Silistra District

▶ Population (2020)	107,435
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,846.3
▶ Number of settlements	118
▶ Share of urban population (%)	43.8

SILISTRA
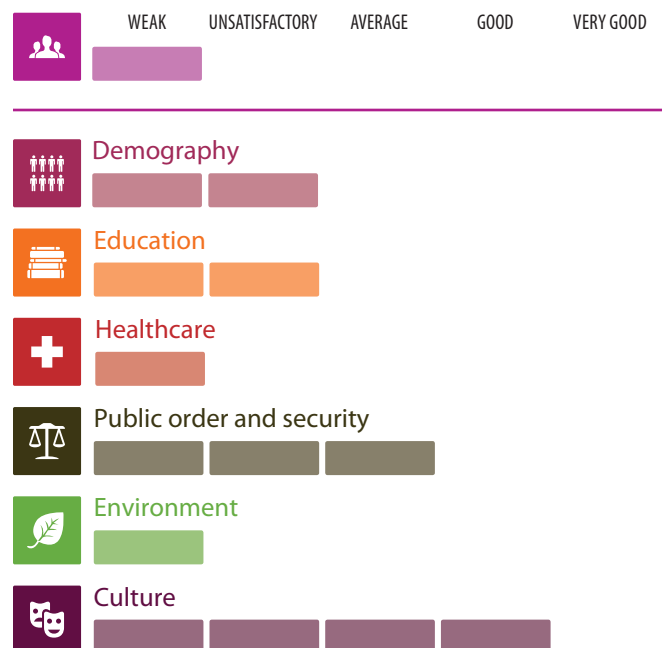TUTRAKAN SITOVO Kaynardzha
GLAVINITSA ALFATAR
DULOVO

Silistra is the district with the lowest GDP per capita in Bulgaria and despite this, it has been growing relatively slowly. At the same time, the share of population living with material deprivation remains relatively low. The development of the local labor market remains unsatisfactory. The employment rate is the second lowest in the country. Silistra is among the districts with the weakest investment activity. FDI per capita remains the lowest in the country. Household access to the Internet is increasing and is relatively high. Typically for the economically less developed districts, the average level of local taxes in Silistra district is low. The average rating for the transparency of the local government also remains lower.

The natural population growth in Silistra district continues to deteriorate. In 2021, the average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature in the district was the lowest in the country. Healthcare in Silistra district suffers from a shortage of both doctors and hospital beds. The workloads of criminal judges have increased in recent years and are higher than the national average, but delivery of justice is relatively fast. Silistra is among the districts with the worst performance as regards the environment indicators. One of the main reasons for this is the extremely low share of waste submitted for treatment and recycling. The pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on cultural events in 2020 affected cultural life in the district.

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
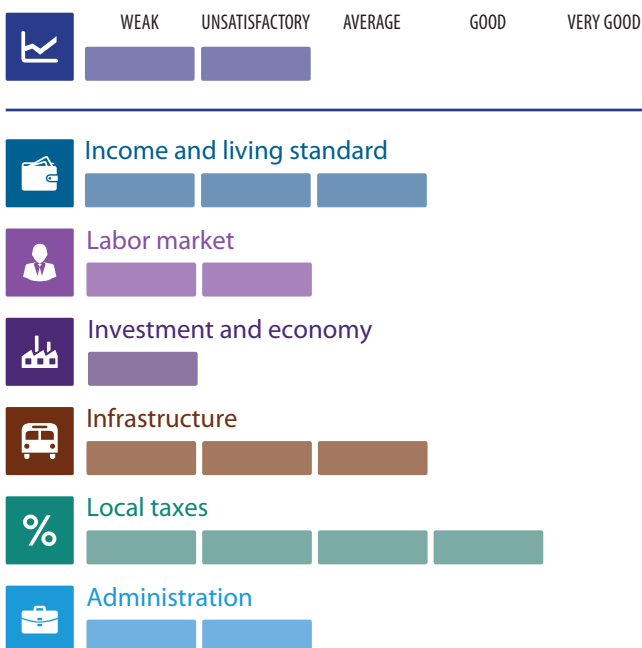
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

Silistra is the district with the lowest GDP per capita and despite this, it has been growing at a relatively slower pace to reach 7,700 BGN/person in 2019, compared to the national average of 17,200 BGN/person. Salaries in the district have remained relatively low as well. The average gross annual salary in 2019 amounted to 10,600 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN in the country. Household incomes have recorded a more significant increase: they reached 5,700 BGN/household member, compared to 6,000 BGN in the country.

