

Pazardzhik District

▶ Population (2020)	252,038
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,456.9
▶ Number of settlements	118
▶ Share of urban population (%)	62.6



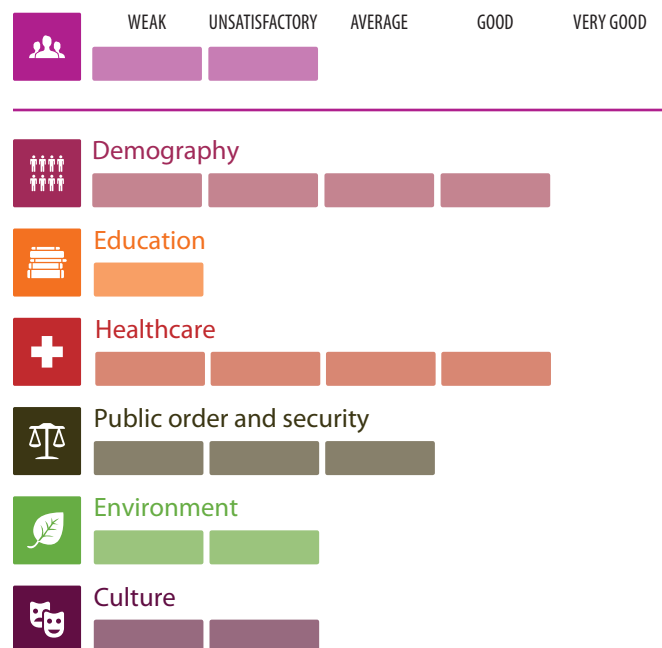
GDP in Pazardzhik district continued to grow in 2019, but at a rate below the national average and its amount continued to lag behind the average one in the country. The average annual income per household member declined and poverty levels remained high. The local labor market is still facing the challenge presented by the educational profile of the workforce. Investment activity in the district is not very strong. In 2019 there was an outflow of FDI. Pazardzhik is the district with the highest rating for infrastructural development and the leader in installed RES capacity. The average rate of local taxes levied by municipalities is relatively low. Their self-assessments for the development of e-government and the provision of one-

stop shop services remain below the national average. Age dependency ratios in the district continue to worsen, but remain more favorable than the national average. Pazardzhik is among the districts with the lowest performance in the education indicators. Students' results continue to lag behind the national averages. Access to GPs in the district is better than the country's average. The number of patients admitted to the local general hospitals is extremely low. The workloads of the local criminal judges are close to the national average, but the delivery of justice is faster. The crime rate in the district is relatively low. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains extremely limited. Cultural life in Pazardzhik district is not very active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

In 2019, GDP per capita in Pazardzhik district continued to grow but at a rate lower than the country's average and its figure remained below the national average. A similar trend was observable as regards the gross annual salary of employed persons. It reached 11,700 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN in the country on average. However, the average annual income per household member in the district registered a decrease to 4,200 BGN, and compared to the average of 6,000 BGN nationally, it was among the lowest in the country.

These indicator values are the main prerequisite for the high poverty levels of the local population. In 2019, the share of people living with material deprivation was 37.0%, compared to 22.6% in the country, and those living below the national poverty line made up 26.5% of the residents, versus the national average of 19.9%.

Labor market

Economic activity in Pazardzhik district is traditionally close to, but below the national average. In 2020, similar to the trends in most other districts, it shrank to 72.5%, versus 73.7% in the country. Employment decreased to 67.4%, compared to 68.5% nationally. Unemployment remained at 5.1%, versus the national average of 5.2%.

The educational profile of the workforce remains a persistent challenge facing the local labor market. In 2020, the share of people with a university degree decreased for the third consecutive year and came down to 15.6%, against an average of 29.2% in the country, while those with primary or lower education increased to 24.2%, versus 16.9% nationally.

The demographic replacement ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 reached 66.3% and for the first time was below the national average. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the workforce in the next few years, there are 66 young people who will join the labor market.

Investment and economy

Investment activity in Pazardzhik district was not particularly strong in 2019. The number of enterprises remained low – 45 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 61 per 1,000 persons. FTA acquisition expenditures in the same year marked a symbolic increase to 2,256 BGN/person, against the national figure of 3,155 BGN/person. There was a drop in FDI stock in 2019 (by 6%) and its relative amount fell back to under 2,000 EUR/person.

In spite of these processes, production value in Pazardzhik district rose faster than the national average, though remaining relatively low – 16,500 BGN/person, against 28,000 BGN/person in the country.

As regards utilization of EU funding, Pazardzhik district is also lagging behind, in spite of the relatively high rate of increase compared to the previous year. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,429 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 2,217 BGN/person. Within the district, the municipality with the highest rate of utilization was that of Panagyurishte.

Infrastructure

Pazardzhik is the district with the highest rating in terms of infrastructural development. In 2020, the density of its railroad network again remained higher than the national average. The road network density and the share of motorways and first-class roads were lower than the respective national average figures but road surface quality remained relatively high.

The population's access to the internet has improved rapidly and in 2019 it reached 81.7%, exceeding the average of 78.9% nationwide.

Pazardzhik district is the leader in installed RES capacity – 4.2 kW/person, compared to 0.6 kW/person in the country.

Local taxes

The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Pazardzhik district again remained relatively low in 2021. Out of the five monitored taxes, the only exception was the tax rate on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, which was higher, albeit slightly, than the national average. Considerably lower than the average ones in the country were the local rates on non-residential property of legal entities, motor vehicles, taxi transportation and retail trade.

