



REGIONAL PROFILES

INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT
2024

IME
INSTITUTE FOR MARKET ECONOMICS



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Sofia • 2024



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Abbreviations used

AIP	Access to Information Program
APIA	Access to Public Information Act
BLL	Bulgarian Language and Literature
EA	Employment Agency
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GP	General Practitioner
GVA	Gross Value Added
IME	Institute for Market Economics
ISMM	Information System for Management and Monitoring of EU Funds
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MF	Ministry of Finance
MI	Ministry of the Interior
NEA	National External Assessment
NRA	National Revenue Agency
NSI	National Statistical Institute
p.	point(s)
p.p.	percentage point / percentage points
PPS	purchasing power standards
RES	Renewable Energy Sources
RIA	Road Infrastructure Agency
SEDA	Sustainable Energy Development Agency
SJC	Supreme Judicial Council
TFA	Tangible Fixed Assets

Preface

For over a decade now, the Institute for Market Economics has presented the annual issue of *Regional Profiles: Indicators of Development*, the only almanac of regional development in Bulgaria of its kind. The book, better known as *The Regional Profiles*, has now become an established trademark of IME.

The study is based on 75 indicators evaluating the economic and social environment in the country's 28 districts. All data presented in it is also available at www.regionalprofiles.bg, the Institute's specialized web page. Being organized around specific indicators allows data to be observed in its dynamics, as well as to make comparisons between individual districts. Access to the most complete recent mass of statistical data at the regional level is thus facilitated.

Thanks to the work of the institutions collecting and providing statistics, with each successive year, we have been able to include more relevant and wide-ranging statistics for each district's socio-economic environment. In the present edition, most figures are for 2023. Exceptions are few in number and are limited to several indicators which get published with a delay of over a year: data on GDP per capita per district, those on salaries, as well as some indicators in investment, the environment, and infrastructure. Where possible, in fields such as administration, education and local taxes, for example, analysis also rests on figures for 2024.

This study can benefit national and local government, business and the media, as well as academics, experts and people in the non-governmental sector, in their work on regional development. We also believe that the general public could find something of interest regarding the performance of their own district in comparison with other districts in various spheres of economic and social life.

The IME team wishes to express their gratitude to the America for Bulgaria Foundation for their partnership and lasting support in preparing and publishing *The Regional Profiles*.

We hope this year's edition will be once again interesting and beneficial to all readers. Enjoy reading it!

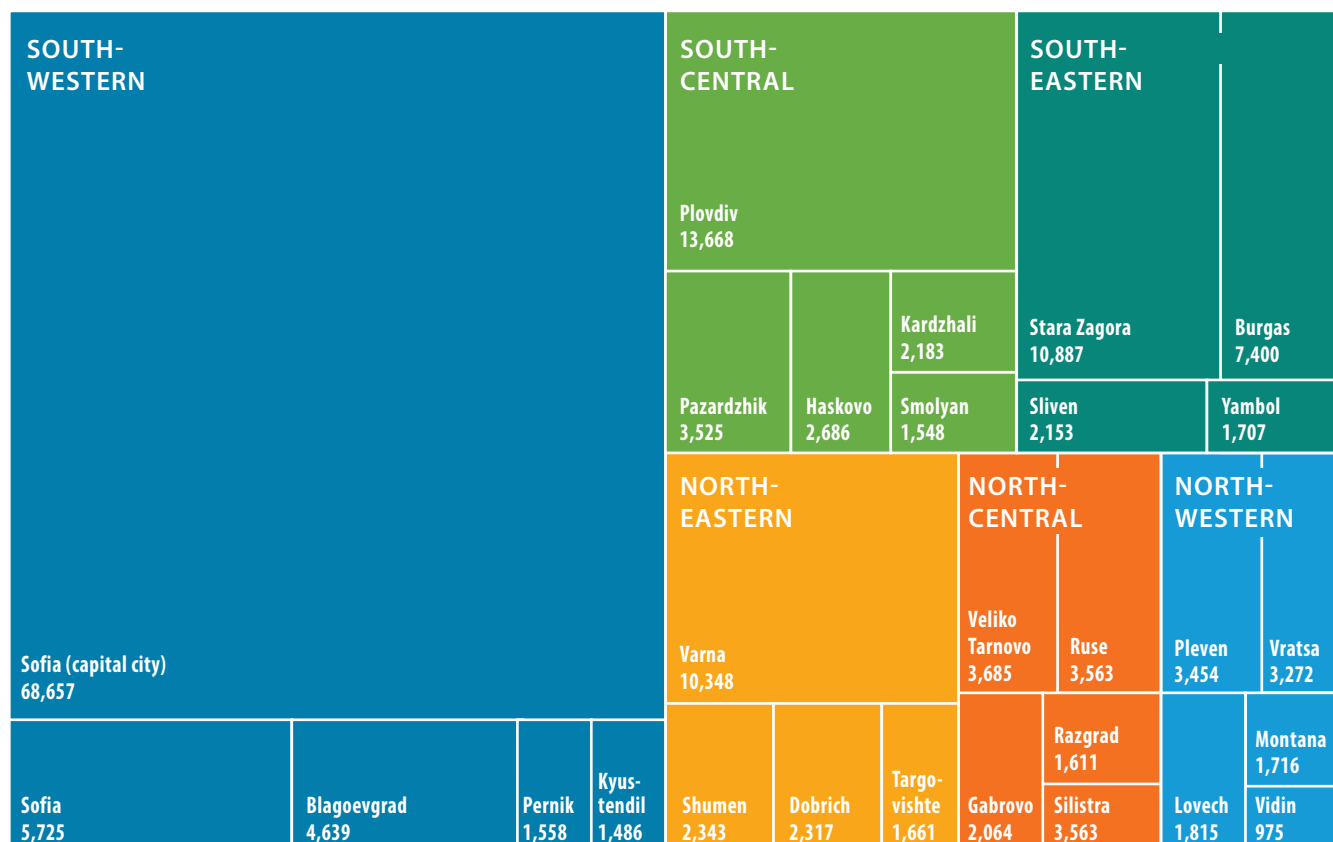
The IME team

Regional Profiles 2024: Resume

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: THE DISTRICTS ARE REBOUNDED FROM THE CRISIS BUT AT DIFFERENT RATES

In 2022, strong economic growth in several of the smaller districts led to a slight decline in the capital's share of the country's GDP. Sofia contributed 41% of GDP to the national economy, or 68.7 billion BGN in 2022, against 43% a year earlier. Plovdiv ranked second with 6.5%, or 13.7 billion BGN. However, Stara Zagora came in third with 6.2% of the total Bulgarian economy, mostly under the impact of the good performance of the energy sector during that year. The leading five districts were complemented by the traditionally strong economies of Varna and Burgas, whose dynamism was supported by the gradual recovery of tourism. Sofia (district) came closer, driven by the rapid development of industry and logistics in the capital's broad periphery. Bringing up the rear was Vidin – the only district with a GDP of less than 1 billion BGN. A cause for concern are the growth rates of the regional economies, with the most developed economies – those of Stara Zagora, Plovdiv, Sofia (district) and Varna – leading the way in terms of GDP growth compared to 2021, while the districts at the bottom of the ranking – Vidin, Lovech, Silistra, Dobrich and Kyustendil – registered

Fig. 1. GDP by district, 2022 (million BGN)

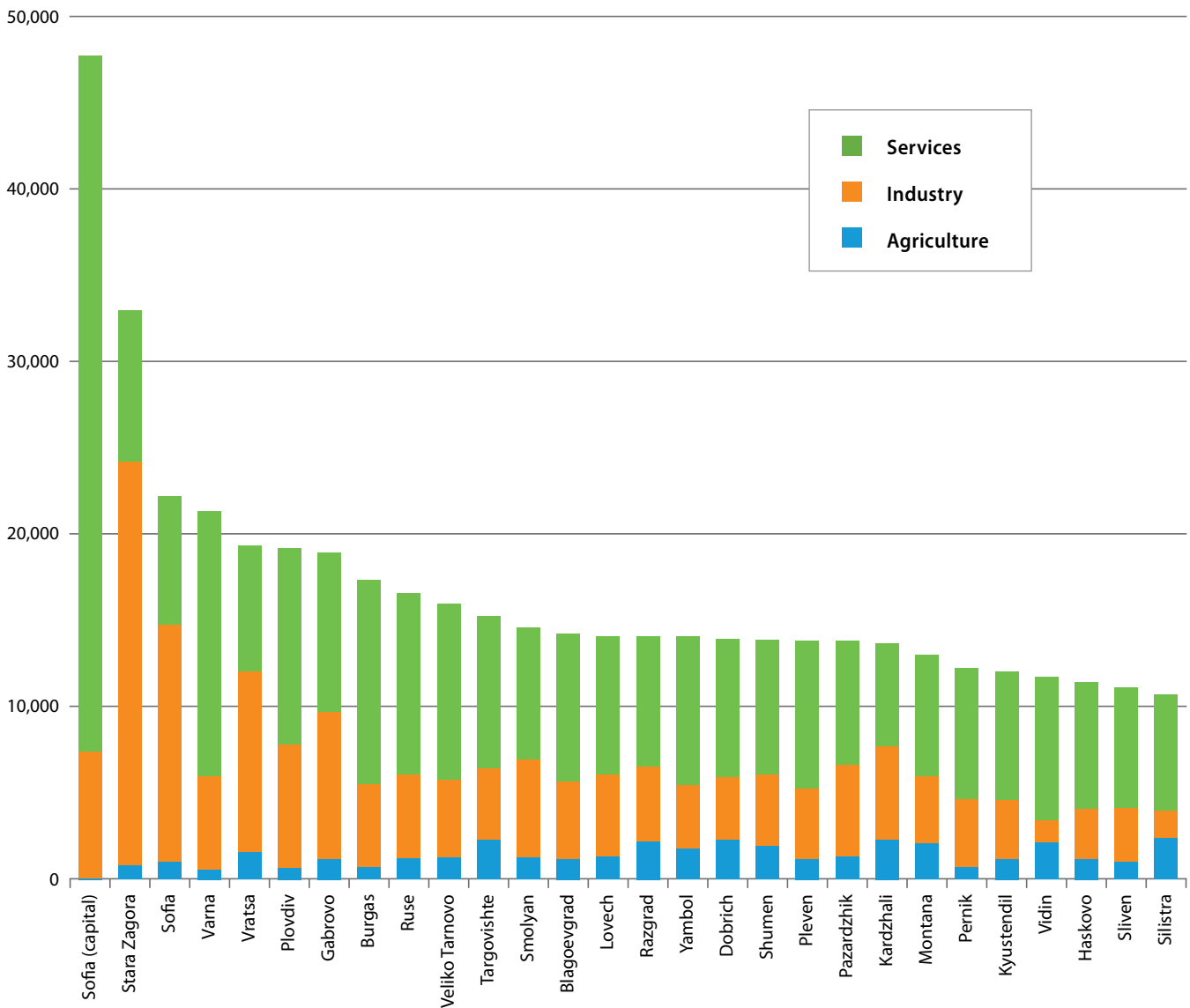


Source: NSI.

anemic growth in 2022, thus creating preconditions for a further widening of the gap in the standard of living between the districts.

Only two districts – Stara Zagora and Sofia (capital), exceed the national average value of gross domestic product per capita for 2022, with the capital already generating on average over 50,000 BGN per capita. Seven districts already have GDP per capita above 20,000 BGN, with Sofia joined by Stara Zagora, Sofia (district), Varna, Vratsa, Plovdiv and Gabrovo. That year again there was a shift in the bottom of the ranking, with the lowest GDP per capita being in Silistra (12,100 BGN), followed by Sliven (12,600 BGN) and Haskovo (12,900 BGN). Almost half – a total of 13 – of the districts generated GDP between 15,000 and 18,000 BGN per capita, which indicates a relatively even degree of economic development outside the leaders and the most backward regions in the country. These small margins also allow for rapid shifts in the districts’ ranking as a result of different growth rates, such as we have seen in recent years among the least developed regions.

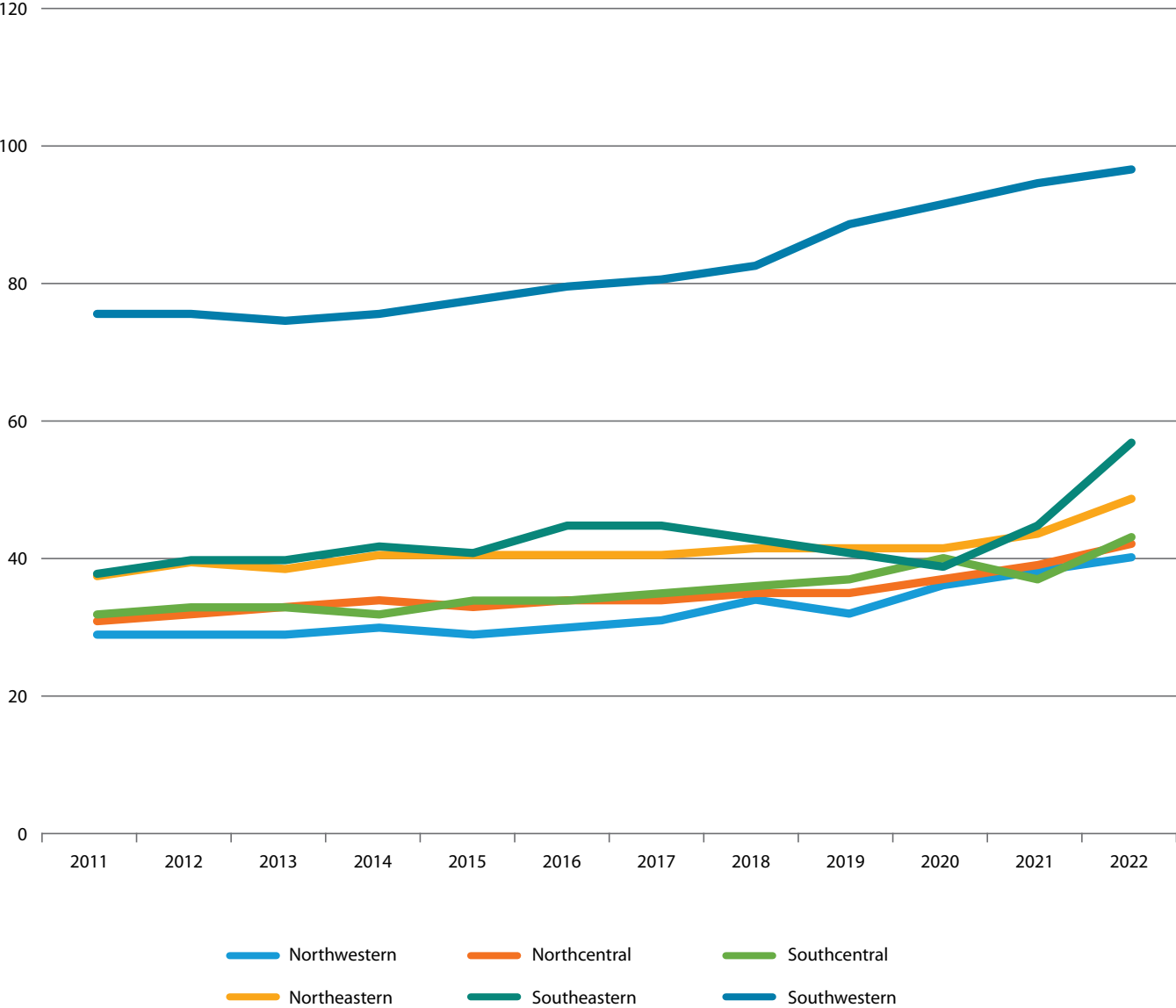
Fig. 2. Gross value added per capita by broad economic sectors, 2022 (thousand BGN)



Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

The distribution of value added per capita clearly outlines the main patterns of development of the regional economies. In Sofia, the capital, it is driven by the services which generate 84% of value added, but over the past year there has been a slight increase in the role played by industry in its economy (15%). A high share of services is also present in the two coastal districts of Varna (72%) and Burgas (68%), as well as in most of the major economic centers of northern Bulgaria – Pleven (62%), Ruse (63%) and Veliko Tarnovo (64%). The exception in this region is Gabrovo, where there is a relative balance between industry (45%) and services (49%). Also moving towards an increased role of the services is the southern industrial centre of Plovdiv, where they already account for 60% of value added. Industry plays a major role in the structure of the economies of several of the leading districts, most prominently in Stara Zagora (71%), Sofia (district) (62%) and Vratsa (54%). By contrast, most regions with a significant share of agriculture are positioned at the bottom of the ranking and only in the least developed district of Silistra does it generate more than 1/5 of value added.

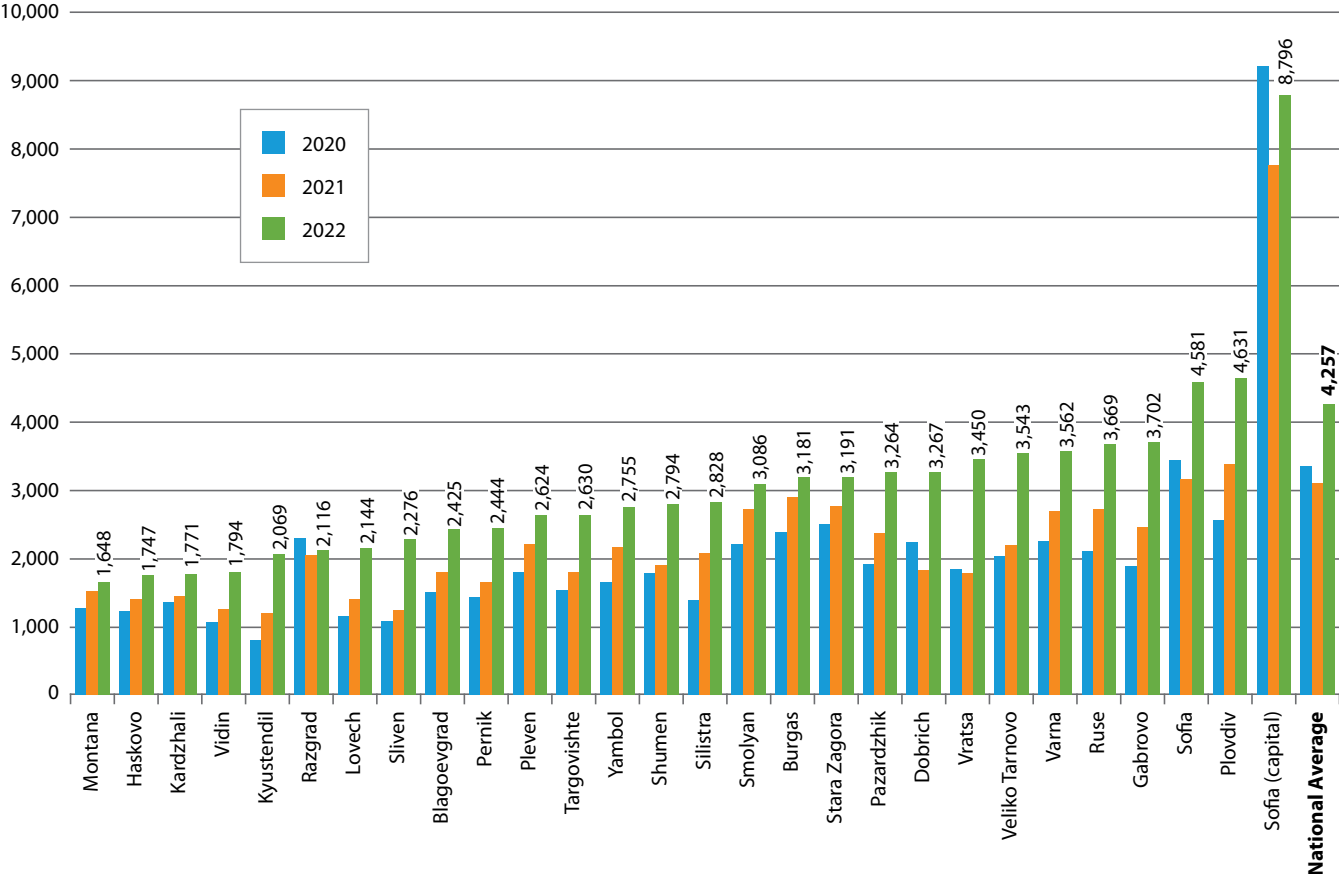
Fig. 3. GDP, measured in PPS per capita in the planning regions as a share of the EU-27 average, 2011–2022 (%)



Source: Eurostat.

An important insight into the economic growth of the regions is the degree of convergence towards the European average. Measured in purchasing power standards (PPS), the GDP per capita of the Southwestern region, which includes the capital, has already reached 97% of the European average, while in the least developed part of Bulgaria – the Northwest – it remains at only 40%. Also noteworthy is the very even pace of catching up – in terms of PPS, four of the country’s planning regions have closed the gap with the EU-27 average GDP per capita by 11 points compared to 2011. A faster convergence is visible in the Southeastern region – by 19 points, with much of this increase occurring in 2022 and reflecting the energy industry’s very strong performance in Stara Zagora, and in the Southwestern region – by 21 points. This offers yet more proof that the stratification of economic development increasingly perpetuates the “Sofia and everyone else” phenomenon.

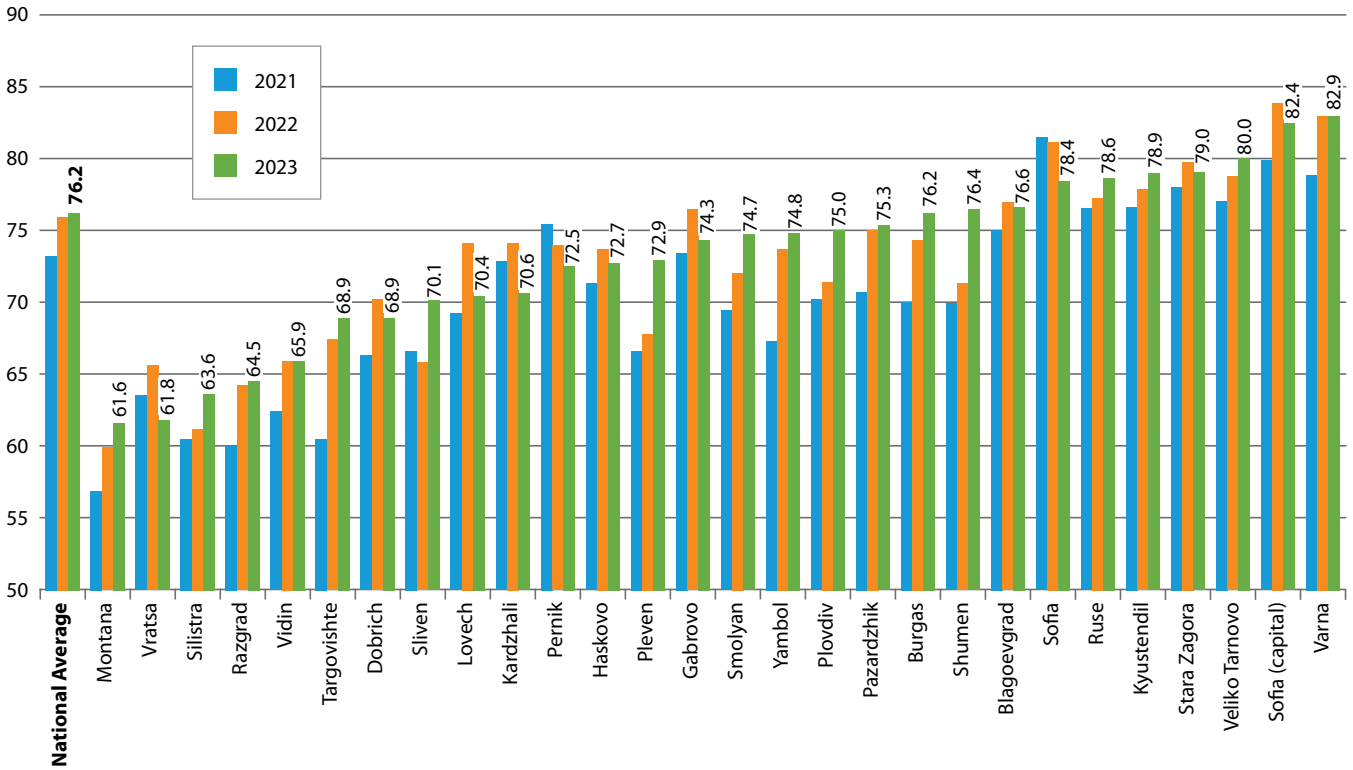
Fig. 4. Expenditure on acquisition of tangible fixed assets per capita, 2020–2022 (BGN)



Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

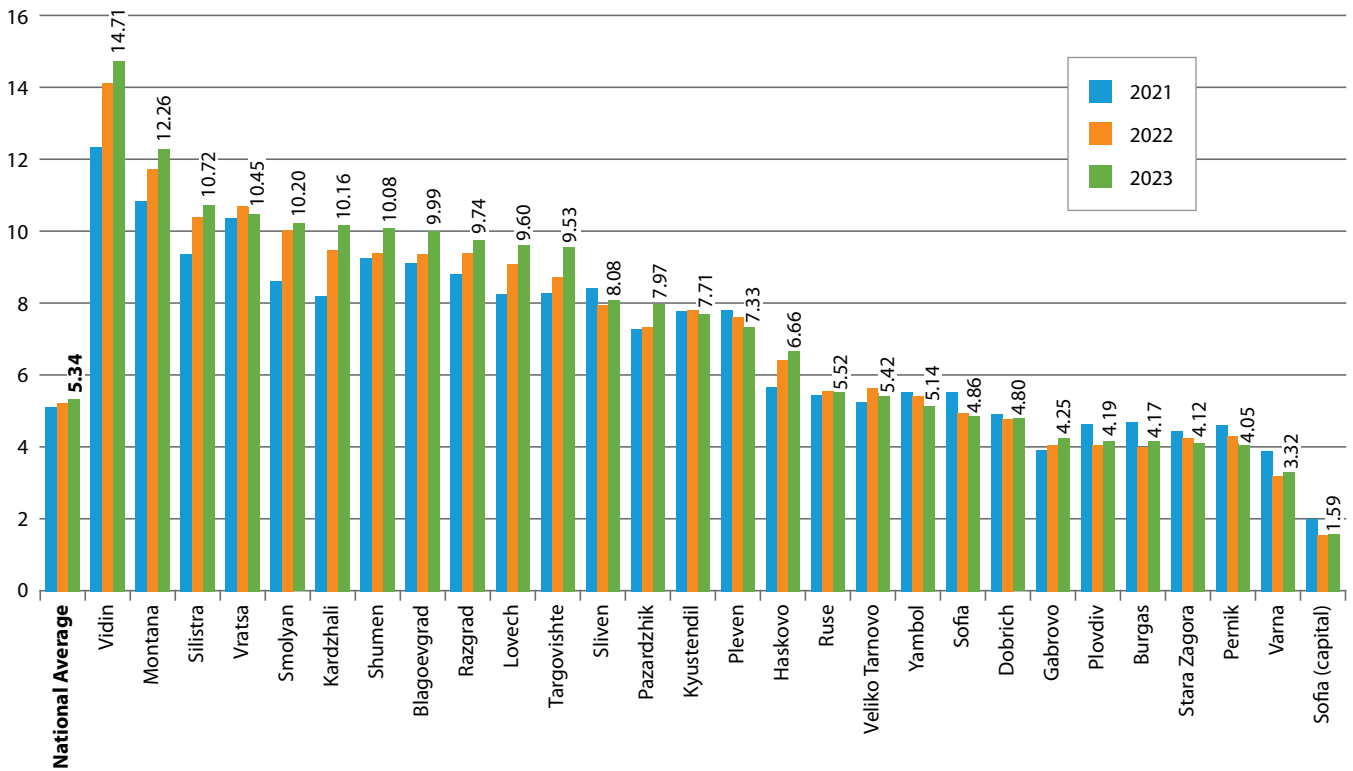
In terms of investment in the districts, 2022 brought a rapid recovery from the impact of the crisis and a new expansion not only compared to the pandemic years but also to the high levels of the pre-crisis period. The differences in investment activity are significant, with the capital city approaching 8,800 BGN per capita in TFA expenditures, followed by Sofia (district) and Plovdiv, where the indicator reached 4,600 BGN per capita. At the bottom of the ranking, with less than 2,000 BGN per capita, are the districts that are also last in terms of economic development: Montana, Haskovo, Kardzhali and Vidin have TFA expenditures of less than 2,000 BGN per capita, while the remaining districts are in the range of 2,000–4,000 BGN per capita. This stratification determines the preservation of and even the future increase in inequality between the districts’ economic development. Less clear-cut are the dynamics of foreign investment – although at the national level there was a significant growth of accumulated flows from 4,100 to 4,500 EUR per capita towards the end of 2022, a number of districts, including Stara Zagora, Silistra, Pleven, Vidin, Vratsa and Burgas, reported a decline in foreign cap-

Fig. 5. Employment rate of the population aged 20–64, 2021–2023 (%)



Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

Fig. 6. Unemployment rate of the population aged 15–64, 2021–2023 (%)



Source: EA.

ital. Against this backdrop, in several districts – Veliko Tarnovo, Gabrovo, Pazardzhik – FDI grew significantly, by over 1,000 EUR per capita within the year. The differences in the levels of FDI remain impressive, with the capital city approaching 12,000 EUR per capita and 9 districts still below 1,000 EUR per capita.

Although in 2023 the labor market expansion continued at national level, albeit at a more moderate pace, in more than half the districts the employment rate of the population aged 20–64 either went into decline or remained without change. The most visible downturns, of more than 3 p.p. on an annual basis, were in the less developed districts of Vratsa, Lovech and Kardzhali. At the opposite side, with over 4 p.p. increase, were Pleven, Shumen and Sliven. The employment rate of the active population was broadly spread across a range from 62% to 83%, with Varna, Sofia (capital) and Veliko Tarnovo performing best, while the share of the working population remained lowest in Montana, Vratsa and Silistra. In many districts, most notably Blagoevgrad, Sofia (district) and Veliko Tarnovo, the employment rate remained below the 2019 labor market records.

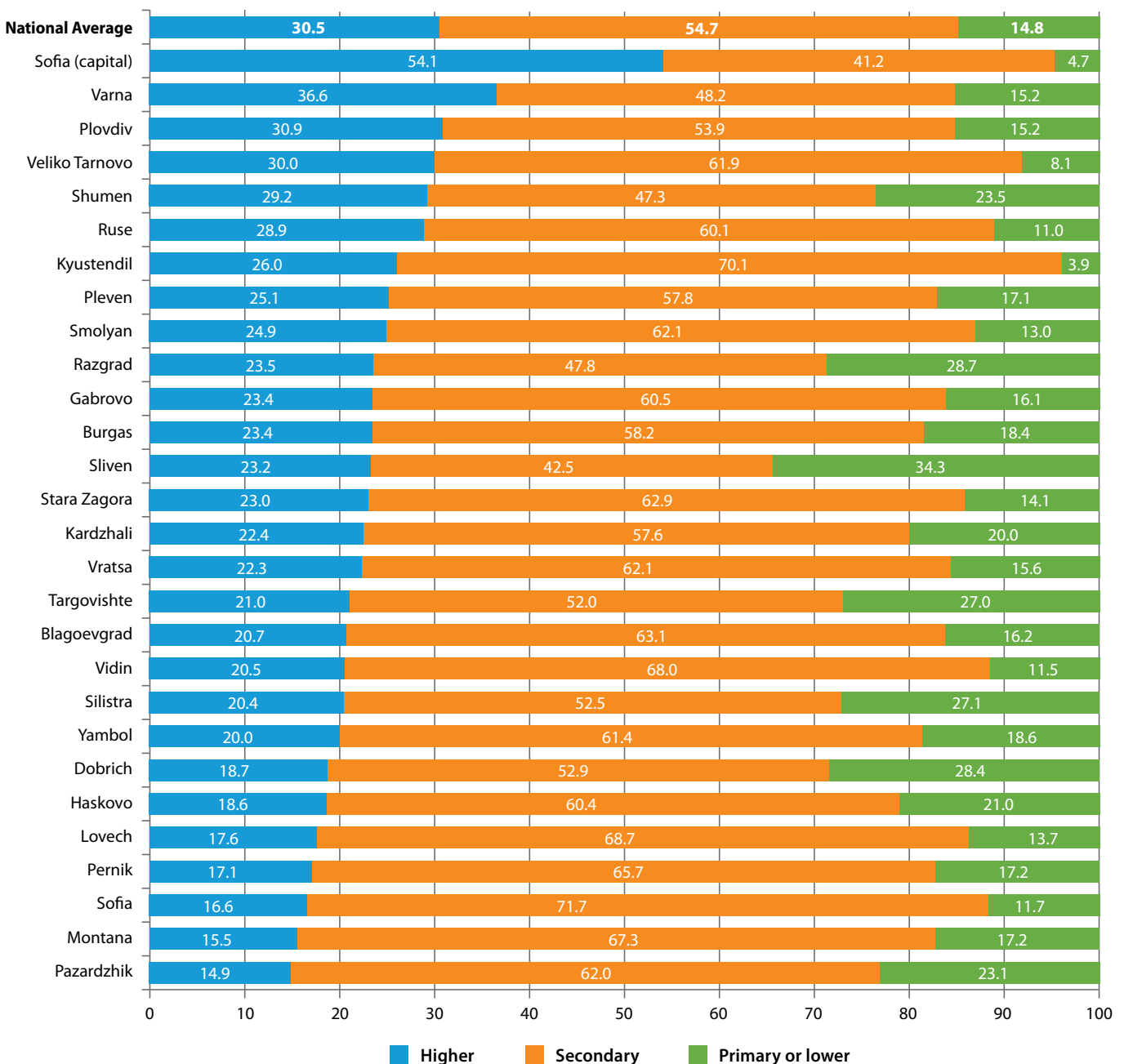
Unemployment dynamics were more moderate, with no district showing a change of more than one p.p. based on the rates reported by the Employment Agency. The share of jobseekers in most places remained close to that reported in the pre-pandemic period, suggesting that the achievable minimum may have already been reached. However, the large gaps between the different regional labor markets are still there – while in the capital the unemployment rate for 2023 was 1.6% for the population aged 15–64, and in Varna it was 3.3%, in Vidin it approached 15%, in Montana it exceeded 12% and in Shumen, Smolyan, Kardzhali and Vratsa it remained above 10%. A cause for concern is also the opposite dynamics, as a slight increase in unemployment is observed precisely in the regions where it is already the highest; on the contrary, there is a more visible decline in the regions with well-functioning labor markets.

Already more than double is the difference in average salaries between the first and the last district: in the capital the average gross salary reached 3,129 BGN by the second quarter of 2024, while in Blagoevgrad it was 1,519 BGN. The distance between the leader and the district in the second place remains in the order of 1,000 BGN per month, with three more districts – Varna (2,147 BGN), Vratsa (2,123 BGN) and Sofia (district) (2,048 BGN) – with average salaries above 2,000 BGN. The rate of salary growth varies between 13% in the districts growing at a slower pace and 26% in the leaders, with the largest increases registered in regions such as Dobrich, Haskovo and Vidin, which probably also reflects the significant increase in the minimum wage. Nevertheless, the faster rate of salary growth in the poorer districts creates the preconditions for a convergence of the working population's living standards. Pension growth is more uniform, with increases in all districts in the range of 13–18% in 2023. The average monthly pension in the capital has reached 957 BGN, while the lowest one – 633 BGN – is in Kardzhali, which is also the district with the slowest pension growth in the whole country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: THE ARENA OF LONG-TERM CHALLENGES

Both economic dynamics and labor market growth are driven by the knowledge and skills of the regions' human capital. If we consider the share of people with higher education – a key indicator for the development of the high-tech sector as well as most services and many segments of industry – the absolute leader in the country for 2022 is the capital, where university graduates form 54% of the population aged 25–64. The second place, a whole 17 points away, is held by Varna with 37% graduates, while only Plovdiv and Veliko Tarnovo have more than 30%. At the same time, in the districts at the tail end – Pazardzhik, Montana, Pernik and Lovech, people of working age with higher education constitute only 15–17%, which in effect blocks opportunities for certain types of investments.

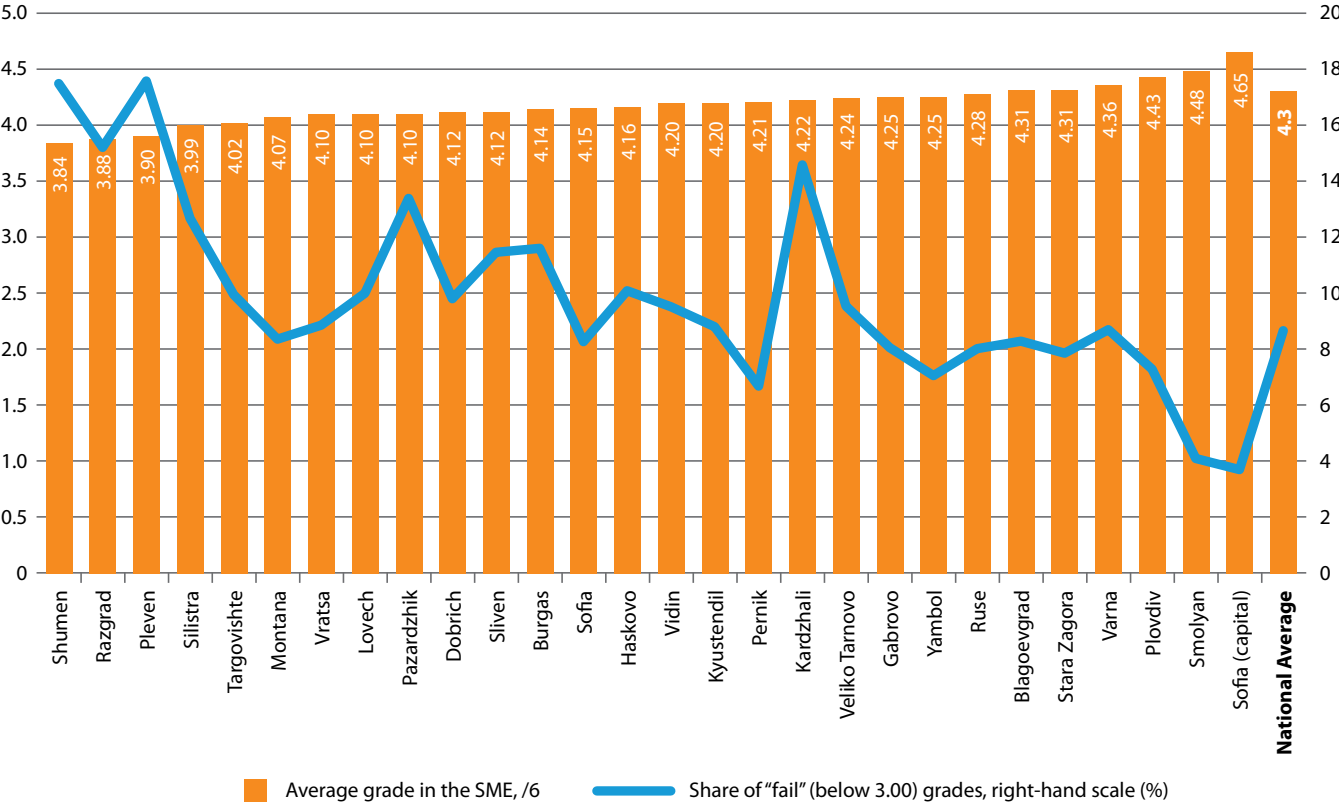
Fig 7. Population aged 25–64 by highest completed education level, 2022 (%)



Source: NSI.

Even more important for the potential for economic development, however, is the share of people with primary and lower education, as jobs for low-skilled workers are increasingly scarce. In 2023, this share again remained high in many places, exceeding 34% in Sliven and 28% in Razgrad and Dobrich each. Expectedly, these are also the regions where schools with some of the weakest results in the country are concentrated, so overcoming the human capital deficit will be among the key challenges for the further development of these districts.

Fig 8. Average results in the State matriculation exam in BLL and share of “fail” grades, spring session 2024



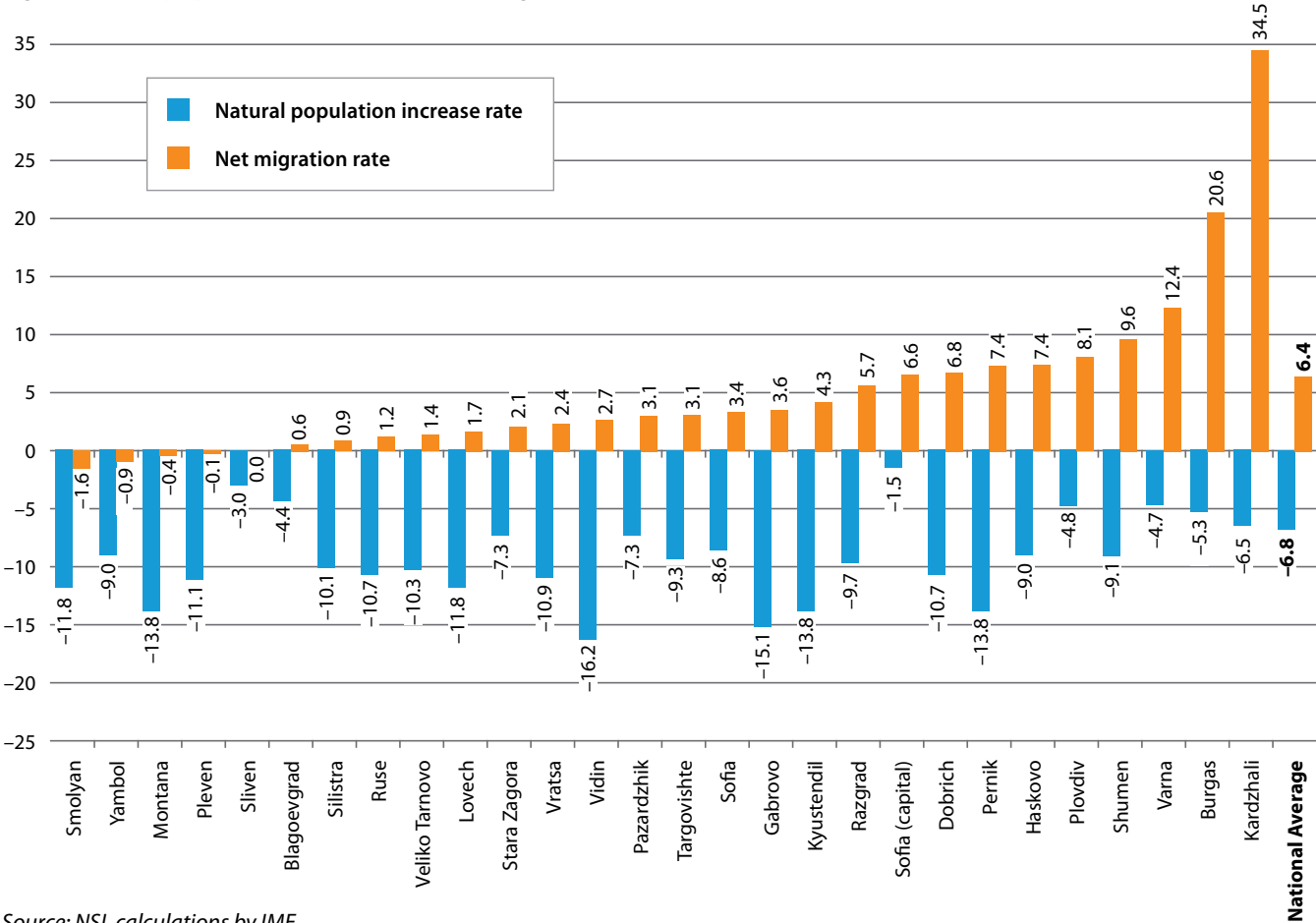
Source: MES.

A review of the results in the 2024 State matriculation exams reveals a widespread improvement in the results for Bulgarian language and literature at district level, coupled with a significant – in some places more than double – reduction in the share of students with “fail” grades. However, large gaps between the districts remain, with the capital (4.65) and the established educational leader among the other districts – Smolyan (4.48), as well as Plovdiv (4.43) and Varna (4.36) achieving the highest scores for yet another year. The lowest-performing schools are in Shumen (3.84), Razgrad (3.88) and Pleven (3.90), with the Northeast emerging as the region with the highest concentration of low-performing schools in recent years. Despite some improvement, the share of low achievers exceeds 17% in Shumen and Pleven, and in as many as 14 districts one in ten students has failed the Bulgarian language exam. This indicates a low level of general literacy in those districts, something that will have real consequences for the productivity of the upcoming workforce in the regional labor market. It is also important to note that comparisons between different sessions of both the matriculation examination and the external assessments after 7th Grade should be considered conditional, as comparability and uniform difficulty from year to year is not necessarily among their goals.

After the big improvements in 2022, there has been a decline in the coverage of the school education system in most districts, with a 0.8 p.p. drop in the net enrolment ratio between 5th and 7th grade at the national level,

while the greatest deterioration is observed in districts where coverage is weak to begin with – in Silistra the enrolment ratio dropped by 3.4 p.p. to just 78.7%, and in Kardzhali by 2.6 p.p. to 84%. There are also declines of about one p.p. in the educational leaders – the capital, Plovdiv, Varna and Smolyan. This is accompanied by an almost universal increase in the share of repeaters, which is also an indication of a worsening quality of local school systems and of their ability to meet the educational minimums.

Fig. 9. Natural population increase and net migration rates, 2023 (%)

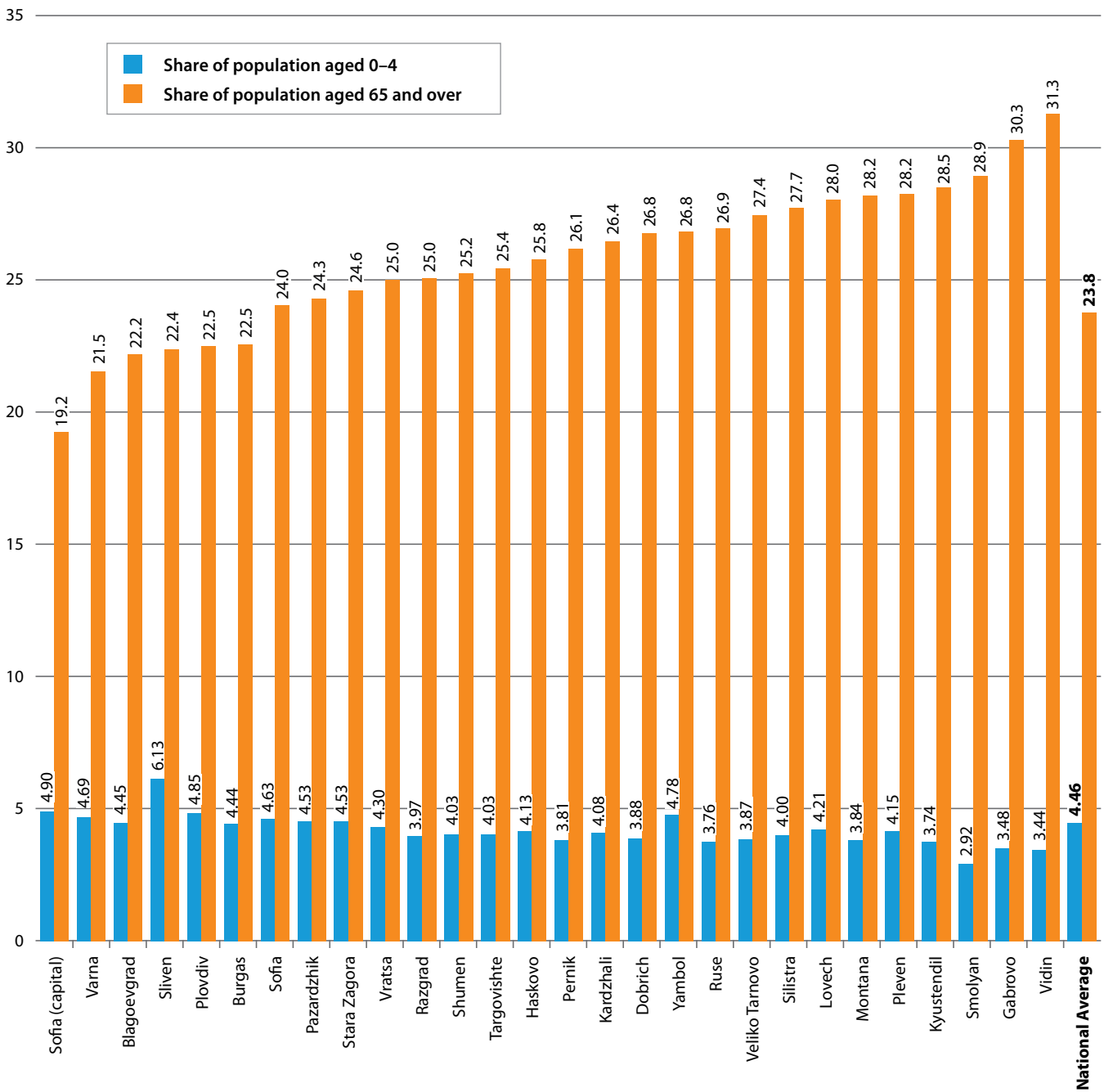


Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

Despite the markedly negative long-term trend, some positive changes in the main demographic indicators were again visible in 2023. The most significant improvements have come mainly through the migration processes, with the net migration remaining negative in only five districts – Sliven, Pleven, Montana, Yambol and Smolyan, though even in those districts the trend is towards a slowdown in the outflow of population. In 2023, Kardzhali still ranked first for positive net migration with 3.5% net migration growth, mainly due to the influx of people from across the border with Turkey. Burgas (2.1%) and Varna (1.2%) also have a favorable migration balance, influenced by the normalization of tourism and the restoration of jobs in hotels and restaurants. Judging by the changes since the beginning of the decade, migration back to the country will have a positive impact on the population size and age structure in almost all districts.

