Pernik district

▶ Population (2021)	118,023
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,394
▶ Number of settlements	171
▶ Share of urban population (%)	78.1

TRAN

BREZNIK

PERNIK

Kovachevtsi

ZEMEN RADOMIR

In terms of economic development, Pernik takes a place in the middle of the ranking. The relatively high incomes in Pernik district are the main prerequisite for the relatively low poverty levels of its population. The workforce is characterized by a high proportion of people with secondary education. Population ageing remains a major challenge for the local labor market. Investment activity in the district is relatively slack. The share of highways and first-class roads remains low, but road quality is good. Local tax rates are low. The AIP active transparency rating of the district's mu-

nicipalities is among the lowest in the country. Age dependency continues to deteriorate and is among the highest in the country. Students' results in the district are traditionally lower than the national average. Pernik has the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals. The relative number of registered crimes in Pernik district is close to the national average, while the detection rate is slightly higher. The volume of generated household waste is the highest in the country. Pernik is the district with the least active cultural life in the country, which is probably related to its proximity to the capital.

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 ▪▪▪▪

In 2020, GDP per capita in Pernik district registered a slight decrease to 9,400 BGN/person, against the country's average of 17,300 BGN. At the same time, salaries and incomes have been rising, though at a rate lower than the national average. The average gross annual salary of employed people is 12,400 BGN, compared to 16,700 BGN on average nationwide, while the income per household member remains among the highest in the country, reaching 8,300 BGN, against 7,700 BGN countrywide. The explanation for this difference is that salary data are based on place of employment, while data on household income consider the place of residence. In other words, when people are resident in Pernik but are working in Sofia (capital city), this has a positive effect on the data for household income but not on salary data.

The relatively high incomes also result in relatively low poverty levels in the district. In 2020, the share of the population living with material deprivation amounted to 16.7% in Pernik district, compared to 19.4% in the country, while the share of those living below the poverty line in 2021 was 19.1%, versus 22.1% nationally.

👤 Labor market ▪▪▪▪

In 2021, unemployment went down and economic activity and employment went up. The rates of economic activity and employment continue to be relatively high, reaching respectively 76.9% (against 72.0% in the country) and 71.2% (versus 68.1% in the country). At the same time, the unemployment rate remains relatively unfavorable, although it has decreased to 7.5%, compared to 5.3% in the country.

A characteristic of the workforce in Pernik district is the relatively large share of people with secondary education. While on a national scale a little over half the population have secondary education, in Pernik district they constitute almost 2/3, while the shares of both university graduates and people with primary or lower education are lower. A major challenge facing the local labor market continues to be population ageing. The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 50.3%, against 69.4% nationwide. Thus, for every 100 adults who are about to leave the workforce in the next few years, there are half as many young people who will join the labor market.

🏭 Investment and economy ▪

Investment activity in Pernik district is relatively slack. Its proximity to the capital affects both the number of enterprises and the investment flows attracted into the district. In 2020, there were 45 enterprises per 1,000 persons, compared to 60 per 1,000 persons in the country. Both foreign and domestic investment flows rose considerably, but the figures remain relatively low. FTA acquisition expenditures were 1,400 BGN/person, against 3,300 BGN/person countrywide, while FDI amounted to 1,900 EUR/person, compared to 3,900 EUR/person nationally. Nevertheless, production value in Pernik district shrank for the second year in a row and in 2020 it was 15,200 BGN/person, compared to an average of 27,200 BGN/person nationwide.

Utilization of European funds has been on the increase but its figures still rank Pernik among the worst performing districts in the country. By 30 June 2022, payments made to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,400 BGN/person on average.

🚌 Infrastructure ▪▪▪▪▪

In 2021, the density of the road and railroad networks in Pernik district again remained considerably higher than the national average. The share of highways and first-class roads was lower – 15.9%, against 18.5% in the country; however, the quality of the roads was relatively good. The share of road surfaces in good condition was 41%, against the national average of 42%.

The relative share of households with internet access registered a considerable increase and in 2021 it came close to the national average – 82.8% in Pernik district, versus 83.5% nationally. The share of households connected to a gas supply is low – 1.8% in 2020, against the national average of 5.3%. The installed RES capacities are a bare 0.07 kW/person, compared to 0.62 kW/person countrywide.

% Local taxes ▪▪▪▪▪

The average level of the local taxes in the municipalities of Pernik district again remained relatively low in 2022, and the average rates of all five monitored taxes were lower in the district than in the country. The margin was particularly wide as regards the tax rate on motor vehicles and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property.

Within the district, the lowest taxes were levied by the municipalities of Breznik and Zemen, and the highest ones were in the municipality of Kovachevtsi.

