Pernik District

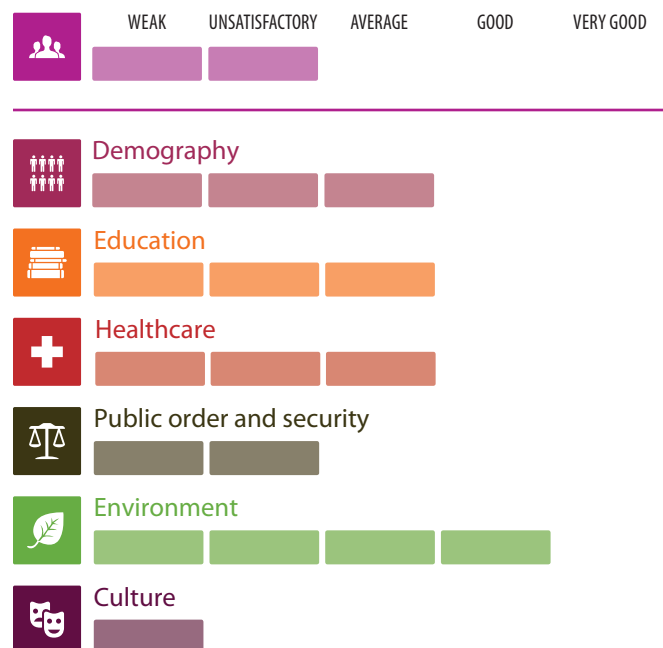|	
▸ Population (2020)	119,808
▸ Territory (sq. km)	2,394.2
▸ Number of settlements	171
▸ Share of urban population (%)	77.9

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The relatively high incomes in Pernik district are the main prerequisite for the relatively low poverty levels of its population. The workforce has a high proportion of people with secondary education. Population ageing remains a major challenge for the local labor market. Investment activity in the district is relatively weak. Utilization of European funds is growing, but the district still ranks among the last in the country in this category. The share of highways and first-class roads remains low, but road quality is good. The average rates of the local taxes levied by the local municipalities remained relatively low in 2021. Cadastral map coverage in the district has been growing rapidly. The self-assessment rating on the transparency of the district's municipalities is among the lowest in the country. Age dependency continues to worsen and is among the highest in the country. The results in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature, which in the district are traditionally lower than the national average, went even further down in 2021. Pernik has the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals. Hospitalization numbers are also among the lowest. The workloads of criminal judges in Pernik district are relatively low, but this does not affect the speed of delivery of justice. The relatively high share of urban population entails a large share of population living in settlements with public sewerage. Pernik is the district with the least active cultural life in the country, which is probably related to its proximity to the capital.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	WEAK	UNSATISFACTORY	AVERAGE	GOOD	VERY GOOD

Income and living standard

Labor market

Investment and economy

Infrastructure

Local taxes

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	WEAK	UNSATISFACTORY	AVERAGE	GOOD	VERY GOOD

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Public order and security

Environment

Culture

⬚ ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ▪▪▪▪

📲 Income and living standard ▪▪▪▪▪

In 2019, GDP per capita in Pernik district registered very minor growth to 9,400 BGN, against the country's average of 17,200 BGN. At the same time, salaries and incomes have been rising faster. The average gross annual salary of employed people was 11,400 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN on average nationwide, while the income per household member remained among the highest in the country, reaching slightly above 7,000 BGN, against 6,000 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, this has a positive effect on the data for household income but not on salary data.

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

👤 Labor market ▪▪▪▪

In 2020, economic activity registered a slight decrease to 78.1%, against the national average of 73.7%. This decrease was accompanied by a parallel shrinkage in employment and a rise in unemployment. The employment rate was 69.8%, compared to the average of 68.5% in the country. The unemployment rate reached 8.3%, versus the national average of 5.2%.

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 working-age 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 lower.

A major challenge facing the local labor market continues to be the problem of population ageing. The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 49.5%, against 67.1% nationwide. Thus, for every 100 adults who are about to leave the workforce in the next few years, there are fewer than 50 young people who will join the labor market.