Administration

Cadastral map coverage has been rising fast and in 2019 it exceeded the national average, with 93.3% of the district's territory already included, compared to 91.4% in the country. The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services rose considerably in 2021, though still remaining lower than in the country on average. The performance of the district's e-government was rated at 3.12 p. out of 4 p., versus the national average of 3.40 p., and the provision of one-stop shop services – at 3.01 p. out of 4 p, compared to 3.34 p. nationally. The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration went up to 70.4% in 2021, but for the second year in a row it remained below the national average (73.2%). Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipalities of Septemvri and Panagyurishte, each with over 75%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2020, the natural population growth rate dropped sharply to -10.7% and thus fell below the national figure of -9.5% . At the same time, however, and similar to most other districts, Pazardzhik managed to attract new residents and for the first time in at least two decades the net migration figure increased to the positive value of 4.8% .

Age dependency ratios continue to worsen but remain more favorable than in the country on average. In 2020, the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 139.3%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 it was 33.0%, against 34.1% nationally.

The proportion of urban population in Pazardzhik district remains relatively low – 62.6%, versus the national average of 72.9%. Nevertheless, the average density of the population living in urban settlements is relatively high – 2,074 persons/sq. km, against 1,506 persons/sq. km on average nationwide.

Education

Pazardzhik is among the districts with the worst performance in education, where only Sliven has shown poorer results. In 2020, the rate of enrolment in 5th–8th grade dropped sharply to 79.8%, against the national average of 86.5%, and was among the lowest in the country. Excessively high were also the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education. The relative number of teachers has continued to increase and in 2020 it reached 96 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to the national average of 87 teachers per 1,000 students.

The figures for the average results of the district's students registered a slight decline in 2021 and again remained below the respective national averages. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 30.9 points, versus 37.9 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.03 in the district, compared to 4.21 nationally. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) dropped by 1 p.p. to 12%, but remained considerably above the average of 7% nationwide.

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

Healthcare

The share of people with health insurance in Pazardzhik district again remained low in 2020 – 85.1%, against 88.7% in the country. Access to GPs in the district is higher than the national average but there is a pronounced shortage of specialist physicians. The provision of beds in the local general hospitals is traditionally higher than average and in 2020 there were 6.34 beds per 1,000 persons, versus the national average of 5.52 beds per 1,000 persons.

Hospitalization figures are extremely low – 87/1,000 persons, versus 138/1,000 persons nationally. This leads to the assumption

that a significant share of the population seeks medical services outside the district, for instance in Plovdiv or in the capital.

Infant mortality in the district recorded a considerable decrease but in 2020 it remained above the national average.

Public order and security

The workloads of the local criminal judges are close to the national average, but delivery of justice is relatively faster. In 2020, one local judge heard an average of 8.4 cases a month, compared to 8.6 cases nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months rose to 93%, against the national average of 90%, and pending cases went up to reach 10%, versus 11% in the country.

The number of crimes in the district is relatively low, and detection rates are close to the national average. In 2020, the registered crimes against the person and property dropped to around 7.3 per 1,000 persons, versus 9.9 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate dropped by almost 10 p.p. to 52.4%, compared to the national figure of 52.1%.

Environment

In 2019, carbon dioxide emissions in the district of Pazardzhik remained lower than the average ones in the country. Although in districts with a relatively high share of rural population connectivity to public sewerage systems is usually limited, in Pazardzhik district such access is close to the country's average – 72.7% compared to 76.4% nationally. However, connectivity to wastewater treatment plants lags significantly behind, with 44.1% versus 64.6% nationally.

The household waste generated in the district remains relatively small – in 2018 it was 339 kg/person, compared to 409 kg/person in the country. At the same time, however, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling also remained extremely limited – 13%, versus 71% nationally.

Culture

Cultural life in Pazardzhik district is not particularly active. In 2020, the pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on visits to public places left their impact on Pazardzhik district as well. The number of cinema visits dropped by 77% to 43 per 1,000 persons, which is far below the national average of 190 per 1,000 persons. Library visits fell by 40%, versus 30% in the country, and their rate of 193 per 1,000 persons was considerably below the national average of 480 per 1,000 persons. Only museum visits managed to remain at levels above the country's average, although they also fell – by nearly 60% (or the general rate of decrease in 2020) to 361 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Key indicators for the district of Pazardzhik

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,213	9,965	n.a.	17,170
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,592	4,180	n.a.	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,513	11,675	n.a.	15,209
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	41.4	37.0	n.a.	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	63.8	69.1	67.4	68.5
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	4.7	5.1	5.1	5.2
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	23.2	22.8	24.2	16.9
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	17.8	17.5	15.6	29.2
Production value (BGN/person)	14,754	16,513	n.a.	28,027
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	2,237	2,256	n.a.	3,155
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	2,020	1,890	n.a.	3,655
Share of households with Internet (%)	67.8	68.3	81.7	78.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	41.1	44.4	n.a.	41.4
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	16.2	16.2	16.9	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	68.0	65.4	70.4	73.2

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–5.6	–6.7	–10.7	–9.5
Net migration rate (‰)	–4.1	–3.9	4.8	4.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.95	4.07	4.03	4.21
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.4	31.3	30.9	37.9
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	82.5	82.4	79.8	86.5
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	92	92	96	87
Share of population with health insurance (%)	84.7	85.8	85.1	88.7
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,667	1,631	1,669	1,727
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	9.1	8.8	7.3	9.9
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	10.8	10.4	8.4	8.6
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	72.3	72.7	n.a.	76.4
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	339	n.a.	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	13.4	n.a.	n.a.	70.9
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	0	190	43	190
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	821	864	361	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.