

REGIONAL



PROFILES

IME



# REGIONAL PROFILES

## INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT

# 2021

**IME**

Institute for Market Economics

Sofia • 2021



The study is published with the support of the *America for Bulgaria Foundation*.

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**ISSN 2738-7623**

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## Abbreviations used

AIP	Access to Information Program
APIA	Access to Public Information Act
BLL	Bulgarian Language and Literature
EU	European Union
EUMIS	Information System for Management and Monitoring of EU Funds in Bulgaria
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTA	Fixed Tangible Assets
GAV	Gross Added Value
GCCA	Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre Agency
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GP	general practitioner
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MI	Ministry of Interior
NCRD	National Center for Territorial Development
NEE	National External Examination
NRA	National Revenue Agency
NSI	National Statistical Institute
p.	point(s)
p.p.	percentage point / percentage points
RES	Renewable Energy Sources
RIA	Road Infrastructure Agency
SJC	Supreme Judicial Council
SME	State Matriculation Examination

# Preface

For the tenth consecutive year the Institute for Market Economics presents the annual issue of *Regional Profiles: Indicators of Development*, the only almanac of its kind on regional development in Bulgaria. The book, better known as *The Regional Profiles*, has now become an established trademark of the IME. This year its scope comprises the social and economic conditions in the regions during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The study is based on 66 indicators evaluating the economic and social conditions in the country's 28 districts. All data presented in it is also available at [www.regionalprofiles.bg](http://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 set of statistical data at the regional level is thus facilitated.

Thanks to the work of the institutions collecting and providing data with each successive year we have been able to include more relevant and wide-ranging indicators for each district's socio-economic environment. In the present edition most figures are for 2020. Exceptions are few in number and are limited to several indicators which get published with a delay of over a year: district figures on GDP per capita, those on salaries, and some indicators in investment, the environment, infrastructure, and education. Where possible, for example, in fields such as administration, local taxes and fees, as well as matriculation exam results, analysis is based on 2021 figures.

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 everyone could find something of interest on the performance of their own district in comparison with other districts in a variety of 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



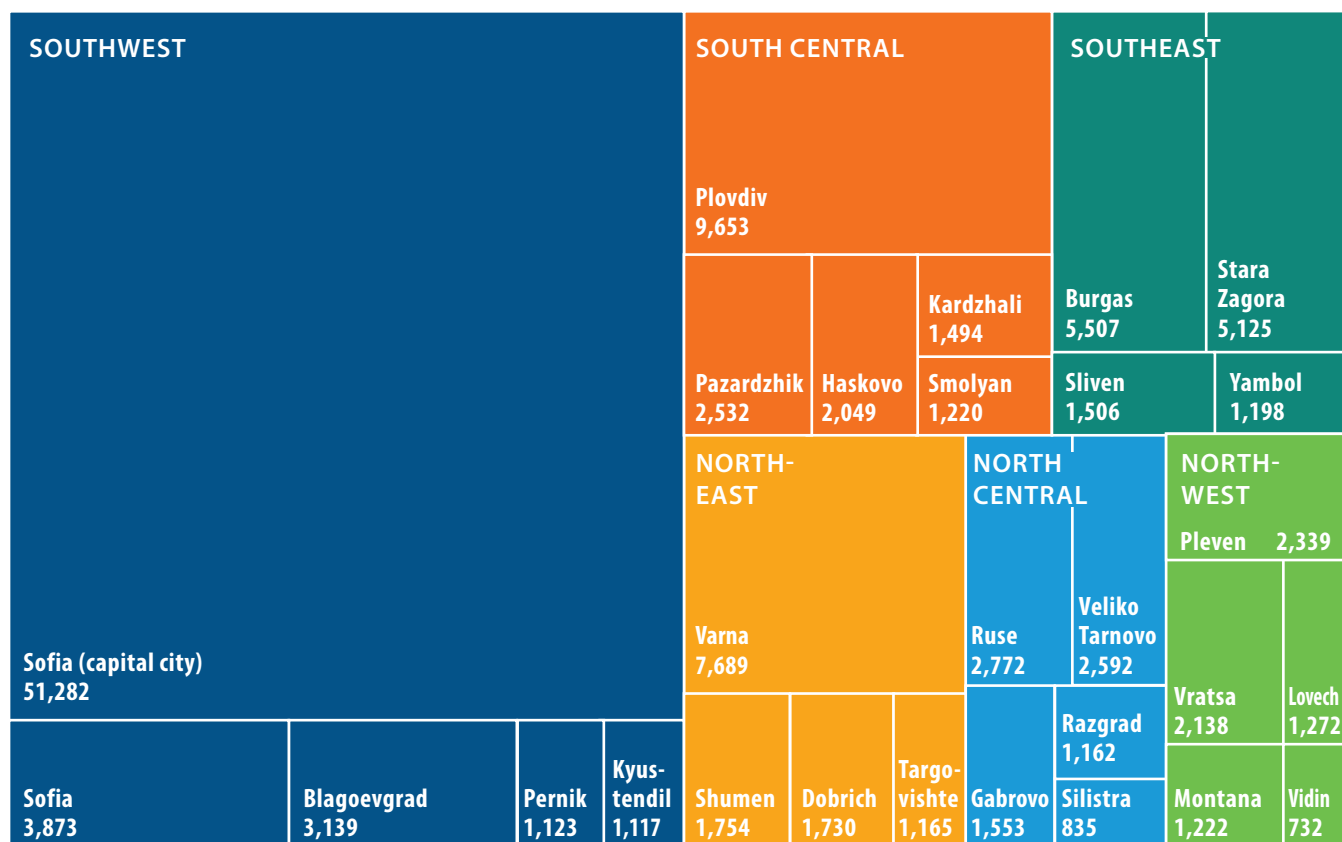


# Regional Profiles 2021: Development During a Pandemic

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The regional map of economic development in Bulgaria continues to be dominated by the major economic centers. In 2019, the gross domestic product (GDP) of Sofia (capital) reached over 51 billion BGN, which was nearly 43% of the country's total economy. Outside the capital, in southern Bulgaria, the districts that stand out are those of Plovdiv (9.7 billion BGN), Burgas (5.5 billion BGN) and Stara Zagora (5.1 billion BGN). In the north, the leader is Varna district (7.7 billion BGN), followed by Ruse (2.8 billion BGN) and Veliko Tarnovo (2.6 billion BGN). The smaller scale of the economic centers in northern Bulgaria with the exception of Varna, as well as the weaker connection among them, are the main factors determining the differences between Bulgaria's North and South.

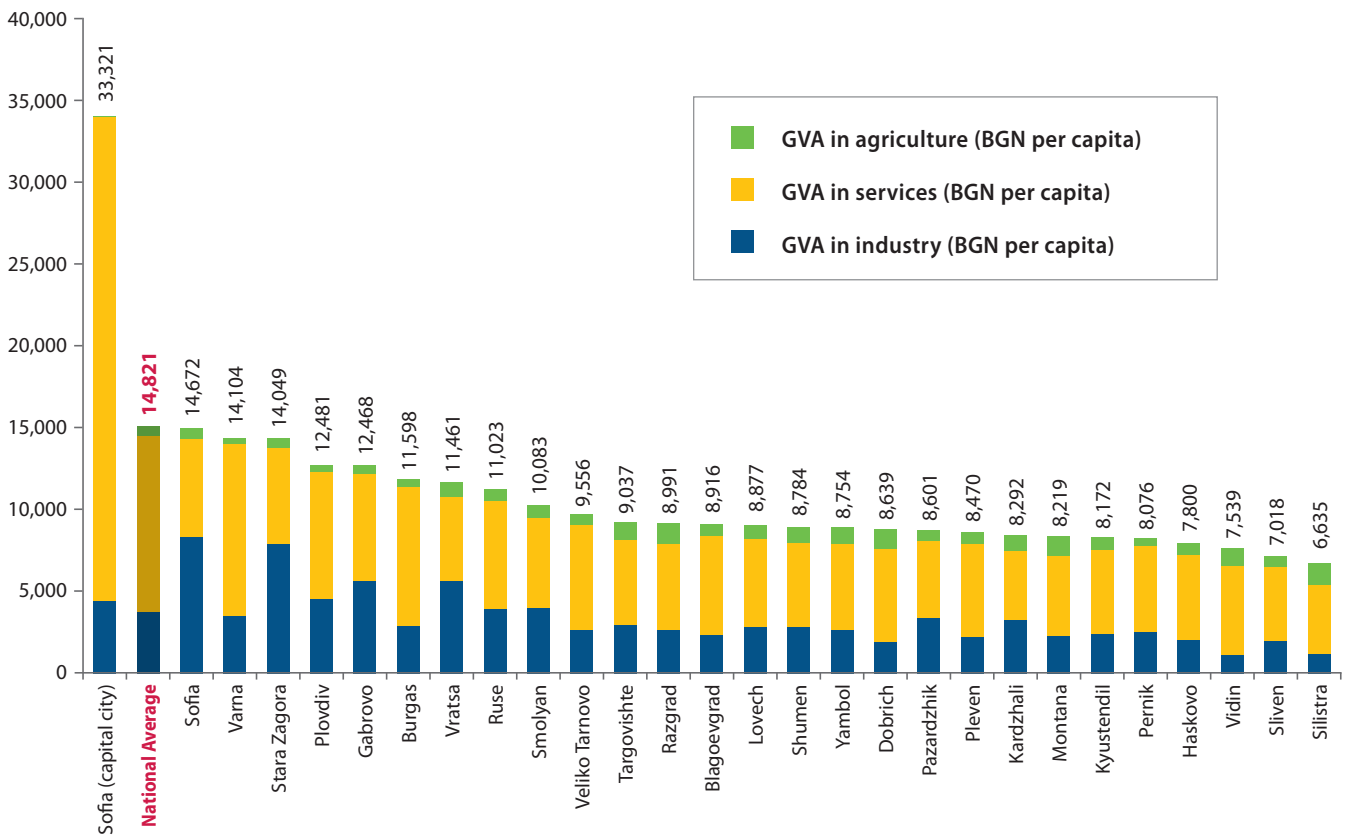
Fig. 1. Gross domestic product of the districts in Bulgaria in 2019 (in million BGN)



Source: NSI.