💼 Administration ▪

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop-shop services retained overall their levels in 2021, though with ratings again below the country's average.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration in Pernik's municipalities decreased further and in 2022 it was again the second lowest in the country, followed only by the municipalities in Kyustendil district – 52.64%, compared to the national average of 70.2%.

🝚 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ▬▬

⛊ Demography ▬▬▬

The natural population growth rate in Pernik district has continued to decline. 2020 was yet another year of considerable decrease, reaching –22.1‰, compared to the national average of –13.2‰. The net migration rate has dropped but remains positive (1.1‰).

The rapid rate of population ageing in the district is also evident in the age dependency ratios. In 2021, the ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 was 200.8%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to that aged 15–64, it was 40.5%, against 34.0% nationally.

The urban population is relatively high – 78.1%, versus 73.1% countrywide, but its density is low – 904 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,489 persons/sq. km in the country.

🕮 Education ▬▬▬

The rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade was 91.06% in 2021 and continued to exceed the national average of 85.9%. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school are also lower than the respective national averages. The relative number of teachers remains relatively high – 102 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 97 teachers per 1,000 students nationally.

The average score in the national external examination in mathematics after 7th grade is relatively low – 28.4 p., compared to 35.3 p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature is traditionally below the national average – "Good" 3.79, versus 3.97 respectively. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) is 18.2% in the district, against 17.0 in the country.

The small number of university students in the district can be explained by Pernik's proximity to the capital.

✚ Healthcare ▬▬▬

The share of people with health insurance in Pernik district has decreased but remains above the national average – 89.3%, against 88.7% in the country. The district is relatively well provided with GPs, but in 2021 there were relatively few specialist physicians.

Pernik is the district with the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals – 2.49 beds per 1,000 persons, which is half the average number in the country (5.62 beds per 1,000 persons). The relative number of hospitalizations is also among the lowest in the country – 58.5 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 per 1,000 persons nationwide. These figures suggest that Pernik's population seeks medical care outside the district, most probably in the capital with its larger hospitals.

The infant mortality rate in the district has fallen considerably and is lower than the national average.

⚖ Public order and security ▬▬

The workloads of the local criminal judges in Pernik district rose sharply in 2021 and for the first time in at least a decade exceeded the national average. This has had a negative effect on the speed of delivery of justice. One local judge hears an average of 9.7 criminal cases per month, compared to 9.0 cases per month per judge in the country. The share of cases completed within 3 months has dropped to 86%, against 89% in the country.

The crime rate in Pernik district is close to the national average, while the detection rate is slightly higher. Registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 9.7 per 1,000 persons in 2021, versus an average of 9.8 crimes per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate was 55.7%, against 51.7% for the country on average.

🍃 Environment ▬▬▬▬

The relatively high urban population entails a large share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network – 78.9%, compared to 76.3% in the country in 2020. Connectivity to wastewater treatment plants is also high – 73.8%, against 66.7% countrywide. In 2020, Pernik was once again the district with the highest volume of generated household waste – 543 kg/person per annum, compared to 409 kg/person in the country. At the same time, however, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling was also high – 75.8%, against 69.3% nationally.

The share of forest areas in Pernik district is relatively high – 40.2% in the district, versus 33.1% countrywide. However, the share of disturbed areas is twice the national average – 0.96%, compared to 0.42% in the country.

🎭 Culture ▬

Pernik is among the districts with the least active cultural life, with only Kardzhali district performing worse. This is probably due to Pernik's proximity to the capital.

In 2021, cinema visits amounted to 99 per 1,000 persons, compared to 351 per 1,000 persons nationally. Museum visits numbered 263 per 1,000 persons, compared to 426 per 1,000 persons in the country. Library visits were 174 per 1,000 persons against the national average of 449 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Pernik

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,405	9,352	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,434	12,359	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	14.2	16.8	19.1	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	77.5	76.1	76.9	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	70.9	69.8	71.2	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	8.2	8.3	7.5	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	13.4	11.3	11.3	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	21.4	25.1	18.0	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	16,730	15,202	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,222	1,432	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,561	1,872	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	68.8	83.4	82.8	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	46.9	49.7	41.3	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	23.8	23.9	24.0	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	61.8	59.6	52.4	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−13.1	−16.3	−21.2	−13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	−0.9	26.6	1.1	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.13	4.06	3.79	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.7	32.0	28.4	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	91.6	89.6	91.0	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	98	99	102	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	91.0	89.6	89.3	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,490	1,536	1,595	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	11.8	10.9	9.7	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	6.3	5.8	9.7	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	79.6	78.9	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	550	543	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	75.7	75.8	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	0	19	99	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	318	156	263	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.