

# Targovishte district

► Population (2021)	108,117
► Territory (sq. km)	2,710
► Number of settlements	194
► Share of urban population (%)	54.3



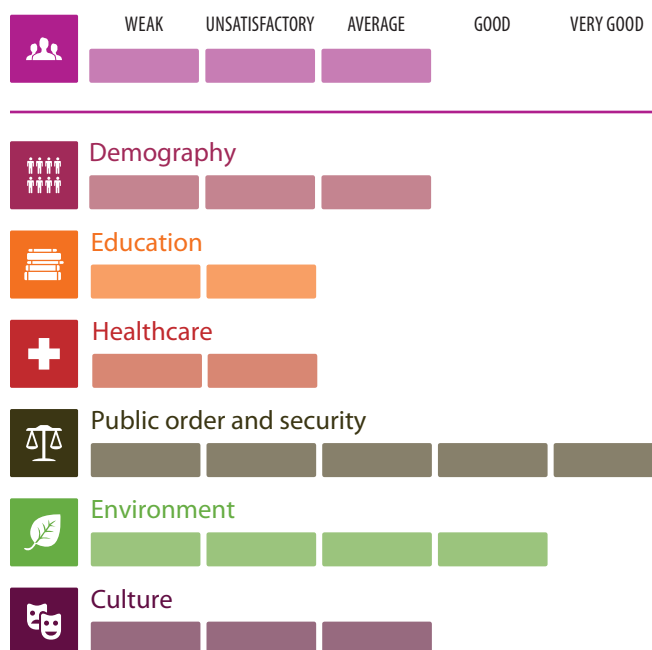
The growth of GDP in the district is relatively high, but its volume remains relatively low. The poverty level is decreasing. Targovishte is the district with the poorest performance as regards the labor market indicators. There has been a contraction in investment and production. The quality of the road surfaces is among the best in the country. The levels of local taxes in the district remain relatively low. The self-assessment of the local administrations on e-government development has gone up and remains higher than the national average.

Natural population growth in the district is deteriorating and the number of people settling in the district is declining. The coverage of the education system is low and student results are poor. Access to GPs is difficult. Health insurance coverage is increasing but remains below average. Criminal judges in the district are among the least busy in the country and this affects the speed of delivery of justice. The share of the sewerage networks connected to a wastewater treatment plant is low. The intensity of cultural life in the district is increasing.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

### Income and living standard ■■■

In 2020, the growth of GDP in Targovishte district was relatively high, but its amount remained relatively low – 11,000 BGN per person, compared to 17,300 BGN per person in the country. However, incomes and salaries also went up, although they too failed to reach the average levels. The annual gross salary of employed people was 13,400 BGN, against 16,700 BGN in the country.

The poverty level in the district is decreasing and remains below the country's average. The share of the population living with material deprivation is 14.5%, compared to 19.4% in the country, while the share of those living below the poverty line is 21.4%, versus 22.1% nationally in 2021.

### Labor market ■■

In 2021, Targovishte was once again the district with the worst performance as regards the labor market indicators. Economic activity continued to shrink, reaching 62.4%, versus 72.0% in the country. This decline was accompanied by falling employment and a minimal drop in unemployment. The employment rate was 55.7%, compared to 68.1% in the country, and the unemployment rate was 10.8%, versus 5.3% countrywide.

A huge challenge for the labor market in the district is the deteriorating educational structure of the workforce, even though 2021 saw a significant improvement. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education dropped by over 6 p.p. and is no longer the highest in the country (a place now occupied by Sliven district), having reached 32.2%, compared to 16.6% in the country. The share of university graduates increased to 17.1%, against 29.6% nationally.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to the 60–64 age group has continued to increase to reach 70.0%, against 69.4% in the country in 2021. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 70 young people joining the workforce.

### Investment and economy ■■

Due to the markedly industrial profile of the local economy and the significant role played by big business, Targovishte has a relatively small number of enterprises – 37 per 1,000 people in 2020, with an upward trend. At the same time, investment and production in the district are shrinking. FTA acquisition expenditures per person decreased by 1/3 to 1,500 BGN/person, against 3,300 BGN/person in the country. FDI reached 2,500 EUR/person, compared to 3,900 EUR/person in the country, and production value – 16,500 BGN/person, against 27,200 BGN/person in the country.

Utilization of European funds in the district remains low. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,459 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by Popovo municipality.

### Infrastructure ■■■■■

The density of the railway network again remained relatively low in 2021. The average density of the road network is generally above the country's average, but the share of highways and first-class roads is relatively low – 14.7%, compared to the national average of 18.5%. Nevertheless, the quality of road surfaces is among the best in the country. In 2021, 60% of the roads in the district were in good condition, compared to 42% in the country.

There has been an improvement in the population's access to the internet, which within the past three years has exceeded the national average, reaching 88% in 2021, compared to 83.5% in the country. The share of households connected to a gas supply is also relatively high – 8.3%, versus 5.3% in the country.

### Local taxes ■■■■■

Local taxes in the municipalities of Targovishte district again remained at relatively low levels in 2022. None of the monitored taxes was higher than the respective national average. Relatively, the lowest tax rates were those on the immovable non-residential property for legal entities and on taxi transportation – respectively 1.92‰ (versus 2.06‰ in the country), and 288 BGN (against 478 BGN in the country).

Within the district, the average local taxes are the lowest in the municipality of Antonovo and the highest in the municipality of Omurtag.

