Kyustendil district

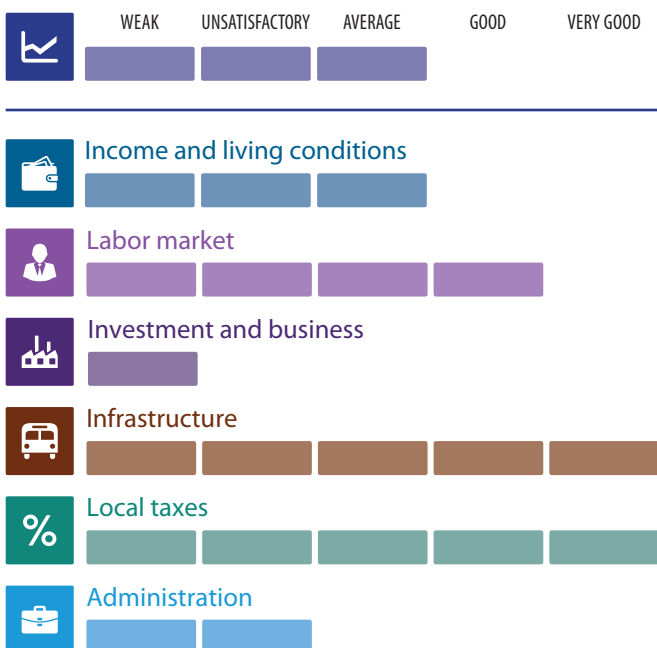|	
▶ Population (2021)	111,736
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,052
▶ Number of settlements	182
▶ Share of urban population (%)	68.6

GDP per capita in Kyustendil district has been growing but remains below the national average. Economic activity and employment rates have registered a considerable increase. Investment activity in the district is among the lowest in the country. The density of the road and railway networks in Kyustendil remains higher than the national average. The average rate of local taxes in the district's municipalities is relatively low. Kyustendil is the district with the worst performance in the indicators assessing the transparency of the local administrations.

Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest rate of population aging. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy remains low, and students' results are unsatisfactory. Healthcare in Kyustendil district has the highest number of GPs, and the lowest infant mortality rate. The workloads of the local criminal judges are the highest in the country. The amounts of generated household waste are low. At the same time, however, only a small portion of this waste is handed over for treatment and recycling. Cultural life and tourism in the district remain characterized by their low intensity.

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 Kyustendil district has continued to grow but its increase in 2021 again remained lower than in the country – 11,500 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 20,200 BGN/person. Salaries have also gone up, but they also remain below the national average. The gross annual salary of people employed in a labor and service contract reached 12,700 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 18,700 BGN/person and is the second lowest in the country, after that in Blagoevgrad district. At the same time, pensions continue to stay close to the national average.

Over the past three years, the poverty rate has settled below the national average. The share of population living below the national poverty line in 2022 was 19.9%, versus 22.9% in the country.

Labor market ▬▬▬▬

The labor market in the district showed a number of positive trends in 2022. Economic activity and employment rates grew significantly and for the second year in a row exceeded the respective national averages. The rate of economic activity increased to 75.4%, against 73.6% in the country, and that of employment reached 73.5%, versus 70.4% in the country. The unemployment rate remained stable at 7.8%, compared to 5.2% nationally.

Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest share of workforce with secondary education – 73%, compared to 54% in the country, which is in line with the district's industrial profile. The proportion of people aged 25–64 with a university degree is 23%, versus 30% nationally, while the share of those with primary or lower education is among the lowest in the country.

The labor market in the district continues to face the challenge of population aging. The share of working-age population continues to decline and has reached 55.7%, compared to 58.5% in the country. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 is 55.7%, compared to 65.7% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labour market in the next few years, there will be only 56 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and business ▬

Investment activity in Kyustendil district again remained among the lowest in the country in 2021. The number of non-financial enterprises was 53 per 1,000 people, against the national average of 60 per 1,000 people. In 2021, the district registered a slight increase in domestic investment, as well as in production volumes. FTA acquisition expenditures per person reached 1,200 BGN, versus the national figure of 3,100 BGN/

person, while FDI amounted to 351 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 4,100 EUR/person. Production value in Kyustendil district went up to reach 13,800 BGN/person, against 31,200 BGN/person as the national average.

Utilization of European funds is also lagging behind. By 30 June 2023, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,768 BGN/person, against 2,836 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the municipality with the highest amount of utilized EU funding was that of Rila.

Infrastructure ▬▬▬▬▬▬

The density of the road and railway networks in the district again remains higher than the national averages for 2022. The share of highways and first-class roads is also higher – 20.8%, compared to 18.5% in the country, and so is the share of road surfaces in good condition – 56%, compared to the average of 41% nationwide.

Households' internet access in the district has gone up considerably and in 2022 it was 87.4%, thus even surpassing by a small margin the national average of 87.3%.

Local taxes ▬▬▬▬▬

In 2023, the average level of the local taxes in the municipalities of Kyustendil district again remained relatively low. The biggest margin is in the annual rates for non-gratuitous acquisition of property and for taxi transportation.

The average tax rate on retail trade in the municipalities of the district is 10.14 BGN/sq. m, versus 13.04 BGN/sq. m in the country.

Within the district, the lowest rates are those levied by Nevestino municipality, and the highest – those of the municipalities of Rila and Boboshevo.

Administration ▬▬

The self-assessment of the local administrations for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services has gone up to surpass the respective country's averages for 2023. At the same time, the AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has retained its value from the previous year and is again the lowest one in the country – 50%, compared to the national average of 70.3%.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities increased to 24.9% in 2022, compared to 29.0% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues – to 76.8%, versus 84.2% in the country.

