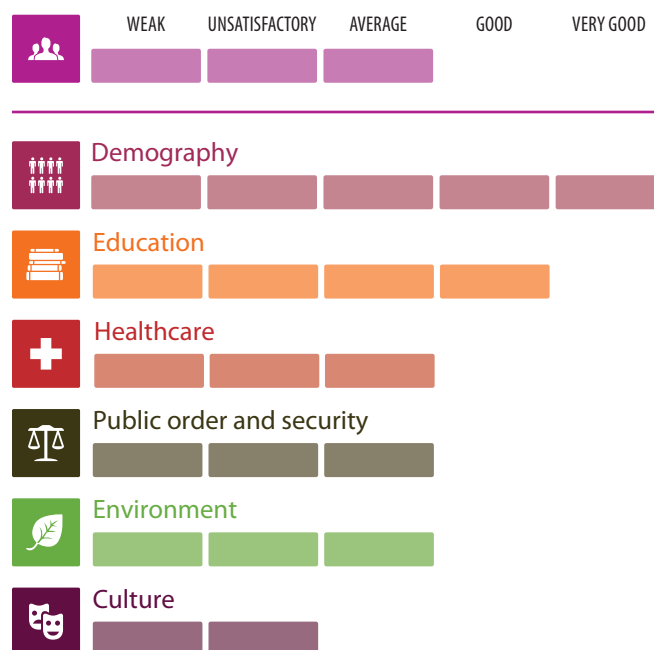
Blagoevgrad district's economy has been developing very well. GDP has been growing faster than the country's average, though it is yet to reach that level. Incomes have exceeded national averages and in 2018 labor market trends remained favorable. Blagoevgrad is among the districts with the highest economic activity, employment continues to be high and unemployment low. Investment activity has improved slightly but is still far below the average level of the country as a whole. The quality of the road infrastructure has improved. Local taxes and fees remain lower than the national averages. In 2020 the assessment of the functioning of the local e-administration and the provision of one-stop shop services in the district's municipal-

ities continued to improve and once again reached levels slightly above the average ones of the country as a whole. Blagoevgrad district has performed relatively well in terms of demographic indicators. The share of repeaters and drop-outs from primary and secondary education is considerably below the national average. Grades in both matriculation and external evaluation exams come close to the country's average. At the same time, healthcare in the district suffers from shortages of medical staff. The crime rate remains relatively low and detection high. Blagoevgrad district still ranks high as regards air quality. Cultural life, however, has shown no considerable progress and remains poorly developed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■

Since 2015, GDP per capita in Blagoevgrad district has risen considerably. In 2018 the annual growth rate of nearly 11% even exceeded the national average of slightly over 9%. Nevertheless, the value of that indicator remained considerably lower – 9,700 BGN/person, while the national average was 15,600 BGN/person. The average annual income per household member also increased and in 2019, for the first time in 15 years, it surpassed the national average. Salaries, however, still remain persistently low. In 2018 the average annual gross salary of employed people was 9,000 BGN compared to 13,800 BGN for the country as a whole. In spite of the low pay, however, poverty levels in Blagoevgrad district remain close to the national average and in 2019 the relative share of people living in material deprivation in the district was 19.6%, compared to the national average of 19.9%. The percentage of those living under the national poverty line was 23.9%, versus 22.6% on a national scale.

Labor market ■■■■■

In 2019, the labor market in Blagoevgrad district continued its positive development. Economic activity rose to 79.3% and at 5 p.p. higher than the national average, it reached an all-time maximum for that district. Blagoevgrad also held second place in economic activity after Veliko Tarnovo district. At the same time, employment reached 75.2%, which is not only a record for the district, but also significantly higher than the national average (70.1%). The unemployment rate dropped to 4.1%, which is three times lower than in 2014.

The population replacement ratio (63.3%) of the population aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64 is slightly below the national average, which means that in the near future the workforce will be shrinking at a faster pace than in other districts. A problem the district is still facing is the relatively low educational level of the population. In 2019, the share of working-age people with higher education was 21.8%, versus 28% for the country on average, and of those with primary education or less was 19.9%, against the national average of 17.6%.

Investment and economy ■■■■■

In 2018, the number of non-financial enterprises in the district continued to rise and remained among the highest in the country, reaching 72 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 59 per 1,000 persons. Investment in Blagoevgrad district is also on the rise but the figures are still well below the national averages. In 2018, FTA expenditure was 1,768 BGN/person, while the national average was 2,750 BGN/person. FDI was 1,636 EUR/person, against 3,560 EUR/person on the national level. Production value per capita in the district also remained at the relatively low

level of 18,400 BGN/person, against the national average of 25,900 BGN/person, and registered only a negligible increase in 2019.

Blagoevgrad district remains one of the leaders in utilization of EU funds. By 15 June 2020, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached 2,623 BGN/person, compared to 1,976 BGN/person on a national level. The top place in the region was again held by the Bansko municipality.

Infrastructure ■■■

Due to the relatively large proportion of mountainous terrain, in 2019 Blagoevgrad remained among the lowest ranking districts in the country for the density of the road and railroad networks. Nevertheless, with the completion of several lots of the Struma highway, over the past few years the indicators for the share of highways and first-class roads and for road surface quality have improved. In 2019 a total of 69.6% of the roads in the district were in good condition, against the average of 41.4% for the country.

The relative share of households with broadband internet access remained unchanged in 2019, and at 71% was slightly below the national average of 75%.

Local taxes ■■■■■

Blagoevgrad district's economy is well developed compared to most regions, and in 2020 the five monitored local tax rates again remained lower than the national averages. Within the district, only the Petrich municipality raised two tax rates beginning 2020 – those on the immovable property of legal entities and on the non-gratuitous acquisition of property.

Administration ■■■■■

Similar to the rest of the districts, cadastral map coverage in Blagoevgrad district showed considerable increase in 2019, reaching 98.5% of the territory, against the national average of 91.4%.

Assessments of the local e-administration and one-stop shop services in the district's municipalities have continued to improve and in 2020 again slightly exceeded the national averages. Within the district, the municipalities receiving top evaluations are those of the city of Blagoevgrad, Bansko and Gotze Delchev. The AIP active transparency ratings of the local administration have also improved, although in 2020 they again failed to reach the national average. The highest ratings were achieved by the Bansko, Razlog and Blagoevgrad municipalities.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Demography ■■■■■■

In regard to demographic tendencies, Blagoevgrad has achieved relatively good results, although similar to all other districts in the country, the tendencies are still negative. The rate of natural population growth rate in the district rose for the second year in a row and although in 2019 it again remained negative (−4.1‰), it was lower than the national average of −6.7‰. The net migration rate was also negative, yet lower than that of the neighboring districts of Smolyan and Kyustendil.

The share of urban population in the district remained unchanged and relatively low in 2019 – 60%, against the national average figure of 74%. At the same time, the population density of the district's settlements remained high at 2,270 persons/sq.km, versus 1,510 persons/sq.km on average for the whole country.

The ratios of the district's age dependency of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 and 15–64 continued to decline in 2019, following the trend characterizing the whole country.

Education ■■■■■■

The rate of enrolment of schoolchildren in 5th–8th grade in the district continues to be relatively high. In 2019 it rose further to reach 92.4%, compared to the national figure of 86.6%. The percentage of school year repeaters remained below the national average. But even though the number of dropouts from primary and secondary education was below average, over the past few years their share has been climbing. Student performance is close to the national average both in terms of external evaluation scores at the end of 7th grade and of the results in the 2020 matriculation exams. The number of teachers in primary and secondary education rose considerably in 2019 to reach 90 per 1,000 students, exceeding the national average of 89 teachers per 1,000 students.

The number of university students as a share of the total population has been on the decline, in line with the trend typical of the country as a whole, in spite of Blagoevgrad being one of Bulgaria's districts with universities on their territory.

Healthcare ■■■■

The percentage of people with health insurance in Blagoevgrad district continued to rise in 2019 and it again exceeded the national average. At the same time, the healthcare system in the region kept suffering from shortages of medical staff and beds in the local general hospitals. Statistics on the relative share of GPs and specialist physicians in the district were less favorable than the average ones for the country. The number of hospital beds continued to rise in 2019, reaching 360 per 100,000 persons, with 550 beds per 100,000 persons as the national average.

The number of patients treated in the local hospitals was considerably lower than the national average – 173 per 1,000 persons, while in the country as a whole it was 254 per 1,000 persons. Having in mind the smaller number of physicians and hospital beds, the assumption is that the population in the district seeks medical care in the capital.

Public order and security ■■■■

Although in 2019 court workloads in Blagoevgrad district were lower than the national average, delivery of justice did not move ahead at a matching speed. The share of criminal cases that were closed within 3 months was 86%, with 90% as the national figure, while pending cases comprised 13%, compared to 10% as the national average. Statistics have shown a downward trend over the past three years.

The crime rate in the district remains lower compared to the rest of the country, and in 2019 detection rates continued to improve, exceeding the national average. Registered crimes against the person and property in Blagoevgrad district dropped to 8.4 per 1,000 persons, with 11.1 per 1,000 persons as the national figure. 55% of those crimes were cleared, against 52% for the whole country on average.

Environment ■■■■

Blagoevgrad district still ranks very high in the country in air quality. Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere are 20 times lower than the national average per sq.km. Although the district has a relatively dense sewerage network, its connectivity to waste water treatment plants is low – 33% in 2018, against the national average of 64%.

The amount of household waste generated in the district is relatively low – an annual of 304 kg/person, against 409 kg/person on a national scale. However, a very small part of it is handed over for treatment and recycling – 15.2%, against 70.9 % as the national average.

Culture ■■■■

All the indicators for 2019 in this category once again give Blagoevgrad district a relatively low ranking. Theater visits went up but still remained considerably below average – 123 per 1,000 persons, compared to 362 per 1,000 persons nationwide. In 2019 museums, too, again failed to enjoy much popularity, with 457 visits per 1,000 persons, against the national figure of 770 per 1,000 persons. Library visits were 408 per 1,000 persons, against 683 on a national level, and cinema visits numbered 443 per 1,000 persons, while the national average was 659 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Blagoevgrad

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,792	9,736	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,193	5,193	6,079	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	8,297	9,024	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	26.0	23.9	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	69.2	71.0	75.2	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	4.5	4.8	4.1	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.6	19.2	19.9	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	19.9	20.7	21.8	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	18,050	18,422	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,576	1,768	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,535	1,636	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	63.3	71.4	71.1	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	47.5	62.5	69.6	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	10.5	11.0	11.1	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	64.8	65.0	68.3	70.7

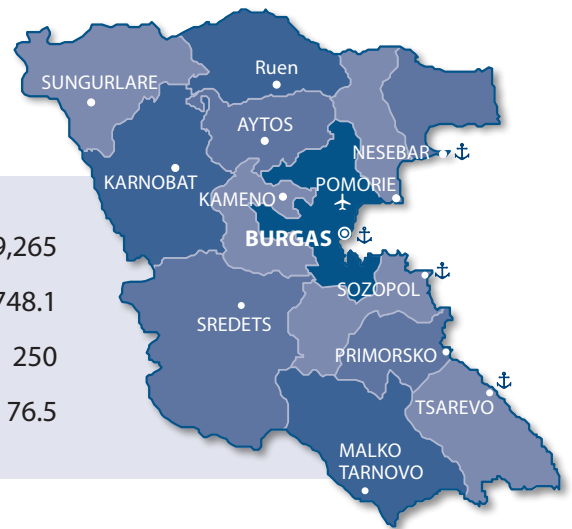
Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-4.6	-4.5	-4.1	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-3.4	-4.5	-3.9	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.04	4.06	4.24	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	32.3	35.0	34.4	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	79	82	90	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	92.6	91.8	92.4	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	88.4	88.8	90.6	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,610	1,732	1,701	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.9	9.3	8.4	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	8.7	9.2	8.3	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	81.0	81.9	82.2	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	345	304	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	1.6	15.2	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	343	363	443	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	111	96	123	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.

Burgas District

► Population (2019)	409,265
► Territory (sq. km)	7,748.1
► Number of settlements	250
► Share of urban population (%)	76.5



Both GDP per capita and salaries in the district of Burgas continued to grow in 2018, though at a slower pace than in the other districts, and remained slightly below the national average. The labor market did relatively well in 2019. The district is among the leaders in investment and business activity. The number of enterprises per person went slightly up and remained above the national average. Foreign investment continued to increase, while local investment remained stagnant. The quality of the road infrastructure keeps deteriorating. Local tax rates are higher than the national average. In 2020, the functioning of e-administration in the district again received relatively good evaluation. However, the Active transparency rating of local government is still low.

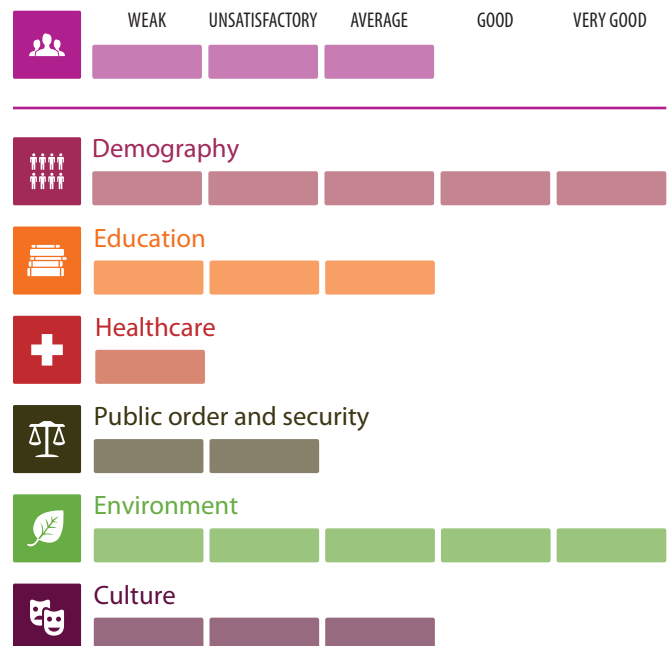
Against the general tendency towards population age-

ing in Bulgaria, Burgas district is doing quite well. The majority of people live in urban areas. The average results in the external evaluation at the end of 7th grade remain higher than the national average, but those in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature are lower than those nationwide. The number of university students in the district is also relatively low. The main factor for the unfavorable state of health-care in Burgas district is the shortage of medical staff. The crime rate is relatively high and detection relatively low, though the indicators show some improvement. Air quality is relatively good. The amount of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling is considerable. Theater and cinema visits are at acceptable levels, while the figures for those to museums and libraries indicate low interest.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■

Both GDP per capita and salaries in the district of Burgas continued to grow in 2018, though at a slower pace than in the other districts and remained slightly below the national average. The average annual gross salary of employed people was 11,200 BGN, compared to 13,800 BGN as the national average. The average annual income per household member did not show significant increase in 2019 and remained relatively low at 5,169 BGN/person against the national average of 6,013 BGN/person.

Poverty levels in the district were close to the national average in 2019, both as regards the percentage of people living in material deprivation and of those living below the poverty line.

Labor market ■■■■

The labor market did relatively well in 2019. Economic activity went up to reach 73%, the employment rate rose by 2 p.p. and at 69.4% came quite close to the national average of 70.1%. Unemployment underwent a sharp decrease to 3.6% and for the first time in four years returned to a level below the national average of 4.2%.

The educational status of the work force in the district is relatively unfavorable. The share of people with higher education is 23.0%, against 28% on a national level, while the share of people with primary education or less is 20%, which is above the national average of 18%. The population replacement ratio of those aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64 has been rising and in 2019 it remained higher than the national figure. Thus for every 100 people who will leave the workforce in the next few years, there are 69 people who could enter the labor market.

Investment and economy ■■■■

In 2018, the district retained its place among the leaders in investment and business activity. The relative number of enterprises remained considerably above the national average – 75 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 59 per 1,000 persons, even though there was a slight increase. FTA acquisition expenditure was 2,995 BGN/person, against the national average of 2,750 BGN/person but the past three years have seen stagnation in that area. By contrast, FDI was marked by a clear upward trend, as it reached 5,019 EUR/person, against 3,560 EUR/person on a national level. Production value per capita in the district is also extremely high – 34,500 BGN/person, with only Sofia district and Sofia (capital city) outranking Burgas.

Payments made for European projects have grown, albeit slower than expected, and are nearing the national average levels. By 15 June 2020 the sums utilized in the district reached 1,829 BGN/person, with the municipalities of Sozopol and Primorsko holding the top places.

Infrastructure ■■■■

The density of the road network and the railroads in the region is below that of the country on average, yet the share of highways and first-class roads (26%) exceeds the national average of 19%. Nevertheless, the quality of the roads in the district of Burgas continues to deteriorate. In 2019, the share of good quality road surfaces was 32.5%, against the national average of 41.4%.

For the second year in a row, the share of households with good internet connectivity rose sharply to reach 77.7%, exceeding the national average of 75.1%.

Local taxes ■■

Similar to most of the developed regions, local taxes in the district of Burgas are high – a tendency sustained in 2020 as well. The margin is especially wide in the retail trade tax – within the municipalities in the region its average was 15.22 BGN/100 sq.m, while the national figure was 12.93 BGN/100 sq.m.

The annual tax rate for taxi transportation was also considerably above the national average – 545 BGN on average for the municipalities in the district, against 498 BGN nationwide.

Municipalities with relatively higher tax rates include the tourist towns of Sozopol, Pomorie and Burgas, while the less developed Aitos and Karnobat impose lower rates.

Administration ■■■■

Cadastral map coverage in the district of Burgas made slow progress in 2019. The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of their e-services remained relatively high in 2020, but the evaluation on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services was below the national average.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration also remained low – 67%, against the national average of 71%. The highest ratings in the district of Burgas were achieved by the municipalities in Burgas, Aitos, Karnobat and Sozopol, and the lowest ones by those in Kameno and Malko Tarnovo.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Demography ■■■■■■

Demographic trends in the district of Burgas remained negative, though compared with the general tendency towards population ageing in Bulgaria, the district was doing quite well. In 2019, the natural growth rate of the population in the district continued to fall but at -4.7% , it remained considerably higher than the national average of -6.7% . More people migrated to the district than out of it, resulting in a net migration rate of 2.1% and placing Burgas among the few districts in Bulgaria with positive net migration figures. In 2019 the age dependency ratios continued to rise but remained more favourable than the national average.

A large part of the population in the district of Burgas – 77% – lives in urban areas, compared with 74% on average for the whole of Bulgaria. The density of population is well above the country's average – $2,238$ persons/sq.km in the district, against the national average of $1,510$ persons/sq.km.

Education ■■■■

The enrolment rate in 5th-8th grade fell slightly in 2019 and remained a little below the national average. The relative share of dropouts from primary and secondary education in the region went up and was again above the national average. At the same time, the share of repeaters fell to 0.8% , compared to 0.9% for the country on average. In 2019 the number of teachers in primary and secondary education went up again but still failed to reach the national average. The results in the 2020 external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade remained higher than the national average. At the same time, the average grades in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature were below those across the country on average. University student numbers in the district also remain relatively low: 15 per $1,000$ persons, compared to the national average for 2019 of 32 per $1,000$ persons.

Healthcare ■■

The healthcare system in the district has been performing poorly. This is mostly due to the shortage of both physicians and beds in the local hospitals. What is more, in 2019 the number of GPs, as well as that of specialist physicians declined further. The number of beds in general hospitals was 350 per $1,000$ persons, with 550 per $1,000$ persons as the national average.

The share of people with health insurance in Burgas district continued to rise in 2019 but compared to the national average remained relatively low – 84.8% , against 88.8% .

The number of patients treated in the local hospitals also remained considerably lower than the national average – 183 per $1,000$ persons, while in the country as a whole it

was 254 per $1,000$ persons on average. Having in mind the shortage of doctors and the smaller number of hospital beds, the assumption is that the population seeks medical care outside the district.

Public order and security ■■

Indicators for the performance of the judicial system in the district of Burgas show results close to the average ones for the country as a whole. The workload of criminal judges was slightly below the national average for 2019, with 89% of the criminal cases closed within 3 months against 90% nationwide. The share of pending cases, on the other hand, equals the national figure of 10% .

Crime rates in Burgas district are higher and detection rates lower, although there has been considerable improvement in the past few years. In 2019, the number of registered crimes against person and property fell to 14.2 per $1,000$ persons, whereas on a national scale its average was 11.1% . The detection rate went up to reach 44% , against 52% as the national average.

Environment ■■■■■■

The indicators for air quality in the district of Burgas are relatively good. Carbon dioxide emissions rose slightly in 2018 to reach 93 t/sq.km, which is much lower than the national average of 275 t/sq.km.

The concentration of quite a large part of the population in urban areas also explains the relatively large share of people living in settlements with access to public sewerage systems – 80% , versus the national average rate of 76% . Access to sewerage connected with wastewater treatment plants is also high – 66% .

The amount of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling is large – 83% , against 71% on average across the whole country.

Culture ■■■■

The indicators for this category present a contradictory situation for the district of Burgas. On the one hand, theater and cinema visits are comparable in number to those across the country, while on the other hand, museums and libraries enjoy little popularity. What is more, while visits to the latter have shown a slight increase on a national level, in Burgas district the reverse tendency can be observed.

Museum visits number 598 per $1,000$ persons, against 770 per $1,000$ persons on a national level, and library visits – 110 per $1,000$ persons, compared to 683 per $1,000$ persons as the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Burgas

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,240	12,585	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,037	5,037	5,169	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,276	11,225	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	19.6	20.0	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	64.8	67.4	69.4	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	8.6	5.3	3.6	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	22.2	20.1	20.4	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	24.8	20.1	22.5	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	31,395	34,472	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	3,002	2,995	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	4,579	5,019	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	60.0	68.9	77.7	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	40.1	36.9	32.5	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	15.2	15.2	15.2	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	65.0	68.0	66.9	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-4.3	-4.3	-4.7	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	1.6	1.3	2.1	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.06	4.11	4.18	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	32.5	36.9	38.1	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	71	73	80	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	87.7	87.3	85.9	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	83.9	84.1	84.8	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,856	1,976	2,006	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	18.1	15.2	14.2	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	8.8	7.8	8.9	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	78.6	79.6	79.7	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	392	433	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	95.5	83.2	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	855	800	843	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	340	349	378	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.

Dobrich District

► Population (2019)	171,809
► Territory (sq. km)	4,719.7
► Number of settlements	216
► Share of urban population (%)	69.0



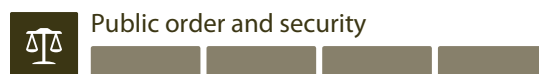
In 2018, GDP per capita in Dobrich district registered one of the lowest growth rates in the country. The situation regarding the growth in household incomes was not much different. Still, in spite of the lag in incomes and salaries, poverty levels in Dobrich district were close to the national average. Economic activity rose, accompanied by a growth in employment rates and a decline in unemployment, yet those indicators still remained unfavorable. The local labor market continues to face the problem of the low educational status of the workforce. Investment activity in Dobrich district is not sufficiently high. There has been a serious lag in production value and FDI. Local tax rates are among the lowest in the country. The transparency ratings for the district administration are on the decline

but remain considerably above the national average. The tendency towards population ageing in Dobrich district follows a country-wide trend, which results in constantly deteriorating age dependency ratios. Higher education has little presence in the district. The health-care system is sufficiently saturated with GPs, but there is a shortage of specialist physicians. The district is among those facing the problem of acute shortages of hospital beds. The workloads of local criminal judges are lower and delivery of justice is speedier than the average national levels. Crime rates are slightly lower than the average national figures, and detection rates are slightly higher. The indicators for the state of the environment point to the district's very good performance in that area. The district's cultural life is characterized by its relatively low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Income and living standard ■■■

Compared to the other regions, in 2018 the growth rate of GDP per capita in Dobrich district remained extremely low. GDP per capita reached only 9,200 BGN, against the national average of 15,600 BGN. Salaries and incomes also rose at a much slower pace. The gross annual salary in the district reached 10,400 BGN, whereas the national average was 13,800 BGN. In 2019 the annual income per household member went up to 5,500 BGN, compared to 6,013 BGN as the country's average.

Still, in spite of the lag in incomes and salaries, in 2019 poverty levels in Dobrich district were close to the national average. The proportion of people living in material deprivation was 19.5%, versus 19.9% on average nationwide, while the share of those living below the poverty line was 22.8%, compared to the national average of 22.6%.

Labor market ■■■

After several years of fluctuations, in 2019 economic activity in Dobrich district rose by 2.5 p.p., reaching a rate of 73.9%, versus the national average of 74.3%. This increase was accompanied by a growth of employment rates and a decline of unemployment, yet both still remained unfavorable. Employment rates went up to 66.9%, compared to 70.1% in the country on average, and unemployment figures reached 7.0%, whereas the national average was 4.2%.

The low educational status of the workforce continued to be a major challenge before the labor market in the district. The share of people with a university degree went up to reach 21.1%, still below the national average of 28.0%. The proportion of people in the workforce with primary or lower education grew for the second year in a row, yet at 24.8% it was considerably worse than the national average of 17.6%.

The population replacement ratio of people aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64 has been decreasing in Dobrich district at a slower pace than in the country on average over the past ten years and in 2019 it was 67.9% against the national average of 65.9%.

Investment and economy ■■

Investment activity in Dobrich district remained relatively weak in 2018. The relative number of enterprises went on the rise and reached figures close to but still lower than the national average. FTA expenditures increased to 2,023 BGN/person, versus the national figure of 2,750 BGN/person.

There was a serious lag in production value and foreign investment. Though production value had been going up, due to the low starting point it only managed to reach 14,800 BGN/person, versus 25,900 BGN/person. Cumulative FDI also recorded an increase for four years in a row and in 2018 it reached 1,793 EUR/person, though that was only about half the national average of 3,560 EUR/person.

By 15 June 2020 the payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,525 BGN/person, while the national average was 1,976 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded in the municipality of the city of Dobrich, while in all of the rest they were below 1,000 BGN/person.

Infrastructure ■■

The state of the infrastructure in Dobrich district is far from the average one in the country. Its density, especially of the railroad network, remains quite low. In 2019 the share of highways and first-class roads was almost half the national average – 10%, against 19% respectively. At the same time, road quality is relatively good, with 46.7% of road surfaces in good condition, compared to the national average of 41.4%.

The relative share of households with internet access in Dobrich district has registered a considerable increase over the past ten years, yet in 2019 it fell to 70.0%, against the average of 75.1% nationwide.

Local taxes ■■■■

In 2020, local tax rates in Dobrich district remained low. Out of the five monitored rates, only the one on the non-gratuitous acquisition of property was higher than the average in the country. The average tax rate on motor vehicles in the district municipalities equaled the national average.

Considerably lower rates were registered for the taxes on retail trade, immovable property and taxi transportation. The average figure for the retail trade tax in the municipalities of Dobrich district remained unchanged at 8.71 BGN/sq.m, against 12.93 BGN/sq.m in the country as a whole. The average rate of the tax on non-residential immovable property of legal entities was 1.55‰, with 2.01‰ nationally, and the one for taxi transportation – 300 BGN, versus the national average of 498 BGN.

Administration ■■■

Over the past few years, cadastral coverage in Dobrich district has been rising fast and in 2019 it included almost all of its territory – 97.6%, versus 91.4% countrywide.

The local authorities' self-evaluation on the development of e-administration and on the provision of one-stop shop services registered worse results in 2020, falling below national averages.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration also fell in 2020, but they remained considerably above the national average – 76.2%, compared to 70.7% for the country as a whole. Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipalities in the city of Dobrich and Krushari.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Demography ■■■■

The natural population growth rate and net migration improved slightly in 2019, even though they still remained negative. The rate of natural increase reached -9.0‰ , against -6.7‰ for the country as a whole, and the net migration figure was -2.7‰ .

The tendency towards population ageing is similar to that in the country as a whole and results in constantly deteriorating age dependency ratios in the district. In 2019 the age dependency ratio between people aged 65+ and those aged 0-14 years was 158.5%, against 150.1% for the country on average, and the ratio between people aged 65+ and those aged 15-64 – 35.3%, with 33.8% as the national average.

A relatively low share of population in Dobrich district lives in urban areas – 69%, versus the national average of 74%. In 2019 the district also still had the lowest population density – 667 persons/sq.km, compared to 1,510 persons/sq.km on a national scale.

Education ■■■

In 2019, the enrolment rate in 5th-8th grade was 74.7%, the lowest one in the country for that year. At the same time, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education were higher than the national averages. The numbers of primary and secondary school teachers continued their increase in 2019 and at 96 teachers per 1,000 students were once again higher than the national average of 89 teachers per 1,000 students.

In 2020, students' results for the district once again showed a mixed picture. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was relatively low – 29.8 p., compared to 36.3 p. in the country on average. The average score in the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature equaled the national average of 4.20. However, the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) remained considerably lower than the average countrywide – 5.3%, versus 8.2% respectively.

Higher education in the district is poorly represented, only through the branches of Shumen University and Varna Technical University. University students number 4 per 1,000 persons, against 32 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Healthcare ■■■

The share of people with health insurance has been on the rise but in 2019 it still remained lower than the national average. The healthcare system is relatively well provided with GPs but there is a shortage of specialist physicians.

Dobrich is still among the districts with an acute shortage of hospital beds. In 2019 there were 281 beds per 100,000 persons, while the national average was 550 beds per 100,000 persons.

The shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds can probably explain the relatively low number of hospitalizations in the district – 118.6 per 1,000 persons, compared to 253.7 per 1,000 persons across the country. This wide margin leads to the assumption that the population seeks medical services outside the district.

Public order and security ■■■■

The workloads of criminal judges in Dobrich district are small, and delivery of justice – speedy. In 2019 there were on average 6.2 cases a month per one judge, compared to 9.1 cases nationally. At the same time, the proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months reached 95%, against the national average of 90%.

The number of crimes is slightly lower than the national average, and detection rates – slightly higher. In 2019, the registered crimes against the person and property were 10.4 per 1,000 persons, versus 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate rose to 54.5 %, versus the national figure of 52.1%.

Environment ■■■■

The indicators for the state of the environment point to the district's continuing very good performance in 2018. Carbon dioxide emissions rose to 18.9 t/sq.km, though they remained nearly 14 times lower than the national average of 274.8 t/sq.km.

In 2018, the share of the population with access to public sewerage systems was slightly below the national average – 70.9%, versus 76.2% respectively. However, the whole sewerage system in the district is connected to wastewater treatment plants.

The amount of waste generated by households annually – 399 kg/person – is relatively smaller than the national average of 409 kg/person. A considerable part of that waste is handed over for treatment and recycling – 84%, versus 71% for the country on average.

Culture ■■■

Cultural life in Dobrich district was still characterized by low intensity in 2019. The only exception are museum visits, which amounted to 1,119 per 1,000 persons, versus 770 per 1,000 persons in the country on average. The smallest numbers were recorded for visits to the local cinemas – 202 per 1,000 persons, against the average of 659 per 1,000 persons for the country.

The average number of theater visits was 211 per 1,000 persons, versus 362 per 1,000 persons nationwide, and visits to libraries amounted to 549 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 683 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Dobrich

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,925	9,176	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,234	5,234	5,500	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,539	10,429	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	19.9	22.8	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	69.8	65.3	66.9	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	6.4	8.6	7.0	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	20.1	23.4	24.8	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	20.9	20.8	21.1	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	13,392	14,750	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,984	2,023	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,524	1,793	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	62.3	75.2	70.0	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	43.0	46.9	46.7	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	17.4	17.4	17.4	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	74.0	80.0	76.2	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-8.8	-9.2	-9.0	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-4.2	-4.0	-2.7	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.98	4.12	4.20	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	27.1	27.3	29.8	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	86	90	96	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	76.8	76.4	74.7	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	84.8	85.2	86.5	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,333	1,496	1,494	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	12.5	12.5	10.4	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	5.6	6.1	6.2	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	70.8	70.9	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	386	399	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	36.8	84.3	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	255	187	202	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	251	227	211	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.

Gabrovo District

- Population (2019)
- Territory (sq. km)
- Number of settlements
- Share of urban population (%)

106,598
2,023.0
349
81.9



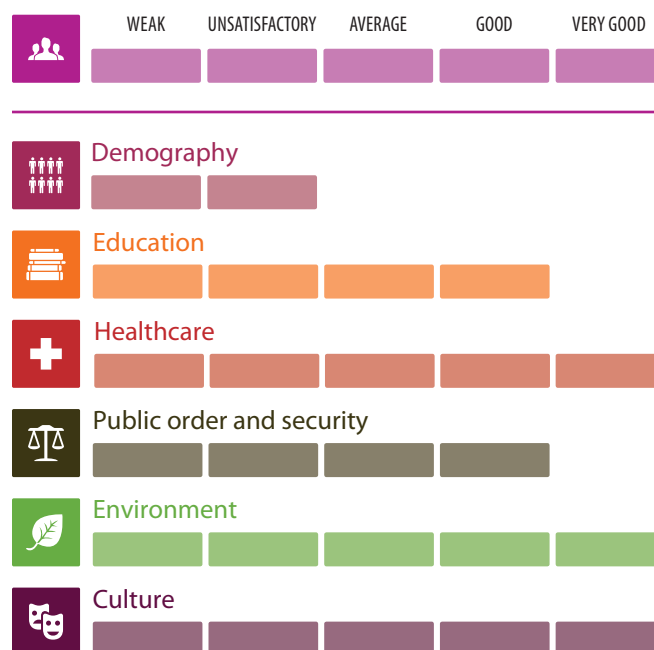
The growth of the economy and the rise in incomes explain the relatively low poverty levels in Gabrovo district. Its economic activity has been intensifying, reaching levels higher than the country's average, and this growth has been accompanied by an increase in employment rates. Expectedly for the district's economic profile, a majority of the workforce has secondary education. Investment activity figures place Gabrovo among the leaders in the country. The district also occupies one of the top places in terms of the utilization of EU funds, where it is outranked only by Sofia (capital city). Although it has a relatively well developed economy, local taxes in Gabrovo remain comparatively low, as is evident from the 2020 figures. The transparency ratings

of the local administration have been traditionally good. The problem of population ageing is particularly acute in Gabrovo district. The low rates of natural growth and net migration explain the fast deteriorating age dependencies there. The majority of the population lives in urban areas. The district's performance in the Education category is relatively good. It has kept its high ranking as regards the relative proportion of university students and holds one of the top places in the sphere of healthcare. Although criminal judges have small workloads, delivery of justice is sluggish. Crime rates are relatively low and detection is high. Gabrovo is among the districts with the best indicators for the state of its environment. Its cultural life is particularly active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■■■

In 2018 the annual GDP per capita grew at rates close to the average ones in the country and brought it to levels close to those nationwide – 13,500 BGN/person, with 15,600 BGN/person on average nationally. Salaries increased and also reached figures close to the average ones – their gross annual amount per capita in the district was 11,800 BGN, against 13,800 BGN for the country as a whole. The average annual income per household member also grew in 2019 and reached 7,406 BGN/household member, against the national average of 6,013 BGN/household member.

The growth of the economy in Gabrovo district and the rise in incomes explain the relatively low poverty levels, which were maintained in 2019. The relative share of people living in material deprivation was 14.1%, versus the national average of 19.9%. The relative share of those living below the poverty line was 17.8%, compared to 22.6% on a national scale, though over the past two years both indicators have taken a downward turn.

Labor market ■■■■■■

In 2019, after a three-year decline, economic activity in Gabrovo district resumed an upward trend to reach levels higher than the national average, though by a small margin. This growth was accompanied by a respective rise in employment figures, with a rate equal to that in the country on average – 70.1% in 2019. Unemployment rates were kept at 4.5%, versus the national average of 4.2%.

Expectedly for the district's economic profile, a majority of the workforce has secondary education – 58.4%, against 54.4% on average nationwide. The share of those with primary or lower education dropped to 12.6% in 2019, against the national average of 17.6%.

The labor market in Gabrovo district continues to be affected by population ageing. In 2019, the population replacement of people aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64 was 51.6%, with the national average at 65.9%. Thus for every 100 people who will leave the workforce in the next few years, there are 52 people who could enter the labor market.

Investment and economy ■■■■■■

Investment activity figures place Gabrovo district among the leaders in the country. The relative number of enterprises in the district continued to rise. In 2018, local and foreign investment also grew, almost reaching the national averages. FTA expenditures in the district were 2,133 BGN/person, 2,750 BGN/person countrywide. FDI was 3,120 EUR/person, against 3,560 EUR/person on a national level.

Production value per capita in the district grew at a rate faster than that in the country on average and in 2018 it

reached 23,000 BGN/person, against the national average of 25,900 BGN/person.

The district also occupied one of the top places in terms of utilization of EU funds, where it was outranked only by Sofia (capital city). By 15 June 2020 payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached an average of 3,290 BGN/person, with 1,976 BGN/person on a national level. The amounts were highest in the city of Gabrovo but in all municipalities they were at levels of over 1,500 BGN/person.

Infrastructure ■■■■■■

The density of the road and railroad networks in Gabrovo district remained relatively high in 2019. It has 25 km of roads per 100 sq.km of territory, versus 18 km in the country on average. Nevertheless, the share of highways and first-class roads remains lower than the national average – 17%, versus 19% respectively. This partly accounts for the lower road quality in the district. In 2019, 37% of the road surface in the district was in good condition, against the average of 41% for the whole country.

The digital infrastructure of Gabrovo district has continued to improve. The relative share of households with internet access was 75%, exactly the same as the national average.

