

# Varna District

▶ Population (2020)	470,005
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,819.5
▶ Number of settlements	159
▶ Share of urban population (%)	83.2



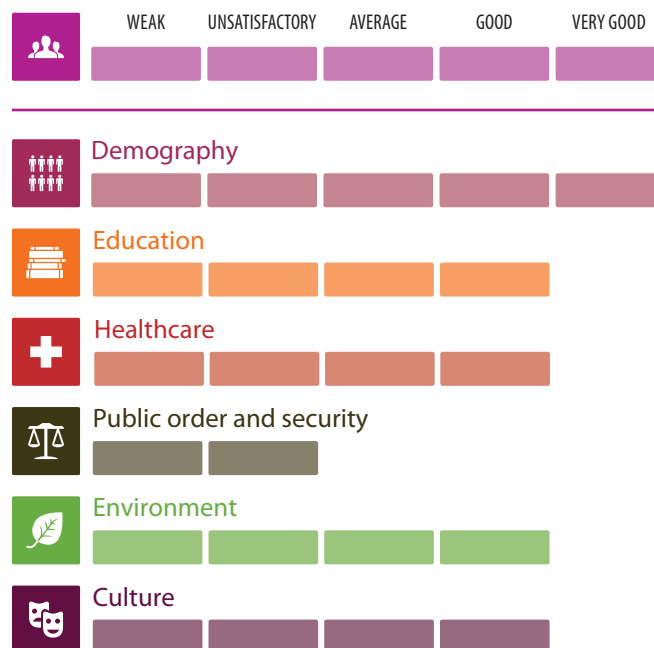
**G**DP per capita in Varna district has continued to grow, and in 2019 it overtook that of Stara Zagora and returned Varna to the third place in the country. The same has happened with wages. Trends in the labor market in 2020 placed the district in a relatively favorable position. In 2019 investment and business activity again remained relatively high, although some negative trends were also in evidence. The infrastructure remained well developed in 2020. The average levels of the monitored local taxes remained relatively high in 2021. The 2021 self-assessment rates of the local administrations on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services showed a considerable increase.

In 2020 Varna retained its place among the districts with very good demographic development. With a significant share of the population living in urban areas, a large proportion of the households have access to public sewerage networks. Varna is among the districts with the best results in the field of education. The performance of students in 2021 was very good. Compared to the national average values, Varna district has more doctors but fewer hospital beds. Crime rates remain quite high, and detection rates among the lowest in the country. The reduction in the number of visits to cultural events in 2020 was more noticeable than in the country on average.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

GDP in Varna district has continued to grow and with 16,300 BGN per capita in 2019, it overtook Stara Zagora and returned Varna to the third place in the country, preceded only by Sofia (capital city) and Sofia district. The same has happened with the average annual gross salary of people in employment. In 2019, it reached 14,300 BGN. The average income per household member has also continued to grow and in 2019 it exceeded the national average, though Varna ranked eighth among the country's districts. This explains the relatively high share of the population living with material deprivation – 26.7%, compared to 19.9% in the country. At the same time, however, the share of the population living below the national poverty line remains below the national average.

### Labor market

Trends in the labor market in 2020 placed Varna district in a relatively favorable position. The economic activity rate decreased slightly and remained below the national average. At the same time, however, employment rates went up and unemployment rates fell. The employment rate reached 70.2%, already exceeding the national average of 68.5%, while the unemployment rate fell to 2.2%, remaining one of the lowest in the country with its average of 5.2%.

The share of the workforce with secondary education in the district is relatively high. The share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 has continued to decrease and for the second consecutive year is below the national average – 24.8%, compared to 29.2% in the country. The share of the population with primary education or less has also decreased, reaching 14.4%, versus 16.9% nationwide.

The relatively good demographic trends in Varna district also indicate a favorable development in the labor market. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 is 77.5% (compared to the national average of 67.1%), and is the third highest in the country after Sliven and the capital. Moreover, it has been growing rapidly and steadily since 2013, when Varna district ranked ninth in the country.

### Investment and economy

Investment and business activity in the district again remained relatively high in 2019, although some slightly negative trends were also noticeable. The number of non-financial enterprises reached 71 per 1,000 persons, compared to 61 per 1,000 persons in the country. At the same time, and contrary to the general trends in the country, domestic and foreign investments lagged slightly behind. The amount of FTA acquisition expenditures decreased by 1% (against a growth of 15% in the country) to 2,700 BGN/person, versus 3,200 BGN in the coun-

try. FDI decreased by 6% to just over 3,700 EUR/person, against 3% growth in the country and just under 3,700 EUR/person. The growth of production value in the district has also slowed down – 5%, compared to 8% in the country, and amounts to 23,300 BGN/person (compared to 28,000 BGN/person in the country).

Utilization of European funds has been growing but nevertheless remains relatively low. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district under EU operational programs amounted to 1,500 BGN/person, compared to 2,200 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the largest payments were made to the Byala municipality, while the lowest rates of utilization were registered in the Vetrino and Dalgopol municipalities.

### Infrastructure

The infrastructure of Varna district remained relatively well developed in 2020. The density of the road and railway networks was high. The share of highways and first-class roads was also high – 27.4%, compared to 18.5% in the country. The quality of the road surface was close to, but above the national average level. 43.5% of the roads in the district were in good condition, versus 41.4% countrywide.

