

Haskovo District

▶ Population (2020)	224,471
▶ Territory (sq. km)	5,533.3
▶ Number of settlements	261
▶ Share of urban population (%)	71.9



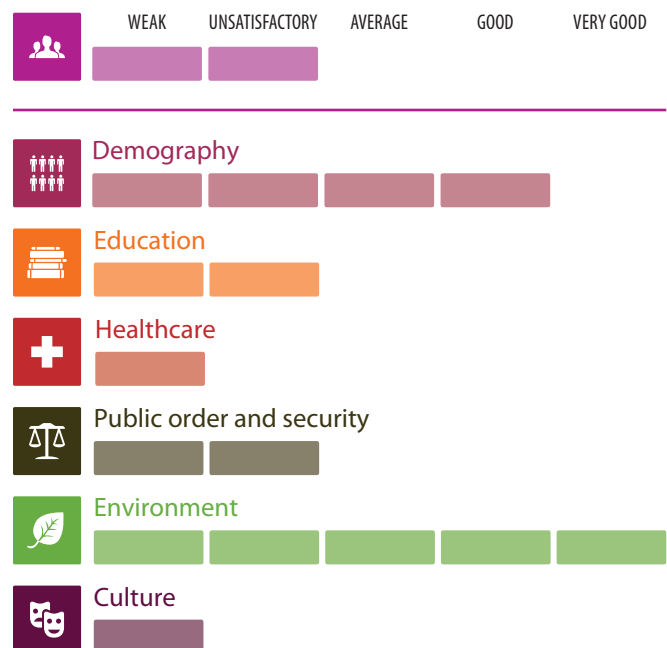
Household incomes in Haskovo district have been gradually rising, yet the issue of high poverty levels and material deprivation persists. Employment has fallen below the national average. The local labor market continues to face the challenges posed by the educational structure of the workforce and the ageing population. Investment activity remains low. The density of the road and railway networks in the district is relatively high. The share of highways and first-class roads is also higher than average. Local taxes are lower than average. The self-assessments of local administrations for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services are improving, but remain below the national average.

2020 marked a deterioration in the natural population growth and the net migration rates. The district performs poorly in education. The results of the students in the district are low. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. Morbidity and infant mortality are relatively high. The workloads of the local criminal judges continue to decrease, but the delivery of justice is slow. The crime detection rate is high. The high assessment of Haskovo district in the environment category is mainly due to the relatively low volumes of generated household waste and its management. The pandemic and the countrywide restriction on cultural events in 2020 affected cultural life in the district as well.

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, with only 9,000 BGN per capita in 2019, compared to the national average of 17,200 BGN. The average annual gross salary of employed people has been increasing, but in 2019 it was the third lowest in the country – only 10,600 BGN, versus 15,200 BGN in the country. The average annual income per household member went up to 5,700 BGN in the district, compared to 6,000 BGN nationally.

These indicators are the main factor for the high poverty levels in the district. 23.8% of the population live with material deprivation, compared to 19.9% on average nationally, and 30.9% are below the national poverty line, versus 22.6% on average countrywide.

Labor market ■■■■

In 2020, economic activity in Haskovo district decreased significantly and its rate dropped to 67.7%, compared to 73.7% in the country. This decline was accompanied by a sharp shrinkage of employment, whose rate of 67.4% now fell below the national average of 68.5%. Unemployment, however, remained relatively low.

The local labor market continues to face the challenges posed by the educational structure of the workforce and the ageing population. In 2020, the share of university graduates among the 25–64 age group dropped to 17.8%, compared to 29.2% in the country. Also, the share of people with primary or lower education went up to reach 25.8%, compared to the national average of 16.9%. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 rose slightly but remained low at 60.5%, compared to 67.1% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 61 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and economy ■■

Investment activity in Haskovo district remained low in 2019. FTA acquisition expenditures even decreased to 1,130 BGN/person, compared to 3,155 BGN/person nationally. FDI underwent a mild increase to 815 EUR/person but remained considerably below the national average of 3,655 EUR/person. These indicator values also result in relatively low production, which slowed down and reached 12,900 BGN/person, compared to 28,000 BGN/person nationally.

Utilization of EU funds is also relatively poor. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operation-

al programs amounted to 1,435 BGN/person, while the national average was 2,217 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Svilengrad.

Infrastructure ■■■■

Haskovo district has a relatively well developed road and railway network. The share of first-class roads and highways is also higher than the national average – 21.5% in 2020, compared to 18.5% in the country. The quality of the roads has been improving, but remains relatively low. The share of road surfaces in good condition was 36.8% in 2019, compared to 41.4% countrywide.

Households' access to the internet improved in 2020 and nearly reached the national average, with 78.6% in the district, versus 78.9% in the country. The share of households with access to a gas supply is low – 0.8%, against 3.1% nationally.

Installed RES capacity is 0.9 kW/person, against 0.6 kW/person in the country.

Local taxes ■■■■

The levels of the monitored local taxes in the municipalities on the district's territory again remained close to, though below the national average in 2021. The taxes on the immovable real estate of legal entities (2.04‰) and motor vehicles (1.54 BGN/kW) were equal to the respective national averages. Lower than the average ones were the tax rates on retail trade (12.76 BGN/sq. m, versus 12.99 BGN/sq. m in the country), on non-gratuitous acquisition of property (2.55%, against 2.73% nationally) and on taxi transportation (288 BGN, compared to 453 BGN countrywide).

