

Dobrich district

► Population (2021)	167,314
► Territory (sq. km)	4,720
► Number of settlements	216
► Share of urban population (%)	68.6



GDP per capita in Dobrich district has continued to grow but its rate remains relatively low. The low educational status of the workforce continues to be a major challenge before the labor market. Investment in the district has been increasing but remains comparatively low, and production value is relatively limited. Dobrich is among the districts with the highest share of households with access to a gas supply. The level of local taxes in the local municipalities is relatively low. The indicators for the work of local government rank Dobrich among the top performers in the whole country.

The urban population and its density remain low. Its performance as regards the education indicators is poor. Student scores are relatively low. The shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds can probably explain the relatively low number of patients treated in the local general hospitals. The number of registered crimes in the district continues to fall and remains lower than the national average, while detection rates are rising. The share of public sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants remains high. Museum visits in the district have risen considerably.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Income and living standard



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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

GDP per capita in Dobrich district has continued to grow and in 2020 its rate of increase was higher than the national average, though its volume remained relatively low – 10,200 BGN, compared to 17,300 BGN as the country's average. Salaries and incomes have grown but they remain below the respective national averages. The gross annual salary in the district has reached 12,500 BGN, versus the national average of 16,700 BGN.

Still, in spite of the lag in incomes and salaries, in 2021 poverty levels in Dobrich district were close to, though slightly above the national average. The proportion of people living in material deprivation was 19.7%, versus 19.4% on average nationwide, while the share of those living below the poverty line was 26.0%, compared to the national average of 22.1%.

Labor market

After a decade of fluctuations, in the past few years economic activity in Dobrich district has settled below the national average. In 2021, the rate of economic activity dropped to 68.5%, against 72.0% in the country. This decrease was accompanied by a decline in employment and an increase in unemployment rates in the district. Employment rates reached 62.4%, compared to 68.1% in the country on average, and unemployment rates reached 8.9%, whereas the national average was 5.32%.

In 2021, the relatively low educational status of the workforce continued to be a major challenge before the labor market in the district. The share of employed people aged 25–64 with a university degree was 20.3%, against the national average of 29.6%. The proportion of people in the workforce with primary or lower education was 25.6%, versus 16.6% nationally.

The labor market continues to be affected by population ageing as well. Still, the demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 in the district has been rising in recent years, reaching 70.6%, compared to 69.4% 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 71 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and economy

Investment in the district has been increasing, but it remains comparatively low, and production value is relatively limited. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population has decreased to 54 per 1,000 persons, against 60 per 1,000 persons as the national average. FTA acquisition expenditures and accumulated FDI flows relative to the population have increased by 1/4, reaching 2,200 BGN/person, versus 3,300 BGN/person in the country, and 2,200 EUR/person, versus the national figure of 3,900 EUR/person.

There was, however, a decrease in production value for the second year in a row and in 2020 it shrank to 12,800 BGN/person, versus the national average of 27,200 BGN/person.

Utilization of European funds in the district has continued to grow but both its rate and its volume remain below the national average per capita. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,874 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded in the Dobrich city municipality while the lowest ones were in the greater Dobrich municipality.

Infrastructure

The density of the infrastructure in Dobrich district, and especially that of its railroad network, remains quite low. In 2021, the share of highways and first-class roads remained nearly twice as low as the national average – 10.1%, against 18.5% respectively. At the same time, road quality is relatively good, with 40% of road surfaces in good condition.

The relative share of households with internet access in Dobrich district remains relatively low – 68.1%, against the average of 83.5% nationwide.

Dobrich is among the districts with the highest share of households connected to a gas supply – 9.6%, versus the national average of 5.3%. The installed RES capacities – 3.2 kW/person – place the district second in the country on this indicator, preceded only by Pazardzhik.

Local taxes

In 2022, local tax rates in Dobrich district again remained relatively low. The margin with the national average rates was especially significant as regards the average local rates on immovable non-residential property for legal entities and on taxi transportation. However, the tax on non-gratuitous transfer of property remains higher than the national average.

Within the district, tax rates as a whole are lowest in the municipalities of Tervel and greater Dobrich, and highest in the municipality of Shabla.

Administration

The indicators for the functioning of the local government rank Dobrich among the top performers in the whole country. The major reason for this is the high AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration – 81.2% in 2022, against 73.2% nationwide, thus ranking Dobrich at the top place in the whole country for the second year in a row. Cadastral coverage in Dobrich district remains high. The district municipalities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services is close to the national average for 2022.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

Demography ■■■■

The natural population growth rate decreased to -16.6‰ in 2021, compared to -13.2‰ as the national average. The net migration rate also fell and after reaching a positive value in 2020, it was again negative at -1.1‰. The trend towards population ageing is visible in the age dependency rates. In 2021, the ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 years increased to 163.9%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to that aged 15–64 rose to 36.0%, with 34.0% nationally.