The relative share of the population living with material deprivation in Silistra district remained relatively small in 2019 – 15.5%, compared to 19.9% 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 2020, the development of the local labor market again remained unsatisfactory. Economic activity went down and this was accompanied by a parallel drop in employment and a rise in unemployment. The rate of economic activity reached 69.7%, compared to 73.7% in the country. The rate of employment shrank by over 4 p.p. to 54.1% and was the second lowest in the country (after Montana district), far below the national average of 68.5%. The unemployment rate went up by over 2 p.p. and reached 15.6% – another figure far more unfavorable than the national average of 5.2%.

The labor market in Silistra district also suffers from the extremely poor educational structure of the workforce. The share of the working age population with university degrees constitutes 20.8% of the workforce, compared to 29.2% countrywide, and of those with primary or lower education – 30.7%, versus 16.9% nationwide.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 has been on the rise, but it still remains below the national average – 64.9% in Silistra, against 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 are 65 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and economy

Silistra is among the districts with the lowest investment activity in the country (alongside Sliven district). Accumulated FDI per capita remains the lowest in the whole country and by the end of 2019 it even shrank to 99 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 3,655 EUR/person. FTA expenditures have also registered a decrease to 1,523 BGN/person, compared to 3,155 BGN/person nationally.

Poor economic activity in Silistra district is also manifested in the relatively small number of enterprises in the region. In 2019 they were 37 per 1,000 persons, compared to 61 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

The above tendencies are also reflected in the weak growth of production value in the district, which remained the second lowest in the country (after Vidin) in 2019. It was three times lower than the country's average – 9,800 BGN/person, against 28,000 BGN/person respectively.

The municipalities in Silistra district are also lagging behind as regards the utilization of European funds. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,688 BGN/person, compared to 2,217 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Tutrakan.

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 18.5% 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 most northern Bulgarian districts railroad density is typically lower, and in Silistra district it is 2.5 km/100 sq. km of territory, compared to 3.6 km/100 sq. km in the country.

 Access to internet by the households in the district has been rising to reach a relatively high percentage – 80.7%, compared to the average of 78.9% nationwide. The share of households connected to a gas supply is relatively low – 0.2%, versus 3.1% in the country.

Local taxes

As is typical of the less economically developed districts, the average level of local taxes in Silistra is relatively low. In 2021, all monitored local taxes were lower than the respective national averages. The biggest margin occurred in the rates for retail trade and taxi transportation. The retail trade patent tax levied by the municipalities in Silistra district was 8.75 BGN/sq. m on average, compared to 12.99 BGN/sq. m nationally. The annual patent tax on taxi transportation was 313 BGN, versus 453 BGN in the country.

Administration

Along with most other districts in the country, Silistra made quick progress with cadastral map coverage which in 2019 already included 97.3% of the district's territory, compared to 91.4% nationally.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services decreased in 2021 and fell below the national average. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration in Silistra district also retained its lower values.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth rate in Silistra district has continued to deteriorate and in 2020 it registered the considerable decrease to –14.0‰, compared to –9.5‰ in the country. Net migration increased in almost the whole country and for the first time in years its rate reached a positive value in a great number of districts. Silistra district was no exception but its net migration rate was relatively low – 3.2‰.

These are processes that affect the age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 179.9%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 – 40.0%, versus the national average of 34.1%.

Silistra is among the districts with the smallest share of urban population, after Kardzhali district. In 2020, 43.8% of the population were living in urban settlements, against 72.9% countrywide. Population density is twice as low as the national average – 782 persons/sq. km, against 1,506 persons/sq. km countrywide.

Education

The district's performance as regards the indicators for education is unsatisfactory. The rate of enrolment in 5th to 8th grade was considerably below the national average in 2019 – 80.2% in Silistra district, compared to 86.5% nationally. The share of repeaters was still comparatively small, but that of dropouts from primary and secondary school remained relatively high – 4.5% in 2019, versus 2.5% countrywide.