In 2023, natural population increase was largely normalized after the peak mortality during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a 0.1% difference compared to 2019 at the national level. However, large disparities in the balance of mortality and birth rates between districts persist – while in the capital the difference is now only -1.5%, meaning that in a few years the population of Sofia is likely to grow as a result of natural processes, half of the districts are losing more than 1% of their population per year due to negative natural population increase.

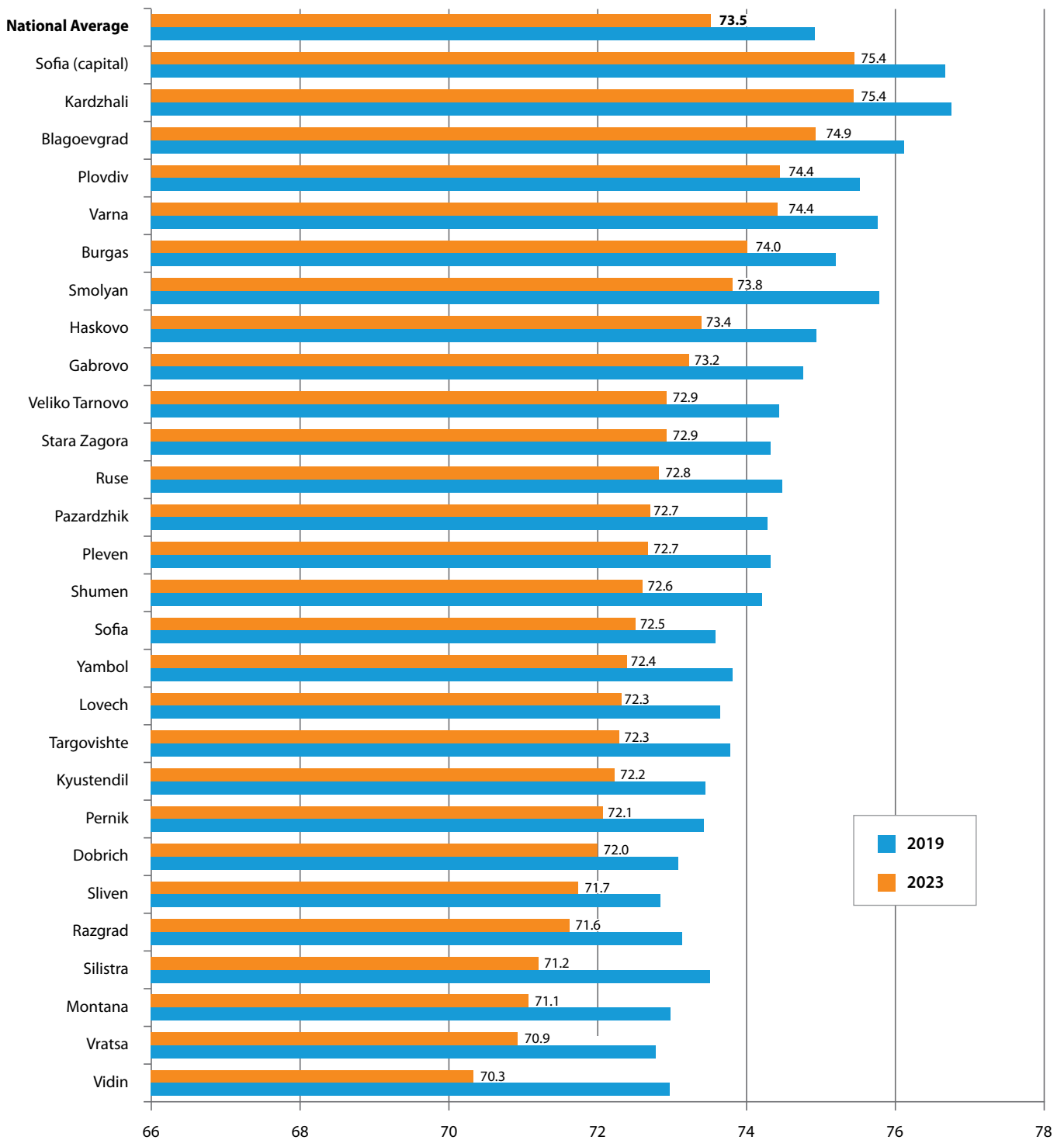
Fig. 10. Shares of population aged 0–4 and 65 and over, 2023 (%)



Source: NSI.

The dynamics of the demographic processes are also a determinant for the differences in the districts' population structure which has a direct impact on the potential for economic growth and for the expansion of labor supply. In 2023, Vidin had the highest share of population at retirement age (65 years and over) – 31%, while Gabrovo also exceeded 30%. It is noteworthy that among the more visibly ageing districts are also some in southern Bulgaria – Kyustendil and Smolyan (29% each), and Yambol (27%). Only the capital city remains with less than 20% of the population aged over 65. As for young children (0 to 4 years), differences in their relative share are not so significant, with most districts in the range of 3.5–4.5% of the total population; the highest number of children is in Sliven (6.1%), and the lowest in Smolyan (2.9%).

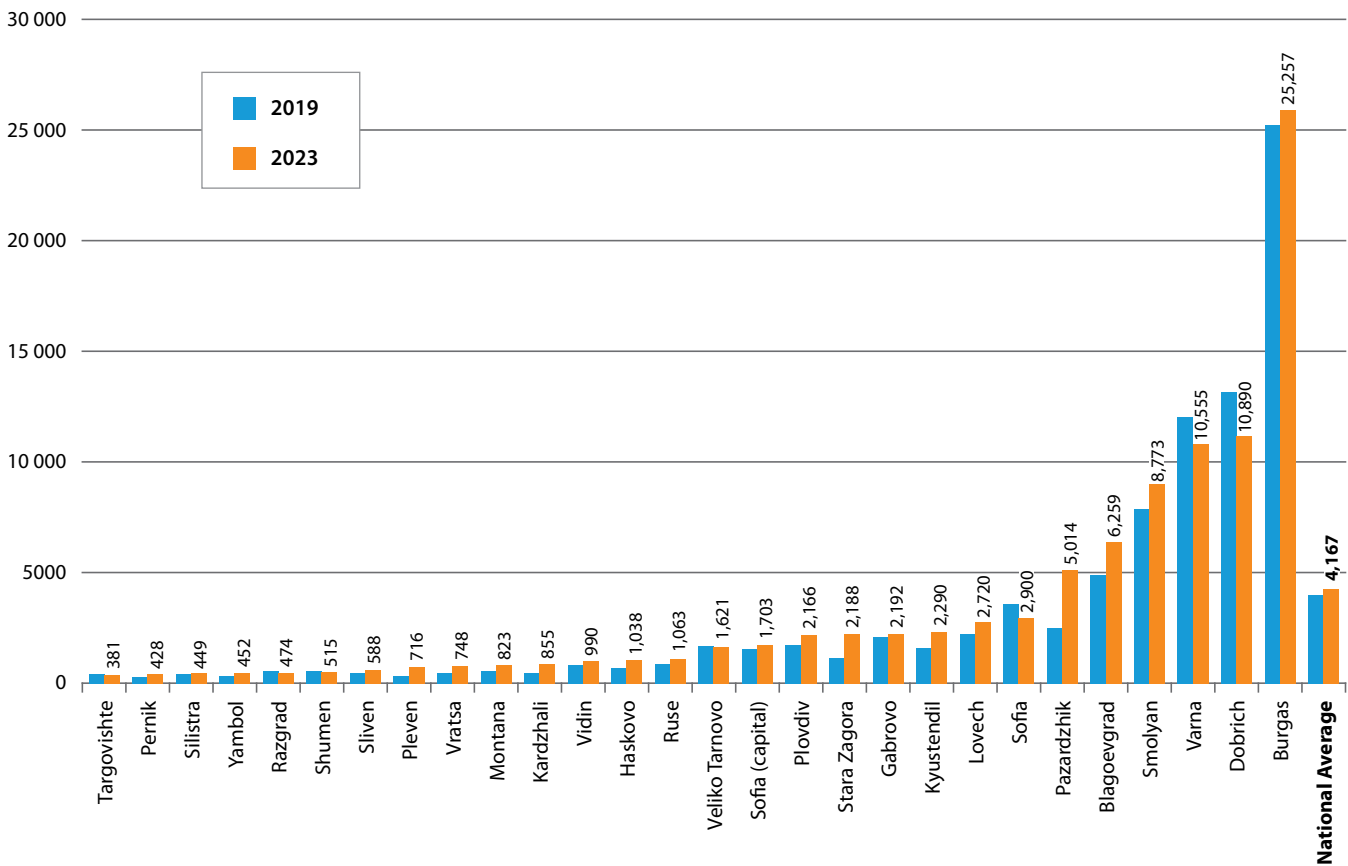
Fig. 11. Average life expectancy, 2019 and 2023



Source: NSI.

A key measure of quality of life in general and of the performance of the healthcare system in particular in each district is life expectancy. None of the districts have reached the best values of this indicator recorded in 2019, but the elimination of the outlier mortality from COVID-19 should have allowed them to come close to those values by mid-decade. However, the large regional disparities remain – while in the capital and Kardzhali life expectancy at birth is 75.4 years, in Vidin it is 70.3 years and in Vratsa – 70.9 years.

Fig. 12. Overnight stays in accommodation per 1,000 population, 2019 and 2023



Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

Among the key indicators of recovery from the impact of the pandemic is also the performance of the tourism sector. While at the national level population-weighted overnight stays in accommodation in 2023 already exceeded those of 2019, among the Black Sea districts this is true only for Burgas; Varna and Dobrich will likely need at least another year to reach the pre-crisis levels. Smaller tourist districts – Smolyan, Blagoevgrad, Pazardzhik – are also showing positive dynamics.

Blagoevgrad district

▶ Population (2023)	287,077
▶ Territory (sq. km)	6,449
▶ Number of settlements	274
▶ Share of urban population (%)	59.9



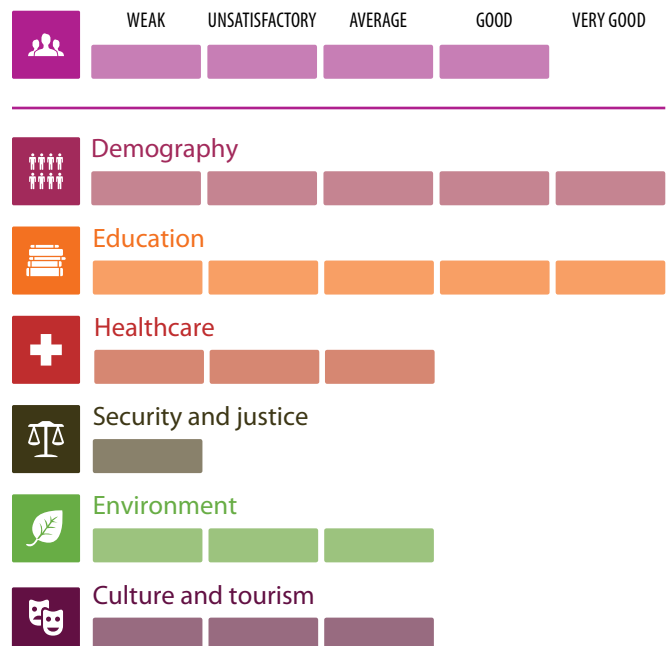
GDP per capita in Blagoevgrad district continues to increase, albeit at a slightly lower rate than the national average. Employment remains above average, but the unemployment rate is significantly less favorable. The relative volumes of investment and production value are below the national average. Blagoevgrad is among the districts with the best quality of road surfaces. The district is also notable for the relatively low level of its local taxes. The municipalities' self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services stand around the national average.

Blagoevgrad is among the districts with relatively good results in the area of demographic indicators. The share of children in kindergartens is high. Students' results for 2024 are around the national average. Healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The crime rate in the district is low and the detection rate relatively high, but the delivery of justice remains sluggish. The share of forest area is high. The intensity of cultural life in Blagoevgrad district is traditionally not among the country's highest, but tourism is well developed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Blagoevgrad district has continued to increase, albeit at a slightly lower rate than the national average, and in 2021 it reached 16,000 BGN. At the same time, the growth rates of salaries and pensions are almost identical with the average ones in the country, though they too remain relatively low. The gross annual salary of persons employed under labor contract in the district is 13,800 BGN, against 21,200 BGN nationally, and in 2022 it was the lowest in the whole country. The average pension in 2023 was 711 BGN, versus 784 BGN nationally.

The relative share of the population living below the national poverty line has fallen slightly, reaching 21.6% and in 2023 it surpassed the national average. The Gini coefficient, which measures the extent of income inequality in the district, has continued to decline and in 2023 it stood at 27.6%, compared to 37.2% nationally.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Blagoevgrad district continues to decrease, falling to 59.5% in 2023, though remaining relatively high when compared to 58.5% countrywide. The employment rate has also declined slightly, but it too remains above the national average – 76.6% in the district, versus 76.2% in the country. The unemployment rate, however, remains almost double the national average – 10.0% in the district, against 5.3% nationally.

The educational structure of the workforce continues to be relatively unfavorable, though it shows some improvement. In 2023, the share of the population aged 25–64 with university education rose to 21%, compared to 31% in the country, while the share of people with primary and lower education fell to 16%, versus 15% nationally.

Investment and business

The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population in the district remained high in 2022, with 78 companies per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population nationally. The relative volume of investment and production value remains below the national average. TFA acquisition expenditure has increased to 2,400 BGN per capita and FDI – to 1,700 BGN. Production value per capita has reached 86,000 BGN per employed person. Expenditure on research and development has gone slightly up but remains relatively low.

Utilization of EU funds has continued to increase and now stands at a level considerably above the national average relative to the population. By 30 June 2024, payments made to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached 4,400 BGN/person, once again placing Blagoevgrad district third in the country after Sofia (capital) and Gabrovo. The largest recipient in the district is Bansko municipality.

Infrastructure

Due to the district's geographic location at the country's periphery and the relatively large proportion of mountainous terrain, the density of its road and rail network is low. For the same reason, its share of highways and first-class roads in the country's road network is small. Nevertheless, Blagoevgrad remains among the districts with the best road quality – 66% in 2023, compared to 40% in the country, second only to Sliven district as regards the share of road surfaces in good condition.

The relative share of households with internet access in Blagoevgrad district went considerably up in 2023 and for the first time exceeded the national average.

The share of the district's population with access to a public sewerage network has decreased but remains above the national average – 78% in the district, versus 75% countrywide. However, Blagoevgrad is the district with the lowest connectivity to waste water treatment plants – 35%, against the national average of 67%.

Local taxes

Contrary to general nationwide trends, the district is relatively well developed economically, while in 2024 the level of local taxes again remained quite low. The average level of the tax burden for all monitored taxes is relatively small. Indeed, Blagoevgrad is the district with the lowest average tax rates for non-gratuitous acquisition of property. The tax rate for non-residential immovable property of legal entities is also significantly lower than average, as is that for motor vehicles. Closest to the average, but again below it, is the average tax rate the municipalities of Blagoevgrad district levy on retail trade.

Within the district, Blagoevgrad municipality levies on average the highest local taxes and Satovcha – the lowest.

Administration

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the municipalities in Blagoevgrad district continued to decline in 2023, remaining extremely low at 17.9% on average in the district, compared to 26.9% nationally. Similarly, the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues remained low at 50.2%, versus 74.1% nationally.

In 2023, the self-assessments of both the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services in Blagoevgrad's municipalities were near the national average.

The AIP transparency rating of the local administration in Blagoevgrad's municipalities, though on the rise, remains below the national average – 63.4% in the district, versus 69.3% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In regard to demographic indicators, Blagoevgrad has achieved relatively good results, though similar to all other districts in the country, the trend towards fast population aging is in evidence here as well.

In 2023, the natural population increase rate in the district decreased to -4.4% , against the national average of -6.8% . The district continues to attract new residents and its net migration rate is positive, albeit a bare 0.6% .

Population aging in the district again remained below the national average in 2023. The share of children aged under 4 was 4.5%, equal to that in the country, but that of people aged 65 and over remained relatively low at 22.2%, versus 23.8% nationwide.

Population density in the district's urban settlements is relatively high, with 2,022 persons/sq. km, versus 1,221 persons/sq. km on average in the country.

Education

Blagoevgrad remains among the districts with the highest share of children attending kindergarten (second only to Smolyan district) – 94% in 2023, compared to the national average of 88%.

Blagoevgrad is also among the districts with the highest rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade – 94% in 2023, compared to 90% countrywide. The percentage of school year repeaters remains considerably lower than the respective national average. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy is relatively weak.

In 2024, students' achievement in Blagoevgrad district again remained close to the national average. The district's average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 41.1 p., compared to 42.9 p. in the country. For its part, the average result in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.31, versus 4.30 nationally. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades was 8.3%, against 8.7% nationwide.

The relative number of university students is on the decline, which is in line with the general nationwide trend, and has reached 27.7 students per 1,000 population, against 29.6 students per 1,000 population in the country.

Healthcare

The percentage of people with health insurance in Blagoevgrad district is 94%, against 95% nationally for 2023. The healthcare system in the district continues to suffer from a shortage of medical staff – both GPs and specialist physicians – and of hospital beds. The number of beds in the local general hospitals is 4.0 per 1,000 population, compared to 6.1 beds per 1,000 population as the national average. Nevertheless, hospital bed occupancy remains relatively low at 52%, compared to 56% nationally. Access to pharmacies is higher than average.

Infant mortality rates remain low – 4.0% , versus 4.9% nationwide. Life expectancy in the district has gone up and remains relatively high at 74.9 years, compared to 73.5 nationwide.

Security and justice

The share of cases closed within 3 months in the district again remained relatively low in 2023 – 88% of the criminal cases (against 91% in the country), 67% of the administrative cases (against 72% in the country) and 64% of the civil cases (against 64% in the country). The average actual workload in Blagoevgrad's District Court is close to the national average – 13.6 cases a month per judge, compared to 14.4 cases nationally. However, the Administrative Court is the busiest one compared to those in the rest of the country's districts – one judge hears on average 19.1 cases per month, compared to 14.8 nationally.

Although there are relatively few police officers in the district, in 2023 the number of crimes again remained low and the detection rate relatively high. The number of police officers is 3.2 per 1,000 population, compared to 4.2 per 1,000 population nationally. Registered crimes against the person and property in Blagoevgrad district amounted to 8.8 per 1,000 population, versus 11.3 per 1,000 population as the national figure. 60% of those crimes were cleared, against 53% on average for the whole country.

Environment

The amount of household waste generated in the district continues to be relatively low – an annual of 398 kg/person in 2022, against 488 kg/person on a national scale. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling has remained low and even continues to decrease, falling to 33%, against 76% as the national average.

By 30 June 2024, the relative volume of installed RES capacities in Blagoevgrad district is commensurable with the national average. The share of forest area is high – 52%, compared to 33% nationally, and that of disturbed area low – 0.1%, versus 0.4% in the country for 2023.

Culture and tourism

The intensity of cultural life in Blagoevgrad district has traditionally not been among the country's highest and this can be seen from the data for 2023. Cinema visits increased, reaching 479 per 1,000 population, against 684 per 1,000 population nationwide and visits to the theatre rose to 143 per 1,000 population, against 349 per 1,000 population in the country. The number of museum visits went up to 651 per 1,000 population, against 770 per 1,000 population nationwide. Numbers for library visits stood at 659 per 1,000 population, compared to 679 per 1,000 population nationwide.

At the same time, the district performs relatively well in the tourism-related indicators. The number of beds in accommodation establishments is 71 per 1,000 population, versus 56 per 1,000 population in the country, and the number of overnight stays has risen to 6,259 per 1,000 population, compared to 4,167 per 1,000 population countrywide. Guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms number 801 per 1,000 population, compared to 500 per 1,000 population nationally.

Key indicators for the district of Blagoevgrad

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,629	16,041	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	12,226	13,833	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	19.1	22.9	21.6	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	61.0	59.8	59.5	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	75.0	76.9	76.6	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	9.1	9.4	10.0	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	18.8	18.4	16.2	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	21.0	20.4	20.7	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	67,797	85,975	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,795	2,425	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,693	1,739	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	83.7	78.0	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	65.6	63.9	65.6	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	61.3	59.9	50.2	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	61.3	61.2	63.4	69.3

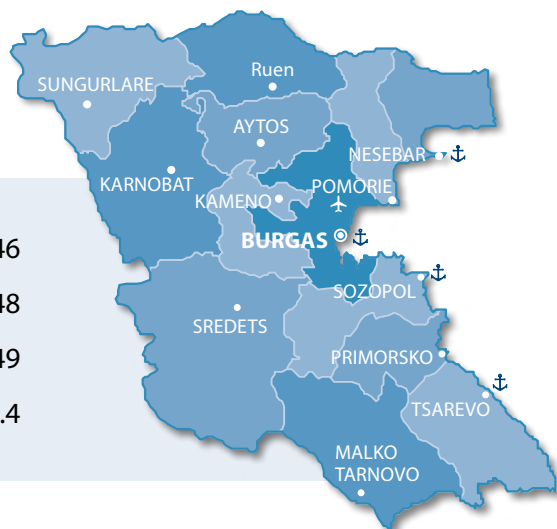
Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–7.5	–4.4	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	0.3	0.6	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.91	3.84	4.31	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	35.0	33.3	41.1	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	92.9	94.5	94.0	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	74.3	74.0	74.9	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	90.2	93.0	94.0	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,775	1,742	1,743	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	7.3	8.9	8.8	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	82	87	88	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	119	122	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	360	398	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	41	33	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	258	333	479	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	3,047	4,799	6,259	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

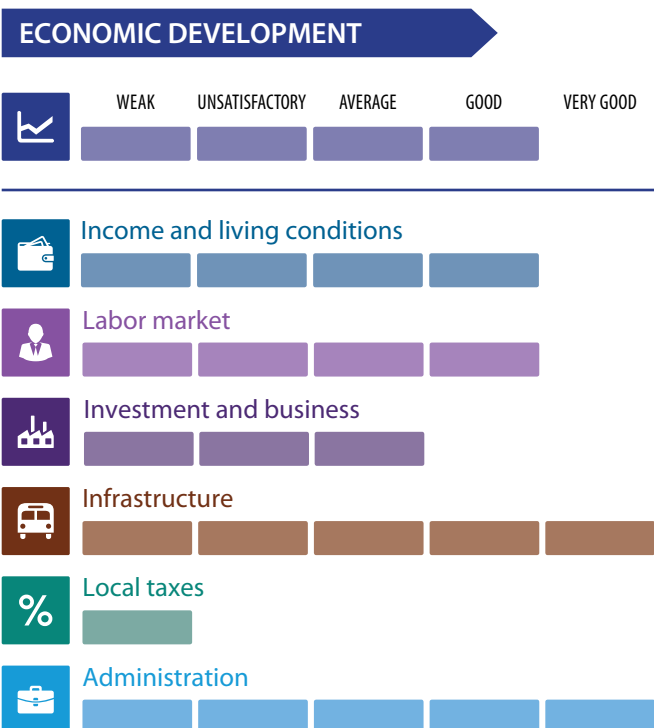
Burgas District



▶ Population (2023)	384,446
▶ Territory (sq. km)	7,748
▶ Number of settlements	249
▶ Share of urban population (%)	76.4

GDP per capita in Burgas district continues to increase, although its growth is relatively limited. Employment and unemployment rates are growing simultaneously. Investment and business activity in the district remains relatively high. The share of highways and first-class roads is high, but the quality of road surfaces remains low. Burgas is among the districts with the highest level of local taxation. The local administrations' self-assessments of e-government development and the provision of one-stop shop services are improving.

The demographic indicators place Burgas district among the top four in the country. In 2024, the results of the students in the district in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade were relatively high. However, the average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature continues to be relatively low. Healthcare in the district is still suffering from a shortage of GPs. The crime rate is rising and remains above the national average. The share of forest area is high. Burgas is the district with the highest rating in the culture and tourism sector.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2022, GDP per capita in Burgas district continued to increase, although its growth remained relatively limited. With a value of 19,500 BGN, it ranks the district eighth in the country. Salaries have also been growing, but their increase is lower than the national average. In 2022, the average annual gross salary of people employed under labor contract in the district reached 16,300 BGN. For its part, in 2023 the average monthly pension rose to 872 BGN, remaining significantly higher than the national average of 784 BGN. Income inequality in the district is lower than the national average and the share of the population living below the national poverty line is decreasing, although it remains above the national average – 21.0% in Burgas district, compared to 20.6% in the country.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Burgas district has registered a slight decrease to 58.7%, but it remains above the national average of 58.5%. Employment and unemployment are rising simultaneously. In 2023, the employment rate reached the national average of 76.2%, while the unemployment rate remained relatively low despite a slight increase to 4.2%, compared to 5.3% nationally.

The educational status of the workforce in the district is gradually, though slowly improving. The share of people aged 25–64 with university education is 23%, against 31% on a national level, while the share of people with primary or lower education is 18%, compared to the national average of 15%.

Investment and business

In 2022, investment and business activity in Burgas district again remained relatively high. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population was 84 per 1,000 population, second only to the capital district. Burgas continues to be among the districts with the highest relative volume of FDI, again ranking third (after the capital and Sofia district) with 5,500 EUR/person. Both TFA acquisition expenditure per capita and production value have increased. The share of export earnings in net sales revenues has fallen slightly to 26% and for the first time is below the national average of 29%.

Payments made to beneficiaries of EU projects have grown as well and by 30 June 2024 they came close to the national average levels. Within the district, the largest sums were utilized by the municipalities of Primorsko, Sozopol and Malko Tarnovo.

Infrastructure

The density of the road and rail network in the district of Burgas again remained relatively low in 2023. The share of highways and first-class roads is high at 26%, versus 19% in the country, but road surface quality remains low – 30% in good condition, against the national average of 40%.

The share of households with internet access continues to be high – 91%, versus the national average of 89%. Access to public sewerage networks in the district is also relatively good – 79%, versus 75% nationally, and almost the entire territory is connected to wastewater treatment plants – 72%, compared to 67% in the country.

Local taxes

Burgas remains among the districts with the highest level of local taxation for 2024. The gap is particularly large for the taxation on motor vehicles and retail trade. Indeed, Burgas is once again the district with the highest taxation on motor vehicles – 1.81 BGN/kW on average, compared to the national average of 1.56 BGN/kW.

Sozopol is the municipality with the highest local taxes both within the district and in the country. Relatively high are also the rates in the tourist municipalities of Pomorie, Primorsko and Burgas. Within the district, the lowest taxes are levied by Malko Tarnovo municipality.

Administration

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the municipalities in the district is the third highest in the country, after that of the capital and Sofia district – 35%, compared to the national average of 27% in 2023. The district is also among the leaders in covering municipal expenditures with local revenues, probably due to the good tourism and property market development.

The local authorities' self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services went up in 2024 and are also among the highest in the country.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has decreased but remains higher, albeit by a small margin, than the national average.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The demographic indicators place Burgas district among the top four in the country, after Sofia (capital city), Sliven and Varna. The rate of natural population increase is still negative, though at -5.3‰ in 2023 it is still among the highest in the country, compared to the national average of -6.8‰ . Burgas district also attracts many new residents and its net migration rate of 20.6‰ is the second highest in the country, after that of Kurdzhali district. The share of children under 4 years is similar to that in the country – 4.4% , versus 4.5% nationwide, but that of people aged 65 and over remains relatively lower at 22.5% , versus 23.8% nationwide.

The population density in the urbanized settlements in Burgas district is also close to the national average – $1,246$ persons/sq. km, compared to $1,221$ persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

The share of children enrolled in local kindergartens has registered a slight decrease, though in 2023 it remained close to and slightly above the national average

For its part, the enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade again remained below the national average in 2023. The index for the alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy is rising and is now above the national average.

In 2024, the results in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade were relatively high – 45.3 p. on average, compared to the national average of 42.9 p. However, the average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature lags behind the national average – the average grade in 2024 was “Good” 4.14 , compared to “Good” 4.30 in the country, and the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was 11.7% , against 8.7% on average in the country.

The number of university students in the district relative to the population decreased in 2023 to 14.5 per $1,000$ population.

Healthcare

In 2023, the share of people with health insurance in Burgas district again remained relatively low – 90% , compared to the national average of 95% . Healthcare in the district also continues to suffer from a shortage of GPs – there are $2,085$ persons per one GP, compared to $1,701$ persons per one GP in the country. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has risen considerably, reaching 5.8 per $1,000$ population, against 6.1 hospital beds per $1,000$ population countrywide. Hospital bed occupancy has also increased to 59% , compared to 56% nationally for 2023. Access to pharmacies is the highest in the whole country.

The infant mortality rate has decreased and in 2023 it was similar to that in the country. For its part, life expectancy in the district has gone up to 74.0 years, compared to 73.5 nationwide.

Security and justice

The speed of delivery of justice in Burgas district and the local justice system’s workloads in 2023 were close to the respective national averages. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 88% , compared to the national average of 91% , the share of civil cases – 72% , versus 65% in the country, and that of administrative cases – 73% , against 72% nationally. There were on average 11.9 cases a month per one District Court judge, compared to 14.4 nationally, and 13.8 cases per one judge in the Administrative Court, versus 14.8 cases nationally.

The crime rate in the district has been rising and remains above the national average. In 2023, the registered crimes against the person and property in Burgas district amounted to 13.6 per $1,000$ population, versus 11.3 per $1,000$ population nationally. At the same time, the detection rate has gone up to 52% , versus the national average of 53% . The number of police officers is also similar to the national average – 4.5 per $1,000$ population in the district, against 4.2 per $1,000$ population nationally.

Environment

In 2022, Burgas once again ranked among the districts with high amounts of household-generated waste – an annual of 543 kg/person, against 488 kg/person on a national scale. At the same time, however, the share of that waste handed over for treatment and recycling was also large – 93% , against 76% as the national average.

The relative volume of installed RES capacities in Burgas district remains relatively low, though it has been rising and by 30 June 2024 it was 0.6 kW/person, against the national average of 1.0 kW/person. The share of forest areas is high – 41% , compared to 33% nationally, and that of disturbed area low – 0.2% , versus 0.4% nationally in 2023.

Culture and tourism

Culture and tourism are strongly present in Burgas and the district leads the ranking in this category. In 2023, the relative number of visits to cinemas and libraries was above the national average relative to the population, while that of visits to theatres and museums – below, though close to the national average. Cinema visits reached 769 per $1,000$ population, against 684 per $1,000$ population nationwide, and visits to museums numbered 767 per $1,000$ population, against 770 per $1,000$ population in the country. Numbers for library visits stood at 844 per $1,000$ population, compared to 679 per $1,000$ population nationwide, while the number of theatre visits was 303 per $1,000$ population, against 349 per $1,000$ population nationwide.

Burgas is the district with the highest relative number of beds in accommodation establishments (382 per $1,000$ population, versus 56 per $1,000$ population in the country), as well as the number of overnight stays ($25,257$ per $1,000$ population, versus $4,167$ per $1,000$ population in the country in 2022). Guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms number $2,674$ per $1,000$ population, compared to 500 per $1,000$ population nationally.

Key indicators for the district of Burgas

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	15,815	19,534	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,852	16,307	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	24.6	22.1	21.0	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	60.2	58.9	58.7	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	70.0	74.3	76.2	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	4.7	4.0	4.2	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.5	19.1	18.4	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	24.4	22.3	23.4	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	83,603	103,064	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,893	3,181	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	5,643	5,470	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	78.5	78.5	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	31.0	29.4	30.0	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	101.3	101.8	83.0	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	72.4	72.7	69.4	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–8.2	–5.3	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	7.1	20.6	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.85	3.68	4.14	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	36.9	37.2	45.3	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	84.8	90.2	89.0	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	73.8	73.1	74.0	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	83.9	90.3	90.2	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	2,129	2,037	2,085	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	11.3	12.5	13.6	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	88	89	88	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	109	111	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	481	543	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	94	93	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	402	674	769	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	15,447	23,733	25,257	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Dobrich district

▶ Population (2023)	146,635
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,720
▶ Number of settlements	216
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.9



GDP per capita in Dobrich district continues 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. Business and investment activity in the district has registered a serious increase. Road surface quality is extremely high. The level of local taxes in the district's municipalities is relatively low. The transparency rating of the local administration remains high. Dobrich is among the districts with the lowest popu-

lation density. The alignment of vocational education and the economy is high. Students' results are relatively low. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. The number of registered crimes in the district is low and the detection rate – relatively high. The share of forest areas is relatively low, but at the same time, that of disturbed area is relatively limited. Dobrich is one of the districts with the highest number of beds in places of accommodation, which signals good opportunities for the development of tourism.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Dobrich district has continued to grow but in 2022 its rate of increase was lower than the national average; in this indicator the district ranks in the lower half. The growth of salaries and pensions is also relatively slow. The average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract in the district has reached 15,800 BGN, against 21,200 BGN nationwide, while the average monthly pension is relatively low – 699 BGN, compared to 784 BGN in the country.

These indicators account for the relatively high poverty level in Dobrich district. In 2023, the share of the people living below the poverty line went up to 32.1%, compared to the national average of 20.6%. Income inequality is also high, with the Gini coefficient being the highest in the country – 41.2, versus 37.2 in the country for 2023.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Dobrich district is relatively low and in 2023 it dropped to 56.4%, compared to 58.5% in the country. Employment is declining as well and remains relatively limited, but unemployment is also low. The employment rate for 2023 was 68.9%, compared to 76.2% in the country, and that of unemployment – 4.8%, versus the national average of 5.3%.

In 2023, the relatively low educational status of the workforce continued to be a major challenge facing the labor market in the district. The share of employed people aged 25–64 with a university degree went up to 19%, against the national average of 31%, while that of people with primary or lower education also went up, reaching 28%, versus 15% nationally.

Investment and business

Business and investment activity in the district registered a serious increase in 2022. The number of non-financial enterprises per capita almost reached the national average. For its part, domestic and foreign investment places the district in the upper half of the ranking. TFA acquisition expenditure reached 3,300 BGN per capita, and foreign investment – 2,300 EUR per person. Production value has also increased significantly, reaching 112,200 BGN per person. However, the share of export earnings in net sales revenues remains low at 13%, compared to 29% in the country.

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 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 2,452 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 3,175 BGN/person. Within the district,

the highest figures were recorded in Dobrich city municipality, while the lowest ones were in the municipality of Tervel.

Infrastructure

The density of the infrastructure in Dobrich district, and especially that of its rail network, remains low. In 2023, the share of highways and first-class roads remained nearly half the national average – 10%, against 19% in the country. Road surface is of poor quality.

Access to the internet has increased but remains below the national average – it was available to 86% of the households, versus 89% nationwide in 2023.

The share of the population living in settlements with access to a public sewerage system is still below the national average – 71%, versus 75% countrywide, though in 2022 all sewerage systems in the district were connected to wastewater treatment plants.

Local taxes

In 2024, local tax rates in Dobrich district again remained below the national average. The margin with the national average rates was especially significant as regards the average local rates on immovable non-residential property for legal entities – 1.60‰ in the district, which is the lowest rate countrywide, where the average was 2.15‰. However, the tax on non-gratuitous transfer of property remained higher than the national average and among the highest in the country.

Within the district, tax rates are lowest in the municipality of Tervel, 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 2024, against 69.3% on average nationwide, which was the second highest rating for that year, after that of Sliven.

The 2024 district municipalities' self-assessments of 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 2023 to 24%, compared to 27% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues was 63%, compared to 74% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population increase rate again remained relatively low in 2023 at -10.7% , compared to -6.8% as the national average. The net migration rate has increased and its value is positive at 6.8% , but it cannot compensate for the population decline in the district, which is a persistent trend. In addition, population aging is visible in the age dependency ratios. The share of children under 4 years is 3.9% , versus 4.5% nationwide, and that of the people aged 65 and over – 26.8% , compared to 23.8% in the country.

Dobrich is among the districts with the lowest population density in its urbanized settlements, ranking only before Vidin district – 565 persons/sq. km, versus 1,221 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

In 2023, the enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade went down and remained relatively low – 83% , compared to 90% countrywide. At the same time, in 2022 the shares of school year repeaters went up 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 2024, especially in the agricultural sector, with a high number of students enrolled in specialized agricultural programs, and a relatively high number of people employed in the sector, as also observed in other districts, Dobrudja, Silistra and Razgrad in particular.

In 2024, students' results for the district remained relatively low. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 33.8 p., compared to 42.9 p. in the country on average. The average score in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.12, compared to the national average of "Good" 4.30. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 9.9% , versus 8.7% 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 3.4 per 1,000 population, against 29.6 per 1,000 population nationwide.

Healthcare

The share of people with health insurance in Dobrich district continued to increase in 2023 and remained higher than the national average. The healthcare system in the district suffers from an acute shortage of specialist physicians, although the proportion of GPs to the district's population is relatively high. Dobrich is also among the districts with the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals – 3.1 beds per 1,000 population, against the national average of 6.1 beds per 1,000 population. At the same time, hospital bed occupancy is below the national average. There is a relative insufficiency of pharmacies in the district. The infant mortality rate in the district went down and in 2023 remained relatively low. At the same time, the average life ex-

pectancy went up to reach 72 years, though it remained below the national average.

Security and justice

Court workloads in Dobrich district again continue to be relatively low. In 2023, there were on average 10.2 cases a month per one District Court judge, compared to 14.4 cases per judge nationally, and 14.4 cases a month per one Administrative Court judge, compared to 14.8 cases per judge in the country. At the same time, the proportion of criminal and civil cases closed within 3 months remained higher than the national average, but delivery of justice for administrative cases is slower than the average.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property has been rising but remains lower than the national average – 10.1 per 1,000 population in the district, versus 11.3 per 1,000 population nationwide. At the same time, the detection rate is also increasing, reaching 61% , versus the national figure of 53% . The relative number of police officers is identical to the national average relative to the population.

Environment

The average annual amount of waste generated by the district's households has been going up and exceeds the national average by a considerable margin – 540 kg/person, compared to the national average of 488 kg/person. At the same time, however, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains among the highest in the country – 97% , versus 76% nationwide.

The share of forest areas is relatively low – 12% , compared to the national average of 33% , but at the same time, the share of disturbed area is relatively limited – 0.1% , versus 0.4% nationally. Dobrich is among the leaders in installed RES capacities per capita.

Culture and tourism

Museum and library visits went up in 2023 and exceeded the national average relative to the population – 1,070 museum visits per 1,000 population, versus 770 per 1,000 population nationwide, and 827 library visits per 1,000 population, versus 679 per 1,000 population in the country. At the same time, visits to the cinema and the theater lagged behind, even though they, too, registered an increase in 2023.

Dobrich is among the districts with the highest number of beds in accommodation establishments relative to the population (outranked only by the district of Burgas) – 193 per 1,000 population, compared to 56 per 1,000 population in the country. The number of overnight stays is also high – 10,890 per 1,000 population, against 4,167 per 1,000 population in the country – and so is the number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms. What largely accounts for the development of tourism is that the territory of the northern Black Sea coastal region is part of the district.

Key indicators for the district of Dobrich

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,385	15,642	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,099	15,837	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	26.0	31.0	32.1	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.3	56.5	56.4	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.3	70.2	68.9	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	4.9	4.8	4.8	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	25.6	26.7	28.4	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	20.3	17.6	18.7	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	84,452	112,152	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,822	3,267	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,816	2,270	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	70.6	71.5	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	40.3	5.9	25.3	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	83.0	75.2	63.4	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	81.2	81.3	81.3	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–14.0	–10.7	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	1.7	6.8	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.68	3.72	4.12	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.2	29.0	33.8	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	70.6	84.5	83.4	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	71.6	70.8	72.0	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	86.0	96.3	96.9	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,507	1,411	1,455	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	8.1	9.9	10.1	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	94	91	93	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	83	90	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	450	540	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	95	97	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	70	118	141	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	7,205	9,449	10,890	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Gabrovo district

- ▶ Population (2023)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

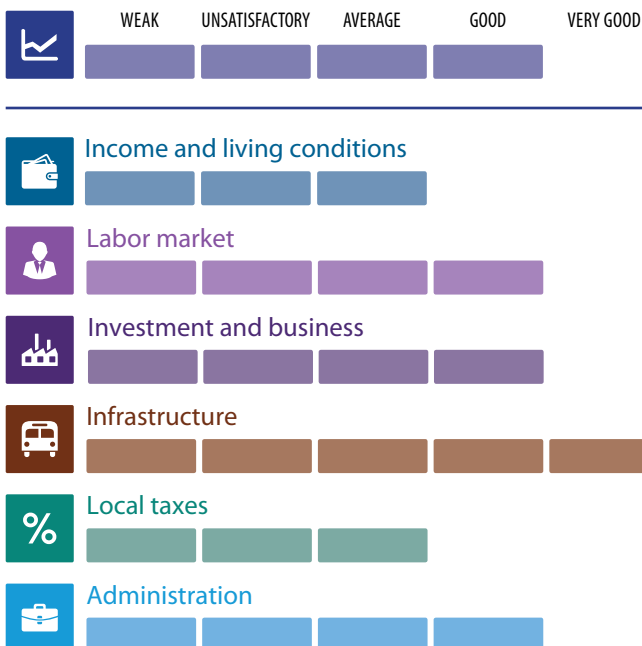
94,862
2,023
349
79.5



GDP, salaries and incomes in Gabrovo district have continued to grow, while the poverty level remains relatively low. The share of the working-age population has declined for yet another year. Business and investment activity in the area is high. Gabrovo remains among the districts with the highest amount of utilized EU funds per person. Despite the high density of the road network, the share of highways and first-class roads is relatively small. The level of the local taxes is close to the national average. The local administrations' self-assessments of the development of e-government are high.

Gabrovo is one of the districts with the most unfavorable demographic picture. Educational results are good. The indicators evaluating healthcare place the district among the top performers in the country. Gabrovo is among the districts with the highest share of health-insured persons. The share of cleared crimes has decreased but remains among the highest in the country. The installed RES capacities have gone up considerably to exceed the national average per capita. Cultural life and tourism in Gabrovo district remain among the most active in the country.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2022, GDP in Gabrovo continued to grow, reaching 21,400 BGN per capita, but the district dropped a place to become the seventh highest in the country. Salaries and pensions have also gone up, though at a lower rate than the national average. The average gross annual salary of employed people reached 17,100 BGN, and the average monthly pension – 748 BGN in 2023.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality again went down and in 2023 was the lowest in the country – 24.3, versus 37.2 nationally. The share of the population living below the national poverty line has also decreased and continues to be relatively low – 15.7%, against 20.6% in the country.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population remains the third lowest in the country (after Vidin and Yambol). In 2023, employment went down and unemployment went up. The employment rate reached 74.3%, compared to 76.2% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 4.2%, compared to 5.3% in the country.

Gabrovo is among the districts with a relatively high share of employed people with secondary education – 61%, compared to 55% in the country – which corresponds to its industrial profile. At the same time, the share of university graduates is relatively low, while that of people with primary or lower education is comparable to the country's average.

Investment and business

Business and investment activity in the district again remained high in 2022. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population was 64 per 1,000 population, against the national average of 70 per 1,000 population. TFA acquisition expenditures went up considerably to reach 3,700 BGN/person. FDI also increased and reached 4,400 EUR/person, thus placing the district among the top four in the country in this indicator. Production value also increased to 103,600 BGN per employed person. The share of export earnings in net sales revenues remains high – 40%, against 29% nationally.

The capital again outstripped Gabrovo in the utilization of EU funds per capita and the latter district now ranks second in this category. By 30 June 2024, payments made in it to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 4,698 BGN/person, versus 3,175 BGN/person nationally. The top place in the district was held by Gabrovo city municipality.

Infrastructure

Gabrovo is the district with the highest road network density in the country – 25.6 km/100 sq. km of territory, compared to 18.0 km/100 sq. km in the country, although in 2023 the share of highways and first-class roads was lower than the national average – 17%, compared to 19% in the country. The share of road surfaces in good condition is also lower. Households' access to the internet has continued to increase and already exceeds the national average.

Gabrovo is also among the districts with the best access of the population to public sewerage networks – 83%, compared to 75% in the country, and to sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants – 73%, versus 67% nationwide.

Local taxes

Although Gabrovo is among the districts with a relatively highly developed economy, in 2024 the level of local taxes again remained close to the national average. A particularly big margin is observed as regards the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, where the average rate in the district's municipalities is 2.64%, versus 2.82% nationally. The retail trade tax rate is also considerably lower compared to that in the country – 9.70 BGN/sq. m, compared to 13.09 BGN/sq. m in the country.

Within the district, Gabrovo city municipality levies the highest local taxes, while the lowest rates are those in Tryavna municipality.

Administration

In 2024, the self-assessments of the local authorities of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services continued to rise but while the self-assessment on e-government continues to be relatively high, that on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services still lags behind the average ones in the country.

In 2024, the AIP active transparency ratings of the local administration in Gabrovo district registered a slight decrease but remained relatively high at 71.4%, compared to the national average of 69.3%.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the municipalities in the district is relatively low – 21%, compared to 27% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is also low but in 2023 it went up to 63%, versus 74% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Gabrovo is among the districts whose demographic picture in 2023 was once again among the most unfavorable ones in the country, ranking the district only one place above the bottom, which is occupied by the district of Vidin. The natural population increase rate of -15.1% is the second worst in the country, after that of Vidin, against the national average of -6.8% . The net migration rate is positive (3.6%) but it cannot compensate for the low rate of natural population increase.

The trend towards population aging is clearly discernible in the age structure of the population. The share of children under 4 years is 3.5% , against 4.5% nationally, and that of the population aged 65 and over – 30.3% , compared to 23.8% in the country.

The density of the population in the district's urbanized settlements remains relatively low – 914 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km countywide.

Education

Gabrovo's performance in the education category is among the good ones. In 2023, it was once again among the districts with a very high rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade. The percentage of school year repeaters has gone up but remains relatively low. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy is low – 39.2% , against 53.1% in the country for 2023.

In 2024, the average score of the district's students in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 38.6 p., compared to 42.9 p. in the country. The average result in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was below the national average – "Good" 4.25, versus "Good" 4.30 nationally, but the share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades continues to be lower than average – 8.1% , against 8.7% countrywide.

The number of university students relative to the population in Gabrovo has been falling but the district ranks immediately below the top four in this category.

Healthcare

Gabrovo district is among the top three performers in the country in this category, where it is preceded only by the districts of Pleven and the capital.

The average life expectancy of the district's residents has increased and is now very close to the national average. In 2023, Gabrovo again remained among the districts with the highest share of health-insured persons. The relative number of GPs is higher than the national average, but specialist physicians are scarce. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has continued to rise but it still fails to reach the national average. Hospital bed occupancy also remains slightly lower.

The infant mortality rate in the district remains considerably below the national average. Access to pharmaceuticals, measured through the number of pharmacies relative to the population, is high.

Security and justice

Court workloads in Gabrovo district again remained relatively low in 2023, which impacts the speed of delivery of justice. The average actual workload of the District Court judges is 9.9 cases per month, compared to 14.4 cases per judge in the country and that of the judges in the Administrative Court is 11.8 cases per month. Around 91% of the criminal cases were closed within 3 months, equaling the national average. For Administrative court cases, this share is 84%, versus 72% nationally, and for civil cases heard in the District Court – 79%, against 65% in the country.

