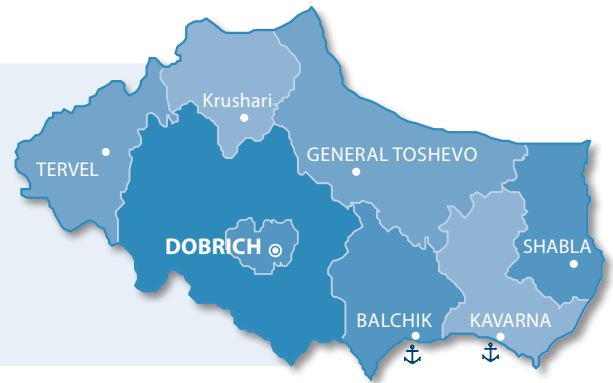# Dobrich district

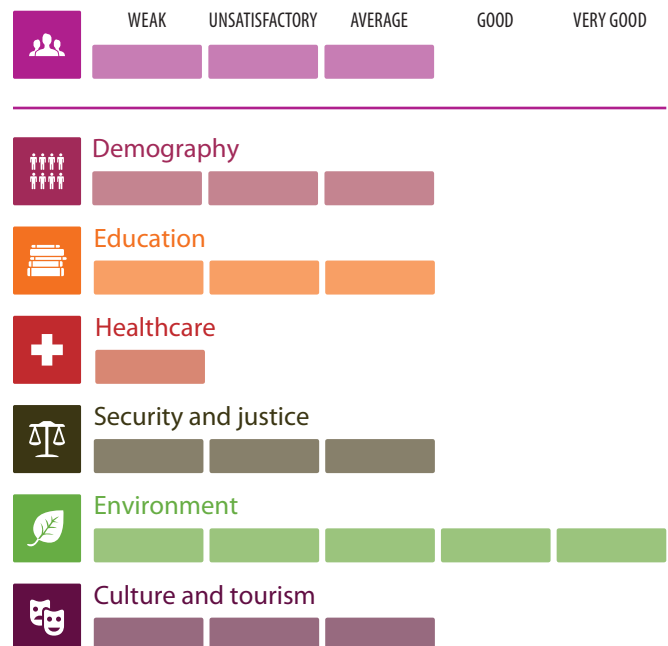|	
▶ Population (2021)	150,146
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,720
▶ Number of settlements	216
▶ Share of urban population (%)	70.9

GDP per capita in Dobrich district has continued to grow but its value remains relatively low. At the same time, the relative poverty rate remains high. The low educational status of the workforce continues to be a major challenge facing the labor market. Investment in the district has been shrinking, but production value has increased. The road surface quality is extremely poor. The level of local taxes in the district's municipalities is relatively low. The transparency rating of the local administration remains high. The share and the density of urban population remain low. The alignment of vocational education and the economy is high. Students' results are relatively low. The shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds may account for the relatively low number of patients treated in the local general hospitals. The number of registered crimes in the district is low and detection rates – relatively high. The share of public sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants remains high. Dobrich is one of the districts with the highest number of beds in places of accommodation.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	WEAK	UNSATISFACTORY	AVERAGE	GOOD	VERY GOOD

Income and living conditions

Labor market

Investment and business

Infrastructure

Local taxes

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	WEAK	UNSATISFACTORY	AVERAGE	GOOD	VERY GOOD

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and justice

Environment

Culture and tourism

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Dobrich district has continued to grow and in 2021 its rate of increase was again higher than the national average, though its volume remained relatively low at 12,400 BGN.

Salaries and pensions have also registered a growth but remain below the respective national averages. The gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract in the district has reached 14,100 BGN, and the average pension – 483 BGN.

These indicators account for the relatively high poverty level in Dobrich district. In 2021, the share of people living below the poverty line went up to 31.0%, compared to the national average of 22.9%.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Dobrich district is relatively low and in 2022 it decreased to 56.5%, compared to 58.5% in the country. Over the last decade, economic activity in the district has seen ups and downs, but in the last few years it has settled consistently below the national average. In 2022, the rate of economic activity went up to 71.8%, against 73.6% in the country. This increase was accompanied by a rise in employment and a shrinking of unemployment. The employment rate reached 65.9%, compared to 70.4% in the country on average, and that of unemployment – 4.8%, versus the national average of 5.2%.