Gross value added (GVA) per capita by district varies from over 33,000 BGN in Sofia (capital city) to less than 7,000 BGN in Silistra. Sofia's economy is strongly dominated by the services which generate nearly 87% of value added. The capital exceeds more than twice the other major economic centers – Varna, Stara Zagora and Plovdiv. The second place in the country is now occupied by Sofia district, which includes the industry in the immediate periphery of the capital city, but also a large part of the mining and metallurgy in the Srednogie region. Along with the district of Sofia, industry also plays a more significant role in the districts of Stara Zagora, Vratsa and Gabrovo. Agriculture brings over 10% of the value added in the districts of Silistra, Vratsa, Montana, Razgrad, Dobrich, Targovishte, Shumen, Yambol and Kardzhali. Evidently, these are the relatively poorer areas located mainly in the northern part of the country.

**Fig. 2. Gross value added per capita by district in 2019.**

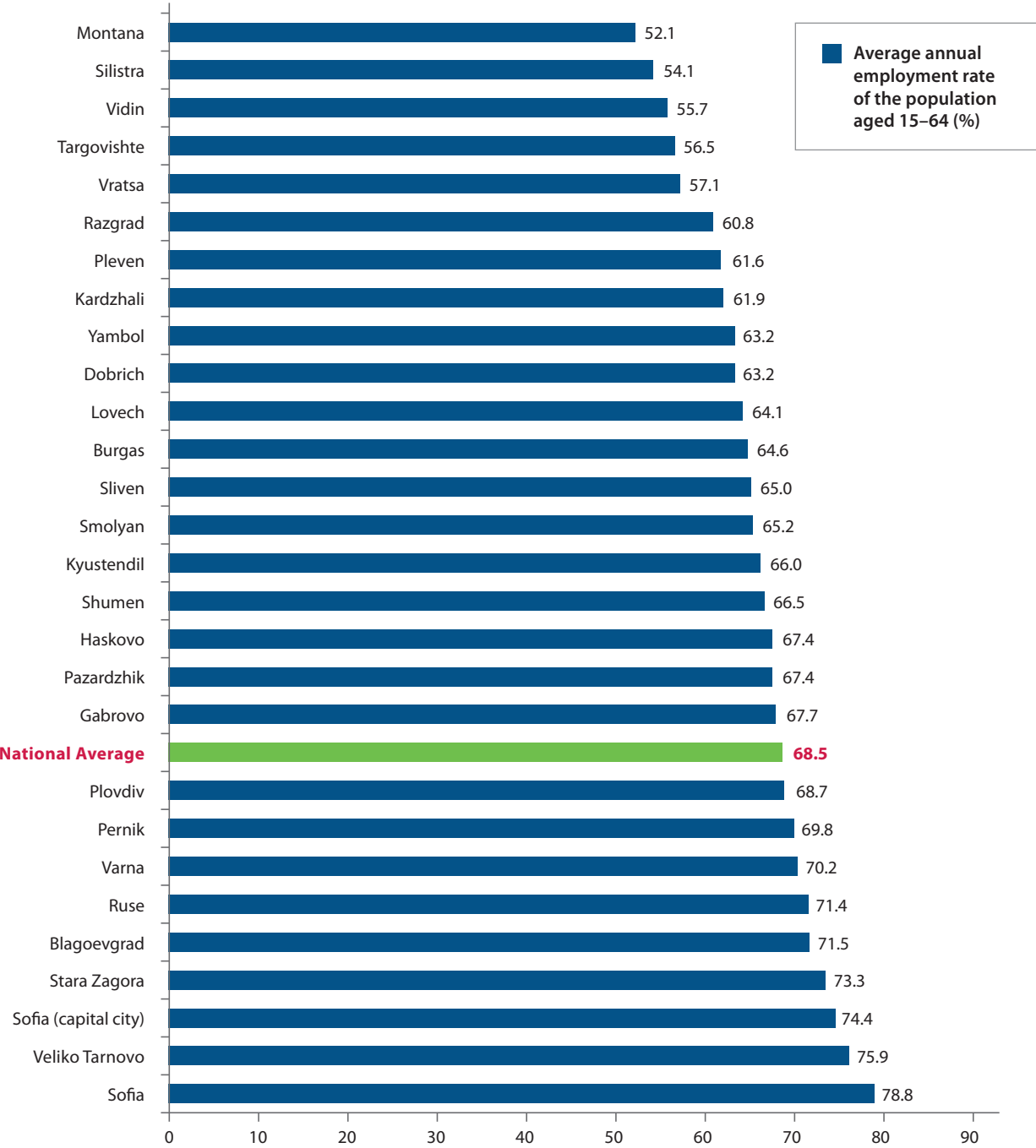


Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

The pandemic has interrupted the positive dynamics of the labor market in Bulgaria. After in 2019 for the first time in the country's recent history the employment rate of the population aged 15–64 reached above 70%, in 2020 employment declined to 68.5%, with the negative processes extending to all of Bulgaria's districts. Despite the pandemic, however, the wide differences in the labor market continue to exist. While the large economic centers report employment rates of around or above 70%, the poorer ones lag far behind. All five districts with an employment rate below 60% are located in the North. The districts in northern Bulgaria with the best performance as regards employment are those of Varna, Ruse and Veliko Tarnovo. Notable also is the very strong performance of Sofia district, which for the second year in a row surpassed the capital. The stable indicators of the labor market in Sofia district are supported by the robust development of the industry in the capital's wider periphery, as well as by the strength of the big companies in the Srednogie region which managed to survive the initial shock of the pandemic and retain their workforce.

Despite the negative impact of the pandemic on the labor market, several positive developments in 2021 are worth noting. The first one is the growth of salaries, which has continued and remained uninterrupted by the crisis. In 2021, the average gross monthly salary in the country exceeds 1,500 BGN, with a growth of over 10% on an annual basis. At the regional level, the average gross salary varies from over 2,000 BGN in Sofia (capital) to about 1,000 BGN in districts such as Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil. At the same time, the labor market is recovering, with unemployment gradually returning to pre-crisis levels. Nevertheless, the continuing waves of coronavirus and the resulting measures restricting social life and economic activity put new jobs at risk.

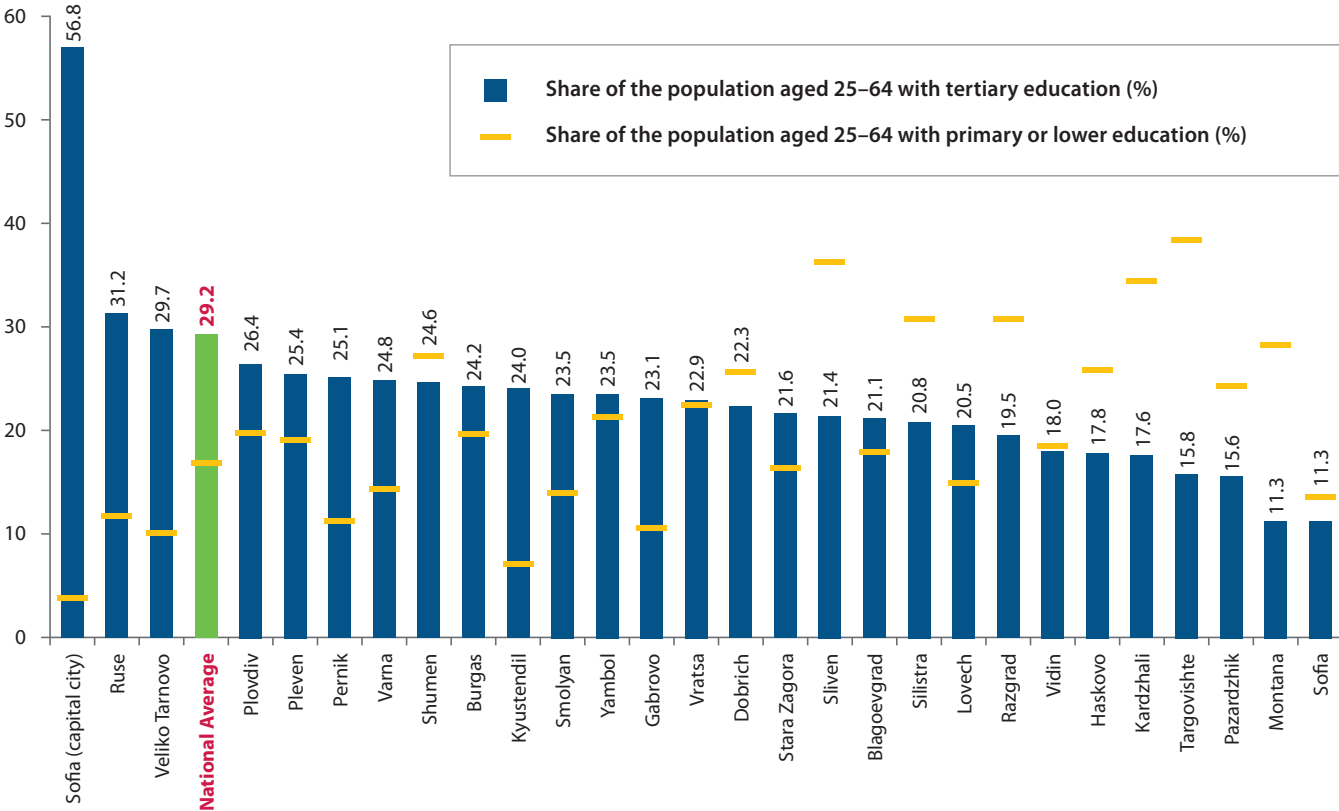
**Fig. 3. Employment rate of the population in 2020 by district.**



Source: NSI.