In 2023, the relative number of registered crimes increased and for the first time exceeded the national average. Registered crimes against the person and property reached 11.7 per 1,000 population, compared to 11.3 per 1,000 people in the country. At the same time, the crime detection rate in Gabrovo has gone down, though still remaining among the highest in the country – 69%, versus 53% on average in the country. The number of police officers is close to, though below the national average – 4.1 per 1,000 population, compared to 4.2 per 1,000 population countrywide.

Environment

In 2022, the relative volume of generated household waste in the district registered a slight decrease and remained below the national average – an annual of 421 kg/person, against 488 kg/person in the country. At the same time, however, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is high at 87%, compared to 76% in the country.

The share of forest areas is above the national average (40%, compared to 33% in the country), and that of disturbed area – considerably lower – 0.1%, against 0.4% countrywide. The installed RES capacities have increased considerably and exceed the national average per capita.

Culture and tourism

Gabrovo's cultural and tourist activity remains among the most intensive in the country and ranks the district among the top five performers in this category for 2023. The main reason for this is the extremely high number of visits to museums – 3,544 per 1,000 population, against the national average of 770 per 1,000 population. The number of theatre visits is also relatively high. Visits to libraries and cinemas have increased in number but have not yet reached the respective national averages.

The number of beds in accommodation establishments in the district is 38 per 1,000 population, against 56 per 1,000 population in the country, and the number of overnight stays has reached 2,192 per 1,000 population, against 4,167 per 1,000 population in the country. Guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms amount to 165 per 1,000 population, compared to 500 per 1,000 population in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Gabrovo

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	16,549	21,351	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	15,771	17,118	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	12.3	21.9	15.7	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	55.4	54.3	54.4	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	73.4	76.4	74.3	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	3.9	4.1	4.2	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	11.7	13.5	16.1	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	24.6	23.5	23.4	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	83,086	103,610	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,460	3,702	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	3,382	4,404	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	83.3	83.1	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	26.5	33.7	23.3	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	57.4	61.0	63.3	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	72.9	72.9	71.4	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–18.0	–15.1	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	2.8	3.6	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.87	3.80	4.25	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.9	31.3	38.6	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	90.5	92.9	92.9	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	73.2	72.1	73.2	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	96.9	100.0	100.0	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,567	1,535	1,539	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	10.1	9.6	11.7	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	86	88	91	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	100	104	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	427	421	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	87	87	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	209	336	387	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	1,406	2,152	2,192	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Haskovo district

- ▶ Population (2023)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

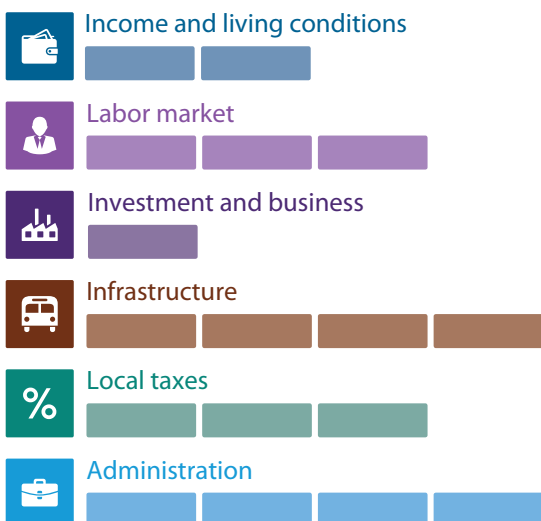
207,114
5,533
261
71.5



Although GDP per capita in the district is growing relatively fast, its value remains low. Employment is falling and unemployment is rising. Investment activity in Haskovo District remains weak. The density of the road network, the share of highways and first-class roads and the quality of road surfaces are high. Local tax levels in the municipalities of the district are close to but below the national average. The AIP rating has increased further and remains higher than average. The district's rate of natural population increase is

strongly negative, though the net migration rate is positive. Students' results are low. Healthcare in Haskovo district suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. Life expectancy is high. The number of crimes in the district is increasing, but remains lower than the national average, and the detection rate is higher. The relative number of household waste generated has increased significantly but remains below the national average. Cultural life and tourism in the district have a relatively weak presence.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Although GDP per capita in the district grew relatively fast in 2022, its value remains low and ranks Haskovo among the bottom three districts in this indicator (ahead of Silistra and Sliven). Salaries are also among the three lowest in the country. The average annual gross salary of people employed under labor contract was 14,300 BGN in 2023, versus 21,200 BGN in the country. The average monthly pension is 757 BGN, against 784 BGN nationally.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality in the district was again relatively low in 2023. Poverty is declining but remains relatively high, with 26.0% of the population living below the national poverty line, compared to 20.6% in the country.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in the district steadied at 56.3% in 2023, remaining below the national average of 58.5%. Employment is declining and unemployment is rising. The employment rate reached 72.7%, compared to 76.2% nationally, and the unemployment rate – 6.7%, versus 5.3% nationally.

The local labor market continues to face the challenge posed by the educational structure of the workforce. The share of university graduates among the 25–64 age group was 19% in 2023, compared to 31% in the country, and the share of people with primary or lower education – 21%, compared to the national average of 15%.

Investment and business

Investment activity in Haskovo district again remained slack in 2022. The number of non-financial enterprises in the district was 68 per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population in the country. TFA acquisition expenditures went up but nevertheless remained extremely low at 1,700 BGN/person, compared to 4,300 BGN/person nationally. FDI also increased to 680 EUR/person, against the national average of 4,500 EUR/person. These indicator values account for the relatively limited production value, in spite of a considerable increase compared to the year before.

Utilization of EU funds is also relatively low. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 2,213 BGN/person, versus the national average of 3,175 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Svilengrad.

The relative size of research and development expenditure remains extremely low, only above that in Targovishte.

Infrastructure

The density of the road and rail network in Haskovo district is above the national average. The share of first-class roads and highways is also higher than the national average – 22%, compared to 19% in the country in 2023. The quality of the road surfaces has been improving and exceeds the country's average. The share of road surfaces in good condition was 46% in 2023, compared to 40% countrywide.

Households' access to the internet in the district decreased in 2023 to 83%, versus 89% in the country.

There has been little change in the share of households with access to a public sewerage network, which in 2022 was 71%, against 75% in the country. The share of households whose sewerage system is connected to a wastewater treatment plant is 54%, compared to 67% countrywide.

Local taxes

In 2024, the levels of the monitored local taxes in the municipalities on the district's territory again remained close to, though below the national average. The tax rates for immovable non-residential property for legal entities and motor vehicles were practically equal to the respective national averages. Lower than the average ones were the tax rates on retail trade (12.82 BGN/sq. m, versus 13.08 BGN/sq. m in the country) and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property (2.63%, against 2.81% nationally). Within the district, the lowest local taxes are levied by the municipality of Ivaylovgrad, and the highest – by that of Madzharovo.

Administration

In 2024, the self-assessment of the district's municipalities of the development of e-government went down but nevertheless remained above the national average. The self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services decreased significantly and fell below the national average. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administrations has increased further and remains higher than average – 75.4% in the district, versus 69.3% in the country.

The share of own revenues in the municipalities' total revenues in 2023 was 24%, compared to 27% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues – 71%, compared to 74% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population increase in the district is relatively low at -9.0‰, compared to -6.8‰ nationally. However, the net migration rate has recorded a significant increase and in 2023 it was positive (7.4‰), which largely compensates for the natural population decline.

Population aging in the district is similar to the country's average. The share of children under 4 years has increased slightly to 4.1%, compared to 4.5% in the country, but the share of people aged 65 and over in the district has also increased to 25.8%, against 23.8% in the country.

Population density is relatively low – 916 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km nationally.

Education

The share of children attending kindergartens continues to be lower than the national average. The coverage of the education system in the district also remains relatively low and in 2023 the net enrolment in 5th–7th grade even went down to 85%, against 90% nationally. The share of school year repeaters is above the national average, albeit slightly. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is at a relatively high level due to the high share of students in manufacturing-related programs and employees with vocational qualifications in that sector and their low share in construction.

Students' results again remained low in 2024. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 36.8 p., versus 42.9 p. in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.16, compared to "Good" 4.30 nationally. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) remained relatively high – 10.2%, against 8.7% nationally.

Healthcare

The healthcare system in Haskovo district suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The number of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – is below the national average. There is one GP per 1,937 people, compared to 1,701 people per GP nationally. The number of beds in the district's general hospitals remains extremely low and in 2023 it even decreased to 3.7 beds per 1,000 population, compared to 6.1 beds per 1,000 people in the country. At the same time, hospital bed occupancy is above the national average.

The pharmacy network is also underdeveloped and access to pharmacies is deteriorating – there is one pharmacy per 2,919 people in the district, versus one pharmacy per 1,982 people in the country.

The average life expectancy of the district's population is rising and remains relatively high – 73.4 years, against 73.5 years nationwide.

The number of people with health insurance continued to increase in 2023, though remaining slightly below the national average.

Security and justice

The workloads of the Administrative Court judges in the district again remained above the national average in 2023, while the relative share of administrative cases closed within 3 months was the lowest in the whole country, after that in Plovdiv district – 59%, against 72% nationally. At the same time, the share of criminal cases closed within 3 months equaled the national average – 91%, and that of civil cases was relatively high – 79% in the district, against 65% countrywide.

The number of crimes in Haskovo district has been increasing, but remains below the national average, while the detection rate is higher. In 2023, registered crimes against the person and property amounted to 10.9 per 1,000 population, compared to 11.3 per 1,000 population nationally. The proportion of cleared crimes was 60%, against 53% nationally. The number of police officers relative to the population is slightly below the national average.

Environment

The volumes of generated household waste in Haskovo district have increased significantly, though remaining below the country's average. In 2022, the annual amount of generated household waste was 385 kg/person, compared to the national average of 488 kg/person, while 97% of that waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to 76% in the country.

The share of forest area is close to the national average – 32% in the district, compared to 33% in the country, but disturbed area is significantly more limited – 0.1% in the district, compared to 0.4% in the country in 2023. The installed RES capacities are slightly above the national average relative to the population. The cooling degree days index is very high (second only to Yambol). However, the consumption of drinking water by the households is relatively low.

Culture and tourism

The district's performance in this category puts it among the bottom three, along with Montana and Kardzhali.

Cultural life in Haskovo district has a relatively minor presence. In 2023, theater visits increased to 210 per 1,000 population, against 349 per 1,000 population nationally, and visits to the local libraries – to 331 per 1,000 population, against 679 per 1,000 population in the country. The number of cinema and museum visits relative to the population is about five times lower than the national average.

Tourism is also not particularly intensive. The number of beds in accommodation establishments in the district is 13 per 1,000 population, versus 56 per 1,000 population in the country, and the number of overnight stays – 1,038 per 1,000 population, compared to 4,167 per 1,000 population in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Haskovo

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,817	12,859	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	12,906	14,308	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	32.9	30.2	26.0	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	58.1	56.3	56.3	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	71.3	73.7	72.7	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	5.7	6.4	6.7	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.9	20.1	21.0	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	18.5	18.6	18.6	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	64,441	86,437	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,399	1,747	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	614	680	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	71.3	71.4	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	38.9	39.5	46.1	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	79.8	72.6	70.9	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	72.2	72.4	75.4	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–12.6	–9.0	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	–1.5	7.4	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.62	3.72	4.16	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.4	31.5	36.8	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	85.6	86.1	85.1	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	73.1	72.5	73.4	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	89.6	93.5	93.8	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,932	1,849	1,937	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	9.1	10.5	10.9	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	88	89	91	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	80	81	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	319	385	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	98	97	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	91	51	110	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	501	900	1,038	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Kardzhali district

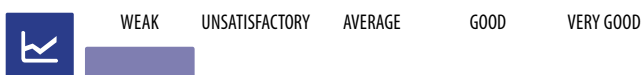
▶ Population (2023)	146,562
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,209
▶ Number of settlements	468
▶ Share of urban population (%)	41.2



Kardzhali is among the districts with the worst performance as regards the incomes and quality of life of the population. Employment has been going down and unemployment has been going up. Investment and business activity has improved, though remaining relatively limited. The density of the road network is higher than the national average, though the share of highways and first-class roads is relatively low. The tax rates for retail trade and immovable non-residential property for legal entities levied by the municipalities in the district are considerably lower than the national average. E-government is not well developed.

The rate of natural population increase is relatively high. Students' performance in the district again remains poor. Healthcare suffers from a chronic shortage of doctors and hospital beds. Life expectancy is high. The number of registered crimes against the person and property is low and the crime detection rate is high. The amount of household waste generated in the district is low, but at the same time, only a small proportion of this waste is handed over for treatment and recycling. Cultural life and tourism in Kardzhali district are among the least active in the country.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Income and living conditions



Labor market



Investment and business



Infrastructure



Local taxes



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Demography



Education



Healthcare



Security and justice



Environment



Culture and tourism



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Kardzhali is among the districts with the worst performance as regards the incomes and quality of life of the population.

In 2022, GDP per capita rose considerably, though its level remained relatively low – 15,400 BGN/person, compared to 26,000 BGN/person in the country. Pensions have been growing at a slower rate and remain the lowest in the country – the average monthly pension in the district is 633 BGN, compared to 784 BGN in the country. Salaries in the district have also recorded the smallest increase in the whole country for 2022 – by 8%, against 13% nationally, reaching 15,700 BGN/person, against the national average of 21,200 BGN/person.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality remains low in Kardzhali district, but the poverty level has been rising and is now high. The proportion of people living below the poverty line is 27.3%, against the national average of 20.6% for 2023.

Labor market

The working-age population is declining and remains below the national average – 56.8% in the district, compared to 58.5% in the country for 2023. At the same time, employment declined and unemployment increased. The employment rate reached 70.6%, compared to 76.2% in the country, and the unemployment rate went up to 10.2%, against 5.3% in the country.

The labor market continues to face the challenge of the population's unfavorable educational structure, which even worsened in 2023. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education is 20%, compared to 15% in the country, while that of the people with a university degree has gone down to 22%, versus 31% nationally.

Investment and business

In 2022, investment and business activity in Kardzhali improved but remained relatively slack. The relative number of non-financial enterprises increased and is no longer the lowest in the country – 48 per 1,000 population, against the national average of 70 per 1,000 population. TFA expenditures marked an increase to 1,800 BGN/person, and FDI registered a growth to 3,000 BGN/person.

Production in the district has been on the increase, although it remains significantly below the national average relative to the employed population – 69,800 BGN in Kardzhali, against 122,400 BGN in the country. Considerably above the national average, however, is the share of export earnings in net sales revenues – 38%, against 29% in the country, which has to do with the district being situated at the country's border.

Research and development expenditures per capita in the district again remained low in 2022.

Utilization of EU funding has increased but is still lagging behind the country's average. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs

amounted to 2,529 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the municipalities with the highest rate of utilization were those of Kardzhali and Momchilgrad but neither of them managed to reach the national average.

Infrastructure

In 2023, the density of the rail network in Kardzhali district again remained among the lowest in the country. The road network density is higher than the national average but the share of highways and first-class roads is relatively low – 11%, against 19% in the country. The share of road surfaces in good condition is close to, but below the national average – 35% in the district, compared to 40% across the country.

The share of households with internet access in the district has decreased and in 2023 it was still below the national average.

The share of the population living in settlements connected to a public sewerage system is among the lowest in the country – 43%, against 75% in the country. Connectivity of the public sewerage networks with wastewater treatment plants is similarly among the lowest – 38%, compared to the national average of 67%.

Local taxes

The municipalities in Kardzhali district again kept local tax rates low in 2024. The margin is especially large as regards the retail trade tax and the tax rate on immovable non-residential property for legal entities. The tax rates for non-gratuitous acquisition of property and for motor vehicles are slightly higher than the respective national averages. Within the district, the local tax rates are lowest in the municipality of Chernoochene, and highest in the municipality of Ardino.

Administration

The performance of the municipalities in Kardzhali district in this category is the second lowest in the country, ranking it only above Vidin.

In 2024, the local authorities' self-assessments of the development of e-government and of the provision of one-stop shop services remained extremely low. The transparency rating of the local administration is low as well – 67.8%, compared to the national average of 69.3%.

Similar to the processes in the rest of the country's districts, the share of own revenues in the total revenues of Kardzhali district's municipalities in 2023 decreased, going down to 18%, against 27% in the country, while the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues shrank to 56%, against 74% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population increase rate in Kardzhali district remains more favorable than the national average of -6.8% , although at -6.5% it too is still negative. The district continues to attract a great number of new residents and the net migration rate is again the highest in the country.

The share of children under 4 years in Kardzhali district is below the country's average – 4.1% , compared to the national average of 4.5% , while the share of the population aged 65 and over exceeds the national average – 26.4% , compared to 23.8% in the country,

Although a small share of the population lives in urban settlements, its density is relatively high – $1,702$ persons/sq. km, against $1,221$ persons/sq. km on average nationwide.

Education

Kardzhali is one of the three districts (alongside Lovech and Sliven) occupying the bottom places in this category.

Enrolment in 5th–7th grade in Kardzhali district has marked a decrease and is among the lowest in the country. At the same time, the proportion of school year repeaters remains relatively small. In 2024, the alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy in the district again remained below the national average.

In 2024, the performance of the students from the district was once again poor. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 36.8 p., compared to 42.9 p. in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was “Good” 4.22 , compared to “Good” 4.30 nationally. The share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature, however, was 14.7% , compared to the national average of 8.7% .

Higher education in the district is poorly represented, with 3.6 university students per $1,000$ population, compared to 29 per $1,000$ population countrywide.

Healthcare

In 2023, the health insurance system in Kardzhali district again covered practically the whole of its population. Life expectancy is among the highest in the country (along with that in the capital). At the same time, healthcare in Kardzhali district suffers from a chronic shortage of doctors and of hospital beds. Kardzhali is the district with the lowest number both of GPs and of specialist physicians relative to the population. There is one GP per $2,950$ population, whereas nationally the proportion is $1,701$ per GP on average.

The number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals relative to the population remains extremely low – 3.8 beds per $1,000$ population, compared to the national average of 6.1 beds per $1,000$ population. The relative number of pharmacies in the district is also limited.

Security and justice

Kardzhali's performance in this category places the district among the top three in the ranking. In 2023, the workloads of the District Court judges were among the lowest in the country, though the workloads of the Administrative Court judges were relatively high. Delivery of justice in the district is speedy. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 97% , against the national average of 91% ; that of administrative cases is 78% , compared to 72% in the country, and of civil cases – 85% , versus 65% nationally.

In 2023, the number of registered crimes against the person and property in Kardzhali district rose slightly, though remaining among the lowest in the country – 5.7 crimes per $1,000$ population, versus 11.3 per $1,000$ population nationwide. The detection rate continues to be extremely high, reaching 69% , versus the national figure of 53% , even though the number of police officers is below the average one countrywide.

Environment

In 2022, the amount of household waste in the district remained the lowest in the country – 246 kg/person, compared to 488 kg/person nationally. At the same time, however, a relatively small portion of this waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 10% , against 76% in the country.

Kardzhali is among the districts with the largest forest areas, with a share of 54% , compared to 33% in the country. Disturbed area, on the other hand, is relatively limited – 0.1% , compared to 0.4% in the country for 2023. The installed RES capacities in the district relative to the population are higher than the national average. The amount of drinking water consumed by the households relative to the population is relatively small.

Culture and tourism

In 2023, cultural life in Kardzhali district again remained among the least active in the country, where it ranks only before Montana. The district has the lowest number of visits to local museums – 85 per $1,000$ population, against the average of 770 per $1,000$ population in the country. Visits to the cinema relative to the population have increased, though remaining over five times lower than the average ones. Visits to the local theatres and libraries are also relatively few in number.

Tourism again gets a poor rating for 2023. The number of beds in accommodation establishments has been increasing but remains low, with 19 beds per $1,000$ population, compared to 56 per $1,000$ population nationally. Overnight stays are also relatively low at 855 per $1,000$ population, versus $4,167$ per $1,000$ population nationally. Guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms are a whole ten times fewer than the national average relative to the population.

Key indicators for the district of Kardzhali

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,760	15,411	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,508	15,693	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	25.5	25.9	27.3	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.6	57.0	56.8	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	72.8	74.1	70.6	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	8.2	9.5	10.2	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	26.6	21.7	20.0	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	24.2	23.5	22.4	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	65,054	69,814	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,449	1,771	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	2,567	2,952	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	42.7	43.5	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	40.9	40.0	34.5	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	71.5	57.2	56.0	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	66.0	66.0	67.8	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–9.4	–6.5	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	21.6	34.5	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.73	3.75	4.22	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.5	29.4	36.8	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	76.0	86.6	84.0	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	75.5	74.6	75.4	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	3,097	2,777	2,950	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	4.7	5.1	5.7	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	86	93	97	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	74	79	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	239	246	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	12	10	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	27	40	128	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	837	869	855	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Kyustendil district

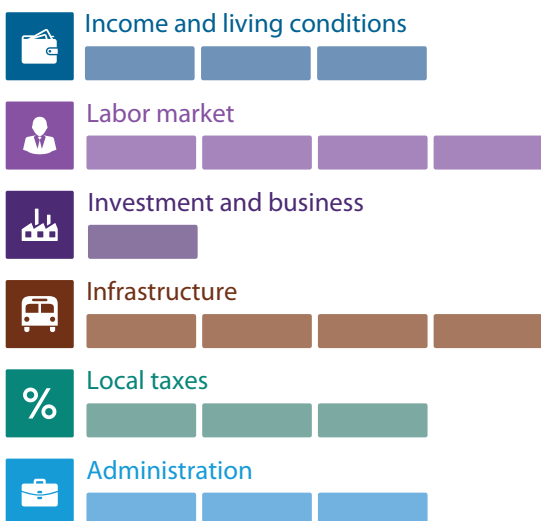
▶ Population (2021)	107,673
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,052
▶ Number of settlements	182
▶ Share of urban population (%)	68.4



GDP per capita in Kyustendil district has been growing, though considerably more slowly than in the country on average. The labor market is developing well. Employment is rising and unemployment is dropping. Investment activity in the district is among the lowest in the country. The density of the road and rail network in Kyustendil remains high. The average rate of local taxes in the district's municipalities is close to the national average. The rating of the local administrations' transparency is improving, though remaining low.

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. The healthcare system has the highest number of GPs. The number of crimes is low, and the crime detection rate is high. The amounts of generated household waste are low, but so is the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling. Cultural life and tourism in the district continue to show low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Kyustendil district has been growing, though considerably more slowly than in the country on average, reaching 13,600 BGN/person in 2022, compared to the national average of 26,000 BGN/person.

Salaries and pensions are also rising, though relatively slowly. In 2022, the gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract reached 14,000 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 21,200 BGN/person and was once again the second lowest in the country, after that in Blagoevgrad district. At the same time, the average monthly pension for 2023 reached 821 BGN, compared to the national average of 784 BGN.

The Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality, is decreasing and remains below the country's average. The poverty level in the district continues to decline and remains low. The share of the population living below the national poverty line in 2023 was 16.1%, versus 20.6% in the country.

Labor market

The labor market in the district developed relatively well in 2023. Employment registered a considerable increase, while unemployment decreased. The employment rate reached 78.9%, and for the third year in a row exceeded the national average of 76.2%. For its part, the unemployment rate decreased to 7.7%, though remaining above the national average of 5.3%.

The educational structure of the workforce in Kyustendil district also continues to improve. Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest share of workforce with secondary education – 70%, compared to 55% in the country, which is in line with the district's industrial profile. The proportion of people aged 25–64 with a university degree has gone up to 26%, versus 31% 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 has shrunk to 55.6%, compared to 58.5% in the country.

Investment and business

Investment activity in Kyustendil district again remained among the lowest in the country in 2022. The number of non-financial enterprises was 64 per 1,000 population, against the national average of 70 per 1,000 population. There has been an increase in investment, as well as in production value, though the relative volumes of both remain low. TFA acquisition expenditures per capita reached 2,100 BGN, versus the national figure of 4,300 BGN/person, while FDI amounted to 423 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 4,500 EUR/person. Production value in Kyustendil district went up to reach 77,300 BGN per employed person, against 122,400 BGN as the national average. At the same time, the share of export earnings in net sales revenues is relatively high – 35%, versus 29% in the country.

Utilization of European funds is also lagging behind. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 2,127 BGN/person, against 3,175 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 rail network in the district again remained higher in 2023 than the national averages for that year. The share of highways and first-class roads is also higher – 21%, compared to 19% in the country, and so is the share of road surfaces in good condition – 56%, compared to the average of 40% nationwide.

Households' internet access in the district went down to 83% in 2023, which was below the national average of 89%.

Close to, though slightly below the national average, is the proportion of population with access to a public sewerage network – 70%, versus the national average of 75%, and to a sewerage network connected to a wastewater treatment plant – 62%, versus 67% countrywide for 2022.

Local taxes

In 2024, the average level of the local taxes in the municipalities of Kyustendil district was close to the national average. The tax rates, however, vary considerably. While the annual rates for non-gratuitous acquisition of property and for retail trade are relatively low, those for motor vehicles and non-residential immovable property of legal entities are higher than the average ones.

The average tax rate on retail trade in the municipalities of the district is 10.14 BGN/sq. m, versus 13.08 BGN/sq. m in the country.

Within the district, the lowest taxes as a whole are levied by Treklyano municipality, and the highest – by Kocherinovo municipality.

Administration

The local administrations' self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services settled above the respective country's averages in 2024. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has gone up and is no longer the lowest in the country, though still remaining relatively low – 58.7%, compared to the national average of 69.3%.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities was 20% in 2023, compared to 27% in the country, while the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues was 67%, versus 74% in the country. This is an indicator of the high dependence of local finances on transfers from the state budget.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The rate of natural population increase continues to be considerably below the national average with a value of -13.8‰ , against -6.8‰ nationally for 2023. However, the net migration rate is positive, though at 4.3‰ , it cannot compensate for the rapid population decline. The share of children under 4 years is 3.7% , compared to 4.5% nationally, and that of people aged 65 and over is 28.5% , versus 23.8% in the country.

Population density is relatively low – $1,048$ persons/sq. km in the urbanized settlements, against $1,221$ persons/sq. km in the country on average for 2023.

Education

The share of children attending kindergarten is increasing and in 2023 it equaled the national average of 88% .

In 2023, the rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade went up to 91% , which was slightly above the national average of 90% . However, the number of school year repeaters has also gone up to equal 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 programs oriented towards the ICT sector, as well as the relatively reduced enrolment for the transport sector.

The performance of the students in Kyustendil district in 2024 again remained low. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 35.8 p., compared to 42.9 p. in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was “Good” 4.20 , compared to the average of “Good” 4.30 nationally. The number of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was 8.9% , versus 8.7% as the national average.

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

Healthcare

The share of people with health insurance in Kyustendil district is traditionally high and in 2023 it covered practically the whole of its population, compared to 95% in the country. The number of beds in the local general hospitals remained close to, though slightly below the national average. Hospital bed occupancy, however, remained low at 44% , versus 56% in the country. The relative number of pharmacies is below the national average.

Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest relative number of GPs, with one GP per $1,443$ people, versus one GP per $1,701$ in the country, but there is a relative shortage of specialist physicians.

The infant mortality rate remains low, while life expectancy is below the national average.

Security and justice

In 2023, the workloads of the criminal judges in Kyustendil district remained below the average ones in the country, yet this had no substantial effect on the speed of delivery of justice. There were on average of 12.4 cases a month per one District Court judge, compared to 14.4 cases per judge nationally in 2022, and 12.5 cases per one Administrative Court judge, versus 14.8 cases per judge nationally.

The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 92% , against 91% in the country, and of administrative cases – 75% , versus 72% nationally. Kyustendil is the district with the lowest share of civil cases closed within 3 months – 45% , compared to 65% in the country.

There has been a slight increase in the relative number of registered crimes in the district, though in 2023 it remained below the national average. At the same time, the crime detection rate has increased to 57% , against 53% in the country. The number of police officers in the district is above the country's average.

Environment

The amount of household waste in Kyustendil district remains among the relatively low ones in the country, though over the past few years it has registered a rapid increase. In 2022, it was 372 kg/person per annum, compared to the average of 488 kg/person in the country. At the same time, only a little over half of it was handed over for treatment and recycling – 51% , versus the national average of 76% .

The share of forest areas is relatively high – 42% , against 33% in the country, but the share of disturbed area is also above the national average – 0.6% , against 0.4% in the country for 2023. Relative to the population, the installed RES capacities are above the national average. Kyustendil is among the districts with the lowest cooling degree days during hot days, but also among those with the highest consumption of drinking water.

Culture and tourism

In 2023, cultural life in Kyustendil district again retained its relatively low intensity. Only museum visits relative to the population were above the national average – $1,062$ per $1,000$ population, against 770 per $1,000$ population nationally. The relative number of visits to the cinema, theatre and libraries remained considerably below the respective national averages.

The number of beds in accommodation establishments has registered a slight decrease to 38 per $1,000$ population, versus 56 per $1,000$ population in the country, but the number of overnight stays has risen to $2,290$ per $1,000$ population, against $4,167$ per $1,000$ population in the country. There has also been a sharp rise in the number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms, although the relative value of that number is relatively low.

Key indicators for the district of Kyustendil

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,535	13,575	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	12,719	13,988	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	17.9	19.9	16.1	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	56.0	55.7	55.6	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	76.6	77.8	78.9	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	7.8	7.8	7.7	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	6.4	4.0	3.9	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	23.9	23.0	26.0	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	60,421	77,306	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,194	2,069	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	351	423	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	70.3	70.2	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	55.3	56.0	55.5	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	63.7	76.8	67.0	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	50.0	50.0	58.7	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-17.1	-13.8	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	2.4	4.3	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.76	3.58	4.20	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.2	28.3	35.8	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	92.9	90.2	90.8	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.0	71.1	72.2	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	96.8	99.3	100.0	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,493	1,460	1,443	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	9.3	10.2	10.5	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	94	83	92	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	111	117	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	312	372	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	47	51	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	48	288	432	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	1,265	1,753	2,290	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Lovech district

- ▶ Population (2023)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

112,225
4,129
110
61.6



GDP per capita in Lovech district is slowing down its rate of increase. Poverty is declining but remains relatively high. The labor market in the district is further suffering the negative impact of rising unemployment and declining employment. Business and investment activity is increasing but remains relatively weak. The utilization of EU funds is close to the national average. Road surface quality remains high. Local taxes in the district are among the lowest in the country. Transparency in the work of the local administration gets good ratings. Due to the strongly negative natural population in-

crease rate, Lovech is among the districts with a high rate of population aging. Students' results are relatively low and vocational education fails to meet the demands of the economy. The number of GPs remains higher than the national average. The availability of beds in the local general hospitals again remains relatively low. The crime detection rate is relatively high. The amount of generated household waste is not considerable, but the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains extremely small. Cultural life in Lovech district is not particularly active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Income and living conditions



Labor market



Investment and business



Infrastructure



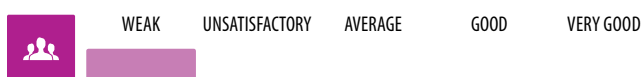
Local taxes



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Demography



Education



Healthcare



Security and justice



Environment



Culture and tourism



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

After the sharp rise in 2021, in 2022 the rate of increase of GDP per capita in Lovech slowed down considerably and left the district in the middle of the ranking in this indicator. Salaries and pensions have also grown at a relatively slow rate. The average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract is 15,700 BGN, compared to 21,200 BGN nationwide. For its part, the average monthly pension is 709 BGN, against 784 BGN in the country.

Poverty in the district is on the decrease but remains relatively high. In 2023, the share of the population living below the poverty line was 26.9%, versus 20.6% in the country. However, income inequality is relatively low and the Gini coefficient has shrunk to 30.9, compared to 37.2 nationally.

Labor market

The proportion of the working age population continues to decline, falling to 54.7%, against 58.5% nationally in 2023. At the same time, the labor market in the district is further suffering the negative impact of rising unemployment and declining employment. The employment rate has shrunk to 70.4%, versus 76.2% nationally, and the unemployment rate has risen to 9.6%, against 5.3% countrywide.

A relatively high share of the population aged 25–64 in the district has secondary education – 69%, compared to 55% in the country, while the shares of both university graduates and those with primary or lower education are lower than the national averages – 18%, against 31% in the country, and 14%, against 15% in the country respectively.

Investment and business

Business and investment activity in the district grew in 2022 but remained relatively slack. The relative number of enterprises reached 53 per 1,000 population, versus the national average of 70 per 1,000 population. Domestic investment and FDI grew considerably. TFA expenditures relative to the population reached 2,100 BGN/person, against 4,300 BGN/person nationally, and FDI in the district went up to 1,200 EUR/person, versus 4,300 EUR/person on a national level. Production value increased to 82,000 BGN per employed person, compared to 122,400 BGN in the country. However, the share of export earnings in net sales revenues has decreased and also remains below the national average – 22%, against 29% in the country. Utilization of EU funds is close to the national average. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached 3,151 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/person countrywide. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipalities of Apriltsi, Troyan and Yablanitsa – over 3,500 BGN/person.

Spending on research and development is increasing and is above that in most districts – 74 BGN/person.

Infrastructure

In 2023, the rail network density in Lovech district again remained below the country's average. The road network density is above the national average, albeit slightly, but the share of highways and first-class roads is still relatively limited – 16%, versus 19% in the country. Road surface quality continues to improve settling above the average one in the country – 49% in the district, versus 40% in the country.

The share of households with internet access has decreased to a level below the national average. Households' access to public sewerage networks is also below average, as is the connectivity of public sewerage networks to waste water treatment plants.

Local taxes

The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Lovech district again remains low and the district now ranks second in this category, where it is outranked only by Montana district. The only exception is the tax rate on non-residential immovable property of legal entities, which in Lovech district is 2.20‰ on average, compared to 2.15‰ in the country. Considerably lower than the national averages are the tax rates for motor vehicles – 1.28 BGN/kW, versus 1.56 BGN/kW in the country, and for non-gratuitous acquisition of property – 2.35%, compared to 2.82% nationally.

Within the district, the lowest local taxes are levied by Letnitsa municipality, and the highest – by Apriltsi municipality.

Administration

In 2024, the local administrations' self-assessment of the development of e-government was comparable to the national average, while that of one-stop shop service provision settled above the national average, though registering a slight decrease.

The AIP transparency rating of the local administrations remains above the national average – 73.6% in the district, against 69.3% nationally.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is decreasing and remains relatively low at 18%, compared to 27% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures by local revenues has also shrunk to 61%, which indicates a relatively high dependence of local finances on transfers from the state budget.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■

Demography ■■■

The natural population increase rate in Lovech district for 2023 is -11.8‰, remaining considerably lower than the national average of -6.8‰. However, the net migration rate has gone up and is positive, though relatively low - 1.7‰.

These developments are the prerequisite for a further worsening of the trend toward population aging in the district, which is clearly visible in its age structure. The share of children under 4 years is 4.2%, compared to 4.5% in the country, and of people aged 65 and over - 28.0%, versus 23.8% nationally.

Population density in the district is relatively low - in 2023 it was 757 persons/sq. km in the urbanized settlements, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km nationally.

Education ■■■

The district's performance in the education category is unsatisfactory and for yet another year the district holds the second lowest place in this category, only above Sliven district.

The share of children attending kindergarten is increasing but in 2023 it again remained below average. The enrolment ratio in 5th-7th grade registered a slight increase to 87% in 2023 but also failed to reach the national average of 90%. The percentage of school year repeaters continues to be considerably higher than the national average.

Lovech is also the district with the lowest alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy, which is mainly due to the fact that it has the highest share of trainees in the hospitality and catering sector (almost double the national average) and at the same time a relatively low share of persons employed in this particular economic activity.

Students' results in the district are low. The average score in the NAE in mathematics after 7th grade is 34.9 p., versus 42.9 p. in the country on average. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature is "Good" 4.10, compared to "Good" 4.30 in the country, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) is 10.1%, against the national average of 8.7%.

The number of university students in Lovech district again remained extremely low in 2023, with only Lovech Technical College, which is a branch of Gabrovo Technical University, on its territory.

Healthcare ■■■

The average life expectancy in Lovech district has increased but remains below the national average.

In 2023, the number of GPs relative to the population again remained higher than the national average. Specialist physicians, however, are relatively scarce. The share of people with health insurance remains around the national average. The number of pharmacies is close to, though below the average one in the country.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals remains relatively low - 4.5 beds per 1,000 population in the district, versus

6.1 beds per 1,000 population in the country. Hospital bed occupancy, however, like that in Pernik district, is among the lowest countrywide - 40%, against 56% nationally, which is probably due to their proximity to other districts with traditionally strong healthcare - the capital and Pleven respectively.

Security and justice ■■■■■

The workloads of the District Court judges remain relatively low, while those in the Administrative Court are above the national average. This accounts for the relatively low speed of delivery of justice as regards administrative cases, while the number of criminal and civil cases closed within 3 months is above the national average - 93%, versus 91% in the country, and 86%, versus 65% in the country respectively for 2023.

In 2023, the number of registered crimes against the person and property in Lovech district went slightly down but remained relatively high - 11.8 per 1,000 population, compared to the national average of 11.3 per 1,000 population. However, the detection rate was higher than the national average - 57%, against 53% in the country. Also higher than the national average is the number of police officers in the district - 4.8 per 1,000 population, against 4.2 per 1,000 population in the country.

Environment ■■■

The amounts of waste generated by the households in Lovech district are relatively low - 434 kg/person per annum, compared to 488 kg/person nationally, but the share of this waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains extremely low - 12%, compared to the national average of 76% for 2022.

In 2023, the share of forest areas remained close to the national average, while that of disturbed area was relatively limited.

The installed RES capacities in relation to the population are above the national average, with a threefold increase in the past year. Cooling degree days in the district is relatively low. Households' drinking water consumption is also relatively limited.

Culture and tourism ■■■

Cultural life in Lovech district again showed little intensity in 2023. Only visits to museums relative to the population exceeded the national average - 1,125 per 1,000 population in the district, compared to 770 per 1,000 population nationally. The relative number of cinema, theater and library visits remains considerably below the respective national averages.

The number of beds in accommodation establishments has gone up, reaching 43 per 1,000 population, against 53 per 1,000 population in the country. There has also been an increase in the number of overnight stays, which have reached 2,720 per 1,000 population, versus 4,167 per 1,000 population countrywide. An increase has also been registered in the number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms.

Key indicators for the district of Lovech

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	13,963	15,890	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,244	15,704	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	28.1	30.3	26.9	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	55.5	54.8	54.7	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	69.2	74.1	70.4	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	8.3	9.1	9.6	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	15.2	12.9	13.7	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	17.5	13.8	17.6	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	66,432	82,123	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,407	2,144	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,073	1,246	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	59.9	60.0	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	40.1	46.7	49.5	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	68.1	69.9	60.6	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	74.3	74.2	73.6	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-14.7	-11.8	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	-1.1	1.7	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.82	3.63	4.10	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	26.1	27.5	34.9	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	87.1	86.3	86.8	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.1	71.3	72.3	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	90.6	93.9	94.4	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,556	1,523	1,524	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	10.8	11.9	11.8	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	95	89	93	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	98	98	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	379	434	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	7	12	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	145	192	186	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	2,122	2,605	2,720	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Montana District

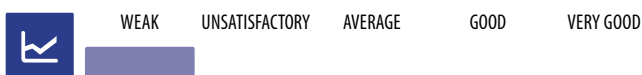
▶ Population (2023)	114,526
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,636
▶ Number of settlements	130
▶ Share of urban population (%)	63.5



Montana is among the districts with relatively low incomes and quality of life. Employment and unemployment are growing simultaneously while remaining significantly more unfavorable than the national average. Investment and business activity in the district is relatively low. The density of the road and rail network remains lower than the national average. The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of the district is the lowest in the country. The share of own revenues in the mu-

nicipalities' total revenues is extremely limited. The continuing tendency towards population aging in the whole of Bulgaria is particularly conspicuous in Montana district. Students' results are low. Access to GPs is relatively good. The number of beds in the local general hospitals remains significantly higher than the national average. The crime rate is relatively high. The amount of household waste in the district is low, and its management is good. Cultural life and tourism in Montana district are among the least active in the country.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Income and living conditions



Labor market



Investment and business



Infrastructure



Local taxes



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Demography



Education



Healthcare



Security and justice



Environment



Culture and tourism



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Montana is among the districts with relatively low incomes and quality of life. GDP per capita in the district has been increasing but its value remains relatively low – 14,700 BGN, compared to 26,000 BGN in the country in 2022. Salaries and pensions have also increased but remain relatively low. The average gross annual salary of employed people has reached 15,500 BGN, against 21,200 BGN nationally, and the monthly pension is 704 BGN on average, compared to 784 BGN in the country in 2023.

These indicators account for the high poverty level in the district. The share of the population living below the poverty line has fallen, though remaining among the three lowest ones in the country, after Targovishte and Vidin – 33.4%, compared to 20.6% nationally.

Labor market

The unfavorable trends in the local labor market again rank Montana last in the country in this category. The share of the working-age population continues to decline and is down to 55.1%, compared to 58.5% nationally in 2023. Employment in the district has been rising but again remains the lowest in the country with a rate of 61.6%, compared to 76.2% nationwide. This has been accompanied by a rise in the unemployment rate, which has reached 12.3%, compared to 5.3% nationwide.

The share of people aged 25–64 with a university degree has gone slightly down to 16%, against 31% nationally, and is the second lowest in the country only above Pazardzhik district. The share of the workforce with primary or lower education has remained stable at 17%, whereas on a national scale it is 15.0%.

Investment and business

Investment and business activity in Montana district again remained slack in 2022. Together with Vidin and Vratsa, Montana is among the three districts with the lowest relative number of enterprises – 44 per 1,000 population, compared to the national average of 70 per 1,000 population.

Domestic and foreign investment is growing but also remains extremely limited. TFA acquisition expenditures have reached 1,600 BGN/person but are the lowest in the country (the national average being 4,300 BGN/person), and FDI amounts to 509 EUR/person, which is the third lowest figure in the country, with the national average at 4,500 EUR/person.

Production value in the district has gone up to 101,200 BGN per employed person, against the national average of 122,400 BGN per employed person.

Utilization of EU funding in Montana district has been accelerating fast and is relatively high. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs reached 3,366 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/

person nationally. Within the district, the top place in the utilization of EU funds is occupied by the municipality of Montana city, and the bottom places – by the municipalities of Brusartsi, Valchedrum and Yakimovo.

Infrastructure

Montana district's performance in this category is the worst in the country. The density of the road and rail network remains below the national average. The share of highways and first-class roads is less than half the national average – 9% in the district, against 19% in the country. This can also explain the relatively poor condition of the roads – in 2023, only 22% of the road surface was in good condition, compared to 40% in the country.

Internet access in the district remains extremely low. Also remaining low is the share of the households living in settlements with a public sewerage network – 60%, compared to an average of 75% in the country, as well as of the number of public sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants – 36%, compared to 67% in the country.

Local taxes

The average level of municipal taxes for 2024 again places Montana at the top in the country in this category. The average tax rate for motor vehicles is the lowest in the country – 1.22 BGN/kW, compared to 1.56 BGN/kW nationwide. The average tax on retail trade is the second lowest – 5.06 BGN/sq. m, compared to 13.09 BGN/sq. m countrywide, and so is the tax on non-residential immovable property of legal entities – 1.72‰, versus 2.15‰ nationwide. The average tax rate for non-gratuitous acquisition of property in the district's municipality is also considerably lower than the country's average.

Within the district, Georgi Damyanovo is the municipality levying the lowest local taxes, while the municipality of Chiprovtsi levies the highest.

Administration

In 2024, the local authorities' self-assessment of the development of e-government registered a decrease, though the district's average is above that in the country. However, the self-assessment of the provision of one-stop shop services is relatively low. The AIP transparency rating of the local administration is also lower, albeit slightly, than the country's average – 68.9%, against 69.3% in the country.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is decreasing and is now the lowest in the country – 15%, versus 27% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is also low – 53%, against 74% in the country in 2023.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■

The continuing tendency towards population aging is particularly conspicuous in Montana district. The natural population increase rate is once again among the five worst in the country at -13.8‰, versus -6.8‰ nationally for 2023. The net migration figure is also negative at -0.4‰

The trend towards population aging is also reflected in the age structure of the district's population. The share of children under 4 years is 3.8%, compared to 4.5% in the country, while the share of those aged 65 and over is 28.2%, compared to 23.8% in the country.

Population density in the urbanized settlements is relatively low - 718 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km countrywide.

Education ■■■■

The share of children in the district attending kindergarten is increasing, but remains relatively limited at 86.6%, compared to 87.9% nationally in 2023. The rate of enrolment in 5th-7th grade is also below the country's average - in 2023 it was 87.6%, against 89.9% in the country. The percentage of school year repeaters is higher than the national average. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is poor.

The average results of the students from Montana district were again relatively low in 2024. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 35.2 p., which ranked it far behind the national average of 42.9 p. The average result in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language was "Good" 4.07, compared to "Good" 4.30 nationally. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades was close to the national average - 8.4% in the district, versus 8.7% nationally.

There are no universities or branches of universities in the district of Montana.

Healthcare ■■■■

Life expectancy in Montana has been increasing but is the third lowest in the country (after Vidin and Vratsa). Infant mortality has been decreasing and in 2023 it was already below the national average.

Access to GPs in Montana district again remained relatively good in 2023. The proportion of population cared by GPs is 1,538 persons to one GP, compared to 1,701 persons to one GP as the country's average. However, the proportion of specialist physicians is relatively limited. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has been rising and remains considerably higher than in the country, with 7.6 beds per 1,000 population, versus the national average of 6.1 beds per 1,000 population.

However, hospital bed occupancy is below the country's average. The pharmacies in the district are relatively few.

Security and justice ■■■■

The workloads of the judges in Montana's District Court are relatively low, but those in the Administrative Court again remained above the national average in 2023. Montana is the district with the lowest share of criminal cases closed within 3 months - 86%, versus 91% nationally, while the share of administrative cases closed within 3 months is the highest - 93%, against 72% in the country. Delivery of justice as regards civil cases is also relatively speedy.

The registered crimes against the person and property increased in 2023 and their relative number remained comparatively high - 12.8 per 1,000 population, compared to 11.3 per 1,000 population in the country. At the same time, the share of cleared crimes is below, albeit slightly, the national average - 52%, compared to 53% in the country. The proportion of police officers to the district's population is relatively high - 4.6 per 1,000 population, versus 4.2 per 1,000 population nationally.

Environment ■■■■

The amount of household waste is relatively low, and its management - relatively good. In 2022, the average amount of waste generated annually by the households was 394 kg/person, against the average of 488 kg/person nationwide. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling was 94%, compared to 76% as the national average.

The share of forest areas is relatively low - 23%, against 33% in the country, but the share of disturbed area is also relatively low - 0.1%, against 0.4% in the country. The installed RES capacities relative to the population in the district are lower than average.

Culture and tourism ■■

The indicators in this category rank Montana last in the country. In 2023, cultural life in Montana was once again among the least active in the country. Cinema visits went up to 212 per 1,000 population, versus 684 per 1,000 population nationwide. The local museums managed to attract a bare 95 persons per 1,000 population, compared to the national average of 770 persons per 1,000 population. Since 2015, there has been no library in the district large enough to be included in the official NSI statistics.

The relative number of beds in accommodation establishments is relatively low and overnight stays are few. Tourism realized via online sharing economy platforms is also limited.