Local taxes ■■■■■■

Although compared to other similar districts Gabrovo has a relatively well developed economy, its local taxes remain lower than the national averages, as evident from the 2020 figures. The margin is especially wide in the retail trade tax. Its average for the municipalities in the region was 8.88 BGN/sq.m, against 12.93 BGN/sq.m for the country as a whole. The district's tax rates for non-gratuitous acquisition of property and taxi transportation were also lower than the average ones nationwide.

Conversely, higher rates were recorded for the local taxes on the non-residential immovable property of legal entities and on motor vehicles.

Administration ■■■■■■

Cadastral map coverage in Gabrovo district has been making slow progress and in 2019, for the first time, its rate fell below the national average. The self-assessment figures for the performance of the local e-administration and one-stop shop services were also relatively low in 2020.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration have been traditionally good and remained so in the period under observation. In 2020 they reached 74.8%, against the national average of 70.7%. Expectedly, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipality of Gabrovo.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

Demography ■■■

The problem of population ageing is particularly acute in Gabrovo district and this is again confirmed by the data for 2019. The natural population growth rate in the district reached -12.7‰, and although it registered a slight improvement, it still remained half the national average of -6.7‰. Out-migration figures still outnumbered those for in-migration, resulting in a net migration rate of -4.2‰.

The district's unfavorable rates of natural increase and net migration explain the fast worsening values of the district's age dependency ratios, with only those in Vidin district falling below them. In 2019, the age dependency ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 reached 248.2%, compared to the national average of 150.1%, and that to people aged 15-64 was 49.0%, whereas in the country as a whole it was 33.8% on average.

The share of population living in urban areas in the district is relatively large - 81.9%, against the national average figure of 73.7%. At the same time, the density of the urban population is relatively low at 1,224 persons/sq.km, versus 1,510 persons/sq.km for the country on average.

Education ■■■■■

The district's performance in education is relatively good. The rate of enrolment of schoolchildren in 5th to 8th grade in the district has continued to be relatively higher than the national averages, although in 2019 it declined to 93.4%, against the national figure of 86.6%. The percentage of school year repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education also remained below the national average. The number of teachers in primary and secondary education rose further in 2019 to reach 81 per 1,000 students, though it was still below the national average of 89 teachers per 1,000 students.

The students' average score in the 2020 external evaluation at the end of 7th grade again remained lower in Gabrovo district than in the country - 33.9 p., against 36.3 p. respectively. The average results in the 2020 matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature were, however, higher than the national averages - 4.31 versus 4.20 nationally, with a share of 7.9% "fail" (below 3.00) grades, against 8.2% nationwide.

Gabrovo district remains one of the leaders in terms of university students as a share of the total population - 44 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 32 per 1,000 persons. Still, in line with the trend typical of the country as a whole, in Gabrovo district it too has been on the decline.

Healthcare ■■■■■

In 2019, Gabrovo district again occupied one of the top places in the country in the sphere of healthcare. Almost the entire population - 97.5% - had health insurance, compared to 88.8% nationwide. The relative percentage of doctors was higher than the country's average, both in terms of GPs and specialist phy-

sicians. The provision of hospital beds remained limited - 464 beds per 100,000 persons, with 550 beds per 100,000 persons as the national average.

Infant mortality was reduced to 0‰, an achievement unique among all of Bulgaria's districts. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals was 199 per 1,000 persons, against the average of 254 per 1,000 persons in the country.

Public order and security ■■■■■

In 2019, criminal judges in Gabrovo district had smaller workloads compared to the national average. The figures show an average of 6.4 cases a month per judge, compared to 9.1 nationally. Still, in spite of the smaller workloads, the proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is on the decline, while that of pending cases has been rising.

The crime rate in the district remains lower compared to the country's average figures, and detection rates are high. In 2019, registered crimes against the person and property in Gabrovo district amounted to 10.5 per 1,000 persons, with 11.1 per 1,000 persons as the national figure. 73.2% of those crimes were cleared, against 52.1% for the whole country on average.

Environment ■■■■■

The indicators for 2018 place Gabrovo very high as regards the state of the environment. Carbon dioxide emissions were over 10 times lower than the average relative volumes countrywide. A relatively high percentage of the population - 85.1% - had access to a public sewerage network, compared to 76.2% countrywide, and 74.5% were connected to waste water treatment plants, against the national average of 63.9%.

The amount of household waste generated in the district was relatively high - an annual of 433 kg/person, against 409 kg/person on a national scale. However, the part of it handed over for treatment and recycling - 91% - was also very high, compared to the national average of 71%.

Culture ■■■■■

Cultural life in Gabrovo district remained particularly active in 2019. Gabrovo took top ranking for visits to the local museums, with 3,812 visits per 1,000 persons, against the national figure of 770 per 1,000 persons. The relative number of theater visits was also high - 440 per 1,000 persons, compared to 362 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Cinema and library visits remained lower than the national averages. In 2019 cinema visits numbered 402 per 1,000 persons, versus 659 per 1,000 persons on average nationwide, and library visits were 546 per 1,000 persons, against 683 on a national level.

Key indicators for the district of Gabrovo

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,363	13,510	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	6,937	6,937	7,406	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,522	11,796	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	14.6	17.8	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	67.1	67.2	70.1	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	5.1	4.5	4.5	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	11.2	14.5	12.6	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	26.5	27.9	29.0	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	20,928	22,999	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,965	2,133	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	2,932	3,120	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	66.9	70.6	74.9	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	34.4	39.0	36.7	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	24.9	24.9	24.9	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	79.2	80.0	74.8	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-14.4	-13.2	-12.7	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-4.4	-3.7	-4.2	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.11	4.10	4.31	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	30.2	31.3	33.9	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	75	80	81	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	91.9	95.5	93.4	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	95.4	95.9	97.5	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,504	1,518	1,501	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	12.6	11.4	10.5	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.8	6.1	6.4	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	85.1	85.1	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	580	433	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	51.8	91.1	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	351	339	402	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	442	405	440	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.

Haskovo District

► Population (2019)	225,317
► Territory (sq. km)	5,533.3
► Number of settlements	261
► Share of urban population (%)	72.2



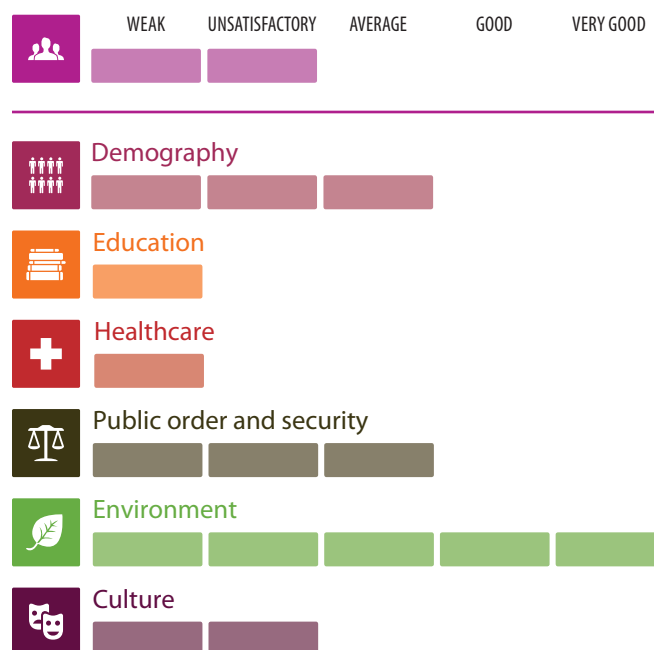
Haskovo district is among the least economically developed regions in southern Bulgaria. Both GDP per capita and average salaries are significantly lower than the respective national averages. Household incomes have been gradually rising, yet the problems of high poverty levels and material deprivation remain. The dynamics of the labor market is favorable, with very low unemployment rates and employment already above average, too. There is a visible shortage of university graduates in the district, while the share of people with primary education has been growing in recent years. Investment activity can be described as “timid”. The infrastructure is relatively well developed and its quality is gradually improving. Local taxes remain lower than the national average,

and in 2020 some of them got reduced even further. Both the natural growth rate and net migration rates in the area are deteriorating. There are major challenges facing the coverage of the school education system and the prevention of early dropping out of school, but exam results have been improving. Access to GPs and specialist physicians is relatively difficult and the infant mortality rate is high. Figures for security and justice in Haskovo are close to the national average, and crime rates are declining. The generated household waste is almost entirely handed over for treatment and recycling, and its volume is gradually decreasing; there is also a decline in carbon emissions. Interest in cultural events in the district is low, with theaters attracting most of it.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Income and living standard ■■

Haskovo is the district with the lowest GDP per capita in southern Bulgaria after Sliven, and in 2018 it had only 8,500 BGN per capita. Economic growth is similar to the national average. The average annual gross salary is the fifth lowest in the country – only 9,600 BGN, and its annual growth did not exceed the national average until 2018.

Thanks to the relatively favorable conditions on the labor market, in 2018 households' incomes came close to the national average, with an annual average of 5,678 BGN per household member in the district, compared to 6,013 BGN for the country. However, the indicators for poverty levels and social exclusion give cause for concern, as in 2019 nearly 30.9% of the population were below the national poverty line for that year, against 22.6% on average countrywide, and 23.8% lived with material deprivation, compared to 19.9% on average nationally.

Labor market ■■■

In 2019, unemployment practically disappeared from the labor market in the district. NSI reported an unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ of only 0.4%, but with the proviso that the data were of low accuracy. In 2018, a year earlier, unemployment was 3.1%, which was again considerably below the national average. Employment was also relatively high – 70.9%, having increased by more than 15 p.p. compared to 2012.

The share of university graduates in the age group 25-64 has been gradually increasing, but remains at 20.2%, or 8 p.p. below the national average. However, the share of people with primary or lower education has also been growing, and in 2019 they constituted 24.0%, compared to the national average of 17.6%.

Investment and economy ■

Between 2014 and 2018, cumulative FDI increased almost fourfold, but remained at the extremely low level of 801 EUR/person. The expenditures for acquisition of FTA were also low, reaching 1,197 BGN/person in 2018, which is a minimal increase from the average of about 1,100 EUR/person for the period 2013-2017. Despite the growth in the past year, the district has also underperformed in the utilization of EU funds, as by the middle of 2020 their volume had reached only 1,302 BGN/person, compared to 1,976 BGN/person for the country on average; the only exception was the municipality of Svilengrad with 5,287 BGN/person. There is a clear trend in the district towards a rise in the number of enterprises, which reached 53 per 1,000 persons in 2018. Within the period of economic recovery, production value increased at a slower pace than the

national average rates, except for 2018. The lag therefore widened and in 2018 the production value per capita amounted to only 12,600 BGN, or less than half the average for the national economy.

Infrastructure ■■■

Haskovo district has a relatively well developed road network, with a density of 20.7 km/100 sq.km in 2019. The share of first-class roads and highways in the road network registered that year is also high – 21.5%, compared to the national average of 18.6%, with the Maritza highway passing through the territory of the district. The condition of the road surfaces has been improving in recent years, but the share of roads in good condition remains below the national average – 36.8%, compared to 41.4% countrywide. The density of the railway network is also slightly above the national average, with 3.7 km/100 sq. km territory in the district. Access to high-speed internet has visibly improved and between 2009 and 2019 the share of households connected to it increased from 24% to 68%, but the lag behind the leading districts in Bulgaria still remains.

Local taxes ■■■■

The levels of the monitored local taxes in the municipalities on the territory of the district are close to the national average. In 2020, the average amount of the annual tax on taxi transportation was reduced to 324 BGN, which brought it close to the minimum value of 300 BGN. There was also a decrease in the patent tax for retail trade – from an average of 12.77 BGN/sq.m retail space down to 11.96 BGN/sq.m. The taxes on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and on the immovable property of legal entities remained at their current levels. However, the tax on motor vehicles was above the national average – 1.55 BGN/kW after taking into account the environmental component, compared to 1.51 BGN/kW respectively.

Administration ■■■

The self-assessment of the district's municipalities of their capacity to provide electronic services has been improving, with the average value for 2020 at 3.10 out of a possible 5 p. The results from their self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services has also gone up to 2.97 p. The AIP active transparency rating of the local authorities has also increased to reach an average of 67.3% for the municipalities in the district, but remains below the national average of 70.7%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Demography ■■■■

The natural growth rate in Haskovo district has gradually been deteriorating, reaching -8.7% in 2019, compared to -5.4% in 2009, and staying below the national average for the entire ten-year period. The district is also losing population due to the negative net migration ratio, but not at such a rate – in 2019 the difference between settler and emigrant numbers was -3.8% of the population. These are processes that accelerate the trend towards population ageing in the district, so for every 100 people aged 0-14 in 2019 there were 158 over the age of 65. The age dependency ratios between the number of people over 65 and those of working age were also more unfavorable than the national average – 37%, compared to 33% at the national level.

The district is undergoing a slow process of urbanization: within a decade the share of urban population increased by 2 p.p. and reached 72.2% in 2019. At the same time, the population density in the urban areas of the district remained below average – 1,045 persons/sq.km, having steadily declined in recent years.

Education ■■

The low coverage of the school system still remained a challenge in 2019, as only 83% of children were enrolled in 5th to 8th grade. After a decline of 1 p.p. compared to the previous year, the level fell by 4 p.p. below the national average. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education was also significantly higher – 3.7%, as well as the number of repeaters – 1%. Despite some improvement in recent years, in 2019 the teacher-student ratio for primary and secondary education reached only 84 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 89 per 1,000 students on average for the country.

Although the results of the students in Haskovo district at the 2020 matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature remained below the national average, they showed some improvement and reached an average grade of 4.07. However, the share of “fail” (below 3.00) grades remained high at 12.5%, but an increase was recorded in most districts anyway. At the external exam in mathematics after 7th grade, the students from the district achieved an average of 32 out of a possible 100 points, again slightly below the national average of 36 points.

Healthcare ■■

The indicator for access to GPs in Haskovo district is more unfavorable than the national average, as in 2019 there was one doctor per 1,847 persons, compared to 1,688 persons nationally. The index for access to specialist physicians also reveals that the local health system is facing problems. The number of beds in general hospitals is relatively low – 356 per 100,000 people and its increase in recent years has been slow.

The health system coverage is relatively good – in 2019, 90.1% of the population of the district had health insurance. Morbidity rates have gradually been declining, with 194 out of every 1,000 persons being treated at local hospitals. However, the infant mortality rate remains high – 8.2‰, with no signs of improvement.

Public order and security ■■■■

In 2019, 90% of criminal cases in the district were closed within 3 months, but the figure shows a drop from previous years, when it was 92-94%. A relatively rapid increase is observed in the share of pending cases, which rose from 7.1% in 2015 to 9% in 2019, even though the workloads of criminal judges had declined. Thus, while in 2015 they heard 9.8 cases on average per month, in 2019 they were already hearing 8 cases.

As in most other districts, there is a similar trend in Haskovo towards a decrease in the number of crimes against the person and property. In 2019, 10.1 such crimes per 1,000 people were registered there. At the same time, between 2009 and 2019 the share of detected crimes increased by 12 p.p. and reached 59%.

Environment ■■■■■■

Haskovo is among the leaders in waste processing, with 96% of all generated household waste in 2018 handed over for recycling and treatment. The amounts of generated waste have also been slowly declining, reaching 316 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person. There are no significant changes in the share of the population with access to public sewerage: in 2018 it amounted to 72.7%. The share of households whose sewerage is connected to a waste water treatment plant increased to 54.2%. On the other hand, in 2018 carbon emissions decreased to 108 t/sq.km, or almost three times below the national average.

Culture ■■■

Haskovo district reports generally unfavorable values of the indicators for intensity of cultural life included in this category. Compared to the average values for the country in 2019, the least difference was recorded as regards theater visits – 298 per 1,000 persons, versus 362 per 1,000 persons nationally. Cinema was the least attractive form, with only 98 visits per 1,000 persons per year, or almost seven times below the national average. An increase was in evidence as regards museum visits, but interest remained low with just 251 per 1,000 people, compared to the national average of 770 visits per 1,000 people.

Key indicators for the district of Haskovo

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,807	8,545	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,119	5,119	5,678	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	8,537	9,623	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	28.5	30.9	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	64.3	66.0	70.9	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	4.7	3.1	0.4	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	20.0	21.0	24.0	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	17.3	20.1	20.2	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	11,211	12,598	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,094	1,197	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	442	801	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	66.1	72.3	68.1	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	34.8	33.7	36.8	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	20.7	20.7	20.7	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	63.5	63.0	67.3	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-8.3	-8.5	-8.7	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-0.9	-5.2	-3.8	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.87	3.84	4.07	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	27.7	28.8	32.0	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	74	77	84	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	84.4	84.7	82.6	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	88.2	88.5	90.1	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,774	1,809	1,847	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.5	10.2	10.1	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	9.5	9.1	8.0	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	72.6	72.7	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	327	316	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	98.0	96.1	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	103	72	98	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	258	291	298	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.

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



Income and living standard



Labor market



Investment and economy



Infrastructure



Local taxes



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



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, ver-

sus 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 7 th 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 5 th -8 th 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.

Kyustendil District

► Population (2019)	116,915
► Territory (sq. km)	3,051.5
► Number of settlements	182
► Share of urban population (%)	70.0



GDP per capita in Kyustendil district has registered the third highest annual growth rate in the country, yet its value is still relatively small. Both salaries and incomes have been growing as well, though at rates below the national average ones, and their amounts have remained considerably below average. The educational profile of the workforce is dominated by a significant share of people with secondary education. Kyustendil district is characterized by weak investment activity. Road quality is traditionally higher than in the country on average. Households still have limited internet access. The average rate for each of the monitored local taxes in the municipalities of Kyustendil district is lower than the national average. The local admin-

istration's transparency ratings remain relatively low. The population ageing tendencies in Bulgaria as a whole are particularly evident in Kyustendil district, whose demographic indicators are among the most unfavorable in the whole country. Students' results remain relatively low. The provision of the district healthcare system with doctors is relatively good. The number of beds in the local general hospitals is close to the national average. Kyustendil is doing relatively poorly in terms of public order and security. The district is a leader in environmental indicators, mostly due to the quantities of waste generated by the households and their management. Cultural life in Kyustendil district is characterized by its low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Income and living standard



Labor market



Investment and economy



Infrastructure



Local taxes



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Demography



Education



Healthcare



Public order and security



Environment



Culture



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

GDP per capita in Kyustendil district recorded one of the highest annual growth rates in the country for 2018, increasing by 16.2%, versus the national average of 9.3%. However, its nominal value still remained relatively low – 9,300 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 15,600 BGN.

Incomes and salaries in the district also kept growing, though at a slower than average pace, and remained significantly below the national average. In 2018, the average gross annual salary in Kyustendil district was 9,500 BGN, compared to 13,800 BGN nationally. The annual income per household member in 2019 reached 4,977 BGN, versus 6,013 BGN in the country on average.

The share of the population living with material deprivation in the district has been lower than the national average in the last seven years. At the same time, the share of the population living below the national poverty line remains relatively high – 32.9% in 2019, compared to 22.6% in the country.

Labor market

Over the last five years, economic activity in Kyustendil district has stayed at almost the same level and, compared to its rising rates countrywide, it continues to lag behind. In 2019, economic activity reached 70.2%, compared to 74.3% in the country. After a serious increase in the period between 2015 and 2017, the employment rate in the district slowed its growth and in 2019 it was 67.6%, versus an average of 70.1% nationwide. At the same time, the unemployment rate continued to decline and came down to 2.6% – one of the lowest levels in the country, while the average rate is 4.2%.

The educational profile of the workforce is dominated by a significant share of people with secondary education. Figures show the proportions of both people with university degrees and those with primary or lower education – 21.5% and 5.6% respectively – falling below the average ones in the country – 28.0% and 17.6% respectively.

The labor market in the district is also affected by the factor of population ageing. The population replacement rate, measured as the ratio of the population aged 15-19 to that of those aged 60-64, reached 52.4%, compared to 65.9% in the country.

Investment and economy

Investment activity in Kyustendil district is weak. The relative number of enterprises in 2018 was close to the national average – 51 per 1,000 persons, against 59 per 1,000 persons in the country. FTA expenditures amounted to 1,118 BGN/person, versus the national figure of 2,750 BGN/person. FDI registered 361 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 3,560 EUR/person. The growth of FTA expenditures and FDI was exceptionally slow: the third lowest within the country in 2018.

Low investment impacted the levels of production value in Kyustendil district. In 2018 it amounted to only 11,900 BGN/person against 25,900 BGN/person as the national average.

By 15 June 2020 the payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,120 BGN/person, while the national average was 1,976 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were registered by the Rila municipality.

Infrastructure

The density of the road and railway networks in the district remains higher than the national averages. The share of highways and first-class roads is also higher and in the last five years, after the construction of the Struma highway, it has remained constant – in 2019 it was 20.5%, compared to 18.6% in the country. Road quality has traditionally been higher than the national average. In 2019, 54.6% of road surfaces in the district were in good condition, compared to the average of 41.4% nationwide.

Households' internet access in the district remains limited – 62.5%, compared to 75.1% in the country on average.

Local taxes

In 2020, the average figures for all monitored local taxes in the municipalities of Kyustendil district remained lower than the respective national rates. Moreover, the district had the lowest tax rates in the country after Vidin and Montana. The biggest margin was in the annual tax on taxi transportation. In the municipalities of Kyustendil district it was 300 BGN, compared to the average of nearly 500 BGN countrywide. The difference in the retail trade tax was over 20%, while the rates for motor vehicles and non-gratuitous acquisition of property were about 15% lower than the national averages.

Administration

Just as everywhere else in the country, cadastral map coverage in Kyustendil district increased considerably over the past two years. In 2019 it reached 95% of the district's territory, versus the national average of 91%.

The self-assessment of the local administration for the development of e-services has on the whole remained at the same level over the past few years and in 2020 it registered 2.98 out of 5 points, compared to 3.22 points in the country on average. The ratings for the provision of one-stop shop services, on the other hand, rose considerably in 2020 and were the fifth highest in the whole of Bulgaria, after Sofia (capital city), Lovech, Vratsa and Ruse.

Only the AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration remained relatively low in 2020 – 56.9%, compared to the national average of 70.7%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■

Demography ■■■

The population ageing tendencies in Bulgaria as a whole are particularly evident in Kyustendil district, whose demographic indicators in 2019 again were the second most unfavorable in the country, after those in Vidin. For the fourth consecutive year, the natural population growth rate remained below -13‰ or two times lower than the national average of -6.7‰ . Out-migration from the district is also a factor for the decline in population numbers, with the net migration rate reaching -4.8‰ .

All of this also entails a rapid deterioration of the age dependency ratios, which in 2019 were higher only in the districts of Vidin and Gabrovo. The age dependency coefficient, calculated as the ratio of the people 65+ to those aged 0-14, reached 228% in the district, compared to 150% in the country on average, and that of people aged 65+ to those aged 15-64 was 46%, versus the national average of 34%.

In 2019 the share of the urban population went up to reach 70%, compared to 74% on average nationwide, but the population density of urbanized areas decreased to 1,109 persons/sq.km, against 1,510 persons/sq.km in the country on average.

Education ■■

In 2019, the figures for the enrolment in 5th-8th grade again remained higher than the national average. At the same time, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education were lower, even though the figures for both recorded an increase. The number of primary and secondary school teachers has been rising and is approaching the national averages.

The grades of the students in Kyustendil district remained low in 2020. Their average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 30.0 points, compared to 36.3 points in the country. The average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.08, compared to the average of 4.20 nationally. The number of "fail" grades (below 3.00) continued to rise and in 2020 made up 12.4%, versus 8.2% as the national average.

Kyustendil district is one of those without a university or university branch on its territory.

Healthcare ■■■■■

The healthcare system in Kyustendil district is relatively well provisioned with doctors. One local GP cares for an average of 1,426 persons, compared to 1 GP per 1,688 people in the country. In 2019, however, there still was a relative shortage of specialist physicians.

The number of beds in the district's general hospitals is close to the average one in the country – 550 beds per 100,000 persons. The number of patients admitted for treatment is lower than

their average number in the country – 221 per 1,000 persons, compared to 254 per 1,000 persons respectively.

Public order and security ■

The performance of Kyustendil district in public order and security remained relatively poor in 2019. The workloads of criminal judges decreased from 2018, yet they were still relatively heavy. There were 11 cases a month per one judge on average, compared to 9 cases nationally. The workload volumes bore their impact on the speedy delivery of justice – the proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was relatively low at 85%, against the national average of 90%, and that of pending cases – high, with 13% in the district, compared to an average of 10% nationwide.

The number of crimes registered in the district has stayed at levels slightly above the national average, while detection rates have been rising, though they still remained relatively low in 2019. The registered crimes against the person and property reached 12 per 1,000 persons, versus 11 per 1,000 persons on average nationwide. The detection rate was 49%, versus the national figure of 52%.

Environment ■■■■■■

Kyustendil district is the country's leader in terms of environmental indicators. The main reason is the amount of household waste and the share handed over for treatment and recycling. In 2018, there was a significant drop in the amount of waste generated by households – 287 kg/person per annum, compared to the average of 409 kg/person in the country. At the same time, the share handed over for treatment and recycling reached 98%, versus the national average of 71%. Close to the national averages were the proportions of the population with access to public sewerage networks – 73%, versus the national average of 76%, and with a sewerage system connected to wastewater treatment plants – 62%, versus 64% countrywide.

Carbon dioxide emissions in the district remained higher than the average ones in Bulgaria.

Culture ■■■

Cultural life in Kyustendil district again retained its low intensity in 2019. An exception was the great interest in the museums in the district, where the registered visits were 1,094 per 1,000 persons, compared to an average of 770 per 1,000 persons in the country. Visits to theatres were three times fewer – 123 per 1,000 persons, versus the national average of 362 per 1,000 persons. The relative number of cinema visits was similar – 273 per 1,000 persons in the district, against 659 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Visits to libraries numbered 444 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 683 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Kyustendil

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,989	9,285	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,773	4,773	4,977	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	8,642	9,476	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	15.8	32.9	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	67.1	67.5	67.6	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	4.3	3.6	2.6	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	11.5	9.6	5.6	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	25.2	22.3	21.5	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	10,656	11,850	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,077	1,118	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	350	361	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	65.6	59.8	62.5	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	56.3	51.8	54.6	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	20.6	20.6	20.6	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	55.0	57.0	56.9	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-13.5	-13.4	-13.2	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-5.6	-3.8	-4.8	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.95	3.96	4.08	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	27.3	28.6	30.0	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	79	83	88	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	92.3	92.2	89.8	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	94.6	94.9	97.0	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,359	1,429	1,426	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	13.5	11.3	11.7	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	12.3	12.8	11.0	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	75.2	72.6	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	447	287	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	4.7	97.6	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	230	286	273	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	170	133	123	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.

Lovech District

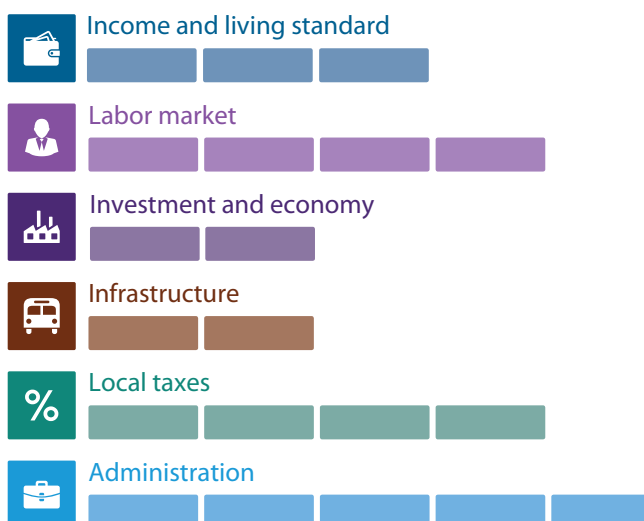
► Population (2019)	122,546
► Territory (sq. km)	4,128.8
► Number of settlements	110
► Share of urban population (%)	63.0



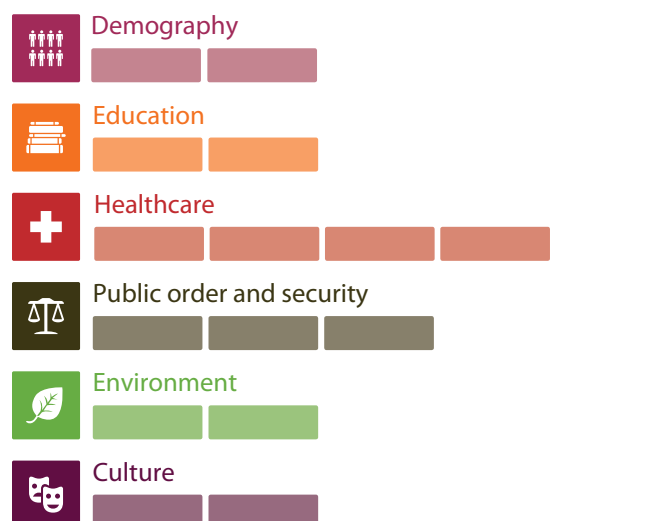
Despite its low starting point, GDP per capita in Lovech district has been growing at a rate similar to the country's average and so its amount remains smaller than the national average. Poverty rates in the district are falling, but they are still higher than the country averages. In 2019 the labor market picked up a lot of speed. Economic activity in the district intensified and its growth was accompanied by a sharp increase in employment and a decline in unemployment. Investment activity in the district is not very strong. Households' access to the Internet remains relatively limited. The average rate of local taxes in the municipalities of Lovech district was still relatively low in 2020. The fig-

ures for the performance of the local administration place the district among the leaders in the country. The problem of population ageing is particularly acute in Lovech district. The students' educational results are unsatisfactory. The indicators for the district's health-care again gave Lovech one of the top-ranking places in the country for 2019. The number of registered crimes against the person and property equalled the national average but detection rates were considerably higher. The amounts of household waste remained lower than the average but the share handed over for treatment and recycling continued to be extremely limited. The district's cultural life is not particularly active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■

Despite its low starting point, in 2018 GDP per capita in Lovech district grew at a rate similar to the national average. Thus its value of 9,700 BGN per capita remained lower than the average of 15,600 BGN for the country. The same trend is observed in salaries and incomes. In 2018, the average gross salary in the district reached 10,300 BGN per annum, compared to 13,800 BGN on average nationwide, and in 2019 the average income per household member amounted to 4,454 BGN per year, against 6,013 BGN countrywide.

Poverty rates in the district have been falling, but in 2019 they still remained higher than the national averages. The share of the population living in material deprivation was 22.4%, versus 19.9% in the country, and those living below the poverty line constituted 25.3% of the population, compared to 22.6% nationwide.

Labor market ■■■■

In 2019 the labor market in Lovech district picked up a lot of speed. Economic activity intensified by 6 p.p. to reach 73.5%, almost catching up with the national average of 74.3%. This growth was accompanied by a sharp rise in employment figures and a decline in unemployment. The employment rate reached 67%, coming close to the average of 70% nationwide. The unemployment rate shrank to 6.5%, versus the national average of 4.2%.

The labor market still faces the challenge posed by the educational structure of the workforce. Although the share of the population with primary education or less is relatively low (13.5%, compared to 17.6% in the country), the share of the workforce with a university degree is limited – 19.1%, versus the national average of 28.0%. A relatively large share of the workforce has secondary education, which reflects the structure of the economy in the district.

The population replacement ratio of those aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64 is 64.2%, against the national average of 65.9%.

Investment and economy ■■

Investment activity in Lovech district is not particularly strong. The relative number of enterprises in the district had been rising but in 2018 it still remained comparatively low – 46 per 1,000 persons, versus the national average of 59 per 1,000 persons. FTA expenditure and FDI in the district were also extremely limited. In 2018 FTA acquisition expenditure amounted to 1,165 BGN/person, while the national average was 2,750 BGN/person. Cumulative FDI in Lovech district was 969 EUR/person, against 3,560 EUR/person on a national level.

The values of the above indicators were a prerequisite for the relatively low production value in the district. In 2018 it was 14,700 BGN/person, against the national average of 25,900 BGN/person.

By 15 June 2020 utilization of EU funds had begun to accelerate compared to the previous year and the payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs exceeded the national average. They amounted to 2,121 BGN/person, versus 1,976 BGN/person on a national level. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipalities of Yablanitsa, Lukovit and Troyan.

Infrastructure ■■

The railroad network density in Lovech district remains relatively low. Although the road network density is higher than the national average, the share of highways and first-class roads remains relatively small. In 2019, the share of roads in good condition rose to 41%, equal to the national average.

The relative share of households with internet access remained relatively limited in 2019 – 66.8%, versus the average of 75.1% nationally.

Local taxes ■■■■

The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Lovech district remained relatively low in 2020. An exception was the tax rate on the non-residential immovable property of legal entities. In Lovech district it was 2.25‰ on average, compared to 2.01‰ in the country.

For the other monitored local taxes – on motor vehicles, retail trade, non-gratuitous acquisition of property and taxi transportation – the average rates in the district were lower by 15 to 20% than the national ones.

Administration ■■■■

The performance of the administration in Lovech ranks the district among the leaders in the country. One of the main reasons for this is that in 2020 the local authorities recorded higher self-assessment ratings for the development of e-administration and the provision of one-stop-shop services. In both indicators Lovech district exceeded the averages for the country. Another reason for the high assessment of the local administration is its relatively good transparency rating. In 2020, it reached 77.9%, compared to the average of 70.7% nationally. Within the district, the highest ratings (of over 80%) were given to the municipalities of Troyan and Teteven.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Demography ■■■

The problem of population ageing is particularly acute in Lovech district, which in 2019 remained among the regions with the most unfavourable demographic tendencies (after Vidin and Kyustendil).

For eight years, the natural population growth rate has remained below -10‰, while in 2019 it even fell to -13.1‰, or twice lower than the national average of -6.7‰. Out-migration from the district is also rising and the net migration rate has reached -5.8‰.

These processes also affect the age dependency figures in the district. For the fourth consecutive year, the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 years was 201%, compared to 150% in the country on average, and to those aged 15-64 years - 45%, versus 34% nationwide.

A relatively low share of the district's population lives in urban areas - 63%, compared to 74% in the country, and the population density of urbanized areas is almost half the national average - 836 persons/sq.km, while nationally it is 1,510 persons/sq.km.

Education ■■■

The district's performance in the education category is unsatisfactory. The percentages of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school have been on the rise and remain higher than the national averages. In 2018, school dropouts comprised 4.2%, compared to 2.9% in the country, and in 2019 repeaters made up 1.3% of the students, against 0.9% in the country. Though the enrolment ratio in 5th-8th grade was on the decline in 2019, it still remained higher than the national average.

The exam results achieved by the district's students in 2020 once again present a mixed picture. The average score at the external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade was significantly lower in the district than nationally - 29.8 points, versus 36.3 points in the country on average. At the same time, the grades in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature again came close to the average ones for the whole country (4.19 in the district, 4.20 in the country), while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) exactly equaled the national average of 8%.

The relative number of teachers in primary and secondary education has been increasing, but it is still lower than the national average.

Healthcare ■■■■■

The 2019 healthcare indicators for Lovech district again place it among the leaders in the country. The main reason for this is the relatively high accessibility to doctors. One local GP cared for 1,476 persons, whereas the average proportion for the

country was 1,688 persons per doctor. The access to specialist physicians was close to the national average.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals remained low - 468 beds per 100,000 people in the district, versus 550 beds per 100,000 people in the country.

Infant mortality in the district is declining and is already below the national average. Significantly lower is also the number of hospitalizations in the district - 163 per 100,000 persons, compared to 254 per 100,000 nationwide.

Public order and security ■■■■

The workloads of criminal judges in Lovech district have been on the decline, but in 2019 they still remained above the national average: an average of 10 cases a month per judge, compared to 9 cases nationally. Still, the speed of the delivery of justice was good, so the proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months reached 96%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide.

The relative number of registered crimes against the person and property in Lovech district equaled the national average of 11 per 1,000 persons, but the detection rate was very high - 64%, against 52% for the country.

Environment ■■■

The amount of household waste generated in the district in 2018 remained lower than the national average - 332 kg/person per annum, against 409 kg/person per annum on a national scale. However, the part of it handed over for treatment and recycling was still extremely limited - 11%, compared to the national average of 71%.

The share of the population with access to public sewerage networks still remained relatively limited in 2018 - 69%, compared to 76% countrywide. 57% of the population were connected to waste water treatment plants, against the national average of 64%.

Culture ■■■

Cultural life in Lovech district again showed little intensity in 2019. The district achieved better than average results only as regards visits to the local museums - 1,031 visits per 1,000 persons, against the national figure of 770 per 1,000 persons.

Visits to the local cinemas were severely limited in number - 183 per 1,000 persons, compared to 659 per 1,000 persons nationwide, and so were visits to the theaters - 161 per 1,000 persons, versus 362 per 1,000 persons, and to libraries - 227 per 1,000 persons, against 683 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Lovech

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,804	9,653	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,303	4,303	4,454	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,474	10,317	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	38.3	25.3	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	55.8	60.9	67.0	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	8.7	9.8	6.5	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	22.4	15.6	13.5	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	17.8	20.9	19.1	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	13,558	14,666	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,040	1,165	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	891	969	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	54.8	67.8	66.8	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	45.8	37.8	41.0	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	18.0	18.0	18.3	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	72.8	74.0	77.9	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-13.2	-11.5	-13.1	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-4.5	-5.0	-5.8	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.98	4.00	4.19	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	26.0	29.7	29.8	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	77	79	86	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	92.4	90.6	88.6	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	90.4	90.5	92.0	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,348	1,464	1,476	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	12.8	12.7	11.2	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	10.9	12.0	9.9	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	69.0	69.1	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	354	332	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	0.9	11.3	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	114	112	183	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	94	96	161	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.