Human capital and the profile of the workforce will be key to the process of recovery and ongoing transformation of the Bulgarian economy. Nearly 30% of the workforce (aged 25–64 years) have tertiary education, and this share has been rising in recent years. The clear leader is Sofia (capital), where 56.8% of the workforce have higher education. Next come Ruse (31.2%) and Veliko Tarnovo (29.7%), which have traditionally performed strongly in this indicator. In almost half of the country’s districts the share of people in the workforce with primary or lower education is higher compared to the share of university graduates. The share of people with primary or lower education in the districts of Targovishte, Sliven, Kardzhali, Silistra, Razgrad, Montana and Shumen remains very high.

Fig. 4. Educational structure of the workforce by district in 2020.



Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

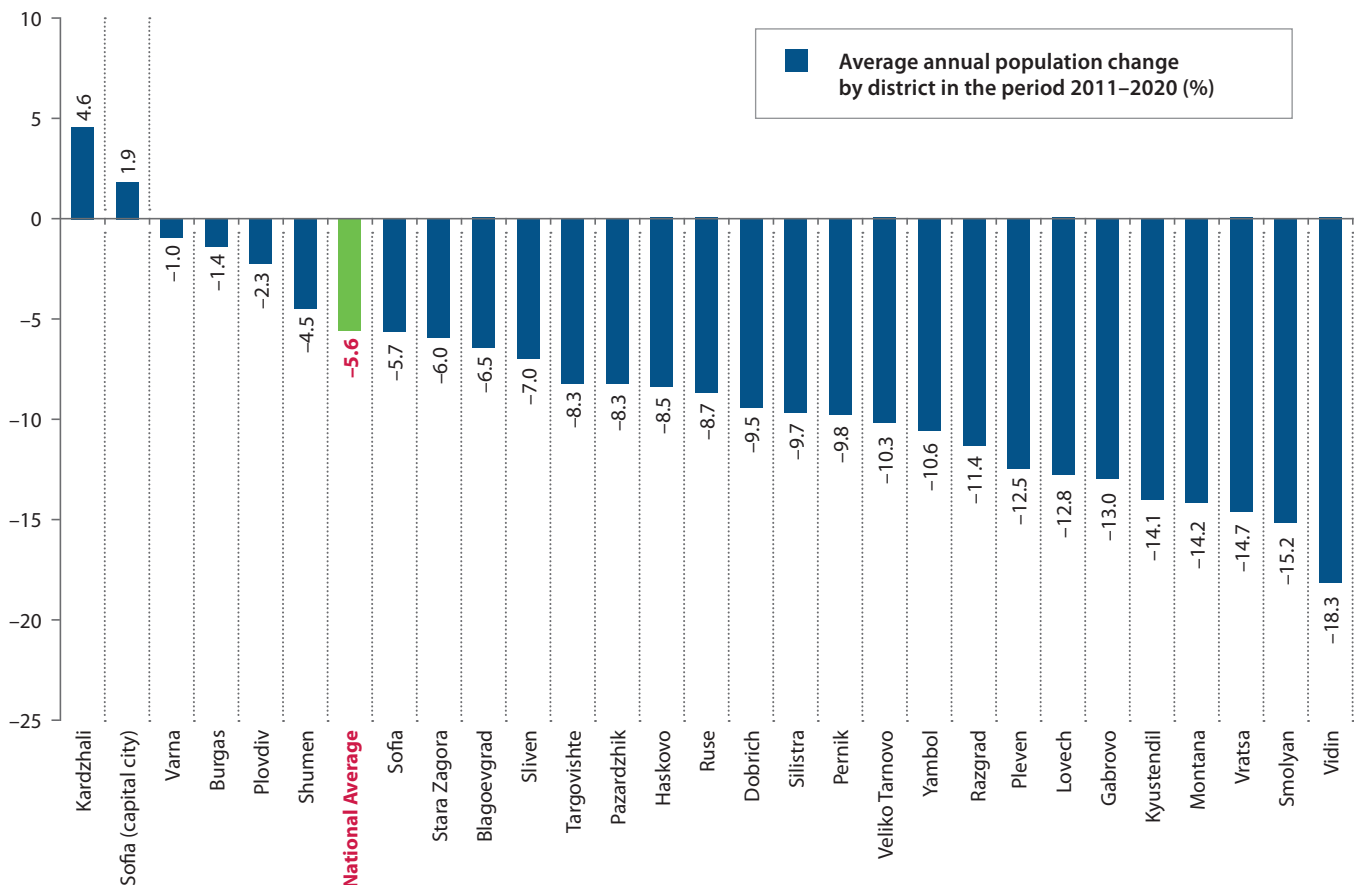
At the end of 2021, despite the new wave of the pandemic, focus is on restoring economic growth and changing the regional map. The technological and structural transformations of industry, including changes in supply chains and the introduction of digital services, will continue to be the leading factors for local development. The big challenge for economic growth will be investment, which is still suppressed by the uncertain economic and political environment. Strategic planning by the municipalities for the period 2021–2027, as well as the efforts of the large economic centers to attract investors and develop industrial zones, can play a positive role and support the transformation of the economy. In these efforts, municipalities need support and, above all, real steps towards financial decentralization.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Over the last decade, the population in 26 of the country's districts has been on the decline. The only districts where the opposite trend is in evidence are those of Sofia (capital) and Kardzhali. In recent years, the performance of Kardzhali has been very strong, as almost all settlements in the area register an influx of population. The coastal districts of Varna and Burgas have registered a slight decline, but maintain stable positive net migration rates and have the potential to reverse demographic processes. Until the onset of the pandemic, it was net migration that characterized the strong economic centers. They managed to attract young and active people, which resulted in a boom of in-migration. In 2020, however, with the pandemic and the restrictive measures induced by it, the situation changed. On the one hand, many Bulgarians returned from abroad, and on the other hand, the population began migrating from the larger cities to smaller settlements.

In 2020, all major cities, headed by Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna, reported negative net migration, i.e. population outflow. At the same time, a total of 205 municipalities recorded positive net migration, unprecedented in the recent history of the country. In the year of the pandemic, the district centers lost population, while the peripheral municipalities registered an influx of new residents. Nevertheless, despite this adjustment induced by the pandemic and the restrictive measures, the long-term demographic trends tend to remain unchanged, with the strong economic centers best placed to attract young and active people.