Key indicators for the district of Montana

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,088	14,651	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	13,983	15,514	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	42.0	41.0	33.4	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	56.2	55.2	55.1	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	56.9	59.9	61.6	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	10.8	11.7	12.3	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	24.1	17.3	17.2	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	14.0	17.9	15.5	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	81,331	101,214	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,514	1,648	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	444	509	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	59.6	59.7	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	27.0	23.0	22.2	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	59.8	56.9	53.0	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	69.5	69.4	68.9	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-17.1	-13.8	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	0.4	-0.4	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.78	3.64	4.07	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	27.8	27.7	35.2	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	81.8	86.9	87.6	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	70.6	70.3	71.1	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	88.5	91.1	91.7	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,547	1,521	1,538	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	13.2	12.3	12.8	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	86	77	86	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	91	93	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	333	394	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	92	94	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	123	164	212	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	520	736	823	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Pazardzhik district

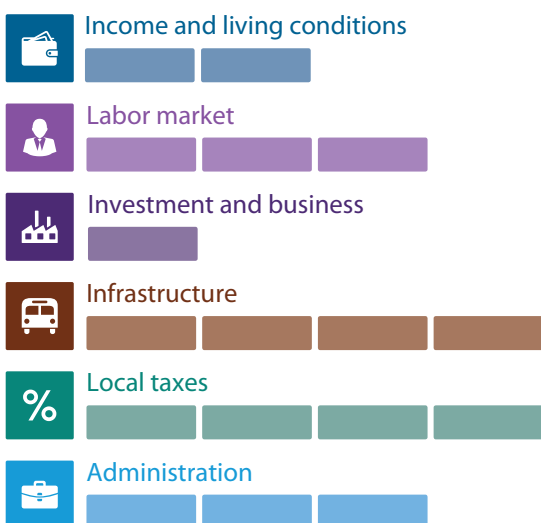
▶ Population (2023)	225,261
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,457
▶ Number of settlements	118
▶ Share of urban population (%)	61.5



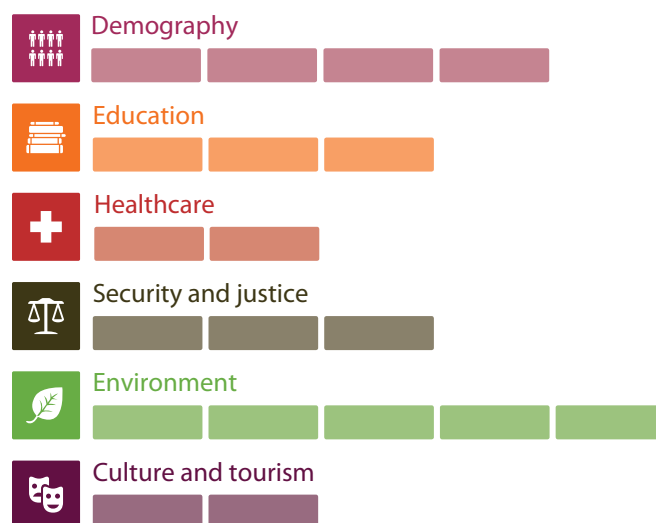
GDP, salaries and pensions in Pazardzhik district have continued to grow, but remain relatively low. Employment and unemployment are growing simultaneously. Investment and business activity in the district is slack. The density of the road network, as well as the share of highways and first-class roads is below the national average, though the quality of the road surface remains relatively high. The average level of local taxes is low. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administration receives a relatively low rating.

The natural population increase rate in Pazardzhik district is increasing and exceeds the national average. Students' results remain relatively low. Access to GPs in the district is better than in the country on average, but there is a definite shortage of specialist physicians. The number of crimes remains relatively low, while the detection rate is above the national average. Pazardzhik district retains its place as the country's leader in installed RES capacities. Theater visits relative to population are increasing and remain above the national average.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2022, GDP in Pazardzhik district continued to grow relatively fast, though remaining relatively low. GDP per capita reached 15,500 BGN, compared to 26,000 BGN in the country on average. The gross annual salary of persons employed under labor contract was 16,400 BGN, compared to 21,200 BGN in the country. In 2023, pensions continued to grow at a rate close to the national average and reached 712 BGN, compared to 784 BGN nationally.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality again remained close to but below the national average in 2023. The share of the population living below the national poverty line retained its level above the national average – 27.2% in the district, versus 20.6% countrywide.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in the district continued to decline in 2023 and was down to 57.4%, thus moving further away from the national average of 58.5%. Employment and unemployment have been growing simultaneously. The employment rate has reached 75.3%, compared to 76.2% nationally, and the unemployment rate – 8.0%, versus the national average of 5.3%.

The educational profile of the workforce remains a challenge facing the local labor market. In 2023, the share of people with a university degree registered a slight increase, yet in 2023 it was again the lowest in the country – 15%, against an average of 31% in the country. At the same time, the share of those with primary or lower education shrank to 23%, though again remaining relatively high when compared to the national average of 15%.

Investment and business

Investment and business activity in Pazardzhik district was again slack in 2022, although there were some noticeable positive trends. The number of enterprises remained low – 51 per 1,000 population, against the national average of 70 per 1,000 population. There has been an increase in foreign and domestic investment to levels above those in most other districts. TFA acquisition expenditures have reached 3,300 BGN/person, and FDI – 3,000 EUR/person. Production value in Pazardzhik district has continued to rise, reaching 100,000 BGN per employed person. The share of export earnings in net sales revenues has steadied slightly below average.

As regards utilization of EU funding, Pazardzhik district has also recorded some increase, though the amounts remain relatively low. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 2,149 BGN/person, against 3,175 BGN/person nationwide. Within the district, the municipality with the highest rate of

utilization was that of Panagyurishte, and the one with the lowest – the municipality of Rakitovo.

Relative research and development expenditure is increasing.

Infrastructure

In 2023, the density of the rail network in Pazardzhik district again remained higher than the national average. The road network density and the share of highways and first-class roads were lower than the respective national average figures but road surface quality remained relatively high. The share of road surface in good condition registered a slight decrease to 55%, compared to 40% in the country.

In 2023, the district population's access to the internet shrank to 83% of the households and remained below the national average of 89%.

Access to a public sewerage network is close to the national average – 72% in the district, compared to 75% in the country. Connectivity to wastewater treatment plants, however, is lagging behind by a considerable margin – 42%, compared to 67% in the country in 2022.

Local taxes

The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Pazardzhik district again remained relatively low in 2024. Of all monitored taxes, all average rates were below the average ones in the country. Considerably lower than the average ones in the country were the local tax rates for non-residential immovable property for legal entities and for motor vehicles.

Within the district, Batak municipality levies on average the lowest taxes, while the highest ones are in Rakitovo municipality.

Administration

In 2024, the local authorities' self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services largely retained their levels and remained below the respective national averages. The average value of both is 3.2 p. out of a maximum of 4 p., versus the national average of 3.35 p., and the provision of one-stop shop services – at 3.1 p. out of 4 p., compared to 3.4 p. nationally. In 2024, the AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration dropped slightly to 63.1%, against the national average of 69.3%, and remained relatively low.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the municipalities in the district is 20%, versus 27% in the country in 2023, while the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is 68%, against 74% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population increase rate has gone up and now exceeds the national average, though remaining negative at -7.3% , compared to -6.8% in the country. At the same time, Pazardzhik continues to attract new residents and the net migration rate is positive at 3.1% .

The share of children below 4 years is equal to the national average – 4.5% , while the share of people aged 65 and over remains slightly higher – 24.3% in the district, against 23.8% nationally.

Pazardzhik is among the districts with a relatively high density of the population – $1,546$ persons/sq. km in the urbanized settlements, against $1,221$ persons/sq. km on average nationwide.

Education

The net rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade decreased in 2023 and remained below the national average. School year repeaters make up an excessively high percentage – 2.0% , versus 1.2% nationally. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is worsening – there is a shortage of manufacturing-related programs at the expense of a disproportionate number of places in ICT courses.

The average results of the district's students in 2024 again remain relatively low. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 37.5 p., versus 42.9 p. in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.19 in the district, compared to "Good" 4.30 nationally, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) – 13.5% , versus the average of 8.7% nationwide.

There are no universities or branches of universities in the district of Pazardzhik.

Healthcare

Life expectancy in the district has gone up, but remains below the national average. However, the infant mortality rate has been increasing and in 2023 it again remained relatively high. The district's health insurance coverage rate remains below the national average.

Access to GPs in the district is better than the national average but there is a definite shortage of specialist physicians. The availability of beds in the local general hospitals is traditionally higher than average and in 2023 there were 7.4 beds per $1,000$ population, versus the national average of 6.1 beds per $1,000$ population, while hospital bed occupancy is comparable to the average one countrywide (56%), which is indicative of a well-developed and well-functioning healthcare system. Pazardzhik is among the districts with the greatest number of pharmacies relative to the population, where it is outranked only by Burgas district.

Security and justice

The workloads of the local District Court judges are relatively low, but those in the Administrative Court are among the highest in the country, second only to Blagoevgrad for 2023. This impacts the speed of delivery of justice. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 96% , against the national average of 91% , that of civil cases – 73% , versus 65% in the country, while the share of administrative cases is 64% , compared to the national average of 72% .

The number of crimes in the district remains relatively small, while their detection rate is above the country's average. In 2023, the registered crimes against the person and property amounted to 8.2 per $1,000$ population, versus 11.3 per $1,000$ population nationwide, while the detection rate has registered a considerable increase to 64% , against 53% nationally. The number of police officers relative to the population is relatively low.

Environment

Pazardzhik's performance in this category again places the district almost at the top (second only to Smolyan). The main reason for this is that Pazardzhik continues to be the leader in terms of installed RES capacities – 5.9 kW/person, compared to 1.0 kW/person in the country in 2024.

The amount of household waste generated in the district is above the national average. – an annual of 483 kg/person, against 488 kg/person in the country. The amount of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling has gone considerably up and in 2022 it exceeded the national average – 87% in the district, against 76% countrywide.

Pazardzhik is the district with the second highest share of forest area, where it is outranked only by Smolyan – 55% in the district, versus 33% countrywide. The share of disturbed area, for its part, is equal to the national average – 0.4% . The large share of forest areas accounts for the district's relatively low cooling degree days.

Culture and tourism

Cinema visits have gone up to reach 192 per $1,000$ population, but their number remains considerably lower than the national average of 684 per $1,000$ population for 2023. The number of visits to the local libraries also continues to be relatively small. Visits to local theaters relative to the population have increased and remain above the national average. Close to, though below the national average are the visits to the local museums.

The number of beds in accommodation establishments has reached 37 per $1,000$ population, versus 56 per $1,000$ population in the country, and the number of overnight stays for the first time has exceeded the national average – $5,014$ per $1,000$ population, versus $4,167$ per $1,000$ population in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Pazardzhik

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,653	15,535	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,842	16,407	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	30.6	27.0	27.2	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.5	57.8	57.4	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	70.7	75.0	75.3	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	7.3	7.3	8.0	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	27.2	25.6	23.1	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	15.2	14.5	14.9	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	84,289	100,017	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,372	3,264	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,807	2,997	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	71.1	72.1	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	54.7	57.7	55.1	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	68.8	66.2	68.5	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	65.3	65.2	63.1	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–10.5	–7.3	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	4.2	3.1	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.80	3.54	4.10	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.1	29.5	37.5	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	78.4	88.9	86.9	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.4	71.8	72.7	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	85.8	93.0	93.4	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,671	1,598	1,636	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	7.2	7.7	8.2	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	92	95	96	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	102	105	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	480	540	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	72	87	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	121	169	192	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	2,032	3,732	5,014	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Pernik district

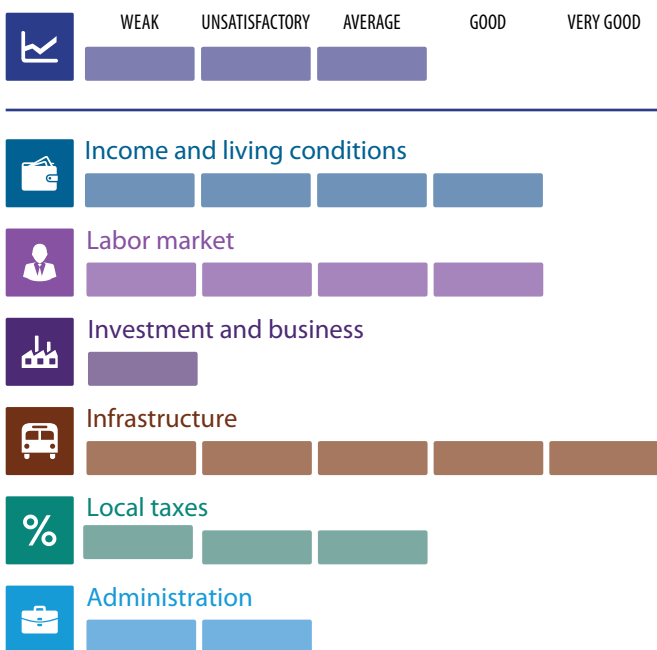
▶ Population (2023)	111,032
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,394
▶ Number of settlements	171
▶ Share of urban population (%)	78.1



Salaries and pensions in Pernik district continue to rise and the poverty level remains low. The workforce is characterized by a relatively high proportion of people with secondary education. Investment activity in the district is slack. Pernik is among the districts with the highest density of road networks. The proportion of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network remains high. The average rate of the taxes levied in the district on motor vehicles and retail trade is relatively low. The AIP active transparency rating of the local municipalities is below the country's average.

Pernik's net migration is increasing and has a positive value, though this cannot compensate for the considerable population decrease. Students' results in the district are traditionally lower than the national average. Pernik has the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals. The relative number of crimes and the detection rate are close to the national average. The amount of generated household waste is the highest in the country, though practically all of this waste is handed over for treatment and recycling. Cultural life and tourism in the district are characterized by their low intensity, which is probably related to Pernik's proximity to the capital.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2022, GDP per capita in Pernik district again registered an increase but remained relatively low. Salaries and pensions went up at a rate higher than the national average, though they too stood at relatively low levels. The average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract has reached 16,200 BGN, compared to 21,200 BGN on average nationwide. At the same time, the average pension is among the highest in the country – 861 BGN, against 784 BGN countrywide. The reason is that some of the district's residents were employed in the capital and received higher salaries, with the result that their pensions are also relatively higher.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality in the district is relatively low, as is typical for districts where the pension levels are high. The poverty rate also remains relatively limited. The proportion of people living below the poverty line is 15.2%, against the national average of 20.6% in the country for 2023.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Pernik district has steadied at 57.1% and continues to be below the country's average of 58.5% for 2023. Both employment and unemployment are declining simultaneously, but while the employment rate remains below the national average – 72.5%, versus 76.2% respectively, the unemployment rate is more favorable – 4.1% in the district, against 5.3% nationally.

A characteristic of the workforce in Pernik district is the relatively large share of people with secondary education. While on a national scale 55% of the population have secondary education, in Pernik district they constitute 66%. At the same time, the share of university graduates remains relatively low, while that of people with primary or lower education is increasing and they now constitute 17%, compared to 15% in the country.

Investment and business

Investment activity in Pernik again remained relatively slack in 2022. The district's proximity to the capital affects both the number of enterprises and the investment flows attracted into it. There are 55 enterprises per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population in the country. Both foreign and domestic investment flows have been rising. TFA acquisition expenditures have reached 2,400 BGN/person, against 4,300 BGN/person countrywide, while FDI amounts to 2,500 EUR/person, compared to 4,500 EUR/person nationally. Production value in Pernik district has also gone up to 112,900 BGN/person, compared to an average of 122,400 BGN/person nationwide.

Utilization of European funds has seen the biggest annual rate of increase in the country, but the relative volumes of the payments still remain relatively low. By 30 June 2024, pay-

ments made to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,191 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/person nationally.

Infrastructure

In 2023, the density of the rail and road networks in Pernik district again remained considerably higher than the national average: the density of the road network is 24 km/100 sq. km (versus 18 km/100 sq. km in the country) and is the second highest in the country after Gabrovo district, and that of the railway network is 4.8 km/100 sq. km, versus 3.6 km/100 sq. km in the country. The share of highways and first-class roads remains lower – 16%, against 19% in the country.

Households' internet access has registered a considerable increase over the past few years, and in 2023 it exceeded the national average – 90% in Pernik district, versus 89% nationally.

The share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network remains high – 80%, compared to 75% in the country in 2022. Connectivity to wastewater treatment plants is also high – 75%, against 67% countrywide.

Local taxes

The average level of the local taxes in Pernik district's municipalities was close to the national average in 2024, though the rates for the individual monitored taxes show diverging trends. While the average rates of the motor vehicle and retail trade tax are relatively low, those on immovable non-residential property for legal entities and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property are higher than average

Within the district, the lowest taxes are levied by Zemen municipality, and the highest ones – by the municipality of Kovachevtsi.

Administration

The local authorities' self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services again remained below the country's average in 2024.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration in Pernik's municipalities has registered a slight increase, though in 2024 it was the lowest in the country – 54.6%, compared to the national average of 69.3%.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of municipalities in the district was 25% in 2023, compared to 27% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues reached 62%, against 74% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population increase rate in Pernik district again remained considerably below the national average in 2023, reaching -13.8% in the district, versus -6.8% countrywide. The net migration rate is rising and is positive (7.4%), though it cannot compensate for the considerable population decrease.

The rapid rate of population aging in the district is also evident in the age dependency ratios. The share of children under 4 years is 3.8%, compared to 4.5% in the country, and those aged 65 and over make up 26.1%, against 23.8% nationally.

Population density is relatively low – 921 persons/sq. km in the urbanized settlements, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

The share of children attending kindergarten is above the country's average, while the rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade in 2023 was equal to the national average. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is above the national average. There is an alignment between the low share of students and people employed in the agricultural sector, and the high share of those employed in the construction industry. At the same time, Pernik is the district where the share of trainees in the ICT sector and in transport, storage and postal services is among the highest in the country, although neither sector provides enough opportunities for regional employment.

The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade is relatively low – 35.7 p., compared to 42.9 p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature is traditionally below the national average, as it was in 2024 – “Good” 4.21, versus “Good” 4.30 in the country. However, the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) in the district has fallen considerably – to 6.7%, against 8.7% in the country, and is among the lowest nationwide.

The low number of university students can be explained with the presence of one single university on Pernik district's territory – the European Polytechnical University – which has a very small intake.

Healthcare

Pernik is the worst performing district in the healthcare category. The explanation for this can be found in its proximity to the capital, which is where the residents go to seek healthcare.

The share of people with health insurance in Pernik district has increased but is lagging somewhat behind the national average. The district is relatively well provided with GPs, but in 2023 there were again relatively few specialist physicians.

Pernik continues to be the district with the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals – 2.9 beds per 1,000 population, which is less than half the average number in the country (6.1 beds per 1,000 population). Moreover, their occupancy

is among the lowest countrywide, similar to Lovech district, which is also located within a short distance to another district with well-developed healthcare – Pleven. The number of pharmacies relative to the population is also fairly limited.

Life expectancy in the district is below the national average. The infant mortality rate is rising.

Security and justice

The workloads of the judges in Pernik's District Court are relatively high, while those in the Administrative Court are relatively low. This impacts the speed of delivery of justice in the district. The share of criminal cases completed within 3 months equals the national average – 91%, while that of administrative cases is extremely high – 88%, compared to 72% nationally. Civil cases are also processed relatively fast – 78% are completed within 3 months, versus 65% as the national average.

The crime and detection rates in Pernik district are close to the respective national averages. Registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 11.7 per 1,000 population in 2023, versus an average of 11.3 crimes per 1,000 population nationwide. The detection rate was 53%, which equals the national average. The number of police officers relative to the population is relatively high.

Environment

In 2022, Pernik was once again the district with the highest volume of generated household waste – 630 kg/person per annum, compared to 488 kg/person in the country. At the same time, however, practically all waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, against 76% nationally.

The share of forest areas in Pernik district is relatively high – 41% in the district, versus 33% countrywide. However, the share of disturbed area is twice the national average – 1.0%, compared to 0.4% in the country in 2023. The installed RES capacities relative to the population remain relatively small.

Pernik is among the districts with the lowest cooling degree days.

Culture and tourism

Pernik is among the districts with a relatively stagnant cultural and tourist life, which is probably due to its proximity to the capital.

In 2023, cinema visits relative to the population went slightly down and remained below the national average. The number of visits to the local libraries, however, was considerably lower. Visits to museums registered a considerable rise.

The number of beds in accommodation establishments is 5 per 1,000 population, compared to 56 per 1,000 population in the country. The number of overnight stays is 428 per 1,000 population, compared to 4,167 per 1,000 population in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Pernik

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,084	13,845	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,074	16,188	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	19.1	19.0	15.2	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	58.2	57.1	57.1	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	75.4	73.9	72.5	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	4.6	4.3	4.1	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	11.3	14.7	17.2	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	18.0	15.5	17.1	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	87,386	112,934	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,641	2,444	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,876	2,496	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	79.4	79.6	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	41.3	40.7	11.3	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	63.7	69.0	62.5	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	52.4	52.4	54.6	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-16.9	-13.8	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	3.1	7.4	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.79	3.64	4.21	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.4	29.2	35.7	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	91.0	90.4	89.7	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	71.4	71.3	72.1	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	89.3	92.9	93.6	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,595	1,563	1,547	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	9.5	11.4	11.7	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	86	89	91	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	107	109	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	531	630	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	100	100	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	99	625	584	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	143	329	428	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Pleven district

- ▶ Population (2023)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

217,881
4,653
123
67.3



GDP per capita in Pleven district has slowed down its growth and is lagging behind the national average. Employment is rising and unemployment is falling, though both indicators remain relatively unfavorable. Production value and the share of export earnings in the district have registered a considerable rise. The share of households with internet access has increased but remains relatively low. The average tax rate on non-residential immovable property for legal entities is the highest in the country. The coverage of municipal expenses with local

revenues is higher than in the country on average. The natural increase rate remains strongly negative. The district is also failing to attract new residents. Student performance remains poor. Pleven is a district with strong traditions in the field of healthcare and is the leader in this category. The workloads of the local criminal judges are relatively low, which impacts the speed of delivery of justice. Pleven is the district with the lowest share of forest area, though the share of disturbed area is also small. Cultural life and tourism are characterized by their low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Income and living conditions



Labor market



Investment and business



Infrastructure



Local taxes



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Demography



Education



Healthcare



Security and justice



Environment



Culture and tourism



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2022, GDP per capita in Pleven district continued to slow down its growth rate and remained below the national average – 15,600 BGN, compared to 26,000 BGN in the country. At the same time, salaries in Pleven registered the highest growth rate in the country, though they too remained below the national average. The average annual salary of people employed under labor contract reached 17,000 BGN. The average monthly pension for 2023 was 734 BGN.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality is relatively low. A decrease is discernible in the poverty level in the district, though it too remains above the national average. In 2023, the proportion of the population living below the national poverty line was 26.4%, compared to 20.6% nationally.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Pleven district has continued to decline and remains relatively low – 54.7%, compared to 58.5% in the country in 2023. Employment has increased and unemployment has declined, but both indicators are less favorable than the country's average. The employment rate has reached 72.9%, against 76.2% nationally, and the unemployment rate – 7.3%, compared to 5.3% countrywide.

The educational structure of the population shows some improvement. In 2023, the share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 rose to 25%, against 31% in the country, while the share of those with primary or lower education decreased to 17%, compared to 15% nationally.

Investment and business

The relative number of non-financial enterprises is relatively low – 49 per 1,000 population, versus 70 per 1,000 population nationally. TFA acquisition expenditures have increased but remain relatively low. At the same time, in 2022 there was an outflow of FDI – it came down to 1,477 EUR/person, against 4,544 EUR/person.

Production value in the district has continued its considerable rise, reaching 107,400 BGN per employed person, compared to 122,400 BGN per employed person nationally. Also, a considerable increase has been registered in the share of export earnings in net sales revenues – 41%, against 29% countrywide.

Expenditure on research and development is 102 BGN per capita, higher than that in most districts.

Utilization of European funds in Pleven district remains below the national average. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,791 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded in Belene municipality.

Infrastructure

Pleven district is characterized by a higher than average density of the rail network, while that of the road network is below the country's average. The share of highways and first-class roads is also lower – 12%, versus 19% in the country in 2023. Road surface quality is also deteriorating and lagging behind the national average – 34% of the roads are in good condition, compared to 40% countrywide.

The share of households with internet access is rising but remains relatively low – 85% in the district, against the average of 89% nationally.

The share of population living in settlements with access to a public sewerage network amounted to 60% in 2022, compared to 75% nationally, while connectivity to wastewater treatment plants was available to 56% of the households, against 67% in the country.

Local taxes

In 2024, the level of the local taxes in Pleven district's municipalities was close to the national average, though significantly higher than the average ones in northwestern Bulgaria. The average tax on non-residential immovable property for legal entities in the district's municipalities is the highest in the whole country – 3.05‰, against 2.15‰ nationwide. The tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property is also above the national average, albeit by a small margin.

For their part, the average local taxes on motor vehicles and retail trade are relatively low.

Within the district, Pleven city municipality levies the highest local taxes, while the lowest rates are in Iskar municipality.

Administration

In 2024, the local administrations' self-assessments of e-government development and the provision of one-stop shop services went down and were below the respective national averages.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has also been lagging behind and it is again lower, albeit slightly, than the national average – 67.3% in Pleven district, versus 69.3% nationally.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is relatively low – 20%, compared to 27% in the country, but the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is higher than average – 81%, compared to 74% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population increase rate in Pleven district remains strongly negative at -11.1%, against the national average of -6.8%. Pleven also fails to attract new residents and the net migration rate is also negative (-0.1%).

These processes are the main prerequisite for the high level of population aging in the district. The share of children under 4 years is 4.1%, versus 4.5% nationally, and that of people aged 65 and over is 28.2%, compared to 23.8% nationwide.

Population density also remains relatively low – 864 persons/sq. km in the district's urbanized areas, versus 1,221 persons/sq. km nationwide.

Education

The enrolment ratio in 5th–7th grade in Pleven district has continued to rise, reaching 91% in 2023 and exceeding the national average. The percentage of school year repeaters remains relatively high. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is improving and is relatively high. Pleven is one of the districts with the lowest share of students in ICT-oriented programs and people employed in that sector. At the same time, the number of students and employees in the agricultural sector is relatively low.

Students' performance in Pleven district again remained poor in 2024. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 36.3 p., compared to 42.9 p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was among the lowest in the country – “Good” 3.90, versus “Good” 4.30 in the country, while “fail” grades (below 3.00) made up 17.8%, which was the highest share nationwide, where the average was 8.7%.

Healthcare

Pleven district has strong traditions in the sphere of healthcare and is the country's leader in this category. Indeed, Pleven is the district with the highest number of both GPs and specialist physicians. One local GP cares for 1,197 persons on average, compared to 1,701 persons per doctor in the country. The presence of a medical university in the city of Pleven is one of the prerequisites for the large number of doctors and the well-developed network of healthcare facilities in the district.

Pleven is also the district best provided with hospital beds. In 2023, their number continued to increase, reaching the unprecedented 12.7 beds per 1,000 population, compared to 6.1 beds per 1,000 population in the country. Hospital bed occupancy equals the country's average – 56%. Less favorable than the respective national averages remain the indicators for life expectancy in the district, the infant mortality rate and the number of pharmacies relative to the population.

Security and justice

The workloads of the local criminal judges in Pleven district are relatively small, which impacts the speed of delivery of justice. In 2023, one District Court judge heard an average of 9.9 cases a month, compared to 14.4 cases nationally, while in the Administrative Court the average workload was 11.5 cases a month, compared to 14.8 cases per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 95%, against the national average of 91%; that of administrative cases was 83%, versus 72% nationally, and that of civil cases – 78%, against 65% countrywide.

The number of crimes in Pleven district, as well as their detection rate, was comparable to the national average in 2023. The number of registered crimes against the person and property was 10.8 per 1,000 population, versus the average of 11.3 per 1,000 population nationwide, while the detection rate was 55%, against 53% in the country. The number of police officers relative to the population is fairly small.

Environment

The average amount of household waste generated in the district in 2022 is comparable to the national average, while the share of that waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains relatively high – 89%, versus 76% nationally.

Pleven is the district with the lowest share of forest areas – 7%, compared to 33% nationally in 2023. However, the share of disturbed area is also low – 0.2%, versus 0.4% nationally. The installed RES capacities are close to the national average per person. Pleven is among the districts with very hot days and a high cooling degree days index.

Culture and tourism

In 2023, Pleven district's cultural life again remained characterized by a relatively low intensity. There was a significant increase in the number of visits to the local theaters and their number relative to the population exceeded the national average. A relatively high number of visits to museums was registered as well, while that of visits to cinemas and libraries remained relatively low.

The tourism sector has a weak presence in the district. The number of beds in accommodation establishments is 6 per 1,000 population (compared to 56 per 1,000 population in the country) and the number of overnight stays is 716 per 1,000 population (compared to 4,167 per 1,000 population in the country). The number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms is also low.

Key indicators for the district of Pleven

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,889	15,562	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,608	17,030	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	21.6	31.4	26.4	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	55.6	54.9	54.7	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.6	67.8	72.9	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	7.8	7.6	7.3	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.9	19.7	17.1	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	24.7	22.8	25.1	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	78,372	107,381	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,201	2,624	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,508	1,477	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	57.3	59.8	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	41.3	40.0	33.7	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	89.8	84.9	81.1	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	69.8	70.0	67.3	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–13.9	–11.1	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	–0.5	–0.1	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.61	3.51	3.90	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.0	28.0	36.3	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	85.6	90.4	90.6	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.6	72.3	72.7	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	92.0	93.8	94.5	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,214	1,233	1,197	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	10.9	11.5	10.8	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	89	93	95	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	102	101	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	438	485	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	83	89	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	247	392	445	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	322	529	716	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Plovdiv district

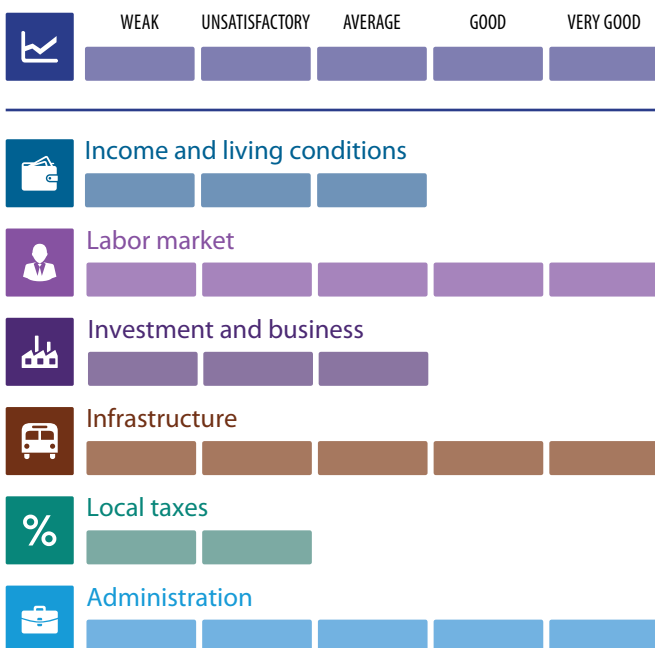
▶ Population (2023)	633,586
▶ Territory (sq. km)	5,973
▶ Number of settlements	212
▶ Share of urban population (%)	74.5



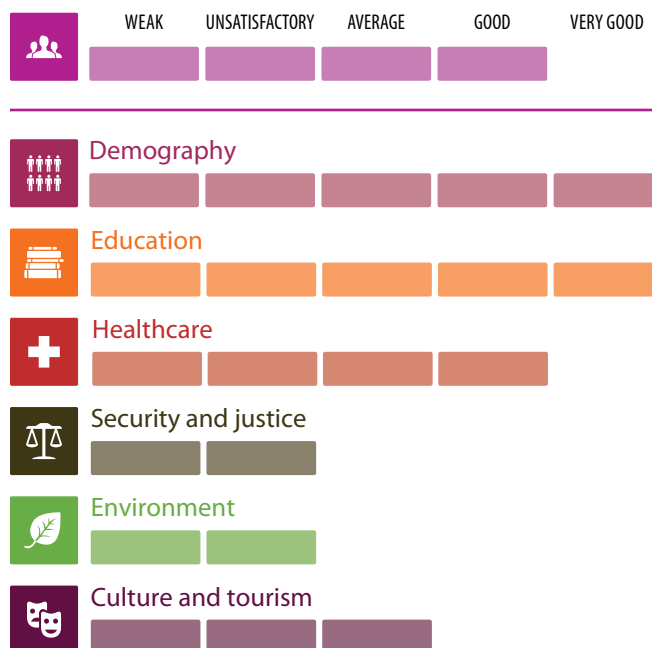
GDP per capita in Plovdiv district has continued to grow at a rate that is considerably higher than the country's average. Employment is rising and unemployment remains low. TFA acquisition expenditures and FDI have grown considerably. Road quality is relatively good. The average rates of all monitored taxes in the district's municipalities are higher than the respective national averages. For the first time, the coverage of municipal expenses with local revenues is below the country's average. Against the general trend in the country towards

population aging, Plovdiv performs relatively well. Students' results are good. Plovdiv is also among the districts with well-established traditions in higher education. The numbers of doctors and hospital beds relative to the population are among the highest in the country. Crime numbers in Plovdiv district remain relatively high but the detection rate is below the national average. The installed RES capacities are above the country's average. The intensity of cultural and tourist life in the district is among the highest in the whole country.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Plovdiv district has continued to grow and in 2022 its rate of increase was so much higher than in the country that it raised the district to the 6th place in the ranking for this category. Salaries and pensions in the district have also been increasing. In 2022, the average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract reached 17,900 BGN per year, and the average monthly pension for 2023 – 763 BGN. The poverty level and income inequality in the district remain above the respective national averages. The share of the population living below the national poverty line was 26.6% in 2023, versus 20.6% countrywide.

Labor market

Plovdiv's performance in this category places the district among the top four in the country. In 2023, the share of the working-age population in Plovdiv district remained relatively high – 59.1%, compared to 58.5% countrywide. Employment went up and unemployment remained low. The employment rate reached 75.0, compared to 76.2% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 4.2%, versus 5.3% in the country.

The educational structure of the workforce has seen a considerable improvement. The share of the population with university degrees has risen to 31%, while that of people with primary or lower education has decreased to 15%, with both indicators now equal to the respective national averages.

Investment and business

In 2022, investment and business activity in Plovdiv district again continued to grow. The number of non-financial enterprises came close to the national average. TFA acquisition expenditures improved considerably to reach 4,600 BGN/person, which is the second highest figure in the country, below only that of the capital. FDI also registered an increase, up to 3,900 EUR/person. Production value went up to 128,700 BGN per employed person. Research and development expenditure per capita in the district remains second to that in the capital. However, Plovdiv district has been lagging behind in the utilization of European funds. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,368 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were registered in the municipalities of Hissarya and Krichim.

Infrastructure

The development of the district's infrastructure can be assessed as very good, ranking Plovdiv second only to Varna in this category. The density of its road network is close to the average one in the country, but the density of its railroads is considerably higher, with 5.4 km/100 sq. km of territory, versus 3.6 km/100 sq. km nationally. The share of highways and first-class roads is 17%, compared to the national average of 19%. The quality of the roads in the district is relatively good – in 2023, 53% of the road surface were in good condition, compared to the average of 40% countrywide.

The relative share of households with internet access went up again in 2023 and remained above the average one nationwide – 92%, versus 89% respectively.

The share of households with access to a public sewerage network equals the country's average of 75%, but the share of people with access to a public sewerage network connected to a wastewater treatment plant is higher – 74%, against the national average of 67%.

Local taxes

In 2024, the average rate of the monitored local taxes levied by the district's municipalities was higher than in the country, though the differences are not considerable. The average rate for non-residential immovable property for legal entities was 2.17‰, against 2.5‰ nationwide, and that for retail trade – 13.03 BGN/sq. m, versus 13.08 BGN sq. m in the country.

The average tax rate for motor vehicles was 1.59 BGN/kW, versus 1.56 BGN/kW countrywide, and for non-gratuitous acquisition of property – 2.85%, compared to the average of 2.81% in the country.

Within the district, the municipalities of Saedinenie and Kaloyanovo levy the lowest local taxes, while the highest average rates are in Laki and Sopot.

Administration

The local authorities' self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services went further up in 2024 and settled above the respective national averages.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has decreased slightly but it too remains relatively high – 70.2% in the district, versus 69.3% in the country.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities has decreased to equal the national average of 27%, while in 2023 for the first time the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues fell below average – 70% in the district, versus 74% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Contrary to the nationwide trend towards population aging, Plovdiv district has been performing relatively well in this category. The natural population increase rate continues to exceed the national average, with -4.8% in the district, versus -6.8% in the country for 2023. Plovdiv continues to attract new residents and its net migration rate of 8.1% is among the highest in the country.

The share of children under 4 years is 4.8% , against 4.5% nationally, and that of people aged 65 and over – 22.5% , versus 23.8% nationwide.

Population density is relatively high, with 1,846 persons/sq. km in its urbanized settlements, against 1,221 persons/sq. km nationally.

Education

The net enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade in Plovdiv district went slightly down in 2023, though it remained above the national average. Worse figures, however, have been recorded for the share of school year repeaters, while the alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is lower than average.

In 2024, students' results in Plovdiv district again remained good. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 42.5 p., which was slightly below the national average of 42.9 p. For its part, the average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.43, versus the average of "Good" 4.30 in the country. "Fail" grades (below 3.00) made up 7.3%, against the national average of 8.7%.

Plovdiv is among the districts with long and stable traditions in higher education. The number of university students relative to the population is the third highest in the country, outranked only by that in Veliko Tarnovo and the capital.

Healthcare

Plovdiv is among the districts with the largest relative number of doctors and hospital beds. In 2023, one local GP cared for 1,626 persons on average, compared to 1,701 persons per doctor in the country. The index for access to specialist physicians is also more favorable than the national average. The local general hospitals provide 8.6 beds per 1,000 population, compared to 6.1 per 1,000 population in the country, which ranks Plovdiv second in the country after Pleven district. Hospital bed occupancy is also relatively high. Plovdiv is also among the districts with a relatively good network of pharmacies – 1,733 persons per pharmacy, versus 1,982 persons per pharmacy countrywide.

Life expectancy also remains significantly higher than the national average – 74.4 years, compared to 73.5 years in the country.

Security and justice

The average workloads of the judges in Plovdiv's District Court are relatively low, while those in the Administrative Court are among the heaviest in the country for 2023. This impacts the speed of delivery of justice. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 93%, compared to the average of 91% nationwide, of civil cases it is 73%, against 65% in the country, while the share of administrative cases is 56%, which is the lowest in the country, where the average is 72%.

The number of crimes registered in Plovdiv district remains relatively low, but the crime detection rate is below the national average. In 2023, registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 8.4 per 1,000 population, versus the average of 11.3 per 1,000 population nationwide, while the detection rate was 52%, compared to 53% in the country. Plovdiv is the district with the lowest number of police officers relative to the population – 3.2 per 1,000 population, against 4.2 per 1,000 population countrywide.

Environment

The amounts of household waste generated in the district have remained high and in 2022 they increased to 541 kg/person per annum, against an average of 488 kg/person nationally. At the same time, the amounts of this waste handed over for treatment and recycling made up 63%, which is below the national average of 76%.

The share of forest areas in Plovdiv district is slightly below the national average, though the share of disturbed area is also considerably lower. The installed RES capacities have registered an increase of 18% and are above the national average.

The cooling degree days index in the district is relatively high due to its geographical location. The relative volume of drinking water consumed by households is lower than the national average, albeit slightly.

Culture and tourism

In 2023, cinema visits recorded a considerable increase, reaching 783 per 1,000 population, against 684 per 1,000 population nationally. Visits to the local libraries, theaters and museums also recorded an increase, though their relative number remained below the national average.

The number of beds in accommodation establishments in Plovdiv district was 21 per 1,000 population in 2023, and the number of overnight stays – 2,166 per 1,000 population; both of these values are relatively high, outranked only by the seaside districts. The use of online sharing economy platforms is also relatively widespread.

Key indicators for the district of Plovdiv

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	15,547	21,638	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	15,937	17,931	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	26.8	29.4	26.6	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	60.6	59.2	59.1	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	70.2	71.4	75.0	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	4.6	4.1	4.2	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.2	17.8	15.2	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	26.0	26.9	30.9	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	99,268	128,737	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	3,379	4,631	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	3,228	3,894	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	75.9	75.2	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	46.5	54.7	53.2	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	103.1	85.4	70.2	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	72.4	72.4	70.2	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-7.4	-4.8	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	7.0	8.1	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.10	3.95	4.43	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	35.0	35.3	42.5	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	87.6	91.8	90.8	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	73.9	73.6	74.4	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	87.1	91.5	91.8	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,637	1,599	1,626	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	7.5	8.1	8.4	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	93	90	93	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	99	101	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	495	541	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	61	63	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	438	705	783	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	1,385	1,965	2,166	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Razgrad district

- ▶ Population (2023)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

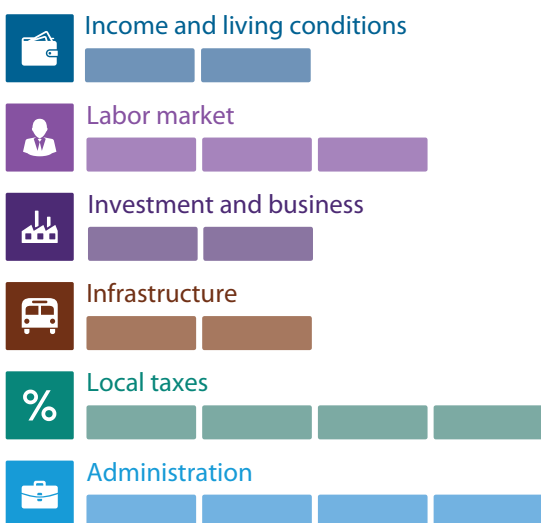
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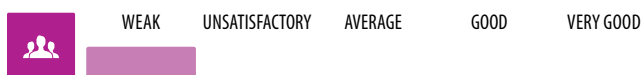
GDP in Razgrad district continues to grow but at a lower than average rate, and its per capita value remains relatively low. Employment and unemployment are rising simultaneously. Investment and business activity in the district is showing some improvement. The share of highways and first-class roads, as well as that of road surfaces in good condition, is extremely low. The average level of the local taxes levied by Razgrad's municipalities is considerably lower than the national average. The local authorities' self-assessments of the development of e-government have gone up.

The district manages to attract population and the net migration rate is positive. Students' results are extremely low. Razgrad is one of the districts with the most acute shortage of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians. The number of crimes in the district has increased slightly but remains relatively low. However, their detection rate is also increasing and remains considerably above the national average. Razgrad is among the districts with the lowest volume of household waste submitted for treatment and recycling. Cultural life and tourism are characterized by a low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Income and living conditions ■■■

GDP per capita in Razgrad district has continued to grow but at a lower than average rate, and its value per capita remains relatively low – 15,900 BGN, against 26,000 BGN in the country in 2022. Both salaries and pensions in the district are rising at a slower rate. The average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract has reached 17,000 BGN, versus 21,200 BGN nationally. The average monthly pension for 2023 is 647 BGN, versus 784 BGN countrywide, and remains among the three lowest in the country.

In 2023, the Gini coefficient for income inequality in the district went slightly up but it still remains among the relatively low ones in the country. The poverty level, on the other hand, has also been rising and is again among the country's highest. The share of the population living below the national poverty line is 31.3%, compared to 20.6% nationally.

Labor market ■■■■

The share of the working-age population is decreasing and is moving away from the national average. In 2023 it reached 57.9%, compared to 58.5% nationally. Employment and unemployment are rising simultaneously, and both indicators are significantly less favorable than the average ones countrywide. The employment rate for 2023 is 64.5%, compared to 76.2% nationally, and the unemployment rate is 9.7%, versus 5.3% nationally.

The educational structure of the workforce also remains among the challenges facing the local labor market. The share of the population aged 25–64 with a university degree has decreased to 24%, against 31% in the country, while that of the people with primary or lower education has shrunk to 29%, though continuing to be almost twice higher than in the country, where the average is 15%.

Investment and business ■■■

Investment activity in Razgrad district again recorded some improvement in 2022. The relative number of enterprises is 50 per 1,000 population, compared to the national average of 70 per 1,000 population. TFA acquisition expenditures went slightly up to 2,100 BGN/person, compared to the average of 4,300 BGN/person in the country. FDI reached 2,300 EUR/person, and production value amounted to 120,900 BGN per employed person. The share of export earnings in net sales revenues is growing and has reached the significant 44%, compared to 29% in the country. Research and development expenditures remain limited – 19 BGN/person, versus 195 BGN in the country.

Utilization of European funds has been lagging behind. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries

under EU operational programs amounted to 2,380 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded by the municipalities in Kubrat and Isperih.

Infrastructure ■■■

The density of the district's railroad network is close to, though slightly above the country's average. The road network density is higher, but the share of highways and first-class roads remains extremely low – 11%, compared to 19% countrywide, and so does the share of road surfaces in good condition – 25%, versus 40% nationally in 2023.

The relative share of households with internet access has gone slightly down to 84% and remains lower than the average of 89% nationwide.

Razgrad is the district with the lowest share of population living in settlements with a public sewerage network – 42% in 2022, compared to the national figure of 75%. All public sewerage networks are connected to wastewater treatment plants, though the coverage remains extremely low – only a share of 42% of the population, compared to 67% nationwide.

% Local taxes ■■■■■

In 2024, the average level of local taxes in Razgrad district's municipalities again remained considerably lower than the national average. Among the four monitored local taxes, only the tax rate on non-residential immovable property of legal entities was higher in Razgrad district than the average one in the country, albeit by a small margin.

Significantly lower than the national average were the local taxes on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and retail trade.

Within the district, the lowest taxes are levied by Tsar Kaloyan municipality, and the highest – by that of Loznitsa.

Administration ■■■■■

The local authorities' self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services went up in 2024 and exceeded the national average.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration is 69.0% and is again below the national average, albeit slightly.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is decreasing and remains low – 20% in 2023, compared to 27% the country in 2023. The coverage of municipal expenses with local revenues is 64%, versus 74% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■■■

The natural population increase rate in Razgrad district is relatively low and in 2023 it was -9.7% , versus the national average of -6.8% . At the same time, the district has managed to attract new residents and the net migration rate is positive (5.7%), but that cannot compensate for the population decrease.

Population aging in the district is reflected in the age structure as well. The share of children under 4 years is 4.0% , against 4.5% nationally, and that of the population aged 65 and over – 25.0% , versus the national average of 23.8% .

Population density in Razgrad's urbanized settlements is relatively low – 841 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education ■■■■

The share of children in the district attending kindergarten and the enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade are slightly above the respective national averages. The share of school year repeaters is growing but remains below the national average. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy is close to, but below the national average.

Students' results for 2024 were extremely low in Razgrad district. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 33.9 p., versus 42.9 p. nationally, and was the fourth lowest in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was the second lowest in the country – “Good” 3.88, compared to “Good” 4.30 in the country, while the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was one of the highest – 15.3% , against the national average of 8.7% .

The single provider of higher education in Razgrad district is a branch of Ruse University. This accounts for the small number of university students in the district – the 2023 data show just 2 students per 1,000 population, compared to 30 students per 1,000 population nationally.

Healthcare ■■

The share of people with health insurance in Razgrad district remains extremely high, covering practically the whole population. At the same time, Razgrad is among the districts with the most acute shortage of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians. In 2023, one local GP cared for 2,402 persons on average, compared to 1,701 persons per doctor in the country.

The relative number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals is also relatively limited and within a year it dropped to 4.4 beds per 1,000 population, compared to 6.1 per 1,000 population in the country. This has an impact on hospital bed occupancy which, although low, has increased to 49% , against 56% nationally. Razgrad is the district with the lowest relative number of pharmacies – one pharmacy per 3,363 population, versus one per 1,982 population in the country.

The average life expectancy in the district is relatively low and the infant mortality rate is high.

Security and justice ■■■■

The workloads of criminal judges in Razgrad district are relatively low, which impacts the speed of delivery of justice. In 2023, one District Court judge heard an average of 10.4 cases a month, compared to 14.4 cases per judge nationally, while a judge in the Administrative Court heard 8.3 cases monthly, which is the lowest workload in the country, compared to the national average of 14.8 cases. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 93% , compared to the average of 91% nationwide, of administrative cases it is 84% , against 72% in the country, and of civil cases – 82% , against 65% in the country.

The number of crimes registered in Razgrad district has gone slightly up but remains relatively low. Registered crimes against the person and property in the district amount to 9.3 per 1,000 population, versus the average of 11.3 per 1,000 population nationwide. However, the detection rate has also increased and remains considerably above the national average – 66% , in the district, compared to 53% nationally. The number of police officers relative to the population remains comparatively low.

Environment ■■

The amounts of waste generated by households in Razgrad district continued to grow in 2022 to a level exceeding the national average relative to the population. Its average volume reached 491 kg/person annually, compared to 488 kg/person in the country on average. At the same time, Razgrad ranks among the districts with the lowest amounts handed over for treatment and recycling, outranking only Kardzhali district – a mere 11% , versus the national average of 76% .

The share of forest areas is relatively low – 22% , against 33% in the country, but the share of disturbed area is also small – 0.2% , against 0.4% countrywide in 2023.

The installed RES capacities relative to population in 2024 are relatively limited. Razgrad is among the districts with a high cooling degree days. However, households' drinking water consumption is low.

Culture and tourism ■■

Cultural life in the district was again not particularly active in 2023. Visits to cinemas, theaters and museums relative to the population increased, but remained relatively small in number. For its part, the number of visits to libraries went down and in this indicator the district takes one of the bottom places.

Razgrad is among the districts with the lowest number of beds in accommodation establishments – 7 per 1,000 population, compared to 56 per 1,000 population in the country. Overnight stays are also limited – 474 per 1,000 population, versus 4,167 per 1,000 population nationally in 2023. The number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy is also low.

