

# Kardzhali district

- Population (2021)
- Territory (sq. km)
- Number of settlements
- Share of urban population (%)

161,024  
3,209  
468  
40.2



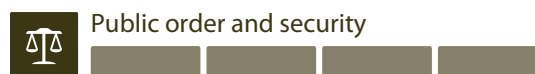
Salaries and incomes in Kardzhali district have been rising fast, though their levels are still below the respective national averages. Economic activity and employment rates have registered record growth, though their rates are still less favourable than the average ones in the country. Investment and business activity again remained relatively low in 2020. The density of the rail network is also relatively limited. The level of local taxes in the municipalities of Kardzhali region remains relatively low. The local authorities' self-assessment of the development of e-government and of the

provision of one-stop-shop services has gone up. The rate of natural population growth is relatively high. In 2022, the performance of the students in the district remained poor. Healthcare suffers from a chronic shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The number of registered crimes against the person and property is among the lowest in the country, and their detection is among the highest. The amount of household waste generated in the district is low, but also, a relatively small proportion of municipal waste is handed over for treatment and recycling. Cultural life in the district is among the least active in the country.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

### Income and living standard ■■■■

Over the past few years, GDP per capita in Kardzhali district has registered a steady increase. In 2020 it again registered a record growth (14.3% against 0.2% in the country) and reached 11,000 BGN/person, against the national average of 17,300 BGN/person. Salaries and incomes have also grown considerably, though their levels are still below average. The average gross salary of employed people is 12,700 BGN/person, against the national average of 16,700 BGN/person.

These processes have been accompanied by decreasing, though still high poverty levels in the district. The proportion of people living in material deprivation is 20.5%, compared to 19.4% in the country, while those living below the poverty line make up 25.5%, versus the national average of 22.19%.

### Labor market ■■■■

Economic activity and employment rates in Kardzhali district registered record growth in 2021 (of 6 p.p.), though their rates still remain lower than the average ones in the country. The rate of economic activity reached 69.0%, against 72.0% nationally, and that of employment – 67.9% (compared to 68.1% in the country). At the same time, the unemployment rate remained relatively low.

The educational structure of the workforce has also improved considerably, but it continues to be less favorable than the national average. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education has decreased to 26.6%, compared to 16.6% in the country, and that of employed people with a university degree has gone up to reach 24.26%, versus 29.6% nationally.

The aging of the population affects the labor market as well. Kardzhali is one of the two districts (along with Smolyan) in which the demographic replacement rate is lower than 50%. In 2021, the ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 was 49.0%, compared to 69.4% 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 half as many young people who will join the workforce.

### Investment and economy ■■

In 2020, investment and business activity in Kardzhali again remained relatively slack and placed the district at the bottom of the scale, with only Sliven district showing worse results. Kardzhali was also the district with the lowest number of nonfinancial enterprises – 32 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 60 per 1,000 persons. In addition, in 2020 the district registered an outflow of foreign and domestic investment. FTA expenditures fell drastically to 1,400 BGN/person, compared to 3,300 BGN/person in the country. FDA also suffered a sharp decrease to 1,600 BGN/person, against 3,900 BGN/person nationally.

At the same time, production value in Kardzhali district again recorded high growth, though it remained considerably below the country's average relative to the population – 11,200 BGN/person, against 27,200 BGN/person as the national average.

Utilization of EU funding has increased but still remains among the lowest, lagging behind the country's average. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,727 BGN/person. Within the district, the municipalities with the highest rate of utilization were Kardzhali and Momchilgrad.

### Infrastructure ■■■■

In 2021, the density of the railroad network in Kardzhali district again remained among the lowest in the country. The road network density was higher than the national average but the share of highways and first-class roads was relatively low – 11.2%, against 18.5% in the country. There was, however, an increase in the share of road surfaces in good condition, and it came close to the national average – 41% in the district, compared to 42% across the country.

The share of households with internet access in the district continued to rise in 2021 and even exceeded the national average. The share of households connected to a gas supply remains among the lowest in the country. The installed RES capacities are relatively large.

### Local taxes ■■■■

The municipalities in Kardzhali district again kept local tax rates low in 2022. The difference is especially large as regards the retail trade tax and the tax rate on immovable non-residential property for legal entities. The tax rates on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and transport vehicles are higher than average. Within the district, the local tax rates are lowest in the municipality of Chernoochene, and highest in the municipality of Ardino.

### Administration ■■

The cadastral tax coverage in Kardzhali district is similar to the national average, reaching 98%.

In 2022, the local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop-shop services went up but remained relatively low. The trend as regards the Active transparency rating of the local administration is similar – it reached 66.0%, compared to the national average of 70.2%.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■

### Demography ■■■■■

In 2021, the natural population growth rate in Kardzhali district continued to decrease considerably, though at -11.1‰ it was again higher than the national average of -13.2‰. The district continued to attract new residents and the net migration rate of 12.6‰ was the highest in the country.

Age dependency ratios have continued to rise but come close to the national average. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 155.7%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it is 34.1%, against 34.0% in the country.