Montana District

- Population (2019)
- Territory (sq. km)
- Number of settlements
- Share of urban population (%)

127,001
3,635.6
130
64.3



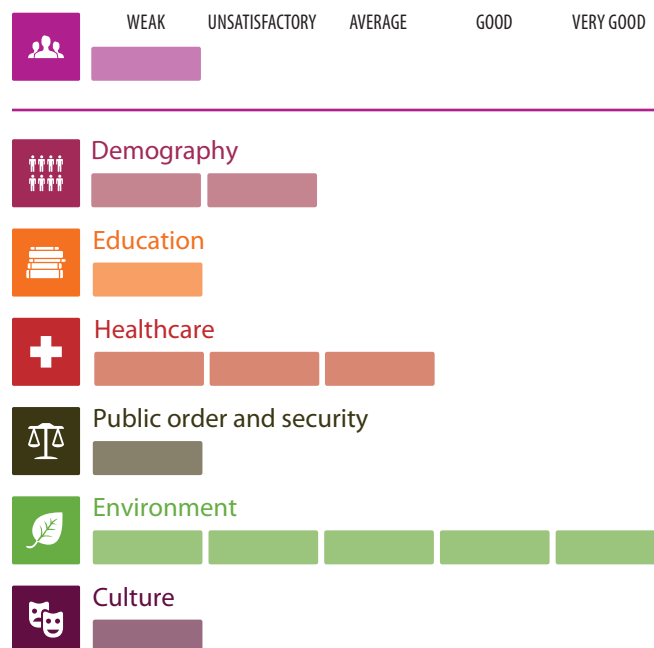
Montana is among Bulgaria's districts that have the worst indicators for incomes and quality of life: a prerequisite for the high poverty levels among its population. The unfavorable trends in the local labor market place Montana last in the country in this category. The rise in economic activity in 2019 led to an increase in the unemployment rate. Investment activity in the district is relatively weak. Montana performs well in terms of the utilization of European funds. This is the region with the smallest share of highways and first-class roads in the country. The average municipal taxes for 2020 gave the district the top place in the ranking for the lowest taxation rates. The performance of the district administration has received relatively good ratings.

The continuing tendency towards population ageing in the whole of Bulgaria is particularly pronounced in Montana district. The natural growth rate continues to fall and is the second lowest in the country. The performance of Montana district as regards the indicators for education is relatively weak. Access to doctors in the area is relatively good. The number of beds in the local general hospitals also remains higher than the national average. The maintenance of public order and security is evaluated as poor. The district ranks well in terms of its environmental indicators. The share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains high. In 2019, Montana remained the district with the least active cultural life in the country.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■

Income and living standard ■■

Montana is among Bulgaria's districts with the worst indicators for incomes and standard of living. In spite of the low starting point, the growth rate of GDP per capita in the district has been two times smaller than the average one in the country and in 2018 it reached 9,000 BGN, against 15,600 BGN nationally. Salaries and incomes have also been rising at a relatively slow pace. The gross annual salary in Montana district was 10,100 BGN in 2018, versus the national average of 13,800 BGN, while in 2019 the annual income per household member was 4,644 BGN, compared to 6,013 BGN as the country's average.

The low salaries and incomes serve as a prerequisite for the large proportion of the population living in poverty. In 2019 the share of people living below the national poverty line was 47.4%, or double the average figure for the country of 22.6%. The proportion of people living in material deprivation was 22.7%, versus 19.9% nationwide.

Labor market ■■

The unfavourable trends in the local labor market place Montana last in the country in this category for 2019.

Economic activity did grow considerably compared to the previous year, but its rate of 68.6% still remained lower than the national average of 74.3%. Since, however, the labor market suffers from a number of problems, the growth in economic activity only leads to a rise in unemployment figures. In 2019 employment fell by 4 p.p. to 48.2% and remained the lowest in the country where the average rate was 70.1%. At the same time, unemployment rose by 5 p.p. to reach 20.4%, against the national average of 4.2%, and again placed Montana last.

A major challenge facing the labor market is posed by the relatively low educational status of the workforce. The share of people with a university degree is almost three times smaller than the national average – 10%, versus 28%, while the share of the workforce with primary or lower education constitutes 30%, whereas on a national scale the figure is 18%. As regards both indicators, tendencies in Montana district over the past few years have been unfavourable.

Investment and economy ■■

Investment activity in Montana district is comparatively weak. In 2018, Montana remained one of the districts with the smallest relative number of enterprises – 36 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 59 per 1,000 persons. Also, it was among the districts with the lowest rates of investment. FTA expenditures even fell to 1,157 BGN/person, versus 2,750 BGN/person nationally. There is also a decline in FDI, which, with a rate of 274 EUR/person remained over ten times lower than the national average of 3,560 EUR/person.

In spite of a certain increase over the past few years, in 2018 production value in the district remained as low as 13,000 BGN/

person, compared to 25,900 BGN/person as the national average.

On the other hand, Montana district has performed quite well as regards the utilization of EU funding. By 15 June 2020 payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs reached 2,202 BGN/person, versus an average of 1,976 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the top places in the utilization of EU funds are occupied by the municipalities of Montana and Georgi Damyanovo.

Infrastructure ■■

The density of the road and railroad network in Montana district is close to the national average. However, the share of highways and first-class roads in it is the smallest in the country – 9.8% in 2019, against 18.6% nationally. Only 28.9% of road surfaces are in good condition, compared to the national average of 41.4%.

The relative share of households with internet access is on the increase and has reached 78%, against 75% nationwide.

Local taxes ■■■■■■

The average level of municipal taxes in Montana for 2020 made the district the leader with the lowest taxation rates in the country. For all five monitored local taxes, the rates in Montana district were lower than the respective national average. The biggest difference was in the retail trade tax. In the municipalities within the district it was 5.10 BGN/sq.m on average, compared to 12.93 BGN/sq.m in the country. For its part, the tax on taxi transportation in the district was lower by over 33%, while taxes on motor vehicles and on non-residential real estate of legal entities were 20% lower than the average nationwide rates.

Administration ■■■■■■

Montana district demonstrates relatively good results in the Administration category. Similar to the rest of the country, cadastral map coverage has been on the rise and in 2019 it included almost the entire territory of the district.

In 2020, the local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-administration and on the provision of one-stop shop services showed improvement.

The transparency ratings of the local administration decreased slightly in 2020 but they still remained above the national average. Within the district, the highest ratings for this indicator were achieved by the municipalities of Boichinovtsi, Berkovitsa and Chiprovtsi.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■■

The continuing tendency towards population ageing is particularly conspicuous in Montana district. The natural growth rate is still declining and is the second worst in the country after that in Vidin district. In 2019 it was -14.5‰, versus the national average of -6.7‰. Ongoing out-migration also contributes to the fast shrinking of the population in the district. The net migration figure for 2019 dropped to -6.1‰.

The above mentioned processes have a strong negative impact on the age dependency ratios in Montana district. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 is a whole 195%, compared to 150% in the country, and to those aged 15-64 it is 44%, against 34% nationally.

A relatively low share of the population of Montana district lives in urban areas – 64.9%, versus the national average of 74%. The population density in the urban territories is also among the lowest in the country – 894 persons/sq.km against 1,510 persons/sq.km on a national scale.

Education ■■

The performance of Montana district as regards the indicators in the education category was relatively poor in 2019. Enrolment in 5th-8th grade came down to reach 81.1%, against the national average of 86.6%. At the same time, the percentages of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education increased and remained higher than the national averages.

The average score in the 2020 external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was again among the lowest in the country, with 27.8 points on average for the students from Montana district and 36.3 points in the country on average. However, the district's figure marked a slight improvement compared to the past two years. At the same time, students' results in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature were close to the national average. The average score was 4.15, compared to 4.20 nationally, while the share of "failed" grades (below 3.00) was 6.5%, against 8.2% nationwide.

The number of primary and secondary school teachers relative to the total student population has been growing at the same rate as the average one in the country and remains close to the average values.

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

Healthcare ■■■■

Access to doctors in Montana district is relatively easy. The proportion of population cared by GPs is 1,443 persons to 1 GP, compared to 1,688 persons to 1 GP as the country's average. The relative number of specialist physicians is close to the national average.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals is higher than in the country on average. In 2019, hospitals provided 688 beds

per 100,000 persons, versus the national average of 550 per 100,000 persons.

The hospitalization figures for 2019 reached 267 per 1,000 persons, compared to 254 per 1,000 nationally.

Public order and security ■■

The maintenance of public order and security in Montana district is evaluated as poor. Although the local criminal judges have smaller workloads – an average of 7.7 cases a month per one judge, compared to 9.1 nationally – delivery of justice is relatively slow. In 2019, the proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months fell to 80%, against the national average of 90%, while pending cases rose to 15%, against 10% nationwide.

Montana is among the districts with the highest crime rates. In 2019, the registered crimes against the person and property numbered over 13 per 1,000 persons, versus 11 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Nevertheless, the rate of detection has been on the rise and again exceeds the national average.

Environment ■■■■■■

The performance of Montana district in terms of the state of the environment remained very good in 2018. The volume of carbon dioxide emissions was tens of times lower than the national average – 7.3 t/sq.km, compared to 274.8 t/sq.km in the country. The amount of household waste generated annually also remained relatively small – 268 kg/person, against the average of 409 kg/person nationwide. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remained high – 95%, compared to 71% as the national average.

The share of the population with access to wastewater treatment plants remained extremely low (35.5%, compared to 63.9% for the country), and so did the share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (59.9%, compared to 76.2% in the country).

Culture ■■

In 2019, Montana was once again the district with the least active cultural life in the whole country. Visits to local theatres and cinemas increased but were many times lower than the national averages. Visits to theatres amounted to 88 per 1,000 persons, compared to 362 per 1,000 persons in the country on average, and museum visits numbered 155 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 770 per 1,000 persons.

2019 marked the first time a cinema was opened in the district, with visits to it numbering 97 per 1,000 persons – a figure, however, still too far from the average one for the country of 659 per 1,000 persons.

Since 2015, there has been no library in the district large enough to be included in the official NSI statistics

Key indicators for the district of Montana

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,659	9,033	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,507	4,507	4,644	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,297	10,129	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	45.7	47.4	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	57.3	52.2	48.2	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	9.7	15.3	20.4	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	21.0	25.6	30.3	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	14.4	12.6	10.0	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	11,546	13,048	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,234	1,157	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	286	274	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	51.5	67.8	78.0	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	28.4	30.5	28.9	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	17.1	17.1	17.2	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	68.8	73.0	71.0	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-13.5	-14.0	-14.5	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-5.0	-5.7	-6.1	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.82	3.95	4.15	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	26.6	25.2	27.8	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	81	84	90	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	84.7	82.9	81.1	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	87.3	87.2	88.8	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,224	1,505	1,443	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	15.0	12.2	13.1	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	7.4	6.3	7.7	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	59.6	59.9	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	264	268	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	95.2	95.3	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	0	0	97	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	134	82	88	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.

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



Income and living standard



Labor market



Investment and economy



Infrastructure



Local taxes



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Demography



Education



Healthcare



Public order and security



Environment



Culture



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.

Pernik District

► Population (2019)	119,190
► Territory (sq. km)	2,394.2
► Number of settlements	171
► Share of urban population (%)	79.5



In 2018, GDP per capita in Pernik district grew at a rate twice the national average, although it remained far below the average level. Salaries and incomes have also been rising fast, which has had a positive effect on the relatively low poverty rates in the district. In 2019 the labor market also gathered a lot of momentum. Economic activity recorded a serious growth, accompanied by a simultaneous rise both in employment and unemployment rates. Population ageing, however, still remains a major challenge facing the local labor market. Investment activity is relatively weak. The average rate of the local taxes in the municipalities of Pernik district is relatively low. The transparency of the local administration is estimated as relatively poor.

The problem of population ageing is particularly conspicuous in Pernik district. The natural growth rate is twice as low as the national average. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school remain lower than the national averages. The district is relatively well provided with GPs, but specialist physicians are relatively insufficient in number. Beds in the local general hospitals are also less than half the national average, and Pernik is also the district with the smallest relative number of hospitalizations. The workloads of criminal judges are still small in national terms, which affects the speed of delivery of justice. A considerable amount of household waste is handed over for treatment and recycling. Pernik is one of the districts with the least active cultural life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■■

In 2018, GDP per capita in Pernik district grew at the rate of 18.3%, which is double the national average rate of 9.3%. Nevertheless, its nominal value of 9,200 BGN remained far below the country's average of 15,600 BGN. Salaries and incomes have also been rising fast. The average gross annual salary in the district reached 10,300 BGN, compared to 13,800 BGN on average nationwide, and in 2019 the income per household member grew by 12%, compared to 8% in the country, to reach 7,049 BGN per year, against 6,013 BGN countrywide. The explanation for this difference is that salary data are based on place of employment, and those on household income – on place of residence. In other words, when people are resident in Pernik but are working in Sofia (capital city), this has a positive effect on the data for household income but not on salary data.

The comparatively high incomes in the district also result in relatively low poverty levels. In 2019, the share of the population living with material deprivation amounted to 18.8%, compared to 19.9 % in the country, while that of the people living below the poverty line was 14.2%, versus 22.6% nationally.

Labor market ■■■■■

In 2019 the labor market in Pernik district picked up a lot of momentum. Economic activity marked a serious growth of 7 p.p. and reached 79.1%, considerably surpassing the national average of 74.3%. This growth was accompanied by a parallel rise in employment and unemployment rates. The employment rate reached 70.9%, and for the first time in five years exceeded the average rate in the country (70.1%). The unemployment rate rose slightly to 8.2%, versus the national average of 4.2%.

Characteristic of the workforce in Pernik district is the relatively large share of people with secondary education. While on a national scale a little over half the population have secondary education, in Pernik district they constitute almost 2/3, while the shares of both university graduates and people with primary or lower education are smaller.

A major challenge facing the local labor market continues to be the problem of population ageing. The population replacement ratio of those aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64 has dropped to 47.7%. Thus, for every 100 adults who will leave the workforce in the next few years, there are about 48 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and economy ■■■

Investment activity in Pernik district is relatively weak. The region's proximity to the capital affects both the number of enterprises and the investment attracted into it. In 2018, there were 45 enterprises per 1,000 people, compared to 59 per 1,000 people

in the country. Both FTA expenditure and FDI amounted to less than half the respective national averages.

This also explains the relatively low production value in Pernik district – 17,500 BGN/person, compared to an average of 25,900 BGN/person nationwide.

The amounts of utilized European funds in the district were also half the national average. As of 15 June 2020 beneficiaries under EU operational programs received payments of 1,026 BGN/person on average, compared to 1,976 BGN/person on a national level.

Infrastructure ■■■■■

In 2019, the density of the road and railroad networks in Pernik district remained considerably higher than the national average. The share of highways and first-class roads was still comparatively low – 15.8%, against 18.6% in the country; however, the quality of the roads was relatively good. The share of road surfaces in good condition was 46.9%, against the national average of 41.1%.

The relative share of households with internet access has been rising but still remains relatively limited – 68.8%, versus the average of 75.1% nationally.

Local taxes ■■■■■

The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Pernik district again remained relatively low in 2020. What is more, the average rates of all five monitored taxes were lower in the district than in the country, and in 2020 all of them remained without change. The tax rate on taxi transportation was 40% lower – 300 BGN per annum, against 498 BGN nationally. The local taxes on motor vehicles and retail trade were also over 20% less than the average national ones.

Administration ■■■■

Following the trend in the country, the cadastral map coverage in Pernik district has increased and in 2019 it included almost 100% of its territory.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-administration and on the provision of one-stop shop services improved in 2020, though with ratings below the country's average. The 2020 AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration were also lower – 62%, compared to the national average of 71%. Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipality of Breznik, and the lowest ones were given to the Zemen municipality.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Demography ■■■■

The problem of population ageing is particularly conspicuous in Pernik district. While over the past eight years the natural growth rate had fluctuated between -11‰ and -12‰, in 2019 it took a sharp drop to -13.1‰, or twice lower than the national average of -6.7‰. Out-migration from the district is also rising but remains at a relatively low level. The net migration rate has reached -0.9‰.

Evidence of population ageing in the district can be found in the extremely high age dependency ratios. In 2019, the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 years reached 204%, compared to 150% in the country on average, and to those aged 15-64 years - 40.9%, versus 33.8% nationwide.

A relatively large share of the district's population lives in urban areas - 79.5%, compared to 73.7% in the country, but population density remains lower than the national average - 917 persons/sq.km, while nationally it is 1,510 persons/sq.km.

Education ■■■■

The enrolment rate in 5th-8th grades continues to be higher than the national average and in 2019 it rose even further. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school have also been on the increase but remain lower than the national averages. In 2019, repeaters made up 0.46% of the students, against 0.89% in the country.

Students' results for 2020 again present a mixed picture. The average score at the external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade is relatively low, while the average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature comes close to the national one. For the second year in a row, the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) is smaller than the national average.

For the third consecutive year the relative number of teachers in primary and secondary education has been increasing and remains higher than the national average, with 97 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 89 teachers per 1,000 students nationally.

There is one university on the district's territory, but the students enrolled in it amount to a bare 1 per 1,000 persons, against 32 per 1,000 persons nationally. The small number of students can be explained with Pernik's proximity to the capital.

Healthcare ■■■■

The share of people with health insurance in Pernik district continued to increase in 2019 and sustained a level above the national average. The district is relatively well provided with GPs (1,490 persons per doctor compared to 1,688 persons per doctor in the country), but there are relatively few specialist physicians. The beds in the local general hospitals are less than half the average national numbers. In 2019, they were 247 per 100,000 persons, compared to 550 per 100,000 persons in the country. In 2019, Pernik again was the district with the lowest relative num-

ber of hospitalizations - 102 per 1,000 persons, compared to 254 per 1,000 persons nationwide. This fact, as well as the relatively limited number of beds in the local hospitals, is probably related to the district's proximity to the capital, in whose large metropolitan hospitals the population tends to seek medical care.

Public order and security ■■■■

The workloads of the local criminal judges in Pernik district continue to be smaller than the national average. The figures for 2019 show an average of 6.3 cases a month per one judge, compared to 9.1 cases nationally. This has a positive effect on the speed of the delivery of justice. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 95%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide, while pending cases make up 5%, against 10% in the country.

The relative number of registered crimes in Pernik district is slightly higher than the national average, and the detection rate slightly lower. In 2019 there were 11.8 crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons, versus an average of 11.1 crimes per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate rose to 51.5%, against 52.1% for the country on average.

Environment ■■■■

Carbon dioxide emissions in the district are relatively small - 175 t/sq.km of territory, against 275 t/sq.km in the country.

The amounts of household waste generated in the district have continued to increase and in 2018, for the first time in four years, they reached levels above the national average. At the same time, however, a considerable part of these amounts went out for treatment and recycling - 86%, compared to the national average of 71%.

The share of population with access to public sewerage networks and of the households with sewerage connected to waste water treatment plants have remained practically unchanged since 2010, with both indicators placing Pernik district above the respective national averages.

Culture ■■■■

Pernik is among the districts with the least active cultural life. Interest for theaters has been rising, but remains well below the national average rates. In 2019, visits to the local theaters amounted to 65 per 1,000 persons, compared to 362 per 1,000 persons in the country. Museums attracted 318 visits per 1,000 persons, against 770 per 1,000 persons nationally, and libraries - 234 visits per 1,000 persons, while the national average was 683 per 1,000 persons.

The absence of an active cultural life in the district can again be attributed to its proximity to the capital.

Key indicators for the district of Pernik

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,735	9,153	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	6,269	6,269	7,049	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,321	10,321	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	11.9	14.2	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	66.5	66.7	70.9	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	7.2	7.5	8.2	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	10.5	12.4	13.4	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	19.9	23.8	21.4	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	14,977	17,525	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,055	1,109	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,658	1,647	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	67.9	67.7	68.8	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	46.7	46.7	46.9	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	24.0	24.0	23.8	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	54.2	63.0	61.8	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-12.4	-11.9	-13.1	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	1.4	-0.7	-0.9	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.03	4.04	4.13	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	26.8	29.6	28.7	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	86	90	93	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	90.5	90.7	91.6	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	89.3	89.7	91.0	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,415	1,502	1,490	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	13.9	13.7	11.8	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.5	4.9	6.3	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	79.1	79.4	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	416	472	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	100.0	86.3	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	0	0	0	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	61	15	65	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.

Pleven District

- Population (2019)
- Territory (sq. km)
- Number of settlements
- Share of urban population (%)

236,305

4,653.3

123

66.9



Although in 2018 GDP per capita in Pleven district again recorded considerable growth, it has still remained relatively low. The labor market has not picked up appreciably. Investment activity in the district is relatively weak. Pleven is among the districts with the least FDI, but it performs well in terms of the utilization of European funds. Against the background of its relatively weak economic development, Pleven district maintains rates of local taxation that are close to the national averages but are also significantly higher than the average ones in north-western Bulgaria. The ratings for the transparency of the local administration are declining, but they still remain higher than the national average.

The process of population ageing is accelerating at a faster pace in Pleven district than in the rest of the country. The district does not perform well in terms of the indicators assessing education. Pleven is one of the few districts in the country where in recent years there has been a steady increase in the number of university students. In the area of healthcare, Pleven ranks first in the whole of Bulgaria. It is indeed the district with the highest relative number of doctors and beds in its general hospitals. The workloads of local criminal judges are relatively small, which has a positive effect on the speedy delivery of justice. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is growing. Cultural life in Pleven district is characterized by relatively low activity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■

Although in 2018 GDP per capita in Pleven district again recorded a considerable growth rate – 11.6%, compared to the national average of 9.3%, it has remained relatively low – 8,800 BGN against 15,600 BGN respectively. Salaries were also rising relatively fast and reached 10,500 BGN, compared to 13,800 BGN on average nationwide. Incomes per household member remained generally stable, with a rate of increase for 2019 of a bare 2%, compared to 8% in the country. Their average annual amount reached 5,893 BGN per household member, which for the first time in ten years fell below the national average (6,013 BGN).

The share of the population living with material deprivation again remained above the national average in 2019. At the same time, the share of people living below the poverty line shrank to a level below the national average – 20.4% in the district versus 22.6% nationally.

Labor market ■■■■

No serious rally in the labor market was observed in 2019 in Pleven district. Economic activity intensified slightly but remained relatively weak at 71.1%, compared to the national average of 74.3%. This growth was accompanied by a parallel decline both in employment and unemployment rates. The employment rate shrank by 1 p.p. to 63.2%, and so further increased its distance from the average of 70.1% nationwide. The unemployment rate, for its part, remained relatively high – 7.9%, versus the national average of 4.2%.

Over the past few years the educational structure of the workforce in Pleven district has remained relatively unfavorable and has even been characterized by a slight deterioration of its indicators. In 2019 the share of the population holding a university degree dropped to 23%, against 28% in the country, while the share of those with primary education or less rose to 21%, compared to 18% nationally.

A major challenge facing the local labor market continues to be the problem of population ageing. The population replacement ratio of those aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64 is 61.5%, against 65.9% countrywide.

Investment and economy ■■■

The relative number of enterprises in Pleven district has been growing but although placed against the other regions in north-western Bulgaria it is relatively high, it remains considerably lower than the national average, with 41 enterprises per 1,000 persons, versus 59 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Investment activity in Pleven district remained relatively weak in 2018. Pleven is among the districts with the smallest amounts of FDI and in that same year it even registered a decline, falling to 524 EUR/person, which is nearly seven times lower than the national average of 3,564 EUR/person. FTA expenditures grew but

they, too, remained relatively low – 1,722 BGN/person, compared to 2,750 BGN/person in the country.

Production value in the district has made a considerable increase, reaching 13,000 BGN/person, which, however is twice as low as the average of 25,900 BGN/person nationwide.

As regards the utilization of European funds, Pleven district has been performing relatively well. By 15 June 2020 payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,930 BGN/person, compared to 1,976 BGN/person on a national level. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded by the Belene municipality.

Infrastructure ■■■

Pleven district is characterized by a low density of its road network but with a higher density of its railroads. There is still no highway passing through the district, and first-class roads make up as little as 12.2%. The quality of the roads improved in 2019, with the share of road surfaces in good condition reaching 36.5% but remaining relatively small when compared to the national average of 41.1%.

There has also been an increase in the share of households with internet access, which in 2019 went up to 71.7%, so still lagging behind the average of 75.1% nationally.

Local taxes ■■■■

Against the background of its relatively weak economic development, Pleven district maintains local taxes at levels comparable to the national averages, though the local rates in the region are significantly higher than the average ones for north-western Bulgaria.

In 2020, two of the monitored rates in the district were even higher than their respective national averages. The average level of the tax on non-residential real estate for legal entities was almost 50% higher, and the tax on the non-gratuitous acquisition of property was 5% higher. For their part, taxes on retail trade and taxi transportation were about 1/4 lower.

Administration ■■■■

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-administration and on the provision of one-stop shop services for 2020 produced ratings considerably below those in the country on average.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration have deteriorated but at 71.8% they still remain higher than the national average of 70.7%. Within the district, the highest ratings of over 80% were achieved by the municipalities of Dolna Mitropoliya and Cherven bryag.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Demography ■■■

In 2019 the process of population ageing accelerated at a faster pace in Pleven district than in the rest of the country. For the third year in a row, the natural growth rate continued to fall, reaching -11.0‰, against the national average of -6.7‰. Out-migration from the district also went up, bringing the net migration rate down to -6.1‰.

These two processes have had an extremely negative impact on the age dependency ratios in the district. In 2019, the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 years reached 188%, compared to 150% in the country on average, and to those aged 15-64 years – 43.9%, versus 33.8% nationwide.

The share of the district's population living in urban areas remains relatively small – 66.9%, compared to 73.7% in the country, and so does the population density of urban areas – 1,077 persons/sq.km, while nationally it is 1,510 persons/sq.km.

Education ■■■

The district does not perform well in terms of the indicators assessing education. The enrolment ratio in 5th-8th grades continued to decline in 2019, although it remained slightly above the national average. The percentage of repeaters continued to shrink and for the first time in the last seven years fell below the average one for the country. At the same time, in 2018 the share of dropouts from primary and secondary school increased for the second consecutive year to reach a figure well above the average – 3.6%, against 2.9% in the country. The relative number of teachers in primary and secondary schools continued to increase and for the third consecutive year exceeded the national average by a considerable margin.

Students' results for 2020 again remained poor. The average score at the external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade was 28.8 p., compared to 36.3 p. nationally. The average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.00, versus 4.20 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) made up 13%, against the national average of 8%.

Pleven is one of the few districts in Bulgaria registering a steady increase in the number of university students over the past few years. In 2019 it reached 15 per 1,000 persons, yet it still remained half the national average.

Healthcare ■■■■■■

Pleven district has strong traditions in the sphere of healthcare. The share of people with health insurance in the region has continued to increase to levels above the national average. Indeed, Pleven is the district with the highest proportion both of GPs and specialist physicians. One local GP cares for 1,212 persons on average, compared to 1,688 persons per doctor in the country.

Pleven is also the district best provided with hospital beds. In 2019 their number even went up to reach around 931 beds per

100,000 persons, compared to 550 beds per 100,000 persons in the country.

The relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is high. In 2019, it was 269 per 1,000 persons, compared to 254 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Public order and security ■■■■

The workloads of the criminal judges in Pleven district are relatively small, which has a favorable impact on the speed of delivery of justice. In 2019, one judge heard an average of 7.7 cases a month, compared to 9.1 cases nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 94%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide.

The total number of crimes registered in Pleven district in the past ten years is on the whole higher than the national average but after two years of considerable decline, it went down almost to the average one in the country. In 2019 registered crimes against the person and property in the district constituted 11.7 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate rose to 55.5%, against 52.1% for the country on average.

Environment ■■■■■

In 2018 the relative volumes of carbon dioxide emissions in the district again remained many times smaller than in the country on average. The share of the population living in areas with access to public sewerage network systems amounted to 56.8%, with 53.1% of households connected to waste water treatment plants. Both indicators place Pleven district considerably lower than the respective national averages of 76.2% and 63.9%.

The amounts of household waste generated in the district increased for three years in a row, but in 2018 they still remained below the national average. At the same time, the amounts handed over for treatment and recycling also rose and reached 90%, compared to the national average of 71%.

Culture ■■■■

In 2019 Pleven district's cultural life still remained characterized by relatively low intensity. Only the number of museum visits reached a level above the national average – 854 visits per 1,000 persons, against 770 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Figures indicating interest in the local libraries are twice as low as the average ones in the country – 310 visits per 1,000 persons, versus 683 per 1,000 persons nationally. The proportions for visits to the local theaters and cinemas are around 1/3 smaller than countrywide.

Key indicators for the district of Pleven

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,884	8,795	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,774	5,774	5,893	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,401	10,461	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	30.3	20.4	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	61.7	64.4	63.2	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	10.5	8.2	7.9	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.4	18.8	20.8	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	24.5	24.1	23.1	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	11,553	13,009	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,388	1,722	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	920	524	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	56.9	63.6	71.7	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	36.7	33.6	36.5	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	17.1	17.1	17.1	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	71.6	75.0	71.8	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-10.2	-10.8	-11.0	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-5.8	-5.0	-6.1	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.71	3.94	4.00	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	26.4	26.8	28.8	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	92	93	97	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	89.2	88.6	87.0	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	90.0	90.3	91.9	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,129	1,205	1,212	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	16.3	13.0	11.7	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	9.4	9.4	7.7	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	56.6	56.8	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	344	391	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	87.1	89.7	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	509	434	452	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	157	206	258	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.

Plovdiv District

► Population (2019)	666,801
► Territory (sq. km)	5,972.9
► Number of settlements	212
► Share of urban population (%)	75.8



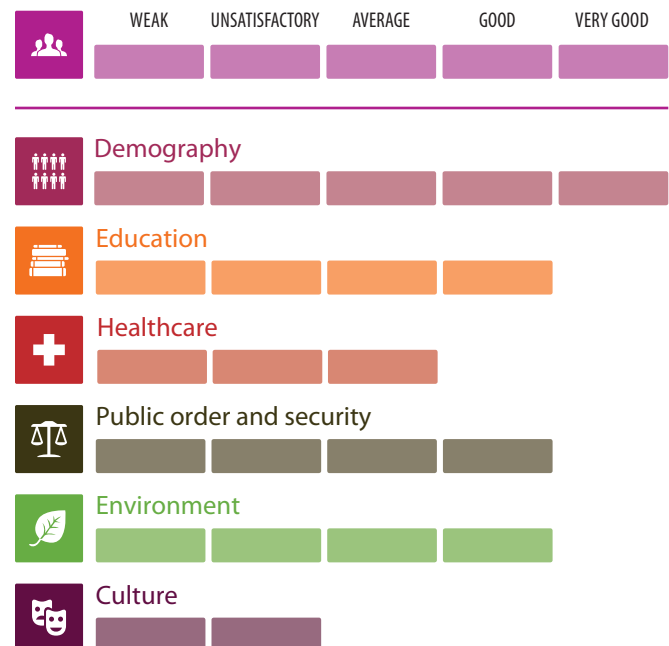
GDP per capita in Plovdiv district is the seventh highest in the country. Household incomes are growing relatively fast. Employment rates remain relatively high and unemployment rates low. The number of enterprises, FTA expenditures and production value all equal the national average. Infrastructural development in the district has achieved very good ratings. As in most districts with better developed economy, the level of local taxation in Plovdiv district remained relatively high in 2020. The development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services remain significantly lower than the national average.

Plovdiv is also one of the country's seven districts that manage to attract population. In 2020 Plovdiv's students again achieved good educational results. Plovdiv is among the districts with the largest relative number of doctors and hospital beds. The workloads of criminal judges in the district are high, but this does not impede the speedy delivery of justice. The number of crimes is relatively low and their detection rate is relatively high. The concentration of the population in urban areas is a prerequisite for a relatively high share of population with access to public sewerage networks. The number of visits to local theatres and museums remains relatively small.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■

GDP per capita in Plovdiv district continues to grow at a rate similar to the national average. In 2018, it reached 13,100 BGN and was the seventh highest in the country whose average was 15,600 BGN. Gross salaries in the district have also been growing steadily, reaching 11,800 BGN per year compared to 13,800 BGN in the country as a whole. Faster growth was observed in household incomes and in 2019 they again achieved levels higher than the national average – an annual amount of 6,163 BGN per household member, compared to 6,013 BGN in the country.

Poverty levels continued to rise in the district and in 2019 they exceeded the national average. The share of population living with material deprivation amounted to 24.9%, versus 19.9% nationally, and that of people living below the national poverty line – 22.7%, versus 22.6% countrywide.

Labor market ■■■■

In the last few years, economic activity in Plovdiv district has been making hesitant progress and in 2019 its growth rate of 72.7% already fell below the average level of 74.3% in the country. However, employment rates remained relatively high and unemployment rates low. The employment rate reached 70.3%, against 70.1% for the country, and the unemployment rate – 2.4%, against 4.2% nationwide.

A major challenge facing the local labor market continues to be the educational structure of the workforce. In 2019 it improved somewhat but still remained slightly less favorable than the country's average figures. The share of the population holding a university degree reached 26% against 28% in the country on average, while the share of those with primary education or less reached 20%, compared to 18% nationally. The population replacement ratio of those aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64 was 68% – slightly more favorable than the national average of 66%.

Investment and economy ■■■■

The relative number of enterprises in Plovdiv district has been growing and in 2018 it equaled the national average of 59 per 1,000 persons. Almost equal to the average level for the country were FTA expenditures – nearly 2,800 BGN/person, and production value – about 25,800 BGN/person.

FDI has been rising slowly and in 2018 it reached 2,861 EUR/person, versus the national average of 3,564 EUR/person. Nevertheless, Plovdiv district ranks seventh in the country with the largest relative volume of foreign investment.

Plovdiv district has also been lagging behind in the utilization of European funds. By 15 June 2020 payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,494 BGN/person, compared to 1,976 BGN/person na-

tionally. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were registered in the municipalities of Hissarya and Krichim.

Infrastructure ■■■■

The development of the district's infrastructure receives very high ratings. 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 in 2019 was 17.5%, compared to the national average of 18.6%. The quality of the roads is relatively good – roads with surfaces in good condition constitute 48.7%, against the average of 41.4% countrywide.

The relative share of households with internet access has been rising and is again well above the average one nationwide – 80.7%, versus 75.1% respectively.

Local taxes ■■

As in most districts with better developed economy, in 2020 the level of local taxation in Plovdiv district was again relatively high. The biggest difference remained in the rate on taxi transportation. Its average level in the municipalities of the district was 548 BGN per year, compared to 498 BGN in the country.

For the other monitored taxes, taxation in Plovdiv district was 2-3% in excess of the average rates nationwide.

Administration ■■

After several years of stagnation, in 2019 the coverage of the cadastral map in Plovdiv district increased sharply from 34% to 95% and even surpassed the average value of 91% for the country.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-administration and on the provision of one-stop shop services for 2020 remained at the level of the previous year, which was considerably below the national average. The ratings for the district e-government were 2.7 p. out of 5 p., compared to 3.2 p. nationally. The provision of one-stop shop services got exactly the same rating, versus 3.1 p. in the country.

For the first time in five years, the AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration fell and at 70.1% remained below the national average of 70.7%. Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipalities of Parvomai, Asenovgrad and Plovdiv, and the lowest by the municipalities of Stamboliyski and Kaloyanovo.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

Demography ■■■■■

Despite the nationwide process of population ageing in Bulgaria, Plovdiv district has been performing relative well. The natural growth rate of the population has continued to rise by a small margin, and at a value of -5.3% for 2019 it still remains above the national average of -6.7% . Plovdiv is also one of the country's seven districts that manage to attract population. In 2019 the net migration rate stayed unchanged at 3.1% , which is the highest value achieved by the district for at least two decades.

In 2019, these processes again left their relatively beneficial impact on the age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 years reached 142%, compared to 150% in the country on average, and to those aged 15-64 years – 33%, versus 34% nationwide.

A relatively large share of the district's population lives in urban areas, and in 2019 it reached a whole 76%, compared to 73.7% in the country. Plovdiv ranks third after the capital and Sliven as regards population density in its settlements – 2,054 persons/sq.km, while nationally it is 1,510 persons/sq.km.

Education ■■■■■

Plovdiv's performance in education is assessed as good. A challenge facing primary and secondary education in the district is the small relative number of teachers, even though in 2019 it continued to grow. An additional problem is posed by the relatively large shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school, though the latest data show some improvement in that aspect as well.

Students' results for 2020 again remained good. The average score at the external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade was slightly higher than the national average, while the average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.33 – considerably higher than the average of 4.20 in the country. "Fail" grades (below 3.00) made up 7.4%, against the national average of 8.2%.

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

Healthcare ■■■■

Plovdiv is among the districts with the largest relative number of doctors and hospital beds. The data for 2019 show one local GP caring for 1,588 persons on average, compared to 1,688 persons per doctor in the country. The index for access to specialist physicians is also more favourable than the national average. The local hospitals provide 786 beds per 100,000 persons, compared to 550 per 100,000 persons in the country. In 2019, the relative number of patients treated in the local

general hospitals reached 338 per 1,000 persons, compared to 254 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

The infant mortality rate fell in 2019 to levels below the national average.