Key indicators for the district of Razgrad

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,942	15,858	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	15,517	16,955	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	16.7	27.7	31.3	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.9	58.2	57.9	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	60.0	64.2	64.5	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	8.8	9.4	9.7	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	34.1	31.3	28.7	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	21.1	24.9	23.5	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	83,543	120,925	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,046	2,116	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,917	2,336	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	41.5	42.1	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	16.9	26.2	25.2	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	78.1	75.3	63.7	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	68.1	68.2	69.0	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-13.5	-9.7	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	4.4	5.7	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.53	3.50	3.88	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.1	25.9	33.9	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	85.5	92.7	91.8	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	71.3	70.7	71.6	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	96.3	100.0	100.0	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	2,293	2,362	2,402	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	7.3	9.2	9.3	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	91	90	93	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	84	88	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	481	491	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	10	11	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	85	215	220	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	468	497	474	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Ruse district

- ▶ Population (2023)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

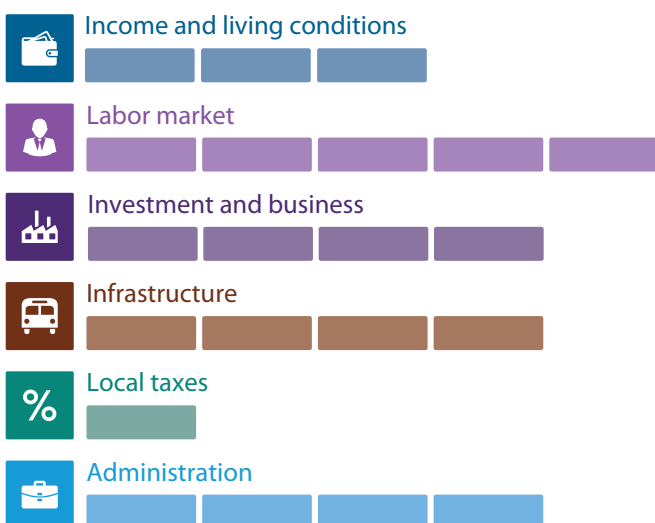
187,830
2,803
83
77.9



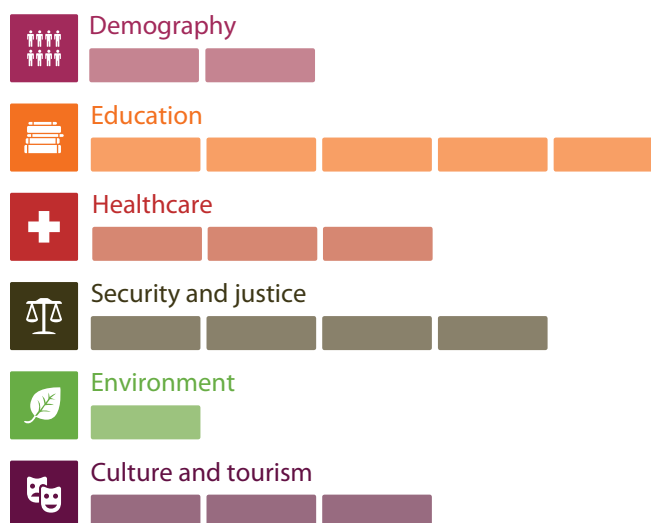
GDP per capita in the district is increasing and is now the ninth highest in the country. Both employment and unemployment figures remain relatively favorable. A significant increase is observed in the share of export earnings in net sales revenues, raising Ruse to the first place. Ruse is the district with the highest railway network density in the country. The average level of the tax rates levied by the municipalities in Ruse district is above the national average. The AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies has declined slightly but again exceeds the country's average.

Natural population increase has severely deteriorated. Students' performance in the district is close to the average one in the country. The number of university students relative to the population ranks the district among the leaders in this indicator. The healthcare system continues to suffer from a shortage of GPs. The number of crimes is increasing but remains relatively low, and crime detection is above the national average. The installed RES capacities are extremely small. Ruse is among the districts with an intensive cultural life, but the tourism sector is not strongly represented.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Ruse district has increased to 18,700 BGN and in 2022 it remained the ninth highest in the country. Salaries and pensions have also been rising, though their rate of increase is lower than the country's average. The average annual gross salary of people employed under labor contract reached 17,200 BGN in 2023, and the average monthly pension – 736 BGN.

The Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality, was again below the national average in 2023. Poverty has increased slightly, but the share of the population living below the national poverty line remains relatively low – 20%, compared to 20.6% nationally.

Labor market

The labor market indicators for Ruse district rank it among the top five in this category.

The share of the working-age population in the district has decreased slightly to 57.0%, versus 58.5% in the country. In 2023, employment went up and unemployment went down. The employment rate was 78.6%, compared to 76.2% in the country, and the unemployment rate was 5.5%, compared to 5.3% in the country.

Ruse is also among the districts with a highly educated workforce. The share of the people aged 25–64 with primary or lower education is 11%, versus 15% in the country, and that of university graduates – 29%, versus 31% nationally. Those with a secondary education make up 60% of the population aged 25–64, against 55% countrywide.

Investment and business

Investment and business activity in Ruse district is growing and is relatively good. The number of enterprises reached 65 per 1,000 population in 2022, compared to 70 per 1,000 population in the country. TFA acquisition expenditures continue to rise and have reached 3,700 BGN/person. FDI flows have gone up to 2,800 EUR/person. Production value per employed person has also grown and remains relatively high – 135,000 BGN.

A significant increase, which puts Ruse in the first place in this category, is observed in the share of export earnings in net sales revenue – 58%, versus 29% nationally.

Spending on research and development has risen to 99 BGN per capita and is higher than in most districts.

Utilization of European funds in Ruse has also increased rapidly and exceeds the average level in the country per capita. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 3,275 BGN/person, against 3,175 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the leader in utilization of EU funding is Byala municipality.

Infrastructure

Ruse is the district with the highest railway network density in the country. The density of the road network is slightly lower, but the share of highways and first-class roads exceeds the national average – 22% in the district, versus 19% in the country. Road quality has deteriorated slightly, though in 2023 it again exceeded the national average, with 43% of road surfaces in good condition, against 40% nationwide.

The percentage of households in the district with internet access has gone down and remains below the national average.

The share of the population with access to a public sewerage system remains relatively low – 68%, versus 75% in the country on average. Nevertheless, in 2022 the whole sewerage network was already connected to wastewater treatment plants, compared to the national average of 67%.

Local taxes

In 2024, the average level of the tax rates in Ruse district was above the country's average. Among all monitored taxes, the only one where there was a significant margin with the national average was the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, which in Ruse district's municipalities was lower. For its part, the local tax on retail trade was higher, but it did not differ much from the average levels. As for the tax on non-residential property of legal entities, Ruse municipalities have one of the highest rates – the average for the district is 2.75‰, compared to 2.15‰ in the country.

Within the district, the municipality of Ruse city levies on average the highest local taxes, while the lowest rates are in the municipalities of Slivo Pole and Vetovo.

Administration

In 2024, the local authorities' self-assessments of the development of e-government showed no change and remained slightly below the national average. However, the self-assessments of the provision of one-stop shop administrative services again achieved high scores.

The AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies decreased slightly but remained above the country's average – 71.5% in the district, compared to 69.3% nationally.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities has been decreasing and is slightly below average – 26% in the district, versus 27% in the country, but the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is high – 80% in the district, versus 74% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The serious decline of the natural population increase in Ruse district continued in 2023, with a rate of -10.7% , against the national average of -6.8% . However, Ruse manages to attract new residents, although its net migration rate is low -1.2% .

The trend toward population aging in the district is clearly visible in the age structure. The share of children under 4 years is 3.8%, compared to 4.5% in the country, and of people aged 65 and over -26.9% , versus 23.8% nationally.

Population density is close to, though below the national average.

Education

The proportion of children in the district attending kindergarten remains higher than the country's average. The enrolment ratio in 5th–7th grade is also relatively high, though in 2023 it registered a slight decline. The share of school year repeaters, on the other hand, is the third lowest in the country, below that of the districts of Smolyan and the capital. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy is relatively good, mainly owing to the high number of students in manufacturing and transport-related programs and of employees in those sectors.

Students' results for 2024 again remained close to the average ones in the country. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 42.3 p., compared to 42.9 p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.28, whereas the national average was "Good" 4.30. "Fail" grades (below 3.00) made up 8.1%, against the national average of 8.7%.

The number of university students relative to the population ranks the district among the leaders in this indicator.

Healthcare

In 2023, the healthcare system in Ruse district continued to suffer from a shortage of GPs. One local GP was caring for an average of 2,220 people, compared to 1,701 people per doctor in the country. The number of specialist physicians, however, was close to the national average.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the relative number of beds in the local general hospitals, which in 2023 reached 6.3 per 1,000 population, compared to 6.1 per 1,000 population in the country. Hospital bed occupancy is also relatively high. The pharmacy network in the district is relatively dense.

The average life expectancy in the district is close to, though below the national average, while the infant mortality rate in the district is declining and remains low.

Security and justice

The workloads of the criminal judges in Ruse district again remained relatively low in 2023, which impacts the speed of delivery of justice. One local judge in the District Court heard an average of 11.1 cases a month, compared to 14.4 cases per judge countrywide, while in the Administrative Court the average workload was 13.8 cases a month per judge, versus 14.8 cases in the country. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 95%, compared to the average of 91% nationwide. For administrative cases, this share was 84%, against 72% nationally, and for civil cases in the District Court -83% , compared to 65% countrywide.

The crime rate in Ruse district is increasing but remains below average, and the detection rate is above the country's average. In 2023, registered crimes against the person and property in the district constituted 11.1 per 1,000 population, versus the average of 11.3 per 1,000 population nationwide. The detection rate, for its part, increased to 59%, against 53% in the country on average. The number of police officers relative to the population is below the national average.

Environment

The amounts of household waste generated in the district have risen significantly and are above the national average -574 kg/person in the district per year, versus 488 kg/person in the country. At the same time, the share handed over for treatment and recycling remains low -69% , compared to the national average of 76% in 2022.

The share of forest areas in Ruse district is relatively small -15% , versus 33% countrywide in 2023. The share of disturbed area, however, is higher -0.5% , against 0.4% in the country.

The installed RES capacities are extremely small -0.3 kW/person, compared to 1.0 kW/person countrywide in 2024. The cooling degree days index is relatively high.

Culture and tourism

In 2023, Ruse remained among the districts with relatively active cultural life. Cinema visits reached 817 per 1,000 population, against 684 per 1,000 population nationally. Visits to the local theatres and museums also recorded a significant increase. Local libraries attracted 734 visits per 1,000 population, against 679 per 1,000 population nationally.

The tourism sector does not have a strong presence in the district. The number of beds in accommodation establishments is 13 per 1,000 population, compared to 56 per 1,000 population in the country. Overnight stays are also relatively few in number $-1,063$ per 1,000 population in the district, versus 4,167 per 1,000 population in the country. Guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms have doubled, though their number remains relatively limited.

Key indicators for the district of Ruse

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	15,075	18,658	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	15,443	17,154	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	24.0	18.5	20.0	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.6	57.2	57.0	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	76.5	77.2	78.6	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	5.4	5.6	5.5	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	11.6	11.1	11.0	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	30.9	29.0	28.9	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	106,790	134,960	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,723	3,669	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	2,243	2,784	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	67.3	67.8	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	40.5	47.2	42.5	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	98.4	101.7	79.7	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	72.2	72.4	71.5	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–15.1	–10.7	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	0.9	1.2	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.88	3.82	4.28	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	35.9	35.6	42.3	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	83.8	92.4	90.8	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.9	72.0	72.8	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	88.2	95.5	96.4	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	2,248	2,170	2,220	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	8.5	9.3	11.1	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	92	90	95	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	102	104	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	442	574	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	68	69	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	395	688	817	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	622	909	1063	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Shumen district

▶ Population (2023)	149,699
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,390
▶ Number of settlements	151
▶ Share of urban population (%)	62.0



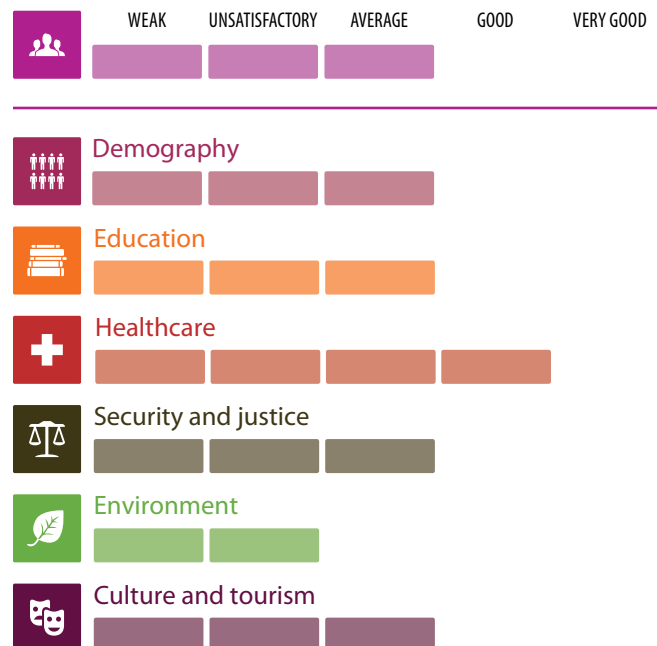
GDP, incomes and pensions in Shumen district are continuing to grow. The increase in the employment rate in the district is significant and for the first time it is ahead of the national average. Investment activity remains relatively low. Shumen is the district with the highest share of first-class roads and highways in the country. Municipalities in Shumen district have relatively low levels of local taxes. The transparency rating of local government administrations remains significantly higher than average. The natural population increase rate is less favorable

than average, but the district has managed to attract new residents. Students' results continue to be among the poorest in the country. Healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of hospital beds, but hospital bed occupancy is the highest in the country. The workloads of the local criminal judges remain low and this has a favorable effect on the speed of delivery of justice. The number of crimes in the district is low and the detection rate is high. The share of degraded territory is limited. Tourism in the district also has a relatively limited presence.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

The growth of GDP per capita in Shumen district has continued, reaching 15,600 BGN/person and placing the district just below the middle of the 2022 ranking scale for this indicator. The trend towards rising incomes and pensions is also maintained. The average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract is 16,700 BGN, versus 21,200 BGN in the country, and the average monthly pension – 688 BGN, versus 784 BGN nationally.

The share of the population living below the national poverty line has gone down significantly but remains below the national average – 15.1% in the district, compared to 20.6% in the country for 2022. The Gini coefficient for income inequality is also declining and has steadied below the national average.

Labor market

In 2023, the share of the working-age population was close to, but below the national average – 57.7% in the district, compared to 58.5% in the country. Employment and unemployment went up simultaneously in 2023. The employment rate recorded a significant increase – by over 5 p.p. to 76.4%, and for the first time it exceeded the national average of 76.2%. The unemployment rate, however, also went up, reaching 10.1%, which is almost double the national average of 5.3%.

A challenge still facing the labor market in Shumen district is the educational structure of the workforce, although in 2023 there was a considerable increase. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education decreased to 24%, against the national average of 15%. At the same time, the share of those with a university degree increased to 29%, compared to 31% in the country.

Investment and business

Investment activity in Shumen district again remained relatively slack in 2022. The number of enterprises in Shumen district is small – 54 per 1,000 population, against 70 per 1,000 population nationally. TFA acquisition expenditures have gone up significantly to reach 2,800 BGN/person but remain below the national average. FDI relative to the population has also increased – almost double – though it too remains relatively low. By the end of 2022, FDI reached 1,400 EUR/person in the district, compared to 4,500 EUR/person in the country. The share of export earnings in net sales revenues is also growing and is relatively high – 35% in the district, compared to 29% in the country. Production value reached 112,200 BGN per employee, against 122,400 BGN per employee in the country.

The relative volume of research and development expenditure has increased to 105 BGN per capita and ranks the district fourth in the country in this indicator.

Infrastructure

Shumen district is among the good performers in the category assessing infrastructure. The density of the road and railway networks is higher than the national average. In 2023, Shumen remained the district with the highest share of first-class roads and highways in the country – 37%, compared to 19% in the country. However, road quality is deteriorating and remains below the national average, with road surfaces in good condition making up 30%, versus 40% in the country.

Household access to the internet has increased to 88% but remains slightly lower than the country's average of 89%.

There has been little change in the share of households with access to a public sewerage network and it remains low – 58% in 2022, against 75% in the country. The share of households whose sewerage system is connected to a wastewater treatment plant is 54%, compared to 67% countrywide.

Local taxes

The municipalities in Shumen district again kept the levels of local taxes relatively low in 2024. For all monitored local taxes, the average rates were lower than the respective national averages. The biggest margin is in the taxes on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and retail trade.

Within the district, the highest local taxes are levied by the municipality of Novi Pazar, and the lowest – by that of Hitrino.

Administration

The self-assessments of the local administrations of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services went down in 2024 and equaled the national average. The AIP active transparency rating of the municipalities in the district also registered a decrease, though it remained significantly above the country's average – 75.8% in the district, compared to 69.3% nationally.

The share of own revenues of the district's municipalities remained low in 2023 at 19%, versus 27% nationally, while the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues was limited – 53%, against 74% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population increase rate is less favorable than the country's average but Shumen district manages to attract new residents. In 2023, the natural population increase rate was -9.1‰, compared to -6.8‰ nationally. The net migration rate was positive and relatively high at 9.6‰.

The share of children under 4 years is 4.0%, compared to 4.5% in the country, and that of the population aged 65 years and over – 25.2%, versus 23.8% nationally.

Population density again remained low in 2023 – 854 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km on average countrywide.

Education

The coverage of children attending kindergartens in the district again recorded a significant increase in 2023. Their share reached 91%, compared to 88% nationwide. The net enrolment in 5th–7th grade was 89%, against 90% nationally. The share of school year repeaters equals the national average. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy has improved and is relatively high, mainly due to the alignment between the numbers of students attending courses in the transport and hospitality sectors and people employed with those professional qualification.

In 2024, students' results again remained among the lowest in the country. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 35.2 p., versus 42.9 p. in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was again the lowest in the country – "Good" 3.89, compared to "Good" 4.30 in the country, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was the second highest, below that of Pleven district – 17.7%, against 8.7% nationally.

The number of university students has gone down to 42 per 1,000 population, though remaining higher than the national average of 30 students per 1,000 population.

Healthcare

The healthcare system in Shumen district suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. However, the number of GPs relative to the population is increasing and is now above the national average. In 2023, there was one GP per 1,627 persons, compared to 1,701 persons per doctor nationally. The number of beds in the district's general hospitals remains extremely low, with 3.0 beds per 1,000 population, compared to 6.1 beds per 1,000 population in the country. At the same time, hospital bed occupancy is the highest in the country – 67%, against 56% nationally. The pharmacy network in the district is relatively limited.

Infant mortality registered an increase in 2023, though remaining below the country's average, albeit by a small margin. However, the average life expectancy is below the national average. The share of population with health insurance is among the highest nationally.

Security and justice

The workloads of local judges in the district remain low, which in 2023 again had a favorable effect on the speed of delivery of justice. One Administrative Court judge heard an average of 9.9 cases per month, compared to an average of 14.8 cases per judge in the country, and the monthly workload of one District Court judge was 10.2 cases, versus 14.4 cases nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 97%, against 91% nationally, of administrative cases it was 84%, compared to 72% nationally, and of civil cases – 68%, against 65% nationwide.

The number of crimes in Shumen district is low, and the detection rate is high. Registered crimes against the person and property amounted to 9.5 per 1,000 population in 2023, compared to 11.3 per 1,000 population nationally. The detection rate was 65% against 53% in the country. However, the number of police officers relative to the population is relatively low.

Environment

The volumes of household waste in Shumen district have been rising but remain relatively low, while its management is improving, though it still is not good. In 2022, the amount of household waste generated in the district was 452 kg/person, compared to the national average of 488 kg/person; however, a relatively low share was handed over for treatment and recycling – 52%, against 76% nationally.

The share of forest area is close to the national average, but that of disturbed area is rather more limited.

The installed RES capacities relative to the population are relatively small.

Shumen is one of the districts with a low volume of drinking water consumption by the households.

Culture and tourism

Visits to the local museums and libraries continued to increase in 2023 and again exceeded the respective national averages. Museums attracted 1,139 persons per 1,000 population, versus 770 per 1,000 population in the country. Visits to libraries reached 1,626 per 1,000 population, which is the among highest numbers for the whole country, where the average was 679 per 1,000 population. The number of cinema visits has also registered an increase, though remaining exceptionally low – 149 per 1,000 population, compared to 684 per 1,000 population nationally. Theater visits follow much the same trend.

Tourism in the district also has a relatively weak presence. The number of beds in accommodation establishments in 2023 was 12 per 1,000 population, compared to 56 per 1,000 population in the country, and the number of overnight stays – 515 per 1,000 population, compared to 4,167 per 1000 population in the country. The number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms is also low.

Key indicators for the district of Shumen

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,989	15,614	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	15,105	16,702	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	15.4	22.5	15.1	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	60.0	57.8	57.7	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	69.9	71.3	76.4	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	9.2	9.4	10.1	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	27.8	26.8	23.5	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	24.2	24.8	29.2	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	85,114	112,201	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,897	2,794	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	708	1,363	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	56.7	58.0	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	37.6	37.8	30.1	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	78.1	71.7	52.6	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	76.1	76.5	75.8	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-11.7	-9.1	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	6.4	9.6	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.58	3.43	3.84	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	27.0	26.2	35.2	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	79.6	90.3	88.9	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.4	71.3	72.6	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	88.1	98.9	99.4	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,862	1,705	1,627	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	8.6	9.0	9.5	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	95	97	97	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	79	83	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	370	452	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	45	52	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	68	66	149	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	372	506	515	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Silistra district

- ▶ Population (2023)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

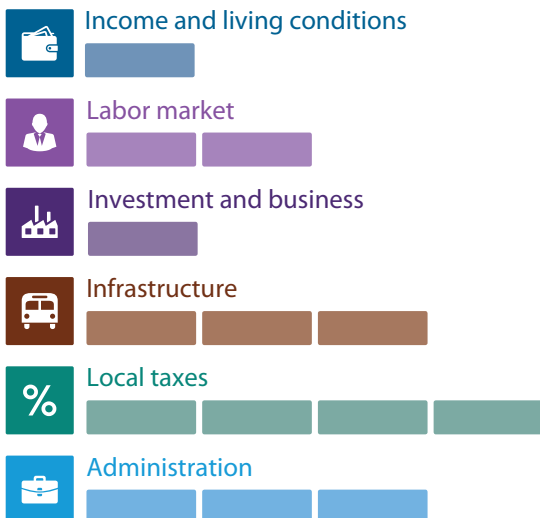
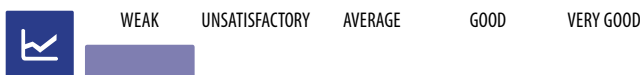
94,739
2,846
118
44.5



Salaries and pensions in Silistra district continue to increase, but are still relatively low. The poverty rate in the district is shrinking but remains high. The development of the local labor market is unsatisfactory. Domestic investment has increased significantly, but foreign investment is lagging behind. Due to the low level of urbanization, a relatively small share of the population lives in settlements with a public sewerage network. The average level of local taxes in Silistra district is relatively low. The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is extremely low.

Silistra is among the districts with the worst demographic profile. Students' results are relatively low. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is high. Healthcare in Silistra district suffers from a shortage of doctors. The workloads of criminal judges in Silistra district are significantly lower than the national average. Crime numbers have risen, but remain relatively low and the detection rate is high. Silistra is also among the districts with the worst performance as regards the environment indicators. Tourism in the district is not well developed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Silistra is again the district with the lowest rating in this category. The growth rate of GDP per capita is slowing down despite the low baseline, reaching 12,100 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 26,000 BGN/person in 2022. Salaries and pensions also continue to increase, but are still relatively low. The average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract is 14,800 BGN, compared to 21,200 BGN in the country. The average monthly pension for 2023 is 654 BGN, against 784 BGN countrywide.

The Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality, is rising but remains relatively low. The poverty level in the district remains high but has shrunk significantly, which is probably related to the rapid growth of pensions over the past few years. The share of the population living below the national poverty line has reached 25.6%, compared to 20.6% nationally.

Labor market

In 2023, the development of the local labor market again remained unsatisfactory, ranking Silistra in the second lowest place (only above Montana). The share of the working-age population has dropped to 55.3%, against 58.5% in the country.

There has been a parallel rise in both employment and unemployment. The employment rate has reached 63.6%, against the national average of 76.2%. For its part, the unemployment rate is up to 10.7%, compared to 5.3% nationwide.

The educational structure of the workforce continues to be a major challenge facing the labor market. In 2023, the share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education was 27%, compared to 15% nationwide, while the share of those with a university degree went down to 20%, versus 31% countrywide.

Investment and business

Silistra is among the country's districts with low investment and business activity. In 2022, the number of nonfinancial enterprises was 54 per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population countrywide. Domestic investment has increased significantly, but foreign investment is lagging behind. TFA expenditures have reached 2,800 BGN/person. Against the national average of 4,544 EUR/person, FDI in Silistra has shrunk to 266 EUR/person, which is the lowest value nationally.

Production value has increased to 81,400 BGN per employed person, but remains relatively low. The share of export earnings in net sales revenues is also low – 16%, compared to 29% in the country.

Spending on research and development relative to the population has grown considerably but remains below the country's averages.

Utilization of European funds in Silistra district's municipalities is also lagging behind. By 30 June 2024, payments made

in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,904 BGN/person, versus 3,175 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Tutrakan.

Infrastructure

The density of the road network in Silistra district is almost identical to the average one in the country – 18 km/100 sq. m of territory. At the same time, the share of first-class roads in the district is considerably below average – 11% in 2021, against 19% countrywide. Nevertheless, the quality of the road surface is relatively high – 43% of the roads are in good condition, versus 40% in the country.

In most northern Bulgarian districts, railroad density is typically lower, and in Silistra district it is 2.5 km/100 sq. km of territory, compared to 3.6 km/100 sq. km in the country.

Access to the internet is available to 83% of the households in the district, compared to the average of 89% nationwide.

Due to the low level of urbanization, a relatively small proportion of the population lives in settlements with a public sewerage network – 52%, compared to 75% in the country. Nevertheless, by 2022, all of the district's sewerage networks were connected to wastewater treatment plants, compared to 67% nationally.

Local taxes

As is typical of the less economically developed districts, the average level of local taxes in Silistra is relatively low. In 2024, all monitored local taxes were lower than the respective national averages. The biggest margin occurred in the rates for retail trade and motor vehicles.

Within the district, Sitovo municipality levies the lowest local taxes, and Tutrakan municipality – the highest.

Administration

In 2024, the local authorities' self-assessment of the development of e-government registered a slight decrease but remained above the national average. The local authorities' self-assessment of the provision of one-stop shop services has shrunk more significantly and to a level below the national average.

The average AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has improved but is still lagging behind the national average – 65.9% in Silistra district, versus 69.3% in the country.

In 2023, the share of own revenues in the district's municipalities was 15%, against 27% nationally, which is one of the lowest figures nationally, only above that of Montana. For its part, the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues has fallen considerably to 57%, versus 74% countrywide.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■■

The demographic profile of Silistra district continued its deterioration in 2023. The natural population increase rate in Silistra district was -10.1% , compared to -6.8% in the country. The net migration rate was positive but relatively low -0.9% .

These developments have their impact on the age structure of the district's population. The share of children under 4 years is 4.0% , versus 4.5% in the country, and that of people aged 65 and over -27.7% , versus the national average of 23.8% . Population density is almost half the national average -680 persons/sq. km in the urbanized settlements, against $1,221$ persons/sq. km countrywide.

Education ■■■■

The share of children attending kindergarten in the district continued to rise and in 2022 it already exceeded the national average. The rate of enrolment in 5th to 7th grade, however, registered a slight decrease and remained below the national average -88% in Silistra district, compared to 90% nationally. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is relatively high due to the relatively high share of agriculture in the economy, which is also linked to the higher share of admissions into specialized agricultural programs in vocational education. At the same time, the ICT sector is not represented in either employment or education.

Students' results in Silistra district were again relatively poor in 2024. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 34.2 p., versus 42.9 p. nationally, and was the third lowest in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.99 , compared to "Good" 4.30 in the country, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 12.8% , against the national average of 8.7% .

The single provider of higher education in Silistra is a branch of Ruse University, which explains the very small number of university students in the district $-$ just 3 students per $1,000$ persons, compared to 30 students per $1,000$ population nationally.

Healthcare ■■■

Life expectancy in the district is increasing but remains relatively low.

The healthcare system in Silistra district continues to suffer from a shortage of doctors, both GPs and specialist physicians, and in 2023 the number of beds in the local general hospitals was again below the national average. One local GP cares for $2,069$ persons on average, compared to $1,701$ persons per doctor in the country. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has increased in the past few years, but compared to other districts, their proportion to the population remains relatively low -5.0 beds per $1,000$ population, compared to 6.1 beds per $1,000$ population in the country. At the same time, hospital bed occupancy exceeds the country's average.

The density of the pharmacy network in the district is relatively limited.

Security and justice ■■■■

The workloads of the local judges in 2023 were considerably lower than the national average, but this had no significant impact on the speed of delivery of justice in the district. One District Court judge heard an average of 10.6 cases a month, compared to 14.4 cases per judge nationally, and in the Administrative Court the monthly workload was 10.7 cases, versus 14.8 cases nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 93% , against the national average of 91% , that of cases heard in the Administrative Court was 67% , against 72% nationally, and of civil cases heard in the District Court -77% , versus 65% in the country.

The crime rate has been going up but remains relatively low, while the detection rate is high. In 2023, registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 9.1 per $1,000$ population, versus the average of 11.3 per $1,000$ population nationwide. The detection rate stood at 64% , compared to the national average of 53% . The number of police officers in relation to the population is equal to the national average -4.2 per $1,000$ population.

Environment ■■

Silistra is also among the worst performing districts as regards the environmental indicators, ranking only above Stara Zagora, which occupies the bottom place. One major factor for the low figures is the extremely small amount of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling $-$ a bare 13% , versus 76% nationally for 2022. At the same time, the amount of generated household waste is similar to the national average $-$ an annual of 457 kg/person in the district, versus 488 kg/person in the country.

The share of forest areas in Silistra district is low -15% , versus 33% countrywide in 2023. The share of disturbed area, however, is close to the national average -0.4% . The relative volume of installed RES capacities has doubled but remains relatively low. Silistra is among the districts with a high cooling degree days index.

Culture and tourism ■■

Cinema visits have gone up but remain low -121 per $1,000$ population, against 684 per $1,000$ population nationally. Visits to the local museums number 394 per $1,000$ population, against 770 per $1,000$ population in the country. Visits to the local theatres and libraries are also relatively few.

Tourism in the district is not well developed. The number of beds in accommodation establishments for 2023 is 8 per $1,000$ population, versus 56 per $1,000$ population, and the number of overnight stays is 449 per $1,000$ population, against $4,167$ per $1,000$ population in the country. The number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms is also low.

Key indicators for the district of Silistra

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,975	12,087	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	13,272	14,813	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	23.4	34.4	25.6	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	57.6	55.6	55.3	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	60.5	61.2	63.6	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	9.4	10.4	10.7	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	28.2	26.5	27.1	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	22.6	21.6	20.4	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	65,661	81,369	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,078	2,828	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	400	266	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	51.0	51.6	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	59.6	44.0	43.3	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	63.2	74.2	57.5	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	58.6	58.8	65.9	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–14.0	–10.1	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	1.3	0.9	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.65	3.69	3.99	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	26.9	26.8	34.2	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	77.8	88.8	88.2	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	71.0	70.2	71.2	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	88.3	95.4	96.1	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	2,097	1,964	2,069	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	7.4	8.5	9.1	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	89	96	93	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	87	93	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	413	457	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	19	13	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	80	110	121	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	297	495	449	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Sliven district

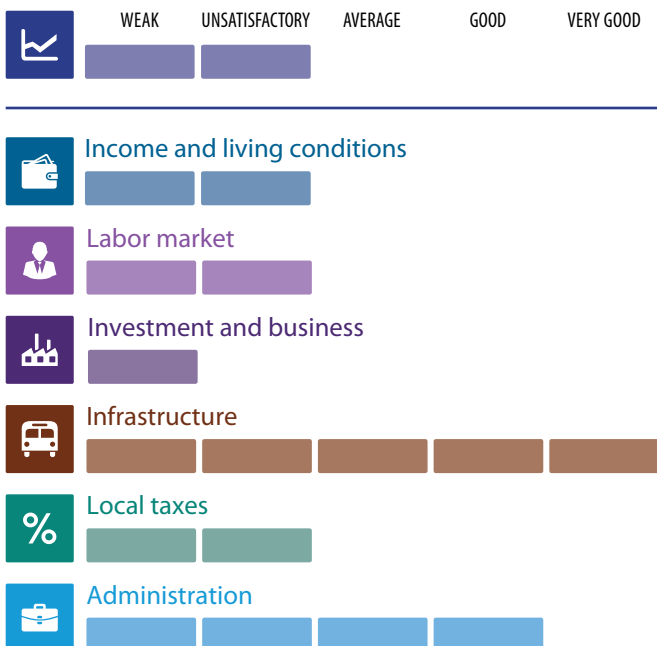


▶ Population (2023)	170,051
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,544
▶ Number of settlements	110
▶ Share of urban population (%)	65.0

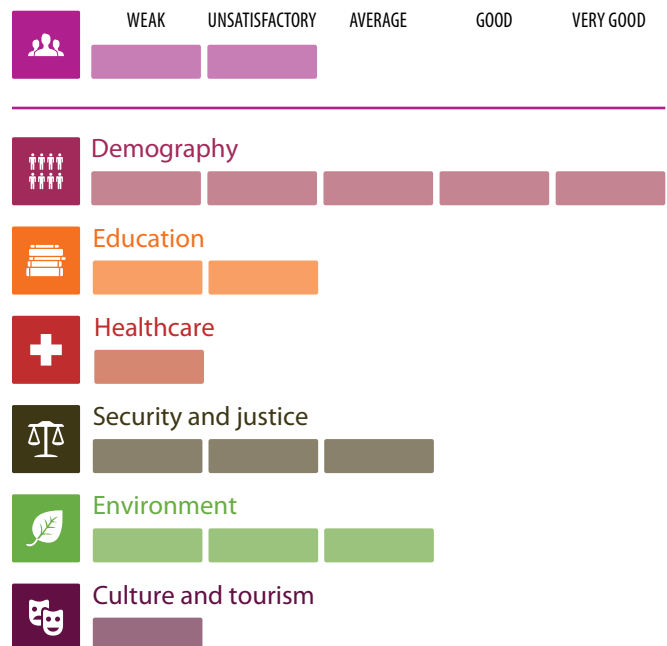
Although GDP per capita in Sliven district has been growing, it is among the lowest in the country. There has been a parallel rise in employment and unemployment. The labor market continues to face the challenge posed by the educational structure of the workforce. Investment activity is extremely slack. The basic physical infrastructure retains its relatively good level. The tax rates on retail trade are significantly lower than the national average. The transparency in the work of the district's local administration remains high. The demographic picture of the district ranks it

among the country's leaders in this indicator. At the same time, Sliven is among the districts with the lowest performance as regards the indicators for education and healthcare. Most notably, there is an acute shortage of both GPs and specialist physicians. The relative number of crimes in the district is close to the average one in the country, while the detection rate remains considerably higher. The relative volume of the consumed drinking water is the lowest in the country. The culture and tourism sectors show relatively low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Although GDP per capita in Sliven district has been growing, its rate of increase is below average and its volume remains extremely low – 12,600 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 26,000 BGN/person. The increase in salaries and pensions in the district is also relatively modest and they both remain low as well.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality has been decreasing and in 2023 it was relatively low. At the same time, there has been a huge decrease in the poverty level – the share of the population living below the national poverty line has come quite close to the national average, reaching 21.4% in the district, compared to 20.6% in the country.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in the district is relatively low – 55.0% in 2023, compared to 58.5% nationally. There has been a parallel rise in employment and unemployment. The employment rate has gone up considerably, reaching 70.1%, although it remains below the national average of 76.2%. For its part, the unemployment rate has gone up to 8.1%, compared to 5.3% nationally.

The labor market continues to face the challenge posed by the educational structure of the workforce, although some improvement was recorded in 2023. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education went down to 34%, against 15% nationally, though for the third consecutive year it was the highest one countrywide. However, the share of those with higher education went up to 23%, versus the national average of 31%.

Investment and business

Investment activity in Sliven is extremely slack and the district's ranking in this category is the second worst in the whole country, only above Vidin. The number of non-financial enterprises in the district for 2022 is 55 per 1,000 population and remains relatively low, compared to the national average of 70 per 1,000 population. Domestic and foreign investment flows also remain small, though they have registered some increase. TFA acquisition expenditure has gone up to 2,300 BGN/person, versus the average of 4,300 BGN/person nationally. FDI in the district amounts to 783 EUR/person, remaining significantly below that in the country, where the average is 4,544 EUR/person.

Production in the district is worth 94,400 BGN per employed person, compared to the national average of 122,400 BGN.

Sliven is also the district with the lowest utilization rate of European funds. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to

1,893 BGN/person, against 3,175 BGN/person countrywide. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by Sliven city municipality, though even those payments were far below the national average.

Infrastructure

The basic physical infrastructure in Sliven district retains its very good level. The density of the road and railroad networks is comparable to the national average. In 2023, the share of highways and first-class roads again remained relatively high – 22%, compared to 19% in the country.

Sliven continues to be the district with the largest share of road surfaces in good condition – 88% in 2023, against 40% in the country. The share of households with internet access has increased, but remains below the national average.

A persisting challenge facing the district is the low share of population with access to a public sewerage network – only 63%, compared to 75% countrywide, and to a sewerage network connected to wastewater treatment plants – 56% in Sliven district, against the national average of 67%.

Local taxes

Of all monitored taxes, only the average rates for non-residential immovable property of legal entities were higher than the country's average in 2024. At the same time, the rates of the taxes on retail trade were considerably lower than the respective national averages. The rates for the tax on motor vehicles and on non-gratuitous transfer of property were comparable to the average ones in the country.

Within the district, the highest average taxes are levied by Sliven city municipality and the lowest ones – by Tvarditsa municipality.

Administration

Sliven is among the districts with a relatively good performance in the category assessing the work of the administration. The transparency in the work of the municipalities has continued to improve and its average rating for 2024 places Sliven district at the top, with 84.0%, versus 69.3% countrywide.

The local administrations' self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services were below the national average in 2024.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities for 2023 was 19%, compared to 27% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues was 69%, against 74% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Sliven's demographic picture for 2023 again places the district among the country's leaders in this category. The natural population increase rate is the second highest in the country (after the capital), with -3.0‰, versus -6.8% nationally. At the same time, the net migration rate is nil.

Sliven district has the highest share of children under 4 years - 6.1%, versus 4.5% nationwide. It is also the district with the lowest share of people aged 65 and over - 22.4%, compared to 23.8% in the country.

The population density is relatively low - 987 persons/sq. km in the urbanized settlements, against 1,221 persons/sq. km countrywide.

Education

In this year's issue, Sliven again features as the district with the lowest score as regards the indicators for education.

Both the share of children attending kindergartens and the rate of enrolment in 5th-7th grade are the lowest in the country - 75% in the district, against 88% nationally, and 79%, against 90% nationally, respectively. For its part, the share of school year repeaters is the highest in the whole country - 3.6%, which is three times higher than the national average of 1.2%.

The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is high - 61.9%, compared to 53.6% nationally, which is due to the high share of admissions to programs and employment figures in manufacturing and their low share in the ICT and construction sectors.

Students' performance in 2024 again remained poor. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 31.7 p., compared to the average of 42.9 p. nationally, and was the third lowest in the whole country, above only those of Vidin and Vratsa. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was also relatively low - "Good" 4.12, versus the national average of "Good" 4.30, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 11.5%, compared to the national average of 8.7%.

The relative number of university students in the district rose to 8.7 per 1,000 population, but remained relatively low.

Healthcare

In 2023, Sliven again recorded an acute shortage of both GPs and specialist physicians. There were on average 1,872 persons per one local GP, compared to 1,701 persons per doctor countrywide. The number of beds in the local general hospitals continues to be relatively low - 5.0 beds per 1,000 population, compared to 6.1 beds per 1,000 population in the country, though hospital bed occupancy is close to the national average - 53%, compared to 56% nationally.

Sliven is also among the districts with the lowest number of pharmacies relative to the population - one pharmacy per 2,937 population, versus one pharmacy per 1,982 population in the country. The average life expectancy is also relatively low.

Security and justice

The workloads of judges in the District and Administrative courts were relatively low in 2023, and the speed of delivery of justice - relatively high. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 94%, against the national average of 91%, of administrative cases - 78%, versus 72% in the country, and of civil cases - 88%, against 65% nationally.

The relative number of crimes in the district is close to the average one in the country, but the detection rate is considerably higher. In 2023, registered crimes against the person and property in Sliven district amounted to 11.5 per 1,000 population, against 11.3 per 1,000 population nationwide. The detection rate was 64%, versus the average of 53% in the country.

The number of police officers is relatively low - 3.9 per 1,000 population, compared to 4.2 per 1,000 population in the country.

Environment

The relative volume of generated household waste is close to, but below the national average - 464 kg/person per year in the district, compared to 488 kg/person in the country for 2022. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is almost equal to the national average - 75% in the district, compared to 76% nationally.

The share of forest areas is relatively high - 42%, compared to 33% in the country, and that of disturbed area is around the national average. The installed RES capacities are increasing and significantly surpassing the national average relative to the population.

The cooling degree days in the area is relatively high. The relative volume of consumed drinking water is the lowest in the country (alongside Targovishte district) - 72 liters per person per day, compared to 103 liters in the country.

Culture and tourism

Cultural life and tourism in Sliven district show relatively low intensity. The number of cinema visits has gone up to 71 per 1,000 population but it is the lowest in the country relative to the population and many times lower than the national average of 684 per 1,000 population. Visits to the local theatres and museums are also lagging significantly behind. Only visits to the local libraries are close to, though again below the national average - 668 per 1,000 population in the district, against 679 per 1,000 population in the country.

The tourism sector also continued to underperform in 2023. The number of beds in accommodation establishments was 12 per 1,000 population, compared to 56 per 1,000 population in the country, and the number of overnight stays - 588 per 1,000 population, versus 4,167 per 1,000 population nationally. The number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms was also limited.

Key indicators for the district of Sliven

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,439	12,586	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,033	15,312	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	32.0	29.2	21.4	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	57.2	55.0	55.0	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.6	65.8	70.1	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	8.4	7.9	8.1	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	38.2	37.8	34.3	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	20.1	21.1	23.2	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	71,626	94,356	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,234	2,276	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	726	783	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	62.6	62.5	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	68.0	68.0	87.9	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	83.8	87.4	68.5	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	80.1	80.5	84.0	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–5.9	–3.0	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	0.6	0.0	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.79	3.65	4.12	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	25.8	25.3	31.7	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	85.3	82.1	78.7	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	71.2	70.8	71.7	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	86.7	90.3	90.6	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,916	1,859	1,872	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	9.5	11.3	11.5	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	92	93	94	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	71	72	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	403	464	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	73	75	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	53	70	71	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	419	527	588	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Smolyan district

- ▶ Population (2023)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

92,107
3,193
240
57.3



GDP, salaries and pensions in Smolyan district continue to rise. The poverty level is declining. Employment and unemployment are rising, with both indicators remaining relatively unfavorable. Business and investment activity has been showing some improvement. There are no railways, highways or first-class roads in the district. Local taxes in the district are relatively low. Smolyan is among the three districts with the lowest share of own revenues in the total municipal revenues and is the district with the second lowest coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues.

The population of the district is among the fastest aging in the country. Smolyan continues to rank among the districts with the highest educational results. The health insurance system covers practically the entire population of the district. Workloads in Smolyan's courts are relatively low, which impacts the speed of delivery of justice. Smolyan is the district with the lowest number of registered crimes. The district also ranks first regarding the share of forest area and has the lowest share of disturbed area. The intensity of its cultural life remains weak, but tourism is strongly represented.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Smolyan district continued its growth in 2022, reaching 16,400 BGN. Salaries and pensions are also rising, though at a lower than average rate. The average annual gross salary of people employed under labor contract has reached 14,600 BGN, though it remains below the average amounts in the other district. For its part, the average monthly pension is 761 BGN, which is close to the national average.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality is shrinking and is significantly lower than the 2023 average. The poverty level in the district has also registered a sharp decline and is half that of the previous year. In 2023, the share of the population living below the national poverty line was 14.7%, against 20.6% countrywide.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in Smolyan district continues to decline and is lower than the national average – 56.0% in the district, compared to 58.5% in the country for 2023. There has been a simultaneous rise in employment and unemployment, with the two indicators remaining less favorable than the respective national averages. The employment rate is 74.7%, compared to 76.2% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 10.2%, against 5.3% nationwide.

The educational structure of the workforce in the district remains relatively good. In 2023, the share of the people aged 25–64 with primary or lower education was 13%, versus the national average of 15%, while the number of those with a university degree was 25%, against 31% nationally.

Investment and business

In 2022, business and investment activity in the Smolyan region continued its upward trend, though on the whole, the district's performance remains unsatisfactory. The number of non-financial enterprises in the district was 61 per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population in the country. TFA acquisition expenditure per capita increased to 3,100 BGN, and FDI – to 866 EUR per capita. Production value grew to 69,700 BGN per employed person, though it remained among the lowest in the country. Research and development expenditure per capita was also lower than average, while the share of export earnings in net sales revenues decreased slightly to 20%, versus 29% in the country.

Utilization of European funds in Smolyan district is relatively good. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 3,800 BGN/person, against 3,200 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Smolyan city.

Infrastructure

The specific geographic location of the district as a border region and its mountainous terrain account for its relatively poorly developed infrastructure. Smolyan lacks railroads, highways and first-class roads. The density of its road network remains below the national average. Road surface quality remained relatively high in 2023 with the share of roads with surfaces in good condition reaching 58%, against the country's average of 40%.

Households' access to the internet has registered a decrease, but remains around the national average.

In 2022, 71% of the population were living in settlements with a public sewerage network, compared to 75% in the country. However, Smolyan district is still lagging behind in terms of the connectivity of its sewerage networks to waste water treatment plants, with a coverage of only 45% of the local population, compared to the national average of 67%.

Local taxes

In 2024, Smolyan again ranked among the districts with relatively low local taxes. The biggest differences with the respective national averages can be observed in the taxes on retail trade and on motor vehicles. The average retail trade tax in the municipalities of Smolyan district for that year was 8.02 BGN/sq. m, versus 13.09 BGN/sq. m in the country. The tax on motor vehicles and passenger cars was 1.38 BGN/kW, compared to 1.56 BGN/kW nationally. Among the monitored taxes, the rate was higher for the tax on immovable non-residential property for legal entities.

Within the district, the municipality levying the lowest average taxes is that of Borino, and the highest – of Dospat municipality.

Administration

The self-assessments of the local administrations of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services have continued to increase, though in 2024 they again remained below the respective national averages. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration also remained below the national average – 63.4% in the district, compared to 69.3% in the country.

Smolyan is among the three districts with the lowest share of own revenues in the municipalities' total revenues – 16%, versus 27% in the country, as well as the district with the second lowest coverage (only ahead of Targovishte) of municipal expenditures with local revenues – 48%, versus 74% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Smolyan's population is among the fastest aging in the country and its demographic picture places it among the three districts (only ahead of Vidin and Gabrovo) with the worst indicators in this category. The rates of both natural population increase and net migration again remained strongly negative in 2023. The natural population increase rate was -11.8% , versus -6.8% nationwide, and for yet another consecutive year the net migration rate was the lowest in the country with a value of -1.6% .

Smolyan is also the district with the lowest number of children. The share of children under 4 years is 2.9%, compared to 4.5% in the country, and the share of the population aged 65 and over is 28.9%, compared to 23.8% in the country.

The density of the population remains around the country's average – 1,217 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

Smolyan continues to rank among the districts with the best performance in the education category, where it is outranked only by Sofia (capital city) and Varna. The district ranks first regarding the share of children attending kindergarten – 97%, compared to the national average of 88%. The net enrolment rate of schoolchildren in 5th–7th grade is also the highest in the country – 95%, compared to the average of 90% nationally, while the share of school year repeaters is the lowest countrywide – 0.3%, against 1.2% nationally. However, the index of the alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is low – 34.8 p., compared to 53.1 p. in the country. The main reason for this is the low interest in manufacturing-related programs at the expense of a relatively high number of students enrolled in ICT courses.