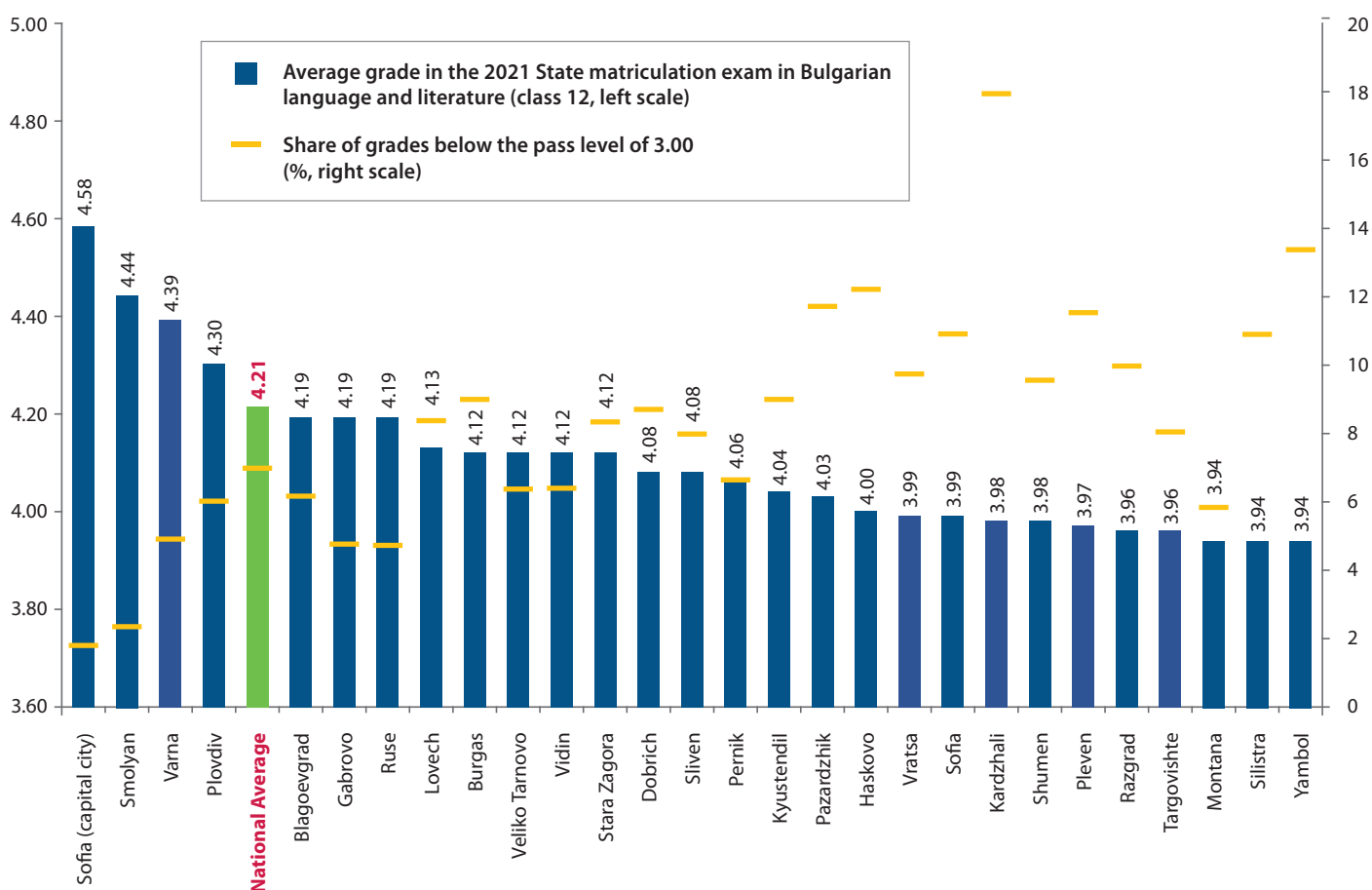
Fig. 5. Population change by district in the period 2011–2020.



Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

Education has also been severely affected by the onset of the pandemic, with students going into online learning for long periods of time within the past two years. However, the general picture of the educational imbalances in the country remains unchanged. The highest results in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature in 2021 were recorded in the capital Sofia (4.58), Smolyan (4.44) and Varna (4.39). For yet another year in a row, Sofia (capital) and Smolyan district had a very low share of poor grades. A total of ten districts registered average results, i.e. below 4.00. In some places there was a high share (over 10%) of poor grades, which points to the serious challenges facing the quality of school education in these districts.

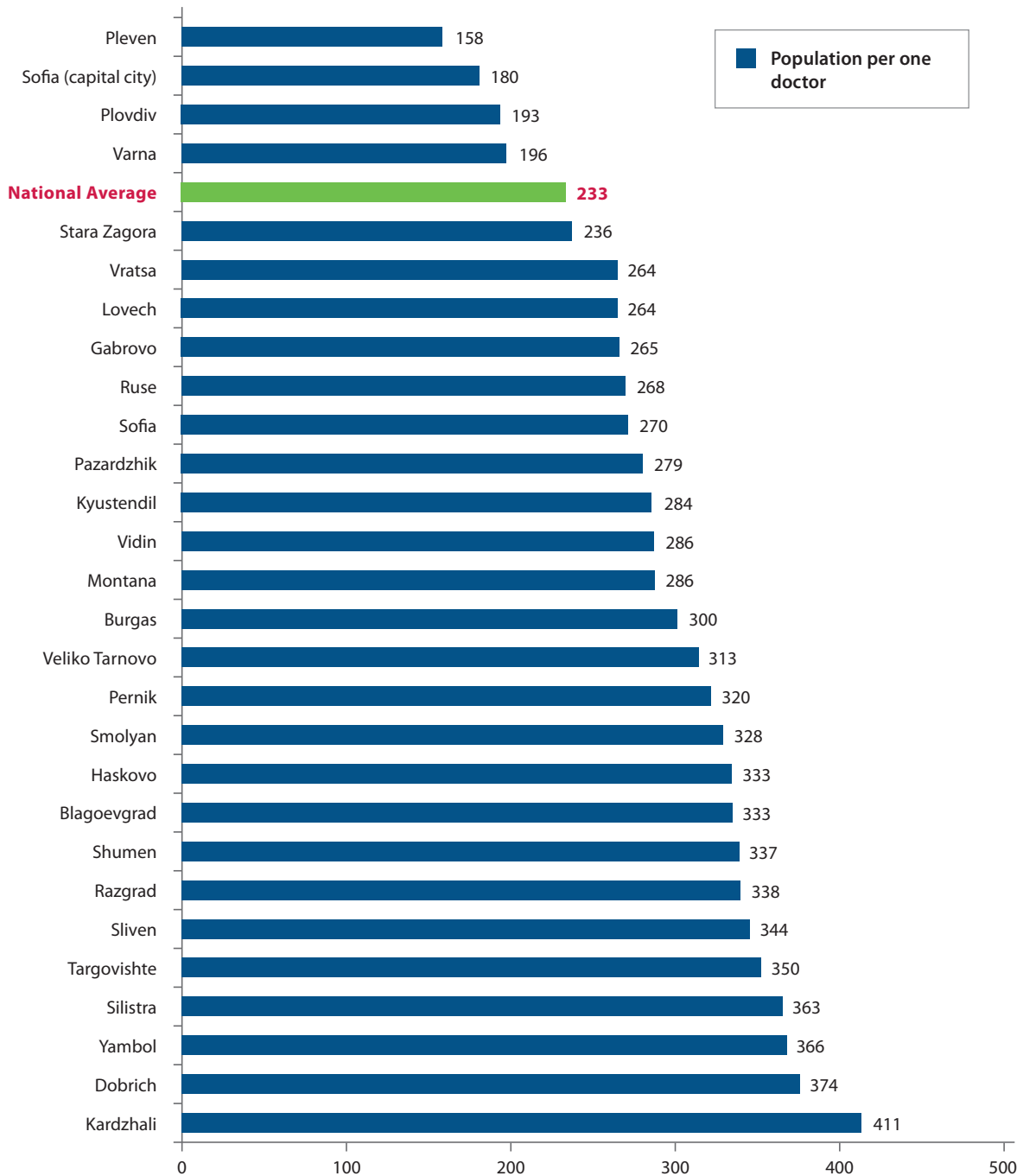
Fig. 6. Average grade in the 2021 matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature.



Source: MES, calculations by IME.

The 2020 pandemic gave special prominence to healthcare. Data such as the number of hospital beds and access to doctors became the crucial indicator for the quality of life in the different regions. Regional differences in the field of healthcare are especially visible when considered through the perspective of access to GPs. While in some regions – Pleven, Sofia (capital city), Plovdiv and Varna – less than 2,000 persons were served by one GP, in half of the rest one doctor cared for over 3,000 persons. The differences as regards specialist physicians are similar in their proportions. The numbers of hospital beds also vary from nearly 10 beds per 1,000 persons in Pleven district to under 3 beds per 1,000 people in Pernik, Dobrich and Shumen.

Fig. 7. Access of the population to GPs in 2020 by district.