Public order and security ■■■■

The workloads of the criminal judges in Plovdiv district are the second largest in the country, after those in the capital. This, however, does not impede the speedy delivery of justice, as it does in the capital. In 2019 one judge heard an average of 11.4 cases a month, compared to 9.1 cases nationally. At the same time, the proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 94%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide.

The number of crimes registered in Plovdiv district is relatively low, and crime detection is relatively high. In 2019 the registered crimes against the person and property in the district dropped to 8.3 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate rose considerably (by 9 p.p.), reaching 57.3%, against 52.1% for the country on average.

Environment ■■■■

Carbon dioxide emissions in Plovdiv district remain twice smaller than in the country on average. In 2018, greenhouse emissions amounted to 123 t/sq.km, compared to 275 t/sq.km in the country. The concentration of the population in urban areas is a prerequisite for a relatively high share of households with access to sewerage networks connected to waste water treatment plants – 67%, versus 64% nationally, and equally, for a high share of people living in areas with accessibility to public sewerage networks – 82%, against the national average of 76%.

The amounts of household waste generated in the district declined for the second year in a row, though they still remained relatively large. In 2018 they reached 446 kg/person per annum, against an average of 409 kg/person nationally. At the same time, the amounts handed over for treatment and recycling also showed an increase and reached 67%, though that was still below the national average of 71%.

Culture ■■■

In 2019, the numbers of visits to the local theaters, museums, cinemas and libraries in Plovdiv district still remained below the respective national averages. The highest rate of increase – by 28% – was observed in the number of museum visits, which reached 575 per 1,000 persons, against 770 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to the local libraries also increased, though by a small margin, and remained over two times lower than the average ones in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Plovdiv

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,112	13,141	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,093	5,093	6,163	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,771	11,780	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	19.9	22.7	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	70.1	69.9	70.3	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	4.7	3.6	2.4	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	18.9	20.3	20.2	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	26.7	27.0	26.0	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	24,260	25,792	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	2,511	2,790	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	2,825	2,861	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	76.2	74.4	80.7	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	48.7	50.3	48.7	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	17.1	17.1	17.1	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	70.2	75.0	70.1	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-5.1	-5.2	-5.3	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	2.5	3.1	3.1	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.19	4.25	4.33	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	29.7	34.7	36.7	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	77	78	84	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	89.3	88.6	87.8	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	87.1	87.1	87.6	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,452	1,571	1,588	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	9.3	8.6	8.3	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	11.9	11.0	11.4	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	81.4	81.6	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	526	446	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	41.7	66.8	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	997	874	373	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	232	243	232	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.

Razgrad District

► Population (2019)	110,789
► Territory (sq. km)	2,639.7
► Number of settlements	103
► Share of urban population (%)	47.1



Despite the low base, GDP per capita in Razgrad district has been growing at a slower pace than in the country on average. Poverty levels in the district also suffer the effect of the insufficiently fast growth rate of the local economy and incomes. In 2019, the labor market picked up considerable speed, although the district still failed to bridge the significant lag. Investment activity remained low. The development of the district's infrastructure is assessed as poor. The share of road surfaces in good condition is the lowest in the country. In 2020, the average local tax rates in the municipalities of Razgrad district again remained lower than the national average. The ratings for the transparency of the local administration remained relatively high.

Razgrad is one of the three districts with less than 50% of the population living in urban areas. The district's performance in education is unsatisfactory. The students' educational results remained relatively low in 2020. Razgrad is among the districts with the greatest shortages of doctors. Although the workloads of the local criminal judges are close to the national average, delivery of justice is speedier. Razgrad ranks last in the whole of Bulgaria as regards the environmental indicators. It is the district with the highest relative volume of generated household waste, while the share submitted for treatment and recycling is extremely low. Interest in the local theaters continues to be relatively high.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Income and living standard



Labor market



Investment and economy



Infrastructure



Local taxes



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Demography



Education



Healthcare



Public order and security



Environment



Culture



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■

Income and living standard ■■■

Despite the low base, GDP per capita in Razgrad district has been growing at a slower pace than in the country on average and in 2018 it reached 9,700 BGN, against 15,600 BGN nationally. Gross salaries in the district were rising at the country's average rate, but remained relatively low – 11,600 BGN per year compared to 13,800 BGN in the country. In 2019 household incomes rose significantly and reached 5,420 BGN/household member, compared to 6,013 BGN /household member in the country.

Poverty levels in the district also suffer the effect of the insufficiently fast growth rate of the local economy and incomes. The share of the population living with material deprivation in 2019 was 35.8%, compared to 19.9% in the country, and the population living below the national poverty line made up 28.0%, versus 22.6% nationwide

Labor market ■■■

In 2019, the labor market picked up considerable speed, although it still failed to bridge the district's significant lag. Investment activity rose by 8.2 p.p. to reach 71.4%, compared to 74.3% in the country, and its progress was accompanied both by a rise in employment and a decline in unemployment. The employment rate reached at least a twenty-year record of 61.8%, which, however, is still well below the national average of 70.1% for that year. The unemployment rate also dropped to record levels – 9.6%, which is nevertheless more than double the average of 4.2% nationwide.

A major challenge still facing the local labor market is the educational structure of the workforce, which has seriously deteriorated. The 2019 figures point to 31.6% of the population with primary or lower education, compared to 17.6% nationally, and to only 18.8% with a university degree, against 28.0% in the country on average.

The population replacement ratio of people aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64 has dropped to 64.2%, compared to the national average of 65.9%.

Investment and economy ■■■

Investment activity in Razgrad district remained low in 2018. Razgrad was among the districts with the lowest number of enterprises – 38 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 59 per 1,000 persons. FTA expenditures recorded some increase to 1,780 BGN/person but they nevertheless remained significantly lower than the average of 2,750 BGN/person nationally. FDI remained twice as low as the national average – 1,564 EUR/person, versus 3,560 EUR/person respectively. After a three-year growth, in 2018 production value per capita in Razgrad district dropped to 15,600 BGN/person, compared to 25,900 BGN/person in the country.

Some improvement was noticeable in the utilization of European funds. By 15 June 2020, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,568 BGN/person, compared to 1,976 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded by the municipalities of Isperih and Kubrat.

Infrastructure ■■

The development of the district's infrastructure was once again assessed as poor in 2019. The density of its railroad network was similar to the average one in the country, while the density of its roads was higher. At the same time, the share of highways and first-class roads was only 11.1%. In 2019, the share of road surfaces in good condition was 17.6% – an all-time low for the district and significantly below the average of 41.1% countrywide.

The relative share of households with internet access rose to reach 69.5%, though it still remained lower than the average of 75.1% nationwide.

Local taxes ■■■■■

In 2020, 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 on the non-residential immovable property of legal entities was higher in Razgrad district, albeit slightly, than the national average.

Significantly lower – by about 30-35% – than the national average were the local taxes on retail trade and on taxi transportation. The local taxes on motor vehicles and on the acquisition of property were 5 to 10% lower.

Administration ■■■

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services has remained considerably below the national average and in 2020 it deteriorated even further.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration also fell but at 73.2% in 2020 it still remained above the national average of 70.7%. Within the district, the municipality of the city of Razgrad performed best as regards this indicator and achieved a rating of 84%.

Similar to the progress in the other districts in Bulgaria, in 2019 cadastral map coverage in Razgrad district grew considerably to include a whole 96% of its territory, compared to an average of 91% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Demography ■■■■

In the last five years, the natural population growth rate in Razgrad district has been relatively steady at about -8 to -9%. In 2019, it was exactly -9%, compared to -6.7% in the country. The district has also been losing population due to out-migration. Although for the third consecutive year the net migration rate had been rising, in 2019 it remained relatively high at a value of -3.9%. These processes are also reflected in the constant deterioration of the age dependency ratios. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 years reached 162% that year, compared to 150% in the country, and to those aged 15-64 it was 34.2%, versus the national average of 33.8%. Razgrad is one of the three districts, along with those of Kardzhali and Silistra, where less than 50% of the population lives in urban areas. In 2019, 47.1% of the population was urban. Its density was also relatively low – 837 persons/sq.km, compared to 1,510 people/sq.km countrywide.

Education ■■■

The district's performance as regards the indicators in the sphere of education is unsatisfactory. The percentages of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school have been decreasing, but while the number of repeaters is comparatively small, that of dropouts remains relatively high.

Students' results for 2020 again remained relatively low. The average score in the external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade was 31.1 p., versus 36.3 p. nationally. The average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.02, compared to 4.20 in the country, and the share of "failed" grades (below 3.00) made up 12%, against the national average of 8%.

The relative number of teachers in primary and secondary education continued to rise in 2019 and remained higher than the national average.

The only 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 – just 2 students per 1,000 persons in 2019, compared to 32 students per 1,000 persons nationally.

Healthcare ■■■

The share of people with health insurance in Razgrad district continued to grow and in 2019 it reached a level considerably above the national average. At the same time, Razgrad is the district with the most acute shortage of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians. The data for 2019 show one local GP caring for 2,172 persons on average, compared to 1,688 persons per doctor in the country.

The relative number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals continued to increase in 2019 but it still remained relatively small – 505 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 also remained low, with 206.5 hospitalizations per 1,000 persons, compared to 253.7 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

The infant mortality rate continues to be relatively high.

Public order and security ■■■■

Although the workloads of the criminal judges in Razgrad district are close to the average ones in the country, the speed of delivery of justice is higher than the national average. In 2019 one judge heard an average of 9.2 criminal cases a month, compared to 9.1 cases per judge nationally, while the proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 95%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide.

The number of crimes registered in Razgrad district is relatively low, and crime detection is high. In 2019 the registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 9.9 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate dropped to 70%, which is still considerably above the national average of 52%.

Environment ■■

Among all of Bulgaria's districts, Razgrad ranks last as regards the environmental indicators for 2018. Due to the low concentration of people in urban areas, it is one of the districts with the worst results for the share of population with access to sewerage connected to waste water treatment plants – 42% versus 64% nationally, as well as in terms of the share of population living in settlements with a public sewerage network – again 42%, compared to the national figure of 76%.

Razgrad district generates greater amounts of household waste than any other district in Bulgaria. Its volume reached 529 kg/person annually, compared to 409 kg/person in the country on average. At the same time, the amounts handed over for treatment and recycling were a mere 9%, versus the national average of 71%.

Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere amounted to 50 t/sq.km, compared to 275 t/sq.km in the country.

Culture ■■■■

Interest in the local theaters in Razgrad district continues to be relatively strong. In 2019, the number of visits to the local theaters again showed an increase, reaching 434 per 1,000 persons, compared to 362 per 1,000 persons in the country.

Figures for the other indicators in this category also show a rise in the number of visits, though their numbers per 1,000 persons remain below the respective national averages. Visits to museums numbered 563 per 1,000 persons, against 770 per 1,000 persons nationally, visits to libraries – 415 per 1,000 persons, compared to 683 per 1,000 persons, and cinema visits – 106 per 1,000 persons, against 659 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Key indicators for the district of Razgrad

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,985	9,709	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,408	4,408	5,420	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,453	11,569	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	24.2	28.0	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	58.8	56.2	61.8	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	11.0	11.1	9.6	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	38.8	36.6	31.6	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	17.5	20.0	18.8	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	16,992	15,560	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,606	1,780	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,331	1,564	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	57.6	63.3	69.5	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	32.4	21.2	17.6	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	19.2	19.2	19.2	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	67.4	76.0	73.2	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-9.3	-8.7	-9.0	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-5.5	-4.5	-3.9	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.74	3.80	4.02	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	25.7	30.1	31.1	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	84	88	92	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	88.8	88.2	85.4	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	93.0	94.3	96.5	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	2,121	2,306	2,172	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.9	10.6	9.9	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	7.9	9.4	9.2	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	41.9	41.9	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	459	529	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	4.9	8.5	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	5	98	106	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	366	416	434	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.

Ruse District

- Population (2019)
- Territory (sq. km)
- Number of settlements
- Share of urban population (%)

215,477

2,803.4

83

78.2



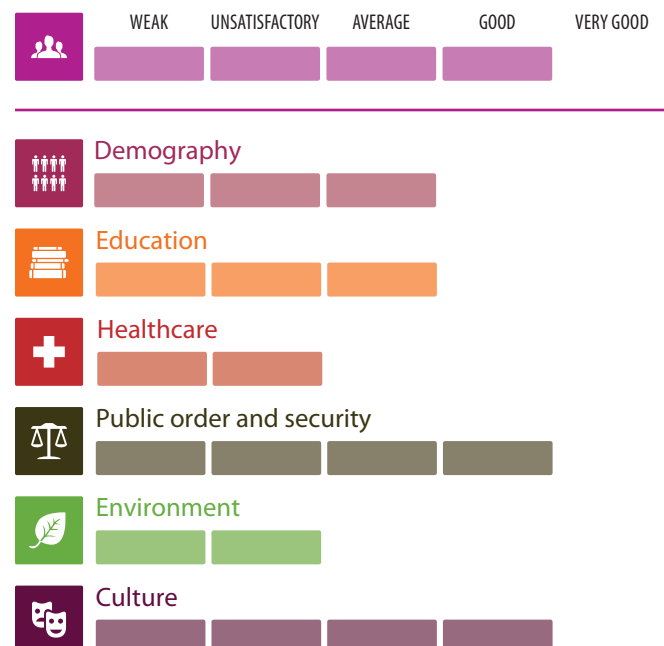
GDP per capita in Ruse district has been growing, but at a significantly lower rate, and so the district is increasingly lagging behind the national averages. Poverty levels in the district are similar to the average ones in the country. Economic activity has been rising slowly but steadily in recent years, accompanied by rising employment and declining unemployment. Investment activity in Ruse district is moving closer to the national average. The infrastructural development of the district can be categorized as good. The average level of the tax burden is relatively low. Ruse district has registered a huge improvement in the assessment of the local administration and ranks among the leaders in the country.

The population continues to decline both due to the low rate of natural increase and to out-migration from the region. Ruse is among the districts with the highest level of urbanization. The performance of the students from the district in 2020 again remained close to the national average. Healthcare in Ruse district continues to suffer from a shortage of doctors. Although local criminal judges have relatively heavier workloads, the speed of adjudication remains unaffected. The emissions of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere in the district are twice as low as the national average. The share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains extremely low. Cultural life in Ruse district is relatively active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■

GDP per capita in Ruse district has been growing, but the levels it has reached are significantly lower, and the district is increasingly lagging behind the national average. While two decades ago it was about 12-13% lower than the average one nationally, in 2018 it reached 11,800 BGN compared to 15,600 BGN in the country – a difference of 25%. Regarding salaries, the situation is almost identical – in 2018 the average gross salary in the district reached 11,200 BGN per year compared to 13,800 BGN countrywide.

For the third year in a row, households' incomes in the district were below the national average and their growth in 2019 was also lower.

Poverty levels in the district in 2019 were similar to the national average. The share of the population living below the national poverty line was 22%, compared to 23% in the country, and of those living with material deprivation – 25%, versus 20% nationally.

Labor market ■■■■■

Economic activity in Ruse district has been growing slowly but steadily in recent years, accompanied by growing employment and declining unemployment. In 2019, the economic activity rate was 72.7%, compared to 74.3% nationally. The employment rate was almost equal to the average national values – 69.6% against 70.1% countrywide, and the unemployment rate, which had been lower for a whole decade, remained below average. In 2019 it reached 3.1%, compared to 4.2% in the country.

The educational structure of the workforce in Ruse district is significantly better than the national average. The share of university graduates has reached 31%, compared to 28% nationwide, and of people with primary or lower education – 11%, versus 18% in the country.

A major challenge for the local labor market remains the problem of population ageing. In 2019, the replacement ratio of the population aged 15-19 to that aged 60-64 was 59%, compared to 66% in the country.

Investment and economy ■■■■

In 2018, investment activity in Ruse district came close to the national average. The number of enterprises had been growing and reached 54 per 1,000 persons, compared to 59 per 1,000 persons in the country. After a two-year decline in FTA expenditures, in 2018 they again increased to 1,948 BGN/person, against 2,750 BGN/person nationally. For the first time in five years, there was a steep rise in cumulative FDI, which reached 1,964 EUR/person, versus the national average of 3,560 EUR/person.

Production value has been growing at a slower pace than in the country as a whole to remain below the national averages. In 2020 its relative value reached 23,200 BGN/person, compared to 25,900 BGN/person nationally.

Ruse is also lagging behind as regards the utilization of European funds. By 15 June 2020, the payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,558 BGN/person, compared to 1,976 BGN/person on a national level. Within the district, the leader in utilization of EU funding is Byala municipality.

Infrastructure ■■■■■

The infrastructural development of Ruse district is categorized as good. The density of the road and railway networks in the district is higher than the national average. The same applies to the share of motorways and first-class roads – the figure for 2019 is 21.6% in the district, compared to 18.6% in the country. Road quality has been a persistent problem, as only 11.5% of surfaces are in good condition, against 41.4 % nationwide.

The percentage of households in the district with internet access is on the rise, and in 2019 it reached 84.4%, compared to 75.1% in the country.

Local taxes ■■■■■

Unlike most districts with a similar socio-economic profile, the average level of the tax burden in Ruse district is relatively low. Among all monitored taxes, the only one whose average rate is higher than the national average is the retail trade patent tax.

The local taxes on motor vehicles and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property are about 15% lower than the average ones in the country.

Administration ■■■■■

Ruse district has made a huge improvement in the ratings of its local administration and ranks among the leaders in the country.

In 2020, the local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services went significantly up and exceeded the national averages. There is also a big increase in the transparency of local government bodies. In 2020, the rating rose by 6 p.p. to 71.4%, which was above the national average. Within the district, the municipality with the highest rating was that of the city of Ruse.

Parallel to the increasing cadastral map coverage in the country, the cadastre in Ruse district keeps enlarging the territory it includes, reaching 95.5% in 2019, compared to 91.4% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Demography ■■■■

The population in Ruse district has continued to decrease both due to the low natural growth rate and to out-migration. In 2019, the former fell to -10.2, against the national average of -6.7%. The net migration rate went down to -4.1%.

These two processes have had an extremely negative impact on the age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 years has reached 186%, compared to 150% in the country on average, and to those aged 15-64 years – 37.5%, versus 33.8% nationwide.

Ruse is one of the districts with the highest level of urbanization – 78.2% of the population live in urban areas, while the population density is 1,657 persons/sq.km, compared to 1,510 persons/sq.km nationwide.

Education ■■■■

The number of teachers in primary and secondary schools in Ruse has been rising at a rate above the national average and in 2019 it reached 96 per 1,000 students, compared to 89 per 1,000 students in the country on average. The share of repeaters continues to be lower than nationally, although the share of dropouts from primary and secondary school still remains high.

The enrolment ratio in 5th to 8th grade is still to catch up with the national average. In 2019 the figures point to 84.4%, versus 86.6% in the country on average.

Students' results for 2020 again remained close to the average ones in the country. The average score in the external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade was 35.2 p., compared to 36.3 p. nationally. The average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature reached 4.25, whereas the national average was 4.20.

The shrinking in the numbers of university students from the previous years has slowed down and in 2019 they reached 29 per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Healthcare ■■■■

In 2019, the healthcare system in Ruse district continued to suffer from a shortage of doctors. One local doctor was caring for an average of 2,155 persons from the population compared to 1,688 people per doctor in the country. The number of specialist physicians was also relatively low.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of beds in the local general hospitals, but the bed capacity still remains relatively limited with 478 beds per 100,000 persons, compared to 550 per 100,000 thousand persons in the country according to the 2019 statistics. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is relatively low – 205.8 per 1,000 persons, compared to the average of 253.7 per 1,000 persons in the country.

The share of people with health insurance and the infant mortality rate in the district remain close to the average levels in the country.

Public order and security ■■■■

Although the workloads of the criminal judges in Ruse district are relatively big, this does not have a negative impact on the speedy delivery of justice. In 2019 one local judge heard an average of 9.6 cases a month, compared to 9.1 cases nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 95%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide.

Unlike the situation with the delivery of justice, the sphere of public order and security shows relatively low crime rates, but also low detection rates. In 2019 the registered crimes against the person and property in the district decreased to 9.7 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate, for its part, rose to 50.8% against 52.1% for the country on average.

Environment ■■■■

In 2018 carbon dioxide emissions in Ruse district were twice smaller than in the country on average – 143 t/sq.km versus 274.8 t/sq.km nationally.

The amounts of household waste generated in the district are close to the national average. At the same time, the share handed over for treatment and recycling remains extremely low at 17%, compared to the national average of 71%.

The share of the population living in areas with access to public sewerage systems remains relatively low – 69%, versus 76% in the country on average. Still, the figures for 2018 indicate that the whole sewerage network is connected to waste water treatment plants, while the national average is 64%.

Culture ■■■■

In 2019 Ruse district's cultural life remained relatively active. Visits to the local theaters and cinemas were above the national averages, while the number of museum visits was at a slightly lower level.

Registered cinema visits in the district amount to 746 per 1,000 persons, versus 659 visits per 1,000 persons nationally, while theater visits are 540 per 1,000 persons, compared to 362 per 1,000 persons in the country. Museum visits have risen by over 40% to reach 565 per 1,000 persons, against 770 per 1,000 persons nationally. Library visits, however, have decreased to 592 per 1,000 persons, versus 683 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Key indicators for the district of Ruse

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,152	11,769	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,416	5,416	5,702	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,243	11,185	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	14.1	22.2	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	65.0	67.7	69.6	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	5.7	5.2	3.1	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	16.8	12.9	11.4	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	27.7	29.1	30.9	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	22,378	23,237	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,606	1,948	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,685	1,964	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	73.0	71.9	84.4	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	20.0	21.8	11.5	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	18.3	18.3	18.2	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	62.5	65.0	71.4	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-8.9	-9.7	-10.2	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-0.7	-2.9	-4.1	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.05	4.13	4.25	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	30.8	35.0	35.2	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	88	92	96	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	86.0	84.9	84.4	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	87.1	87.0	88.3	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,917	2,115	2,155	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.1	11.0	9.7	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	10.1	10.0	9.6	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	68.4	68.7	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	499	404	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	2.5	16.7	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	819	717	746	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	476	457	540	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.

Shumen District

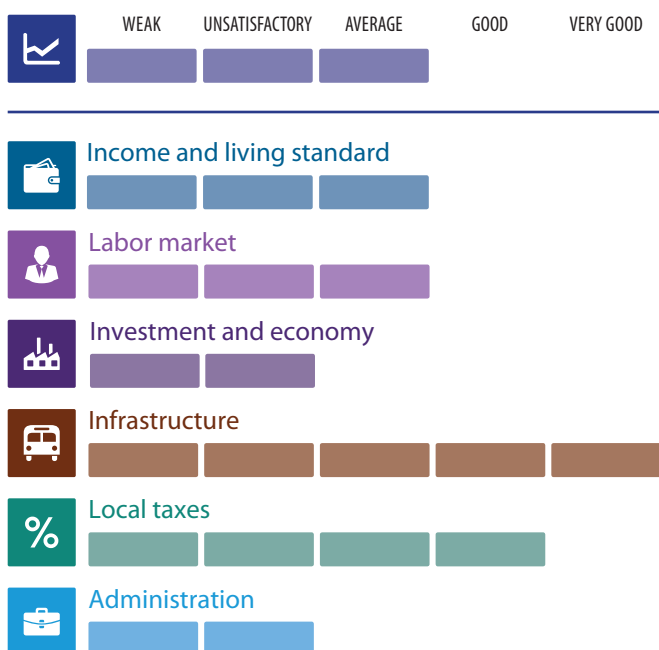
► Population (2019)	172,262
► Territory (sq. km)	3,389.7
► Number of settlements	151
► Share of urban population (%)	61.2



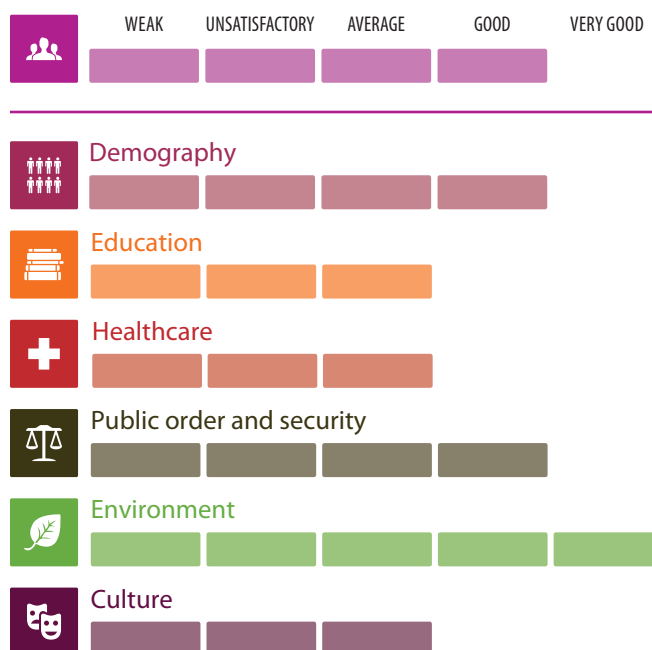
The dynamics of both GDP per capita and of the average salary in Shumen district in recent years have been favorable though not sufficient to converge with the national averages. Poverty levels are a challenge. In 2019, unemployment was still high and employment growth relatively slow so that the difference with the best performing districts remained. The district attracts little foreign investment and is not doing very well in the utilization of European funds. Thanks to the Hemus highway and the well-developed railway system, the infrastructure assessment is good. Local taxes in the district are below the national average despite some increases in 2020, but municipalities in the country face problems with the transparency of their work.

Shumen enjoys a positive net migration rate, but the rate of natural population growth has been deteriorating in recent years, while the rate of population ageing is accelerating. The school education system encounters serious problems with its coverage, and exam results in the district, especially those after 7th grade, are a cause for concern. Access to healthcare is relatively difficult, but morbidity and infant mortality are relatively low. The population of Shumen district generates little household waste, almost all of which is handed over for treatment and recycling, but there is a significant lag in the access to public sewerage and wastewater treatment plants. The district's cultural life owes its intensity to the high interest in museums and libraries.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Income and living standard ■■■

The growth rate of GDP per capita in Shumen district slowed down in 2018 to 6.4% reaching 9,400 BGN, thus placing the district around the middle of the ranking scale on this indicator, though in its lower half. In 2017 and 2018, the rapid increase in salaries by over 10% per year continued. However, this coincided with a period of a significant increase in salaries countrywide, so that the district failed to reduce the difference with the average salary of 13,800 BGN for the country in 2018. Household incomes also remained below the national average, with 5,347 BGN/household member per year, compared to 6,013 BGN/household member nationally, and the situation with the growth rate was similar. However, Shumen continues to face significant problems with poverty levels: in 2019, 29.1% of the population were below the national poverty line, and 18.5% lived with material deprivation. Nevertheless, both poverty indicators have improved significantly in recent years.

Labor market ■■■

In 2019, Shumen continued to have one of the highest unemployment rates in Bulgaria – 10.1% for the population aged 15+, with only Montana, Silistra, Vidin and Targovishte showing higher unemployment figures. Despite the gradual increase in employment in recent years – up to 66.6% – in 2019 the employment rate of the population aged 15-64 continued to be significantly lower (by 3.5 p.p.) than the national average for that year. In general, however, due to the high unemployment in the district, its total economic activity was 76.7%, exceeding the national average by 2.4 p.p.

The weaker dynamics of the district's labor market can be attributed in part to the large share of population with primary or lower education – 29.5%, compared to 17.6% for the country. On the other hand, the demographic replacement ratio of the population aged 15-19 to that aged 60-64 is slightly above the national average, which shows a potential for maintaining the size of the workforce in the coming years.

Investment and economy ■■

FDI in Shumen recorded a minimal increase in recent years and remained extremely low, with a total accumulated FDI of 681 EUR/person at the end of 2018, compared to 3,560 EUR/person in the country. On the other hand, in 2018 FTA expenditures increased to 2,106 BGN/person. The district has also underperformed as regards the utilization of European funds, and by mid-2020 the total value of the payments made to beneficiaries was only 1,453 BGN/person.

The number of enterprises in Shumen district is relatively small – 41 per 1,000 persons, but this can be explained with the large role industry plays in the local economy, which entails individual enterprises of a larger size. Workforce productivity in the district is also growing at a pace similar to that of the country and production value increased from 11,600 BGN/person in 2013 to 15,700 BGN/person in 2018.

Infrastructure ■■■■■

Shumen is the district with the largest share of first-class roads and highways in the country – 36.4%, partly due to the Hemus highway. And since its construction is relatively recent, the quality of roads in the district is also good – by 2019, 45.9% of the road surfaces were in good condition. Due to the large territory of the district, the density of the road network is slightly lower than the average one for the country – 18.2 km/100 sq. km. Despite the decline at the beginning of the decade, Shumen still has one of the more developed railway networks with a density of 4.6 km/100 sq.km territory. The share of the population with broadband Internet access has also been gradually increasing, and with a coverage of 77.3% in 2019 it already exceeded the national average.

Local taxes ■■■■■

The municipalities in Shumen district keep the levels of local taxes relatively low. Only the average amount of the motor vehicle tax after taking into account the environmental component is equal to the national average of 1.51 BGN/kW. The rate of the property acquisition tax in the district has not changed in the last five years. The patent tax for retail trade, for its part, decreased to 8.89 BGN/sq.m of retail space, which is significantly lower than the national average of 12.93 BGN/sq.m. The immovable property tax for legal entities remained at 1.85%, which is again slightly below the average for the municipalities in the country.

Administration ■■

After a rapid improvement in 2018 and 2019 and in line with the progress made throughout the country, the coverage of the cadastral map of Shumen reached 90%. At the same time, the average AIP active transparency rating of the municipalities in the district decreased by 1 p.p., falling to 65.4%. The 2020 self-assessment of the municipalities of their capacity to introduce e-government was on average 2.87 out of possible 5 points, and of the provision of one-stop shop services – 3.39 points, with neither indicators having changed since the previous year.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

Demography ■■■■■

The population of Shumen is ageing relatively fast – in 2017 the age dependence ratio between the population aged 65+ and that aged 15-19 reached 157%, compared to 153% a year earlier and exceeding the national average. The natural growth rate also followed its steadily negative trajectory, dropping to –7.4‰ in 2019 from –3‰ a decade earlier: that is, the ageing process is accelerating. On the other hand, Shumen is one of the few districts with a positive net migration figure of 6.9‰ in 2019, although in-migration and out-migration tend to follow the election cycle.

The district is among those relatively poorly urbanized, with 61% urban population, or over 12 p.p. lower than the national average, and over the last decade this share has been steadily declining. The population density of the urban settlements has also been decreasing – from 1,003 persons/sq.km in 2009 to 887 persons/sq.km in 2019, compared to 1,510 people/sq.km on average countrywide.

Education ■■■■

Interest in Shumen University has been gradually declining since 2006, with the number of students dropping within a decade from 45 to 38 per 1,000 persons, even though in 2019 there was a minimal increase. The district encounters visible problems with the coverage of the school system – in 2019 only 83% of children were enrolled in 5th to 8th grade and there is no clear prospect for improvement. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary school is close to the national average. The ratio between teachers and students in the school system is relatively good.

In recent years, the average results in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature in the district have fluctuated between around 4.00 and slightly below that, and in 2020 the average grade was 3.96, compared to 4.20 nationwide. The share of poor grades in 2020 was also relatively high – 10.5%. At the external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade, the students in Shumen also underperformed, achieving an average of 29.6 points against the national average of 36.3 points and placing the district among only ten others with a score below 30 points.

Healthcare ■■■■

Access to specialist physicians in Shumen district is relatively difficult. Access to GPs has also been gradually deteriorating and in 2019 there was an average of 1,833 persons per one GP, compared to 1,688 persons per one GP countrywide. The number of beds in the local general hospitals is relatively small – 313 per 100,000 persons. The share of people with health insurance is similar to that in the country.

Shumen is similar to Pernik district as regards the very low number of hospitalizations – only 125 per 1,000 persons in

2019 were treated in the local general hospitals. The most likely explanation for this figure is the proximity of Varna with its much better developed health facilities. The infant mortality rate in the district is also low – 3.5‰, compared to 5‰ on average for the country.

Public order and security ■■■■

In 2019 the judicial system in the district managed to close 92% of criminal cases within 3 months, compared to 90% on average for the country. Its relatively good efficiency is also proved by the low share (6.2%) of cases pending in the courts. However, Shumen's judiciary was also among the less busy ones, with criminal judges hearing an average of 6.2 cases per month, compared to an average of 9.1 cases nationwide.

As regards security, the district is also performing well – only 9.3 crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons were registered in 2019, compared to 11.1 in the country. The detection rate of this type of crime has also been gradually improving and that year it reached 59%, compared to 52% for the country.

Environment ■■■■■

The amounts of household waste generated in the district have increased in recent years, reaching 305 kg/person in 2018; however, this figure is much lower than the national average of 409 kg/person. The district is among the leaders in the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling with nearly 95% of the total generated quantities.

One very big challenge for Shumen district is the population's access to public sewerage – only 58% of the population live in settlements with public sewerage, which can partly be explained by the low level of urbanization. In addition, by 2018 only 55% of the population with access to sewerage were connected to a wastewater treatment plant. In terms of carbon emissions, the district is also doing well, with just under 31 t/sq.km of carbon dioxide, or approximately 10 times less than the national average.

Culture ■■■■

Shumen comes second in the country after Veliko Tarnovo district as regards interest in libraries, with 1,306 visits per 1,000 persons in 2019 – an almost threefold increase since 2009. Museums in the area also hold great attraction and were visited on average 1,162 times per 1,000 persons, compared to 770 visits per 1,000 people countrywide. On the other hand, the number of cinema visits was six times lower than the national average and that of theater visits almost two times lower.

Key indicators for the district of Shumen

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,829	9,397	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,855	4,855	5,347	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,994	11,028	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	38.3	29.1	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	62.7	64.6	66.6	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	15.9	12.0	10.1	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	29.6	28.9	29.5	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	22.6	24.0	23.7	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	14,129	15,681	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,683	2,106	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	621	681	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	77.9	70.5	77.3	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	54.4	41.7	45.9	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	18.3	18.3	18.2	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	66.7	66.0	65.4	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-7.6	-7.6	-7.4	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-1.1	4.1	6.9	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.77	3.85	3.96	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	26.2	24.5	29.6	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	95	96	95	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	86.0	83.6	83.1	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	88.5	88.6	88.9	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,436	1,744	1,833	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.0	9.6	9.3	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.5	6.9	6.2	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	58.4	58.2	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	357	305	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	91.6	94.7	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	161	126	111	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	177	165	191	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.

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-gov-

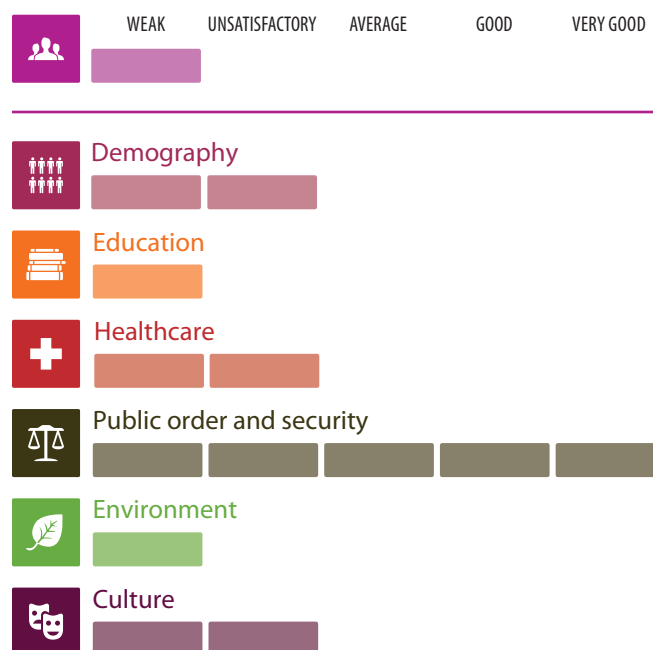
ernment went up considerably in 2020 and for the first time rose above the country's average.

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



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



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 of 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 pro-

portion 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 7 th 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 5 th -8 th 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.

Sliven District

► Population (2019)	184,119
► Territory (sq. km)	3,544.1
► Number of settlements	110
► Share of urban population (%)	65.7



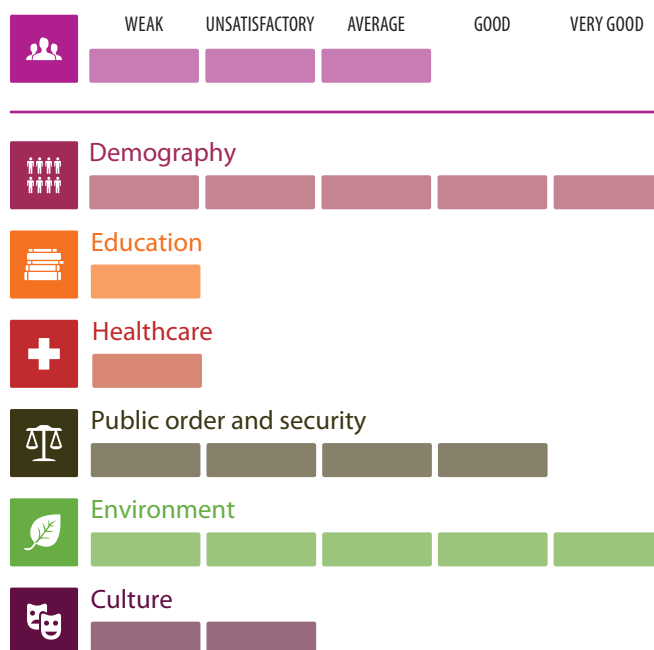
GDP and salaries in Sliven district have been growing, but at a relatively slow pace and the regional economy continues to lag behind the national trends. The most serious challenge facing the local labor market is the deteriorating educational structure of the workforce. Investment activity is extremely weak and the district ranks last in the country in this category. Sliven is also the district with the lowest utilization rate of European funds. The basic infrastructure retains its high level. Sliven is the area with the highest share of road surfaces in good condition. The average rate of local taxes in the municipalities of Sliven district differs significantly from the average rates in the country. The transparency of the local administration continues to improve.

