Varna district

- Population (2021)   468,614
- Territory (sq. km)   3,819
- Number of settlements   159
- Share of urban population (%)   83.3

VALCHI DOL
Vetrino
SUVOROVO
Aksakovo
DEVNYA
VARNA
PROVADIYA
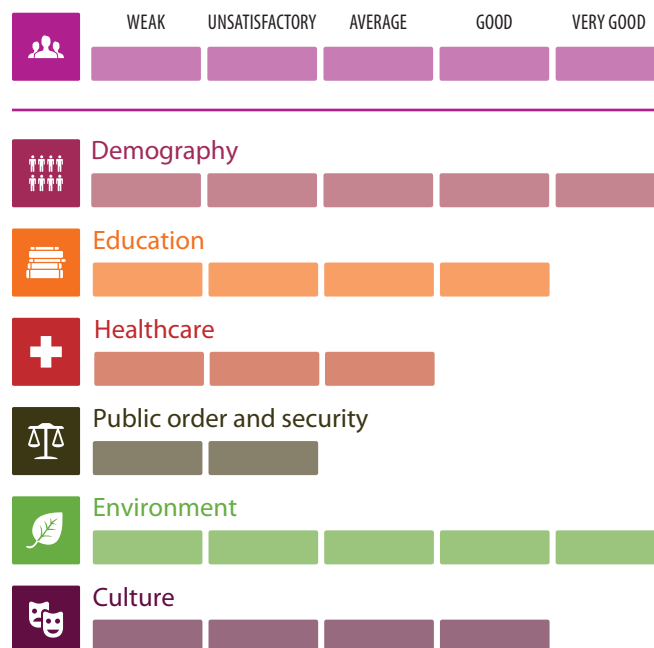BELOSLAV
Avren
DALGOPOL
DOLNI CHIFLIK
BYALA

In 2020, Varna remained among the top-ranking districts as regards GDP per capita. Salary and income rates have continued to grow. Trends in the labor market in 2021 placed the district second in the country. Investment and business activity again remain relatively high, although some negative trends are also in evidence. The infrastructure remains well developed. The average levels of the monitored local taxes remained relatively high in 2022. Both e-government development and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services are at a high level.

Varna retains its place among the districts with a very good demographic development. Varna is among the districts with the best results in the field of education. The performance of students in 2022 was very good. Compared to the national average values, Varna district has more doctors but fewer hospital beds. Crime rates remain quite high, and detection rates relatively low. With its high share of urban population, a relatively large part of them lives in settlements with public sewerage. Cultural life in the district is relatively intensive.

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 in Varna declined in 2020, the district remained among the top-ranking districts in this category, preceded only by Sofia (capital city) and Gabrovo. Salary and income rates have continued to grow. The average annual gross salary of people in employment has reached 15,300 BGN, versus 16,700 BGN nationally, and the average income per household member was 8,100 BGN compared to the national average of 7,700 BGN.

Poverty levels have recorded a considerable decline. The share of the population living with material deprivation reached 20.8% in 2021, compared to 19.4% in the country, and the share of the population living below the national poverty line was 17.3%, versus the national average of 22.1%.

👤 Labor market ▬▬▬▬▬

Trends in the labor market in 2021 placed the district second in the country, after Sofia (capital city). Economic activity has continued to grow, reaching a rate of 75,1% in 2021 and for the first time in over a decade exceeding the national average of 72,0 for that year. The increase in economic activity was accompanied by both an increase in employment and a decrease in unemployment, with their values remaining significantly more favourable than the average ones for the country. The employment rate in Varna district reached 73.8%, against the national average of 68.1%, while the unemployment rate was 1.6%, compared to the country's average of 5.3%.

The educational status of the work force in the district also remained good in 2021. The share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 increased by 5.4 p.p. to 30.2% and exceeded the national average of 29.6%. The share of the population with primary education or less increased, reaching 15.8%, but remained lower than the national average of 16.6%.

The relatively good demographic trends in Varna district are also an important factor for a more favorable development in the labor market. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 is 77.5%: it has risen sharply (in line with the attraction of university graduates) to reach 81.9%, compared to the national average of 69.3%, and is the third highest in the country after Sliven and the capital. Moreover, it has been growing rapidly and steadily since 2013, when Varna district ranked ninth in the country.

🏭 Investment and economy ▬▬▬

Investment and business activity in the district again remained relatively high in 2020, although there were also some negative trends which went deeper than the effects of the pandemic nationwide and the state of emergency. The number of non-financial enterprises continues to be relatively high,

though it has been shrinking to reach 69 per 1,000 persons, compared to 60 per 1,000 persons in the country. At the same time, there is evidence of a reduction in investment flows and a decrease in production. The amount of FTA acquisition expenditures decreased by 18% to 2,200 BGN/person, against 3,300 BGN in the country. FDI fell by 15% to 3,200 EUR/person, compared to 3,900 EUR/person countrywide. Production value in the district shrank to 21,400 BGN/person, compared to 27,200 BGN/person in the country.

Utilization of European funding has been growing but nevertheless remains relatively low. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district under EU operational programs amounted to 1,800 BGN/person. Within the district, the largest beneficiary was Byala municipality, while the lowest rates of utilization were registered in Dalgopol.

🚌 Infrastructure ▬▬▬▬▬

The infrastructure of Varna remained relatively well developed in 2021, placing the district second in the whole country. The density of the road and railway networks is high. The share of highways and first-class roads is also high – 27.4%, compared to 18.5% in the country. The quality of the road surface has improved considerably. 57% of the roads in the district are in good condition, versus 42% countrywide.

