Silistra district

▶ Population (2021)	104,869
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,846
▶ Number of settlements	118
▶ Share of urban population (%)	43.7

SILISTRA

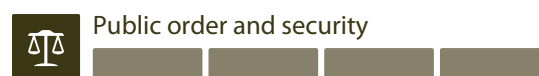TUTRAKAN · SITOVO · Kaynardzha · ALFATAR · GLAVINITSA · DULOVO

*S*ilistra is once again the district with the lowest GDP per capita, despite its relatively high rate of increase. The development of the local labor market remains unsatisfactory. Some improvement can be seen in the educational structure of the workforce. Silistra is among the regions with the weakest investment activity in the country. The quality of the road surface is relatively high. All monitored local taxes are lower than the national average. The average rating for the transparency of the local self-government has fallen and lags considerably behind.

The natural population growth in Silistra district continues to deteriorate. Students' results are relatively low. Healthcare in Silistra district suffers from a shortage of both doctors and hospital beds. The crime rate is rising, though remaining relatively low, while the detection rate is high. Silistra is among the districts with the worst performance as regards environment indicators. One of the main reasons for this is the extremely low share of waste submitted for treatment and recycling. Cultural life in the district is intensifying.

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

Although GDP per capita grew relatively fast in 2020, Silistra is again the district with the lowest GDP figures – 8,300 BGN/person in 2019, compared to the national average of 17,300 BGN/person. Salaries and incomes in the district continue to increase, yet are still relatively low. The average gross annual salary of employed people amounts to 11,700 BGN, compared to 16,700 BGN in the country. Nevertheless, these developments have led to a drop in the poverty levels in the district. In 2021, the relative share of the population living with material deprivation in Silistra district was 11.5%, compared to 19.4% in the country, while the share of those living below the national poverty line was 23.4%, versus 22.1% nationwide.

Labor market

In 2021, the development of the local labor market again remained unsatisfactory. Economic activity went up, but remained relatively low – 65.4%, compared to 72.0% in the country. This increase was accompanied by a parallel rise in employment and a drop in unemployment, though both indicators remained considerably less favorable than the respective national averages. The employment rate reached 55.8%, against the national average of 68.1%. The unemployment rate went down to 14.7%, versus the national average of 5.2%.

The educational structure of the workforce also shows some improvement. The share of the population with primary or lower education has decreased to 28.2% of the workforce, compared to 16.6% nationwide, while the share of those with a university degree has increased to 22.6%, versus 29.6% countrywide.

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 has been on the rise, but it still remains below the national average – 65.2% in Silistra, against 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 65 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and economy

Silistra is among the districts with the lowest investment activity in the country (alongside the districts of Sliven and Kardzhali). The number of nonfinancial enterprises was 37 per 1,000 persons in 2020, compared to 60 per 1,000 persons countrywide. Foreign and domestic investment also remains relatively low. FTA expenditures have reached 1,400 BGN/person (versus 3,300 BGN/person nationally), and FDI – 385 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 3,900 EUR/person. Silistra is also one of the districts with the lowest production value – 10,000 BGN/person, against 27,200 BGN/person respectively.

The municipalities in Silistra district are also lagging behind as regards the utilization of European funds. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,952 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Tutrakan.

Infrastructure

The density of the road network in Silistra district is almost identical to the average one in the country – 18 km/100 sq. m of territory. At the same time, the share of highways and first-class roads is considerably below average – 11.3% in 2021, against 18.5% countrywide. Nevertheless, the quality of the road surface is high – 60% of the roads are in good condition, versus 42% in the country.

In most northern Bulgarian districts railroad density is typically lower, and in Silistra district it is 2.5 km/100 sq. km of territory, compared to 3.6 km/100 sq. km in the country.

Access to the internet is available to 79.0% of the households in the district, compared to the average of 83.5% nationwide in 2021. The share of households connected to a gas supply has been rising, but it remains relatively low – 1.6%, versus 5.3% in the country.

Local taxes

As is typical of the less economically developed districts, the average level of local taxes in Silistra is relatively low. In 2022, all monitored local taxes were lower than the respective national averages. The biggest margin occurred in the rates for retail trade, motor vehicles, and taxi transportation. Within the district, the municipalities of Kainardzha, Alfatar, and Sitovo levy the lowest local taxes, while the highest rates are in Dulovo municipality.

Administration

Along with most other districts in the country, Silistra has made quick progress with cadastral map coverage, which in 2021 already included 97.3% of the district's territory, compared to 97.4% nationally.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government has registered a considerable decrease and is among the lowest in the country for 2021 – an average of 2.93 p. (out of a maximum of 4 p. and against 3.47 p. nationally). The local authorities' self-assessment on the provision of one-stop-shop services, however, has risen and now equals the national average.