Despite the negative demographic trends throughout the country, Sliven district presents a relatively good population picture. On the education indicators, the district scores worst in the whole country. Sliven remains the district with the highest share of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school. The poor assessment of its healthcare is mainly due to the high infant mortality rate. The crime rate in the district is on the decrease, while the detection rate remains higher than average. The relatively high rating of Sliven district in terms of the environmental indicators is primarily the result of the low relative volume of generated household waste and the large share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling. Interest in the local libraries remains high.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■

Income and living standard ■

Despite the low base, in 2018 GDP and salaries in Sliven district grew at a slower pace than the average one for the country's economy. GDP per capita was only 7,600 BGN, which is half the national average of 15,600 BGN. The average annual gross salary increased by 10% to reach 10,000 BGN, against 13,800 BGN in the country. Despite their higher growth rate in 2019, household incomes still remained relatively low at 4,446 BGN/person, compared to 6,013 BGN/person nationally.

These indicators are also a prerequisite for a high poverty level in the district. In 2019, the share of the population living with material deprivation was 34.0%, versus 19.9% in the country. Identical to it is the share of the population living below the national poverty line – 33.9%, against 22.6% countrywide.

Labor market ■■■

The economic activity of the population has been increasing in line with the increase in employment and the drop in unemployment rates, yet in 2019 the values of all three indicators remained less favorable than in the country on average. The rate of economic activity increased by 3 p.p. to reach 71%, compared to 74% in the country. The employment rate went up to 64.5% after an increase of 3.3 p.p., versus the national average of 70.1%. The unemployment rate registered a significant drop from 9.9% in 2018 to 6.5% in 2019, compared to 4.2% nationally.

The labor market still faces the challenge posed by the persistently worsening educational structure of the workforce. In 2019 the share of the population aged 25-64 years with primary or lower education reached 37.6%, which was a record low for the country. The share of people with higher education remained relatively limited: 21%, versus the national average of 28%.

At the same time, the district presents a rather favorable picture of its demography – the population replacement ratio of people aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64 is the highest in the country at 89%, while the national average is 66%.

Investment and economy ■

Investment activity in Sliven is extremely weak, which places the district last in the whole country in this category. The number of non-financial enterprises in the district rose in 2018 to 39 per 1,000 persons, yet it remained relatively low compared to the national average of 59 per 1,000 persons. Domestic and foreign investment was also low. FTA expenditure was 1,160 BGN/person, versus the average of 2,750 BGN/person nationally. Cumulative FDI in the district amounted to 866 EUR/person, which is nearly four times lower than the 3,560 EUR/person on a national level. Production value in the district was

worth only 11,800 BGN/person – more than half the average figure for the national economy.

Sliven is also the district with the lowest utilization rate of European funds. By 15 June 2020 the payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 957 BGN/person, against 1,976 BGN/person on a national level. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Sliven.

Infrastructure ■■■■■

The basic physical infrastructure in Sliven district retains its high quality. The density of the road and railroad networks is comparable to the national average. In 2019 the share of highways and first-class roads remained comparatively high.

Sliven is the district with the largest share of road surfaces in good condition – 79.4%, whereas in the country it is 41.4% on average. Digital connectivity is also relatively good, and in 2019 the relative share of households with internet access went up to 77.2%, versus 75.1% nationally.

Local taxes ■■■■

In 2020, the average rates of local taxes in the municipalities of Sliven district again remained considerably different from the country's respective averages. While the tax rates on the non-residential immovable property of legal entities and on motor vehicles remained relatively high, the local rates for retail trade and taxi transportation were about 1/4 lower than the country's respective averages. The local tax on the acquisition of property almost equaled the national average rates.

Administration ■■

Against the background of the rapid progress in cadastral map coverage in the rest of the country over the past two years – reaching nearly 91% of Bulgaria's territory – in 2019 Sliven had managed to cover only 64%, which places the district last in the whole of Bulgaria for this category.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services marks a significant improvement, but in 2020 the rating still remained considerably below the national average. The transparency ratings of the municipalities in the district have been steadily rising and in 2020 reached an average of 77.8%, versus 70.7% countrywide. The highest rating of over 91% was achieved by the municipality of the city of Sliven; however, there are wide margins between the ratings given to the municipalities across the district.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Demography ■■■■■■

In 2019, against the negative demographic tendencies in the country, Sliven district still retained its standing with relatively good population indicators. The natural growth rate, which has been on the rise, reached a level of -2.9‰ that year, compared to the national average of -6.7‰ . At the same time the population is shrinking fast due to intensive out-migration, with the net migration rate in 2019 down to -10‰ and being the lowest in the whole country.

The age dependency ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 has marked a minimal rise, but at 109% it still ranks Sliven district first in the country, where that ratio is 150%. The share of the district's population living in urban areas is relatively low – 66%, compared to 74% in the country, but the population density measured as the average number of people per unit area remains second highest in the country after that in the capital.

Education ■■

Sliven is the district with the lowest results as regards the indicators for education. The share of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education is the highest in the whole country. The share of repeaters increased for two years in a row to reach 3.24% in 2019, against 0.89% in the country. The number of early dropouts decreased, yet their share still remained twice as high as the national average – 5.7%, versus 2.9% respectively.

The shortage of teachers is still a big challenge facing the district. In 2019, their numbers rose considerably but remained relatively small – 83 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 89 teachers per 1,000 students on average nationally.

Figures for the students' performance at the 2020 matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature come close to the average ones for the country. The average grade achieved by the students in the district was 4.16, versus the national average of 4.20, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 10.5%, compared to the national average of 8.2%. Although there was some improvement throughout 2019 and 2020, the students' performance at the external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade was again quite poor – 29.3 points compared to the average of 36.3 points nationally.

Healthcare ■■

The poor results of Sliven district in the area of healthcare are mostly due to the exceptionally high infant mortality rate. In 2019 it rose again to reach 14.4‰ – the highest in the whole country and far above the national average of 5.6‰.

The numbers of doctors and hospital beds are close to but still below the national average. One local GP cares for 1,841 persons on average, compared to 1,688 persons per doctor countrywide. The index for access to specialist physicians is also more unfavorable than the national average. The number of

beds in the local general hospitals has been steadily increasing in recent years, but it still remains relatively low.

The number of people treated in the local general hospitals was 208 per 1,000 persons in 2019, compared to 254 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

Public order and security ■■■■

Criminal judges in Sliven district have relatively heavy workloads, yet in 2019 this did not have an adverse effect on the speedy delivery of justice. One judge heard an average of 10 cases a month, compared to 9 cases nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months reached 96%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide.

The number of crimes in the district decreased throughout 2018 and 2019, while the detection rate remained higher than the national average. In 2019 the registered crimes against the person and property in Sliven district amounted to 10.2 per 1,000 persons, against 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate fell slightly to 64.5% but it still remained considerably above the average figure of 52.1% reported that year for the whole country.

Environment ■■■■■■

The relatively high rating of Sliven district in terms of the environmental indicators is primarily due to the low relative volume of generated household waste and the high share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling. In 2018, the volume of household waste shrank to 307 kg/person, against 409 kg/person on a national scale, while 92% of it was handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to the national average of 71%. The relative volume of carbon dioxide emissions in the district was half that of the country's average.

A challenge facing the district is the limited share of the population – only 65% – with access to public sewerage networks, compared to 76% countrywide, and the share of sewerage systems connected to waste water treatment plants – 57% in the district, against the national average of 64%.

Culture ■■■

In 2019 the number of visits to the local cinemas and museums in Sliven district still remained relatively low, while interest in libraries exceeded the national average. Registered visits to the cinemas in the district numbered 90 per 1,000 persons on average, against the national figure of 659 per 1,000 persons. Visits to the local theaters amounted to an average of 313 per 1,000 persons, compared to 362 per 1,000 persons nationally, and to museums – 485 per 1,000 persons, versus 770 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Visit to libraries increased for the third consecutive year and reached 804 per 1,000 persons, against 683 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Key indicators for the district of Sliven

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,046	7,600	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,790	3,790	4,446	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,113	10,005	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	35.6	33.9	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	58.9	61.2	64.5	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	10.2	9.9	6.5	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	29.2	33.4	37.6	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	21.2	21.1	20.9	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	10,891	11,803	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,060	1,160	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	737	866	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	58.5	75.2	77.2	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	70.4	80.0	79.4	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	16.6	16.5	16.4	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	67.1	71.0	77.8	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-2.8	-3.6	-2.9	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-4.4	-6.8	-10.0	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.96	4.04	4.16	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	24.0	25.8	29.3	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	68	73	83	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	84.2	85.7	84.9	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	86.8	86.6	87.5	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,818	1,856	1,841	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.8	11.3	10.2	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	10.8	9.8	9.8	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	65.2	65.3	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	355	307	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	89.4	91.7	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	97	66	90	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	339	285	313	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.

Smolyan District

► Population (2019)	103,532
► Territory (sq. km)	3,192.8
► Number of settlements	240
► Share of urban population (%)	56.4



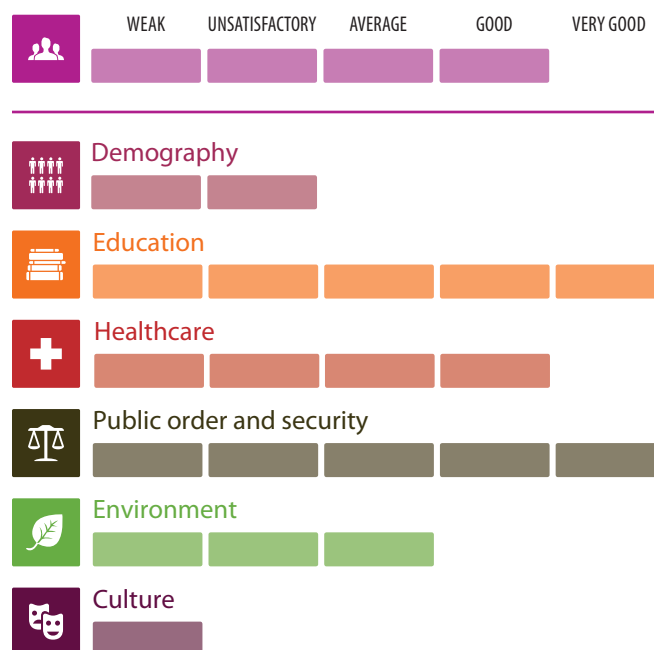
GDP in Smolyan district has been growing though at a slower rate than the country's average, and the margin between them has widened over the past twenty years. Incomes continue to exceed the national averages. Employment rates sustain relatively low levels, and unemployment rates are high. A major challenge for the future development of the local labor market is population ageing. Investment activity in the district is low. The specific geographic location of the district as a border region and its mountainous terrain account for its relatively poorly developed infrastructure. In 2020 Smolyan again ranked among the districts with the lowest local tax rates. The transparency ratings of the local administration remain below the average ones of the country.

The population of Smolyan district is among the fastest ageing in the country. Compared to the other districts, it continues to have some of the best indicator values in the education category, with the highest teacher-student proportion and the lowest share of repeaters. Healthcare in the district is at a relatively good level. The share of people with health insurance is among the highest in the country. Smolyan district ranks first in the whole of Bulgaria in terms of security and justice. The workloads of the local judges are low, while the detection rate is the highest in the country. Smolyan is one of the districts with the lowest volumes of carbon dioxide emissions, but the share of household waste handed over for recycling and treatment is exceptionally small. The intensity of its cultural life is low.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■

Over the last two decades, GDP in Smolyan district has been growing though at a slower pace than that of Bulgaria's economy in general. As a consequence, the district is increasingly lagging behind the average level in the country by a margin which has gone up from 20% in 2002 to over 32% in 2018. In 2018, GDP per capita in the district rose by 8.8% to reach 10,600 BGN. The average gross annual salary increased by over 11% to 10,100 BGN, compared to 13,800 BGN in the country.

Household incomes remain higher than the national average, but in 2019 they registered a slight relative decline to 6,354 BGN/household member compared to 6,013 BGN in the country.

Poverty levels in the district also remained lower than the national average in 2019. The share of the population living with material deprivation was extremely small, and at 12.8% the district ranked second in the country after the capital. The share of the population living below the national poverty line was 21.2%, versus 22.6% on average countrywide.

Labor market ■■■■

In 2019, economic activity in Smolyan district remained at a relatively high level – 75.3% , compared to 74.3% in the country. This was accompanied by a decline in both employment and unemployment rates. The employment rate remained relatively low – 66.5%, against 70.1% on a national scale, while the unemployment rate dropped to 8.8%, which, however, was double the national average.

The educational structure of the workforce in the district has undergone a slight improvement, as the people with a university degree have increased by 1 p.p. to 23.5%, against 28% nationally, while the number of those with primary education or less has declined by 1 p.p. to 14.3%, versus the national average of 17.6%.

A major challenge for the future development of the local job market is population ageing. Smolyan is the district with the lowest population replacement ratio of the people aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64, which in 2019 fell to 41.8%, compared to 65.9% nationwide.

Investment and economy ■■

Investment activity in the district remains low. In 2018, the number of registered enterprises went up and reached 51 per 1,000 persons, which, however, is still below 59 per 1,000 persons as the average one for the national economy that year. FTA expenditure has also been rising but is still far below the one in the years before the global financial and economic crisis. More visible in 2018 was the growth of cumulative FDI but that, too, amounted to as little as 860 EUR/person, which was four times lower than the national average.

In 2018 production value in the district also grew but at a slower pace than the average one in the country – only 6.9%, which

places the district even further behind in terms of the average value in Bulgaria's economy.

Utilization of EU funds in Smolyan district is identical to the average national rate. By 15 June 2020 payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs were 1,975 BGN/person. The leaders in the region in the utilization of European funds are the municipalities of Smolyan, Rudozem and Zlatograd.

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, which is an impediment to traffic on its territory. The density of its road network is 16.9 km/100 sq.km compared to the national average of 17.9 km/100 sq.km. Road quality is relatively good and in 2019 it improved even more, so that the share of roads with surfaces in good condition reached 53.8%, against the average of 41.4% for the whole country.

The relative share of households with internet access has been rising in the past few years, and in 2019 it reached a whole 82.4%, versus the national average of 75.1%.

Local taxes ■■■■

Smolyan remained among the districts with the lowest local taxes in 2020. The biggest differences of nearly 40% compared to the national average were observed in the tax rates on retail trade and taxi services. In 2020, the average level of the retail trade tax in the municipalities in Smolyan district fell to 7.74 BGN/sq.m, versus 12.93 BGN/sq.m in the country. The annual patent tax for taxi transportation remained at an average of 318 BGN, compared to 498 BGN nationally, and the tax rates on motor vehicles were 16% lower than nationwide.

Administration ■■

The self-assessment of the local administration on the development of e-government continued to improve over the past three years, but in 2020 it still remained considerably below the national average, with 2.73 out of 5.00 p. in the district and 3.22 countrywide. At the same time, the rate of increase in their self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop services within the same three-year period was sufficient to exceed the national average.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration across the district remained lower than the national average. It reached an average of 67.5% for the whole district, against 70.7% nationally, with the municipalities of Zlatograd, Dospat and Chelopele achieving the highest transparency ratings.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

Demography ■■■

The population of Smolyan district is one of the fastest ageing in the country. 2019 was a year of both a declining birth rate and increasing out-migration. The natural growth rate dropped to -9.7‰, compared to the national average of -6.7‰, while the net migration rate decreased to -8.4‰.

The district's age dependency ratios have been deteriorating fast and are considerably more unfavorable than the national averages. In 2019 the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 reached 216%, compared to 150% nationally, and that to the 15-64 age group was 39%, versus 34% countrywide.

The share of urban population in the district is relatively small – 56%, against the national average figure of 74%. At the same time, the density of population in urban areas remains relatively high at 1,775 persons/sq.km, versus 1,510 persons/sq.km for the whole country.

Education ■■■■■

Smolyan continues to be among the districts with the best performance in the education category. The net enrolment of schoolchildren in 5th to 8th grade is one of the highest in the country – 90.9%, compared to an average of 86.6% nationally. The proportion of teachers to students in primary and secondary education is the highest in the country and in 2019 it continued to improve, reaching 122 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to the national average of 89 teachers per 1,000 students. The share of repeaters is the lowest in Bulgaria, and that of dropouts from primary and secondary education is the second lowest, outranked only by that of Sofia (capital city).

Students' performance in the district in 2020 also exceeded the national average. The average score in the 2020 external evaluation at the end of 7th grade was 38.1 p. against the average of 36.3 p. nationwide. The average result in the 2020 matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature reached 4.53 in the district, versus 4.20 nationally, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) dropped to 3.2%, against 8.2% nationwide, which ranks Smolyan district second in Bulgaria, immediately after the capital.

Smolyan has two university branches on its territory – one of Varna Free University and one of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski". The reported relative number of university students in the district is 14 per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 students per 1,000 persons in the country on average.

Healthcare ■■■■■

Smolyan district has performed quite well in the healthcare category. The percentage of people with health insurance is among the highest in Bulgaria and in 2019 it reached 97%, compared to 89% nationwide. Infant mortality is nearly four times lower than the national average, which ranks the district in the second place on this indicator. Access to GPs is relatively easy, though the number of specialist physicians is still considerably lower than the average one for the country.

Hospital bed capacity has continued to improve and in 2019 it

reached 562 per 100,000 persons, thus exceeding the national average.

The relative number of patients treated in the local hospitals remained relatively low in 2019 with 220 per 1,000 persons, versus 254 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

Public order and security ■■■■■

Smolyan was the top-ranking Bulgarian district in 2019 as regards security and justice. The workloads of the local criminal judges were among the lowest in the country, with a monthly average of 5.2 cases per judge, compared to 9.1 cases nationally. This has a beneficial effect on the speedy delivery of justice. Pending cases make up a bare 7%, against 10% in the country.

Smolyan is also one of the districts with the lowest crime rates in the country. Registered crimes against the person and property number 6 per 1,000 persons, with 11 per 1,000 persons as the national average figure. At the same time, the detection rate in the district is the highest in the whole of Bulgaria – 74% in the district, compared to 52% nationally.

Environment ■■■■

Smolyan district is among the districts with the lowest volumes of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere. In 2018 they amounted to 9.6 t/sq.km, many times lower than the average of 274 t/sq.km nationally. 72.9% of the population live in settlements with a public sewerage network, which is a comparatively high figure relative to the low level of urbanization in the district.

Smolyan district is still lagging behind in terms of the connectivity of sewerage networks to waste water treatment plants, with a coverage of only 43.1% of the local population, compared to the national average of 63.9%.

The amounts of household waste generated in the district are relatively low – 301 kg/person per year against 409 kg/person on a national scale. However, the figures for the share of this waste handed over for treatment and recycling have fluctuated significantly over the past few years.

Culture ■■

Cultural life in Smolyan district is characterized by low intensity, one reason for which is the limited number of cultural institutions with any significant activity there. That situation remained unchanged in 2019.

Cinema visits in the district, though on the rise, remained relatively few in number – 149 visits per 1,000 persons, versus the national average of 659 per 1,000 persons. Considerably fewer than average were also the visits to the local theaters and museums – 99 per 1,000 persons for theater visits, compared to 362 per 1,000 persons nationwide, and 154 museum visits per 1,000 persons, against the national figure of 770 per 1,000 persons. Libraries enjoy extremely low popularity and in 2019 reported visits were only 198 per 1,000 persons, against 683 per 1,000 persons on a national level.

Key indicators for the district of Smolyan

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,742	10,597	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	6,127	6,127	6,354	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,133	10,145	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	20.9	21.2	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	68.1	67.7	66.5	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	11.2	10.5	8.8	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	15.5	15.3	14.3	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	23.8	22.5	23.5	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	13,955	14,914	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,511	1,738	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	765	860	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	56.5	73.0	82.4	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	49.6	49.1	53.8	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	16.9	16.9	16.9	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	58.2	67.0	67.5	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-9.5	-9.4	-9.7	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-10.4	-8.1	-8.4	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.33	4.19	4.53	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	36.0	37.7	38.1	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	114	119	122	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	90.8	91.6	90.9	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	94.4	94.8	97.0	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,526	1,587	1,569	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	6.1	5.1	6.0	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.2	5.0	5.2	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	72.6	72.9	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	251	301	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	53.0	7.5	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	169	134	149	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	93	119	99	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.

Sofia (capital city)

► Population (2019)	1,328,790
► Territory (sq. km)	1,348.9
► Number of settlements	54
► Share of urban population (%)	95.6



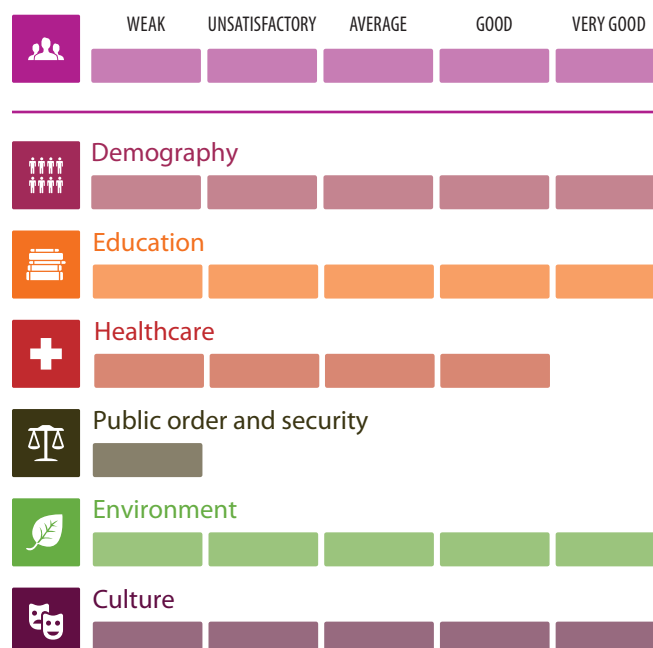
Sofia (capital city) is the district with the highest GDP per capita, as well as the highest salaries and incomes. This accounts for the low levels of poverty in the district. Its economic development is also interrelated with the favorable trends in the local labor market. Employment and unemployment rates have reached record levels for the capital. Sofia is a leader in investment activity. Sofia Central Railway Station is a major railway hub in the country. In 2020, the capital was once again the district with the highest local taxes in the country. The work of Sofia city's local administration is assessed as the most transparent in the country. Sofia is also the district whose administration received the highest assessment ratings for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services.

Sofia is the district presenting the most favorable demographic picture in the country. The capital is a leader in the field of education, with a high enrolment rate, a low share of repeaters and dropouts, good student performance and a high number of university students. Its healthcare is characterized by easy access to specialist physicians, low infant mortality and a small relative number of patients admitted for treatment to the local general hospitals. The capital's poor result and its last place in the country in public order and security is a consequence of the large workloads of the local judges and the relatively high number of crimes. Almost all waste in the area is handed over for treatment and recycling. Sofia is the district with the most intensive cultural life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■■

The capital is the district with the highest GDP per capita, with a value twice that of Stara Zagora, the district ranking second in this category. In 2018, GDP per capita in Sofia rose at a rate faster than the national average and reached 33,400 BGN, against 15,600 BGN nationally.

Salaries and incomes are growing at a rate similar to the national average, but their values are significantly higher. The average annual gross salary reached 19,000 BGN in 2018 and exceeded the national average by over 38%, while the average annual income per household member reached 8,224 BGN in 2019, with a similar difference to the average income for the whole country.

The capital also remained the district with the lowest poverty level in 2019. The share of the population living with material deprivation amounted to less than 11%, versus 20% nationally, while that of people living below the national poverty line was 10%, compared to 23% in the country.

Labor market ■■■■■

The good indicators for the economic development of Sofia (capital city) are also manifested in the favorable dynamics of the local labor market. Economic activity continued to grow in 2019 and reached 78%, compared to 74.3% in the country. Parallel to this growth was a decrease in unemployment and increase in employment. The employment rate reached 76.4%, against 70.1% nationally, and marked a record for the capital. The unemployment rate also recorded the lowest figure in the modern economic history of Bulgaria – 1.6%, versus 4.2% nationally.

The capital remains the district with the best educational structure of the workforce. In 2019 the share of the population aged 25-64 with a university degree reached 53%, against 28% in the country, while employed people with primary or lower education made up less than 5%, compared to 18% nationally.

Sofia is the district with the third highest population replacement ratio of people aged 15-19 to those aged 60-64 – 74.3%, compared to 65.9% nationwide, and is outranked only by Sliven and Varna on this indicator.

Investment and economy ■■■■■

Sofia is the undisputed leader in investment activity. The district has the largest number of enterprises relative to its population – 91 per 1,000 persons, compared to an average of 59 per 1,000 persons in the country in 2018. The growth rate of FTA acquisition expenditures by 8.5% in 2018 reversed the downward trend from the previous three years, though the annual investment figures were still below the level of 2015. The capital is the district with the highest nominal FTA expenditure – 5,568 BGN/person, compared to 2,750 BGN/person nationally. Cumulative FDI is also

significantly higher than the average national values and in 2018 it reached 9,361 EUR/person.

These indicators also account for the exceptionally high production value in the district, which at 50,400 BGN/person is double the national average of 25,900 BGN/person.

By 15 June 2020, the capital regained its first place as regards utilization of EU funds, after being outranked by Gabrovo district the previous year. Payments made in Sofia (capital) district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 3,369 BGN/person, compared to 1,976 BGN/person nationally.

Infrastructure ■■■■■

There are no roads from the national road network within Sofia (capital), but its territory is bordered directly by several highways. Sofia Central Railway Station is one of the main railway hubs in the country and the density of the railway network of 12.8 km/100 sq.km territory in the capital district significantly exceeds the national average of 3.6 km/100 sq.km. The share of households with access to high-speed internet has continued to increase and in 2019 it reached 83%, compared to 75% in the country.

Local taxes ■■■

The level of local taxation in Sofia (capital) district again remained the highest in the whole country in 2020. The biggest difference in comparison to the national figures was recorded in the rate on taxi transportation – 850 BGN per year, compared to 498 BGN in the country, and the retail trade tax – 20 BGN/sq.m, versus less than 13 BGN/sq.m in the country.

From the other monitored taxes, the only one that remained below the average rates nationwide was the tax on immovable property for legal entities – 1.88‰ against 2.01‰ nationally.

Administration ■■■■■

In 2020 the work of Sofia's municipal administration achieved the highest transparency ratings in the country, thus displacing Gabrovo and Dobrich from their top positions the previous year. The AIP Active transparency rating reached 78.8%, against the national average of 70.7%. Sofia is also the district with the highest results in the self-assessment of its local administration for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services – 4 points out of 5, which confirms its leading position in the whole of Bulgaria.

Almost the whole of the capital's territory – 99.2% – was already included in the cadastral map in 2019.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

Demography ■■■■■

In 2019, Sofia (capital city) remained the district presenting the most favorable demographic picture. Although here, as elsewhere in Bulgaria, the natural growth rate was negative, it was still the highest in the country at -2.0‰, compared to the national average of -6.7‰. Sofia (capital city) is also one of the few districts that manage to attract population and has a positive net migration rate at 2.4‰.

The age dependency ratios in the district remained considerably more favourable than in the country on average. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 years reached 119.9%, compared to 150.1% nationally, and to those aged 15-64 years – 26.2%, versus 33.8% nationwide.

The district's specificity is a prerequisite for the extremely high level of urbanization – 95.6% of its territory is urban, and the population density reaches 4,963 persons/sq.km, compared to 1,510 persons/sq.km in the country.

Education ■■■■■

The capital is the country's leader in education, with a high rate of enrolment, low shares of repeaters and dropouts, good performance of the students and a high number of university students.

The only less favorable figures pertain to the teacher-student ratios, in spite of the improvement over the past few years.

The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education are almost three times smaller than the country's averages. The students in the capital achieved an average score of 48.1 p. at the 2020 external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade, which is far above the national average of 36.3 p. Also, the average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.63, compared to the average of 4.20 countrywide, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was only 2.4%, against the national average of 8.2%.

The number of university students in Sofia continued to fall in 2019, in parallel with the general tendency of declining student numbers in the country, but it still remains considerably above the national average.

Healthcare ■■■■■

In 2019, the capital remained among the districts with the best healthcare in the country, characterized by easy access to specialist physicians, low infant mortality and a small number of patients treated in local general hospitals.

The indicator for access to GPs is similar to the national average – one doctor cares for an average of 1,712 persons, compared to 1,688 persons on average for the country. The hospital bed capacity is also similar to the national average – 552 beds in general hospitals per 100,000 persons. The number of hospitalizations is 182 per 1,000 persons and is significantly lower than the average number in the country of 254 per 1,000 persons. However, it should be borne in mind that the capital's medical institutions

also attract many patients from outside the district who are not included in the calculation of this indicator.

Public order and security ■■■■■

The capital's poor results and its last place in the whole country in the indicator of public order and security is a consequence of the large workloads of the local judges and the relatively high number of crimes.

In 2019 one criminal judge in Sofia (capital city) heard an average of 12 cases a month, compared to 9 cases nationally. These heavy workloads had a negative impact on the speedy delivery of justice. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 86%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide, and pending cases constituted 14.4%, versus less than 10% countrywide. The number of crimes against the person and property registered in the capital district dropped in 2019 to 13.3 per 1,000 persons but still remained high compared to the national average of 11.1 per 1,000 persons. These are all factors contributing to the exceptionally low share of cleared crimes – a bare 35%, versus 52% for the country in 2019.

Environment ■■■■■

The capital remained the district with the highest annual volume of generated household waste, with 499 kg/person in 2018, compared to 409 kg for the country. However, almost all waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 97% compared to only 71% on average for the country.

The high degree of urbanization in the district accounts for the high figures for accessibility to public sewerage systems – 96%, versus 76% nationally, while over 96% of the sewerage network is connected to waste water treatment plants, compared to as little as 64% on average countrywide.

Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere remain at the second highest level in the country (after the district of Stara Zagora) and are four times higher than the national average.

Culture ■■■■■

In 2019 Sofia was the district with the most intensive cultural life. It had the highest number of visits to cinemas and theaters – 1,756 cinema visits per 1,000 persons, compared to 659 per 1,000 persons nationwide, and 708 theater visits per 1,000 persons, versus 362 per 1,000 persons in the country. Visits to libraries also significantly exceeded those reported in the country as a whole – 1,114 per 1,000 persons, compared to 683 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Out of the indicators included in this category, the only one where the capital came second was the number of visits to museums – 652 visits per 1,000 persons were reported in 2019, compared to the national average of 770 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Sofia (capital city)

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	30,295	33,437	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	7,603	7,603	8,224	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	17,199	19,026	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	8.8	10.0	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	74.6	75.6	76.4	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	2.8	2.1	1.6	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	3.0	4.2	4.9	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	50.8	51.4	52.8	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	46,070	50,416	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	5,134	5,568	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	9,294	9,361	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	75.6	81.9	83.0	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	78.3	77.0	78.8	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-1.3	-1.9	-2.0	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	2.7	3.9	2.4	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.45	4.53	4.63	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	37.6	44.6	48.1	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	76	82	87	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	90.1	89.4	89.4	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	86.3	86.6	87.1	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,633	1,665	1,712	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	16.8	15.1	13.3	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	14.6	14.2	12.0	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	96.4	96.3	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	565	499	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	96.5	96.8	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	2,101	1,884	1,756	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	584	684	708	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.

Sofia District

► Population (2019)	226,671
► Territory (sq. km)	7,062.3
► Number of settlements	284
► Share of urban population (%)	61.6



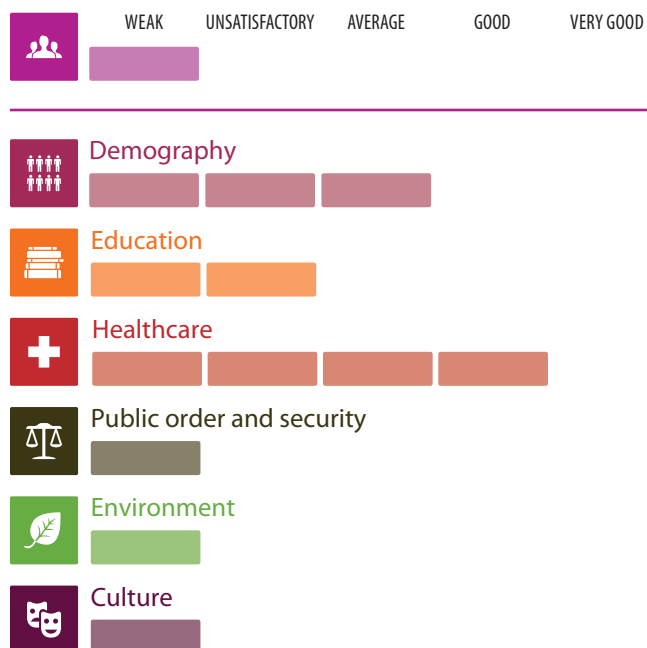
GDP per capita in Sofia district remains the third highest in the whole country. Salaries are rising, which is a precondition for relatively low poverty levels. The development of the local labor market is very good, with the employment and unemployment rates both reaching record levels for the district. The good economic development is also manifested in the local investment activity. Sofia district reports the second highest figures in the country for FTA acquisition expenditure and foreign investment. The district has a relatively well-developed infrastructure. The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Sofia district is generally close to, but lower than the national average. The performance of the administration in the district is extremely poor.

The rate of natural growth in Sofia district remains among the lowest in the country. Sofia is among the districts with relatively low urbanization. The share of repeaters is twice as high as the national average. Student performance is also relatively poor. The district has specialist physicians similar in number to the national average, but there are fewer GPs. The performance of Sofia district in the field of public order and security is weak, the reason for this being the relatively slow delivery of justice. The indicators for security and justice in the district are close to the country's averages. The amounts of generated waste are relatively large, with a small part of it handed over for treatment and recycling. The cultural life in the district is not active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■■

Although GDP per capita in Sofia district recorded an extremely low growth rate in 2018 – 0.8% compared to 9.3% for the national economy, its value remained the third highest in the country after that of the capital and Stara Zagora district. The average annual gross salary increased by 10.5% – similar to the national average – and reached 13,400 BGN, which almost equals the average one for Bulgaria as a whole. However, incomes declined slightly and in 2019 the average gross annual income per household member was 4,844 BGN, compared to 6,013 BGN in the country.

Irrespective of this unfavorable development in 2019, the relatively high values of GDP and salaries in the district have kept poverty levels relatively low. In 2019, the share of the population living with material deprivation was 14.5%, compared to 19.9% for the country, and those living below the national poverty line made up 17.6%, versus 22.6% nationwide.

Labor market ■■■■■

The development of the local labor market in 2019 continued to be very good, which once again shows the deep connection between the economies of the capital and of Sofia district. The economic activity in the district increased significantly and for the second consecutive year exceeded the national average, with a figure of 78.1%, compared to 74.3% for the country. Its growth was accompanied by a simultaneous increase in employment and a reduction of unemployment, both reaching record levels for the district. The employment rate went up to 77.7%, compared to 70.1% in the country, and that of unemployment fell to 0.4%, versus 4.2% nationwide.

The profile of the workforce in Sofia district is characterized by a large number of people with secondary education – 77%, compared to 54% for the country, while the shares of people with tertiary degrees and of those with primary or lower education are relatively low. This structure can be accounted for by the proximity of most settlements in the district to the capital which attracts university graduates and naturally leaves the processing industry to develop in its geographical periphery.

Investment and economy ■■■■■

The good economic development of the district is associated with high investment activity. In 2018, the district reported the second highest average figures in the country for FTA acquisition expenditure and FDI per capita, preceded only by the capital. The figure for acquisition of FTA reached 3,140 BGN/person, compared to 2,750 BGN/person nationally. The amount of cumulative FDI in 2018 was 6,064 EUR/person, versus 3,560 EUR/person countrywide.

Production value for 2018 ranks the district second in the country, with 48,100 BGN/person, compared to 50,400 BGN/person in the capital and the national average of 25,900 BGN/person.

The number of enterprises in the district remains relatively low, but at the same time the share of large enterprises among them is relatively high.

The rate of utilization of EU funds slowed down in the past year compared to the national one, but their amounts still remained slightly higher than the country's average. Within the district, the leader in the utilization of EU funds was the municipality of Kostinbrod.

Infrastructure ■■■■■

Sofia district has a relatively well-developed infrastructure. The density of the road network is higher than the national average, and the share of highways and first-class roads is the second largest in the country after that in Shumen district, with 30.2%, compared to the national average of 18.6%. At the same time, however, the quality of the roads remains relatively low, with only 31.7% of the road surfaces in good condition, versus 41.4% in the country in 2019.

