

Targovishte district

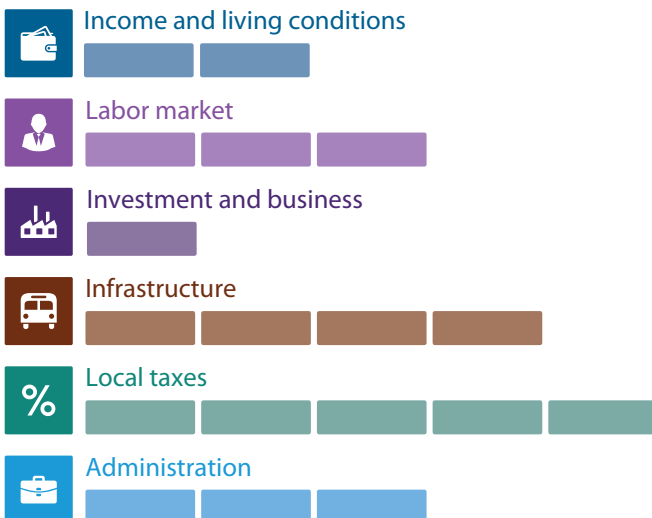
▶ Population (2021)	98,144
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,710
▶ Number of settlements	194
▶ Share of urban population (%)	56.2



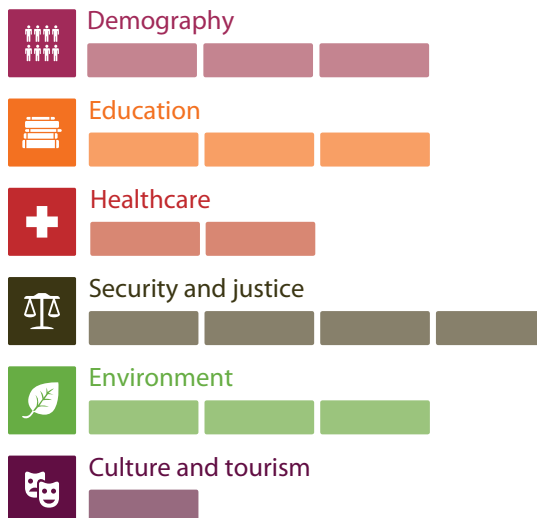
In 2021, both the value and the growth rate of GDP in Targovishte district were relatively low. The share of the working-age population has been decreasing and moving away from the national average. A huge challenge for the labor market in the district is the deteriorating educational status of the workforce. Investment and production have recorded some growth. The local taxes levied by the district municipalities have sustained their relatively low levels. The AIP transparency rating of the local administrations has gone up and is now higher than the national average.

The district's population is aging at a faster rate than in the country. The coverage of the education system in the district is the lowest on a national scale. The relative number of GPs has gone up but remains low. The workloads of the district's criminal judges are among the lowest in the country and this affects the speed of delivery of justice. The share of forest areas is lower than nationally, but so is the share of degraded land. Cultural life in the district retains its low intensity and tourism is poorly represented.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2021, both the value and the growth rate of GDP in Targovishte district was relatively low. Its amount per person was 12,500 BGN per capita, compared to 20,200 BGN per capita in the country. Salaries and pensions have been rising at a rate higher than the one in the country but they too remain considerably lower than average. The annual gross salary of people employed in a labor and service contract was 15,100 BGN, against 18,700 BGN in the country. The average monthly pension remained among the four lowest in the country with an amount of 451 BGN, versus 537 nationally.

The poverty level in the district has been increasing and exceeds the country's average, although by a small margin. The share of population living below the poverty line was 24.7% in 2022, versus 22.9% nationally.

Labor market

The share of the working age population in the district has registered a decline and is moving away from the national average for 2022. Economic activity has recorded a sharp increase, although remaining relatively low, and its rate has reached 69.5%, compared to 73.6% nationally. This increase has been accompanied by a rise in both employment and unemployment, with both indicators remaining less favorable than in the country on average. The employment rate has reached 61.9%, compared to 70.4% in the country, and the unemployment rate is 8.7%, versus 5.2% countrywide.

A huge challenge for the labor market in the district is the deteriorating educational structure of the workforce, even though 2022 again saw a significant improvement. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education dropped by 2 p.p. to 30.3%, compared to 16.0% in the country. The share of university graduates increased to 21.3%, against 29.8% nationally.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to the 60–64 age is 60.0%, against 65.7% in the country in 2022. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 60 young people joining the work force.

Investment and business

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 population. At the same time, investment and production in the district have been recording an increase. FTA acquisition expenditures per person have reached 1,800 BGN/person, against 3,100 BGN/person in the country. FDI amounts to 2,700 EUR/person, compared to 3,100 EUR/person in the country, and production value to 20,300 BGN/person, against 31,200 BGN/person in the country.

Utilization of European funds in the district remains low. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,719 BGN/person, versus 2,836 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by Popovo municipality, but even they failed to reach the national average.

Relative research and development expenditures in the district are extremely low, ranking Targovishte last in this indicator.

Infrastructure

The density of the railway network again remained relatively low in 2022. 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 high. In 2022, 47.9% of the roads in the district were in good condition, compared to 41.1% in the country.

Household access to the internet has been increasing and over the past few years has exceeded the national average, reaching 89.1% in 2022, compared to 87.3% in the country.

Local taxes

In 2023, local taxes in the municipalities of Targovishte district again retained their relatively low levels, ranking the district right after the top three with the lowest taxes (Montana, Blagoevgrad and Vidin). None of the monitored taxes was higher than the respective national average. The lowest tax rates were those on the immovable non-residential property for legal entities and on taxi transportation –1.91‰ (versus 2.08‰ in the country), and 303 BGN (against 471 BGN in the country) respectively.