⬚ Investment and economy ▪

Investment activity in Pernik district is relatively weak. The proximity to the capital has an impact on both the number of enterprises and the investment attracted into the district. In 2019, there were 46 enterprises per 1,000 people, compared to 61 per 1,000 people in the country. FTA acquisition expenditures went up but because of their low base, they remained among the lowest in the country. In 2019 they amounted to 1,222 BGN/person, against 3,155 BGN countrywide. FDI stock registered a 5% drop and went down to 1,561 EUR/person, compared to 3,655 EUR/person nationally. The same decrease marked production value in Pernik district, which was 16,700 BGN/person, compared to an average of 28,000 BGN/person nationwide.

Utilization of European funds has been on the increase but its figures still rank Pernik among the worst performing districts in the country. By 15 June 2021, payments made to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,194 BGN/person on average, compared to 2,217 BGN/person on a national level.

🚍 Infrastructure ▪▪▪▪

In 2020, the density of the road and railroad networks in Pernik district again remained considerably higher than the national average. The share of highways and first-class roads was lower – 15.7%, against 18.5% 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 41.4%.

The relative share of households with internet access registered a considerable increase and at 83.4% it exceeded the average of 78.9% nationally. The share of households connected to a gas supply in 2020 was low – 0.7%, against the national average of 3.1%. The installed RES capacity is a bare 0.07 kW/person, compared to 0.60 kW/person countrywide.

% Local taxes ▪▪▪▪▪

The average level of the local taxes in the municipalities of Pernik district again remained relatively low in 2021, and the average rates of all five monitored taxes were lower in the district than in the country. The margin was particularly wide as regards the tax rate on motor vehicles and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property.

Within the district, the lowest taxes were levied by the municipalities of Breznik and Tran.

💼 Administration ▪▪

Cadastral map coverage in Pernik district again continued to increase rapidly in 2019 and for the second year in a row it exceeded the national average.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services improved in 2021, though with ratings below the country's average.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration in Pernik's municipalities decreased further and in 2021 it was the second lowest in the country, followed only by the municipalities in Kardzhali district – 59.6%, compared to the national average of 73.2%. Within the district, the highest rating was achieved by the municipality of Breznik, and the lowest one was given to Zemen municipality.

⚌ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ▬▬

♨ Demography ▬▬▬

The natural population growth rate in Pernik district has continued to decline. 2020 was a year of considerable decrease (to –16.3‰), which distanced it even further from the national average of –9.5‰. At the same time, however, the district attracted a large number of new residents. While this was a trend typical of almost the whole country in 2020, it was especially pronounced in the districts around the capital (Sofia district and Pernik). Thus, for the first time in the last decade, the net migration rate in the district reached a positive value (26.6‰).

Age dependency in the district has continued to worsen and in 2020 it was once again among the highest in the country. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 was 204.0%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to that aged 15–64 it was 40.7%, against 34.1% nationally.

The share of urban population is relatively high – 77.9%, versus 72.9% countrywide, but its density is low – 922 people/sq. km, compared to 1,506 people/sq. km in the country.

▤ Education ▬▬▬

The rate of enrolment in 5th–8th grade fell to 89.6% in 2020 but continued to be higher than the national average of 86.5%. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school also shrank and remained lower than the national averages. In 2019, repeaters made up 0.42% of the students, against 0.55% in the country. The share of dropouts was 1.5%, compared to 2.5% nationally.

The relative number of teachers remains relatively high – 92 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 87 teachers per 1,000 students nationally.

The average score in the national external examination in mathematics after 7th grade rose considerably – by over 3 p. – though it still remained relatively low at 32.0 p., compared to 37.9 p. nationally. The average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature came down to below the national average (4.06 versus 4.21 respectively) – a situation traditional for the district. At the same time, however, the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) decreased and for the third consecutive year it fell below the national average – 6.6% in the district, against 7.0 in the country.

The small number of university students in the district can be explained with Pernik's proximity to the capital.