The performance of the district's students in 2024 was again much better than the country's average. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 44.3 p., against 42.9 p. nationwide. The average result in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.48 in the district, versus "Good" 4.30 nationally, which ranks Smolyan district second only to the capital. For its part, the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 4.1%, against 8.7% nationwide, and was also the second lowest nationwide.

Healthcare

The healthcare insurance system covers practically the whole of the district's population. The average life expectancy is among the highest in the country, and the infant mortality rate – among the lowest for 2023. Access to GPs is relatively easy, though the number of specialist physicians is still considerably lower than the average one in the country.

Bed capacity in the local general hospitals is around the country's average – 6.0 beds per 1,000 population, versus 6.1 beds nationwide. However, hospital bed occupancy remains relative-

ly low – 48%, versus 56% countrywide. The number of pharmacies relative to the population is around the national average.

Security and justice

Smolyan district is the leader in the justice and security category. The workloads in the local courts are relatively low, which impacts the speed of delivery of justice. In 2023, the share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was the highest in the country – 98%, against 91% nationally, of administrative cases – 88%, versus 72% nationally, and of civil cases – 84%, compared to 65% countrywide.

Smolyan is also the district with the lowest number of crimes. Registered crimes against the person and property number 5.0 per 1,000 population, against 11.3 per 1,000 population as the national average. At the same time, the detection rate in the district is high – 63% in the district, compared to 53% countrywide. The relative number of police officers is also relatively high – 5.2 per 1,000 population, compared to 4.2 per 1,000 population in the country.

Environment

Smolyan is the district with the best performance in the environment indicators. It is actually the district with the highest share of forest areas – 71%, against 33% in the country, and with the lowest share of disturbed area – 0.1%, versus 0.4% nationwide for 2023. The cooling degree days in the district is also the country's lowest.

The amounts of household waste generated in the district are relatively small – 355 kg/person per year, against 488 kg/person on a national scale. At the same time, the share of this waste handed over for treatment and recycling is also low, though in 2022 it increased to 66%, compared to 76% in the country.

The installed RES capacities are almost three times larger than in the country relative to the population.

Culture and tourism

In 2023, the intensity of cultural life in the district again remained not particularly strong, although all monitored indicators recorded an improvement. Cinema visits numbered 169 per 1,000 population, against 684 per 1,000 population nationally, visits to the theaters went up to 177 per 1,000 population, compared to 349 per 1,000 population in the country, and those to the local museums amounted to 470 per 1,000 population, against 770 per 1,000 population in the country. Local libraries attracted 183 visits per 1,000 population, against 679 visits per 1,000 population nationally.

However, tourism in the district was again strongly represented in 2023. The number of beds in accommodation establishments reached 130 per 1,000 population, which is the fourth highest number relative to the population after those in the seaside districts (Burgas, Dobrich and Varna). The number of overnight stays in the district is also high, ranking the district fourth in the country with 8,773 per 1,000 population.

Key indicators for the district of Smolyan

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,609	16,425	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	13,379	14,633	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	23.0	28.7	14.7	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	57.7	56.5	56.0	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	69.4	72.0	74.7	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	8.6	10.0	10.2	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	12.9	13.0	13.0	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	24.3	24.3	24.9	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	56,906	69,691	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,714	3,086	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	692	866	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	72.9	71.3	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	50.1	56.5	57.6	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	52.3	43.6	47.9	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	66.9	66.9	63.4	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-14.7	-11.8	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	-4.5	-1.6	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.12	4.09	4.48	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	39.4	37.6	44.3	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	91.8	95.7	94.6	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	74.0	73.4	73.8	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	97.5	100.0	100.0	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,552	1,450	1,472	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	4.3	5.1	5.0	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	95	95	98	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	84	85	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	349	355	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	52	66	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	95	137	169	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	6,045	7,993	8,773	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Sofia district

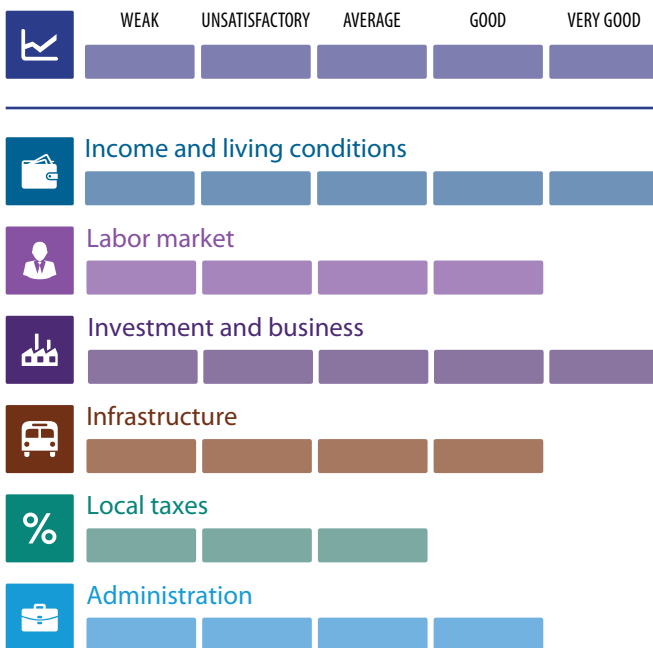
▶ Population (2023)	226,420
▶ Territory (sq. km)	7,062
▶ Number of settlements	284
▶ Share of urban population (%)	60.1



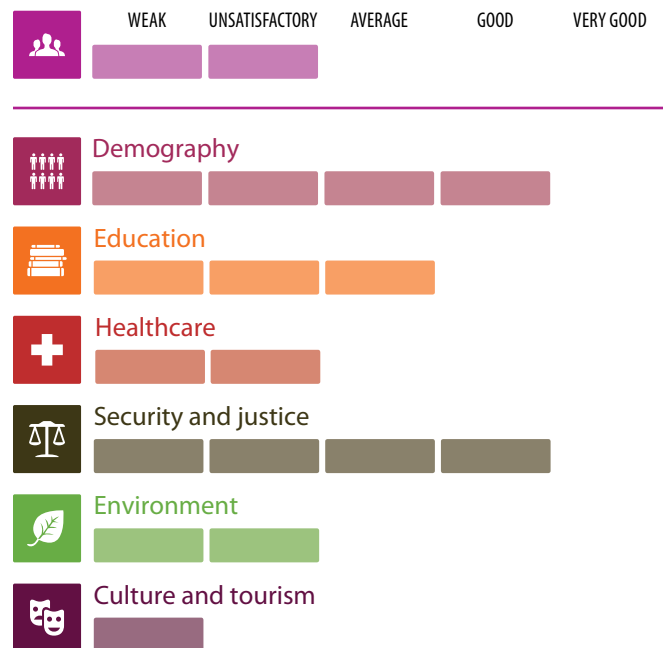
Sofia remains among the three districts with the highest GDP per capita. Salaries and pensions are relatively high. The development of the local labor market continues to be positive. The share of the workforce with secondary education is the highest in the country. The good economic development in the district is accompanied by high investment activity. The density of the road network is high, as is the share of highways and first-class roads. The local taxes on retail trade are lower. The performance of the municipal administrations in the district is relatively good.

The rate of natural population increase in Sofia district remains below the national average. The performance of its students is relatively poor. Access to doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – is slightly below the national average. The workloads of the local judges in the district are below the national average, which also impacts the speed of delivery of justice. The volume of generated household waste is high, while the share of that waste handed over for treatment and recycling is low. Cultural life in Sofia district retains its low intensity. At the same time, its tourism is better developed than in most other districts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Sofia remains among the three districts with the highest GDP per capita, below only the capital and Stara Zagora. Salaries and pensions have continued to rise and remain relatively high. The average annual gross salary of people employed under labor contract is 19,300 BGN and the average monthly pension has reached 814 BGN.

The Gini coefficient for income inequality is relatively low. However, poverty is rising and is above the national average. In 2023, the share of the population living below the national poverty line was 26.1%, compared to 20.6% nationally.

Labor market

The local labor market continued to develop well in 2023, which once again shows the deep interrelation between the economies of the capital and of Sofia district. The share of the working-age population is around the national average. Employment is declining but remains above average with a rate of 78.4%, compared to 76.2% nationally. The unemployment rate has steadied at 4.9%, versus 5.3% nationally.

The profile of the workforce in Sofia district is characterized by the predominance of people with secondary education – 72%, compared to 55% in the country, which is the highest number countrywide, while the shares of people with a university degree and of those with primary or lower education are both relatively low. This structure can be accounted for by the proximity of most of the district's settlements to the capital, the latter attracting the university graduates and naturally leaving the process industry to develop in its geographical periphery.

Investment and business

The positive economic development of Sofia district is associated with high investment activity, which ranks it second in the country, only below the capital. In 2022, the district's TFA acquisition expenditures amounted to 4,600 BGN/person, which was the third highest figure in the country (after those in the capital and Plovdiv). FDI reached 8,200 EUR/person and was also the second highest figure nationally. Production value in Sofia district is the country's highest relative to the employed persons – 268,300 BGN per employed person, against half that amount on average countrywide. More than half of the net sales revenues are export revenues – 55%, compared to 29% in the country, which places the district second in this indicator, after Ruse district.

The number of enterprises in the district remains relatively low, though the share of large enterprises among them is relatively high.

Utilization of EU funds has recorded an increase and now almost equals the national average relative to the population. By 30 June 2024, payments made in Sofia district to beneficia-

ries under EU operational programs amounted to 3,172 BGN/person. Within the district, the leader in the utilization of EU funds is the municipality of Kostinbrod.

Infrastructure

Sofia district has a very well-developed infrastructure. The density of the road and rail network is higher than the national average, and with 31%, compared to the national average of 19%, the share of highways and first-class roads is the second highest in the country after that in Shumen district. At the same time, however, road quality remains relatively low, with only 32% of the road surfaces in good condition, versus 40% in the country in 2023.

Access to the Internet in the district remains relatively limited, with 79% of the households connected to it, compared to 89% on average in the country.

The share of households in the district with access to a public sewerage network is high – 80%, compared to the national average of 75%. At the same time, access to a sewerage network connected to a wastewater treatment plant is lower – 42%, against the average share of 67% in the country in 2022.

Local taxes

In 2024, the average level of local taxation in Sofia district's municipalities was among the high ones in the country. Considerably higher than average were the taxes on non-residential immovable property for legal entities and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property. By contrast, significantly lower were the tax rates on retail trade.

Within the district, the highest average tax rates are levied by the municipalities of Svoge, and the lowest ones – by Bozhurishte municipality.

Administration

The performance of the municipal administrations in Sofia district is relatively good. Their self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services went up in 2024, though remaining below the respective national averages.

Sofia district comes second (after the capital) regarding the share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities – 40%, compared to 27% nationwide, as well as regarding the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues – 103%, versus 74% nationally.

In 2024, Sofia district was once again among those with a relatively low AIP rating for the transparency in the work of its local administrations – 62.8%, compared to 69.3% on average in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The rate of natural population increase in Sofia district remains below the national average at -8.6% in 2023, against -6.8% nationwide. The net migration rate is positive at 3.4% .

The age structure of the population is similar to the average one nationally. The share of children under 4 years in the district is 4.6% , compared to 4.5% in the country, and the share of people aged 65 and over is 24.0% , against 23.8% in the country.

Sofia is among Bulgaria's districts with a low population density – 747 persons/sq. km, compared to the national average of $1,221$ persons/sq. km.

Education

The proportion of children in Sofia district attending kindergartens has gone up and now equals the national average. The net enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade in the district has continued to decline and in 2023 it remained below the national average – 87% , compared to 90% in the country. The share of school year repeaters is high. The district has relatively few students in agriculture and construction-related programs and employees with professional qualifications in those sectors, while the number of those in manufacturing is relatively high.

The performance of the district's students in 2024 again remained relatively poor. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 35.1 p., versus 42.9 p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.15 , compared to the average of "Good" 4.30 countrywide, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 8.3% , against the national average of 8.7% .

The number of university students in Sofia district is relatively low – 5.0 students per $1,000$ population, compared to the national average of 29.6 students per $1,000$ population in 2023.

Healthcare

Access to doctors in the district – both GPs and specialist physicians – is below the national average. In 2022, one GP cared for an average of $1,831$ people, compared to $1,701$ people per GP in the country. The share of people with health insurance has increased slightly, though in 2023 it still remained the lowest one nationally – 85% in the district, against 95% in the country.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals relative to the district's population is close to the national average. However, hospital bed occupancy is higher – 61% in the district, compared to 56% in the country. The number of pharmacies relative to the population is also commensurate with the national level.

The infant mortality rate has increased slightly, but is below the national average. The average life expectancy now remains practically unchanged – 72.5 years in 2023.

Security and justice

The workloads of the local criminal judges were below the national average in 2023, which impacted the speed of delivery of justice. The number of civil cases closed within 3 months was 90% , compared to the average of 65% nationwide, and that of administrative cases – 82% , against 72% countrywide. Where criminal cases are concerned, the speed of delivery of justice has increased and now the share of those closed within 3 months is close to the national average.

The indicator values for security in Sofia district are higher, albeit slightly, than the national average. The number of registered crimes against the person and property is 10.0 per $1,000$ population, compared to the national average of 11.3 per $1,000$ population, and the detection rate is 59% , versus 53% in the country. The relative number of police officers in the district is 4.5 per $1,000$ population, compared to 4.2 per $1,000$ population in the country.

Environment

Sofia district's performance in this category is unsatisfactory. The main reason for this is the management of household waste. The annual volume of waste generated in Sofia district is relatively high – 496 kg/person, versus 488 kg/person nationwide, while the share of this waste handed over for treatment and recycling is low, although in 2022 there was an increase to 26% , compared to 76% in the country.

The share of forest areas is relatively high (46% , compared to 33% in the country), and that of disturbed area is close to the national average (0.5% , against 0.4% in the country).

The cooling degree days index in the area is extremely low. Household consumption of drinking water is also lower than average.

Culture and tourism

In 2023, cultural life in Sofia district still sustained its low intensity, probably due to the district's proximity to the capital, which allows a large part of the population a relatively fast and easy access to the biggest city in the country. No visits to libraries and theaters have been reported for the district, while cinema visits number 81 per $1,000$ population, versus 684 per $1,000$ population nationwide. Visits to museums have gone up, though their relative number has failed to recover its pre-pandemic level.

At the same time, tourism is better developed than in most other districts. The number of beds in accommodation establishments is 36 per $1,000$ population, ranking Sofia district eighth in the country. The number of overnight stays is $2,900$ per $1,000$ population for 2023.

Key indicators for the district of Sofia

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	19,263	25,014	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	17,697	19,330	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	21.8	23.0	26.1	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.2	58.2	58.2	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	81.4	81.1	78.4	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	5.5	4.9	4.9	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	14.2	14.4	11.7	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	12.4	14.2	16.6	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	216,029	268,325	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	3,157	4,581	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	7,289	8,247	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	77.0	80.2	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	35.4	30.5	32.0	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	98.8	102.2	103.5	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	57.9	57.7	62.8	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–11.1	–8.6	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	–0.1	3.4	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.77	3.58	4.15	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.6	28.3	35.1	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	90.0	87.6	87.2	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.1	72.6	72.5	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	82.9	84.2	84.8	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,839	1,788	1,831	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	9.5	9.7	10.0	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	82	78	90	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	99	96	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	501	496	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	17	26	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	30	65	81	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	2,306	2,871	2,900	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Sofia (capital) district

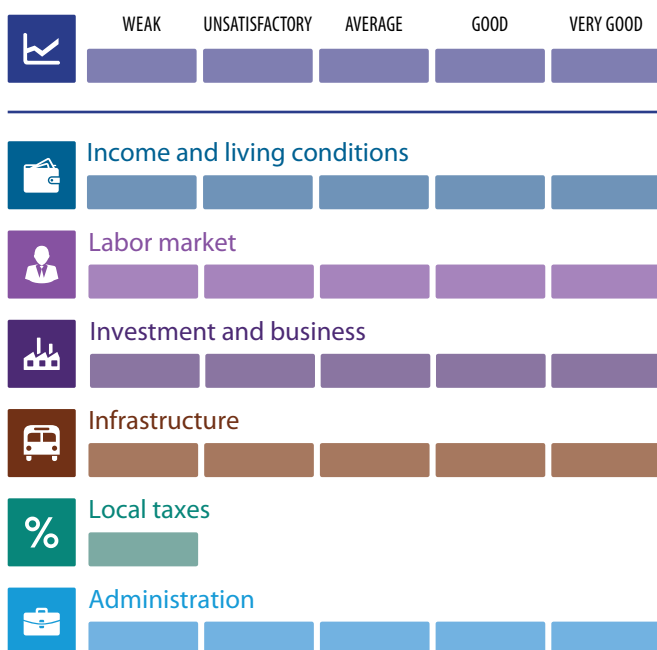


▶ Population (2023)	1,286,965
▶ Territory (sq. km)	1,341
▶ Number of settlements	54
▶ Share of urban population (%)	95.1

Sofia (capital) has the highest GDP per capita, with a value of more than double the national average and far above that in the district ranking second in this indicator – Sofia district. Its labor market is well developed. Sofia is also the undisputed leader in investment activity. Sofia Central Railway Station is one of the main railway hubs in the country. The capital is the district with the highest local taxes in the country. It is the district with the highest share of own revenues in its total revenues, as well as with the highest coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues.

Sofia is the district with the most favorable demographic picture. The capital is once again the leader in the education indicator, with a high rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade, a low share of repeaters, good student performance and a high number of university students. The number of specialist physicians is among the highest in the country. The pharmacy network is well developed. Delivery of justice is relatively slow, and the crime detection rate is low. The share of disturbed area is high. Sofia remains the district with the most intensive cultural life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

The capital is the district with the highest GDP per capita, with a volume more than twice the national average and far above that of Sofia district, the second-ranking district in this category. In 2022, GDP per capita in Sofia reached 53,700 BGN, against 26,000 BGN in the country.

Salaries and pensions have also been growing and their amounts are significantly higher than average. The average annual gross salary of people employed under labor contract has reached 29,700 BGN, against 21,200 BGN in the country, and the average monthly pension – 957 BGN, versus 784 BGN in the country. What is more, the rate of increase of both indicators is considerably faster than in the country.

The capital is also the district with the lowest poverty level. The share of the population living below the national poverty line is 8.1%, compared to 20.6% nationally in 2023. At the same time, however, the Gini coefficient for income inequality remains high.

Labor market

The capital's good performance in the indicators for economic development is again manifested in the favorable dynamics of the local labor market in 2023. The share of the working-age population remains the highest in the country at 63.0%, compared to 58.5% nationally. Employment continues to be extremely high, and unemployment is the lowest in the whole country. The employment rate is 82.4%, against 76.2% nationally, and the unemployment rate – 1.6%, versus 5.3% nationally.

The capital is once again the district with the best educational status of its workforce. The share of the population aged 25–64 with a university degree is 54%, against 31% in the country, while employed people with primary or lower education make up 5.0%, compared to 15.0% nationally.

Investment and business

In 2022, Sofia remained the undisputed leader in investment activity. The district has the largest number of enterprises relative to its population – 100 per 1,000 population, compared to an average of 70 per 1,000 population in the country. After their decrease in the previous year, TFA acquisition expenditures have again recorded an increase, reaching 8,800 BGN/person, compared to 4,300 BGN/person in the country. FDI is also far above the country's average, reaching 11,700 EUR/person, against 4,500 EUR/person nationally.

Production value has also continued to rise, though relative to the population it ranks Sofia (capital) fifth, after the districts of Sofia, Vratsa, Stara Zagora and Ruse. For its part, the share of export earnings in net sales revenues is lower than average – 26%, versus 29% nationally.

The capital's dominance in research and development expenditure is massive – in 2022 it was 734 BGN/person. By compari-

son, the next highest value in the country is in Plovdiv district – 112 BGN/person.

By 30 June 2023, the capital again occupied the top place as regards utilization of EU funds. Payments made to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 4,719 BGN/person, versus 3,175 BGN/person in the country.

Infrastructure

There are no roads from the national road network within Sofia (capital) district, but its territory is bordered directly by several highways. In addition, Sofia Central Railway Station is one of the main railway hubs in the country and the capital district's density of the railway network of 12.4 km/100 sq. km territory significantly exceeds the national average of 3.6 km/100 sq. km.

The share of households with access to high-speed internet is again very high, having risen in 2023 to 96%, compared to 89% in the country.

The high degree of urbanization in the district also accounts for the high share of population with access to a public sewerage network – 96% of the population, versus 75% nationally, while the whole sewerage network is connected to a waste water treatment plant – 96% compared to 67% on average countrywide.

Local taxes

The average level of local taxation in Sofia (capital) district again remained the highest in the whole country for 2024. The biggest differences in comparison to the national figures were recorded in the retail trade tax (20.00 BGN/sq. m, compared to 13.09 BGN/sq. m in the country) and the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property (3.00% versus 2.82% in the country).

Of all the monitored taxes, the only ones that remained below the average nationwide rate were the tax on immovable non-residential property for legal entities (1.88‰, against 2.15‰ in the country) and on motor vehicles – 1.33 BGN/kW, compared to 1.56 BGN/kW nationwide.

Administration

Sofia has again outranked Varna and now occupies the top place in this category as well. Provision of one-stop shop administrative services again received the maximum points in 2024. However, the self-assessment on the development of e-government remains below average. The AIP active transparency rating of the district's local administration bodies has declined, but remains higher than the national average – 70.8%, against the national average of 69.3%.

The capital is also the district with the highest share of own revenues in the total revenues – 67%, versus 27% in the country, as well as the highest coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues – 110%, versus 74% in the country in 2023.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2023, Sofia (capital) was once again the district with the most favorable demographic picture in the country. Although even in the capital the natural population increase rate is negative, it still outpaces all other districts with a value of -1.5% , compared to the national average of -6.8% . Sofia (capital) continues to attract new residents and its net migration rate is 6.6% .

Sofia is also the district with the lowest share of the population aged 65 and over – 19.2% , compared to 23.8% in the country. At the same time, the share of children under 4 years is relatively high – 4.9% , versus 4.5% nationally.

The district's specificity accounts for the almost total urbanization of its territory, and its population density is four times the country's average.

Education

The capital remains the national leader in the education category, with a high rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade, a low share of repeaters, good student performance and a high number of university students.

The share of school year repeaters is 0.5% – the third lowest in the country (after the districts of Smolyan and Ruse). The capital district has a high alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy, mainly because of the high numbers of students in transport and ICT-related programs and employees with vocational qualifications in those sectors, and the low numbers of those in agriculture and industry.

In 2024, the students from the capital achieved the highest average score in the country – 54.7 p. in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade, which is far above the national average of 42.9 p. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was also the highest nationwide – "Very good" 4.65 , compared to the average of "Good" 4.30 countrywide, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 3.7% , against the national average of 8.7% .

Healthcare

In 2023, the capital remained among the country's districts with very good healthcare, second only to Pleven and characterized by easy access to specialist physicians, a well-developed pharmacy network, high life expectancy and low infant mortality.

The average life expectancy in the capital is the highest in the country – 75.4 years, compared to 73.5 years in the country.

The indicator for access to GPs is less favorable than the national average. However, the number of specialist physicians relative to the population is the second highest in the country, after that in Pleven district. The hospital bed capacity is slightly more limited than the country's average, though hospital bed occupancy is relatively high. The pharmacy network ensures good overall coverage. The infant mortality rate is less than half the national average.

Security and justice

The capital's poor assessment and its bottom place in the whole country in the indicator for security and justice is a consequence of the heavy workloads of the local judges and the slow delivery of justice, as well as of the low detection rate.

In 2023, one criminal judge in Sofia (capital) heard an average of 23.1 cases a month, which is the highest figure nationwide, compared to 14.4 cases per judge in the country. Workloads in the Administrative Court are also among the heaviest in the country. Those heavy workloads have a negative impact on the speed of delivery of justice. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 88% , compared to the average of 91% nationwide, of administrative cases the share is 67% , versus 72% in the country, and that of civil cases – 46% , against 65% countrywide.

The proportion of police officers relative to the population is above the national average. The number of crimes against the person and property registered in the capital district increased in 2023 to reach 11.9 per $1,000$ population, which is close to, though above the national average. At the same time, the crime detection rate continues to be the lowest countrywide, with 37% cleared crimes, versus 53% nationally.

Environment

In 2022, the capital remained among the districts with a high annual volume of generated household waste – 548 kg/person, compared to 488 kg/person nationally. However, practically all waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to 76% on average in the country.

The share of disturbed area is high – 1.3% , versus 0.40% nationally, while the figures for installed RES capacities relative to the population are among the lowest in the country.

The cooling degree days index in the district is low. However, the capital city is the district with the highest consumption of drinking water by households – 125 liters per person per day, compared to 103 liters nationally.

Culture and tourism

In 2023, the capital was once again the district with the second most active cultural life after Burgas.

Visits to cinemas, theaters, museums and libraries have grown fast. With the exception of the relative number of museum visits, the values recorded for all other indicators are considerably above the average ones nationwide. Visits to the cinema, theatres and libraries are over twice the national average.

Tourism in the capital is less well represented. In 2022, the number of beds in accommodation establishments was 12 per $1,000$ population, versus 55 per $1,000$ population in the country, and the number of overnight stays was $1,614$ per $1,000$ population, versus $3,739$ per $1,000$ population in the country.

Tourism in the capital is less well represented. In 2023, the number of beds in accommodation establishments was 12 per $1,000$ population, versus 56 per $1,000$ population nationally, and the number of overnight stays was $1,703$ per $1,000$ population, against $4,167$ per $1,000$ population nationally.

Key indicators for the district of Sofia (capital)

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	45,241	53,746	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	25,724	29,698	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	11.3	11.7	8.1	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	64.4	62.9	63.0	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	79.8	83.8	82.4	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	2.0	1.6	1.6	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	4.2	4.0	4.7	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	57.7	57.6	54.1	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	106,286	131,197	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	7,757	8,796	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	11,235	11,719	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	96.6	96.1	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	114.5	113.3	109.5	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	74.8	74.8	70.8	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	–3.4	–1.5	–6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	7.9	6.6	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.42	4.24	4.65	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	47.3	46.6	54.7	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	89.1	93.4	92.7	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	74.9	74.8	75.4	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	89.0	91.6	97.4	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,755	1,767	1,798	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	10.3	11.7	11.9	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	84	85	88	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	127	125	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	522	548	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	100	99	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	814	1,315	1,493	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	896	1,614	1,703	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Stara Zagora district

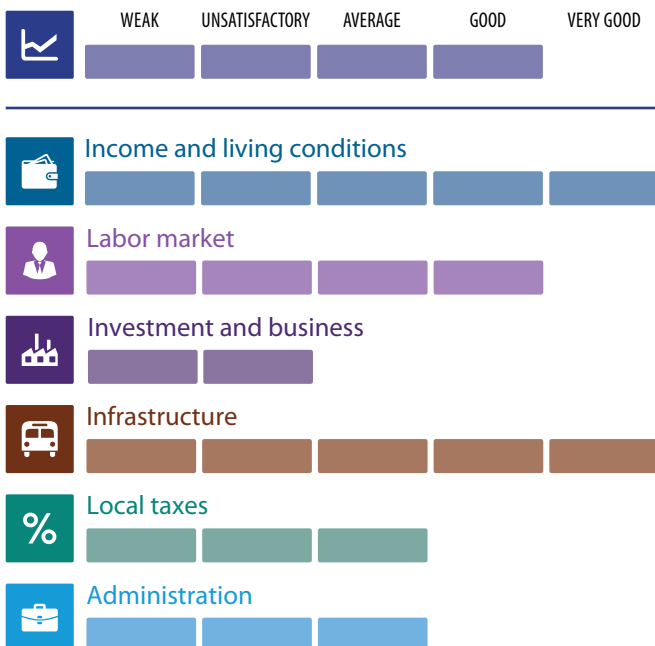
▶ Population (2023)	290,350
▶ Territory (sq. km)	5,151
▶ Number of settlements	206
▶ Share of urban population (%)	71.2



Incomes in Stara Zagora continue to increase significantly and the standard of living is rising. Employment and unemployment are declining simultaneously, with both indicators being more favorable than the respective national averages. Production value is high, placing the district in the top three in the country. Unlike most districts with a high degree of economic development, Stara Zagora maintains relatively low local taxes. The transparency rating of the work of the local administrations is relatively low.

The natural population increase in Stara Zagora remains below the national average. Students' results are close to the country's average. Access to doctors (both GPs and specialist physicians) is relatively good. The pharmacy network is well developed. The number of crimes is relatively high and the detection rate is close to the national average. Stara Zagora's low score in the environment category is primarily due to the extremely high proportion of disturbed area. Cultural life in the district is relatively active.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Incomes in Stara Zagora continue to increase significantly and the standard of living is rising, ranking the district second in this category, immediately below the capital. In 2022, GDP per capita in the district was 37,100 BGN, which marked a record growth for the country. Salaries and pensions also continue to rise at a faster rate than nationally. The average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract has reached 19,000 BGN, and the average monthly pension – 831 BGN, against 784 BGN countrywide.

The upsurge in incomes also impacts the poverty level in the district. The share of the population living below the national poverty line has dropped to 23.1%, although it remains above the national average of 20.6%. The decrease is also reflected in the Gini coefficient, which measures income inequality.

Labor market

The performance of the local labor market is relatively good, placing Stara Zagora immediately below the top five in this category. In 2023, employment and unemployment declined simultaneously, with both indicators being more favorable than the national average. The employment rate reached 79.0%, compared to 76.2% nationally, while the unemployment rate was 4.1%, versus 5.3% in the country.

The share of the working-age population is stable at 57.0%, but remains slightly below the national average of 58.5%.

The educational structure of the workforce in the district has undergone an improvement. In 2023, the population aged 25–64 with higher education increased to 23%, versus the national average of 31%. At the same time, the share of the population with primary or lower education went down and was relatively low – 14%, compared to 15% in the country. The relatively high share of the workforce with secondary education is therefore in line with the district's industrial profile.

Investment and business

Stara Zagora district retained its relatively low number of enterprises in 2022 – 57 per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population in the country. However, production value in the district is high and with 161,300 BGN per employed person, Stara Zagora ranks among the top three performers, preceded only by the districts of Sofia and Vratsa. TFA acquisition expenditures have increased to 3,200 BGN/person.

However, by the end of 2022 accumulated FDI flows decreased to 3,000 EUR/person.

Stara Zagora also ranks third in the country in terms of spending on research and development – 109 BGN/person in 2022.

The district's performance as regards the utilization of European funds is not so good. By 30 June 2024, payments made

to beneficiaries of EU projects amounted to 2,684 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the leader in utilization of EU funds is the municipality of Gurkovo, with over 5,000 BGN/person, and the bottom place is held by Galabovo municipality, with less than 1,000 BGN/person.

Infrastructure

Stara Zagora ranks among the top three districts in this category, below Varna and Plovdiv.

The density of the rail network in Stara Zagora district is considerably higher than average. The density of the road network is slightly lower, but the share of highways and first-class roads is 29%, compared to 19% in the country for 2023. The share of roads with good quality surface has increased significantly and exceeds the national average.

Households' access to the internet has gone up to equal the national average of 89%.

The district is lagging behind as regards the share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network – 68% in 2022, compared to 75% nationally. 65% of the households have access to a public sewerage network connected to a wastewater treatment plant, against 67% in the country.

Local taxes

Unlike most districts with a high degree of economic development, in 2024 Stara Zagora again kept its municipal tax rates relatively low. The biggest differences compared to the respective national averages concern the tax on non-residential immovable property for legal entities and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property. The tax on retail trade remains higher than average, while that on motor vehicles is close to the national average.

Within the district, the lowest average tax rates are those in the municipality of Bratya Daskalovi, and the highest ones – in the municipality of Stara Zagora city.

Administration

The local administrations' self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services recorded an improvement in 2024, albeit remaining below the respective country's averages. The average AIP Active transparency rating of the local municipalities for 2024 also again remained relatively low – 67.5% in the district, compared to 69.3% nationally.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities for 2023 is 22%, versus 27% in the country, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is 68%, against 74% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2023, the natural population increase rate of -7.3% in Stara Zagora district remained below the national average of -6.8% . At the same time, Stara Zagora continues to attract population and its net migration rate is positive at 2.1% .

The share of children under 4 years of age is equal to the national average – 4.5% , but that of people aged 65 and over is higher – 24.6% in the district, compared to 23.8% in the country.

Population density is below average – 1,019 people/sq. km in urbanized areas, against 1,221 people/sq. km in the country in 2023.

Education

The net enrolment rate of schoolchildren in 5th–7th grade continued to rise in 2023 and was again above the national average. The share of school year repeaters, however, also increased, reaching 1.6% , versus 1.2% nationally. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is relatively low, mainly due to a significant shortage of students in industry-related programs, given that manufacturing has such a strong presence in the local economy.

In 2024, students' results in the district were once again close to the national average. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 39.4 p., against 42.9 p. nationwide. The average result in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.31, compared to "Good" 4.30 nationally, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) amounted to 7.9% , against 8.7% nationwide.

The number of university students in the district has increased to 19.8 students per 1,000 population, versus 29.6 students per 1,000 population nationally.

Healthcare

The share of people with health insurance has gone up to 93% , against 95% nationwide. Average life expectancy has registered a slight increase to 72.9 years, but remains below the national average of 73.5 years.

Access to doctors in Stara Zagora district – both GPs and specialist physicians – is relatively good, with 1,441 people on average per one GP, compared to the national average of 1,701 people per doctor. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has not yet reached the national average. Hospital bed occupancy, however, is above average. In 2023, the available hospital beds in the district amounted to 5.2 per 1,000 population, versus 6.1 beds per 1,000 population nationwide, while hospital bed occupancy was 58% , versus 56% nationally. The pharmacy network is relatively well developed.

Security and justice

The workloads of the local judges and the speed of delivery of justice were close to the respective national averages in 2023. The average actual workload of judges in the District court was 13.5 cases per month per judge, compared to 14.4 cases in the country, and in the Administrative court it was 15.1 cases, compared to 14.8 nationally. 91% of criminal cases (the same as in the country), 73% of administrative cases (compared to 72% in the country) and 74% of civil cases (compared to 65% in the country) were completed within 3 months.

The number of crimes in Stara Zagora district is relatively high, and the detection rate – close to the national average. The crimes against the person and property registered in the district in 2023 increased to 12.9 per 1,000 population, compared to 11.3 per 1,000 population in the country, while the detection rate went up to 54% , versus 53% in the country. The relative number of police officers is relatively low – 3.9 per 1,000 population, compared to 4.2 per 1,000 population countrywide.

Environment

The poor rating given to Stara Zagora and its place at the very bottom in the environment category is based predominantly on the persistence of an excessively high share of disturbed area – 3.2% in 2023, against 0.4% in the country, which was once again the highest figure for the whole country that year. At the same time, the share of forest areas is close to the national average – 32% in the district, against 33% in the country. The volume of household waste generated by the district's residents is also close to the national average – 463 kg/person per year, compared to 488 kg/person nationally. However, the share of that waste handed over for treatment and recycling is low – 56% , compared to 76% in the country.

The cooling degree days index in the district is high, and households' drinking water consumption is relatively low.

Culture and tourism

Stara Zagora has a relatively active cultural life. In 2023, visits to the local cinemas, theaters and libraries relative to the population continued to increase. Visits to the local museums also went up to 1,010 per 1,000 population and again exceeded the national average of 770 per 1,000 population.

The number of beds in accommodation establishments in Stara Zagora district is 18 per 1,000 population, compared to 56 per 1,000 population in the country, and in 2023 the number of overnight stays reached 2,188 per 1,000 population, compared to 4,167 per 1,000 population in the country. The number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms has doubled within a year, though still remaining far below the country's average.

Key indicators for the district of Stara Zagora

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	20,165	37,138	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	16,673	18,980	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	28.1	29.1	23.1	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	58.4	57.0	57.0	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	78.0	79.7	79.0	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	4.4	4.3	4.1	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	15.8	17.1	14.1	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	22.0	22.0	23.0	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	107,126	161,326	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,757	3,191	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	3,563	2,971	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	66.3	67.8	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	38.9	39.4	63.1	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	80.0	74.9	67.7	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	63.8	65.0	67.5	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-11.2	-7.3	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	2.2	2.1	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.96	3.83	4.31	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	31.9	33.7	39.4	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	89.6	90.9	91.5	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.7	72.4	72.9	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	89.4	92.5	93.0	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,463	1,430	1,441	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	10.6	12.3	12.9	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	92	89	91	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	94	94	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	422	463	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	57	56	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	307	489	577	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	1,032	1,703	2,188	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Targovishte district

▶ Population (2023)	95,609
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,710
▶ Number of settlements	194
▶ Share of urban population (%)	55.9



In 2022, GDP in Targovishte district recorded a considerable increase. Salaries and pensions also continue to rise. Employment and unemployment are increasing simultaneously, but both indicators are significantly less favorable than the national average. The utilization of EU funds in the district remains low. The share of highways and first-class roads is relatively low, but the quality of road surfaces is high. Local taxes have sustained their relatively low levels. The municipalities' self-assessment of the development

of e-government remains above the national average. The district's population is aging at a faster rate than in the country on average. Targovishte is among the districts with the lowest coverage of the education system. Hospital bed occupancy is low. Court workloads are among the lowest in the country and this impacts the speed of delivery of justice. The share of forest area is lower than nationally, but so is the share of disturbed area. Cultural life in the district retains its low intensity and tourism is poorly represented.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



Income and living conditions



Labor market



Investment and business



Infrastructure



Local taxes



Administration



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



Demography



Education



Healthcare



Security and justice



Environment



Culture and tourism



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2022, GDP per capita in Targovishte district recorded a considerable growth, and its rate of increase was the second highest after that in Stara Zagora. This puts the district just outside the top ten in this indicator. Salaries are also rising significantly. The annual gross salary of people employed under labor contract has reached 17,300 BGN. Pensions also continue to rise, but remain among the lowest in the country. Their average monthly amount for 2023 was 659 BGN, compared to 784 BGN in the country.

The low level of pensions has a strong negative impact on the poverty level in the district – it continues to rise and in 2023 the share of the population living below the national poverty line reached 36.5%, compared to 20.6% nationally.

Labor market

The share of the working age population in the district has registered a decline and is moving away from the 2023 national average. Employment and unemployment are rising simultaneously, with both indicators remaining considerably less favorable than the respective country's averages. The employment rate has reached 68.9%, compared to 76.2% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 9.5%, versus 5.3% countrywide.

A huge challenge for the labor market in the district is the deteriorating educational structure of the workforce, even though 2023 again saw some improvement. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education dropped by 3 p.p. to 27%, compared to 15% in the country. The share of university graduates is 21%, against 31% nationally.

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 – 51 per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population in the country. In 2022, there was again an increase in investment and production. TFA acquisition expenditures per person reached 2,600 BGN/person, against 4,300 BGN/person in the country. FDI amounted to 3,500 EUR/person, compared to 4,500 EUR/person in the country, and production value to 114,800 BGN per employed person, against 122,400 BGN in the country.

Utilization of European funds in the district remains low, surpassing only that in Sliven. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,971 BGN/person, versus 3,175 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 have grown considerably, though still ranking Targovishte last in this indicator.

Infrastructure

The density of the railway network again remained relatively low in 2023. The density of the road network is generally above the country's average, but the share of highways and first-class roads is relatively low – 16%, compared to the national average of 19%. Nevertheless, the quality of road surfaces is high. In 2023, 48% of the roads in the district were in good condition, compared to 40% in the country.

Households' access to the internet has been decreasing and has fallen below the national average – 84%, compared to 89% in the country in 2023.

The share of households connected to a public sewerage network remains low – 53%, compared to 75% in the country. A bare 46% of the sewerage networks are connected to a wastewater treatment plant, which is considerably below the national average of 67%.

Local taxes

In 2024, local taxes in the municipalities of Targovishte district again retained their relatively low levels. Only the average rate of the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property was higher in the district's municipalities than in the country on average. Relatively low were the taxes on immovable non-residential properties of legal entities – 1.91‰, versus 2.15‰ in the country.

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

Administration

The municipalities' average self-assessment of the development of e-government remains above the national average. However, the 2024 self-assessment of the provision of one-stop shop services is again below the national average. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations has gone down and is now below the national average.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the municipalities in the district again remained relatively low in 2023 – 17%, compared to 27% nationally. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues in the district is the lowest in the whole country – 44%, versus 74% respectively.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2023, natural population increase remained relatively low at -9.3‰ , compared to -6.8‰ nationally. At the same time, net migration was positive at 3.1‰ .

The population in the district is aging faster than in the country on average. The share of children under 4 years is 4.0% , compared to 4.5% in the country, and that of people aged 65 and over is 25.4% , against 23.8% nationally.

The degree of urbanization in the district remains among the lowest in the country. Population density in the urban settlements is half that in the country – 614 persons/sq. km, compared to $1,221$ people nationally.

Education

Targovishte is among the districts with the lowest coverage of the education system. In 2023, the net enrolment in 5th–7th grade was 84% , versus 90% nationally. 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 above the national average.

The performance of Targovishte district's students improved significantly in 2024, though remaining relatively low. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 41.4 p., versus the average of 42.9 p. in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.02 , against "Good" 4.30 nationally, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 10.0% , against 8.7% countrywide.

There are no universities or university branches on the district's territory.

Healthcare

The average life expectancy in Targovishte district is about a year lower than the national average – 72.3 years, compared to 73.5 years in the country. The number of people cared for by one GP remained high in 2023 – $2,230$ people per one GP, compared to $1,701$ people per one GP in the country. The relative number of specialist physicians remains lower. The number of beds in the district's general hospitals has decreased slightly to equal the national average of 6.1 beds per $1,000$ population. At the same time, hospital bed occupancy remains relatively low – 49% , compared to 56% nationwide.

The healthcare system coverage in the district went up to 98% in 2023, and for the second year in a row exceeded the national average of 95% . The pharmacy network is relatively limited. There is one pharmacy per $2,297$ population in the district, versus one pharmacy per $1,892$ population in the country.

Security and justice

In 2023, the courts in Targovishte district again remained among the least busy in the country and this impacted the speed of delivery of justice. The average workload in the District Court was 8.7 cases per month per judge, compared to 14.4 cases in the country, and in the Administrative Court – 10.1 cases per month per judge, compared to 14.8 cases in the country. At the same time, the share of criminal cases closed within 3 months in the district was 95% , against 91% in the country, of administrative cases – 89% , versus 72% in the country, and of civil cases – 90% , compared to 65% in the country.

The crime rate in Targovishte has been increasing but remains below the country's average. In 2023, registered crimes against the person and property amounted to 10.4 per $1,000$ population, compared to 11.3 per $1,000$ population nationally. The detection rate is increasing and is now the highest in the country – 72% , against 53% nationally. The relative number of police officers is close to but above the national average relative to the population.

Environment

The volumes of waste generated by the households in Targovishte district are considerably smaller than in the country on average – 370 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 488 kg/person. At the same time, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is high – 84% in 2022, versus 76% countrywide.

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 disturbed area is also small – 0.1% , against 0.4% in the country. The installed RES capacities per capita are increasing but remain below average.

The cooling degree days index is relatively high. The amounts of drinking water consumed by the households are the lowest in the country (together with Sliven district) – 72 liters per person per day, compared to 103 liters in the country.

Culture and tourism

Cultural life in Targovishte district retains its low intensity, though in 2023 it continued to improve after the sharp decline caused by the pandemic-induced restrictions. Cinema visits reached 219 per $1,000$ population, against 684 per $1,000$ population nationally, and visits to museums numbered 226 per $1,000$ population, against 770 per $1,000$ population in the country. Visits to the theatre and to libraries relative to the population in the district are higher than the national average.

Tourism is not particularly well represented in the district. The number of beds in accommodation establishments is 7 per $1,000$ population, against 56 per $1,000$ population in the country. The number of overnight stays reached 381 per $1,000$ population in 2023, versus $4,167$ per $1,000$ population nationwide and was the lowest in the whole country.

Key indicators for the district of Targovishte

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,536	17,195	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	15,110	17,343	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	21.4	24.7	36.5	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.5	57.4	57.1	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	60.5	67.4	68.9	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	8.3	8.7	9.5	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	32.2	30.3	27.0	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	17.1	21.3	21.0	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	86,468	114,775	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,795	2,630	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	2,690	3,544	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	52.7	53.4	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	60.0	47.9	48.0	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	62.0	57.4	43.7	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	70.1	70.7	68.9	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-12.4	-9.3	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	3.9	3.1	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.63	3.58	4.02	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.2	31.3	41.4	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	74.4	85.0	83.9	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	71.8	70.8	72.3	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	87.5	97.3	98.0	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	2,300	2,056	2,230	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	9.1	8.6	10.4	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	95	92	95	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	64	72	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	319	370	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	83	84	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	19	134	219	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	260	360	381	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Varna district

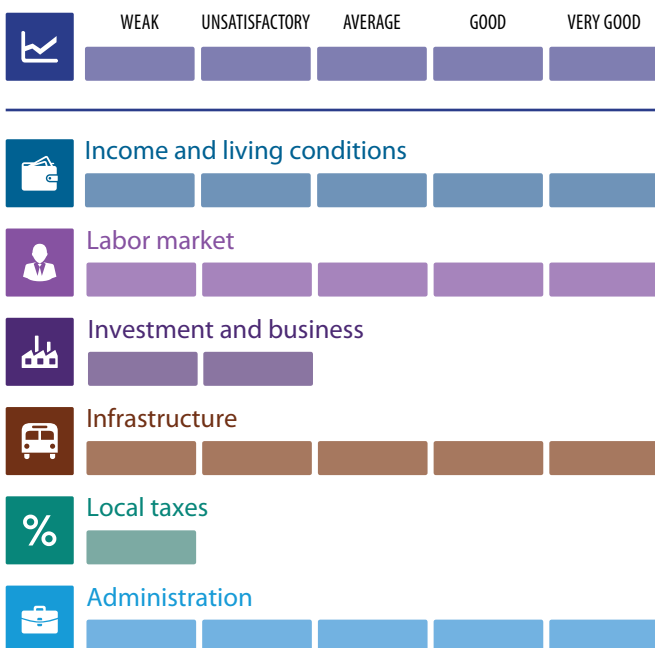
▶ Population (2023)	434,191
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,819
▶ Number of settlements	159
▶ Share of urban population (%)	84.3vv



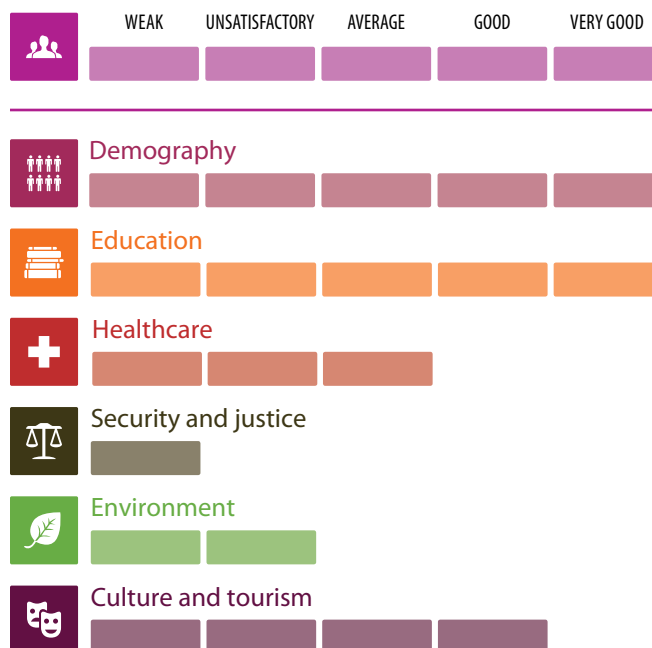
Varna again remains among the top-ranking districts as regards GDP per capita. Salaries and incomes have continued to grow. Income inequality and poverty remain at relatively low levels. Varna is the district with the highest employment rates, while unemployment is the second lowest in the country. Investment and business activity is relatively high. Utilization of European funding is lagging behind. The district's infrastructure is well developed. The average levels of local taxes remain high. The administration's work is evaluated as good.

Varna is among the districts with a relatively favorable demographic development. In the field of education, the trends are moving in a positive direction. Students' performance is very good. Compared to the national average values, Varna district has more doctors but insufficient numbers of hospital beds. The crime rate is relatively high, and the detection rate relatively low. Varna is among the districts with a high volume of generated household waste, but the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains high. Cultural life in the district is intensive, and tourism – well developed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP in Varna has been rising and in 2022 it again ranked the district immediately below the top three (the capital and the districts of Stara Zagora and Sofia). Salaries and pensions have been increasing at a rate close to the national average and are relatively high. The average annual gross salary of persons employed under labor contract reached 19,400 BGN in 2022, and in 2023 the average monthly pension was 830 BGN, versus 784 BGN nationally.

