

Vratsa District

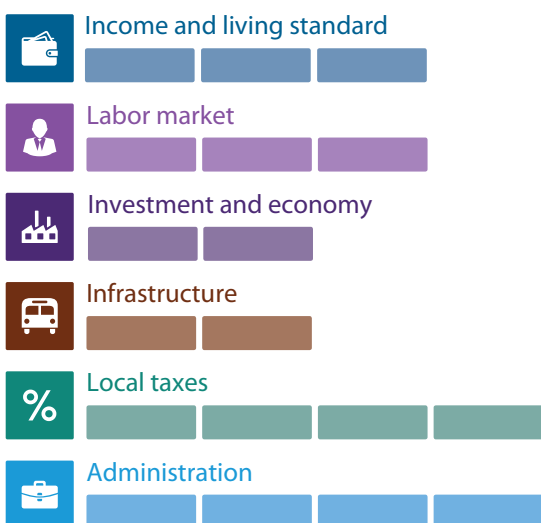
▶ Population (2020)	158,554
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,619.8
▶ Number of settlements	123
▶ Share of urban population (%)	58.8



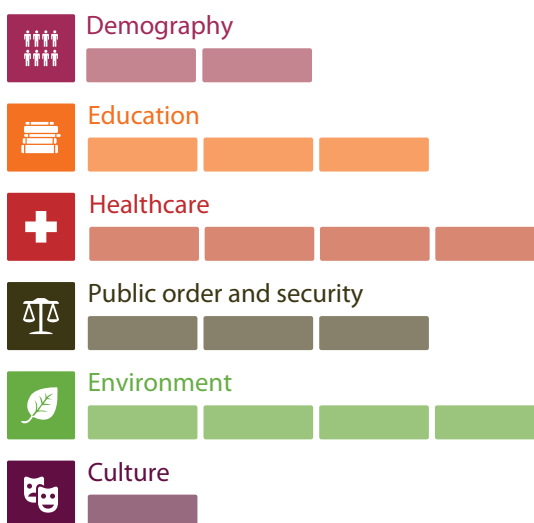
Vratsa is one of the two districts in which GDP per capita shrank in 2019. At the same time, however, salaries and incomes continued to grow at a higher than average rate. The labor market indicators place Vratsa district in an unfavorable position. The challenges facing the local labor market continue to be the relatively low-educated workforce and the ageing population. Economic and investment activity is relatively low, but production value continues to grow. The whole district performs poorly in terms of the indicators for infrastructural development. The average level of local taxes in the local municipalities was again relatively low in 2021. The age dependency ratios remain significantly less

favorable than the national averages. The share of urban population remains low. The indicators in the field of primary and secondary education remain relatively good, but the students' results are relatively poor. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of doctors (both GPs and specialist physicians) and hospital beds. The workloads of criminal judges in the district are decreasing and remain relatively low, which affects the speed of delivery of justice. The relatively small share of the population living in cities and its low density may explain the limited share of households in settlements with a public sewerage network. The cultural life in the district is of low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

After a high and stable growth of GDP in the previous few years, in 2019 it decreased by 12% to 13,300 BGN/person, thus falling further behind the national average of 17,200 BGN/person. Vratsa is one of the two districts (along with Stara Zagora) in which GDP per capita has shrunk, against a 10% growth in the country on average. At the same time, however, salaries and incomes in the district continue to grow at a rate faster than the national average, although they remain below the average levels. The gross annual salary of employees has reached 13,900 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN in the country.

Poverty in the district remains relatively high.

Labor market

The labor market indicators for 2020 place Vratsa district in an unfavorable position. Economic activity remained relatively low – 67.4%, compared to 73.7% in the country, and it even shrank slightly compared to the previous year. The employment rate declined, while the unemployment rate rose to almost twice the national average. The employment rate was down to 57.1%, compared to 68.5% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 10.3%, compared to 5.2% in the country.