Administration ■■■■

In recent years, in line with the nationwide trend, cadastral map coverage in Haskovo district went up considerably and in 2019 it included 93.2% of the territory, compared to 91.4% in the country.

In 2021, the self-assessments of the district's municipalities on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services also went up, though remaining below the respective national averages. An increase was also registered in the AIP Active transparency rating of the local administrations, whose average reached 73.7% and exceeded the national average of 73.2%. Within the district, the highest rating was achieved by the municipalities of Harmanli and Dimitrograd.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2020, natural population growth in Haskovo district registered a decrease, while the net migration rate went up. The natural population growth rate dropped to -12.3‰, compared to -9.5‰ nationally. The net migration rate went up in almost the entire country and for the first time in a number of districts it reached a positive value. Haskovo district was no exception, though its migration rate remained relatively low -4.7‰.

Population ageing continues to be a problem for the district. In 2020, the population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 was 159.9%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15-64 it was 37.2%, against 34.1% in the country.

The share of urban population is comparable to the country's average - 71.9%, versus 72.9% nationally. At the same time, population density is relatively low - 1,043 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,506 persons/sq. km nationally.

Education

The district performs poorly in education. The coverage of the education system has improved but remains relatively low. In 2020, the net enrolment in 5th-8th grade was 84.9%, against 86.5% nationally. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education have been on the decrease but remain relatively high. The number of teachers is relatively small and in 2020 it decreased even further. Their proportion was 82 per 1,000 students, compared to 87 teachers per 1,000 students in the country.

Students' results remained low in 2021. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 32.4 points, versus 37.9 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.00, compared to 4.21 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 12%, against 7% nationally.

Healthcare

The healthcare system in Haskovo district suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The number of doctors - both GPs and specialist physicians - is below the national average. In 2020, there was one GPs per 1,871 people, compared to 1,727 people per doctor nationally. The number of beds in the district's general hospitals remained extremely low, with 3.57 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.52 beds per 1,000 people in the country.

Population morbidity and infant mortality in the district are relatively high. The number of hospitalizations was 159 people per 1,000 persons in 2020, compared to the national average of 138 per 1,000 persons. The infant mortality rate went up for

the third year in a row and reached 8.4‰, compared to the national average of 5.1‰.

The number of people with health insurance dropped to 89.2% in 2020, but remained above the national average of 88.7%.

Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in the district continued to decrease in 2020, but delivery of justice remained slow. One criminal judge heard an average of 7.8 cases per month, compared to an average of 8.6 cases per judge in the country. At the same time, the relative share of criminal cases closed within 3 months shrank to 88%, against 90% nationally, and pending cases went up to 14%, against 11% countrywide.

The crime rate in Haskovo district is comparable to that in the country on average, but the detection rate is considerably higher. The crimes against the person and property registered in 2020 amounted to 10.0 per 1,000 persons, compared to 9.9 per 1,000 persons nationally. The proportion of cleared crimes improved and reached 63.0%, against 52.1% nationally.

Environment

The positive assessment of Haskovo district in the environment category is mainly due to the relatively low volumes of generated household waste and its management. In 2018, the annual amount of generated waste was 316 kg/person, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person. 96% of all generated household waste was handed over for recycling and treatment, compared to 71% in the country.

The volumes of carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere remain low - 61.7 t/sq. km.

There has been little change in the share of households with access to a public sewerage network, which in 2019 reached 72.6%, against 76.4% in the country. The share of households whose sewerage system is connected to a wastewater treatment plant was 53.5%, compared to 64.6% countrywide.

Culture

The pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on visits to cultural events in 2020 had a powerful negative impact on cultural life in the district as well. What is more, the reduction of visits in the district was even larger. Cinema visits dropped by 87% to a bare 13 per 1,000 persons, compared to a reduction by 71% and 190 per 1,000 persons nationally. Museum visits declined by 71% to 73 per 1,000 persons, compared to a drop by 58% to 322 per 1,000 persons in the country. The decrease in the numbers of library visits was by 42% to 196 per 1,000 persons, against a 30% reduction to 480 per 1,000 persons in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Haskovo

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,545	9,036	n.a.	17,170
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,119	5,678	n.a.	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,623	10,566	n.a.	15,209
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	28.5	30.9	n.a.	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.0	70.9	67.4	68.5
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	3.1	(0.4)	(0.3)	5.2
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	21.0	24.0	25.8	16.9
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	20.1	20.2	17.8	29.2
Production value (BGN/person)	12,598	12,867	n.a.	28,027
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,197	1,130	n.a.	3,155
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	801	815	n.a.	3,655
Share of households with Internet (%)	72.3	68.1	78.6	78.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	33.7	36.8	n.a.	41.4
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	20.7	20.7	20.7	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	63.0	67.3	73.7	73.2

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–8.5	–8.7	–12.3	–9.5
Net migration rate (‰)	–5.2	–3.8	4.7	4.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.84	4.07	4.00	4.21
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.8	32.0	32.4	37.9
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	84.7	82.6	84.9	86.5
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	77	84	82	87
Share of population with health insurance (%)	88.5	90.1	89.2	88.7
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,809	1,847	1,871	1,727
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.2	10.1	10.0	9.9
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	9.1	8.0	7.8	8.6
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	72.7	72.6	n.a.	76.4
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	316	n.a.	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	96.1	n.a.	n.a.	70.9
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	72	98	13	190
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	224	251	73	322

* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.