Inequality and poverty in the district again remained at relatively low levels in 2023. The Gini coefficient for income inequality is 33.1, compared to 37.2 nationally. The share of the population living below the national poverty line was 14.6%, versus 20.6% nationally, and remained the second lowest in the country, below that of the capital.

Labor market

In this category, Varna's score is again among the highest in the country. The share of the working-age population remains high at 60.4%, compared to 58.5% in the country. In 2023, Varna was the district with the highest employment rate – 82.9%, versus 76.2% in the country. For its part, unemployment was the second lowest in the country (after the capital) – 3.3%, against 5.3% in the country.

The educational status of the workforce in the district is also relatively favorable. The share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 has increased to 37%, against the national average of 31%. At the same time, the share of the workforce with primary or lower education has decreased to 15%, equaling that in the country.

Investment and business

Investment and business activity in Varna district remains relatively good. The number of non-financial enterprises continues to be high – 78 per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population in the country. Domestic and foreign investment is growing. The amount of TFA acquisition expenditures has reached 3,600 BGN/person, and FDI – 4,000 EUR/person. Production value in the district has also increased to 108,500 BGN per employed person in 2022. The share of export earnings in net sales revenues in the district is below the national average.

Utilization of European funding nevertheless remains relatively low. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district under EU operational programs amounted to 2,165 BGN/person,

compared to 3,175 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized in Byala municipality, and the lowest – in Dalgopol.

Expenditure on research and development is relatively high.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure of Varna district remains relatively well developed. The density of the road and rail network is high. The share of highways and first-class roads is also considerable – 28%, compared to 19% in the country. The quality of the road surface again remained high in 2023. 56% of the roads in the district are in good condition, versus 40% countrywide.

The share of households with internet access is close to the national average – 87%, against 89% in the country.

The share of the population with access to a public sewerage network is among the highest in the country – 87%, compared to 75% nationwide, and practically the whole of that system in the district is connected to waste water treatment plants – 86%, against the national average of 67%.

Local taxes

Within Varna district, the average level of the monitored local taxes levied by the municipalities again remained high in 2024. The margin is particularly large as regards the taxation on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, retail trade and motor vehicles. The average tax rates on immovable non-residential property for legal entities are also relatively high. Within the district, Varna city is the municipality levying the highest local taxes, and the municipality of Dolni Chiflik – the lowest.

Administration

Varna district continues to be among the leaders in this category. In 2024, the self-assessments of the local administrations of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services again went up and were among the highest in the country. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has gone down but also remains among the best in the country

The relatively high share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities in 2023 ranks Varna fourth in the country, with an average of 32%, versus 27% nationally. The district takes the third place as regards the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues – 85%, compared to 74% on average in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2023, Varna remained among the districts with a very good demographic development, ranking third after the capital city and Sliven in this indicator. The rate of natural increase is -4.7% , which is among the highest in the country and far above the national average of -6.8% . Varna continues to attract population and at 12.4% , the net migration rate retains its positive value, with the district ranking third in the country, below only Kardzhali and Burgas.

The share of children under 4 years remains higher than the national average – 4.7% in the district, against 4.5% in the country. The share of people aged 65 and over is lower – 21.5% , compared to 23.8% in the country.

Varna is among the districts with a relatively high population density in the urbanized areas – $1,623$ persons/sq. km, versus $1,221$ persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

Varna is among the districts with the best performance in the field of education, again coming second in the country and is outranked only by Sofia (capital city). The share of children attending kindergarten was 91% in 2023, against 88% nationally, and the enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade – 92% , compared to 90% countrywide. The percentage of school year repeaters remains relatively low – 0.8% , versus 1.2% nationally. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy in the district is relatively high.

In 2024, the performance of the students in Varna district in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was the second best in the country, after the capital – an average of 51.3 p., compared to 42.9 p. in the country. For its part, the average result in the Matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was “Good” 4.36 – very close to, yet also above the average grade of “Good” 4.30 nationwide. The share of “fail” (below 3.00) grades was 8.7% , equaling the national average.

The number of university students remains relatively high.

Healthcare

In 2023, Varna again remained among the districts with a relatively low share of people with health insurance – 91% , against 95% nationwide. Compared to the nationwide averages, the district has more doctors (both GPs and specialist physicians) but it suffers from a shortage of hospital beds in the local general hospitals – 4.7 beds per $1,000$ population, against 6.1 per $1,000$ population countrywide. Hospital bed occupancy is also relatively lower – 52% , compared to 56% nationally. The number of pharmacies relative to the population is similar to the national average.

The infant mortality rate remains relatively low. The average life expectancy of the district’s residents is among the highest in the country at 74.4 years, compared to 73.5 years nationally.

Security and justice

Though the workloads of the criminal judges in Varna district remain relatively low, this does not affect the speed of delivery of justice. In 2023, there were 13.8 cases a month per one District Court judge, compared to 14.4 per judge nationally, and in the Administrative Court – 12.8 cases per judge, versus 14.8 nationally. At the same time, the share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 90% , compared to 91% as the national average, the share of civil cases – 63% , versus 65% nationally, and that of administrative cases – 71% , against 72% countrywide.

The crime rate in the district went up in 2023 and is among the highest in the country, second only to Vidin district relative to the population. At the same time, the detection rate has also been increasing, though still remaining low. Registered crimes against the person and property in Varna district amount to 14.9 per $1,000$ population, versus 11.3 per $1,000$ population nationally. The detection rate of 42% is below the national average of 53% and is the second lowest in the country, after that of the capital. The proportion of police officers in the district is also relatively small – 3.9 per $1,000$ population, versus the national figure of 4.2 per $1,000$ population.

Environment

Varna remains among the districts with a high volume of generated household waste – 524 kg/person in 2022, compared to 488 kg/person nationally. However, the share of that waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains relatively high – 92% , versus 76% countrywide.

The share of forest areas in Varna district is lower than the national average, and the share of disturbed area is higher. The installed RES capacities relative to the population are significantly lower than the average in the other districts.

Culture and tourism

In 2023, Varna remained among the districts with highly developed culture and tourism. The availability of beds in accommodation establishments is among the highest in the country – 149 per $1,000$ population, compared to 56 per $1,000$ population nationally. The relative number of overnight stays reached $10,555$ per $1,000$ population, compared to $4,167$ per $1,000$ population nationally, and guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms numbered $1,148$ per $1,000$ population, compared to 500 per $1,000$ population nationally.

Cinema visits have increased to $1,114$ per $1,000$ population, against 684 per $1,000$ population nationally. Visits to the local theatres, museums and libraries have also gone up, though remaining below the respective national averages relative to the population.

Key indicators for the district of Varna

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	17,872	24,007	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	17,201	19,448	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	17.3	14.2	14.6	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	62.0	60.3	60.4	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	78.8	82.9	82.9	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	3.9	3.2	3.3	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	15.8	16.2	15.2	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	30.2	34.4	36.6	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	86,046	108,496	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,692	3,562	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	3,299	3,979	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	85.8	86.6	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	56.5	56.8	56.1	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	100.0	101.2	85.4	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	76.5	76.8	71.1	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-6.9	-4.7	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	6.1	12.4	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.11	3.94	4.36	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	43.3	42.6	51.3	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	83.0	92.8	91.9	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	74.2	73.6	74.4	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	83.8	91.2	91.3	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,710	1,567	1,602	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	11.8	14.5	14.9	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	92	91	90	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	99	105	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	512	524	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	85	92	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	568	963	1,114	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	7,106	9,451	10,555	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Veliko Tarnovo district

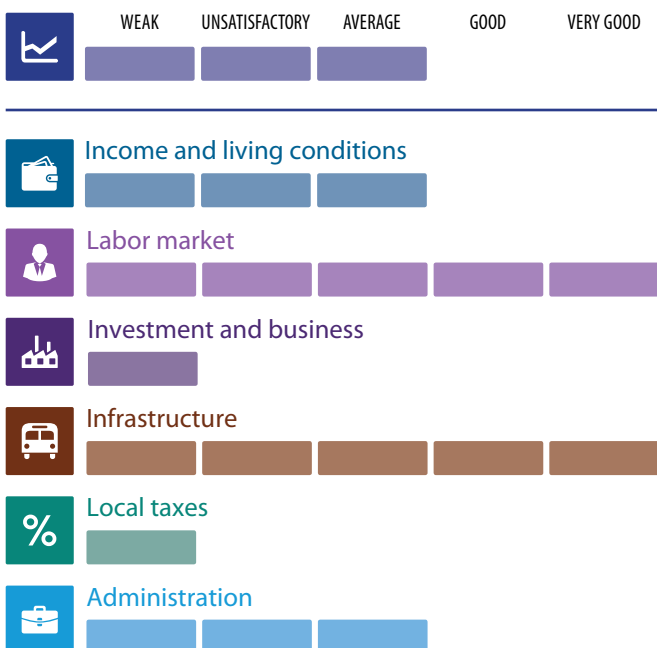
▶ Population (2023)	202,232
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,662
▶ Number of settlements	336
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.8



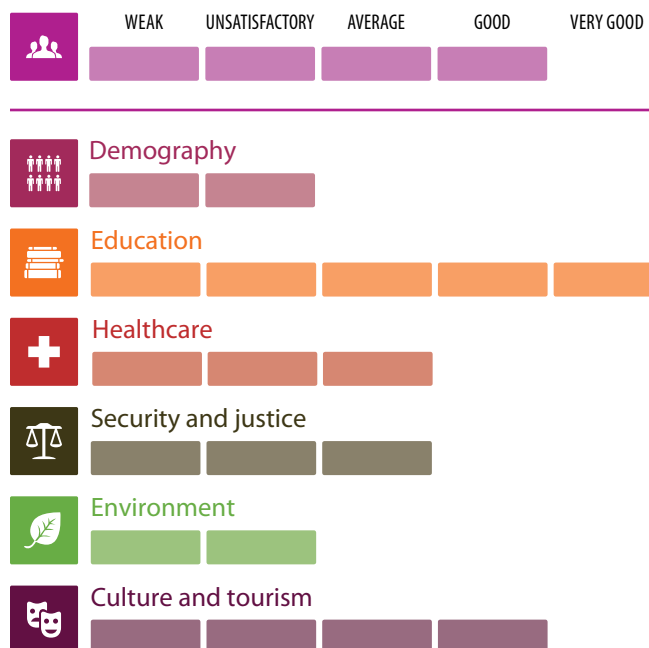
GDP in Veliko Tarnovo district has been growing at a rate higher than the national average relative to the population. The workforce is among the most highly educated in the country, but population aging is a challenge for the labor market. TFA expenditures and foreign investment have registered a considerable increase. The share of highways and first-class roads in the national road network is low. The average rates of the monitored local taxes in the district remain high. The transparency rating of the local administration is improving.

The general trend towards population aging is particularly conspicuous in Veliko Tarnovo district. The indicators in the area of education give it a relatively good ranking. The number of university students relative to the population is the highest in the country. The number of beds in the local general hospitals remains extremely low. Registered crimes have been on the rise but the detection rate remains high as well. The amount of household waste generated in the district is below the national average. Veliko Tarnovo district has an intensive cultural life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

In 2022, GDP in Veliko Tarnovo again grew at a rate higher than the national average relative to the population and reached 18,000 BGN per capita, ranking the district tenth in the country. Salaries and pensions in the district have increased at a rate close to, though below the national average. In 2022, the average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract was 16,100 BGN, compared to 21,200 BGN nationally, and in 2023 the average monthly pension reached 738 BGN, against 784 BGN countrywide. The Gini coefficient for income inequality has registered a slight increase, though remaining below the national average. After a two-year decrease, in 2023 the relative share of the population living below the national poverty line rose considerably to reach 28.9% against 20.6% nationally.

Labor market

One major challenge still facing the labor market in Veliko Tarnovo district is population aging. The share of the working-age population in the district has registered a slight decline and remains relatively low at 56.3%, compared to 58.5% nationally in 2023. Nevertheless, employment has gone up and unemployment has gone down. The unemployment rate has reached 80.0%, compared to 76.2% in the country, and the unemployment rate has decreased to 5.4%, versus 5.3% nationally.

The workforce in Veliko Tarnovo district is among the most highly educated in the country. The share of people aged 25–64 with primary or lower education is 8%, compared to the national average of 15%. Those with a university degree make up 30%, against 31% nationwide.

Investment and business

The number of non-financial enterprises again remained relatively low in 2022, with 55 per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population in the country. TFA acquisition expenditures and FDI have registered a considerable increase but while domestic investment relative to the population is higher than in most other districts, FDI continues to stand below the national average – 1,380 EUR/person in the district, compared to 4,544 EUR/person in the country. Production value per person also remains below the national average relative to the number of employed people – 93,000 BGN per employed person in the district, versus 122,400 BGN nationally. The share of export earnings in net sales revenues is also low – 20% in the district, against 29% in the country.

The relative value of research and development expenditure remains low – in 2022 it amounted to 28 BGN/person, compared to 195 BGN/person countrywide.

Infrastructure

Veliko Tarnovo's central position in northern Bulgaria accounts for the great density of its road and rail network. The road network is 20.1 km/100 sq. km, compared to 18.0 km/100 sq. km in the country, and the rail network is 5.0 km/100 sq. km, versus 3.6 km/100 sq. km, in the country. Nevertheless, the share of highways and first-class roads in the total national network is low – 16% in 2023, against 19% as the country's average. Road quality continues to improve and the share of road surfaces in good condition now considerably exceeds the national average – 47% in the district, compared to 40% countrywide. In 2023, the relative share of households with internet was 87%, against 89% nationally.

The share of the population living in settlements with access to a public sewerage network remains low – 68%, compared to 75% nationwide, and so does the share of public sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants – 61%, versus 67% in the country.

Local taxes

The average rates of the monitored local taxes in the Veliko Tarnovo municipalities again remained relatively high in 2024. The greatest margin was in the non-residential immovable property tax for legal entities – 2.68‰, compared to 2.15‰ in the country, and the tax on non-gratuitous transfer of property – 2.97‰, compared to 2.82‰ in the country. Also relatively high is the tax rate for motor vehicles.

Within the district, Gorna Oryahovitsa is the municipality where the average local taxes are the highest, while the municipality of Suhindol levies the lowest.

Administration

In 2024, the district municipalities' self-assessments of e-government development and the provision of one-shop-stop services remained lower than the respective national averages. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations has gone up and is again higher than the national average – 71.1% in the district, compared to 69.3% nationally.

The financial autonomy of the district's municipalities remains below the average one nationwide. The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the municipalities is 21% on average, compared to 27% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues also remained lower at 67%, versus 74% nationally in 2023.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2023, the general trend towards fast population aging again remained particularly conspicuous in Veliko Tarnovo district. The net migration rate was positive (1.4‰) but this failed to compensate for the markedly negative natural population increase rate of -10.3‰, compared to the national average of -6.8‰. The share of children below age 4 is 3.9% in the district, against 4.5% in the country. The share of people aged 65 and over is 27.4%, compared to 23.8% in the country.

The population density in the district's urbanized settlements remains low at 861 persons/sq. km, versus 1,221 persons/sq. km on average in the country.

Education

In the education indicators, Veliko Tarnovo is very well placed among the rest of the districts. The share of children attending kindergarten is relatively high - 92%, against 88% nationwide, while in 2023 the net enrolment rate in 5th-7th grade continued to rise and remained above the national average - 93% in the district, compared to 90% countrywide. There has been an upward trend in the percentage of school year repeaters, though it remains below the national average.

In 2024, the performance of the district's students again remained below the national average. The average score in the NEA in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 39.3 p., compared to 42.9 p. in the country, and the average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.24, versus "Good" 4.30 nationally. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 9.6%, against 8.7% nationally.

The number of university students in the district has gone down, though Veliko Tarnovo remains the country's leader with 69.5 students per 1,000 population, compared to 29.6 students per 1,000 population nationwide.

Healthcare

In 2023, the share of people with health insurance went up to 93%, but remained below the national average of 95%. The relative number of GPs is above the country's average, but that of specialist physicians is significantly lower.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals remains extremely low - 3.6 per 1,000 population, compared to 6.1 per 1,000 population in the country. Hospital bed occupancy is also relatively low - 49%, compared to 56% countrywide. This may mean that the residents are seeking medical care outside the district (probably in Pleven district). The district also has a shortage of pharmacies.

The infant mortality rate has been drastically reduced and is now below the national average. The average life expectancy in the district has gone up but remains below the national average - 72.9 years, versus 73.5 years respectively.

Security and justice

In 2023, court workloads in Veliko Tarnovo district again remained relatively low and this impacted the speed of delivery of justice. There were 10.6 cases a month per one District Court judge, compared to 14.4 per judge nationally, and in the Administrative Court - 12.6 cases per judge, versus 14.8 nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 92%, compared to 91% as the national average, that of cases heard in the Administrative Court - 82%, versus 72% nationally, and of cases heard in the District Court - 75%, against 65% countrywide.

The crime rate in Veliko Tarnovo district relative to the population marked a slight increase in 2023 but remained below the national average. The number of registered crimes against the person and property reached 10.9 per 1,000 population, compared to 11.3 per 1,000 population nationally. At the same time, the share of cleared crimes marked an increase to 63%, versus the national average of 53%. The number of police officers, however, is still relatively low - 3.8 per 1,000 population, compared to 4.2 per 1,000 population in the country.

Environment

In 2022, the amount of household waste generated in the district was close to but below the national average - an annual of 483 kg/person, against 488 kg/person in the country. However, practically the whole amount of household waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, against 76% as the national average.

The share of forest areas is relatively low - 23%, compared to 33% in the country, but the share of disturbed area is also relatively low at 0.2%, versus 0.4 nationally. The installed RES capacities are relatively small. The relatively high temperatures in 2023 also led to a higher than average cooling degree days.

Culture and tourism

In 2023, visits to the district's cinemas, museums and libraries continued to increase. Cinema visits reached 608 per 1,000 population, against 684 per 1,000 population nationally. Visits to the local theatres amounted to 260 per 1,000 population, against 349 per 1,000 population in the country. Relative to the population, Veliko Tarnovo district ranks second for museum visits (after Gabrovo district) with 2,297 per 1,000 population, against 770 per 1,000 population in the country. Among the monitored indicators in the area of culture, only visits to libraries have gone down, though remaining above the national average - 784 per 1,000 population in the district, compared to 679 per 1,000 population countrywide.

The number of beds in accommodation establishments relative to the population is increasing, but remains relatively low - 26 per 1,000 population, compared to 56 per 1,000 population in the country. This is also the reason for the relatively low number of overnight stays in the district - 1,621 per 1,000 population, against 4,167 per 1,000 population in the country, as well the number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms - 361 per 1,000 population, against 500 per 1,000 population nationally.

Key indicators for the district of Veliko Tarnovo

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	13,669	17,959	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,545	16,105	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	22.5	20.7	28.9	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	59.4	56.4	56.3	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	77.0	78.7	80.0	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	5.3	5.7	5.4	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	6.7	7.1	8.1	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	28.6	28.1	30.0	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	68,032	92,979	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,195	3,543	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	325	1,380	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	68.3	68.2	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	44.1	45.9	46.8	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	76.5	73.0	67.2	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	68.3	68.2	71.1	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-13.6	-10.3	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	2.0	1.4	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.83	3.72	4.24	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	32.7	31.2	39.3	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	83.9	92.8	93.3	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.8	72.1	72.9	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	85.3	92.7	93.2	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,710	1,591	1,612	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	10.0	10.8	10.9	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	92	91	92	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	98	102	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	426	483	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	100	100	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	182	529	608	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	1,228	1,545	1,621	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Vidin district

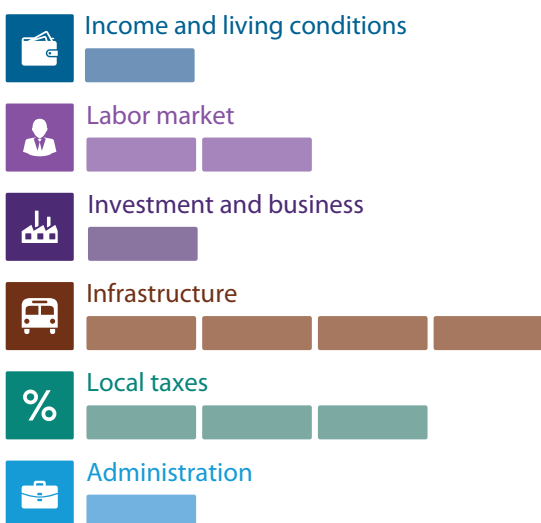
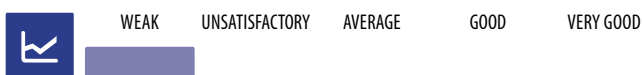
▶ Population (2023)	71,773
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,033
▶ Number of settlements	140
▶ Share of urban population (%)	63.0



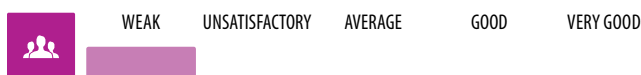
Vidin is among the districts with the worst indicators for incomes and quality of life. The educational structure of the workforce is improving, but unemployment remains extremely high. Investment and business activity is relatively weak, and the infrastructure is not sufficiently developed. Vidin is among the districts with the lowest average rates of the monitored local taxes. The indicators assessing the functioning of the local administration rank Vidin among the worst performers.

Vidin remains the district with the most unfavorable demographic picture in the country. Students' performance is relatively poor. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. The workloads of criminal judges in the district are low, which impacts the speed of delivery of justice. The share of household waste remains relatively low. The relative number of visits to the local cinemas, museums and libraries is increasing but remains lower than the national average.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Vidin is among the districts with the worst indicators for incomes and quality of life. GDP per capita in the district of Vidin continued to increase in 2022, but its growth was relatively limited – by 16%, compared to 28% in the country, and its volume remained low – 13,300 BGN, which is a little over half the national average. Salaries and pensions have also been rising at almost the national average rate, but they too remain relatively low. The average annual salary of people employed under labor contract reached 14,600 BGN in 2022, compared to 21,200 BGN in the country, while the monthly pension is 695 BGN, versus 784 BGN nationally.

Income inequality is close to the national average, but the poverty level remains high, even though it has decreased over the past few years. In 2023, the share of the population living below the national poverty line was 33.7%, against 20.6% in the country, which is the second highest figure after that of Targovishte district.

Labor market

In 2023, Vidin was again the district with the lowest share of working-age population – 53.5%, compared to 58.5% in the country. At the same time, the unemployment rate was the highest in the country – 14.7%, against 5.3% nationwide. The employment rate also remained among the lowest country-wide – 65.9%, versus the national average of 76.2%.

2023 marked a further improvement in the educational structure of the workforce. The share of the population with primary or lower education decreased to 12%, versus 15% nationwide. At the same time, the share of people aged 25–64 with university education also registered a slight decrease to 21%, compared to 31% in the country.

Investment and business

Investment and business activity in Vidin district again remained relatively slack in 2022. The number of enterprises relative to the population continued to be among the lowest in the country – 44 per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population in the country.

TFA acquisition expenditures per person in Vidin district have continued to rise but they still remain among the lowest nationwide – 1,800 BGN/person, compared to 4,300 BGN/person in the country. For the third year in a row, the district has witnessed an outflow of FDI, which has fallen to 490 EUR/person. The relative volume of production value has increased but continues to be the lowest in the country – 53,200 BGN per employed person, compared to the national average of 122,400 BGN. The share of export earnings in net sales revenues remains low, though it has gone up to 17%, against 29% in the country.

Utilization of EU funds remains intensive. By 30 June 2024, the amounts paid to beneficiaries under EU operational programs

reached 3,666 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/person nationally.

Infrastructure

The density of the rail network in the district is close to the national average. The density of the road network is relatively high (20 km/100 sq. km territory, against 18 km/100 sq. km in the country). However, as is typical of northern Bulgaria, the share of first-class roads and highways remains low – 12%, compared to 19% in the country. Road surface quality has been improving, but it too remains at a relatively low level – 37% of the roads in the district are in good condition, compared to 40% in the country in 2023.

The share of households with access to the Internet has been increasing and has stabilized above the national average.

The share of the population connected to a public sewerage network has decreased slightly and continues to be relatively low – 54%, compared to 75% in the country. Connectivity to wastewater treatment plants is also limited – 49%, against 67% in the country.

Local taxes

In 2024, Vidin was once again among the districts with the lowest average rates of the monitored local taxes. The margin was especially big as regards the taxation on retail trade, where Vidin was the leader with 4.60 BGN/sq. m on average for the district, against 13.09 BGN/sq. m in the country. The level of taxation on motor vehicles was also low – 1.46 BGN/kW, versus 1.56 BGN/kW in the country. Of all monitored taxes, the average rates on immovable non-residential property for legal entities and those on non-gratuitous acquisition of property are slightly higher than the respective national averages.

Within the district, the lowest average rates are in the municipality of Chuprene, and the highest ones – in Bregovo municipality.

Administration

Vidin is once again the district with a relatively poor performance in this category. In 2024, the district municipalities' self-assessments of the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services remained among the lowest in the country. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations also remains relatively low – 56.2%, against 69.3% in the country.

The municipalities in Vidin district are among the ones that are excessively dependent on transfers from the national budget. The share of own revenues in Vidin district's municipalities decreased in 2023 and remained low at 16%, compared to 27% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues was also relatively limited – 58%, against 74% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■

In 2023, Vidin again remained the district with the most unfavorable demographic profile in the country. The net migration rate went up and retained its positive value (2.7‰) but this could not compensate for the extremely low value of the natural population increase rate, which was -16.2‰ and over half the national average of -6.8‰.

Population aging is particularly conspicuous in Vidin district. The share of children under 4 years is the second lowest in the country (only after Smolyan district) - 3.4%, versus 4.5% nationwide, while that of the population over 65 is the highest - 31.3%, versus 23.8% in the country.

The density of the population in Vidin district's urbanized settlements is the lowest in the country - 543 persons/sq. km in 2023, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km nationally.

Education ■■■■

In 2023, the share of children attending kindergartens in the district was close to the national average. The enrolment rate in 5th-7th grades has increased but remains low at 88%, compared to 90% nationally. The share of school year repeaters, on the other hand, is decreasing but is still higher than the national average.

The alignment index between vocational education and the profile of the economy in the district again remained low in 2024.

The performance of students in the 2024 NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was again extremely poor. With an average score of 31.3 p., against 42.9 p. in the country, the district occupies the bottom place nationwide. The performance of high-school graduates was better but also below the national average. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.20, compared to "Good" 4.30 nationally, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was relatively high - 9.6%, against 8.7% nationwide.

The number of university students relative to the population in Vidin district is low.

Healthcare ■■

Vidin is one of the three districts (alongside Yambol and Pernik) with the worst performance in this category. In spite of some improvement, it still has the lowest life expectancy - 70.3 years, compared to 73.5 years in the country.

The proportion of people with health insurance reached 98% in 2023 and again exceeded the national average of 95%. The proportion of GPs to the district's population remains relatively high but healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has dropped to 4.3 beds per 1,000 population, compared to 6.1 beds per 1,000 population in the country. At the same time, hospital bed occupancy is among the lowest in the country - 41%, versus 56% nationwide. The infant mortality rate in Vidin district is above the national average.

The number of pharmacies relative to the population is close to the national average.

Security and justice ■■■■■■

In 2023, the workloads of the criminal judges in Vidin district remained below the national average, which impacted the speed of delivery of justice. There were on average 11.4 cases a month per one District Court judge, compared to 14.4 cases per judge nationally, and 11.5 cases a month per one Administrative Court judge, compared to 14.8 cases per judge in the country.

Of all criminal cases in Vidin district, 96% were closed within 3 months, compared to 91% in the country, for administrative cases the share is 85%, versus 72% in the country, and for civil cases - 89%, against 65% in the country.

The relative number of police officers in the district is the second highest in the country (after Vratsa district) - 5.6 per 1,000 population, against 4.2 per 1,000 population in the country. It thus corresponds with the relatively high crime rate - the number of registered crimes against the person and property relative to the population in the district rose in 2023 and became the highest in the country - 15.3 per 1,000 population, compared to 11.3 per 1,000 population nationwide. At the same time, the crime detection rate has gone up and remains above the national average - 58% in Vidin district, against 53% in the country.

Environment ■■■

The amount of household waste generated in the district again remained relatively low in 2022 - 419 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 488 kg/person. At the same time, however, the share handed over for treatment and recycling continued to be very small - 21%, versus 76% countrywide. The share of forest areas is low - 26% in Vidin district, versus 33% in the country, though the share of disturbed area is also low - 0.2% in the district, against 0.4% in the country. The installed RES capacities relative to the population are lower than average.

Culture and tourism ■■■

The relative numbers of visits to the local cinemas, museums and libraries in Vidin district have been increasing but in 2023 they remained lower than the respective national averages. There has been a considerable increase in visits to theaters and their relative number is above the national average - 438 per 1,000 population, compared to 349 per 1,000 population nationwide.

Despite a weak growth in 2023, the number of beds in accommodation establishments remains extremely limited (15 per 1,000 population, compared to 56 per 1,000 population nationally), but the relative number of overnight stays also remains low (990 per 1,000 population, compared to 4,167 per 1,000 population nationally). The number of guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms is 47 per 1,000 population, against 500 per 1,000 population in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Vidin

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,438	13,273	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	12,855	14,566	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	43.3	39.2	33.7	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	54.6	53.6	53.5	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	62.4	65.9	65.9	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	12.3	14.1	14.7	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	17.6	13.4	11.5	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	19.8	22.4	20.5	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	42,883	53,200	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,260	1,794	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	597	490	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	54.8	54.3	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	28.3	36.1	37.1	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	61.4	73.9	58.0	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	57.4	57.5	56.2	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-21.3	-16.2	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	0.9	2.7	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.83	3.63	4.20	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	21.6	25.4	31.3	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	78.8	87.3	87.6	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	70.5	69.4	70.3	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	92.4	97.5	98.2	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,433	1,361	1,338	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	10.0	14.1	15.3	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	94	96	96	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	91	94	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	355	419	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	18	21	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	232	320	365	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	626	911	990	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Vratsa district

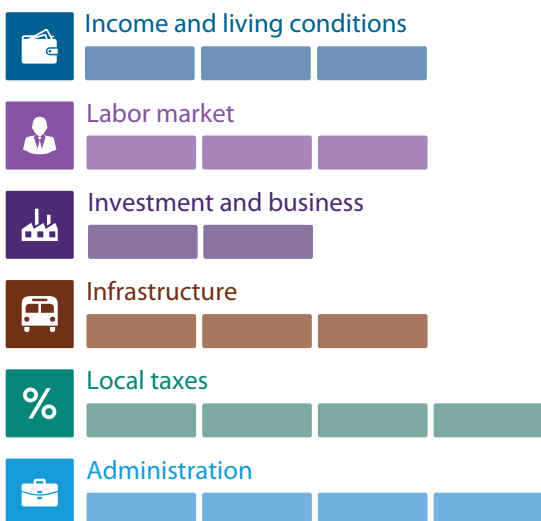
▶ Population (2023)	147,619
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,620
▶ Number of settlements	123
▶ Share of urban population (%)	59.1



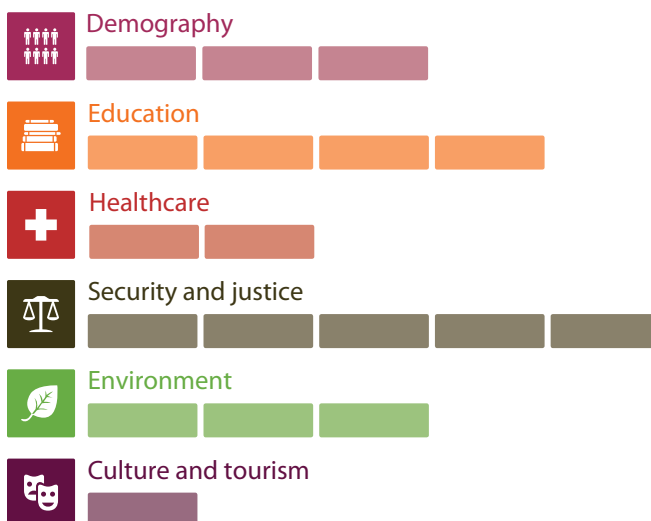
GDP per capita in Vratsa district continues to grow. The average gross annual salary of employees is the third highest in the country. Employment and unemployment rates have been going down simultaneously. Vratsa is among the districts with a strong industrial profile and the share of the workforce with secondary education is relatively high. Economic and investment activity in the district remains relatively limited. Road quality is not improving. Local taxes are low. The transparency in the work of municipal administrations remains low.

The natural population increase rate remains considerably lower than the national average. The indicators in the field of primary and secondary education remain relatively good, but students' results are relatively low. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. Vratsa is the district with the highest relative share of police officers. The number of registered crimes against the person and property relative to the population in Vratsa district is among the highest in the country. The share of forest areas is low. Culture and tourism are insufficiently developed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP per capita in Vratsa district continues to grow. Although its rate of increase is lower than average, in 2022 Vratsa registered the fifth highest GDP in the country – 21,800 BGN/person. Salaries and pensions are also increasing at a rate similar to the national average, and remain among the relatively high ones. The gross annual salary of employed persons has reached 19,400 BGN and is the third highest in the country (after those in the capital and Varna district), mainly on account of the employees in the Kozloduy nuclear power station. The average monthly pension is 786 BGN, which is also higher than in most districts. However, income inequality remains high – the Gini coefficient is 39.0, compared 37.2 in the country. The poverty level has dropped considerably and for the first time has fallen below the national average. In 2023, the share of the population living below the national poverty line was 19.2%, versus 20.6% countrywide.

Labor market

The share of the working-age population in the district has been decreasing and in 2022 it remained lower than the national average – 57.2%, compared to 58.5% in the country. At the same time, there has been a simultaneous decrease in employment and unemployment, both of whose figures are again significantly less favorable than the respective national averages. The employment rate in Vratsa district is 61.8%, against 76.2% in the country, while the unemployment rate is 10.4%, against 5.3% in the country.

Vratsa is among the districts with a pronounced industrial profile and the share of the workforce with secondary education is relatively high – 62%, compared to 55% in the country. The share of the population aged between 25 and 64 with a university degree has gone up to 22%, versus 31% in the country, while that of people with primary or lower education has decreased to 16%, compared to 15% in the country.

Investment and business

Economic and investment activity in Vratsa district again remained relatively limited in 2022. The relative number of non-financial enterprises was the lowest in the country – 43 per 1,000 population, against 70 per 1,000 population as the national average. TFA acquisition expenditure has doubled, but FDI has shrunk considerably to 745 EUR per 1,000 population, against 4,544 EUR per 1,000 population countrywide.

For the second year in a row, production value in Vratsa district has reached a record increase. Its value relative to the population is now the second highest in the country (after Sofia district). At the same time, the share of export earnings in net sales revenues has decreased and is the lowest in the country – 4%, versus 29% nationally. Research and development expenditures are also relatively low.

Vratsa also remains among the top-ranking districts as regards utilization of EU funding. By 30 June 2024, payments made to beneficiaries of EU operational programs reached 3,796 BGN/person, versus 3,175 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the municipality of Vratsa city takes the top place with over 5,500 BGN/person.

Infrastructure

The density of the road and rail network in Vratsa district nearly equals the respective national averages but road quality remains low. The share of highways and first-class roads in the district is 10%, against 19% in the country. In 2023, the share of roads with surfaces in good condition was 34%, compared to the national average of 40%.

Households' internet access in Vratsa district also lags behind the country's average.

The relatively low share of population living in urban settlements and the low population density in Vratsa district can account for the limited access of the households to a public sewerage system – 57%, compared to the national average of 75%. Access to public sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants is also low – available to 53% of the population, compared to the average of 67% countrywide.

Local taxes

In 2024, the average rate of the local taxes in the district's municipalities again remained relatively low. The average retail trade tax rate in the district was almost half the national average – 6.84 BGN/sq. m, against 13.09 BGN/sq. m nationally. Also lower are the rates for the motor vehicle tax and for non-gratuitous acquisition of property.

Of the monitored tax rates, in 2024 only the average one on non-residential immovable property of legal entities remained higher than the national average.

Within the district, the highest local taxes are levied by Kozloduy municipality, and the lowest ones – by Mizia municipality.

Administration

The average share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities is relatively low – 21%, compared to 27% in the country. The coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues is also lower than the national average – 63% in the district, against 74% in the country.

In 2024, the self-assessments of Vratsa district's local municipalities regarding the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services went up and exceeded the respective national averages. The transparency ratings of the local administration have also increased but remain relatively low.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2023, the natural population increase rate in the district remained considerably lower than the national average, with -10.9‰ in Vratsa, against -6.8‰ in the country. At the same time, the net migration rate rose to 2.4‰. The share of children under 4 years is 4.3%, versus 4.5% in the country. The share of the population aged 65 and over is 25.0%, against 23.8% in the country.

The density of the population living in urbanized settlements is almost half the national average – 657 persons/sq. km in the district, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

The indicators of Vratsa district in the field of primary and secondary education remain relatively good, but the results are relatively low. The share of children attending kindergarten is high – 92%, compared to 88% in the country. In 2023, Vratsa again remained among the districts with the highest net enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade – 91%, compared to 90% in the country. The share of school year repeaters has decreased slightly to equal the national average of 1.2%. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy in the district is close to, but below the national average.

Students' results in 2024 were again relatively poor. The average score in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade was 31.4 p., compared to 42.9 p. nationally, thus ranking Vratsa district the second worst in this indicator, only after Vidin. The average score in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.10, versus "Good" 4.30 nationally. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades was 8.9%, compared to 8.7% in the country.

The number of university students in the district is 8.6 per 1,000 population, compared to 29.6 per 1,000 population countrywide in 2023.

Healthcare

The average life expectancy in Vratsa district has risen to 70.9 years, compared to 73.5 years nationally, and is the second lowest in the country (after Vidin district). The share of the health-insured population is traditionally higher than the national average – 96%, versus 95% in the country. Healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and of hospital beds. In 2023, the number of beds in the local general hospitals was 4.8 per 1,000 population, while the national average was 6.1 beds per 1,000 population. Hospital bed occupancy remains relatively low – 58% in the district, against 56% nationally.

The infant mortality rate has decreased and is now below the national average. The number of pharmacies relative to the population is similar to the national average.

Security and justice

In 2023, the workloads of the judges in Vratsa district remained similar to the average ones in the country, but the speed of delivery of justice was relatively high. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 96%, against the national average of 91%, the share of administrative cases – 79%, against 72% in the country, and that of civil cases – 68%, compared to 65% nationally.

Vratsa is the district with the highest relative number of police officers – 6.5 per 1,000 population, against 4.2 per 1,000 population in the country. The number of registered crimes against the person and property has continued to fall but Vratsa remains among the three districts with the highest relative number in the country (after Vidin and Varna) – 13.8 per 1,000 population in Vratsa, versus 11.3 per 1,000 population nationwide. The share of cleared crimes has been rising and remains higher than the national average – 60% in the district, versus 53% nationally.

Environment

In 2022, the amounts of waste generated by the district's households remained relatively small – 344 kg/person per annum, versus 488 kg/person in the country. At the same time, the share handed over for treatment and recycling was again lower than the national average – 57%, versus 76% respectively.

The installed RES capacities relative to the population in the district are above the national average. The share of forest areas is low – 16%, versus 33% in the country, while disturbed area makes up 0.2% of the district's territory, compared to 0.4% in the country in 2023.

Culture and tourism

Cultural life and tourism are not strongly represented in Vratsa and in 2023 the district continued to lag behind the national average. Cinema visits increased but remained relatively low at 321 per 1,000 population, compared to 684 per 1,000 population nationally. Visits to local museums even registered a slight decrease to 138 per 1,000 population, compared to 770 per 1,000 population nationally. Visits to the theater numbered 107 per 1,000 population, compared to 349 per 1,000 population in the country, and those libraries – 610 per 1,000 population, compared to 679 per 1,000 population in the country.

The number of beds in accommodation establishments relative to the population in the district is extremely low at 9 per 1,000 population, compared to 56 per 1,000 population nationally in 2023. Overnight stays are also relatively low, though they have gone up to reach 748 per 1,000 population, against 4,167 per 1,000 population nationally. Guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms amount to 25 per 1,000 population, compared to 500 per 1,000 population countrywide.

Key indicators for the district of Vratsa

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	17,781	21,818	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	17,324	19,441	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	33.5	31.5	19.2	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	57.6	57.3	57.2	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	63.5	65.6	61.8	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	10.3	10.7	10.4	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	24.1	22.5	15.6	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	18.8	15.6	22.3	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	121,054	216,011	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	1,788	3,450	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,240	745	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	55.7	57.0	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	27.2	34.3	34.3	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	72.5	80.7	62.6	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	64.7	64.6	65.9	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-14.5	-10.9	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	0.0	2.4	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.75	3.58	4.10	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	26.4	26.7	31.4	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	92.3	91.7	91.0	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	71.4	70.5	70.9	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	93.8	95.2	95.9	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,727	1,724	1,724	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	13.0	16.4	13.8	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	97	97	96	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	101	93	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	332	344	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	54	57	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	228	303	321	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	473	731	748	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Yambol district

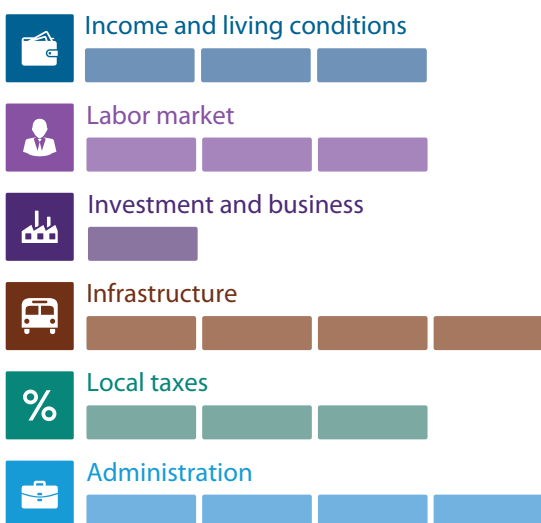


▶ Population (2023)	106,320
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,355
▶ Number of settlements	109
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.9

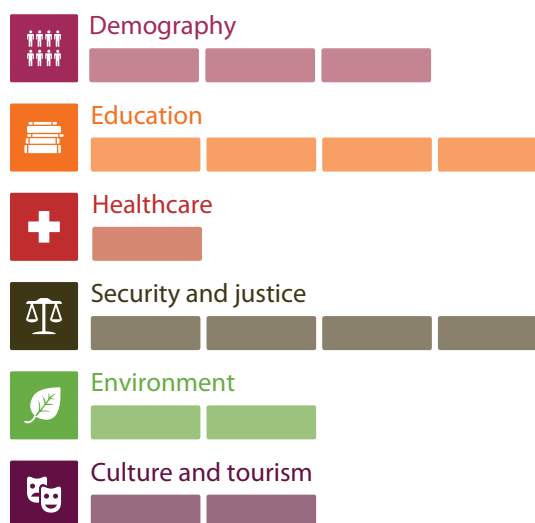
GDP, incomes and pensions in Yambol district continue to grow. The share of the working-age population in the district is one of the lowest in the country. Investment activity remains slack. Yambol is characterized by a high density of the road network, but the railway network is among the least developed in the country. The average levels of local taxes are close to the national averages. The self-assessments of the local administrations on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services have gone up.

Both natural population increase and net migration rates are unfavorable. The district's students are not among the good performers but their results indicate an improvement compared to the rest of the districts. Healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and a limited number of hospital beds. The workloads of the local judges are considerably below the national average, but delivery of justice is relatively slow. The volume of household waste is low. Tourism in Yambol district is poorly represented.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

GDP in Yambol district has continued to grow at a fast pace, reaching 15,800 BGN per capita in 2022.

The rate of increase in incomes and pensions also remains stable. The average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract is 16,500 BGN, compared to 21,200 BGN nationally. The average monthly pension is 763 BGN, versus 784 BGN nationally.

After several years of decline, in 2023 the poverty rate in the district went up. The share of population living below the poverty line reached 26.7%. Income inequality remains below the national average.

Labor market

The share of the working age population in the district was one of the lowest in the country (only ahead of Vidin district) in 2023. Employment has increased and unemployment has decreased. The employment rate has reached 74.8%, compared to 76.2% in the country, and that of unemployment – 5.1%, versus 5.3% nationwide.

A challenge still facing the labor market in Yambol district is the educational structure of the workforce, although 2023 saw some improvement. The share of people aged 25–64 with primary or lower education went down to 19%, against the national average of 15%, while that of university graduates increased to 20%, compared to 31% in the country.

Investment and business

In 2022, investment activity in Yambol district remained low. Due to the relative dominance of the process industry, Yambol is among the districts with a relatively small number of enterprises – only 59 per 1,000 population, compared to 70 per 1,000 population nationally. TFA acquisition expenditures have gone up significantly, reaching 2,800 BGN/person. FDI, however, has registered a negligible increase and remains among the lowest in the country at 476 EUR/person, versus 4,500 EUR/person nationally. At the same time, production value has increased rapidly to reach 92,000 BGN per employed person. The share of export earnings in net sales revenue is decreasing and remains relatively low at 24%, against 29% in the country.

Research and development expenditure relative to the population is comparatively low.

There has been an increase in the utilization of European funds and their amounts are getting much closer to the national average. By 30 June 2024, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs reached 3,132 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/person nationally. Within the

district, the largest amounts were utilized by Bolyarovo municipality.

Infrastructure

Yambol district is characterized by a high density of the road network. However, its railway network is among the least developed in the country, after that of Dobrich district. In 2023, the share of first-class roads and highways exceeded the national average – 21%, compared to 19% nationally. The quality of the road surface in the district, however, is below the national average and in 2023 the share of roads in good condition decreased to 29%, thus lagging well behind the average of 40% countrywide.

In 2023, the share of households connected to high-speed internet went down and again remained relatively low.

There has been little change in the share of households with access to a public sewerage network, which in 2022 again remained below the national average – 71%, against 75% in the country. At the same time, the share of households whose sewerage system is connected to a wastewater treatment plant is above the national average – 69% compared to 67% countrywide.

Local taxes

The average rates of local taxes in Yambol district in 2024 again remained close to the average ones in the country. Among the monitored taxes, the relatively higher than average one, albeit by a small margin, was that on the immovable non-residential property for legal entities. At the same time, the rate on retail trade remained well below average. The tax rate for retail trade in Yambol district was 8.17 BGN/sq. m on average, compared to 13.09 BGN/sq. m in the country.

Within the district, the highest local taxes are levied by the municipality of Yambol city, and the lowest – by that of Elhovo.

Administration

The self-assessments of the local administrations in Yambol district regarding the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services went up in 2024 to exceed the national average. However, the AIP active transparency rating achieved by the local administration fell below the country's average – 68.8% in the district, compared to 69.3% in the country.

The share of own revenues in the total revenues of the district's municipalities in 2023 was 21%, versus 27% nationally, and the coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues – 64%, against 74% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2023, both the natural population increase rate and net migration in Yambol district again remained less favorable than nationally. The natural population increase rate was -9.0% , compared to -6.8% nationally. The net migration rate was negative at -0.9% .

The share of children under 4 years is higher than the average – 4.8% in the district, compared to 4.5% in the country, but the share of the population aged 65 and over is also relatively high – 26.8% , against 23.8% nationally.

Population density in Yambol district is significantly lower than in the country on average – 680 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,221 persons/sq. km countrywide.

Education

The share of children attending kindergarten again remained relatively low in 2023. The net enrolment in 5th–7th grade, however, is close to the national average. The share of school year repeaters is high. The alignment between vocational education and the profile of the local economy is relatively good, especially in the industrial and agricultural sectors.

The 2024 students' results indicate an improvement compared to the rest of the districts. The average score in the NAE in mathematics after 7th grade was 40.4 p., versus 42.9 p. in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.25, compared to "Good" 4.30 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was low – 7.1% , against 8.7% nationally.

The number of students in the district relative to the population is declining in line with its nationwide decline, falling to 6 per 1,000 population, against 30 per 1,000 population nationwide.

Healthcare

The district's poor performance in the sphere of healthcare is due primarily to the low relative number of specialist physicians (where Yambol ranks only ahead of Kardzhali), the low number of hospital beds, as well as to the high child mortality rate in 2023 (8.5% , against 4.9% in the country). At the same time, the number of GPs relative to the population in the district is close to the national average. The district's residents' life expectancy lags behind the country's average by slightly over a year. The number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals has increased, but remains relatively low – 3.9 beds per 1,000 population, compared to the national average of 6.1 beds per 1,000 population. Hospital bed occupancy is also lower than the national average.