Among the challenges that keep facing the local labor market are the relatively low level of education of the workforce and population ageing. The number of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 has risen to 22.9%, but their share remains below the national average of 29.2%. At the same time, the number of people with primary or lower education has increased to 22.4%, compared to 16.9% in the country.

The labor market is affected by population ageing as well. The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 in the district is 65.4%, compared to 67.1% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who will have to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 65 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and economy

Economic and investment activity in Vratsa district remained relatively low in 2019. The relative number of non-financial enterprises was 38 per 1,000 persons, against 61 per 1,000 persons as the national average. Typical of FTA expenditure acquisition rates in the district are significant drops and increases. In 2019 they fell by 10% to 1,513 BGN/person, which is half the national figure of 3,155 BGN/person. A shrinkage by 23% was noticeable in the stock of FDI, which were now 7 times lower than the national average – 505 EUR/person in the district, against 3,655 EUR/person in the country.

Despite these decreases, production value in Vratsa district continued to rise at a rate that was even higher than in the

country on average. It amounted to 17,600 BGN/person, against 28,000 BGN/person as the national average.

Vratsa is among the top ranking districts in terms of utilization of EU funding.

Infrastructure

Vratsa district performs badly as regards the indicators for infrastructural development, and together with Vidin and Montana occupies the bottom three places in the country.

The density of the road and railroad networks nearly equals the national averages but road quality remains extremely low. The share of highways and first-class roads is 10%, against 18.5% in the country. In 2019 the share of roads with surfaces in good condition was 28.4%, compared to the national average of 41.4%. It should be noted, however, that compared to the previous two years, road surface quality has improved.

In 2020, the relative share of households with internet access in Vratsa district again remained almost unchanged – 71.5%, against the average of 78.9% nationwide. The share of households connected to gas supply was 1.9%, against 3.1% in the country. Installed RES capacity reached 0.382 kW/person, compared to the national average of 0.603 kW/person.

Local taxes

In 2021, the average rate of the local taxes in the district's municipalities again remained relatively low. The retail trade tax rate in the district was almost half the national average – 6.69 BGN/sq. m, against 12.99 BGN/sq. m nationally. Also lower were the rates for the motor vehicle tax, the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and on taxi transportation.

Of the monitored tax rates, only the average one on non-residential immovable property of legal entities was higher than its average counterpart in the country.

Within the district, relatively lower local taxes are levied by the municipalities of Krivodol, Hairedin and Vratsa, while the higher ones are in Oryahovo, Byala Slatina and Kozloduy.

Administration

Vratsa district registers relatively good results regarding the functioning of its local administration. Cadastral map coverage has been rising fast but is still below the national average. The level of e-government again remained relatively low in 2021, while that of the provision of one-stop shop services remained relatively high. The transparency ratings of the local administration were close to but slightly higher than the national average

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

While within the previous ten years the natural population growth rate in the district had remained at relatively stable, though relatively low levels, in 2020 it fell sharply from around -11‰ to -13.9‰, against -9.5‰ in the country on average. At the same time, the net migration rate rose and for the first time its value was positive, reaching 2.3 ‰, which, however, was not enough to compensate for the rapid ageing of the population. The age dependency ratios remained significantly less favorable than the national average. In 2020, the ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 177.5%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 40.0%, against 34.1% in the country.

The share of urban population remains low – 58.8%, compared to 72.9% in the country, and its density is twice as low as the national average – 756 people/sq. km compared to 1,506 people/sq. km in the country.

Education

The indicators of Vratsa district in the field of primary and secondary education remain relatively good, but the results are relatively low. In 2020 Vratsa again remained among the districts with the highest net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade – 91.8%, compared to 86.5% in the country. The number of teachers was also higher than the national average – 93 per 1,000 students, versus an average of 87 per 1,000 students nationally. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education were lower than the average ones – 0.41%, against 0.55% in the country, and 2.3%, versus 2.5% in the country, respectively.