The average AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has decreased and is lagging considerably behind the national average – 58.6% in Silistra district, versus 70.2% in the country for 2022.

⚌ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ▪

▥ Demography ▪▪

The natural population growth rate in Silistra district has continued to deteriorate and in 2021 it registered a considerable decrease to –18.2‰, compared to –13.2‰ in the country. The net migration rate was also negative, although at –0.5‰ it was not too low.

These developments affect the age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 178.2%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 – 40.1%, versus the national average of 34.0%.

Silistra is one of the districts with the urban populations, coming only after Kardzhali district. In 2021, 43.7% of the population was living in urban settlements, against 73.1% countrywide. Population density is twice as low as the national average – 767 persons/sq. km, against 1,489 persons/sq. km countrywide.

▤ Education ▪▪

The district's performance as regards the indicators for education is unsatisfactory. The rate of enrolment in 5th to 7th grade in 2021 was considerably below the national average – 77.8% in Silistra district, compared to 85.9% nationally. The share of repeaters remains comparatively small, but that of dropouts from primary and secondary school is relatively high. The number of teachers continues to rise and is again considerably higher than the national average. There are now 111 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 97 teachers per 1,000 students nationwide.

Students' results in Silistra district were again relatively poor in 2022. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade remained relatively low – 26.9 points, versus 35.3 points nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.65, compared to the national average of 3.97. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 20.1% in the district, compared to 17.0% in the country.

The only provider of higher education in the district is a branch of Ruse University, with a very small number of university students – just 3 students per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 students per 1,000 persons nationally.

✚ Healthcare ▪

In 2021, the healthcare system in Silistra district continued to suffer from a shortage of both doctors and beds in the local general hospitals. One local GP was caring for 2,097 persons on average, compared to 1,734 persons per doctor in the country. The shortage of specialist physicians is also acute.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals has continued to increase in the past few years, but their proportion to the population remains relatively low – 4.54 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons in the country.

The relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is 181.8 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The infant mortality rate has been rising considerably in the past few years and in 2021 was among the highest in the country.

⚖ Public order and security ▪▪▪▪

The workloads of the local criminal judges in Silistra district decreased in 2021 and are now relatively low. One local judge hears an average of 7.1 criminal cases a month, compared to 9.0 cases per judge nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is equal to the national average of 89%, but the share of pending cases is considerably lower – 5.4% in the district, versus 11.8% in the country.

The crime rate has been going up but remains relatively low, while the detection rate is high. In 2021, registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 7.6 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate stood at 63.0%, compared to the national average of 51.7%.

☘ Environment ▪

Silistra is also among the worst performing districts as regards environmental indicators. One major factor for the low figures is the extremely small amount of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling – a bare 3.2%, versus the national average of 69.3%. At the same time, the amount of generated household waste is similar to the national average – an annual of 381 kg/person in the district, versus 409 kg/person in the country.

Due to the low level of urbanization, a relatively small share of the population lives in settlements with a public sewerage network – 51.2%, compared to 76.3% in the country. Similarly low is the share of the population whose sewerage is connected to wastewater treatment plants – 44.1%, versus 66.7% nationally.

Forest areas in Silistra district are limited – 14.6%, versus 33.1% countrywide. The share of disturbed areas, however, is close to the national average – 0.40%, against 0.42% in the country.

▦ Culture ▪▪▪▪

After the sharp decline in 2020, cultural life in Silistra district grew in intensity in 2021, although none of the values of the monitored indicators managed to return to their pre-pandemic levels. Cinema visits reached 80 per 1,000 persons, against 351 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to the local theatres and museums numbered 65 per 1,000 persons, against 129 per 1,000 persons in the country, and 194 per 1,000 persons, against 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide respectively. Only visits to the local libraries exceeded the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Silistra

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,727	8,307	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,572	11,727	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	24.0	32.4	23.4	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	67.3	64.1	65.4	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	58.2	54.1	55.8	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	13.3	15.6	14.7	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	30.4	30.7	28.2	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	19.5	20.8	22.6	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	9,832	9,979	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,523	1,388	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	(99)	385	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	76.6	80.7	79.0	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	60.2	67.4	59.6	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	17.8	17.8	17.8	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	63.0	66.4	58.6	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−9.5	−14.0	−18.2	−13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	−2.1	3.2	−0.5	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.86	3.94	3.65	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	26.7	30.3	26.9	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	79.8	80.2	77.8	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	101	106	111	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.7	87.6	88.3	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	2,077	2,193	2,097	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	7.8	8.1	7.6	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	8.1	9.9	7.1	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	51.5	51.2	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	382	381	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	3.2	3.2	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	119	25	80	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	309	162	194	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.