✚ Healthcare ▬▬▬

The share of people with health insurance in Pernik district has decreased but in 2020 it remained above the national average – 89.6%, against 88.7% in the country. The district is relatively well provided with GPs, but in 2020 there were relatively few specialist physicians.

Pernik is the district with the lowest number of beds in local general hospitals – 2.45 beds per 1,000 persons, which is half the average number in the country (5.52 beds per 1,000 per-

sons). The relative number of hospitalizations is also among the lowest in the country – 80 per 1,000 persons, compared to 138 per 1,000 persons nationwide. These figures suggest that Pernik's population seeks medical care outside the district, most probably in the capital with its larger hospitals.

The infant mortality rate in the district has fallen considerably and is lower than the national average.

⚖ Public order and security ▬▬

The workloads of the local criminal judges in Pernik district were relatively small in 2020 but this had little effect on the speedy delivery of justice. One local judge heard an average of 5.8 criminal cases per month, compared to 8.6 cases per month per judge in the country. The share of cases completed within 3 months dropped to 90%, or equal to the national figure, while pending cases doubled in number to 13.3%, against 11.1% in the country.

The relative number of registered crimes in Pernik district is close to, but slightly higher than the national average, while the detection rate is practically equal to it. Registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 10.9 per 1,000 persons, versus an average of 9.9 crimes per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate was 52.7%, against 52.1% for the country on average.

🍃 Environment ▬▬▬▬

The relatively high share of urban population entails a large share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network – 79.6%, compared to 76.4% in the country in 2019. Connectivity to wastewater treatment plants is also high – 74.5%, against 64.6% countrywide. In 2018 Pernik was once again among the districts with the highest volume of generated household waste – 472 kg/person per annum, compared to 409 kg/person in the country. At the same time, however, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling was also high – 86%, against 71% nationally.

In 2019, carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere in Pernik district were 108 t/sq. km.

🎭 Culture ▬

Pernik is among the districts with the least active cultural life, which is probably due to its proximity to the capital. Cinema visits amount to 19 per 1,000 persons, while in the country they are ten times that figure – 190 per 1,000 persons. In 2020, the pandemic and the restrictions on visits to cultural events in the whole country left their impact on Pernik district as well. The number of museum visits dropped by 51% to 156 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationally. Library visits shrank by 42%, versus 30% in the country, and numbered 135 per 1,000 persons against the national average of 480 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Pernik

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,153	9,356	n.a.	**17,170**
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	6,269	7,049	n.a.	**6,013**
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,321	11,434	n.a.	**15,209**
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	11.9	14.2	n.a.	**22.6**
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.7	70.9	69.8	**68.5**
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	7.5	8.2	8.3	**5.2**
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	12.4	13.4	11.3	**16.9**
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	23.8	21.4	25.1	**29.2**
Production value (BGN/person)	17,525	16,730	n.a.	**28,027**
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,109	1,222	n.a.	**3,155**
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,647	1,561	n.a.	**3,655**
Share of households with Internet (%)	67.7	68.8	83.4	**78.9**
Share of roads in good condition (%)	46.7	46.9	n.a.	**41.4**
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	24.0	23.8	23.9	**17.9**
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	63.0	61.8	59.6	**73.2**

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−11.9	−13.1	−16.3	**−9.5**
Net migration rate (‰)	−0.7	−0.9	26.6	**4.4**
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.04	4.13	4.06	**4.21**
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.6	28.7	32.0	**37.9**
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	90.7	91.6	89.6	**86.5**
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	90	93	92	**87**
Share of population with health insurance (%)	89.7	91.0	89.6	**88.7**
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,502	1,490	1,536	**1,727**
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	13.7	11.8	10.9	**9.9**
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	4.9	6.3	5.8	**8.6**
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	79.4	79.6	n.a.	**76.4**
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	472	n.a.	n.a.	**409**
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	86.3	n.a.	n.a.	**70.9**
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	0	0	19	**190**
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	317	318	156	**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.