In 2022, the relatively low educational status of the workforce continued to be a major challenge before the labor market in the district. The share of employed people aged 25–64 with a university degree was 17.6%, against the national average of 29.8%, while those with primary or lower education made up 26.7%, versus 16.0% nationally, and their share continues to rise.

The labor market continues to be affected by population aging as well. The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 in the district has decreased to 57.7%, compared to 65.7% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who will have to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 58 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and business

Investment in the district shrank in 2021, but production value increased, though remaining relatively limited. Expenditure on FTA acquisition decreased to 1,800 BGN per capita, versus 3,100 BGN per capita in the country, and FDI shrank to 1,800 BGN per capita, against 4,100 BGN per capita in the country. Production value recorded the second highest growth in the country compared to the previous year (after that in

Vratsa district) and reached 17,900 BGN per capita, against 31,200 BGN per capita nationwide.

Utilization of European funds in the district has continued to grow but both its increase and its volume remain below the national average relative to the population. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 2,219 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 2,836 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded in Dobrich city municipality, while the lowest ones were in the greater Dobrich municipality, where its value per person was nearly 2.4 times lower.

Infrastructure

The density of the infrastructure in Dobrich district, and especially that of its railroad network, remains quite low. In 2022, the share of highways and first-class roads remained nearly half the national average – 10.1%, against 18.5% respectively. Road surface is of extremely poor quality.

The access of households to internet again remains relatively low – 75.4%, against the average of 87.3% nationwide.

Local taxes

In 2022, local tax rates in Dobrich district again remained relatively low. The margin with the national average rates was especially significant as regards the average local rates on immovable non-residential property for legal entities and on taxi transportation – 1.59‰ (versus 2.08‰ in the country) and 300 BGN (versus 471 BGN in the country), respectively. However, the tax on non-gratuitous transfer of property remains higher than the national average.

Within the district, tax rates as a whole are lowest in the municipalities of Tervel and greater Dobrich, and highest in the municipality of Shabla.

Administration

The indicators for the functioning of the local administration rank the municipalities in Dobrich district among the good performers in the country. The major reason for this is the high AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration – 81.3% in 2022, against 70.3% nationwide, thus ranking Dobrich at the top place in the whole country for the third year in a row.

The 2023 district municipalities' self-assessments on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services are close to the national average.

The share of own revenues in the district's total revenues decreased in 2022 to 26.1%, compared to 29.0% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues was 75.2%, compared to 84.2% in the country.

⚇ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ▪▪▪

▦ Demography ▪▪▪

The natural population growth rate again remained relatively low in 2022 at –14.0‰, compared to –9.7‰ as the national average. The net migration rate has a positive value of 1.7‰, but it cannot compensate for population decline in the district as a persistent trend. In addition, population aging is visible in the age dependency ratios. In 2022, the ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 years increased to 204.2%, compared to 165.9% in the country, and to that aged 15–64 – to 43.5%, against 37.7% nationally.

The share of urban population remains below the national average – 70.9%, versus 73.6% in the country, and Dobrich continues to be the district with the lowest population density in its urban settlements – 573 persons/sq. km, versus 1,404 persons/sq. km in the country.

▤ Education ▪▪▪

In 2022, the enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade went up, but at 84.5% it remained relatively low, compared to 90.7% countrywide. At the same time, the shares of school year repeaters rose to become the second highest in the country, after that of Sliven district. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy remained high in 2023, especially in the agricultural sector, with a high number of students enrolled in agricultural degree courses, and a relatively high number of people employed with vocational qualifications in the sector, as also observed in other districts (Silistra and Razgrad in particular) in Dobrudja.

In 2023, students' results for the district remained relatively low. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 29.0 p., compared to 35.3 p. in the country on average. The average score in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.72, compared to the national average of 3.93. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 19.6%, versus 17.6% nationwide.