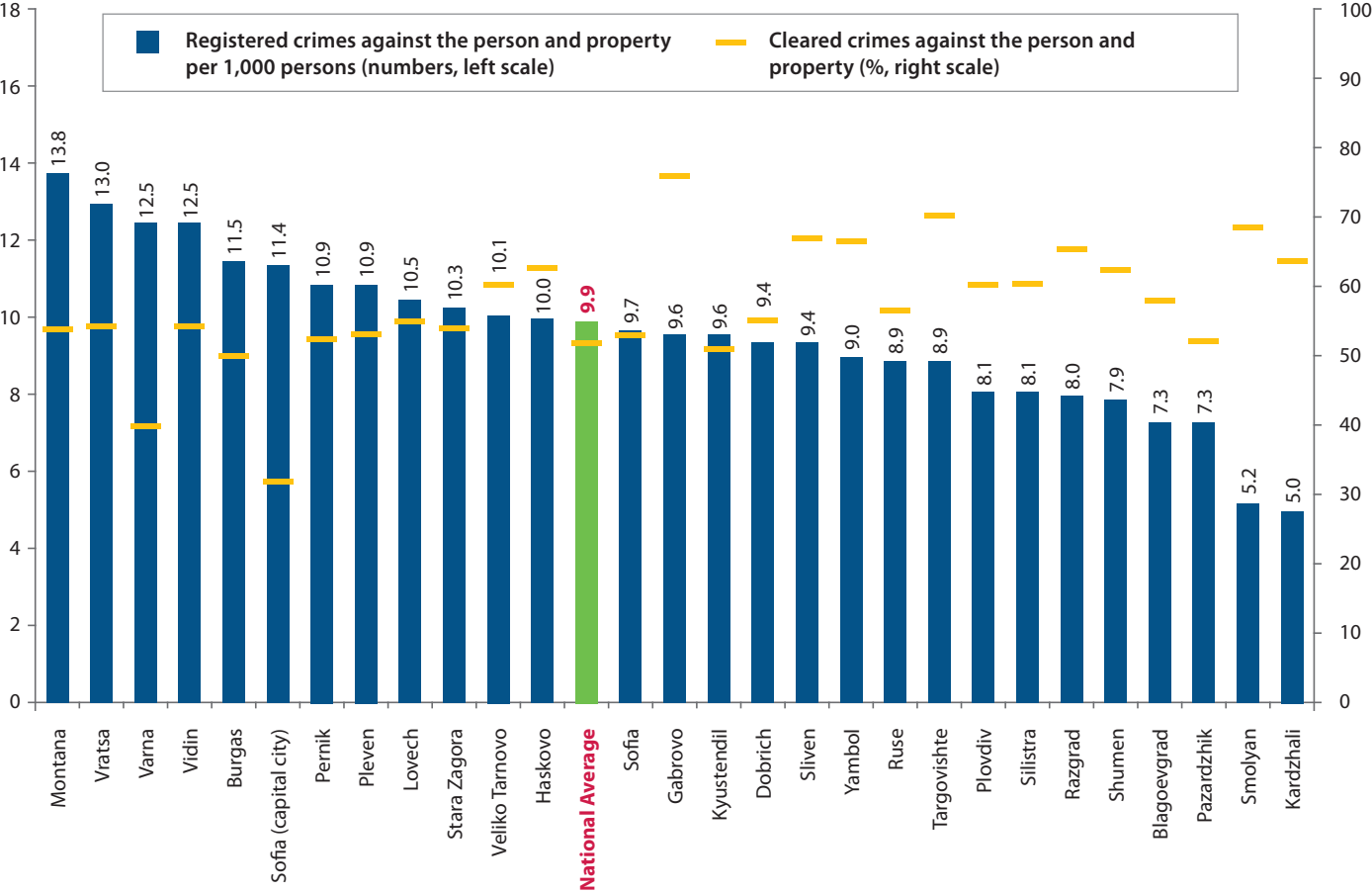


Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

Over the past few years, the country has witnessed a drop in the number of registered crimes against the person and property. The pandemic was an additional factor affecting this decline, with under 10 crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons registered in 2020. Kardzhali and Smolyan were the safest districts with some 5 crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons. The average detection rate for 2020 was highest in Gabrovo district, where over 76% of the crimes registered during that same year were cleared. The districts in the Bulgarian north-west – Montana, Vratsa and Vidin – as well as the coastal cities of Varna and Burgas – were notable for the high number of registered crimes. In Sofia (capital) and Varna, there

has been a persisting tendency towards a very low detection rate, with under 50% of the registered crimes against the person and property having been cleared in the past few years.

Fig. 8. Registered crimes against the person and property and detection rates in 2020.



Source: SJC, calculations by IME.

The pandemic has impacted both the economic and the social indicators of Bulgaria’s districts. Clearly noticeable is the change in the demographics due both to the very high mortality rate and to the outflow of population from the big cities to their periphery. Areas such as healthcare, education and culture have been severely affected and are operating in emergency conditions. Nevertheless, the large regional differences persist and continue to stand out in the data. The current edition of Regional Profiles: Indicators for Development shows the real picture on the ground after the onset of the pandemic and once again draws attention to the huge challenges facing development and the convergence of opportunities across the country. The change in the social environment of the districts depends both on their economic recovery and on the powers, capacity and financial independence of the local authorities.



# Blagoevgrad District

▶ Population (2020)	301,916
▶ Territory (sq. km)	6,449.5
▶ Number of settlements	274
▶ Share of urban population (%)	60.3



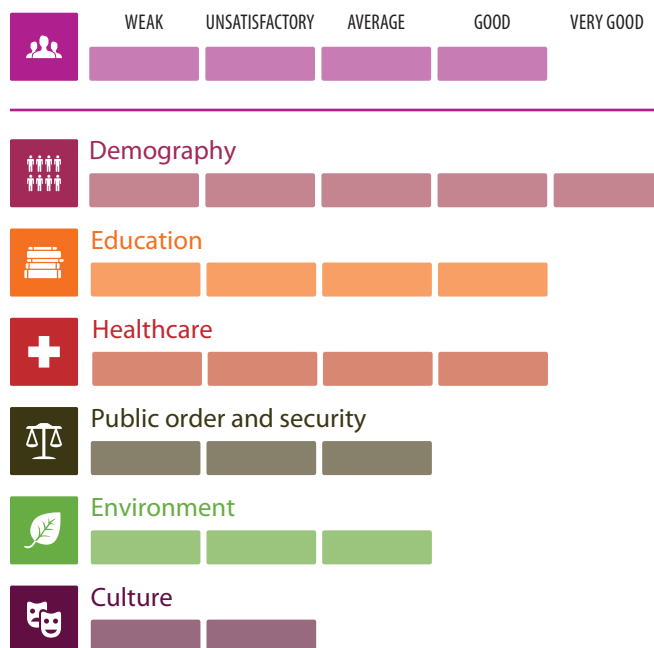
The economic development of Blagoevgrad district is very good. In 2019 GDP per capita continued its growth, although it remained significantly lower than the national average. Salaries and income levels have also been rising. Economic activity remains relatively high, but in 2020 employment rates fell and unemployment rates rose. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population has continued to rise and remains the third highest in the country. Blagoevgrad is among the districts with the best road surface quality. Contrary to general nationwide trends, the district is relatively well developed economically, and

in 2021 the level of local taxes again remained quite low. Blagoevgrad has performed relatively well in terms of demographic indicators and is one of the districts with the highest rate of enrolment in 5th–8th grade. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – and of hospital beds. The crime rate remains relatively low and detection rates relatively high. Blagoevgrad still ranks among the districts with the lowest volumes of CO2 emissions. The intensity of the cultural life is traditionally not very high compared to that of other districts, and in 2020 it shrank even further due to the pandemic and the reduced number of visits to public places.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

GDP per capita in Blagoevgrad district has continued to grow and in 2019 it reached 10,300 BGN, though it remains considerably lower than the national average of 17,200 BGN/person. Both salaries and incomes also rose and the average annual income per household member even exceeded the national average, albeit by a small margin. In 2019 the average annual gross salary of employed people was 9,800 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN in the country as a whole. Yet although GDP, salaries and incomes went up, poverty levels in Blagoevgrad district remained close to the national average. In 2019, the relative share of people living under the national poverty line fell to 23.9%, versus 22.6% on a national scale, while those living in material deprivation made up 19.6% of the total population, compared to the national average of 19.9%.

### Labor market

After a 3-year steady increase, in 2020 economic activity in the district slackened, though still remaining considerably above the national average – 78.8%, compared to 73.7% in the country. Moreover, alongside this decline Blagoevgrad district experienced a drop in employment accompanied by a rise in unemployment. The employment rate fell by nearly 4 p.p. to 71.5%, though remaining above the national average of 68.5%. The unemployment rate rose sharply to 7.3%, and for the first time in four years exceeded the national average of 5.2%.

The challenges still facing the local labor market are the educational structure of the workforce and population ageing. In 2020, the share of people with a university degree among those aged 25–64 decreased to 21.1%, against the national average of 29.2%. The proportion of people with primary or lower education was 17.9%, compared to the national average of 16.9%. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 has continued its slow decrease to reach 63.1%, versus 67.1% countrywide. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 63 young people joining the workforce.

### Investment and economy

The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population in the district continued to rise and in 2019 it remained the third highest in the country, after those in the capital and Burgas district. It reached 72 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 61 per 1,000 persons. At the same time, however, FTA acquisition expenditures stayed relatively low at 1,800 BGN/person, while the national average was 3,200 BGN/person. Production value per capita in the district followed a similar trend, with 18,700 BGN/person, against the national

average of 28,000 BGN/person. FDI stocks underwent a more dynamic development as they rose faster than the national average, reaching 1,700 EUR/person by the end of 2019.

There was also a serious increase in the utilization of EU funds. By 15 June 2021, payments made in Blagoevgrad district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached 3,400 BGN/person, placing it third in the country after Sofia (capital city) and Gabrovo. The top place in the region was held by the 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 railroad network is low. For the same reason, the share of highways and first-class roads in the district's road network is small. Nevertheless, Blagoevgrad remains among the districts with the best road quality, second only to Sliven district as regards the share of road surfaces in good condition – 70% in 2019, compared to 41% for the country.

The relative share of households with broadband internet access in Blagoevgrad district again remained below the national average in 2020. The share of households connected to a gas supply was lower than the national average – 2.7%, versus 3.1% respectively.

### Local taxes

Contrary to general nationwide trends, the district is relatively well developed economically, and in 2021 the level of local taxes again remained quite low. Within the district, Blagoevgrad municipality levies the highest local taxes. Rates in Satovcha municipality are among the lowest not only on a district but also on a national scale.

### Administration

Cadastral map coverage in Blagoevgrad has risen sharply over the past few years and in 2019, with 98.5% of covered territory against the national average of 91.4%, the district came second in the country, preceded only by Sofia (capital city).