⚎ SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ▪▪

▦ Demography ▪▪

The demographic development in Kyustendil district is among the worst in the country. The rate of natural population growth continues to be considerably below the national average with a value of –17.1‰, against –9.7‰ nationally for 2022. However, the net migration rate is positive, though relatively low at 2.4‰.

Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest rate of population aging, preceded only by Vidin, Gabrovo and Smolyan in this indicator. The age dependency ratio in the district, calculated as the ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14, has reached 228.6%, compared to 165.9% in the country on average, and that of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 is 46.9%, versus the national average of 37.7%.

The share of urban population is 68.6%, which is below the national average of 73.6%, and population density is relatively low – 1,033 persons/sq. km, against 1,404 persons/sq. km in the country on average.

▤ Education ▪▪▪

The share of children attending kindergarten is increasing, although it remains below the national average – 86.3% in the district, against 87.3% in the country.

In 2022, the rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade went down to 90.2%, slightly lower than the national average of 90.7%. The number of school year repeaters has gone up and is equal to the national average of 1.2%. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is extremely low, mainly due to the inflated enrolment in courses providing workers for the ICT and hospitality sectors, as well as the relatively reduced enrolment for the transport sector.

The performance of the students in Kyustendil district in 2023 again remained unsatisfactory. Their average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 28.3 points, compared to 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 the average of 3.93 nationally. The number of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 26.1%, versus 17.9% as the national average.

Kyustendil is among the few districts without a university or university branch on its territory.

✚ Healthcare ▪▪▪▪

The performance of Kyustendil district in the field of healthcare is among the best in the country. The share of people with health insurance in the district is traditionally high – in 2022 it was 99.3%, compared to 93.5% in the country. The number of beds in the local general hospitals remained similar to the national average. Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest relative number of GPs, with one GP per 1,460 people, versus one GP per 1,678 in the country, but there is a relative shortage of specialist physicians.

The infant mortality rate remains low, and life expectancy is close to, though slightly below the national average. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals also remains below average – 191 per 1,000 people, compared to 235 per 1,000 people in the country.

⚖ Security and justice ▪▪

The workloads of the criminal judges in Kyustendil district are the heaviest in the country, with an average of 13.1 cases a month per judge, compared to 10.1 cases nationally in 2022. This affects the speed of delivery of justice. Thus, the proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 83%, against the national average of 89%.

Both the crime rate and the share of cleared crimes in the district are below the national average. In 2022, the registered crimes against the person and property were 19.2 per 1,000 people, versus 11.6 per 1,000 people on average nationwide. The detection rate in the district reached 48%, versus the national figure of 49%.

☘ Environment ▪▪▪▪▪

The amount of household waste in Kyustendil district is among the lowest in the country – 312 kg/person per annum, compared to the average of 445 kg/person in the country for 2021. At the same time, the share handed over for treatment and recycling is also low – 47%, versus the national average of 74%.

Close to, though slightly below the national average, is the proportion of population with access to a public sewerage network – 70.3%, versus the national average of 74.8%, and to a sewerage system connected to a wastewater treatment plant – 62.0%, versus 66.8% countrywide for 2021.

The share of forest areas is relatively high – 42%, against 33% in the country, but the share of degraded land is also above the national average – 0.63%, against 0.43% in the country for 2022. The installed RES capacities are above the national average relative to the population.

⚇ Culture and tourism ▪

In 2022, cultural life in Kyustendil district again retained its low intensity. The relative number of cinema visits reached 288 per 1,000 people, against 590 per 1,000 people nationwide, and visits to libraries – 322 per 1,000 people, against 584 per 1,000 people as the national average. Museums attracted more interest and visits to them again remained above the national average. In 2022, their relative number was 699 per 1,000 people, versus the national average of 619 per 1,000 people.

The number of beds in accommodation facilities have increased to 39 per 1,000 people, versus 55 per 1,000 people in the country) and the number of overnight stays – to 1,753 per 1,000 people, against 3,739 per 1,000 people in the country. The share of people employed in the culture, sport and entertainment sector is extremely low.

Key indicators for the district of Kyustendil

Economic Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,616	11,535	n.a.	20,212
Average gross annual salary of people employed in a labor or service contract (BGN)	11,519	12,719	n.a.	18,733
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	21.8	17.9	19.9	22.9
Share of the working-age population (%)	56.0	56.0	55.7	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.0	72.5	73.5	70.4
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	9.2	7.8	7.8	5.2
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	7.1	6.4	4.0	16.0
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	24.0	23.9	23.0	29.8
Production value per capita (BGN)	12,473	13,868	n.a.	31,242
Expenditures on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN)	807	1,194	n.a.	3,097
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises per capita (cumulative) (EUR)	350	351	n.a.	4,098
Share of households with broadband internet access (%)	78.6	77.3	87.4	87.3
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	54.0	55.3	56.0	41.1
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	67.4	63.7	76.8	84.2
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	61.9	50.0	50.0	70.3

Social Development Indicators	2020	2021	2022	National average
Natural population growth rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	−17.1	−9.7
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	n.a.	2.4	4.2
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.04	3.76	3.58	3.93
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	31.4	28.2	28.3	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	88.6	92.9	90.2	90.7
Average life expectancy (years)***	73.1	72.0	71.1	71.9
Share of people with health insurance (%)	95.6	96.8	99.3	93.5
Population per one GP (persons)	1,478	1,493	1,460	1,678
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	9.6	9.3	10.2	11.6
Share of pending criminal cases (%)	11.0	8.2	9.9	11.6
Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network (%)	72.3	70.3	n.a.	74.8
Generated household waste per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	241	312	n.a.	445
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	31.9	46.6	n.a.	74.0
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	43	48	288	590
Overnight stays in accommodation facilities (number/1,000 population)	950	1,265	1,753	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.