The urban population remains relatively low – 68.6%, versus 73.1% in the country, and Dobrich continues to be the district with the lowest population density in its urban settlements – 651 persons/sq. km, versus 1,489 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education ■■

The performance of Dobrich district as regards the education indicators is poor. In 2021, the enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade decreased to 70.6% and remained the lowest one in the country. At the same time, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education remained high. The number of primary and secondary school teachers went up to 112 per 1,000 students and remained higher than the national average of 97 teachers per 1,000 students.

In 2022, students' results for the district remained relatively low. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 29.2 p., compared to 35.3 p. in the country on average. The average score in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.68, compared to the national average of 3.97. In addition, the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) reached 24.4%, versus 17.0% nationwide.

Higher education in the district is poorly represented, only by the branches of Shumen University and Varna Technical University. University students number 4 per 1,000 persons, against 32 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Healthcare ■■■

Dobrich still remains among the districts with the lowest share of people with health insurance – 86.0% in 2021, versus 88.7% nationally. The healthcare system in the district suffers from an acute shortage of specialist physicians, although the number of GPs relative to the population is comparatively high. With the exception of Pernik district, Dobrich has the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals – 2.84 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 5.652 per 1,000 persons.

The shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds, as well as the district's proximity to Varna, can probably explain the relatively low number of hospitalizations in Dobrich – 100.7 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 per 1,000 persons across the country.

The infant mortality rate in the district was 7‰ in 2021 and remained higher than the national average of 5.6‰.

Public order and security ■■■■

The workloads of criminal judges in Dobrich district again remained relatively low in 2021, which affected the speed of delivery of justice. There were on average 7.2 cases a month per judge, compared to 9.0 cases per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months decreased but was still higher than the national average – 94%, against 89% respectively.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property continues to fall and remains lower than the national average – 8.3 per 1,000 persons, versus 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationwide, while detection rates are rising and are higher than the national average – 59.4%, versus the national figure of 51.7%.

Environment ■■■■■■

In 2020, the share of the population with access to a public sewerage system was still slightly below the national average – 70.7%, versus 76.3% countrywide, though the share of sewerage systems in the district connected to wastewater treatment plants remained higher than in the country on average – 70.7%, versus 66.7% countrywide.

The average annual amount of waste generated by households in 2020 was 404 kg/person, which was close to the national average of 409 kg/person. At the same time, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling was among the highest in the country – 97.2%, versus 69.3% nationwide.

The share of forest areas remained relatively low in 2021 at 12.1%, compared to the national average of 33.1%, while the share of disturbed areas was also relatively low – 0.15%, versus 0.42 nationally.

Culture ■■■■

Similar to the nationwide trend, cultural life in Dobrich district began to recover in 2021, after the severe pandemic-related restrictions of the year before. Museum visits went up to 1,045 per 1,000 persons, which was considerably higher than the national average of 426 per 1,000 persons.

Visits to theatres and libraries also marked an increase and their numbers came close to the national averages – 118 per 1,000 persons (against 129 per 1,000 persons in the country), and 385 per 1,000 persons (against 449 per 1,000 persons in the country) respectively. Visits to the cinema remained relatively low in the district, even though their number also increased to 70 per 1,000 persons, compared to 351 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Key indicators for the district of Dobrich

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,061	10,195	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,440	12,548	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	22.8	25.0	26.0	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	72.0	69.9	68.5	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	66.9	63.2	62.4	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	7.0	9.6	8.9	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	24.8	25.6	25.6	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	21.1	22.3	20.3	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	14,549	12,795	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,811	2,235	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,707	2,159	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	70.0	70.4	68.1	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	46.7	45.4	40.3	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	17.4	17.4	17.4	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	76.2	83.6	81.2	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-9.0	-11.9	-16.6	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-2.7	3.1	-1.1	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.20	4.08	3.68	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.8	30.5	29.2	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	74.7	73.4	70.6	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	98	105	112	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	86.5	85.3	86.0	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,494	1,500	1,507	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	10.4	9.4	8.3	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	6.2	5.8	7.2	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	70.9	70.7	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	405	404	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	97.2	97.2	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	202	40	70	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	1,119	800	1,045	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.