In 2021 the provision of one-stop shop services in the district's municipalities improved even further and remained above the national average. At the same time, it has been lagging behind as regards the provision of e-services. The active transparency ratings of the local administration have also shown a slow rise and remain below the national average. Within the district, the municipalities with the best transparency ratings are those of the city of Blagoevgrad and of Gurmen.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

In terms of demographic indicators, Blagoevgrad has achieved relatively good results, although similar to all other districts in the country, the trend towards fast population ageing is in evidence here as well. In 2020 and after a two-year rise, the natural population growth rate in the district fell sharply, though at -7.6‰ it again remained higher than the national average of -9.5‰. The district continued to attract new residents and its net migration rate reached 2.5‰.

The rate of population ageing in the district has increased but in 2020 it again remained below the national average. The ratio of the age dependency of people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 reached 136.1%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15-64 it was 30.8%, versus 34.1% nationwide.

A relatively small share of the population lives in urban areas - 60.3%, against the national average of 72.9%. At the same time, the population density in the district's settlements remains high at 2,264 persons/sq. km, versus 1,506 persons/sq. km on average for the country.

### Education

Blagoevgrad is among the districts with the highest rate of enrolment of schoolchildren in 5th-8th grade - 92.4% in 2020, compared to 86.6% countrywide. The shares of school year repeaters and that of dropouts from primary and secondary education remain considerably lower than the national averages. The number of teachers relative to primary and secondary school students has dropped slightly but it still remains close to the national average.

In 2021, student performance in Blagoevgrad district also remained close to the national average. The district's average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade reached 37.1 points, compared to 37.9 points in the country. For their part, results in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature fell slightly to 4.19, versus 4.21 nationally. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades was 6%, against 7% nationwide.

In line with the nationwide trend over the past few years, the number of university students as a share of the total population has been on the decline, reaching 29 per 1,000 persons, against 32 per 1,000 persons in the country.

### Healthcare

The share of people with health insurance in Blagoevgrad district fell slightly in 2020 but was again above the national average. At the same time, the healthcare system in the region keeps suffering from shortages of medical staff - GPs, as well as specialist physicians - and of hospital beds. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has continued to rise in the past few years but it remains low: 4.13 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.52 beds per 1,000 persons as the national average.

The number of patients treated in the local hospitals remains quite low but having in mind the shortage of physicians and beds in the local general hospitals, the assumption is that the local population seeks medical care in other districts. Infant mortality rates are among the lowest in the country - 3.0‰, versus 5.1‰ nationwide for 2020.

### Public order and security

Court workloads in Blagoevgrad district remained lower than the national average in 2020 - 6.9 cases a month per judge, compared to 8.6 nationally. Nevertheless, delivery of justice was not speedy enough. The share of pending cases rose to 15%, compared to 11% as the national average.

The crime rate in the district remained low in 2020, and detection rates - relatively high. Registered crimes against the person and property in Blagoevgrad district amounted to 7.3 per 1,000 persons, with 9.9 per 1,000 persons as the national figure. 58.2% of those crimes were cleared, against 52.1% on average for the whole country.

### Environment

The amount of household waste generated in the district is relatively low - an annual of 304 kg/person, against 409 kg/person on a national scale. However, Blagoevgrad is among the districts where only a very small part of this waste is handed over for treatment and recycling - 15%, against 71% as the national average.

A relatively large part of the district's population lives in settlements with a public sewerage network - 82.9% versus 76.4% countrywide. However, connectivity to waste water treatment plants is low - 32.8% in 2019, against the national average of 64.6%. Blagoevgrad still ranks among the districts with the lowest carbon dioxide emissions.

### Culture

The intensity of Blagoevgrad district's cultural life is traditionally not very high compared to other districts, and in 2020, due to the pandemic and the reduced number of visits to public places, it shrank even further. Cinema visits dropped by 74% to 114 per 1,000 persons, while nationwide they fell by 71% to 190 per 1,000 persons. A similar drop was recorded for museum visits, which were down to 203 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide. However, numbers for library visits did not follow the nationwide trend and went up, even though they did not reach the average figures relative to the population in the country.

## Key indicators for the district of Blagoevgrad

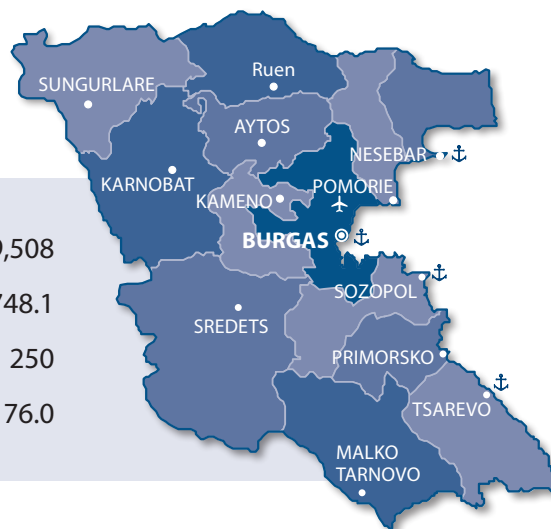
Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,736	10,329	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,193	6,079	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,024	9,810	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	26.0	23.9	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	71.0	75.2	71.5	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	4.8	4.1	7.3	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.2	19.9	17.9	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	20.7	21.8	21.1	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	18,422	18,679	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,768	1,765	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,636	1,745	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	71.4	71.1	75.8	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	62.5	69.6	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	11.0	11.1	11.1	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	65.0	68.3	69.0	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–4.5	–4.1	–7.6	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–4.5	–3.9	2.5	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.06	4.24	4.19	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	35.0	34.4	37.1	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	91.8	92.4	92.4	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	82	90	88	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	88.8	90.6	89.6	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,732	1,701	1,755	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	9.3	8.4	7.3	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	9.2	8.3	6.9	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	82.2	82.9	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	304	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	15.2	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	363	443	114	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	423	457	203	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Burgas District

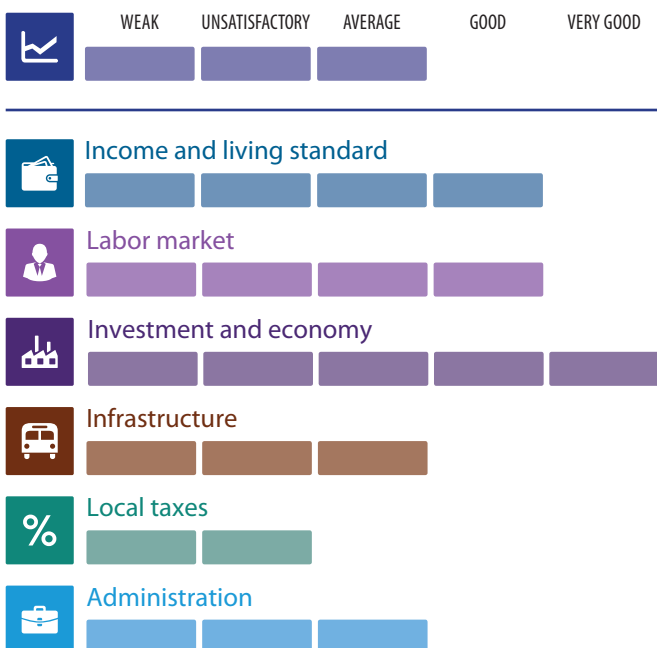


▶ Population (2020)	409,508
▶ Territory (sq. km)	7,748.1
▶ Number of settlements	250
▶ Share of urban population (%)	76.0

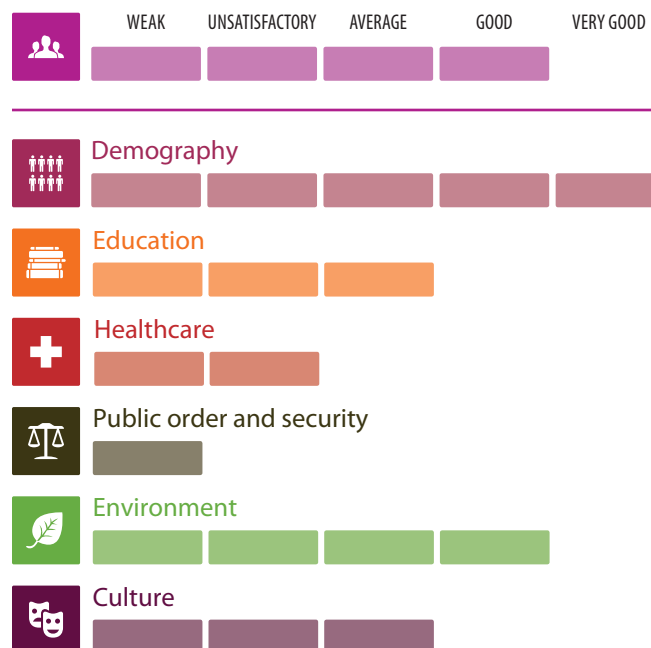
**G**DP per capita in the district of Burgas continued to grow in 2019, though at a slower pace than the national average. Salaries and income levels have also been rising but remain below the average ones. Alongside the decline in economic activity there has been a drop in employment accompanied by a rise in unemployment rates. Investment and business activity in Burgas district remains among the highest in the country. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population is the second highest in the country and the volume of FDI – the third highest. In 2021 Burgas remained one of the districts with the highest local tax rates in the country. The Active transparency ratings of the local administration

went up in 2021 and made up for their lag the previous year. The demographic indicators place Burgas district among the top three in the country. The share of people with a medical insurance is one of the lowest in Bulgaria. Healthcare in the district also suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. Court workloads are relatively high and this impacts the speedy delivery of justice. Crime rates are falling. With its large share of urban population, there is a relatively high share that live in settlements with public sewerage systems. The pandemic and the limitation on visits to public places in 2020 have had a powerful negative impact on cultural life in the country, Burgas district making no exception.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

GDP in Burgas district continued to grow in 2019, though at a slower pace than in the country on average. Its amount per capita reached 13,400 BGN. Salaries and incomes also went up but remained below the national average. The average annual gross salary of employed people in the district was 12,300 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN as the national average, while the average annual income per household member was 5,200 BGN/person, against the national average of 6,000 BGN/person.