The relative share of households with internet access increased to 77.5%, but remained slightly below the national average. The share of households connected to a gas supply and installed RES capacity was relatively low

### Local taxes

Within Varna district, the average level of the monitored local taxes levied by the municipalities remained relatively high in 2021. An exception is the annual patent tax for taxi transportation for 2021, which was reduced from 690 BGN to 300 BGN in the municipality of Varna city in response to the crisis and the pandemic that had started the previous year. This led to a reduction in the total amount of tax in the district, which shifted it below the national average.

The taxes on retail trade and on immovable non-residential property of legal entities remained among the highest in the country.

### Administration

In 2021, the self-assessment ratings of Varna district municipalities on the performance of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services rose considerably and exceeded the national averages. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration also rose, with the highest ones recorded by the municipalities of Beloslav and Devnya.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

In 2020, Varna remained among the districts with very good demographic development, ranking second after the capital city. The natural population growth rate fell to  $-5.7\%$ , but remained among the highest in the country and far above the national average of  $-9.5\%$ . Varna district continues to attract population and at  $-6.3\%$ , the net migration rate has reached its highest value in a decade.

This also reflects on the age dependency ratios, which in Varna district remained relatively favorable. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 127.6%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 29.7%, versus 34.1% in the country.

Varna is among the districts with the highest share of urban population – 83.2%, compared to 72.9% in the country, although its density is close to the average values – 1,800 persons/sq. km, against the national average of 1,500 persons/sq. km.

### Education

Varna is among the districts with the best performance in the field of education, coming third in the country after only Sofia (capital city) and Smolyan. In 2020, the enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade remained relatively low – 83.6%, compared to 86.5% countrywide; however, the percentage of school year repeaters and that of dropouts from primary and secondary education were also low.

In 2021, the performance of students in Varna district was very good. The district's average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade reached 44.4 points, compared to 37.9 points in the country. For its part, the average result in the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.39, versus 4.21 nationally. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades also remained low – 5%, against 7% nationwide.

In line with the nationwide trend over the past few years, the number of university students as a share of the total population has been on the decline. Nevertheless, it remains considerably above the national average – in 2020 it was 50 per 1,000 persons, against 32 per 1,000 persons in the country.

### Healthcare

In 2020, the share of people with health insurance in Varna district remained among the lowest in the country – 83.9%, compared to 88.7% nationwide. Compared to the national averages, the district has more doctors but it suffers from a shortage of hospital beds. The number of hospital beds was 4.37 per 1,000 persons, against 5.52 per 1,000 persons countrywide. Nevertheless, the number of patients treated in the local general hospitals in 2020 came close to the national average – 133 per 1,000 persons, versus 138 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

The infant mortality rate has been falling and remains relatively low.

### Public order and security

Court workloads in Varna district remain relatively low. In 2020 there were 6.9 cases a month per one local judge, compared to 8.6 per one judge nationally. The smaller workloads affect the speedy delivery of justice. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 93%, compared to 90% as the national average, and that of pending cases – 7%, compared to 11% nationally.

The crime rate in the district has been falling but remains one of the highest in the country. Detection rates have been going up but in 2020 they again remained among the lowest in the country. Registered crimes against the person and property in Varna district amounted to 12.5 per 1,000 persons, with 9.9 per 1,000 persons as the national figure. The detection rate of 40.1% ranked below the national average of 52.1% and was the second lowest in the country after the capital (32.1%).

### Environment

With Varna district's large share of urban population, a large part of it lives in settlements with public sewerage networks – 86.5%, versus 76.4% countrywide, and in areas with sewerage systems connected to waste water treatment plants – 86.5%, against the national average of 64.6% for 2019.

In 2018 Varna remained among the districts with the greatest amounts of waste generated by the households – an annual of 498 kg/person, against 409 kg/person on a national scale. At the same time, however, a relatively large share of this waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 78%, against 71% as the national average.

### Culture

The pandemic and the measures put in place in 2020 in order to contain the spread of the disease strongly affected the cultural life in the country and significantly restricted attendance to various cultural events. The district of Varna was no exception; what is more, the negative impact there was even more tangible than elsewhere in the country. The number of cinema visits throughout 2020 dropped by 73%, compared to 71% nationwide, though it remained considerably above average – 306 per 1,000 persons. Museum visits remained relatively low in number, with 180 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide, but their drop was also larger – by 72%, against 58% in the country. A similar trend was in evidence as regards visits to the local libraries, which shrank by 39%, versus 30% in the country, and brought the numbers down to 223 per 1,000 persons, compared to 480 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

## Key indicators for the district of Varna

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	15,479	16,340	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,407	5,883	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	13,008	14,282	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	18.5	18.4	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.3	69.6	70.2	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	4.4	3.0	2.2	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.1	18.8	14.4	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	29.5	25.3	24.8	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	22,164	23,275	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	2,761	2,732	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	3,968	3,721	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	76.6	73.5	77.5	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	42.7	43.5	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	18.8	18.8	18.8	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	73.0	75.3	78.7	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–4.0	–3.6	–5.7	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	2.2	0.7	6.3	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.26	4.34	4.39	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	38.6	43.3	44.4	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	84.2	84.7	83.6	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	83	87	83	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	83.5	84.0	83.9	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,655	1,655	1,685	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	14.3	14.1	12.5	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.3	6.7	6.9	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	86.4	86.5	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	498	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	78.1	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	1,043	1,132	306	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	609	647	180	<b>322</b>

\* 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.