The railroad network density is also relatively high.

In 2019, access to the Internet in the district was again relatively limited, with 67.3% of the households compared to 75.1% on average in the country.

Local taxes ■■■■■

In 2020, the average level of local taxation in Sofia district remained generally close to, yet lower than the average one for all Bulgarian municipalities. The one exception is the tax on the non-residential immovable property of legal entities, which was higher in the district compared to the average levels in the country. By contrast, significantly lower than the average rates – by about 20% – were the taxes on taxi transportation and retail trade.

Administration ■■■■■

The performance of the municipal administrations in Sofia district is extremely weak. While almost the entire territory of the country is already covered by the cadastral map (91.4%), the coverage of the cadastre in the district in 2019 was only 75.3%. The self-assessment of the municipal authorities for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services in 2020 also remained lower than the national average.

In 2020, Sofia continued to be among the districts with the lowest Active transparency assessment of its local administrations, with a rating of 57% compared to 71% on average for the country. Within the district the most transparent municipalities were those of Chelopech, Bozhurishte, Chavdar and Pirdop.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■■■

In 2019, the natural population growth in Sofia district rose for the second year in a row, but it remained among the lowest in the country with a value of -9.3‰, compared to -6.7‰ nationwide. At the same time, the net migration rate remained relatively high, although negative, which can be attributed to the district's proximity to the capital and the possibility of daily commuting.

These processes are reflected in the deteriorating age dependency ratios in the district. In 2019 the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 reached 170%, compared to 150% nationally, and to those aged 15-64 it was 38%, versus 34% nationwide.

Sofia is among Bulgaria's districts with a low level of urbanization – 62% of its population is urban, against 74% countrywide, and with low population density of 727 persons/sq.km, compared to the national average of 1,510 persons/sq.km.

Education ■■

The net enrolment rate in 5th to 8th grade in Sofia district remained relatively high in 2019 at 92%, compared to 87% on average for the country. In 2019, the number of teachers in primary and secondary education in the district was 87 per 1,000 students, versus 89 per 1,000 students nationally. In recent years, however, there has been a gradual increase in this figure and the gap with the national average teacher-student ratio has narrowed.

The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education rose in 2019 to reach figures double those of the country's averages. Students' performance was also relatively poor. In the external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade in 2020, they achieved an average score of 31 p., versus 36 p. nationally. The average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.00, compared to the average of 4.20 countrywide, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) reached 10%, against the national average of 8%.

The number of university students in Sofia district is relatively small – 8 students per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 32 students per 1,000 persons in 2019.

Healthcare ■■■■

The district has a number of specialist physicians similar to the national average, but there are fewer GPs. In 2019, a general practitioner cared for an average of 1,771 people in the population, compared to 1,688 people per GP in the country. The share of the health-insured rose to 87%, which was still below the national average of 89%.

The number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals relative to the population of the district was on the rise and remained, as always, higher than the national average. At the same time, the number of hospitalizations was considerably smaller than in the country on average – 176 per 1,000 persons, compared to 254 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Infant mortality rates dropped in 2019 and reached levels below the national average.

Public order and security ■

The results for Sofia district regarding the provision of security and justice in 2019 continued to be poor. That was mostly a consequence of the slow delivery of justice – only 80% of criminal cases closed within 3 months, compared to the average of 90% nationwide, and pending cases made up a whole 20%, versus 10% countrywide. At the same time, the workloads of the local criminal judges were not significantly larger than the national average – one criminal judge in Sofia district heard an average of 9.5 cases a month, compared to 9.1 cases per judge in the country.

The indicator values for public order and security in Sofia district are close to the national average. The number of registered crimes against the person and property was 11.2 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 11.1 per 1,000 persons. The detection rate was 54.7%, versus 52.1% for the country.

Environment ■

The annual volume of generated household waste rose to 487 kg/person in 2018 and its rate was among the highest in the country. However, an exceptionally small share of it was handed over for treatment and recycling – 19%, compared to 71% for the country, but the figure has been rising fast over the past three years.

In recent years, there has also been a significant improvement in the share of households that have access to sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants. Within a decade it increased from 28% to 43% in 2018, but the amounts remain significantly below the average share of 64% for country. On the other hand, in 2018 the share of households with access to public sewerage networks again remained similar to the national average of 77%.

Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere in 2018 amounted to 36 t/sq.km and remained considerably lower than the national average of 275 t/sq.km.

Culture ■

In 2019, cultural life in Sofia district still sustained its low intensity, which can probably be attributed to the region's proximity to the capital and the relatively fast and easy access to the biggest city in the country for a large part of the population. No visits to libraries and theaters have been reported for the district, and cinema visits are quite few in number – only 78 per 1,000 persons, compared to 659 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Visits to museums rose considerably in 2019 to reach 1,430 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 770 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Sofia

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	15,527	15,654	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,853	4,853	4,844	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,149	13,425	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	20.4	17.6	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	66.4	73.3	77.7	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	2.6	0.7	0.4	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.9	12.3	10.9	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	13.1	13.6	12.0	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	45,443	48,092	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	2,697	3,140	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	6,287	6,064	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	52.3	51.3	67.3	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	28.8	30.8	31.7	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	21.4	21.4	21.4	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	57.9	58.0	57.3	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-9.9	-9.8	-9.3	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-1.3	-1.1	-1.2	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.72	3.92	4.00	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	25.4	28.4	31.0	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	76	84	87	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	91.3	91.3	91.6	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	86.3	86.3	87.3	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,751	1,758	1,771	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	13.9	13.5	11.2	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	7.7	9.6	9.5	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	77.1	77.2	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	479	487	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	3.4	18.9	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	79	67	78	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	0	0	0	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.

Stara Zagora District

► Population (2019)	313,396
► Territory (sq. km)	5,151.1
► Number of settlements	206
► Share of urban population (%)	72.4



Stara Zagora district ranks second in the country after the capital in GDP per capita, and third in average salaries. Poverty indicators are close to the national average. In 2019, there was practically no unemployment in the district, and employment figures were among the highest in the country. However, this did not result in overcoming the existing deficits in the educational structure of the workforce. Stara Zagora is among the leaders in production value and attracts a relatively large volume of investment. Thanks to the Trakia highway, the share of first-class roads and highways is relatively large, but road quality is gradually deteriorating. Local taxes in the district remain below the national average, despite some increases. The results of the municipal administrations' self-assessment of the administrative services they provide

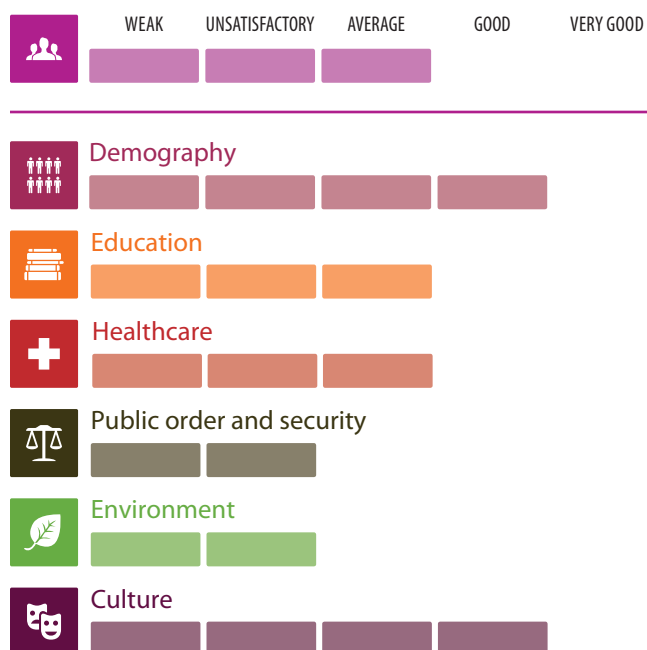
are deteriorating and so are the ratings of the municipal authorities' transparency.

The district has deteriorating demographic indicators, while the relatively low negative net migration rate keeps population numbers at a relatively constant level. School education has achieved results similar to the national average, with an improvement in the teacher-student ratio. The healthcare system provides relatively good access to doctors and morbidity in the area is low, though infant mortality is alarmingly high. The judicial system in Stara Zagora is among the busiest in the country, yet it manages to be relatively efficient. The district has the highest carbon emissions in the country, and the amount of household waste is growing. Among the cultural activities in the district, museums attract most of the interest.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■■

Thanks to the energy complex located on its territory, GDP per capita in Stara Zagora district is the second highest in the country after that in the capital. In 2018, it was 17,300 BGN/person, but in recent years its growth has been relatively slow. After an increase of 32% over the previous five years, in 2018 the average annual gross salary reached 13,200 BGN, placing the district third in the country after the capital and Sofia district.

Despite the high levels of GDP and average salaries, in 2019 household incomes remained below the national average – after a minimal improvement in the previous two years, they reached an average of 5,600 BGN per household member. In terms of the poverty indicators, the figures for Stara Zagora district were almost identical to the national average – 23% of the households in the district were below the national poverty line, and 20% were living with material deprivation.

Labor market ■■■■■

Unemployment in Stara Zagora district was extremely low in 2019. The unemployment rate among the population aged 15+ fell from 11% in 2014 to 1.4% in 2019, the lowest after that of Sofia district. Along with low unemployment, the labor market in the district was characterized by a very high employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 – nearly 75%, compared to the national average of 70%.

In 2019, the share of the working population with higher education increased slightly to 21% but remained significantly below the national average of 28%. However, the share of the workforce with primary or lower education was slightly above average – nearly 19%, and the indicator showed a gradual deterioration within a three-year period. The demographic replacement 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, was 69%, which indicates an impending contraction of the labor force.

Investment and economy ■■■■

In 2018, production value in the district was relatively high and with 25,200 BGN/person, Stara Zagora was preceded only by Sofia (capital city), Sofia district, Burgas and Plovdiv. FDI accumulated by the end of 2018 reached 2,937 EUR/person, remaining relatively unchanged for five years in a row. FTA acquisition expenditure again showed a gradual increase in 2018 and reached 2,621 BGN/person.

The district's performance in terms of the utilization of European funds was not so good. Within the two programming periods, by 15 June 2020 payments made to beneficiaries of EU projects amounted to 1,579 BGN/person, compared to 1,976 BGN/per-

son for the country on average. The district has a relatively small number of enterprises on its territory – in 2018 they were 48 per 1000 persons, compared to the national average of 59 per 1,000 persons.

Infrastructure ■■■■■

With the Trakia highway passing through the territory of the district, the share of highways and first-class roads in the total road infrastructure is high – 29%, compared to 19% for the country on average. In recent years, however, the quality of the road network has deteriorated considerably.

The density of the road network in Stara Zagora district is similar to the national average – 17.5 km/100 sq.km, and has been increasing in recent years. The density of the railway network is also high – 5.1 km/100 sq.km, against 3.6 km/100 sq.km on average for the country. In recent years, access to high-speed Internet has been expanding: in 2019 it was already available to 78% of the population.

Local taxes ■■■■■

Unlike most districts with a high degree of economic development, in 2020 Stara Zagora kept its municipal tax rates relatively low. The tax on motor vehicles after taking into account the environmental component was exactly equal to the national average of 1.51 BGN/kW. The annual tax on taxi transportation of 312 BGN on average was very close to the legal minimum and was among the lowest in the country, probably due to the lack of such a service in most municipalities in the district. In 2020, there was a significant increase in the average tax on the immovable property of legal entities – up to 1.55‰, though the rate remained well below the national average of 2.01‰. Of all the monitored taxes, the only one which was higher than the average one countrywide was the retail trade tax – 13.87 BGN/sq.m retail space.

Administration ■■■

In 2019, the cadastral map coverage in the district exceeded 95% of its territory. However, the self-assessment of the municipalities in Stara Zagora district regarding the electronic services provided by them declined to an average of 2.91 p. out of 5 p., and that of administrative services at one-stop shop also decreased to 2.56 p. The average AIP Active transparency rating of the local municipalities also fell from 71% in 2019 to 65% in 2020.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Demography ■■■■

In line with the trend within the whole country, the natural growth rate in Stara Zagora district has been deteriorating in recent years and in 2019 it decreased to -7.6% , or 1 p.p. below the national average for that year. At the same time, the net migration rate in the district has been fluctuating around a balance between the number of immigrants and emigrants, and in 2019 its value was -1.8% . The indicators for demographic replacement show that the population ageing processes in the district are accelerating.

Stara Zagora district is relatively urbanized, with a 72% share of the urban population. However, population density in the cities is decreasing and in 2019 it was 1,482 persons/sq.km, compared to 1,666 persons/sq.km a decade earlier.

Education ■■■■

The ratio between the numbers of teachers and students has been improving gradually, with the number of teachers per 1,000 students increasing from 60 in 2015 to 87 in 2019. The district is also among the leaders in school enrolment, with 91.4% of the children in the respective age groups attending junior high school. Despite these favorable trends, however, the share of repeaters remains high – 1.41% of all students, compared to the national average of 0.89%. The share of dropouts has also been increasing and in 2019 they made up 3.7%, compared to an average of 2.9% nationwide.

In most years, the students from Stara Zagora district have achieved results in the matriculation exams close to the national average and in the summer session of 2020 their average grade in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.18, against 4.20 on average for the country. Slightly below the average – 7.9% – was the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00). There was some improvement in the results at the exam in mathematics after 7th grade, where the students from the district achieved an average of 31.8 points, which, however, is still lower than the national average of 36.3 points for 2020.

Healthcare ■■■■

In recent years the indicator of access to GPs in Stara Zagora district has deteriorated to 1,485 people per doctor on average, but this ratio is still far more favorable than the national average of 1,688 people per doctor. The index assessing the provision with specialist physicians is slightly less favorable than the national average. The district's health system has a relatively good coverage: in 2019 people with health insurance constituted 90% of the total population.

The number of beds in the general hospitals in Stara Zagora district is relatively small – 498 per 100,000 people or below the national average of 550 per 100,000 people, and the figure has

been fluctuating in recent years. Patient care loads have been generally low, with 189 out of every 1,000 people having undergone hospital treatment in 2019. Infant mortality, however, took a sharp upward turn in 2019 to reach 10.4‰, which is the second highest rate after that in Sliven district.

Public order and security ■■

The courts in Stara Zagora district have some of the biggest workloads in the country. In 2019, criminal judges heard 11.2 cases per month on average, with a tendency for this number to rise. However, the speedy delivery of justice is similar to the national average.

In recent years, there has been a minimal decline in crime rates in the district, with crimes against the person and property in 2019 down to 11.4 per 1,000 persons, compared to 12.6 per 1,000 persons in 2015. Detection of this type of crime has also been improving, fluctuating between 53% and 55% in the past few years.

Environment ■■

Due to the operation of coal-fired power plants in its territory, Stara Zagora is the district with the largest carbon emissions in the country – 3,831 t/sq. km of carbon dioxide, or almost four times more than in the capital. The amounts of household waste generated by the district's residents have also been on the rise and in 2018 they reached 412 kg /person per year, compared to 296 kg/person only two years earlier. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling increased to 86% in 2018, versus 71% as the country's average.

The district is lagging behind as regards the share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage – 72% in 2018, compared to 76% nationally. Of the households who have access to public sewerage networks, 62% are connected to a wastewater treatment plant.

Culture ■■■■

From among the indicators for the intensity of cultural life, the highest value in Stara Zagora is reported for visits to museums – 1,060 visits per 1,000 persons in 2019. Above the national average were visits to theaters – 459 per 1,000 persons, compared to 362 per 1,000 persons countrywide. On the other hand, interest in cinemas and libraries was more modest that year, with 635 and 572 visits per 1,000 persons respectively.

Key indicators for the district of Stara Zagora

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	17,550	17,273	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,478	5,478	5,610	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,248	13,190	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	17.8	23.1	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	70.1	71.0	74.7	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	2.9	2.3	1.4	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	14.9	18.0	18.7	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	17.8	19.0	20.7	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	23,892	25,207	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	2,434	2,621	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	2,829	2,937	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	66.8	71.4	77.9	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	46.6	40.7	37.6	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	17.6	17.5	17.5	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	60.1	71.0	65.1	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-7.0	-7.3	-7.6	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-0.1	-1.2	-1.8	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.01	4.06	4.18	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	28.0	30.9	31.8	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	73	81	87	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	91.1	92.9	91.4	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	89.3	89.3	90.0	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,368	1,471	1,485	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.9	11.0	11.4	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	11.5	10.0	11.2	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	71.9	72.0	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	405	412	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	85.0	86.3	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	677	596	635	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	384	426	459	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.

Targovishte District

► Population (2019)	110,914
► Territory (sq. km)	2,558.5
► Number of settlements	194
► Share of urban population (%)	54.1



Economic growth in Targovishte district has accelerated over the last four years, but this has not led to any significant reduction of poverty levels or an increase in household incomes. This is mainly due to the negative dynamics of the labor market, characterized by rising unemployment and low employment. At the same time, the share of the workforce with primary or lower education has been growing. The district attracts foreign investment at a relatively high level, but has not made enough progress in the utilization of European funds. There is significant improvement in the quality of road surfaces and in the expansion of households' access to the internet. Despite some increases, local taxes remain low compared to most districts. The self-assessments of the municipal administrations of their capacity to pro-

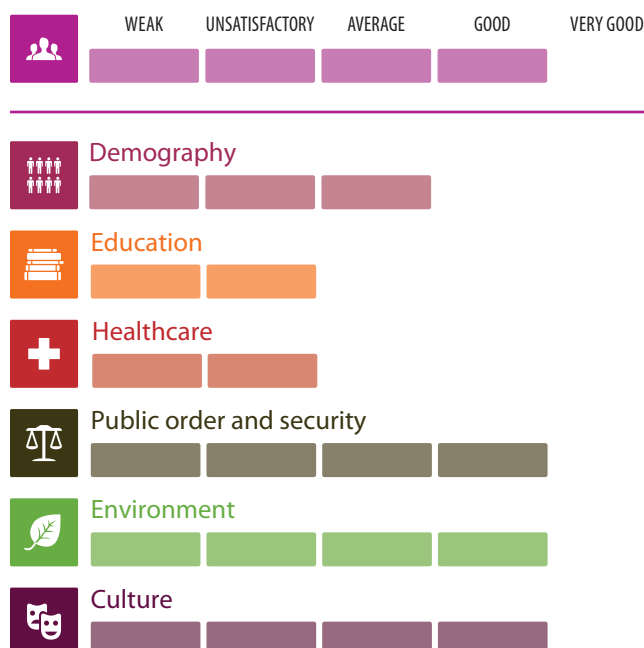
vide electronic and one-stop shop services are inconsistent, but their transparency is improving.

Although Targovishte is one of the few districts with positive net migration, its overall demographic indicators are gradually deteriorating, especially the natural growth rate. The district has visible problems with enrolment in secondary schools, and students' exam results have deteriorated in recent years. Targovishte district is characterized by a shortage of both GPs and specialist physicians. Despite the lowest reported workload of the courts, the speed of delivery of justice has been declining in recent years. There are visible improvements in the treatment and recycling of household waste. The theaters and libraries in the district attract great interest.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■

For four consecutive years GDP in the district had been growing rapidly and in 2018 it already reached 9,981 BGN per capita. This places the district among the more developed ones in northern Bulgaria, though it is still far below the national average of 15,600 BGN per capita. A similar rapid growth is observed in the salaries of employed people in the district, with the average annual gross salary reaching 10,800 BGN in 2018 – a considerable increase compared to the 7,500 BGN it had reached in 2014.

However, due to the lower economic activity of the population, the relatively high salaries in Targovishte district have not resulted in high household incomes. The average income per household member in 2019 was 4,576 BGN, compared to the national average of 6,013 BGN. Among the more worrying trends in the district is the gradual increase in poverty levels – 30.2% of the population were living below the national poverty line in 2019.

Labor market ■■■■

After a decline to 8.8% in 2015, the unemployment rate in Targovishte began to rise and in 2019 it reached 10.5% of the population aged 15+. At the same time, in 2019 the employment rate in the district remained among the lowest in the country – 60.1% of the population aged 15-64, or 10 p.p. below the national average and almost 20 p.p. behind the districts with the highest employment. As a result, the total economic activity in the district was only 71%, with lower figures registered only in Vratsa, Montana, Kardzhali and Kyustendil.

The unfavorable dynamics of the labor market can partly be attributed to the educational structure of the workforce. Only 17% of the population aged between 25 and 64 have university education, and there is evidence of a downward trend. At the same time, the share of the workforce with primary or lower education is gradually increasing – 36% in 2019, or more than double the national average, with a more unfavorable value registered only in Sliven district.

Investment and economy ■■■■

Due to the markedly industrial profile of the local economy, Targovishte has a relatively small number of enterprises – 37 per 1,000 people in 2019, with an upward trend. Despite the steady growth, production value in the district remains low – in 2018 it was 15,500 BGN per capita, compared to the national average of 25,900 BGN.

Thanks to several large investments in the processing industry, the district has been attracting a relatively high amount of FDI – 2,514 EUR/person by the end of 2018. FTA expenditures in the district have varied considerably over the years, but

after 2012 they were around and over 2,000 BGN/person per year. With utilization of European funds at 1,188 BGN/person by 15 June 2020, the district occupies one of the last places in the country.

Infrastructure ■■■■

The positive assessment of Targovishte in this category is mainly due to the good quality of road surfaces in it. According to RIA estimates for 2019, 61% of the roads in the district were in good condition, compared to only 26% three years earlier. There is also significant improvement in the population's access to high-speed internet, which according to the latest data is available to 77% of the households, compared to only 34% five years earlier.

However, the share of highways and first-class roads remains low – 14.7%, compared to the national average of 18.6%. The average density of the road network is generally above the country's average. The density of the railway network is low – 2.8 km/100 sq.km of the territory, and remains significantly lower than the national average.

Local taxes ■■■■

Local taxes in the municipalities of Targovishte district have been gradually increasing, but they still remain at relatively low levels. In 2020, the largest increase was in the taxation on the immovable property of legal entities, where the rate rose from an average of 1.73‰ in 2019 to 1.83‰ in 2020. The tax rate for taxi transportation remained at an average of 303 BGN – the second lowest in the country after Vidin, where in all district municipalities it was at the minimum of 300 BGN. Below the average was the patent tax for retail trade – 9.07 BGN/sq.m of retail space, versus 12.93 BGN/sq.m on average for the country. The tax on non-gratuitous property acquisition increased from 2.24% in 2018 to 2.48% in 2019 and in 2020 remained almost unchanged at an average of 2.49%.

Administration ■■■■

The cadastral map of the district already covers 95% of the territory. However, the assessment of the municipalities' capacity to provide e-services went down from an average of 3.23 out of 5 points in 2019 to 3.04 points in 2020. At the same time, the self-assessment of the provision of one-stop shop services rose from 2.66 to 3.33 points. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations also improved, with the average rating for the municipalities in the district going up to 78.4%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

Demography ■■■■■

Targovishte is among the few districts in the country with a positive net migration rate, with a difference of 2.7‰ of the total population between the in-migration and out-migration numbers for 2019. At the same time, however, there was visible deterioration in the natural growth rate which fell from -7‰ in 2015 to -8.9‰ in 2019. At this stage, the population ageing indicators remain close to the national average, but have been deteriorating relatively fast.

The degree of urbanization in the district has not changed significantly in recent years and remains among the lowest in the country. Population density in the urban areas has been decreasing over the years, reaching 1,071 persons/sq.km in 2019, compared to 1,510 people for the country on average.

Education ■■■

What this ranking most visibly shows is the inability of the educational system in Targovishte district to cover school-age children. Thus, in 2019 over 23% of children who should have been enrolled in 5th to 8th grade remained out of school, against 10-12% in most districts and a little over 13% on average for the country. The share of dropouts was also high – 3%, while at 0.91%, the share of repeaters was around the national average.

The results achieved by the students in the district at the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature have been deteriorating in recent years, and in 2020 the average score dropped to 3.85, compared to 4.20 in the country. This downward turn is combined with a significant increase – up to 10.3% – in the share of “fail” (below 3.00) grades. It is noteworthy, however, that the scores in the external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade have been gradually improving, reaching an average of 35.2 points in 2020, versus 36 points on average for the country. These low achievements do not seem to be affected by the high value of the teacher-student ratio, which ranks Targovishte second in the country with 104 school teachers per 1,000 students, after Smolyan district with 122 teachers per 1,000 students.

Healthcare ■■■

After Dobrich, Targovishte is the district with the most difficult access to GPs, with an average of 2,311 people per doctor in 2019. The index of access to specialist physicians also has an unfavorable value. For seven years in a row the number of beds in the district's general hospitals had been gradually increasing and in 2019 it reached 536 beds per 100,000 persons, which was close to the national average.

The health system coverage in the district is improving, reaching 88.3% of the total population, compared to the national average of 88.8%. In recent years, the district's population morbidity, measured through the number of hospitalizations, has

decreased to 187 people per 1,000 persons, but it may be assumed that seeking medical treatment in neighboring districts is becoming more common. The relatively high infant mortality of 6.7‰ for 2019 gives grounds for concern, though the rate has been extremely volatile over the last decade.

Public order and security ■■■■■

In 2019, the relative share of criminal cases closed within 3 months decreased to 87%, and the share of pending cases rose to 13.5% – the second highest in the country after Montana. These unfavorable developments in the local judiciary, which until recently was among the most efficient in the country, are even more difficult to explain given the courts' small workloads – one criminal judge hears an average of 3.5 cases per month, compared to an average of 9.1 per judge in the country as a whole.

Targovishte also enjoys a relatively low crime rate, with the crimes against the person and property registered in 2019 amounting to 9.5 per 1,000 persons. The detection rate was 73.8%, which ranks Targovishte second in the country after Smolyan district.

Environment ■■■■■

Carbon emissions in Targovishte district have remained relatively low in recent years. In the period between 2014 and 2018, the amounts of carbon dioxide varied between 100 t and 130 t/100 sq.km. Households have been generating relatively small volumes of waste – 302 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling increased from 9% in 2017 to 68% in 2018, which is a significant improvement. However, the share of households connected to public sewerage networks remained unchanged in 2018 at only 56%. Only 45% of the sewerage networks are connected to a wastewater treatment plant, which is considerably below the national average of 64%.

Culture ■■■■■

In recent years, interest in theaters in Targovishte district has been growing, and in 2019 they were visited on average 652 times per 1,000 persons from the population, compared to 434 times in 2015. On this indicator, the district ranks immediately behind the capital. Visits to libraries in the district number well above average – 1,006 per 1,000 persons, compared to 683 in Bulgaria as a whole. On the other hand, museums did not attract much interest, as visits to them were 175 per 1,000 persons – more than 5 times below the national average. Probably due to the lack of infrastructure, cinemas were not visited particularly often either.

Key indicators for the district of Targovishte

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,148	9,981	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,879	3,879	4,576	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,754	10,833	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	28.1	30.2	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	60.4	63.0	60.1	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	12.4	11.2	10.5	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	33.6	33.7	36.0	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	19.8	16.8	16.8	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	14,347	15,518	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,459	2,071	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	2,165	2,514	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	54.0	65.7	77.1	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	26.0	51.3	60.8	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	20.4	20.4	20.4	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	69.3	77.0	78.4	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-8.0	-7.8	-8.9	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-2.8	0.0	2.7	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.96	3.88	3.85	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	33.1	31.9	35.2	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	97	92	104	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	78.3	76.4	76.8	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	87.9	87.9	88.3	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	2,056	2,334	2,311	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.3	10.8	9.5	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	4.7	3.5	3.5	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	56.0	56.2	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	313	302	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	8.6	68.3	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	256	214	185	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	472	496	625	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.

Varna District

► Population (2019)	469,885
► Territory (sq. km)	3,819.5
► Number of settlements	159
► Share of urban population (%)	84.0



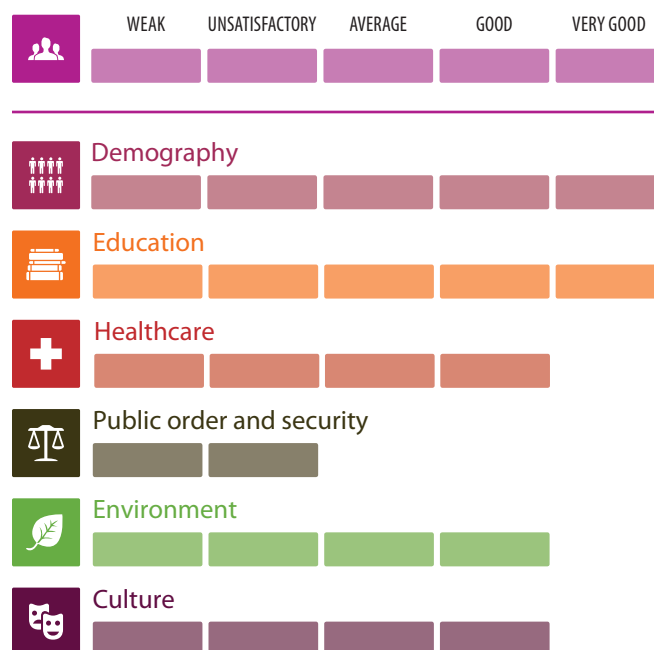
GDP per capita in the district of Varna rose sharply in 2018, exceeding the average growth rate in the country and again bringing the district close to the average GDP rates. Salaries also grew considerably. These two processes resulted in the reduction of poverty levels in the region. Labor market trends remained favorable in 2019. The district also reported moderate investment activity. Against the general background in the country, the district of Varna performed very well as regards its infrastructure. Local tax rates were extremely high, exceeded only by those in the capital. In 2020 the functioning of e-administration and one-stop shop services in the district municipalities were evaluated less positively, bringing the district below the national averages.

In 2019, Varna was among Bulgaria's regions registering the most favorable demographic development. The indicators for the educational sphere also ranked it very high. The proportion of GPs came close to the country's average, and that of specialist physicians was even higher; however, the limited number of beds in the local general hospitals remained a problem. The workloads of the local criminal judges remained considerably below the national average rates in 2019, which resulted in faster delivery of justice. The crime rate in proportion to the population of the district of Varna was high and detection was low. More household waste was generated but a large part of it was handed over for treatment and recycling. Cultural life in the district was relatively active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■

GDP per capita in the district of Varna rose sharply in 2018, exceeding the average growth rate in the country and again bringing the district close to the average GDP rates nationwide. GDP thus amounted to 15,500 BGN per capita, with 15,600 BGN as the average national figure. Salaries also rose considerably, up to 13,000 BGN as the average annual gross figure, though they still failed to reach the national average of 13,800 BGN. Incomes were stagnant in 2018, but in 2019 they underwent a considerable increase, reaching 5,883 BGN/household member, against the country's average of 6,013 BGN/household member.

These processes have resulted in the reduction of poverty levels in the region, both in terms of the proportion of people living in material deprivation and of those living below the national poverty line.

Labor market ■■■■

Trends in the labor market remained favorable in 2019. Economic activity rose, but due to fluctuations in the previous years it still failed to catch up with the national average. Employment rates also rose sharply, reaching 69.6%, compared to the national average of 70.1%, while unemployment rates shrank further, falling to 3.0%, versus 4.2% in the country on average.

The educational structure of the workforce is close to but less favorable than that in the country as a whole. Though there are universities on the district's territory, the share of the population with higher education is 25%, against 28% as the national average. This is due to the migration of the highly educated towards Bulgaria's capital and to countries abroad. The district of Varna holds the second place in the country as regards the demographic replacement ratio (the ratio between people aged 15-19 and those aged 60-64) – 75%, against the national average of 66%. Thus for every 100 people who will leave the workforce in the next few years, there are 75 young people who will be entering the labor market.

Investment and economy ■■■■

Investment activity in the district of Varna remained moderate in 2018. The proportion of enterprises was still quite high (70 per 1,000 persons, against 59 per 1,000 persons as the national average), while local and foreign investment rose, albeit by a small margin. FTA expenditures reached 2,761 BGN/person, and FDI per capita was 3,968 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 3,560 EUR/person. Production value per capita also registered some growth, though at 22,200 BGN/person it remained below the national average of 25,900 BGN/person.

Varna district still lags behind the national averages in terms of the utilization of EU funding in proportion to

population numbers. By 15 June 2020 payments made in the district under operational programs amounted to 1,383 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 1,976 BGN/person. The top place in the district again was held by the Byala municipality (4,901 BGN/person), while the lowest rates of utilization were registered in the Vetrino and Dalgopol municipalities.

Infrastructure ■■■■

Against the general situation in the country, Varna is performing very well in terms of the district's infrastructure. The road and railroad network density in the district is considerably higher than the national average. What is more, Varna has the fourth largest concentration of railroad infrastructure after the capital, Plovdiv and Ruse – 5.2 km/100 sq.km of its territory.

The share of highways and first class roads in 2019 was also relatively high – 27.4%, compared to 18.6% in the country on average, and that of road surfaces in good condition (43.5%) was higher than the national average of 41.4%

The relative share of households with internet access (73.5%) in 2019 was not much different from the national average of 75.1%.

Local taxes ■■

The average level of the monitored selection of local taxes is extremely high: their level is higher only in the capital. In that respect Varna is similar to most of Bulgaria's better developing districts, where local taxes are typically high. In 2020 all monitored local taxes in the district of Varna were high and not a single municipality lowered any of them. The margin between the retail trade tax rates in Varna district and elsewhere in the country reached a whole 30%. The annual average tax rate for taxi transportation in the municipalities in the district was 20% higher than the national average. The remaining local tax rates were higher than the average figures for the country as a whole by around 10%.

Administration ■■■

In 2020, the assessment of the performance of e-administration and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services in the district municipalities was less positive and fell below the national averages. At the same time, the AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration rose slightly by 2 p.p. to reach 75%, thus increasing the margin from the national average of 71%. The highest ratings in the district of Varna were achieved by the municipalities of the city of Varna, Devnya and Beloslav.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2019, Varna remained among the districts showing the most favorable demographic development. The natural population growth rate rose slightly and in spite of its negative value, at -3.6‰ it was twice as high as in the rest of the country (-6.7‰). At the same time, Varna remained among the districts attracting new population. The net migration ratio remained positive, although in the past three years it went down.

All this has led to more favourable age dependency ratios, though in the district of Varna, no less than in the country as a whole, population ageing is a fact. The age dependency ratio as a ratio between people aged 65+ and those aged 0-14 years reached 126%, against 150% for the country on average, and the ratio between people aged 65+ and those aged 15-64 was 29%, with 34% as the national average.

Varna district came second only to the capital in terms of the share of population living in urban areas – 84%, versus 74% nationally, which accounts for the relatively high population density.

Education

The indicators in the field of education place Varna very high among Bulgaria's districts. The net enrolment of children in 5th-8th grade went slightly up in 2019, though it remained below the national average by a small margin. At the same time, the shares of dropouts from primary and secondary education and of repeaters also went down to levels considerably lower than the respective average national figures. Thus, the share of repeaters dropped to 0.5%, versus 0.9% as the national average.

The results achieved by the students in the district also remained higher than average in 2020. The district's average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade rose to 43 points, compared to 36 points in the country on average. Scores in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature were also relatively high: 4.34, compared to 4.20 nationally, while the share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades was 6.3%, versus 8.2% on average nationwide.

Varna also kept its position among the districts with the highest share of university students in 2019 – 51 per 1,000 persons, versus 32 per 1,000 persons for the country on average.

Healthcare

In 2019 the proportion of GPs to the total population came close to the country's average, and that of specialist physicians was even higher due to the presence of the Medical University in the district center. A problem that still persists is the limited number of beds in the local general hospitals – they were 440 per 100,000 persons, while the average figure nationwide was 550 per 100,000 persons.

The share of people with health insurance continued to rise in 2019, albeit insignificantly, and reached 84%, though it was still below the national average of 89%.

Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges remained considerably below the national average in 2019, which resulted in relatively faster delivery of justice. Thus, one judge heard an average of 6.7 cases a month, compared to 9.1 nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months reached 93%, against the national average of 90%.

The number of registered crimes fell but still remained considerably above the national average. The figure for crimes against the person and property registered in 2019 was 14.1 per 1,000 persons versus 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. At the same time, detection rates remained relatively low – 36%, against 52% in the country on average.

Environment

The district's carbon emissions in 2018 remained twice as high as those in the country as a whole: 554 t/sq.km, which is much more than the national average of 275 t/sq.km. The population also generated greater amounts of household waste, though the share handed over for treatment and recycling was large – 78%, against 71% on average across the whole country.

In the district of Varna, the concentration of quite a large part of the population in urban areas is the prerequisite for the relatively large share of those living in settlements with access to public sewerage systems – 86% (with the national average rate at 76%). Access to wastewater treatment plants is also high – 86% of the population's sewerage, versus 64% on average across the country.

Culture

Cultural life in the district of Varna is traditionally quite active and it remained so in 2019. Theater visits rose to 462 per 1,000 persons, while in the country the average figure was 362 per 1,000 persons. Cinema visits were even twice as high as the average ones – 1,132 per 1,000 persons, while the national average was 659 per 1,000 persons.