Higher education in the district is poorly represented, only by branches of Shumen University and Varna Technical University. The share of university students is 4 per 1,000 people, against 33 per 1,000 people nationwide.

✚ Healthcare ▪

The share of people with health insurance in Dobrich district went up in 2022 and outstripped the national average. The healthcare system in the district suffers from an acute shortage of specialist physicians, although the number of GPs relative to the population is relatively high. Dobrich is also among the districts with the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals – 3.2 beds per 1,000 people, against the national average of 5.9 beds per 1,000 people.

The shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds, as well as the district's proximity to Varna, may account for the relatively low number of hospitalizations in Dobrich – 114 per 1,000 people, compared to 235 per 1,000 people across the country.

The infant mortality rate in the district has gone up and remains considerably higher than the national average. At the same time, the average life expectancy is relatively low.

⚖ Security and justice ▪▪▪

The workloads of the criminal judges in Dobrich district remained relatively low in 2022, which affected the speed of delivery of justice. There were on average 6.5 cases a month per judge, compared to 10.1 cases per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months remained relatively high at 91%, against 89% as the national average.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property has been rising but remains lower than the national average – 9.9 per 1,000 people in the district, versus 11.6 per 1,000 people nationwide, while detection rates have decreased, though remaining higher than the national average – 58%, versus the national figure of 49%.

🌿 Environment ▪▪▪▪

The share of population living in settlements with access to a public sewerage system is still below the national average – 70.6%, versus 74.8% countrywide, though the share of sewerage systems in the district connected to wastewater treatment plants remains above the country's average – 70.6%, versus 66.8% countrywide for 2021.

The average annual amount of waste generated by households is 450 kg/person, compared to the national average of 445 kg/person. At the same time, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains among the highest in the country – 95%, versus 74% nationwide.

The share of forest areas is relatively low – 12%, compared to the national average of 33%, but the share of degraded land is also relatively limited – 0.15%, versus 0.43 nationally. Dobrich is among the leaders in installed RES capacities per capita.

🎭 Culture and tourism ▪▪▪

Museum visits have registered a slight decrease but remain considerably higher than the national average – 988 per 1,000 people, versus 619 per 1,000 people nationwide for 2022. At the same time, visits to the cinema remained relatively few, while the number of visits to libraries is around the national average relative to the population.

Dobrich is among the districts with the highest number of beds in accommodation facilities relative to the population (outranked only by the districts of Burgas and Varna) – 197 per 1,000 people, compared to 55 per 1,000 people in the country. The number of overnight stays is also high – 9,449 per 1,000 people, against 3,739 per 1,000 in the country. However, the share of those employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector is low.

Key indicators for the district of Dobrich

Economic Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,195	12,385	n.a.	20,212
Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN)	12,548	14,099	n.a.	18,733
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	25.0	26.0	31.0	22.9
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.2	59.3	56.5	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	63.2	62.4	65.9	70.4
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	7.0	4.9	4.8	5.2
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	25.6	25.6	26.7	16.0
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	22.3	20.3	17.6	29.8
Production value per capita (BGN)	12,795	17,922	n.a.	31,242
Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	2,235	1,822	n.a.	3,097
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR)	2,159	1,816	n.a.	4,098
Share of households with broadband internet access (%)	70.4	68.1	75.4	87.3
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	45.4	40.3	n.a.	41.1
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	83.3	83.0	75.2	84.2
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	83.6	81.2	81.3	70.3

Social Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	−14.0	−9.7
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	1.7	4.2
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.08	3.68	3.72	3.93
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.5	29.2	29.0	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	73.4	70.6	84.5	90.7
Average life expectancy (years)***	73.0	71.6	70.8	71.9
Share of people with health insurance (%)	85.3	86.0	96.3	93.5
Population per one GP (persons)	1,500	1,507	1,411	1,678
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	9.4	8.1	9.9	11.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	8.1	6.1	10.0	11.6
Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%)	70.7	70.6	n.a.	74.8
Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	401	450	n.a.	445
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	97.0	95.3	n.a.	74.0
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	40	70	118	590
Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population)	4,988	7,205	9,449	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.