### Administration ■■■■■

The cadastral map of the district already covers 95.5% of the territory. The municipalities' average self-assessments on the development of e-government have gone up and remained above the national average. However, the self-assessment on the provision of one-stop-shop services has declined and has fallen below the national average. There has also been a decline in the AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations, which in 2022 almost equaled the national average – 70.1% in the district, compared to 70.2% in the country.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

### Demography ■■■■

In 2021, natural population growth visibly deteriorated and resident numbers declined. The natural population growth rate dropped to  $-16.7\%$ , compared to  $-13.2\%$  nationally. At the same time, net migration went down and its rate was again negative, though not too low at  $-0.8\%$ .

The population ageing rate remains close to the national average. In 2021, the population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 151.3%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 34.8%, against 34.0% in the country.

The degree of urbanization in the district has not changed significantly in recent years and remains among the lowest in the country – 54.3% in Targovishte, compared to 73.1% in the country. Population density in the urban settlements is also relatively low – 1,050 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,489 people in the country on average.

### Education ■■

Targovishte is among the districts with the lowest coverage of the education system. In 2021, the net enrolment in 5th–7th grade was the second lowest in the country, after that in Dobrich district, and it even deteriorated compared to the previous year, with 74.4%, against 85.9% nationally. The shares of students that have repeated a class or have dropped out from primary and secondary education remain higher than in the country. The relative number of teachers is 111 per 1,000 students, compared to 97 teachers per 1,000 students in the country.

Students' results, however, again remained unsatisfactory in 2022. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 30.2 points, versus the average of 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.63, compared to 3.97 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 23.1%, against 17.0% nationally.

### Healthcare ■■

After Kardzhali district, Targovishte is the district with the most difficult access to GPs, with an average of 2,300 persons per doctor in 2021, compared to 1,734 persons per doctor nationally. The index of access to specialist physicians also has an unfavorable value. Over the past few years, the number of beds in the district's general hospitals has been gradually increasing and in 2021 it reached 5.50 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons in the country.

The health system coverage in the district has been rising but remains below the national average – 87.5% of the population have health insurance, compared to the national average of 88.7%. Population morbidity, measured by the number of hospitalizations, is relatively high – 153.0 per 1,000 persons on average were treated in the local general hospitals, compared to the

national average of 222.6 patients per 1,000 persons. However, this may mean that residents seek health care outside the district, given the relatively low access to doctors and beds. Infant mortality has been rising and is above the national average.

### Public order and security ■■■■■

Criminal judges in the district are among the least busy in the country, preceded in this category only by those in Smolyan, and in 2021 once again this affected the speed of justice delivery. One criminal judge heard an average of 5.3 cases per month, compared to an average of 9.0 cases per judge in the country. The relative share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 95%, against 89% nationally, and pending cases made up 6.4%, against 11.8% countrywide.

The crime rate in Targovishte remains relatively low and the detection rate is high. The crimes against the person and property registered in 2021 amounted to 9.3 per 1,000 persons, compared to 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationally. The detection rate was among the highest in the country, after that in Gabrovo – 71.7%, against 51.7% nationally.

### Environment ■■■■

The volumes of waste generated by the households in Targovishte district are considerably smaller than in the country on average – 290 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person. At the same time, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is high – 80.2% in 2020, versus the national average of 69.3%. The share of households connected to a public sewerage network remains practically unchanged – 54.2%, compared to 76.3% in the country. A bare 44.3% of the sewerage networks are connected to a wastewater treatment plant, which is considerably below the national average of 66.7%.

The amount of forest areas is lower than the country's average (26.3% in the district, against 33.1% in the country), but the share of disturbed areas is also limited (0.12% against 0.42% in the country) in 2021.

### Culture ■■■■

After the sharp decline in 2020, cultural life in the district intensified in 2021, although none of the values of the monitored indicators managed to return to their pre-pandemic levels. Cinema visits reached 19 per 1,000 persons, against 351 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to the local theatres and museums numbered 165 per 1,000 persons, against 129 per 1,000 persons in the country, and 82 per 1,000 persons, against 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide respectively. The local libraries are among the most visited in the country – they attracted 976 visits per 1,000 persons, against 449 per 1,000 persons in the country on average.

## Key indicators for the district of Targovishte

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,524	11,013	n.a.	<b>17,299</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,035	13,368	n.a.	<b>16,687</b>
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	30.2	22.7	21.4	<b>22.1</b>
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	67.3	63.4	62.4	<b>72.0</b>
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	60.1	56.5	55.7	<b>68.1</b>
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	10.5	10.9	10.8	<b>5.3</b>
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	36.0	38.3	32.2	<b>16.6</b>
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	16.8	15.8	17.1	<b>29.6</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	16,536	16,471	n.a.	<b>27,213</b>
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,236	1,525	n.a.	<b>3,348</b>
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	2,760	2,477	n.a.	<b>3,877</b>
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	77.1	82.4	88.0	<b>83.5</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	60.8	65.4	60.0	<b>42.0</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	20.4	20.4	19.3	<b>18.0</b>
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	78.4	76.0	70.1	<b>70.2</b>

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-8.9	-12.5	-16.7	<b>-13.2</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	2.7	4.5	-0.8	<b>1.9</b>
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.85	3.96	3.63	<b>3.97</b>
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	35.2	34.5	30.2	<b>35.3</b>
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	76.8	75.7	74.4	<b>85.9</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	109	110	111	<b>97</b>
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.3	86.9	87.5	<b>88.7</b>
Number of people per general practitioner	2,311	2,402	2,300	<b>1,734</b>
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	9.5	8.9	9.3	<b>9.8</b>
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	3.5	4.3	5.3	<b>9.0</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	54.1	54.2	n.a.	<b>76.3</b>
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	289	290	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	80.2	80.2	n.a.	<b>69.3</b>
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	185	12	19	<b>351</b>
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	175	49	82	<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.