However, museums and libraries enjoy less popularity. Museum visits in the district numbered 647 per 1,000 persons, against 770 per 1,000 persons on a national level, and library visits – 368 per 1,000 persons, compared to 683 per 1,000 persons as the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Varna

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	13,809	15,479	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,407	5,407	5,883	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,700	13,008	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	18.5	18.4	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	66.0	66.3	69.6	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	7.3	4.4	3.0	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	18.3	19.1	18.8	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	32.5	29.5	25.3	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	20,681	22,164	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	2,680	2,761	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	4,120	3,968	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	71.2	76.6	73.5	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	43.2	42.7	43.5	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	18.8	18.8	18.8	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	78.7	73.0	75.3	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-3.6	-4.0	-3.6	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	2.4	2.2	0.7	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.21	4.26	4.34	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	32.6	38.6	43.3	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	81	83	87	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	85.5	84.2	84.7	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	83.4	83.5	84.0	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,534	1,655	1,655	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	15.7	14.3	14.1	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.6	6.3	6.7	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	86.2	86.4	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	547	498	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	79.6	78.1	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	1,184	1,043	1,132	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	360	449	462	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.

Veliko Tarnovo District

► Population (2019)	232,568
► Territory (sq. km)	4,661.6
► Number of settlements	336
► Share of urban population (%)	70.7

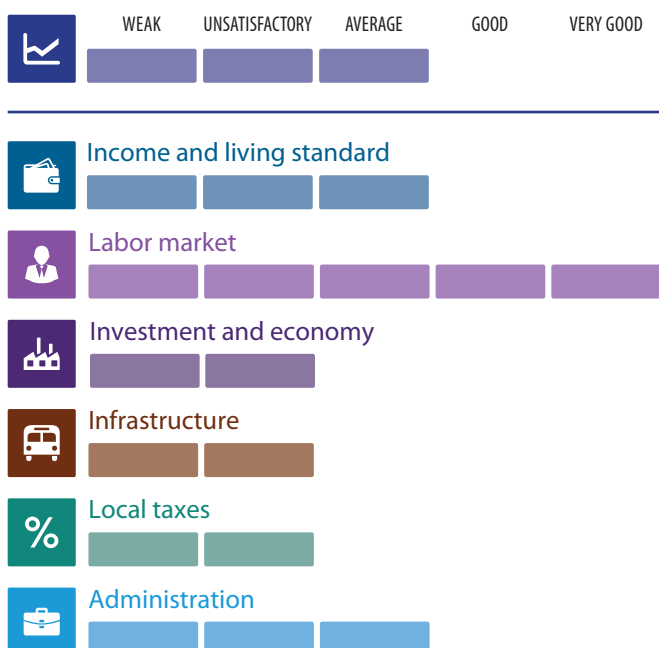


GDP per capita in the district of Veliko Tarnovo rose considerably in 2018 but it still remained well below the national average. The positive developments in the economy and in household income resulted in the reduction of poverty levels in the region. Labor market indicators continued to improve in 2019, placing the district among the top-ranking ones in the country. Local tax rates were relatively high. The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration achieved ratings comparable to the national averages.

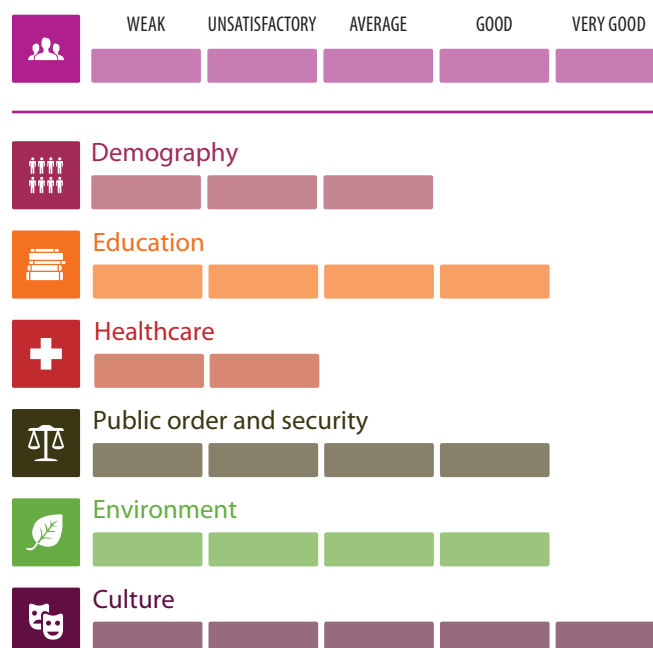
The deterioration of the demographic indicators in Bulgaria is particularly pronounced in Veliko Tarnovo district. It did better in the educational sphere. The proportion

of university students has been falling faster than in the country as a whole but remained twice as high as the national average. The district's poor performance in the area of healthcare is determined by the shortage of doctors and beds in the local hospitals. The workloads of criminal judges are small, yet this has not resulted in faster delivery of justice. The crime rate in the district of Veliko Tarnovo is relatively low and detection is high. Practically all generated household waste is handed over for treatment and recycling. With its active cultural life, Veliko Tarnovo district was among the top-ranking ones in 2019, with only the capital and Gabrovo performing better.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Income and living standard ■■■

In 2018, GDP per capita in the district of Veliko Tarnovo rose by 12.8% to reach 10,400 BGN but in spite of this considerable increase, it still remained well below the national average GDP rates of 15,600 BGN. Salaries also continued to increase, reaching a gross annual average of 10,500 BGN, compared to the national average of 13,800 BGN. Annual incomes per household member have been fluctuating in the past few years and in 2019 the figure was 5,707 BGN, against 6,013 BGN as the country's average.

With the positive tendencies in the economy and the growth in the level of salaries, poverty rates in the region fell in 2019. The proportion of people living in material deprivation declined by 2 p.p. to 25%, against 20% nationwide, and of those living below the poverty line – by 3 p.p. to 25.8%, versus the national average of 22.6%.

Labor market ■■■■■

The indicators for the labor market in the region continued to improve in 2019, placing Veliko Tarnovo district among the top-ranking ones in the country. Economic activity rose by 10 p.p. to reach 81%, which was the highest figure in Bulgaria. Accompanying this growth was a big rise in employment rates and a sharp shrinkage of unemployment. Employment figures reached 78.7%, again the highest ones in the whole country, while unemployment rates fell to 2.0% – half the national average.

As regards the population's educational levels, the indicators also show a favorable tendency. The share of the population with higher education was 30%, above the national average of 28%. The proportion of the population with primary or lower education was 9%, whereas on a national scale the figure was 18%.

Population ageing is still a problem for the district of Veliko Tarnovo. The demographic replacement ratio (the ratio between people aged 15-19 and those aged 60-64) is 61%, against the national average of 66%. Thus every 100 people who will leave the labor market in the next few years could be replaced by 61 young people joining it.

Investment and economy ■■

In 2018 the district of Veliko Tarnovo performed poorly in the area of investment activity. The relative number of enterprises rose but still remained far below the national average. Local and foreign investment recorded persistently low levels, with only an insignificant increase. FTA expenditures reached 1,816 BGN/person, versus the national figure of 2,750 BGN/person, and FDI per capita was among the lowest in the country – 597 EUR/person, six times lower than the national average of 3,560 EUR/person.

The relatively small number of enterprises and limited investment determine the low production value. In 2018 it

was 14,500 BGN/person, versus the national average of 25,900 BGN/person.

In terms of the utilization of EU funding, Veliko Tarnovo also falls behind the other districts. By 15 June 2020 the payments made in the district under operational programs amounted to 1,578 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 1,976 BGN/person. Within the district, the best utilization figures were achieved by the municipalities of Svishtov and the city of Veliko Tarnovo.

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 is low – 16%, against 19% as the country's average. Road quality is also relatively unsatisfactory and although in 2019 the share of road surfaces in good condition rose sharply to 38%, it was still lower than the national average of 41%.

The relative share of households with internet access (63.0%) remained limited against the national average of 75.1%.

Local taxes ■■

The average tax rates in the Veliko Tarnovo municipalities remain high. The greatest margin was in the non-residential immovable property tax for legal entities. In 2020 it was raised further and its average rate reached 2.50‰, whereas in the country in general it was 2.01‰. The highest rise was recorded in Lyaskovets municipality.

The district municipalities also imposed higher than average taxes on motor vehicles and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property.

Slightly lower than the national averages were the local retail license taxes. The average annual tax rate imposed by the municipalities in the district for taxi transportation was also relatively lower – 410 BGN, versus the national average of 498 BGN.

Administration ■■■

In 2019, almost the entire territory of Veliko Tarnovo district was covered by the cadastral map.

In 2020, the local authorities' self-assessment on the development of their e-services remained higher than the national average, but that on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services still fell below the average national figures.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration for 2020 declined from 73% to 71% to equal the national average (71%). The highest ratings in the district of Veliko Tarnovo were achieved by the municipalities of Strazhitsa, Veliko Tarnovo and Gorna Oryahovitsa, and the lowest ones by that of Suhindol.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

Demography ■■■■

In 2019, the deterioration in the demographic indicators was particularly noticeable in Veliko Tarnovo district, continuing the negative tendency from earlier years. The low birth rate affected the natural population growth rate, which fell further to -10.1%, versus the national average of -6.7%. Great numbers of people moved out of the district, resulting in a net migration figure that was also negative (-3.4%). The negative effect of these processes is visible in the age dependency ratios, which indicate that in the district of Veliko Tarnovo the population continues to age.

In 2019, the share of population living in urban areas was 71% and remained slightly lower than the national average of 74%, while the density of the population was smaller – 1,050 persons/sq.km against 1,510 persons/sq.km nationally.

Education ■■■■

In the field of education, Veliko Tarnovo district has been performing relatively well. The figures for net enrolment in 5th-8th grade are almost equal to the national averages. The number of primary and secondary school teachers has continued to rise and in 2019 they reached 98 per 1,000 students, while country-wide the figure was 89 per 1,000 students. The share of repeaters remained below the national average, although there were more dropouts from primary and secondary education.

The scores achieved by the students in the district in 2020 also remained close to the national averages. The district's average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade reached 33.4 points, compared to 36.3 points in the country. Results in the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature were also relatively high: 4.28, versus 4.20 nationally, while the share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades was 7.1%, against 8.2% nationwide.

The number of university students in Veliko Tarnovo district dropped faster than the national average in 2019 but still remained twice as high: 67 per 1,000 persons, versus 32 for the country on average.

Healthcare ■■■

As in previous years, the unsatisfactory performance of the district in the category of healthcare is due to the shortage of both doctors and beds in the local hospitals. And while in the proportion of GPs compared to the country's average for 2019 the difference is not too great – 1,736 persons per GP against 1,688 persons per GP nationwide, the shortage of specialist physicians is more pronounced. The relatively low availability of hospital beds is also a limiting factor for the population's access to hospital care. The local general hospitals have 326 beds per 100,000 persons, while the national average is 550 per 100,000 persons.

The impact of the above is reflected in the hospitalization numbers. In 2019 they declined to 150 per 1,000 persons, com-

pared to 254 per 1,000 persons as the national average. The likely explanation for this relatively low figure is that the local population seeks medical care outside Veliko Tarnovo district.

Public order and security ■■■■

The workloads of criminal judges in 2019 were among the lowest in the country, with an average of 6.6 cases a month per one judge, compared to 9.1 nationally. At the same time, delivery of justice in Veliko Tarnovo district was not faster than average and the share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 90%, exactly the same as the national average.

The number of crimes registered in 2019 again was relatively low and detection rates high. For the second consecutive year, the figures for registered crimes against the person and property continued to decrease, reaching 9.2 per 1,000 persons, versus 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Conversely and again for the second year in a row, the rate of detection of crimes registered throughout the same year rose to 61.4%, against the national figure of 52.1%.

Environment ■■■■

Carbon emissions into the atmosphere in the district of Veliko Tarnovo in 2018 were 37 t/sq.km, or 7 times lower than the national average.

The relatively small share of the population living in urban areas is a factor that affects its access to public sewerage systems. In 2018, 68.4% of the people living in the district of Veliko Tarnovo were connected to public sewerage, against the national average of 76.2%. Access to wastewater treatment plants was available to 60.2% of the population, versus 63.9% across the country on average.

The amounts of waste generated by households kept rising, with figures above the national averages, but almost all of them were handed over for treatment and recycling, whereas the national figure was 71%.

Culture ■■■■■

Veliko Tarnovo is among the districts with the most active cultural life, outranked only by Sofia (capital city) and Gabrovo. This is due to the high and still rising numbers of visits to the local museums and libraries. Museum visits reached 2,346 per 1,000 persons and were 3 times higher than the national average of 770 per 1,000 persons. Library visits were even higher in number – 2,649 per 1,000 persons, which is 4 times as high as the national figure of 683 per 1,000 persons.

Visits to local theaters and cinemas remained half the national average in 2019. Visits to cinemas fell to 319 per 1,000 persons versus the national average of 659 per 1,000 persons. Theater visits underwent a slight increase to 146 per 1,000 persons, while the average figure for the country was 362 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Veliko Tarnovo

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,254	10,434	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	6,024	6,024	5,707	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,665	10,529	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	28.8	25.8	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	66.3	66.6	78.7	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	4.6	5.4	2.0	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	14.6	13.0	8.9	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	22.1	26.8	29.6	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	13,281	14,517	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,582	1,816	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	557	597	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	66.4	66.6	63.0	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	26.1	29.7	38.2	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	20.1	20.1	20.1	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	69.3	73.0	70.8	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-9.1	-9.4	-10.1	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-3.9	-5.0	-3.4	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.96	4.05	4.28	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	26.5	30.1	33.4	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	90	93	98	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	88.0	84.0	85.7	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	83.6	83.9	85.3	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,649	1,746	1,736	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	12.1	10.1	9.2	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.7	7.2	6.6	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	67.1	68.4	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	378	425	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	95.9	99.8	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	530	408	319	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	148	143	146	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.

Vidin District

► Population (2019)	82,835
► Territory (sq. km)	3,032.9
► Number of settlements	140
► Share of urban population (%)	64.9



Vidin is among Bulgaria's districts with the worst indicators for incomes and quality of life. Salaries and incomes have been rising too slowly, remaining far below the national averages. In 2019, as previously, the district also performed poorly as regards the indicators for the labor market, which faces the additional challenge of population ageing. Vidin is one of Bulgaria's regions with the lowest FDI figures. Similar to other districts with low economic activity, the local municipalities keep tax rates relatively low. Vidin district also shows the worst results in the whole country in the Administration category. The trend towards population ageing is more strongly pro-

nounced in Vidin district than anywhere else in Bulgaria. The results in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature are essentially identical to the national averages. The proportion of GPs in the district is larger than the average one in the country; however, in 2019 there was again a serious shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. Crime rates are relatively high but detection is also high. Vidin is the district with the lowest carbon dioxide emissions in the whole of Bulgaria. There is not a single waste water treatment plant in the region. The main factor for the district's good performance in the category of Culture is the large number of visits to the local museums.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■

Income and living standard ■

Vidin is among Bulgaria's districts with the worst indicators for incomes and quality of life. GDP per capita in the district of Vidin has been rising, though at a much slower pace than in the rest of the country, and at 7,900 BGN is almost half the national average of 15,600 BGN. Although salaries and incomes have been rising, their increase has been too slow and they remain far below the national averages. In 2018 the gross annual salary in Vidin district went up to 9,100 BGN, whereas the national average was 13,800. What is more, in 2019 the annual income per household member even shrank by 1% to 3,437 BGN, compared to the national average of 6,013 BGN. This was due to the high proportion of old-age pensions in the formation of annual incomes and the respective lower contribution of salaries.

Given the above factors, in 2019 Vidin retained its position as one of the districts with the highest poverty rates in the country. The proportion of people living in material deprivation went up by 1 p.p. to reach 31%, versus 20% nationwide, while the share of those living below the poverty line went down to 35%, but still remained far higher than the national average of 23%.

Labor market ■■

In 2019, as in previous years, the district's performance as regards the indicators for the labor market was once again unsatisfactory. Economic activity rates continued to improve and at 75.6% were once again higher than the national average of 74.3%. Accompanying this growth, however, were low employment and high unemployment rates. Parallel to the rise in labor demand was a fall in employment rates which reached 56.5%, compared to 70.1% in the country on average. Unemployment figures fell slightly to 19.1% but still remained nearly 5 times higher than the national average of 4.2%.

The share of the population with secondary education in the district is relatively high. The share of people with a university degree is 19.2%, against the national average of 28%. Those with primary or lower education constitute 15.4%, whereas on a national scale the figure is 17.6%.

Population ageing is another challenge facing the labor market in the district of Vidin. The demographic replacement ratio (the ratio between people aged 15-19 and those aged 60-64) in 2019 was 63%, versus the national average of 66%. Thus every 100 people who will leave the labor market in the next few years could be replaced by 63 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and economy ■■

Vidin is one of Bulgaria's districts with the smallest relative number of enterprises. In 2018 their number reached 37 per 1,000 persons, while in the country as a whole it was 59 per 1,000 persons on average. Vidin was also the district with the lowest rate of FTA expenditures – 851 BGN/person, versus the national figure of 2,750 BGN/person, and of production value,

which was as low as 7,000 BGN/person against 25,900 BGN/person as the national average.

Cumulative FDI per capita continued to rise and in 2018 it reached 953 EUR/person, which is still 4 times lower than the average national figure of 3,560 EUR/person.

Utilization of EU funding improved and by 15 June 2020 reached the national average. The payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,983 BGN/person, with the municipalities of Belogradchik and Vidin taking the top places.

Infrastructure ■■

The density of the road and railroad networks in Vidin district nearly equals the national average. However, the share of highways and first-class roads remained considerably lower in 2019 – 11.6%, against the country's average of 18.6%. Road quality was also much worse – only 28.4% of road surfaces were in good condition, compared to the national average of 41.4%.

The relative share of households with internet access also remained relatively limited in 2019 – 63.0%, against 75.1% on average nationwide.

Local taxes ■■■■■■

As in most of the less economically developed regions, the municipalities in Vidin district keep local rates relatively low. What is more, the average tax burden in the district is the second lowest in the country after that of Montana, and when averaged, each of the five monitored rates in 2020 was lower than its average counterpart in the country. The greatest difference was registered in the retail trade tax. Its average figure in the district was 4.55 BGN/sq.m, against 12.93 BGN/sq.m in the country as a whole. The average annual tax rate for taxi transportation was also relatively low – 300 BGN, versus the national average of 498 BGN.

Administration ■■

Vidin district also shows the worst results in the whole country in the Administration category. In 2020, the local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-administration and on the provision of one-stop shop services took a downward turn and fell further below the national average. Local e-administration achieved a rating of 2.57 p. out of 5 p., compared to 3.22 p. nationwide, and the provision of one-stop shop services was rated 2.19 p. out of 5 p., versus the national average of 3.09 p.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration also decreased slightly in 2020 and at 61.9% was again below the national average of 70.7%. Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipality in Belogradchik, and the lowest ones by those in Bregovo and Gramada.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■

Vidin is the district where the tendency towards population ageing is more strongly expressed than anywhere else in Bulgaria. Indeed, it is this district that has the worst figures for birth rates, as evident from the natural population growth rate, which was –16.4‰ in 2019, and although there was no change from the previous year, it remained far below the national average of –6.7‰. Out-migration from the district is still ongoing, which is proved by the relatively low net migration figure of –7.9‰ for 2019. All of this points to Vidin district as the region with the worst age dependency ratio in the whole country.

Vidin is among the districts with a relatively low share of population living in urban areas – 64.9%, versus the national average of 73.7%, and with a low population density – 844 persons/sq.km, against 1,510 persons/sq.km on a national scale.

Education ■■

Vidin is among the districts with the lowest net enrolment in 5th-8th grade, coming second only after Dobrich. In 2019 the figures fell further for the second year in a row, reaching 78.9% against the national average of 86.6%. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education were also higher than average.

The students in the district performed quite poorly in the 2020 external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade, with 28.7 points on average, compared to 36.3 points in the country. At the same time students' performance in the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature showed values close to the national average. The average score was 4.21, compared to 4.20 nationally, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 8.8%, against 8.2% nationwide.

The number of primary and secondary school teachers showed an increase to 88 per 1,000 students in 2019, which almost equals the national average of 89 per 1,000 students. This, however, was less due to new recruitments than to students leaving the district.

Some favorable tendencies can be observed in the sphere of higher education. The branch of Ruse University which opened in the city of Vidin in 2017 now has an enrolment of over 400 students.

Healthcare ■■■■

The proportion of people with health insurance continued to rise in 2019 and again exceeded the national average, mostly due to the increased share of old-age pensioners in the population in the district. The proportion of GPs was higher than the country's average but 2019 again marked a serious shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. The number of beds in the local general hospitals was 404 beds per 100,000 persons, compared to the national average of 550 per 100,000 persons. These limiting factors can probably ex-

plain the relatively low hospitalization figures for 2019 – 155 per 1,000 persons, versus 254 per 1,000 persons nationally.

In 2019 infant mortality figures rose considerably for the second consecutive year, reaching 9.1‰, compared to 5.6‰ as the national average.

Public order and security ■■■■

Criminal judges in Vidin district have small workloads, dropping down to an average of 6.6 cases a month per one judge in 2019, compared to 9.1 nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 92%, against the national average of 90%, but the past few years have shown a worsening tendency.

The number of crimes is high, but so are detection rates. The crimes against the person and property registered in 2019 dropped to 13.2 per 1,000 persons, versus 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The rate of detection decreased compared to the year before, but at 64.6%, it still remained above the national figure of 52.1%.

Environment ■■

Vidin is the district with the lowest carbon dioxide emissions in the whole of Bulgaria. In 2018 they amounted to 3.6 t/sq.km, compared to the national average of 274.8 t/sq.km. Nevertheless, the district's performance based on the Environment indicators is extremely poor.

The proportion of the population with access to public sewerage systems slightly improved, reaching 58% in 2018, yet the figure remained far below the national average of 76%. Vidin is also the district with the lowest access to wastewater treatment plants – 0.5% of the population, versus an average of 64% across the country.

The amount of waste generated by households increased in 2018 to reach 339 kg/person, and although this figure was again below the national average of 409 kg/person, only a very small part was handed over for treatment and recycling – 10%, whereas the national figure was 71%.

Culture ■■■■■■

The main factor for the district's good performance in the category of Culture is the large number of visits to the local museums. Figures for 2019 indicate 2,546 visits per 1,000 persons, or 3 times the national average of 770 per 1,000 persons. Visits to the local theaters and libraries were also high in number. Registered visits to the theater counted 423 per 1,000 persons against the average of 362 per 1,000 persons for the country, and the figure for visits to libraries was 631 per 1,000 persons, with 683 per 1,000 persons as the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Vidin

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,283	7,926	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,470	3,470	3,437	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	8,233	9,103	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	39.0	35.0	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	56.2	58.8	56.5	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	19.2	19.9	19.1	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	10.6	11.8	15.4	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	18.5	20.1	19.2	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	6,350	6,954	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	846	851	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	831	953	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	61.7	61.7	63.0	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	38.0	38.3	28.4	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	20.3	20.2	20.2	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	55.1	63.0	61.9	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-16.2	-16.4	-16.4	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-5.9	-7.6	-7.9	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.96	4.18	4.21	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	25.1	24.6	28.7	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	79	80	88	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	85.6	82.9	78.9	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	90.5	90.8	92.7	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,172	1,432	1,428	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	13.7	14.1	13.2	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	8.7	7.3	6.6	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	57.2	57.6	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	275	339	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	2.4	9.9	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	374	319	397	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	427	485	423	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.

Vratsa District

► Population (2019)	159,470
► Territory (sq. km)	3,619.8
► Number of settlements	123
► Share of urban population (%)	58.9



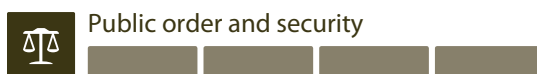
In 2018 GDP per capita in Vratsa district grew three times faster than the average rate of increase in the country and almost reached the national average. At the same time, due to the unfavourable conditions of the labor market, the rate of increase in both salaries and incomes was below the country's averages. Economic activity and employment figures were on the rise, too, but they still remained far beneath the average ones for the country as a whole. The labor market faces the additional challenge of the population's deteriorating educational structure. Investment activity in Vratsa district is relatively low. In 2020 the municipalities kept local tax rates relatively low. The district administration has performed relatively well.

The demographic indicators place Vratsa among the districts with a considerable rate of population ageing. In 2020, students' results were again lower than the national averages. Healthcare in Vratsa district is in a relatively better condition. The proportion of GPs in the district is lower than the average one in the country but the figures are close. The shortage of hospital beds is still a problem awaiting solution. The workloads of local criminal judges are relatively low and therefore delivery of justice is speedier. Crime rates remain relatively high but detection rates are also high. The low share of the population living in urban areas and low population density account for the limited access to public sewerage systems. The intensity of the district's cultural life is low.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■

In 2018 GDP per capita in Vratsa district rose three times faster than the average rate in the country and for the first time it almost reached the national average – 15,000 BGN in the district versus 15,600 BGN nationally. However, due to the relatively unfavourable development of the labor market, salaries and incomes were rising at rates below the respective national averages. The gross annual salary in the district reached 12,500 BGN, whereas the national average was 13,800 BGN. Some improvement in annual incomes was eventually noticed in 2019, when they registered a rise of 14%, against 8% nationwide, and reached 5,209 BGN per household member, compared to 6,013 BGN as the country's average.

In 2019 poverty rates in the district of Vratsa were relatively high. The proportion of people living in material deprivation was 24.2%, versus 19.9% nationwide, while the share of those living below the poverty line was 38.9%, compared to the national average of 22.6%.

Labor market ■■■■

In 2019 economic activity in Vratsa district registered a considerable rise of 6.8 p.p., reaching a rate of 67.5%, but that failed to compensate for the fluctuations in the rates of increase from the previous years and remained far below the national average of 74.3%. A similar development was noticeable in employment rates – they rose by 5.3 p.p. to 59.8%, compared to 70.1% in the country on average. Unemployment figures remained relatively high – 7.7%, whereas the national average was 4.2%.

A major challenge before the labor market in the district is the deteriorating educational structure of the workforce, where no improvement has been registered in the last five years. The share of people with a university degree is 21%, against 28% as the national average, and of those with primary education or less – 21%, whereas on a national scale the figure is 18%.

Investment and economy ■■■■

Investment activity in Vratsa district is relatively weak. Vratsa is among the districts with the smallest relative number of enterprises. In 2018 it rose to 38 per 1,000 persons but remained far below 59 per 1,000 persons, which was the national average. Foreign and local investment was also considerably lower than in the country as a whole. FTA expenditures amounted to 1,682 BGN/person versus the national figure of 2,750 BGN/person. Cumulative FDI, for its part, reached a negligible 654 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 3,560 EUR/person, or 5 times lower.

The result of these factors is the relatively low production value in Vratsa district. Despite being on the rise, in 2018 it amounted to only 15,500 BGN/person, against 25,900 BGN/person as the national average.

On the other hand, Vratsa was among the top ranking districts as regards utilization of EU funding. By 15 June 2020 the pay-

ments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 2,484 BGN/person, while the national average was 1,976 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were registered by the municipalities of the city of Vratsa and Mezdra.

Infrastructure ■■■■

Vratsa is one of the districts with poorly developed infrastructure. Although the density of the road and railroad networks nearly equals the national averages, the share of highways and first-class roads is almost two times lower than the national average – 10%, against 19% respectively. These are factors affecting the figures for road quality – in 2019 only 28.4% of road surfaces were in good condition, compared to the national average of 41.4%.

More positive tendencies are noticeable in the data on the digital infrastructure. In 2019, the relative share of households with internet access in Vratsa district reached 71.1%, against the average of 75.1% nationwide.

Local taxes ■■■■

In 2020, the municipalities in Vratsa district still kept local rates relatively low. From the five monitored rates in 2020, only the one on the non-residential immovable property of legal entities was higher than its average counterpart in the country – 2.28%, versus 2.01% respectively.

The greatest difference was registered in the retail trade tax. Its average figure for Vratsa district was 6.81 BGN/sq.m, against 12.93 BGN/sq.m in the country as a whole. The average annual tax rate for taxi transportation was also considerably lower – 364 BGN, versus the national average of 498 BGN.

Administration ■■■■

Vratsa district registers relatively good results regarding the functioning of its local administration. Joining the trend in the country as a whole, cadastral coverage rose considerably and in 2019 it reached 88.8% of the district's territory, versus the national average of 91.4%.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-administration and on the provision of one-stop shop services also showed better results in 2020, when they registered figures that compensated for the decline in the year before. The provision of one-stop shop services was rated 3.76 p. out of 5 p., versus the national average of 3.09 p., which is among the highest results in the whole of Bulgaria. Almost every municipality in the district reported a rating of 4 p.

Only the AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration decreased in 2020 and for the first time fell below the national average – 69.9%, compared to 70.7% respectively. Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipalities of Mezdra, Kozloduy and Byala Slatina.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Demography ■■■

The demographic indicators place Vratsa among the districts with the most conspicuous tendency towards population ageing. The natural population growth rate has maintained persistently low levels, with -11.4‰ in 2019 against -6.7‰ in the country on average. Out-migration remained at relatively high levels, affecting the net migration figure which fell to -7.9‰ for 2019.

These processes have a negative impact on the age dependency ratios. In 2019, the ratio between people aged 65+ and those aged 0-14 rose to 178.1%, against 150.1% for the country on average, and the ratio between people aged 65+ and those aged 15-64 increased to 39.7%, with 33.8% as the national average.

Vratsa is among the districts with a relatively low share of population living in urban areas – 59%, versus the national average of 74%. The average density of the population living in urban areas – 760 persons/sq.km – is twice as low as that on a national level, which is 1,510 persons/sq.km.

Education ■■■

In 2019, net enrolment in 5th-8th grade fell once again but still remained higher than the national average. At the same time, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education were still quite high.

The numbers of primary and secondary school teachers continued to rise in 2019 and reached figures higher than the national average. In 2020, students' results for the district were once again lower on average than the national figures. The margin is especially wide for the 2020 external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade, with 28.9 points for the district, compared to the average of 36.3 points in the country. The average score in the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was also relatively low – 4.08, compared to 4.20 nationally.

Vratsa district is not among the top ranking ones in higher education. There are, however, two university branches which had an enrolment of over 1,000 students in 2019.

Healthcare ■■■■■

In 2019, Vratsa district performed relatively well in healthcare. The share of health-insured persons continued to rise to levels exceeding the national average. The proportion of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – was lower than, though close to the country's average. Still, the serious shortage of hospital beds remained an ongoing challenge. The number of beds in local general hospitals was 443 beds per 100,000 persons, while the national average was 550 per 100,000 persons.

Hospitalization figures fell to 176.2 per 1,000 persons and for the fifth consecutive year were below the national average of 253.7 per 1,000 persons.

Public order and security ■■■■■

The workloads of criminal judges in Vratsa district continued to decrease, reaching levels well below the average one for the country. In 2019 one local judge heard an average of 6.6 cases a month, compared to 9.1 cases per judge nationally. Small workloads impact the speed of delivery of justice – the proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 95%, against the national average of 90%.

The number of crimes in the district is relatively high, but detection rates are also high. In 2019, the registered crimes against the person and property fell to 14.1 per 1,000 persons, versus 11.1 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate was 64.6%, versus the national figure of 52.1%.

Environment ■■■■■

In 2018, carbon dioxide emissions in the district of Vratsa still remained nearly three times lower than the average ones in Bulgaria, amounting to 101.4 t/sq.km, compared to the national average of 274.8 t/sq.km. The amounts of waste generated by households also remained relatively small – 278 kg/person per annum, versus 409 kg/person in the country. However, the proportion handed over for treatment and recycling continued to rise, reaching 67% and thus coming quite close to the national figure of 71%.

The relatively low shares of the population living in urban areas and the small population density in Vratsa district can account for the limited access of the households to public sewerage systems. In 2018, 57.6% of the population had access to public sewerage networks, compared to the national average of 76.2%. Public sewerage networks with access to wastewater treatment plants were available to 51.2% of the population, compared to the average of 63.9% countrywide.

Culture ■■■

The low intensity of its cultural life remained a characteristic of Vratsa district in 2019. Only the number of visits to local libraries remained high and at 565 per 1,000 persons, it came close to the national average of 683 per 1,000 persons. Museum visits amounted to 131 per 1,000 persons, versus 770 per 1,000 persons in the country on average. Visits to the local cinemas registered a considerable increase compared to the previous year and reached 367 per 1,000 persons, against the average of 659 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Key indicators for the district of Vratsa

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,684	15,018	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,582	4,582	5,209	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,460	12,489	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	29.0	38.9	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	55.3	54.5	59.8	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	11.1	10.1	7.7	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	23.5	20.8	20.7	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	19.9	21.5	21.0	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	13,622	15,540	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,488	1,682	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	651	654	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	64.0	65.5	71.1	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	22.0	26.5	28.4	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	18.0	17.9	17.9	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	72.6	74.0	69.9	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-12.2	-11.4	-11.4	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-6.3	-7.5	-7.8	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.00	3.98	4.08	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	26.3	26.2	28.9	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	80	86	94	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	91.9	93.0	89.9	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	91.1	91.4	93.5	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,520	1,709	1,679	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	15.5	15.4	14.1	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	7.9	7.3	6.6	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	57.2	57.6	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	289	278	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	63.5	67.5	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	238	191	367	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	157	135	166	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.

Yambol District

► Population (2019)	117,335
► Territory (sq. km)	3,355.5
► Number of settlements	109
► Share of urban population (%)	70.8



Yambol remains among the districts with a low level of economic development. Both GDP per capita and salary levels have remained significantly below the national average, but in 2018 they underwent rapid improvement. Unemployment rates remained more than twice as high as the national average, and employment shrank. Low economic activity inevitably leads to very high levels of poverty and material deprivation. FDI has remained quite low, but on the other hand the district has been doing relatively well in the utilization of European funds. Yambol has a well-developed road network, but almost no railroads. Despite some increases in 2020, local taxes in Yambol district remain low, and the assessment of the municipali-

ties' administrative capacity has also been improving. The district has markedly negative and steadily deteriorating demographic indicators and accelerating population ageing. Despite the gradually improving results in the matriculation exams, school education continues to face problems with student retention. Characteristic of Yambol district's healthcare is the most difficult access to specialist physicians in the country and alarmingly high infant mortality. Due to the low workloads, the judiciary is relatively efficient and crime rates are following a declining trend. The population in the district generates relatively little waste, but the problems with access to wastewater treatment plants are still serious. Theaters are the most popular form of cultural life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Income and living standard



Labor market



Investment and economy



Infrastructure



Local taxes



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Demography



Education



Healthcare



Public order and security



Environment



Culture



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■

Income and living standard ■

In 2018, GDP gradually approached the threshold of 10,000 BGN per capita. Employees' salaries remained low, compared to the national average – in 2019 the average annual gross salary in Yambol district was 10,800 BGN, against the national average of 13,800 BGN, but the growth of 13.5% was the fastest one reported for the whole country during the year.

Still, the problems with employment and the large share of inactive people of working age are a precondition for relatively low household incomes, which in 2019 were 5,600 BGN on average per household member, although the indicator has been improving. Yambol ranks last in terms of the share of population living in material deprivation, which reached nearly 40% in 2019. The share of the population living below the national poverty line increased by 9% in just one year, and in 2019 it was already 33.2%, bringing Yambol closer to the most severely affected areas.

Labor market ■■■

Yambol sustains a relatively high unemployment rate – in 2019 it was 9% for the population aged 15+ compared to 4.2% for the country as a whole. At the same time, there has been a rapid decline in the employment rate and while in 2017 it was 68% for the working age population, in 2019 it shrank to 63%. Both indicators come together to show a relatively low economic activity of the population, which in turn points to a large share of inactive working age people.

The more unfavorable indicators for the local labor market can partly be explained with the educational structure of the population. With only 20% of university graduates among the population aged 25-64 and steady deterioration after 2015, the district takes one of the last places in the country. Also, the share of people with primary or lower education is above average and is gradually increasing.

Investment and economy ■■

Due to the relative dominance of the processing industry, Yambol is among the districts with a relatively small number of enterprises – only 46 per 1,000 persons in 2018, but the tendency is towards an increase in their number. The district attracts little foreign investment, and by the end of 2018 FDI amounted to only 445 EUR/person. The annual expenditure on the acquisition of FTA of 1,683 BGN/person was also far from the average for the country, but on this indicator Yambol is not among the districts with the lowest investment activity.

The district is doing well in terms of the utilization of European funds, which by mid-2020 reached 1,796 BGN/person, without

any significant differences between the municipalities on this indicator. Labor productivity in Yambol has been growing rapidly but at this stage still remains low – in 2018 production value per capita was 15,000 BGN, compared to the national average of 25,900 BGN.

Infrastructure ■

Yambol district is characterized by a high density of the road network, with 19 km/100 sq.km territory. However, the railway network is among the least developed in the country, with 1.5 km/100 sq.km. With the Trakia highway passing through the territory of the district, the share of first-class roads and highways (21%) is above the national average. In recent years, there have been fluctuations in the figures indicating the quality of the road surface, with about 44% of the roads in good condition by 2019. The poor assessment for Yambol district in the Infrastructure category is also based on the figure for the share of households connected to high-speed internet – only 53% in 2019, which was the lowest share in the country.

Local taxes ■■■■

In 2020, the average tax rate on the non-residential property of legal entities in Yambol increased to 1.92‰. The average patent tax for retail trade in the district's municipalities remained almost unchanged in 2020 at 8.21 BGN/sq.m of retail space. The property acquisition tax also increased that year to reach 2.5%. A decrease was recorded for the tax on taxi transportation, which fell to an average of 348 BGN per year. Local taxes in Yambol district are significantly below the national average, with the exception of the motor vehicle tax, which in 2020 was 1.53 BGN/kW after taking into account the environmental component.