The share of people with health insurance has gone up but still remains below the national average. The pharmacy network in the district is also relatively limited.

Security and justice

The workloads of the local judges are considerably lower than in the country, and delivery of justice is relatively speedy. In 2023, one local judge in the Administrative Court heard an average of 10.1 cases per month, compared to 14.8 cases per judge in the country, and the District Court average monthly workload was 12.7 cases per judge, against 14.4 cases nationally. The share of civil cases closed within 3 months was 84% , compared to 65% in the country, that of administrative cases was 84% , versus 72% countrywide, while the share of criminal cases equaled the national average of 91% .

The number of crimes in the district is close to, though above the country's average, and the detection rate is relatively high. In 2023, registered crimes against the person and property amounted to 11.5 per 1,000 population, versus 11.3 per 1,000 population nationally. The detection rate was 67% , compared to 53% nationwide. The number of police officers relative to the population is above the national average.

Environment

The volumes of generated household waste in the district are relatively low, and their management – relatively good. In 2022, the amount of household waste generated in the district was 417 kg/person, against the national average of 488 kg/person, while 88% of the generated waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to 76% on average countrywide.

The share of forest areas is low – 15% , versus 33% in the country, but that of disturbed area is also limited – 0.2% against 0.4% countrywide. The installed RES capacities are above the national average relative to the population.

The cooling degree days index in the district is the highest in the country. At the same time, the consumption of drinking water by the households is relatively low.

Culture and tourism

Visits to the local cinemas reached 449 per 1,000 population, versus 684 per 1,000 population in the country, and visits to libraries numbered 471 per 1,000 population, against 679 per 1,000 population nationally. The relative number of visits to museums is among the lowest in the country, although in 2023 it went up to 189 per 1,000 population, compared to 770 per 1,000 population nationally. Among the indicators monitored in this category, only the number of visits to local theatres relative to the population was higher than average – 358 per 1,000 population in the district, compared with 349 per 1,000 population nationally.

Tourism has an extremely low representation in Yambol district. In 2023, the number of beds in accommodation establishments was 7 per 1,000 population, versus 56 per 1,000 population in the country. Overnight stays, for their part, numbered 452 per 1,000 population, against 4,167 per 1,000 population in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Yambol

Economic Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,617	15,805	n.a.	25,956
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labour contract (BGN)	14,779	16,472	n.a.	21,242
Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	24.0	20.2	26.7	20.6
Share of the working-age population (%)	56.1	54.2	54.1	58.5
Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	67.3	73.7	74.8	76.2
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	5.5	5.4	5.1	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	20.6	21.8	18.6	14.8
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	23.0	19.7	20.0	30.5
Production value (BGN/employed person)	73,402	91,955	n.a.	122,377
Expenditures on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (BGN/person)	2,165	2,755	n.a.	4,257
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (cumulative) (EUR/person)	396	476	n.a.	4,544
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	70.9	71.5	n.a.	75.0
Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	36.3	30.4	29.5	40.4
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues (%)	93.2	87.2	64.0	74.1
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	72.5	72.4	68.8	69.3

Social Development Indicators	2021	2022	2023	National average
Natural population increase rate (‰)	n.a.	-11.5	-9.0	-6.8
Net migration rate (‰)	n.a.	-0.4	-0.9	6.4
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.79	3.79	4.25	4.30
Average grade in the National external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.7	30.8	40.4	42.9
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	89.1	90.0	89.3	89.9
Average life expectancy (years)***	72.3	71.5	72.4	73.5
Share of people with health insurance (%)	88.6	92.6	93.1	95.0
Population per one GP (persons)	1,733	1,662	1,696	1,701
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 population	10.0	11.0	11.5	11.3
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	82	88	91	91
Households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water (liter/person/day)	87	90	n.a.	103
Generated household waste of serviced population (kg/person/year)	371	417	n.a.	488
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	91	88	n.a.	76
Visits to cinemas (number/1,000 population)	130	391	449	684
Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number/1,000 population)	240	437	452	4,167

* The 2023 data are included in the 2024 study. The same is valid for the previous years.

** The data refer to the 2023-24 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2024. The same is valid for the previous years.

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

Categories of Indicators

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita	The indicator measures the standard of living in the district and the level of development of the local economy. A higher GDP per capita in a district is indicative of a strong local economy and a higher standard of living for local residents.	2012–2022	BGN per capita	NSI
Average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract	Income earned from salaries and wages is one of the key factors determining the level of household income.	2012–2022	BGN	NSI
Average monthly pension	The indicator provides a broad measure of the well-being and standard of living of local pensioners.	2014–2023	BGN	NRA
Gini coefficient	The coefficient provides a measure of income inequality on a scale of 1 to 100 points, where 100 points indicates perfect inequality.	2012–2023	points	NSI
Relative share of the people living below the national poverty line	A key poverty indicator. It shows the share of people with an equivalent disposable income below the so-called “poverty line” which is set at 60% of the national median equivalized disposable income.	2019–2023	%	NSI

Labor market

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Share of the working-age population	The age limit for the distribution of the population in this category is determined in accordance with the retirement age in the relevant year, adopted by a Decree of the Council of Ministers. The indicator is closely related to the local labor market.	2012–2023	%	NSI
Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15 and over	Low unemployment rates in a district are indicative of a vibrant and job-creating local economic environment.	2012–2023	%	EA
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15–64	The employment rate is a leading indicator of the labor market showing what proportion of the working-age population is actually employed.	2012–2023	%	NSI
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with an university degree	A large share of population with a university degree in a district creates prerequisites for increased competitiveness, labor productivity, and economic growth.	2012–2023	%	NSI
Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education	An indicator of the educational structure of the workforce. The higher the share of people with primary or lower education, the lower the potential of the local labor market to fill newly created jobs. A lower level of education is a precondition for lower economic activity, lower productivity, and thus lower incomes.	2012–2023	%	NSI

Investment and business

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Number of non-financial enterprises	The indicator shows entrepreneurial mindsets and investment activity in the local economy.	2012–2022	number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 population	NSI
Expenditure on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (TFA)	The level of expenditure on the acquisition of tangible fixed assets (TFA) per capita in a district is the leading indicator of investment in the local economy.	2012–2022	BGN per capita	NSI
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (accumulated flows)	The indicator of foreign direct investment (FDI) in non-financial enterprises shows the cumulative investment flows to the district and its attractiveness to foreign investors.	2012–2022	EUR per capita	NSI
Utilization of EU funds by beneficiaries under operational programs	A high level of utilization of EU funds under operational programs creates preconditions for improving a district's competitiveness.	By 30 June 2024	BGN per capita	ISMM; ISMM 2020
Production value	Production value per employed person shows the relative productivity of the enterprises in the district.	2012–2022	BGN per employed person	NSI
Share of export earnings in net sales revenues of non-financial enterprises	The share of export earnings in net sales revenues of non-financial enterprises indicates the extent to which domestic production is export-oriented.	2018–2022	%	NSI
Expenditure for research and development	Research and development includes all creative and systematic work carried out with the aim of expanding the body of knowledge, including knowledge about people, culture and society, and of developing new applications for existing knowledge.	2012–2022	BGN per capita	NSI

Infrastructure

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Road network density	The indicator measures the total length of highways and roads (first-, second-, and third-class) relative to the territory of the respective district. The national road network is essential for the transportation of goods and passengers in the country. The indicator does not include streets in urban and rural settlements.	2012–2023	length of the road network km/100 sq. km territory	NSI
Rail network density	The indicator represents all railway lines intended for the movement of trains between stations or places indicated as independent points of departure and arrival of trains carrying passengers and freight. It excludes urban railway lines. The greater the density of the railway network in a district, the easier the transportation of passengers and freight.	2012–2023	length of the railway network in km/100 sq. km territory	NSI
Share of highways and first-class roads	The indicator provides additional information on the characteristics of the road infrastructure in a district. A larger share of highways and first-class roads points to a better developed local infrastructure.	2012–2023	%	NSI
Relative share of households with broadband internet access	Households' access to the internet is indicative of the spread of new information and communication technologies in the country's districts.	2012–2023	%	NSI
Share of road surfaces in good condition	In addition to the road network density, the quality of road surfaces is also of considerable importance for the infrastructural profile of the districts. This indicator shows the share of roads the condition of whose surface has been assessed as "good" by the Road Infrastructure Agency (RIA).	2012–2023	%	RIA
Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network connected to a waste water treatment plant (%)	The presence of municipal waste water treatment plants implies lower pollution of the environment by waste water and also higher utilization of the water resources in the area. The larger the part of the sewerage network connected to waste water treatment plants, the lower the negative effect of waste water on the environment.	2012–2022	%	NSI
Share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network	The indicator shows the percentage of a given district's residents living in settlements with a public sewerage network. The catchment area size of the public sewerage network affects both the social and environmental characteristics of the districts.	2012–2022	%	NSI

% Local taxes

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Tax rate on immovable non-residential property for legal entities	Real estate taxes are the biggest source of own revenue for municipalities. Taxation on immovable non-residential property for legal entities is indeed the major factor influencing the business environment and the burden on businesses.	2012–2024	p.p. (‰)	Request for access to information under APIA
Motor vehicle tax (commercial and passenger vehicles, 74 kW to 110 kW)	Taxation on vehicles is another major source of own revenue for municipalities. This type of tax is a burden mainly on small companies, since the engine power basis has been chosen specifically for its relevance to such companies. After 2019, the indicator also takes into account the newly introduced environmental component in the total tax rate.	2012–2024	BGN/kW	Request for access to information under APIA
Annual patent tax for retail trade on up to 100 sq. m of retail space at the most favorable business location	Patents taxes are a type of taxation different from those mentioned above. They are a tax burden on specific businesses. The retail trade patent tax has been selected as the most common and recognizable type of taxation.	2012–2024	BGN/sq. m	Request for access to information under APIA
Tax rate on non-gratuitous acquisition of property	The tax rate on non-gratuitous acquisition of property is relevant both to investors entering the local market and to local investors expanding their activities.	2012–2024	p.p. (‰)	Request for access to information under APIA

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Active transparency rating of local government bodies	The active transparency ratings of local government bodies are assigned by the AIP Foundation based on the results of its annual studies of municipal web pages and electronic submission of requests to various administrative structures within the executive branch. The rating assigned to each district is the average of all the ratings given to the municipalities within it.	2016–2024	%	Access to Information Program Foundation (AIP Foundation)
Level of development of e-government	The indicator shows the results of local governments' self-assessment regarding the degree and scope of the electronic services they provide. A low rating indicates a complete lack or rudimentary development of e-government, while a high rating shows a capacity for carrying out two-way transactions between the local administration and citizens/businesses.	2013–2024	rating from 1 to 4	Request for access to information under APIA
Level of development of one-stop shop services	The indicator shows the results from the local governments' self-assessment regarding the extent of their readiness to operate one-stop shop services.	2013–2024	rating from 1 to 4	Request for access to information under APIA
Share of own revenues in the municipalities' total revenues	This ratio shows to what extent each municipality can meet its own needs without relying on the state budget.	2015–2023	%	MF
Coverage of municipal expenditures with local revenues	The indicator shows the dependence of municipal budgets on transfers from the state budget.	2015–2023	%	MF

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Population density relative to the area of the settlements and other urbanized areas	The population density indicator gives information on the number of people per unit area. Density is influenced by the rate of natural increase and net migration flows, as well as by the urbanization processes.	2022–2023	number of persons/sq. km	NSI
Natural population increase rate	The natural population increase rate is the difference between the number of registered live births and the number of deaths during the year. The indicator shows the increase or decrease of the population of the district per 1,000 of its average annual population; a positive value is considered a favorable demographic indicator.	2022–2023	p.p. (‰)	NSI
Net migration rate	The net migration rate shows an increase or decrease of the population per 1,000 of its average annual population due to migration. The ratios are calculated based on statistics for the number of persons who have changed their usual residence within a given period. Net migration is the difference between the numbers of immigrants to and emigrants from a given district.	2022–2023	p.p. (‰)	NSI
Share of children under 4 years of age	The indicator shows the degree of aging in the districts. A higher proportion means less ageing.	2012–2023	%	NSI
Share of the population aged 65 and over	The indicator shows the degree of aging in the districts. A higher proportion means that the age structure of the population has deteriorated.	2012–2023	%	NSI

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Number of students at colleges and universities	The indicator includes students at universities, colleges, and specialized higher education institutions, excluding students in vocational training after high school. A large number of students in any district is a prerequisite for a better educated local workforce and increases the attractiveness of the respective district.	2012–2023	number of university students per 1,000 population	NSI
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade)	The net enrolment rate of the population is the ratio between the total number of enrolled students in the official school age range for a given level of education and the total population of the same age group. The rate is calculated as a percentage by 31 December of the respective year. The number of students in primary and secondary education is established by 1 October of the respective year. The selection of 5th to 7th grade is based on the fact that this is the lowest educational stage where a relatively low coverage of the education system is registered.	2018–2023	%	NSI
Relative share of repeaters	The relative share of repeaters shows the number of students who were enrolled in the same grade for the second year in a row. This indicator points to the quality of educational institutions, at least in terms of their ability to create optimal learning conditions for students.	2012–2022	%	NSI
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature	A high average grade in the annual State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature indicates a high quality of secondary education in the district. Despite differences in exam difficulty across years, results allow comparisons between the districts for each year.	2012–2024	grade 2 to 6	MES
Share of “fail” (below 3.00) grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature	A high percentage of students who have passed the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature indicates a high quality of secondary education in the district.	2012–2024	%	MES
Average grade in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade	A high result in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade indicates a high quality of junior high school education in the district. The indicator is also used as a counterpoint to the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature, as very few high-school students choose to sit the elective matriculation exam in mathematics.	2018–2024	average number of points out of a possible 100	MES
Index of the alignment between vocational education and the profile of the economy	The indicator shows the alignment between students in vocational education by specialization and employees with acquired vocational qualifications by sector. This alignment is also an important dimension for the labor market as it shows the link between education and employment at local level.	2022–2024	average number of points out of a possible 100	IME based on MES and NSI
Share of children attending kindergarten	The indicator is in direct relation to the coverage of pre-school education offered in kindergartens.	2012–2023	%	IME

Healthcare

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Population per one GP	GPs are usually the first point of contact in the healthcare system. The indicator for the number of people cared for by one GP shows both the availability of medical staff in a district and medical doctors' workloads.	2012–2023	number of persons per 1 GP	NSI
Access to specialist physicians index	The index measures access to specialist physicians relative to the country's district with the best access. A lower index value points to better access. Specialist physicians include internists, cardiologists, pediatricians, surgeons, orthopedists/traumatologists, urologists, infectionists, obstetricians/gynecologists, ophthalmologists, neurologists, psychiatrists, x-ray specialists, and others.	2018–2023	composite index	IME based on NSI
Share of people with health insurance	The relative share of persons with health insurance indicates the accessibility of health services to the population in a given district; it can be used as an indirect indicator of the health status of the population.	2012–2023	%	NRA (request for access to information under APIA)
Number of beds in general hospitals	The indicator shows the number of beds in general hospitals per 1,000 population. The availability of hospital beds serves as a relative indicator of the physical resources of the district's healthcare system.	2012–2023	number of hospital beds per 1,000 population	NSI
Bed occupancy in general hospitals	The indicator provides information on the demand for services in the districts' general hospitals.	2018–2023	%	NSI
Infant mortality rate	The infant mortality rate shows the number of deaths of infants under the age of 1 year for every 1,000 live births during the respective year. A high rate indicates both inadequate public healthcare and low health culture of the local population.	2012–2023	p.p. (‰)	NSI
Average life expectancy	The indicator shows the average life expectancy of the population and is used as a function of the quality of life.	2012–2023	years	NSI
Population per 1 pharmacy	The number of persons per 1 pharmacy indicator shows the population's access to medicines and pharmacists.	2022–2023	number of persons per 1 pharmacy	NSI



Security and justice

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months	A higher share of criminal cases in a district's courts closed within 3 months indicates relatively faster delivery of justice (all other factors being equal).	2012–2023	%	SJC
Share of Administrative court cases closed within 3 months	A higher share of administrative cases closed within 3 months indicates relatively faster delivery of justice (all other factors being equal).	2023	%	SJC
Share of District court civil cases closed within 3 months	A higher share of civil cases closed within 3 months indicates relatively faster delivery of justice (all other factors being equal).	2023	%	SJC
Real average workload of District court judges	The indicator shows the deviation from the actual average workloads of District court judges for the respective year. A high workload may be considered as impeding access to justice, while a low workload may indicate inefficiency.	2023	composite index	SJC
Real average workload of Administrative court judges	The indicator shows the deviation from the actual average workloads of Administrative court judges for the respective year. A high workload may be considered as impeding access to justice, while a low workload may indicate inefficiency.	2023	composite index	SJC
Crimes against the person and property	Crimes against the person and property are an indicator of the crime rate in a given area. Officially registered crimes do not always faithfully represent the level of criminality in a district but provide a good basis for evaluation and comparison between districts.	2012–2023	number of crimes per 1,000 population	NSI, MI
Share of cleared crimes against the person and property out of all crimes registered throughout the respective year	The higher the share of cleared crimes, the more efficient the work of law enforcement in the district. The indicator covers only the clearance rates of registered crimes and complements the overall security picture in each district.	2012–2023	%	NSI, MI
Number of police officers relative to the population	The indicator shows the number of police officers relative to the population and offers a measure of the provision of internal order and security to residents.	2023	number of police officers per 1,000 population	MI

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Generated household waste	The amount of generated household waste per person of the serviced population is a standard indicator of the cleanliness of the environment. For the purposes of this study, it is assumed that the higher the value of this indicator, the more endangered the environment in a given district.	2012–2022	kg/person/year	NSI
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling	The share of recycled and treated household waste is important in that the rest of the waste is sent to landfills which carry serious environmental and health risks. A higher share of recycled and treated waste means a cleaner environment.	2013–2022	%	NSI
Cooling degree days index	The index shows the excessive heat of the local climate by daily degrees above a certain temperature threshold. This index measures the cooling degree days, which is also directly related to energy consumption.	2012–2023	composite index	Eurostat
Drinking water consumption	The indicator shows the households' consumption of municipally supplied drinking water.	2012–2022	liter/person/day	NSI
Share of forest area relative to the total area of the district	The indicator measures the proportion of real estate – timber forests and non-timber forest areas.	2021–2023	%	NSI
Share of disturbed area relative to the district's territory	The indicator measures the proportion of real estate used for extractive activities and real estate used as landfills for industrial and household waste, disturbed area.	2021–2023	%	NSI
Installed RES capacities	Provides information on the installed capacities of photovoltaic, wind, hydroelectric and other power plants.	By 30 June 2024	kW/person	SEDA



Culture and tourism

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Visits to theaters	An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities. It shows the average annual number of registered visits to the theaters on the territory of a given district.	2012–2023	number of visits per 1,000 population	NSI
Visits to cinemas	An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities. It shows the average annual number of registered visits to the cinemas on the territory of a given district.	2012–2023	number of visits per 1,000 population	NSI
Visits to museums	An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities. It shows the average annual number of registered visits to the museums on the territory of a given district.	2012–2023	number of visits per 1,000 population	NSI
Visits to libraries	An indicator of the intensity of cultural activities. It shows the average number of registered visits to libraries with a collection of a minimum 200,000 items on the territory of a given district.	2012–2023	number of visits per 1,000 population	NSI
Number of beds in accommodation establishments	The indicator shows the district's potential for the development of tourism.	2012–2023	number of beds per 1,000 population	NSI
Number of overnight stays in accommodation establishments	The indicator shows the actual intensity of tourism in the district.	2012–2023	number of overnight stays per 1,000 population	NSI
Guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms	The indicator shows the significance of sharing economy in the tourism sector.	2019–2022	number of overnight stays per 1,000 population	NSI

Appendix

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living conditions

Indicator	GDP per capita (BGN)	Average gross annual salary of people employed under labor contract (BGN)	Average monthly pension (BGN)	Gini coefficient for income inequality (points)	Share of people living below the national poverty line (%)
District	2022	2022	2023	2023	2023
Blagoevgrad	16,041	13,833	711	27.6	21.6
Burgas	19,534	16,307	872	29.7	21.0
Varna	24,007	19,448	830	33.1	14.6
Veliko Tarnovo	17,959	16,105	738	32.8	28.9
Vidin	13,273	14,566	695	33.4	33.7
Vratsa	21,818	19,441	786	39.0	19.2
Gabrovo	21,351	17,118	748	24.3	15.7
Dobrich	15,642	15,837	699	41.2	32.1
Kardzhali	15,411	15,693	633	32.7	27.3
Kyustendil	13,575	13,988	821	32.8	16.1
Lovech	15,890	15,704	709	30.9	26.9
Montana	14,651	15,514	704	36.4	33.4
Pazardzhik	15,535	16,407	712	33.6	27.2
Pernik	13,845	16,188	861	25.7	15.2
Pleven	15,562	17,030	734	33.1	26.4
Plovdiv	21,638	17,931	763	37.8	26.6
Razgrad	15,858	16,955	647	29.0	31.3
Ruse	18,658	17,154	736	35.6	20.0
Silistra	12,087	14,813	654	33.9	25.6
Sliven	12,586	15,312	739	31.9	21.4
Smolyan	16,425	14,633	761	27.7	14.7
Sofia	25,014	19,330	814	30.9	26.1
Sofia (capital city)	53,746	29,698	957	37.9	8.1
Stara Zagora	37,138	18,980	831	35.6	23.1
Targovishte	17,195	17,343	659	34.7	36.5
Haskovo	12,859	14,308	757	30.0	26.0
Shumen	15,614	16,702	688	28.6	15.1
Yambol	15,805	16,472	763	34.2	26.7
National Average	25,956	21,242	784	37.2	20.6

Labor market

Indicator	Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	Average annual unemployment rate of the population aged 15 and over (%)	Average annual employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	Share of the working-age population (%)
District	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023
Blagoevgrad	20.7	16.2	10.0	76.6	59.5
Burgas	23.4	18.4	4.2	76.2	58.7
Varna	36.6	15.2	3.3	82.9	60.4
Veliko Tarnovo	30.0	8.1	5.4	80.0	56.3
Vidin	20.5	11.5	14.7	65.9	53.5
Vratsa	22.3	15.6	10.4	61.8	57.2
Gabrovo	23.4	16.1	4.2	74.3	54.4
Dobrich	18.7	28.4	4.8	68.9	56.4
Kardzhali	22.4	20.0	10.2	70.6	56.8
Kyustendil	26.0	3.9	7.7	78.9	55.6
Lovech	17.6	13.7	9.6	70.4	54.7
Montana	15.5	17.2	12.3	61.6	55.1
Pazardzhik	14.9	23.1	8.0	75.3	57.4
Pernik	17.1	17.2	4.1	72.5	57.1
Pleven	25.1	17.1	7.3	72.9	54.7
Plovdiv	30.9	15.2	4.2	75.0	59.1
Razgrad	23.5	28.7	9.7	64.5	57.9
Ruse	28.9	11.0	5.5	78.6	57.0
Silistra	20.4	27.1	10.7	63.6	55.3
Sliven	23.2	34.3	8.1	70.1	55.0
Smolyan	24.9	13.0	10.2	74.7	56.0
Sofia	16.6	11.7	4.9	78.4	58.2
Sofia (capital city)	54.1	4.7	1.6	82.4	63.0
Stara Zagora	23.0	14.1	4.1	79.0	57.0
Targovishte	21.0	27.0	9.5	68.9	57.1
Haskovo	18.6	21.0	6.7	72.7	56.3
Shumen	29.2	23.5	10.1	76.4	57.7
Yambol	20.0	18.6	5.1	74.8	54.1
National Average	30.5	14.8	5.3	76.2	58.5



Investment and business

Indicator	Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 population	Expenditure on the acquisition of TFA per capita (BGN)	Amounts paid under contracts to municipalities as beneficiaries of operational programs per capita (BGN)	FDI in non-financial enterprises (accumulated flows) per capita (EUR)	Expenditure on research and development per capita (BGN)	Production value per employed person (BGN)	Share of export earnings in net sales revenues of non-financial enterprises
District	2022	2022	30.06.2024	2022	2022	2022	2022
Blagoevgrad	78.1	2,425	4,369	1,739	15	85,975	45.2
Burgas	83.7	3,181	3,172	5,470	46	103,064	25.5
Varna	77.8	3,562	2,165	3,979	103	108,496	22.7
Veliko Tarnovo	55.1	3,543	2,492	1,380	28	92,979	20.4
Vidin	43.8	1,794	3,666	490	16	53,200	17.1
Vratsa	42.6	3,450	3,796	745	35	216,011	3.9
Gabrovo	64.4	3,702	4,698	4,404	99	103,610	40.4
Dobrich	69.3	3,267	2,452	2,270	38	112,152	12.7
Kardzhali	48.4	1,771	2,529	2,952	17	69,814	37.7
Kyustendil	64.3	2,069	2,127	423	34	77,306	34.6
Lovech	52.8	2,144	3,151	1,246	74	82,123	21.9
Montana	44.3	1,648	3,366	509	15	101,214	33.0
Pazardzhik	51.0	3,264	2,149	2,997	91	100,017	26.1
Pernik	54.9	2,444	2,191	2,496	19	112,934	31.2
Pleven	48.6	2,624	2,791	1,477	102	107,381	41.3
Plovdiv	68.8	4,631	2,368	3,894	112	128,737	29.9
Razgrad	50.1	2,116	2,380	2,336	19	120,925	43.5
Ruse	64.6	3,669	3,275	2,784	99	134,960	57.5
Silistra	53.8	2,828	2,904	266	36	81,369	16.1
Sliven	55.0	2,276	1,893	783	41	94,356	25.8
Smolyan	61.4	3,086	3,827	866	36	69,691	19.9
Sofia	51.8	4,581	3,172	8,247	51	268,325	55.3
Sofia (capital city)	99.5	8,796	4,719	11,719	734	131,197	25.9
Stara Zagora	57.3	3,191	2,684	2,971	109	161,326	18.4
Targovishte	51.4	2,630	1,971	3,544	4	114,775	38.3
Haskovo	67.8	1,747	2,213	680	7	86,437	19.2
Shumen	53.9	2,794	2,629	1,363	105	112,201	35.0
Yambol	58.6	2,755	3,132	476	34	91,955	24.2
National Average	69.5	4,257	3,175	4,544	195	122,377	28.8

Infrastructure

Indicator	Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	Rail network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	Share of highways and first-class roads (%)	Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	Share of population living in settlements with a public sewerage network connected to a waste water treatment plant (%)	Share of population in settlements with a public sewerage network (%)	Share of households with broadband internet access (%)
District	2023	2023	2023	2023	2022	2022	2023
Blagoevgrad	11.2	2.5	17.4	65.6	34.6	78.0	92.2
Burgas	15.5	2.3	26.1	30.0	71.8	78.5	90.5
Varna	18.7	5.2	27.7	56.1	86.1	86.6	87.0
Veliko Tarnovo	20.1	5.0	16.3	46.8	61.2	68.2	87.3
Vidin	20.0	3.6	11.5	37.1	48.9	54.3	92.2
Vratsa	18.1	3.1	9.9	34.3	52.8	57.0	83.9
Gabrovo	25.6	3.7	16.6	23.3	72.5	83.1	91.0
Dobrich	17.5	1.3	10.1	25.3	71.5	71.5	85.9
Kardzhali	20.2	2.1	11.2	34.5	37.9	43.5	81.7
Kyustendil	20.3	4.0	20.6	55.5	61.7	70.2	83.2
Lovech	18.3	2.6	16.0	49.5	56.0	60.0	77.4
Montana	16.9	3.1	9.0	22.2	36.2	59.7	74.5
Pazardzhik	16.9	4.1	14.6	55.1	42.4	72.1	83.2
Pernik	23.9	4.8	15.9	11.3	74.5	79.6	90.2
Pleven	17.1	4.4	12.2	33.7	56.3	59.8	85.3
Plovdiv	17.2	5.4	17.5	53.2	74.0	75.2	92.4
Razgrad	21.0	3.8	11.1	25.2	42.1	42.1	84.2
Ruse	17.8	5.4	21.6	42.5	67.8	67.8	82.2
Silistra	17.8	2.5	11.1	43.3	51.6	51.6	83.1
Sliven	16.4	3.8	22.2	87.9	56.4	62.5	83.7
Smolyan	16.8	0.0	0.0	57.6	45.2	71.3	86.9
Sofia	21.5	4.2	30.6	32.0	41.9	80.2	78.7
Sofia (capital city)	0.0	12.4	0.0	0.0	96.1	96.1	95.8
Stara Zagora	17.6	5.1	28.7	63.1	64.7	67.8	88.5
Targovishte	19.6	2.7	15.7	48.0	46.4	53.4	83.6
Haskovo	20.7	3.7	21.6	46.1	53.7	71.4	83.0
Shumen	18.5	4.6	37.2	30.1	54.2	58.0	87.6
Yambol	19.0	1.6	20.6	29.5	69.3	71.5	79.2
National Average	18.0	3.6	18.6	40.4	67.2	75.0	88.5

% Local taxes

Indicator	Tax rate on immovable non-residential property for legal entities (%)	Motor vehicle tax commercial and passenger vehicles, 74 kW to 110 kW (BGN/kW)	Annual patent tax for retail trade on up to 100 sq. m of retail space at the most favorable business location (BGN/sq. m)	Tax rate on non-gratuitous acquisition of property (%)
District	2024	2024	2024	2024
Blagoevgrad	1.98	1.42	11.66	2.35
Burgas	2.08	1.81	15.28	2.87
Varna	2.24	1.65	16.75	2.96
Veliko Tarnovo	2.68	1.68	12.13	2.97
Vidin	2.20	1.46	4.60	2.89
Vratsa	2.29	1.44	6.84	2.74
Gabrovo	2.22	1.66	9.70	2.64
Dobrich	1.60	1.58	8.71	2.96
Kardzhali	1.80	1.59	8.16	2.85
Kyustendil	2.59	1.61	10.14	2.56
Lovech	2.20	1.28	10.36	2.35
Montana	1.72	1.22	5.06	2.75
Pazardzhik	1.94	1.42	9.11	2.78
Pernik	2.32	1.38	9.90	2.87
Pleven	3.05	1.30	9.27	2.83
Plovdiv	2.17	1.59	13.03	2.85
Razgrad	2.16	1.37	9.24	2.52
Ruse	2.75	1.59	13.62	2.70
Silistra	2.08	1.48	8.72	2.65
Sliven	2.63	1.54	9.90	2.80
Smolyan	2.20	1.38	8.02	2.70
Sofia	2.58	1.33	9.61	2.89
Sofia (capital city)	1.88	1.69	20.00	3.00
Stara Zagora	1.87	1.54	13.94	2.64
Targovishte	1.91	1.52	9.05	2.86
Haskovo	2.10	1.56	12.82	2.63
Shumen	2.13	1.56	9.18	2.72
Yambol	2.17	1.53	8.17	2.78
National Average	2.15	1.56	13.08	2.81

Administration

Indicator	Share of own revenues in the municipalities' total revenues (%)	Coverage of municipal expenditures by local revenues (%)	Development of e-government (rating from 1 to 4)	Development of one-stop shop services (rating from 1 to 4)	Active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)
District	2023	2023	2024	2024	2024
Blagoevgrad	17.9	50.2	3.37	3.26	63.4
Burgas	35.0	83.0	3.91	3.55	69.4
Varna	32.4	85.4	3.81	3.84	71.1
Veliko Tarnovo	21.3	67.2	3.13	3.18	71.1
Vidin	16.4	58.0	2.97	1.74	56.2
Vratsa	20.6	62.6	3.69	3.54	65.9
Gabrovo	21.1	63.3	3.92	3.22	71.4
Dobrich	24.3	63.4	3.44	3.37	81.3
Kardzhali	18.4	56.0	2.92	2.69	67.8
Kyustendil	20.2	67.0	3.47	3.48	58.7
Lovech	17.5	60.6	3.53	3.79	73.6
Montana	14.9	53.0	3.49	1.87	68.9
Pazardzhik	19.6	68.5	3.21	3.18	63.1
Pernik	25.5	62.5	3.20	2.89	54.6
Pleven	19.5	81.1	3.31	3.01	67.3
Plovdiv	27.2	70.2	3.74	3.54	70.2
Razgrad	19.7	63.7	3.48	3.63	69.0
Ruse	25.7	79.7	3.20	3.80	71.5
Silistra	15.4	57.5	3.49	2.90	65.9
Sliven	18.7	68.5	3.17	3.00	84.0
Smolyan	15.8	47.9	3.34	3.16	63.4
Sofia	39.6	103.5	3.35	3.02	62.8
Sofia (capital city)	67.4	109.5	3.00	4.00	70.8
Stara Zagora	22.3	67.7	3.34	3.32	67.5
Targovishte	16.8	43.7	3.79	3.23	68.9
Haskovo	24.1	70.9	3.55	3.04	75.4
Shumen	19.3	52.6	3.43	3.43	75.8
Yambol	21.2	64.0	3.56	3.44	68.8
National Average	26.9	74.1	3.39	3.44	69.3

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Indicator	Population density in settlements and other urbanized areas (number of persons/sq. km)	Natural population increase (‰)	Net migration rate (‰)	Share of children under 4 years of age (%)	Share of the population aged 65 and over (%)
District	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023
Blagoevgrad	2,022	-4.4	0.6	4.5	22.2
Burgas	1,246	-5.3	20.6	4.4	22.5
Varna	1,623	-4.7	12.4	4.7	21.5
Veliko Tarnovo	861	-10.3	1.4	3.9	27.4
Vidin	543	-16.2	2.7	3.4	31.3
Vratsa	657	-10.9	2.4	4.3	25.0
Gabrovo	914	-15.1	3.6	3.5	30.3
Dobrich	565	-10.7	6.8	3.9	26.8
Kardzhali	1,702	-6.5	34.5	4.1	26.4
Kyustendil	1,048	-13.8	4.3	3.7	28.5
Lovech	757	-11.8	1.7	4.2	28.0
Montana	718	-13.8	-0.4	3.8	28.2
Pazardzhik	1,546	-7.3	3.1	4.5	24.3
Pernik	921	-13.8	7.4	3.8	26.1
Pleven	864	-11.1	-0.1	4.1	28.2
Plovdiv	1,846	-4.8	8.1	4.8	22.5
Razgrad	841	-9.7	5.7	4.0	25.0
Ruse	1,078	-10.7	1.2	3.8	26.9
Silistra	680	-10.1	0.9	4.0	27.7
Sliven	987	-3.0	0.0	6.1	22.4
Smolyan	1,217	-11.8	-1.6	2.9	28.9
Sofia	747	-8.6	3.4	4.6	24.0
Sofia (capital city)	4,998	-1.5	6.6	4.9	19.2
Stara Zagora	1,019	-7.3	2.1	4.5	24.6
Targovishte	614	-9.3	3.1	4.0	25.4
Haskovo	916	-9.0	7.4	4.1	25.8
Shumen	854	-9.1	9.6	4.0	25.2
Yambol	680	-9.0	-0.9	4.8	26.8
National Average	1,221	-6.8	6.4	4.5	23.8

Education

Indicator	Number of students at colleges and universities per 1,000 population	Net enrolment rate in 5th to 7th grade (%)	Relative share of school year repeaters (%)	Relative share of "Fail" (below 3.00) grades in the State matriculation exam in BLL (%)	Average grade in the State matriculation exam in BLL (2–6)	Average grade in the NEA in mathematics after 7th grade (number of points out of a possible 100)	Index of the alignment between vocational education and employment (number of points out of a possible 100)	Share of children attending kindergarten (%)
District	2023	2023	2022	2024	2024	2024	2024	2023
Blagoevgrad	27.7	94.0	0.7	8.3	4.31	41.1	41.8	93.8
Burgas	14.5	89.0	0.9	11.7	4.14	45.3	55.4	88.1
Varna	49.3	91.9	0.8	8.7	4.36	51.3	55.4	90.5
Veliko Tarnovo	69.5	93.3	1.1	9.6	4.24	39.3	49.2	92.0
Vidin	4.6	87.6	1.7	9.6	4.20	31.3	36.5	88.8
Vratsa	8.6	91.0	1.2	8.9	4.10	31.4	50.5	92.3
Gabrovo	27.8	92.9	0.9	8.1	4.25	38.6	39.2	91.3
Dobrich	3.4	83.4	2.5	9.9	4.12	33.8	62.9	87.2
Kardzhali	3.6	84.0	0.6	14.7	4.22	36.8	46.7	78.1
Kyustendil	0.0	90.8	1.2	8.9	4.20	35.8	35.1	87.7
Lovech	1.1	86.8	2.0	10.1	4.10	34.9	31.2	86.4
Montana	0.0	87.6	2.0	8.4	4.07	35.2	43.2	86.6
Pazardzhik	0.0	86.9	2.0	13.5	4.10	37.5	46.6	86.3
Pernik	0.7	89.7	0.7	6.7	4.21	35.7	56.6	90.4
Pleven	14.9	90.6	1.4	17.8	3.90	36.3	57.8	88.1
Plovdiv	49.7	90.8	1.5	7.3	4.43	42.5	50.8	87.9
Razgrad	1.9	91.8	1.1	15.3	3.88	33.9	52.8	89.3
Ruse	24.8	90.8	0.5	8.1	4.28	42.3	57.0	90.8
Silistra	2.6	88.2	1.1	12.8	3.99	34.2	56.9	88.5
Sliven	8.7	78.7	3.6	11.5	4.12	31.7	62.4	74.8
Smolyan	9.6	94.6	0.3	4.1	4.48	44.3	34.8	96.8
Sofia	5.0	87.2	1.8	8.3	4.15	35.1	46.5	88.0
Sofia (capital city)	61.9	92.7	0.5	3.7	4.65	54.7	59.4	87.5
Stara Zagora	19.8	91.5	1.6	7.9	4.31	39.4	39.4	87.1
Targovishte	0.0	83.9	1.1	10.0	4.02	41.4	55.9	85.6
Haskovo	3.0	85.1	1.3	10.2	4.16	36.8	55.1	86.1
Shumen	41.8	88.9	1.2	17.7	3.84	35.2	55.7	90.8
Yambol	6.3	89.3	1.9	7.1	4.25	40.4	58.9	86.4
National Average	29.6	89.9	1.2	8.7	4.30	42.9	53.1	87.9

Healthcare

Indicator	Population per 1 GP (persons)	Access to specialist physicians index (lower values are better)	Share of people with health insurance (%)	Number of beds in general hospitals per 1,000 population	Bed occupancy in the general hospitals (%)	Average life expectancy (years)	Infant mortality rate (‰)	Population per 1 pharmacy (persons)
District	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2021–2023	2023	2023
Blagoevgrad	1,743	14.3	94.0	4.0	52.3	74.9	4.0	1,868
Burgas	2,085	11.8	90.2	5.8	58.6	74.0	5.0	1,358
Varna	1,602	8.0	91.3	4.7	51.9	74.4	4.4	1,984
Veliko Tarnovo	1,612	13.4	93.2	3.6	48.7	72.9	1.9	2,477
Vidin	1,338	13.6	98.2	4.3	41.2	70.3	7.7	2,125
Vratsa	1,724	12.7	95.9	4.8	58.3	70.9	4.7	2,031
Gabrovo	1,539	11.1	100.0	5.8	51.7	73.2	1.5	1,800
Dobrich	1,455	16.0	96.9	3.1	53.1	72.0	3.5	2,409
Kardzhali	2,950	16.5	100.0	3.8	55.9	75.4	5.0	2,727
Kyustendil	1,443	12.5	100.0	5.8	43.7	72.2	1.3	2,254
Lovech	1,524	12.6	94.4	4.5	40.0	72.3	4.2	2,256
Montana	1,538	13.8	91.7	7.6	50.1	71.1	3.4	2,958
Pazardzhik	1,636	12.5	93.4	7.4	56.5	72.7	7.5	1,624
Pernik	1,547	15.3	93.6	2.9	40.0	72.1	7.0	2,321
Pleven	1,197	2.6	94.5	12.7	55.9	72.7	8.3	2,306
Plovdiv	1,626	8.0	91.8	8.6	58.3	74.4	5.9	1,733
Razgrad	2,402	14.5	100.0	4.4	49.0	71.6	12.8	3,363
Ruse	2,220	9.8	96.4	6.3	58.5	72.8	3.6	1,797
Silistra	2,069	14.2	96.1	5.0	56.6	71.2	6.4	2,644
Sliven	1,872	15.0	90.6	5.0	53.2	71.7	10.8	2,937
Smolyan	1,472	13.9	100.0	6.0	48.3	73.8	4.2	1,932
Sofia	1,831	11.4	84.8	5.9	60.8	72.5	2.4	1,991
Sofia (capital city)	1,798	7.2	97.4	5.9	60.1	75.4	2.2	1,771
Stara Zagora	1,441	11.3	93.0	5.2	57.8	72.9	8.6	2,109
Targovishte	2,230	12.8	98.0	6.1	48.8	72.3	5.0	2,997
Haskovo	1,937	14.5	93.8	3.7	57.8	73.4	8.0	2,919
Shumen	1,627	13.8	99.4	3.0	67.0	72.6	4.9	2,494
Yambol	1,696	16.4	93.1	3.9	46.7	72.4	8.5	2,544
National Average	1,701	10.1	95.0	6.1	56.2	73.5	4.9	1,982



Security and justice

Indicator	Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months (%)	Share of Administrative court cases closed within 3 months (%)	Share of District court civil cases closed within 3 months (%)	Real average workload of the District court judges (composite index)	Real average workload of the Administrative court judges (composite index)	Crimes against the person and property (number per 1,000 population)	Share of cleared crimes against the person and property (%)	Number of police officers relative to the population (number per 1,000 population)
District	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023
Blagoevgrad	88	67.4	64.3	0.8	4.3	8.8	59.9	3.2
Burgas	88	73.1	71.9	2.5	1.0	13.6	51.6	4.5
Varna	90	71.3	62.8	0.6	2.0	14.9	42.1	3.9
Veliko Tarnovo	92	81.5	74.8	3.8	2.2	10.9	62.7	3.8
Vidin	96	85.1	89.3	3.0	3.3	15.3	57.5	5.6
Vratsa	96	78.7	68.3	1.6	0.5	13.8	60.4	6.5
Gabrovo	91	83.6	78.7	4.5	3.0	11.7	69.0	4.1
Dobrich	93	67.9	77.7	4.3	0.4	10.1	61.3	4.2
Kardzhali	97	77.7	85.0	5.4	2.7	5.7	68.6	4.0
Kyustendil	92	74.8	45.5	2.0	2.3	10.5	57.5	5.0
Lovech	93	69.4	85.6	4.2	0.2	11.8	56.8	4.8
Montana	86	92.9	78.7	4.5	0.5	12.8	51.6	4.6
Pazardzhik	96	63.6	73.1	3.8	3.6	8.2	64.4	3.8
Pernik	91	87.7	77.5	2.6	1.9	11.7	52.6	5.0
Pleven	95	82.5	77.6	4.5	3.3	10.8	54.6	4.0
Plovdiv	93	56.2	72.8	1.5	1.1	8.4	52.5	3.2
Razgrad	93	84.3	81.8	4.0	6.5	9.3	65.8	4.0
Ruse	95	83.9	83.3	3.4	1.0	11.1	58.6	4.0
Silistra	93	67.1	77.3	3.8	4.1	9.1	63.9	4.2
Sliven	94	78.0	88.0	4.6	3.3	11.5	64.5	3.9
Smolyan	98	87.8	84.0	7.5	3.9	5.0	63.3	5.2
Sofia	90	82.1	89.7	1.4	3.4	10.0	58.9	4.5
Sofia (capital city)	88	67.0	46.5	8.7	2.9	11.9	37.3	4.5
Stara Zagora	91	73.4	73.7	0.9	0.3	12.9	54.3	3.9
Targovishte	95	89.0	89.9	5.7	4.7	10.4	72.5	4.3
Haskovo	91	58.6	79.0	0.3	2.1	10.9	59.7	4.1
Shumen	97	84.0	68.2	4.2	4.9	9.5	65.3	4.0
Yambol	91	84.0	84.4	1.8	4.7	11.5	67.3	4.5
National Average	91	71.5	64.9	0.0	0.0	11.3	52.6	4.2


Environment

Indicator	Amount of household waste (kg/person/year)	Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	Share of forest area relative to the district's total territory (%)	Share of disturbed area relative to the district's total territory (%)	Installed RES capacities (kW/person)	Cooling degree days index (composite index)	Drinking water consumption by the households (liter/person/day)
District	2022	2022	2023	2023	2024	2023	2022
Blagoevgrad	398	32.8	51.5	0.1	1.0	174	122
Burgas	543	93.1	40.9	0.2	0.6	280	111
Varna	524	92.4	29.2	0.5	0.2	263	105
Veliko Tarnovo	483	99.8	23.5	0.2	0.5	303	102
Vidin	419	20.8	26.3	0.2	0.7	200	94
Vratsa	344	56.9	15.8	0.2	1.1	239	93
Gabrovo	421	87.5	39.7	0.1	1.8	236	104
Dobrich	540	97.2	12.2	0.1	3.8	248	90
Kardzhali	246	10.0	54.2	0.1	1.5	279	79
Kyustendil	372	51.3	41.9	0.6	1.5	149	117
Lovech	434	12.2	36.3	0.2	1.7	212	98
Montana	394	94.0	23.2	0.1	0.6	215	93
Pazardzhik	540	87.4	54.9	0.4	5.9	140	105
Pernik	630	100.0	40.6	1.0	0.2	86	109
Pleven	485	89.3	7.3	0.2	1.1	318	101
Plovdiv	541	62.8	30.6	0.2	1.2	266	101
Razgrad	491	11.5	22.5	0.2	0.6	304	88
Ruse	574	68.6	14.6	0.5	0.3	315	104
Silistra	457	13.0	14.6	0.4	0.8	301	93
Sliven	464	75.4	42.4	0.4	2.3	363	72
Smolyan	355	66.0	70.8	0.1	2.9	44	85
Sofia	496	26.1	45.8	0.5	0.4	96	96
Sofia (capital city)	548	98.8	32.6	1.3	0.1	97	125
Stara Zagora	463	55.6	31.7	3.2	2.0	340	94
Targovishte	370	84.4	26.7	0.1	0.7	287	72
Haskovo	385	97.3	32.4	0.1	1.1	401	81
Shumen	452	51.8	30.0	0.2	0.3	284	83
Yambol	417	88.2	15.2	0.2	1.4	416	90
National Average	488	75.9	33.3	0.4	1.0	248	103

Culture and tourism

Indicator	Visits to cinemas (number per 1,000 population)	Visits to theatres (number per 1,000 population)	Visits to museums (number per 1,000 population)	Visits to libraries (number per 1,000 population)	Number of beds in accommodation establishments (number per 1,000 population)	Overnight stays in accommodation establishments (number per 1,000 population)	Guest nights booked via online sharing economy platforms (number per 1,000 population)
District	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2023	2022
Blagoevgrad	479	143	651	659	71	6,259	801
Burgas	769	303	767	844	382	25,257	2,674
Varna	1,114	256	475	369	149	10,555	1,148
Veliko Tarnovo	608	260	2,297	784	26	1,621	361
Vidin	365	438	645	516	15	990	47
Vratsa	321	107	138	610	9	748	25
Gabrovo	387	540	3,544	491	38	2,192	165
Dobrich	141	272	1,070	827	193	10,890	1,117
Kardzhali	128	225	85	281	19	855	36
Kyustendil	432	183	1,062	307	38	2,290	216
Lovech	186	140	1,125	246	43	2,720	163
Montana	212	79	95	0	14	823	34
Pazardzhik	192	371	769	278	37	5,014	140
Pernik	584	0	1,304	122	5	428	10
Pleven	445	499	809	213	6	716	39
Plovdiv	783	288	759	268	21	2,166	269
Razgrad	220	233	529	157	7	474	5
Ruse	817	470	733	734	13	1,063	128
Silistra	121	182	394	434	8	449	4
Sliven	71	245	458	668	12	588	29
Smolyan	169	177	470	183	130	8,773	769
Sofia	81	0	1,022	0	36	2,900	410
Sofia (capital city)	1,493	689	688	1,443	12	1,703	576
Stara Zagora	577	365	1,010	466	18	2,188	89
Targovishte	219	525	226	1,870	7	381	18
Haskovo	110	210	176	331	13	1,038	8
Shumen	149	174	1,139	1,626	12	515	18
Yambol	449	358	189	471	7	452	19
National Average	684	349	770	679	56	4,167	500