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 municipalities' average self-assessment on the development of e-government remains above the national average. However, the 2023 self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop services is again below the national average. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations has gone up and now exceeds the national average.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the municipalities in the district again remained relatively low in 2022 – 19.1%, compared to 29.0% nationally. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues in the district is also low – 57.4%, versus 84.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2022, natural population growth remained relatively low at -12.4‰, compared to -9.7‰ nationally. At the same time, net migration was positive at 3.9‰.

The population in the district is aging faster than in the country on average. In 2022, the population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 186.4%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 40.7%, against 37.7% in the country.

The degree of urbanization in the district remains among the lowest in the country – 56.2% in Targovishte, compared to 73.6% in the country. Population density in the urban settlements is also relatively low – 935 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,404 people in the country on average.

Education

Targovishte is among the districts with the lowest coverage of the education system. In 2022, the net enrolment in 5th–7th grade went up to 85.0%, versus 90.7% nationally, but remained the third lowest in the country, after those in Dobrich and Sliven districts. The share of school year repeaters has registered a slight increase and is close to the average one in the country. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is close to, but below the national average.

Students' results again remained unsatisfactory in 2023. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 31.3 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" 3.58, compared to 3.93 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 21.5%, against 17.9% nationally.

Healthcare

The average life expectancy in Targovishte district is about a year lower than the national average – 70.8 years, compared to 71.9 years in the country. The number of people served by one GP decreased significantly in 2022, although it remains high – 2,056 people per GP, compared to 1,678 people per GP in the country. The relative number of specialist physicians remains lower. Over the past few years, the number of beds in the district's general hospitals has been gradually increasing and in 2022 it exceeded the national average – 6.2 beds per 1,000 people, compared to 5.9 beds per 1,000 people in the country. The health system coverage in the district has been rising and in 2022 it reached 97.3% of the population, thus exceeding the national average of 93.5%.

Population morbidity, measured by the number of hospitalizations, is relatively low – 171 per 1,000 people, compared to the national average of 235 per 1,000 people.

Security and justice

Criminal judges in the district are among the least busy in the country, preceded in this category only by those in Smolyan, and in 2022 once again this affected the speed of delivery of justice. One local criminal judge heard an average of 4.7 cases per month, compared to an average of 10.1 cases per judge in the country. The relative share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 92%, against 89% nationally, and pending cases made up 6%, against 12% countrywide.

The crime rate in Targovishte remains below the country's average and the detection rate is high. The crimes against the person and property registered in 2022 amount to 8.6 per 1,000 people, compared to 11.6 per 1,000 people nationally. For its part, the detection rate is among the highest in the country, only after that in Gabrovo – 68%, against 49% nationally.

Environment

The volumes of waste generated by the households in Targovishte district are considerably smaller than in the country on average – 319 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 445 kg/person. At the same time, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is high – 83% in 2021, versus 74% countrywide. However, the share of households connected to a public sewerage network remains low – 52.7%, compared to 74.8% in the country. A bare 44.9% of the sewerage networks are connected to a wastewater treatment plant, which is considerably below the national average of 66.8%.

The share of forest areas is lower than the country's average – 27% in the district, against 33% in the country, but the share of degraded land is also small – 0.13%, against 0.43% in the country.

Culture and tourism

Cultural life in Targovishte district retains its low intensity, though after the sharp decline caused by the pandemic-induced restrictions, in 2022 intensity continued to increase. Cinema visits reached 134 per 1,000 people, against 590 per 1,000 people nationally, and visits to museums numbered 205 per 1,000 people, against 619 per 1,000 people in the country.

Tourism is has a weak presence in the district. The number of beds in accommodation facilities is 6 per 1,000 people, against 55 per 1,000 people in the country. The number of overnight stays in 2022 reached 360 per 1,000 people, versus 3,739 per 1,000 people nationwide and is one of the lowest in the country (after Pernik district). The share of people employed in the culture, sports and entertainment sector is four times lower than the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Targovishte

Economic Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,013	12,536	n.a.	20,212
Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN)	13,368	15,110	n.a.	18,733
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	22.7	21.4	24.7	22.9
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.2	59.5	57.4	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	56.5	55.7	61.9	70.4
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	11.2	8.3	8.7	5.2
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	38.3	32.2	30.3	16.0
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	15.8	17.1	21.3	29.8
Production value per capita (BGN)	16,471	20,301	n.a.	31,242
Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	1,525	1,795	n.a.	3,097
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR)	2,477	2,690	n.a.	4,098
Share of households with broadband internet access (%)	82.4	88.0	89.1	87.3
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	65.4	60.0	47.9	41.1
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	60.3	62.0	57.4	84.2
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	76.0	70.1	70.7	70.3

Social Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	-12.4	-9.7
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	3.9	4.2
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.96	3.63	3.58	3.93
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	34.5	30.2	31.3	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	75.7	74.4	85.0	90.7
Average life expectancy (years)***	73.1	71.8	70.8	71.9
Share of people with health insurance (%)	86.9	87.5	97.3	93.5
Population per one GP (persons)	2,402	2,300	2,056	1,678
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	8.9	9.1	8.6	11.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	8.7	6.4	5.8	11.6
Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%)	54.2	52.7	n.a.	74.8
Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	273	319	n.a.	445
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	80.7	83.3	n.a.	74.0
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	12	19	134	590
Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population)	360	260	360	3,739

* The 2022 data are included in the 2023 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2022-23 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2023. The same is valid for the previous years.

*** Data are for three-year periods and are updated annually.