Administration ■■■

Yambol is among the districts where the coverage of the cadastral map is not yet completed, with only 82.5% of its territory included by 2019, compared to over 90% on average for the country. The average self-assessment result regarding the introduction of e-government by the municipal administrations in the district remained unchanged in 2020 at 2.87 out of 5 possible points. There was no change either in their self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services – 3.39 points on average for the district. The average AIP rating for active transparency improved to reach 70.4% in 2020.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Demography ■■■■

In 2019, the natural growth rate in Yambol district was -8.7% , below the national average of -6.7% for that year and is the value around which the indicator has fluctuated for a decade. The district is also among those that are losing population relatively quickly, as the net migration rate is -4.6% compared to -0.3% for the country; negative migration processes, however, have been subsiding in recent years. The unfavorable natural growth and net migration indicators also affect the age dependency ratios in the district: they are above the national average and have been deteriorating in recent years.

Yambol is among the districts with a relatively high degree of urbanization – the share of urban population in 2019 was 71%, with a clear trend towards gradual increase. At the same time, the population density in the urban settlements is relatively low – 1,074 persons/sq.km, compared to 1,510 persons/sq.km countrywide.

Education ■■

Over the last two years, the average results in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature rose from 3.55 to 4.04, though still remaining below the achievements of the students in most other districts. One positive trend can be seen in the decline in the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) in the same exam, since within that same period they decreased to 13%, though still remaining above the national average of 8%. The students from Yambol district have also been performing less well in the exams in mathematics after 7th grade – in 2020 they scored an average of 31 points, compared to an average of 36 points nationwide. There are too few teachers in the district – an average of 77 per 1,000 students, but the ratio is gradually improving. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education is high – 3.90% of all schoolchildren, or 1 p.p. above average. The share of repeaters is also slightly higher – 1% of all students, and in the last three years the coverage of school education, measured as the share of students enrolled in 5th to 8th grade, is slightly above the national average.

Healthcare ■■■

Yambol is the district in Bulgaria with the second most acute problems with access to specialist physicians after Dobrich. Access to GPs has also deteriorated in recent years, with an average of 1,701 people per doctor; nevertheless, the number is not much higher than the national average. The number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals per 100,000 people from the district is 353 – well below the national average of 550 beds per 100,000 people. The coverage of the health system in the district is relatively good, as 90% of the population has health insurance. A cause for concern is the high infant

mortality rate – 8.2 per 1,000 in 2019, but the indicator has gradually been improving. The limited capacity of the hospitals also affects the number of patients admitted to them, which is extremely low – in 2019 it was only 144 per 1,000 persons.

Public order and security ■■■■

In the last five years, the share of criminal cases in Yambol district closed within 3 months has been similar to the national average – 89% in 2019. The share of pending cases, on the other hand, is below average – 8.5% of all. The relatively good efficiency of the district’s judiciary can be explained with its small workloads – in 2019 a criminal judge heard an average of 5.4 cases per month, compared to 9.1 on average for the country and over 11 in the districts with the busiest courts. Crimes against the person and property are on a downward trend, with 9.6 per 1,000 persons in 2019, versus 11.1 nationally and 18.0 per 1,000 people in 2010 in the district. The detection rate for this type of crime has been gradually increasing, reaching 69% in 2019.

Environment ■■■■

The amounts of household waste generated in Yambol district have remained relatively unchanged in recent years, with 317 kg/person in 2018, which is significantly below the national average of 409 kg. In 2018, nearly 90% of the generated waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to 71% on average countrywide. In 2018, about 72% of the population were living in settlements with access to public sewerage. However, waste water treatment remains a significant problem, as only 5% of the population have access to sewerage connected to a waste water treatment plant. The district also has very low carbon emissions – 7.4 t/sq.km of carbon dioxide, versus 275 t/sq.km on average for the country.

Culture ■■■■

In 2019, theaters remained the most popular form of cultural life in Yambol district, with 494 visits per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 362. Cinemas held the least interest, with 114 out of every 1,000 persons visiting them – most likely because access to them is more difficult. Library attendance was well below average – 446 per 1,000 persons, and visits to museums amounted to 329 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Yambol

Indicators of economic development	2017	2018	2019	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,881	9,694	n.a.	15,615
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,357	5,357	5,638	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,530	10,815	n.a.	13,775
Share of the poor relative to the national poverty line (%)	n.a.	24.3	33.2	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	67.9	62.3	63.1	70.1
Unemployment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	7.6	8.3	9.0	4.2
Share of the population aged 25-64 with primary or lower education (%)	18.2	23.4	23.3	17.6
Share of the population aged 25-64 with tertiary education (%)	22.0	21.0	19.8	28.0
Production value (BGN/person)	13,493	15,014	n.a.	25,855
Expenditure on fixed tangible asset acquisition (BGN/person)	1,973	1,683	n.a.	2,750
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	418	445	n.a.	3,560
Share of households with Internet (%)	62.0	62.1	53.4	75.1
Share of roads in good condition (%)	42.5	39.8	43.9	41.4
Density of the road network (km/100 sq.km territory)	19.0	19.0	19.0	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of the local self-government (%)*	67.8	67.0	70.4	70.7

Indicators of social development	2017	2018	2019	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	-8.4	-8.9	-8.7	-6.7
Net migration rate (‰)	-6.5	-4.3	-4.6	-0.3
Average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.55	3.80	4.04	4.20
Average grade in the external exam in mathematics at the end of 7 th grade (points)**	29.0	29.4	31.2	36.3
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	73	71	77	89
Net enrolment of the population in 5 th -8 th grade (%)	89.4	90.6	87.0	86.6
Share of people with health insurance (%)	89.9	89.3	89.8	88.8
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,364	1,575	1,701	1,688
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.3	10.5	9.6	11.1
Workload of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.0	6.0	5.4	9.1
Share of the population with access to public sewerage networks (%)	71.6	71.8	n.a.	76.2
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	340	317	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	80.4	89.8	n.a.	70.9
Visits to the cinema per 1,000 persons	139	97	114	659
Visits to the theater per 1,000 persons	437	407	494	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.

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. The higher GDP per capita the district has, the more indicative this is of a strong local economy and a higher standard of living for local residents.	2000-2018	BGN per capita	NSI
Average annual income per household member	The indicator shows the general welfare and living standard of the local population. For the purposes of this study, we have used the total income, including cash income (salary and wages, pensions, social benefits, transfers from other households, proceeds from sales, etc.) and valued in-kind income.	2001-2019	total income BGN/ household member	NSI
Average annual gross salary of people in employment and civil service relationship	Income earned from salaries and wages is one of the key factors determining the level of household income.	2008-2018	BGN	NSI
Relative share of the people living in material deprivation	This is a subjective indicator based on surveys of households on specific indicators of material deprivation using the Eurostat methodology. The questionnaire includes difficulties with paying rent and utility bills, ownership of a car or a washing machine, meat consumption, inadequate heating, etc. A person is defined as living in material deprivation if unable to afford costs on three of the nine indicators.	2007-2019	%	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 equivalent disposable income.	2007-2019	%	NSI

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64	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.	2008-2019	%	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.	2000-2019	%	NSI
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64	The employment rate is a leading indicator of the labor market showing what proportion of the working-age population is actually employed.	2003-2019	%	NSI
Demographic replacement rate (ratio of the number of people aged 15 to 19 to those aged 60 to 64)	The demographic replacement rate shows the ratio of the number of people aged 15 to 19 (who are about to enter the labor market) to those aged 60 to 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 the country's districts.	2010-2019	%	NSI
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education	A large share of population with higher education in a district creates prerequisites for increased competitiveness, labor productivity, and economic growth.	2009-2019	%	NSI
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 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.	2009-2019	%	NSI

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Number of non-financial enterprises	The indicator shows entrepreneurial mindsets and investment activity in the local economy.	2008-2018	number of non-financial enterprises/1,000 persons	NSI
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets 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.	2008-2018	BGN/person	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 region and its attractiveness to foreign investors.	2000-2018	EUR/person	NSI
Utilization by municipalities of EU funds 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.	By 15 June 2020	BGN/person	EUMIS, EUMIS 2020
Production value	Production value per capita shows the relative productivity of the enterprises in the district.	2005-2018	BGN/person	NSI

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.	2000–2019	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 the urban railway lines. The greater the density of the railway network in a district, the easier the transportation of passengers and freight.	2000–2019	length of railways 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.	2009–2019	%	NSI
Relative 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.	2006–2019	%	NSI
Share of road surfaces in good condition	In addition to the road network density, the quality of road surfaces is also of significant 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).	2010–2019	%	RIA

% 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.	2012-2020	per mill (‰)	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.	2012-2020	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.	2012-2020	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.	2012-2020	per mill (‰)	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.	2017-2020	BGN	Request for access to information under APIA

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Share of territory included in the cadastral map	Low cadastral map coverage in a given district is an obstacle to investment, especially when the latter includes developing new construction sites.	2003-2019	%	GCCA
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.	2014-2020	%	Access to Information Programme 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.	2013-2020	rating from 1 to 5	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.	2013-2020	rating from 1 to 5	Request for access to information under APIA

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Age dependency ratio of population aged 65+ to those aged 0-14	The indicator shows the ageing rate in a given district – the higher the indicator value, the more clearly expressed the population ageing process.	2011-2019	%	NSI
Age dependency 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.	2011-2019	%	NSI
Share of urban population	The share of urban population provides information on the degree of urbanization of each district.	2001-2019	%	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.	2001-2019	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 region per 1,000 persons; a positive value is considered a favorable demographic indicator.	2001-2019	per mill (‰)	NSI
Net migration rate	The net migration rate shows an increase or decrease of the population per an annual average of 1,000 persons 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.	2001-2019	per mill (‰)	NSI

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 region.	2000-2019	number of university students/1,000 persons	NSI
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools	The ratio between the number of teachers and the number of students in a given district is a standard indicator for measuring the quality of education.	2011-2019	number of teachers/1,000 students	NSI
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 8th 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 8th grade is based on the fact that this is the lowest educational stage where a relatively low coverage of the education system is registered.	2008-2019	%	NSI
Share of dropouts from primary and secondary education	The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education shows the number of students who prematurely left school that year. The low percentage of dropouts from primary and secondary education signals a well-developed educational system capable of keeping at-risk students at school.	2008-2018	%	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.	2011-2019	%	NSI
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature	A high average grade in the annual 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.	2008-2020	grade from 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.	2008-2020	%	MES
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade	A high result in the National external examination 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.	2018-2020	average number of points out of a possible 100	MES

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Population per one GP	GPs are usually the first point of contact in the healthcare system. The indicator on the number of people cared for by one GP shows both the availability of medical staff in a district and medical doctors' workloads.	2011-2019	persons/1 GP	NSI
Access to specialist physicians index	The index measures access to specialist physicians relative to the 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.	2018-2019	compiled index	IME, based on NSI
Number of hospitalization in general hospitalizations	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.	2008-2019	number of persons treated in the local general hospitals/ 1,000 persons	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.	2010-2019	%	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 100,000 people. The availability of hospital beds serves as a relative indicator of the physical resources of the district's healthcare system.	2011-2019	number of hospital beds/ 100,000 persons	NSI
Infant mortality rate	The infant mortality rate shows the number of deaths of infants under 1 year for every 1,000 live births during the respective year. A high rate indicates both inadequate public health care and low health culture of the local population.	2008-2019	per mill (‰)	NSI

Public order and security

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).	2009-2019	%	SJC
Share of pending criminal cases	The share of pending criminal cases in a district's courts indicates the efficiency of the local judiciary.	2009-2019	%	SJC
Workloads of the criminal judges in office	The indicator shows the actual workloads of criminal judges at the district courts throughout the respective year. The higher the workload, the more difficult the access to justice.	2010-2019	cases/ criminal judge/ month	SJC
Crimes against the person and property	Crimes against the person and property can serve as an indicator of the criminality in a given area. Officially registered crimes do not always faithfully represent the criminality in the district but provide a good basis for evaluation and comparisons between districts.	2000-2019	number of crimes/ 1,000 persons	NSI, MI
Share of cleared crimes against the person and property from 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.	2000-2019	%	NSI, MI

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere	The emissions of greenhouse substances into the atmosphere per sq.km are indicative of the degree of pollution caused by human activity in a given district. For the purposes of this analysis only carbon dioxide emissions have been selected as largest in volume and at the same time most indicative of the greenhouse emissions. Districts with high air pollution are less attractive in terms of living conditions.	2010-2018	tons greenhouse emissions/ 1 sq.km territory	NSI
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.	2008-2018	kg/ person/ per 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.	2013-2018	%	NSI
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks connected to waste water treatment plants	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.	2001-2018	%	NSI
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks	The indicator shows the percentage of residents in a district living in areas with public sewerage systems. The coverage of public sewerage has an impact on both the social and the environmental characteristics of the districts.	2010-2018	%	NSI

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.	2009-2019	number of visits/ 1,000 persons	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.	2009-2019	number of visits/ 1,000 persons	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.	2009-2019	number of visits/ 1,000 persons	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.	2009-2019	number of visits/ 1,000 persons	NSI

Appendix

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and Living Conditions

Indicator	GDP per capita (BGN)	Average annual income per household member (BGN)	Average annual gross salary of people in employment and civil service relationship (BGN)	Share of the people living in material deprivation (%)	Share of the people living below the national poverty line (%)
District	2018	2019	2018	2019	2019
Blagoevgrad	9,736	6,079	9,024	19.6	23.9
Burgas	12,585	5,169	11,225	22.7	20.0
Varna	15,479	5,883	13,008	26.7	18.4
Veliko Tarnovo	10,434	5,707	10,529	24.9	25.8
Vidin	7,926	3,437	9,103	31.0	35.0
Vratsa	15,018	5,209	12,489	24.2	38.9
Gabrovo	13,510	7,406	11,796	14.1	17.8
Dobrich	9,176	5,500	10,429	19.5	22.8
Kardzhali	8,472	4,173	10,419	23.0	35.2
Kyustendil	9,285	4,977	9,476	16.9	32.9
Lovech	9,653	4,454	10,317	22.4	25.3
Montana	9,033	4,644	10,129	22.7	47.4
Pazardzhik	9,213	4,180	10,513	26.5	37.0
Pernik	9,153	7,049	10,321	18.8	14.2
Pleven	8,795	5,893	10,461	25.4	20.4
Plovdiv	13,141	6,163	11,780	24.9	22.7
Razgrad	9,709	5,420	11,569	35.8	28.0
Ruse	11,769	5,702	11,185	25.2	22.2
Silistra	7,029	5,729	9,434	15.5	24.0
Sliven	7,600	4,446	10,005	34.0	33.9
Smolyan	10,597	6,354	10,145	12.8	21.2
Sofia (capital city)	33,437	8,224	19,026	10.8	10.0
Sofia	15,654	4,844	13,425	14.5	17.6
Stara Zagora	17,273	5,610	13,190	19.8	23.1
Targovishte	9,981	4,576	10,833	17.7	30.2
Haskovo	8,545	5,678	9,623	23.8	30.9
Shumen	9,397	5,347	11,028	18.5	29.1
Yambol	9,694	5,638	10,815	39.6	33.2
National Average	15,615	6,013	13,775	19.9	22.6

Labor Market

Indicator	Average annual economic activity of the population (%)	Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15-64 (%)	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 (%)
District	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
Blagoevgrad	79.3	4.1	75.2	63.3	21.8	19.9
Burgas	73.0	3.6	69.4	69.3	22.5	20.4
Varna	72.6	3.0	69.6	74.5	25.3	18.8
Veliko Tarnovo	80.7	(2.0)	78.7	60.7	29.6	8.9
Vidin	75.6	19.1	56.5	63.2	19.2	15.4
Vratsa	67.5	7.7	59.8	64.9	21.0	20.7
Gabrovo	74.6	(4.5)	70.1	51.6	29.0	12.6
Dobrich	73.9	7.0	66.9	67.9	21.1	24.8
Kardzhali	65.7	(2.0)	63.7	49.1	18.6	33.7
Kyustendil	70.2	(2.6)	67.6	52.4	21.5	5.6
Lovech	73.5	6.5	67.0	64.2	19.1	13.5
Montana	68.6	20.4	48.2	65.7	10.0	30.3
Pazardzhik	74.2	5.1	69.1	66.1	17.5	22.8
Pernik	79.1	8.2	70.9	47.7	21.4	13.4
Pleven	71.1	7.9	63.2	61.5	23.1	20.8
Plovdiv	72.7	2.4	70.3	67.5	26.0	20.2
Razgrad	71.4	9.6	61.8	64.2	18.8	31.6
Ruse	72.7	3.1	69.6	58.9	30.9	11.4
Silistra	71.5	13.3	58.2	64.2	19.5	30.4
Sliven	71.0	6.5	64.5	88.5	20.9	37.6
Smolyan	75.3	8.8	66.5	41.8	23.5	14.3
Sofia (capital city)	78.0	1.6	76.4	74.3	52.8	4.9
Sofia	78.1	(0.4)	77.7	63.8	12.0	10.9
Stara Zagora	76.1	(1.4)	74.7	68.5	20.7	18.7
Targovishte	70.6	10.5	60.1	69.4	16.8	36.0
Haskovo	71.3	(0.4)	70.9	60.0	20.2	24.0
Shumen	76.7	10.1	66.6	66.6	23.7	29.5
Yambol	72.1	9.0	63.1	63.5	19.8	23.3
National Average	74.3	4.2	70.1	65.9	28.0	17.6

Indicator	Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 persons	Expenditure on the acquisition of FTA per capita (BGN)	FDI in non-financial enterprises (accumulated flows) per capita (EUR)	Utilization by municipalities of EU funds as beneficiaries under operational programs per capita (BGN)	Production value per capita (BGN)
District	2018	2018	2018	2020	2018
Blagoevgrad	72	1,768	1,636	2,623	18,422
Burgas	75	2,995	5,019	1,829	34,472
Varna	70	2,761	3,968	1,383	22,164
Veliko Tarnovo	46	1,816	597	1,578	14,517
Vidin	37	851	953	1,983	6,954
Vratsa	38	1,682	654	2,484	15,540
Gabrovo	56	2,133	3,120	3,290	22,999
Dobrich	56	2,023	1,793	1,525	14,750
Kardzhali	32	1,313	1,908	1,313	9,028
Kyustendil	51	1,118	361	1,120	11,850
Lovech	46	1,165	969	2,121	14,666
Montana	36	1,157	274	2,202	13,048
Pazardzhik	45	2,237	2,020	1,195	14,754
Pernik	45	1,109	1,647	1,026	17,525
Pleven	41	1,722	524	1,930	13,009
Plovdiv	59	2,790	2,861	1,494	25,792
Razgrad	38	1,780	1,564	1,568	15,560
Ruse	54	1,948	1,964	1,558	23,237
Silistra	37	1,589	257	1,406	8,927
Sliven	39	1,160	866	957	11,803
Smolyan	51	1,738	860	1,975	14,914
Sofia (capital city)	91	5,568	9,361	3,369	50,416
Sofia	43	3,140	6,064	1,981	48,092
Stara Zagora	48	2,621	2,937	1,579	25,207
Targovishte	37	2,071	2,514	1,188	15,518
Haskovo	53	1,197	801	1,302	12,598
Shumen	41	2,106	681	1,453	15,681
Yambol	46	1,683	445	1,796	15,014
National Average	59	2,750	3,560	1,976	25,855

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 households with broadband internet access (%)	Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)
District	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
Blagoevgrad	11.1	2.5	17.3	71.1	69.6
Burgas	15.2	2.3	25.7	77.7	32.5
Varna	18.8	5.2	27.4	73.5	43.5
Veliko Tarnovo	20.1	5.1	16.3	63.0	38.2
Vidin	20.2	3.6	11.6	63.0	28.4
Vratsa	17.9	3.1	10.0	71.1	28.4
Gabrovo	24.9	3.7	17.1	74.9	36.7
Dobrich	17.4	1.3	10.1	70.0	46.7
Kardzhali	20.2	2.1	11.2	67.5	33.3
Kyustendil	20.6	4.0	20.5	62.5	54.6
Lovech	18.3	2.6	16.3	66.8	41.0
Montana	17.2	3.1	9.8	78.0	28.9
Pazardzhik	16.2	4.2	15.2	68.3	44.4
Pernik	23.8	4.8	15.8	68.8	46.9
Pleven	17.1	4.4	12.2	71.7	36.5
Plovdiv	17.1	5.4	17.5	80.7	48.7
Razgrad	19.2	3.5	11.1	69.5	17.6
Ruse	18.2	5.5	21.6	84.4	11.5
Silistra	17.8	2.5	11.3	76.6	60.2
Sliven	16.4	3.8	22.2	77.2	79.4
Smolyan	16.9	0.0	0.0	82.4	53.8
Sofia (capital city)	0.0	12.8	0.0	83.0	0.0
Sofia	21.4	4.2	30.2	67.3	31.7
Stara Zagora	17.5	5.1	28.8	77.9	37.6
Targovishte	20.4	2.8	14.7	77.1	60.8
Haskovo	20.7	3.7	21.5	68.1	36.8
Shumen	18.2	4.6	36.4	77.3	45.9
Yambol	19.0	1.5	20.6	53.4	43.9
National Average	17.9	3.6	18.6	75.1	41.4

% Local taxes

Indicator	Tax rate on immovable non-residential property for legal entities (%)	Motor vehicle tax (commercial and passenger vehicles, 74 kW to 110 kW) (BGN/kW)	Annual patent tax for retail trade on up to 100 sq.m of retail space at the most favorable business location (BGN/sq.m)	Tax rate on non-gratuitous acquisition of property (%)	Tax rate on taxi transportation of passengers (BGN)
District	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020
Blagoevgrad	1.73	1.38	11.75	2.19	419
Burgas	2.06	1.81	15.22	2.87	545
Varna	2.25	1.66	16.62	2.94	588
Veliko Tarnovo	2.50	1.64	11.99	2.71	410
Vidin	1.70	1.25	4.55	2.58	300
Vratsa	2.28	1.37	6.81	2.67	364
Gabrovo	2.18	1.55	8.88	2.47	406
Dobrich	1.55	1.51	8.71	2.92	300
Kardzhali	1.81	1.39	8.04	2.49	322
Kyustendil	1.96	1.29	10.05	2.26	300
Lovech	2.25	1.28	10.40	2.33	395
Montana	1.68	1.21	5.10	2.45	338
Pazardzhik	1.87	1.23	8.95	2.74	300
Pernik	1.89	1.21	9.87	2.45	300
Pleven	2.97	1.30	9.26	2.83	383
Plovdiv	2.08	1.54	13.15	2.77	548
Razgrad	2.09	1.37	9.18	2.52	326
Ruse	2.00	1.26	13.57	2.32	465
Silistra	1.75	1.41	7.98	2.33	328
Sliven	2.44	1.58	9.82	2.67	373
Smolyan	1.95	1.28	7.74	2.57	318
Sofia (capital city)	1.88	1.69	20.00	3.00	850
Sofia	2.35	1.32	10.46	2.63	394
Stara Zagora	1.55	1.51	13.87	2.28	312
Targovishte	1.83	1.52	9.07	2.49	303
Haskovo	1.96	1.55	11.96	2.52	324
Shumen	1.85	1.51	8.89	2.66	355
Yambol	1.92	1.53	8.21	2.50	348
National Average	2.01	1.51	12.93	2.69	498

Indicator	Cadastral coverage (%)	Active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)	Development of local government e-services (Rating from 1 to 5)	Development of one-stop shop services (Rating from 1 to 5)
District	2019	2020	2020	2020
Blagoevgrad	98.5	68.3	3.28	3.23
Burgas	84.7	66.9	3.56	2.99
Varna	96.7	75.3	2.99	2.29
Veliko Tarnovo	96.7	70.8	3.35	2.63
Vidin	89.3	61.9	2.57	2.19
Vratsa	88.8	69.9	3.16	3.76
Gabrovo	82.9	74.8	3.09	2.62
Dobrich	97.6	76.2	2.79	2.44
Kardzhali	95.9	54.1	2.56	2.73
Kyustendil	95.3	56.9	2.98	3.58
Lovech	93.8	77.9	3.34	3.86
Montana	97.0	71.0	3.16	3.40
Pazardzhik	93.3	65.4	2.80	2.78
Pernik	96.1	61.8	3.03	3.05
Pleven	94.4	71.8	2.97	2.85
Plovdiv	95.3	70.1	2.70	2.70
Razgrad	96.2	73.2	2.41	2.22
Ruse	95.5	71.4	3.61	3.74
Silistra	97.3	63.0	3.44	2.31
Sliven	63.6	77.8	3.07	2.61
Smolyan	89.9	67.5	2.73	3.12
Sofia (capital city)	99.2	78.8	4.00	4.00
Sofia	75.3	57.3	3.13	2.76
Stara Zagora	95.3	65.1	2.91	2.56
Targovishte	95.3	78.4	3.04	3.33
Haskovo	93.2	67.3	3.10	2.97
Shumen	90.2	65.4	2.90	3.01
Yambol	82.5	70.4	2.87	3.39
National Average	91.4	70.7	3.22	3.09

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Indicator	Age dependency ratio of population aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 (%)	Age dependency ratio of population aged 65+ to those aged 15-64 (%)	Share of urban population (%)	Population density in urban areas (number of persons/sq.km)	Rate of natural increase (‰)	Net migration rate (‰)
District	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
Blagoevgrad	134.3	30.2	60.2	2,270	-4.1	-3.9
Burgas	127.6	30.9	76.5	2,238	-4.7	2.1
Varna	126.4	29.4	84.0	1,814	-3.6	0.7
Veliko Tarnovo	186.8	37.7	70.7	1,050	-10.1	-3.4
Vidin	248.6	51.6	64.9	844	-16.4	-7.9
Vratsa	178.1	39.7	58.9	760	-11.4	-7.8
Gabrovo	248.2	49.0	81.9	1,224	-12.7	-4.2
Dobrich	158.5	35.3	69.0	667	-9.0	-2.7
Kardzhali	145.0	31.9	40.4	1,957	-3.6	37.2
Kyustendil	228.0	45.9	70.0	1,109	-13.2	-4.8
Lovech	200.5	45.4	63.0	836	-13.1	-5.8
Montana	194.6	44.3	64.3	894	-14.5	-6.1
Pazardzhik	137.8	32.6	62.8	2,081	-6.7	-3.9
Pernik	203.7	40.9	79.5	917	-13.1	-0.9
Pleven	188.2	43.9	66.9	1,077	-11.0	-6.1
Plovdiv	141.8	32.6	75.8	2,504	-5.3	3.1
Razgrad	161.5	34.2	47.1	837	-9.0	-3.9
Ruse	186.4	37.5	78.2	1,657	-10.2	-4.1
Silistra	178.2	39.5	44.2	787	-9.5	-2.1
Sliven	109.4	33.0	65.7	2,628	-2.9	-10.0
Smolyan	216.1	38.8	56.4	1,775	-9.7	-8.4
Sofia (capital city)	119.9	26.2	95.6	4,963	-2.0	2.4
Sofia	170.0	37.7	61.6	727	-9.3	-1.2
Stara Zagora	150.7	36.2	72.4	1,482	-7.6	-1.8
Targovishte	148.9	34.5	54.1	1,071	-8.9	2.7
Haskovo	158.4	36.9	72.2	1,045	-8.7	-3.8
Shumen	157.2	34.0	61.2	887	-7.4	6.9
Yambol	161.2	40.4	70.8	1,074	-8.7	-4.6
National Average	150.1	33.8	73.7	1,510	-6.7	-0.3

Education

Indicator	Number of students at colleges and universities per 1,000 persons	Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 persons	Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 8th grade) (%)	Share of dropouts from primary and secondary education (%)	Relative share of repeaters (%)	Average grades in the State matriculation exam in BLL	Average grade in the NEE in mathematics after 7th grade (number of points out of a possible 100)
District	2019	2019	2019	2018	2019	2019/2020	2020
Blagoevgrad	30	90	92.4	2.20	0.60	4.24	34.4
Burgas	15	80	85.9	3.40	0.79	4.18	38.1
Varna	51	87	84.7	2.80	0.49	4.34	43.3
Veliko Tarnovo	67	98	85.7	3.80	0.71	4.28	33.4
Vidin	5	88	78.9	4.90	0.93	4.21	28.7
Vratsa	7	94	89.9	3.20	0.91	4.08	28.9
Gabrovo	44	81	93.4	2.40	0.87	4.31	33.9
Dobrich	4	96	74.7	4.50	1.54	4.20	29.8
Kardzhali	4	100	80.3	2.00	0.40	3.92	31.9
Kyustendil	0	88	89.8	2.40	0.64	4.08	30.0
Lovech	2	86	88.6	4.20	1.25	4.19	29.8
Montana	0	90	81.1	4.90	1.22	4.15	27.8
Pazardzhik	0	92	82.4	4.40	1.31	4.07	31.3
Pernik	1	93	91.6	2.20	0.46	4.13	28.7
Pleven	15	97	87.0	3.60	0.81	4.00	28.8
Plovdiv	52	84	87.8	3.70	1.38	4.33	36.7
Razgrad	2	92	85.4	3.40	0.45	4.02	31.1
Ruse	29	96	84.4	3.50	0.66	4.25	35.2
Silistra	2	95	79.8	3.90	0.64	3.86	26.7
Sliven	7	83	84.9	5.70	3.24	4.16	29.3
Smolyan	14	122	90.9	1.00	0.14	4.53	38.1
Sofia (capital city)	71	87	89.4	0.80	0.34	4.63	48.1
Sofia	8	87	91.6	2.90	1.74	4.00	31.0
Stara Zagora	16	87	91.4	3.70	1.41	4.18	31.8
Targovishte	0	104	76.8	3.00	0.91	3.85	35.2
Haskovo	4	84	82.6	3.70	0.98	4.07	32.0
Shumen	38	95	83.1	3.00	0.63	3.96	29.6
Yambol	7	77	87.0	3.90	0.99	4.04	31.2
National Average	32	89	86.6	2.90	0.89	4.20	36.3

Здравеопазване

Indicator District	Population per one GP (persons)	Access to specialist physicians index (lower values are better)	Number of hospitalizations in general hospitals per 1,000 persons (number of persons)	Number of beds in general hospitals per 100,000 persons	Share of people with health insurance (%)	Infant mortality rate (‰)
	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
Blagoevgrad	1,701	12.06	173.0	364	90.6	2.9
Burgas	2,006	10.50	182.6	354	84.8	6.1
Varna	1,655	6.87	133.3	437	84.0	4.4
Veliko Tarnovo	1,736	11.61	150.3	326	85.3	7.5
Vidin	1,428	11.42	154.6	404	92.7	9.1
Vratsa	1,679	10.07	176.2	443	93.5	4.5
Gabrovo	1,501	9.04	198.9	464	97.5	0.0
Dobrich	1,494	14.10	118.6	281	86.5	7.4
Kardzhali	2,985	13.92	142.7	351	104.7	7.1
Kyustendil	1,426	10.86	220.8	554	97.0	5.7
Lovech	1,476	9.23	163.3	468	92.0	2.1
Montana	1,443	10.33	266.8	688	88.8	3.2
Pazardzhik	1,631	10.97	263.8	654	85.8	9.1
Pernik	1,490	12.61	102.3	247	91.0	9.2
Pleven	1,212	4.09	269.1	931	91.9	7.5
Plovdiv	1,588	6.84	338.3	786	87.6	5.3
Razgrad	2,172	11.40	206.5	505	96.5	9.1
Ruse	2,155	9.42	205.8	478	88.3	6.0
Silistra	2,077	12.43	200.5	447	88.7	4.5
Sliven	1,841	12.47	207.9	494	87.5	14.4
Smolyan	1,569	11.88	219.8	562	97.0	1.5
Sofia (capital city)	1,712	5.98	182.3	552	87.1	2.5
Sofia	1,771	8.01	176.0	584	87.3	4.4
Stara Zagora	1,485	9.16	189.9	498	90.0	10.4
Targovishte	2,311	11.36	187.2	536	88.3	6.7
Haskovo	1,847	12.10	194.3	356	90.1	8.2
Shumen	1,833	12.28	125.2	313	88.9	3.5
Yambol	1,701	13.91	143.8	353	89.8	8.2
National Average	1,688	8.42	253.7	550	88.8	5.6



Public order and security

Indicator	Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months (%)	Share of pending criminal cases (%)	Workloads of the criminal judges in office (cases/criminal judge/month)	Crimes against the person and property (number of crimes/1,000 persons)	Share of cleared crimes against the person and property (%)
District	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
Blagoevgrad	86.0	12.6	8.3	8.4	54.5
Burgas	89.0	9.8	8.9	14.2	43.6
Varna	93.0	7.9	6.7	14.1	36.2
Veliko Tarnovo	90.0	9.1	6.6	9.2	61.4
Vidin	92.0	11.6	6.6	13.2	64.6
Vratsa	95.0	5.0	6.6	14.1	64.6
Gabrovo	86.0	6.7	6.4	10.5	73.2
Dobrich	95.0	6.4	6.2	10.4	54.5
Kardzhali	94.0	7.1	7.5	5.1	66.7
Kyustendil	85.0	12.5	11.0	11.7	48.6
Lovech	96.0	8.9	9.9	11.2	64.4
Montana	80.0	14.7	7.7	13.1	52.5
Pazardzhik	92.0	7.4	10.4	8.8	61.2
Pernik	95.0	5.3	6.3	11.8	51.5
Pleven	94.0	7.9	7.7	11.7	55.5
Plovdiv	94.0	6.8	11.4	8.3	57.3
Razgrad	95.0	8.1	9.2	9.9	69.9
Ruse	95.0	5.6	9.6	9.7	50.8
Silistra	94.0	5.5	8.1	7.8	59.6
Sliven	96.0	6.0	9.8	10.2	64.5
Smolyan	91.0	6.9	5.2	6.0	74.2
Sofia (capital city)	86.0	14.4	12.0	13.3	34.8
Sofia	80.0	19.6	9.5	11.2	54.7
Stara Zagora	90.0	9.6	11.2	11.4	54.4
Targovishte	87.0	13.5	3.5	9.5	73.8
Haskovo	90.0	9.0	8.0	10.1	58.6
Shumen	92.0	6.2	6.2	9.3	59.3
Yambol	89.0	8.5	5.4	9.6	68.9
National Average	90.1	9.8	9.1	11.1	52.1

Indicator	Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq.km)	Generated household waste (kg/person/per year)	Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks connected to waste water treatment plants (%)	Share of population in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)
District	2018	2018	2018	2018	2018
Blagoevgrad	11.8	304	15.2	32.8	82.2
Burgas	93.0	433	83.2	65.9	79.7
Varna	553.6	498	78.1	86.4	86.4
Veliko Tarnovo	37.4	425	99.9	60.2	68.4
Vidin	3.6	339	10.0	0.5	57.6
Vratsa	101.4	278	67.5	51.2	57.6
Gabrovo	23.4	433	91.1	74.5	85.1
Dobrich	18.9	399	84.3	70.9	70.9
Kardzhali	5.8	253	12.8	38.6	45.3
Kyustendil	668.9	287	97.6	62.3	72.6
Lovech	668.9	332	11.3	56.8	69.1
Montana	7.3	268	95.3	35.5	59.9
Pazardzhik	31.3	339	13.4	44.1	72.3
Pernik	175.0	472	86.3	74.2	79.4
Pleven	59.0	391	89.7	53.1	56.8
Plovdiv	122.5	446	66.8	66.8	81.6
Razgrad	49.5	529	8.5	41.9	41.9
Ruse	143.3	404	16.7	68.7	68.7
Silistra	12.0	400	4.0	44.4	51.5
Sliven	161.0	307	91.7	57.4	65.3
Smolyan	9.6	301	7.5	43.1	72.9
Sofia (capital city)	1,073.5	499	96.8	96.3	96.3
Sofia	35.9	487	18.9	43.2	77.2
Stara Zagora	3,831.1	412	86.3	61.9	72.0
Targovishte	99.7	302	68.3	44.7	56.2
Haskovo	108.3	316	96.1	54.2	72.7
Shumen	30.7	305	94.7	54.5	58.2
Yambol	7.4	317	89.8	4.8	71.8
National Average	274.8	409	70.9	63.9	76.2

Indicator District	Visits to theaters (number of visits/ 1,000 persons)	Visits to cinemas (number of visits/ 1,000 persons)	Visits to museums (number of visits/ 1,000 persons)	Visits to libraries (number of visits/ 1,000 persons)
	2019	2019	2019	2019
Blagoevgrad	123	443	457	408
Burgas	378	843	598	110
Varna	462	1,132	647	368
Veliko Tarnovo	146	319	2,346	2,649
Vidin	423	397	2,546	631
Vratsa	166	367	131	565
Gabrovo	440	402	3,812	546
Dobrich	211	202	1,119	549
Kardzhali	154	90	100	296
Kyustendil	123	273	1,094	444
Lovech	161	183	1,031	227
Montana	88	97	155	0
Pazardzhik	261	190	864	321
Pernik	65	0	318	234
Pleven	258	452	854	310
Plovdiv	232	373	575	292
Razgrad	434	106	563	415
Ruse	540	746	565	592
Silistra	235	119	309	485
Sliven	313	90	485	804
Smolyan	99	149	154	198
Sofia (capital city)	708	1,756	652	1,114
Sofia	0	78	1,430	0
Stara Zagora	459	635	1,060	572
Targovishte	625	185	175	1,006
Haskovo	298	98	251	340
Shumen	191	111	1,162	1,306
Yambol	494	114	329	446
National Average	362	659	770	683