Kardzhali remains the district with the smallest urban populations – 40.2%, versus the national average of 73.1%. Nevertheless, the average density of the population living in the urban settlements is relatively high – 1,981 persons/sq. km, against 1,489 persons/sq. km on average nationwide.

### Education ■■■

Enrolment in 5th–7th grade in Kardzhali district has continued to decrease and in 2021 it was again among the lowest in the country – 76.0%, against the national average of 85.9%. At the same time, the proportions of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education are still comparatively small. The number of primary and secondary school teachers continues to be high – 109 per 1,000 students, versus the national average of 97 per 1,000 students.

However, in 2022 the educational results of the students from the district were once again low. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 30.5 points, compared to 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was “Good” 3.73, compared to 3.97 nationally. The share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) again remained among the highest ones in the country – 25.9%, compared to the national average of 17%.

Higher education is poorly represented in the district, with 4 university students per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

### Healthcare ■■■

In 2021, the health insurance system in Kardzhali district again covered practically the whole of its population. At the same time, it suffers from a chronic shortage of doctors and hospital beds. Kardzhali is the district with the smallest number of both GPs and specialist physicians relative to the population. There is one GP per 3,097 persons, whereas nationally it is one GP per 1,734 persons on average.

The number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals remains extremely low and in the past few years has even been falling, reaching 3.45 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons.

Hospitalization figures in Kardzhali district are relatively low – 120.9 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 222.6, which suggests that residents seek medical health outside the district.

### Public order and security ■■■■■

In 2021, Kardzhali's performance in the field of justice and security was characterized by a reduction in the workloads of the local criminal judges and a lower speed of delivery of justice. There were on average 6.4 cases a month per one judge, compared to 9.8 cases per judge nationally. 86% of criminal cases were closed within 3 months, against the national average of 89%.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property in Kardzhali district is among the lowest in the whole country and half the national average – 4.7 crimes per 1,000 persons, versus 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate is higher, reaching – 66.5%, versus the national figure of 51.7%.

### Environment ■■■■

In 2020, the amount of household waste in the district was among the lowest in the country – 250 kg/person, compared to 409 kg/person nationally. At the same time, however, a relatively small portion of this waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 7.3%, against 69.3% in the country.

The extremely small share of the population living in urban settlements in the districts accounts for the low share of households connected to a public sewerage system – 44.3%, against 76.3% in the country. Connectivity with wastewater treatment plants is similarly low – 36.7%, compared to the national average of 66.7%.

Kardzhali is among the districts with the largest forest areas in the country – 54.9 % in 2021, compared to 33.1% in the country. The disturbed areas are relatively limited – 0.14%, compared to 0.42% in the country.

### Culture ■■

Cultural life in Kardzhali district retained its low intensity in 2021. The pandemic and the restrictions on visits to cultural events added their own negative impact. Visits to the various cultural events increased somewhat in 2021, but the rise in numbers was too small to compensate for the drastic fall of the year before. Visits to local cinemas fell to 27 per 1,000 persons, against the average of 351 per 1,000 persons in the country. Visits to museums reached 49 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 426 per 1,000 persons, and visits to theatres – 37 per 1,000 persons, against 129 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to libraries relative to the population were half those in the country.

## Key indicators for the district of Kardzhali

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,656	11,034	n.a.	<b>17,299</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,356	12,705	n.a.	<b>16,687</b>
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	35.2	30.8	25.5	<b>22.1</b>
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	65.1	62.8	69.0	<b>72.0</b>
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	63.7	61.9	67.9	<b>68.1</b>
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	(2.0)	(1.4)	(1.7)	<b>5.3</b>
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	33.7	34.3	26.6	<b>16.6</b>
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	18.6	17.6	24.2	<b>29.6</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	10,206	11,191	n.a.	<b>27,213</b>
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	3,861	1,352	n.a.	<b>3,348</b>
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	2,013	1,608	n.a.	<b>3,877</b>
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	67.5	77.3	85.6	<b>83.5</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	33.3	35.3	40.9	<b>42.0</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	20.2	20.2	20.2	<b>18.0</b>
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	54.1	59.4	66.0	<b>70.2</b>

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-3.6	-7.1	-11.1	<b>-13.2</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	37.2	23.2	12.6	<b>1.9</b>
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.92	3.98	3.73	<b>3.97</b>
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	31.9	31.7	30.5	<b>35.3</b>
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	80.3	77.2	76.0	<b>85.9</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	104	104	109	<b>97</b>
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	104.7	100.0	100.0	<b>88.7</b>
Number of people per general practitioner	2,985	3,067	3,097	<b>1,734</b>
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	5.1	5.0	4.7	<b>9.8</b>
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	7.5	7.5	6.4	<b>9.0</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	44.8	44.3	n.a.	<b>76.3</b>
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	248	250	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	7.3	7.3	n.a.	<b>69.3</b>
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	90	18	27	<b>351</b>
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	100	39	49	<b>426</b>

\* 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.