The number of teachers continued to rise in 2020 and reached proportions considerably higher than the national average. There are now 97 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 87 teachers per 1,000 students nationwide.

The average score received by the students in Silistra district in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade went up in 2021 but remained relatively low – 30.3 points, versus 37.9 points nationally. At the same time, the average grade in the 2021 State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was the lowest in the country, alongside Yambol and Montana – 3.94 in Silistra district, compared to the national average of 4.21. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) went down but it still remained above the national average – 11% in the district, compared to 7% in the country.

The only provider of higher education in the district is a branch of Ruse University, with a very small number of university students – just 2 students/1,000 persons, compared to 32 students/1,000 persons nationally.

Healthcare

In 2020, the healthcare system in Silistra district continued to suffer from a shortage of both doctors and beds in the local general hospitals. One local GP was caring for 2,193 persons on average, compared to 1,727 persons per doctor in the country. The shortage of specialist physicians is also acute.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals has continued to increase in the past few years, but their relative proportion remains relatively low – 4.5 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.5 beds per 1,000 persons in the country.

The relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is 180 per 1,000 persons compared to 138 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The infant mortality rate has doubled and exceeds the national average.

Public order and security

The workloads of the local criminal judges in Silistra district have increased in recent years and are higher than the national average, but delivery of justice is relatively fast. In 2020, one judge heard an average of 9.9 criminal cases a month, compared to 8.6 cases per judge nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 94%, versus the average of 90% nationwide, and the share of pending cases was 9%, while in the country it was 11% on average.

The crime rate has been going up but remains relatively low. In 2020, crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 8.1 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 9.9 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate stood at 60.6%, compared to the national average of 52.1%.

Environment

In 2019, Silistra was also among the worst performing districts as regards the environmental indicators (alongside Razgrad). One major reason for the low figures was the extremely small volumes 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.

Due to the low level of urbanization, a relatively small share of the population lives in settlements with a public sewerage network – 51.5%, compared to 76.4% in the country. Similarly low is the share of the population whose sewerage is connected to wastewater treatment plants – 44.4% versus 64.6% nationally.

Considerably lower than elsewhere in the country are the carbon dioxide emissions in the district.

Culture

The pandemic in 2020 and the restrictions on cultural events affected cultural life in Silistra district no less than in the country as a whole. The number of cinema visits dropped by nearly 80% to 25 per 1,000 persons, compared to 190 per 1,000 persons nationally. Museum visits decreased by half to 162 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Only visits to the local libraries were higher than the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Silistra

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,029	7,687	n.a.	**17,170**
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,201	5,729	n.a.	**6,013**
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,434	10,572	n.a.	**15,209**
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	19.8	24.0	n.a.	**22.6**
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	60.2	58.2	54.1	**68.5**
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	11.1	13.3	15.6	**5.2**
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	32.7	30.4	30.7	**16.9**
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	16.9	19.5	20.8	**29.2**
Production value (BGN/person)	8,927	9,832	n.a.	**28,027**
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,589	1,523	n.a.	**3,155**
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	257	(99)	n.a.	**3,655**
Share of households with Internet (%)	69.4	76.6	80.7	**78.9**
Share of roads in good condition (%)	62.1	60.2	n.a.	**41.4**
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	17.8	17.8	17.8	**17.9**
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	63.0	63.0	66.4	**73.2**

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−10.5	−9.5	−14.0	**−9.5**
Net migration rate (‰)	−1.2	−2.1	3.2	**4.4**
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.77	3.86	3.94	**4.21**
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	26.2	26.7	30.3	**37.9**
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	80.3	79.8	80.2	**86.5**
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	85	95	97	**87**
Share of population with health insurance (%)	87.2	88.7	87.6	**88.7**
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,998	2,077	2,193	**1,727**
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	7.1	7.8	8.1	**9.9**
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.9	8.1	9.9	**8.6**
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	51.5	51.5	n.a.	**76.4**
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	400	n.a.	n.a.	**409**
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	4.0	n.a.	n.a.	**70.9**
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	0	119	25	**190**
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	239	309	162	**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.