The relative share of households with internet access has made a huge increase to reach 91.1%, against the national average of 83.5%. The share of households connected to a gas supply and installed RES capacities is relatively low.

% Local taxes ▬

Within Varna district, the average level of the monitored local taxes levied by the municipalities remained relatively high in 2022, ranking the district second after the capital. The margin is particularly large in the taxation on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and retail trade. Within the district, Varna city is the municipality levying the highest local taxes, while the municipalities of Dolni Chiflik and Vetrino have the lowest.

💼 Administration ▬▬▬▬▬

In 2022, the self-assessment ratings of Varna district municipalities on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services remained high, thus placing the district among those with top performance results countrywide. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has fallen but still remains among the best in the country.

In 2021, 97.2% of the district's territory was covered by the cadastral map, which is close to the national average (97.4%).

👥 SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ▪▪▪▪▪

🏛 Demography ▪▪▪▪▪

In 2021, Varna remained among the districts with a very good demographic development, where it ranks second after the capital city on this indicator. The rate of natural increase fell to 9.2‰, but remained among the highest in the country and far above the national average of –13.2‰. Varna district continues to attract population and at 6.0‰, the net migration rate retains its positive value.

This also reflects on the age dependency ratios, which in Varna district remain relatively favorable. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 127.6%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it is 29.5%, versus 34.0% in the country.

Varna is among the districts with the highest share of urban population – 83.3%, compared to 73.1% in the country, and a relatively high density in the urban areas – 1,800 persons/sq. km, against the national average of 1,500 persons/sq. km.

📖 Education ▪▪▪▪

Varna is also among the districts with the best performance in the field of education, again coming third in the country after only Sofia (capital city) and Smolyan. In 2021, the enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade remained relatively low – 83.0%, compared to 85.9% countrywide; however, the percentage of school year repeaters and that of dropouts from primary and secondary education were also low.

In 2022, the performance of students in Varna district was very good. The district's average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade reached 43.3 points, compared to 35.3 points in the country. For its part, the average result in the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.11, versus 3.97 nationally, and was the third highest nationwide. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades also remained low – 12.8%, against 17.0% nationwide.

The number of university students remains relatively high.

➕ Healthcare ▪▪▪

In 2021, the share of people with health insurance in Varna district again remained among the lowest in the country – 83.8%, compared to 88.7% nationwide. Compared to the national averages, the district has more doctors but it suffers from a shortage of hospital beds. The number of hospital beds in the general hospitals was 4.18 per 1,000 persons, against 5.62 per 1,000 persons countrywide. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals was also low – 158.9 per 1,000 persons, versus 222.6 per 1,000 persons countrywide. The infant mortality rate has been rising but remains relatively low.

⚖ Public order and security ▪▪

Court workloads in Varna district remain relatively low. In 2021, there were 6.7 cases a month per local judge, compared to 9.0 per judge nationally. The smaller workloads affect the speed of delivery of justice. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 92%, compared to under 89% as the national average, and that of pending cases – 8%, compared to 12% nationally.

The crime rate in the district has been falling but remains one of the highest in the country. Detection rates have been going up but in 2021 they again remained among the lowest in the country. Registered crimes against the person and property in Varna district amounted to 11.8 per 1,000 persons, with 9.8 per 1,000 persons as the national figure. The detection rate of 41.4% ranked below the national average of 51.7% and was the second lowest in the country.

🌿 Environment ▪▪▪▪▪

With Varna district's large urban population, a large part of its residents live in settlements with public sewerage networks – 86.1%, versus 76.3% countrywide, and in areas with sewerage systems connected to wastewater treatment plants – 86.15%, against the national average of 66.7% for 2020.

In 2020, Varna remained among the districts with the highest amounts of waste generated by the households – an annual of 456 kg/person, against 409 kg/person on a national scale. At the same time, however, a relatively large share of this waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 85.6%, against 69.3% as the national average.

In 2021, the share of forest areas was lower than the national average – 29.1%, compared to 33.1% in the country, and the share of disturbed areas – higher at 0.51%, versus 0.42 nationally.

🎭 Culture ▪▪▪▪

The pandemic and the measures put in place in 2020 and 2021 greatly affected the cultural life in the country and significantly restricted attendance to various cultural events. The district of Varna was no exception; what is more, the negative impact there was even more tangible than elsewhere in the country, even though a positive trend emerged in 2021. Generally, cultural life in Varna district is relatively intensive. The number of cinema visits throughout 2021 remained considerably above average – 568 per 1,000 persons, compared to 351 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Museum visits remained relatively low in number, with 288 per 1,000 persons, compared to 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Theatre visits in the district increased and in 2021 their number came close to the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Varna

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	16,425	15,629	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	14,282	15,299	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	18.4	22.9	17.3	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	71.7	71.8	75.1	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	69.6	70.2	73.8	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	3.0	2.2	1.6	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	18.8	14.4	15.8	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	25.3	24.8	30.2	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	23,275	21,397	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,732	2,247	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	3,721	3,166	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	73.5	77.5	91.1	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	43.5	46.2	56.5	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	18.8	18.8	18.8	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	75.3	78.7	76.5	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	−3.6	−5.7	−9.2	−13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	0.7	6.3	6.0	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.34	4.39	4.11	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	43.3	44.4	43.3	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	84.7	83.6	83.0	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	86	90	88	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	84.0	83.9	83.8	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,655	1,685	1,710	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	14.1	12.5	11.8	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	6.7	6.9	6.7	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	86.5	86.1	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	457	456	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	85.7	85.6	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	1,132	306	568	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	647	180	288	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.