In 2019 poverty levels in the district again remained close to the national average. People living in material deprivation constituted 22.7% of the population, versus 19.9% in the country, and 20.0% were living below the poverty line, against 22.6% countrywide.

### Labor market

In 2020 economic activity fell in almost every one of Bulgaria's districts, but in Burgas that decline was particularly strong (by 3.5 p.p.), with the total activity rate down to 69.4%, compared to the national average of 73.7%.

At the same time, Burgas district experienced a drop in employment and a rise in unemployment. Still, while the unemployment rate remained relatively low (4.9%, versus 5.2% nationwide), the employment rate shrank by nearly 5 p.p. to 64.6%, compared to the national average of 68.5%.

The educational status of the workforce in the district is relatively low but 2020 marked some positive tendencies. The share of people aged 25–64 with higher education reached 24.2%, against 29.2% on a national level, while the share of people with primary or lower education was 19.6%, compared to the national average of 16.9%.

The population replacement rate of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 had been rising for four years in a row and reached 70.4%, versus 67.1% countrywide. Thus for every 100 people who will leave the workforce in the next few years, there are 70 people who could enter the labor market.

### Investment and economy

In 2019, Burgas district retained its place among the leaders in investment and business activity. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population was the second highest in the country, preceded only by the capital, and continued to grow, reaching 76 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 61 per 1,000 persons. In 2019 FTA acquisition expenditures continued to fall but remained relatively high at 2,500 BGN/person. FDI retained its upward trend and its volume relative to the population was the third highest in the country, after Sofia (capital city) and Sofia district – 5,200 EUR/person, against 3,700 EUR/person on a national level. Burgas also per-

formed very well as regards production value – 35,800 BGN/person, versus 28,000 BGN/person nationally, and was again outranked only by Sofia district and Sofia (capital city).

Payments made for European projects have grown as well, albeit by 15 June 2021 they still remained below the national average levels. Within the district, the largest sums were utilized by the municipalities of Primorsko and Sozopol – over 5,000 BGN/person.

### Infrastructure

The density of the road and railroad networks in the district of Burgas remained relatively low in 2020. The share of highways and first-class roads was high (26%) but the quality of the road surfaces remained low. The share of good quality road surfaces was 32.5%, against the national average of 41.4%.

The share of households with internet connectivity has risen, exceeding the national average by a small margin. The share of households connected to a gas supply is lower than average – 0.4%, against 3.1% nationally. The installed RES capacities are also more limited – 0.3 kW/person, which is twice lower than the national average.

### Local taxes

Burgas ranks among the districts with the highest level of local taxation in 2021, with local taxes higher only in the capital district. The difference is particularly large in the taxation on motor vehicles and retail trade.

Municipalities with relatively higher tax rates include the tourist towns of Sozopol, Primorsko and the city of Burgas, while the less developed Malko Tarnovo, Aitos and Karnobat impose lower rates.

### Administration

Cadastral map coverage in the district of Burgas made slow progress in 2019, lagging behind the national average. The local authorities' self-assessment ratings on the development of e-government also showed some decline in 2021, but the evaluation of their provision of one-stop shop administrative services went up and remained above the national average.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration rose in 2021 to reach 73.8%, thus compensating for their lagging behind the previous year and equaling the national average of 73.2%. The highest transparency ratings in the district of Burgas were recorded by the municipalities of Burgas city and Primorsko.



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

The demographic indicators place Burgas district among the top three in the country, after only Sofia (capital city) and Varna. The natural population growth rate is still negative and continues to decline but at  $-6.6\%$  in 2020, it was still among the highest in the country, while the national average was  $-9.5\%$ . Burgas district continues to attract new residents as well, with the net migration rate reaching  $7.8\%$ . This also reflects on the age dependency ratios. The ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 130.4%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 31.5%, versus 34.1% nationwide.

For the first time in at least ten years, the share of urban population in Burgas district is declining, although it remains above the national average – 76.0%, compared to 72.9% in the country. The population density in urban areas is also relatively high – 2,240 people/sq. km, compared to 1,506 people/sq. km in the country.

### Education

The enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade continued to decline in 2020 and again remained below the national average. At the same time, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education have been falling. The number of teachers relative to the population has risen slightly but again remains relatively low.

In 2021 the results in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade were relatively high – 39.3 points, compared to the national average of 37.9 points. However, the average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature remained relatively low. The average grade in 2021 was 4.12, compared to 4.21 in the country, and the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was 9%, against 7% on average in the country.

The number of university students in the district relative to the population increased slightly in 2020, but remained twice lower than the national average.

### Healthcare

In 2020, the share of people with health insurance in Burgas district remained among the lowest in the country – 84.3%, compared to 88.7% nationwide. Healthcare in the district also suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. There are 2,058 people per one GP, compared to 1,727 people per one GP in the country. The number of hospital beds is 3.6 per 1,000 persons, against 5.5 hospital beds per 1,000 persons countrywide. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals also remains significantly lower than the national average.

The infant mortality rate increased in 2020 to  $7.2\%$ , and for the third consecutive year was above the national average of  $5.1\%$ .

### Public order and security

Court workloads in Burgas district are relatively high, which in 2020 reflected on the speed of delivery of justice. There were 9.7 cases a month per one criminal judge, compared to 8.6 nationally. The share of cases closed within 3 months declined to 88%, compared to 90% as the national average.

The crime rate in the district has been falling but remains above the national average. In 2020 the registered crimes against the person and property in Burgas district amounted to 11.5 per 1,000 persons, with 9.9 per 1,000 persons as the national figure. Detection rates went up to reach 50.3%, which is still below the national average of 52.1%.

### Environment

In 2018 Burgas was among the districts with the greatest amounts of waste generated by the households – an annual of 433 kg/person, against 409 kg/person on a national scale. At the same time, however, a large share of this waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 83%, against 71% as the national average.

Given the district’s high share of urban population, a relatively large part live in settlements with public sewerage – 79.1%, versus 76.4% countrywide, and in settlements with a sewerage system connected to a waste water treatment plant – 66.1%, against the national average of 64.6% for 2019.

Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere remain at relatively low levels: 92 t/sq. km.

### Culture

The pandemic and the limitations on visits to public places in 2020 have had a strongly negative impact on cultural life in the country, Burgas district making no exception. The number of cinema visits dropped by 77% to 193 per 1,000 persons, but remained slightly higher than the national average of 190 per 1,000 persons. Museum visits decreased by 67% to 198 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The reduction in the numbers of library visits was less drastic (8%, versus 30% in the country) but these visits have been traditionally few. In 2020 they amounted to 101 per 1,000 persons, compared to 480 per 1,000 persons nationwide).

## Key indicators for the district of Burgas

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,585	13,437	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,037	5,169	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,225	12,301	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	19.6	20.0	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	67.4	69.4	64.6	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	5.3	3.6	4.9	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	20.1	20.4	19.6	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	23.6	22.5	24.2	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	34,472	35,826	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	2,995	2,543	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	5,019	5,219	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	68.9	77.7	79.8	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	36.9	32.5	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	15.2	15.2	15.3	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	68.0	66.9	73.8	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–4.3	–4.7	–6.6	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	1.3	2.1	7.8	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.11	4.18	4.12	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	36.9	38.1	39.3	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	87.3	85.9	85.5	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	73	80	81	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	84.1	84.8	84.3	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,976	2,006	2,058	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	15.2	14.2	11.5	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	7.8	8.9	9.7	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	79.7	79.1	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	433	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	83.2	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	800	843	193	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	615	598	198	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.



# Dobrich District

▶ Population (2020)	171,054
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,719.7
▶ Number of settlements	215
▶ Share of urban population (%)	68.7



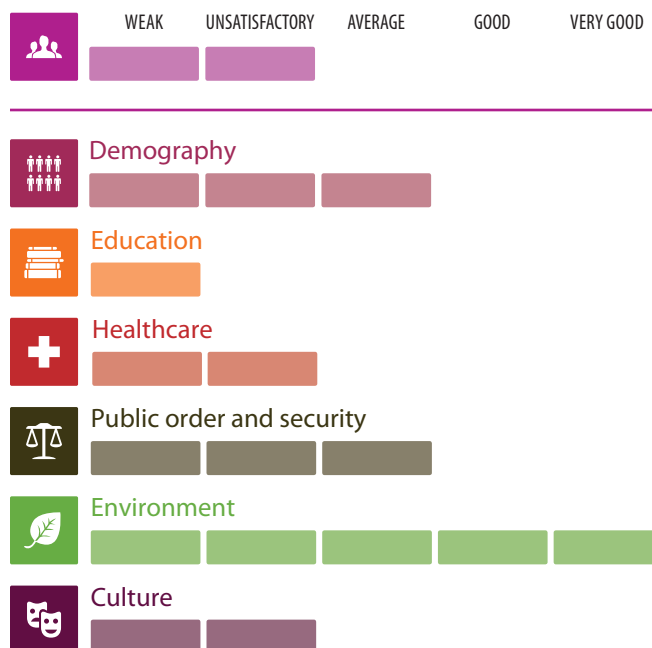
GDP per capita in Dobrich district has continued to grow but its growth rate and volume has fallen below the respective national averages. The decrease in economic activity has been accompanied by a shrinkage of employment and a rise in unemployment. Investment activity remained relatively unfavorable in 2019. The utilization of European funds has continued to grow, but relative to the population in the district it remains lower than the national average. Dobrich is among the districts with the highest share of households with access to a gas supply. The level of local taxation in the municipalities remained relatively low in 2021. The rating of the local governments improved considerably in 2021, thus ranking Dobrich in the top place in the whole country.