The students' results in 2021 were relatively poor. The average score in the national external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 30.3 points, compared to 37.9 points nationally. The average score in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was lower than in the previous year, falling to 3.99 versus 4.21 nationally. The number of "fail" (below 3.00) grades increased to 10%, compared to 7% in the country.

Vratsa is not among the leaders in the field of higher education, although it is home to two branches of higher education institutions. The number of students in the district is 7 per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

Healthcare

The share of health-insured persons in Vratsa district is traditionally higher than the national average, but its healthcare suffers from a shortage of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – and of hospital beds. In 2020 the number of beds in the local general hospitals remained almost unchanged, with 4.46 beds per 1,000 persons, while the national average was 5.52 per 1,000 persons.

After a three-year steady decrease, in 2020 the infant mortality rate was down to 3.7‰, against 5.1‰ nationwide. However, the number of people treated in the local general hospitals was high – 154 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 138 per 1,000 persons.

Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in Vratsa district continued to decrease and in 2020 again remained relatively low, which affected the speedy delivery of justice. In 2020, one local judge heard an average of 6.4 cases a month, compared to 8.6 cases per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months decreased but remained high nevertheless – 93%, against the national average of 90%. Vratsa also remains the district with the smallest share of pending cases – 5%, or half that in the country on average.

The registered crimes against the person and property in Vratsa district decreased for the third year in a row but their number again remains among the highest in the country, second only to Montana district – 13 per 1,000 persons, versus 10 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Still, the detection rate in 2020 was higher than the national average, albeit by a small margin – 54.5%, versus the national figure of 52.1%.

Environment

In 2019, carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere in the district of Vratsa still remained nearly twice as low as the average ones in Bulgaria. The amounts of waste generated by households also remained relatively smaller – 278 kg/person per annum, versus 409 kg/person in the country. However, the share handed over for treatment and recycling was again lower than the national figures – 67%, versus 71% respectively.

The relatively low share of population living in urban areas and the small population density in Vratsa district can account for the limited access of the households to a public sewerage system – 57.8%, compared to the national average of 76.2%. Public sewerage networks with access to wastewater treatment plants are available to 51.4% of the population, compared to the average of 64.6% countrywide.

Culture

The low intensity of its cultural life remained a characteristic of Vratsa district in 2020. Due to the pandemic and the restrictions on visits to cultural venues, the numbers of museum and cinema visits fell. The decrease was comparable to that in the country on average, but in absolute values the number of visits in Vratsa district was considerably lower. Visits to the local museums numbered 45 per 1,000 persons, against the average of 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide, and visits to cinemas were 111 per 1,000 persons, compared to 190 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Key indicators for the district of Vratsa

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	15,018	13,278	n.a.	17,170
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,582	5,209	n.a.	6,013
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,489	13,874	n.a.	15,209
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	29.0	38.9	n.a.	22.6
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	54.5	59.8	57.1	68.5
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	10.1	7.7	10.3	5.2
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	20.8	20.7	22.4	16.9
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	21.5	21.0	22.9	29.2
Production value (BGN/person)	15,540	17,592	n.a.	28,027
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,682	1,513	n.a.	3,155
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	654	505	n.a.	3,655
Share of households with Internet (%)	65.5	71.1	71.5	78.9
Share of roads in good condition (%)	26.5	28.4	n.a.	41.4
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	17.9	17.9	17.9	17.9
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	74.0	69.9	73.9	73.2

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-11.4	-11.4	-13.9	-9.5
Net migration rate (‰)	-7.5	-7.8	2.3	4.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.98	4.08	3.99	4.21
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	26.2	28.9	30.3	37.9
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	93.0	89.9	91.8	86.5
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	86	94	93	87
Share of population with health insurance (%)	91.4	93.5	92.6	88.7
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,709	1,679	1,762	1,727
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	15.4	14.1	13.0	9.9
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	7.3	6.6	6.4	8.6
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	57.6	57.8	n.a.	76.4
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	278	n.a.	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	67.5	n.a.	n.a.	70.9
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	191	367	111	190
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	140	131	45	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.