The net migration rate has gone up and for the first time in almost 15 years it is positive. Dobrich remains the district with the lowest population density in the country. Its performance in terms of the education indicators is poor. Student examination scores in 2021 remained relatively low. The shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds can probably explain the relatively low number of patients treated in the local general hospitals. The workloads of criminal judges remained relatively low in 2020, which affected the speed of delivery of justice. Dobrich is among the districts with the lowest levels of carbon dioxide pollution of the atmosphere. Notable of its cultural life in 2020 was again its low intensity.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

GDP per capita in Dobrich district has continued to grow but at a rate and with a volume lower than the respective national averages. In 2019 it reached 10,000 BGN. Salaries and incomes have registered growth. The gross annual salary in the district reached 11,400 BGN, whereas the national average was 15,200 BGN, and the annual income per household member was 5,500 BGN, compared to 6,000 BGN as the country's average.

Still, in spite of the lag in incomes and salaries, in 2019 poverty levels in Dobrich district were close to the national average. The proportion of people living in material deprivation was 19.5%, versus 19.9% on average nationwide, while the share of those living below the poverty line was 22.8%, compared to the national average of 22.6%.

### Labor market

After a decade of fluctuations in the past few years' economic activity in Dobrich district settled below the national average. In 2020, the rate of economic activity dropped to 72.8%, against 73.7% in the country. This decrease was accompanied by a decline in employment and an increase in unemployment rates in the district. Employment rates reached 63.2%, compared to 68.5% in the country on average, and unemployment reached 9.6%, whereas the national average was 5.2%.

In 2020, the relatively low educational status of the workforce continued to be a major challenge before the labor market in the district. The share of employed people aged 25–64 with a university degree was 22.3%, against the national average of 29.2%. The proportion of people in the workforce with primary or lower education was 25.6%, versus 16.9% nationally.

The labor market continues to be affected by population ageing as well. Still, the demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 in the district has been rising in recent years, reaching 68.9%, compared to 67.1% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who will have to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 65 young people who will join the workforce.

### Investment and economy

Investment activity in Dobrich district remained relatively unfavorable in 2019. The relative number of enterprises decreased slightly to 55/1,000 persons, against 61/1,000 as the national average. A considerable shrinkage of over 10% was registered in FTA acquisition expenditures, and they fell to 1,811 BGN/person, versus the national figure of 3,155 BGN/person. There was also a decrease in accumulated FDI flows, which shrank to 1,707 EUR/person, compared to 3,655 EUR/person in the country, and in production value, which also fell to 14,500 BGN/person, versus the national average of 28,000 BGN/person.

Utilization of European funds in the district has continued to grow but remains below the national average per capita. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,722 BGN/person, while the national average was 2,217 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded in the municipality Dobrich (city), while the lowest ones were in Dobrich municipality (rural)

### Infrastructure

The density of the infrastructure in Dobrich district, and especially that of its railroad network, remains quite low. In 2020, the share of highways and first-class roads remained lower than the national average – 10%, against 19% respectively. At the same time, road quality is relatively good, with 46.7% of road surfaces in good condition, compared to the national average of 41.4%.

The relative share of households with internet access in Dobrich district remains low – 70.4%, against the average of 78.9% nationwide.

Dobrich is among the districts with the highest share of households connected to a gas supply – 8.0%, versus the national average of 3.1%. The installed RES capacity is also relatively large – 3.1 kW/person, compared to 0.6 kW/person countrywide.

### Local taxes

In 2021, local tax rates in Dobrich district remained relatively low. The margin with the national average rates was especially significant as regards the average local rates on immovable non-residential property for legal entities and on taxi transportation.

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

### Administration

Cadastral coverage in Dobrich district is traditionally higher than the national average and in 2019 it included almost all of its territory – 97.7%, versus 91.4% countrywide. The development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services in the district's municipalities improved in 2021, though one-stop shop services remained below the national average.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration increased considerably in 2021, thus ranking Dobrich at the top place in the whole country, with 83.6%, against 73.2% nationwide. Within the district, particularly high ratings were achieved by the municipalities of Dobrich city and Balchik.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

The natural population growth rate decreased to  $-11.9\text{‰}$  in 2020, compared to  $-9.5\text{‰}$  as the national average. At the same time, the net migration rate increased to  $3.1\text{‰}$ , a positive value for the first time in almost 15 years. However, the trend towards population ageing is still ongoing. The age dependency rate as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 years increased to 161.6%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to that aged 15–64 – to 35.7%, with 34.1% nationally.

The share of urban population remains relatively low – 68.7%, versus 72.9% in the country, and Dobrich continues to be the district with the lowest population density in its urban parts – 663 persons/sq. km, versus 1,506 persons/sq. km in the country.

### Education

The performance of Dobrich district in terms of the education indicators is poor. In 2020, the enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade decreased to 73.4% and remained the lowest one in the country. At the same time, the shares of repeaters and drop-outs from primary and secondary education remained high. The numbers of primary and secondary school teachers went down to 96 teachers per 1,000 students, but remained higher than the national average of 87 teachers per 1,000 students.

In 2021, students' results for the district remained low. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 30.5 p., compared to 37.9 p. in the country on average. The average score in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.08, compared to the national average of 4.21. In addition, the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) went up to reach 9%, versus 7% nationwide.

Higher education in the district is poorly represented, only by the branches of Shumen University and Varna Technical University. University students number 4 per 1,000 persons, against 32 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

### Healthcare

Dobrich remains among the districts with the lowest share of people with health insurance – 85.3% in 2020, versus 88.7% nationally. The healthcare system in the district suffers from an acute shortage of specialist physicians, although the number of GPs relative to the population is relatively high. With the exception of Pernik district, Dobrich has the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals – 2.02 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 5.52 per 1,000 persons.

The shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds can probably explain the relatively low number of hospitalizations in the district – 98 per 1,000 persons, compared to 138 per 1,000 persons across the country.

The infant mortality rate in the district decreased in 2020 to 5.7%, but still remained higher than the national average of 5.1%.

### Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in Dobrich district remained low in 2020, which affects the speed of delivery of justice. There were on average 5.8 cases a month per judge, compared to 8.6 cases nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months decreased but was still higher than the national average – 92%, against 90% respectively.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property remained slightly lower than the national average – 9.4 per 1,000 persons, versus 9.9 per 1,000 persons nationwide, while detection rates were slightly higher – 55.4%, versus the national figure of 52.1%.

### Environment

Dobrich is among the districts with the lowest levels of carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere. In 2019, carbon emissions amounted to 7.2 t/sq. m. The share of population with access to a public sewerage system was still slightly below the national average – 70.9%, versus 76.4% countrywide, though the share of sewerage systems in the district connected to wastewater treatment plants remained higher than in the country on average – 70.9%, versus 64.6% countrywide.

The average annual amount of waste generated by households was 399 kg/person, which was close to the national average of 409 kg/person. There was a considerable increase in the amounts of waste handed over for treatment and recycling – 84%, versus 71% for the country on average.

### Culture

The intensity of cultural life in Dobrich district in 2020 was again low, while pandemic-related restrictions on cultural events affected the district no less than the rest of the country.

Visits to the cinema shrank by 80%, compared to 71% in the country, and numbered 40 per 1,000 persons, compared to 190 per 1,000 persons nationally. The number of visits to libraries decreased by 36%, versus 30% nationwide, to 352 per 1,000 persons, against 480 per 1,000 persons in the country.

The decrease in museum visits in Dobrich district was half that of the country as a whole – 29% in the district, compared to 58% nationwide, and their numbers remained considerably higher – 800 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons in the country.

## Key indicators for the district of Dobrich

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,176	10,009	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,234	5,500	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,429	11,440	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	19.9	22.8	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	65.3	66.9	63.2	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	8.6	7.0	9.6	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	23.4	24.8	25.6	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	20.8	21.1	22.3	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	14,750	14,549	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	2,023	1,811	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,793	1,707	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	75.2	70.0	70.4	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	46.9	46.7	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	17.4	17.4	17.4	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	80.0	76.2	83.6	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–9.2	–9.0	–11.9	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–4.0	–2.7	3.1	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.12	4.20	4.08	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	27.3	29.8	30.5	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	76.4	74.7	73.4	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	90	96	93	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	85.2	86.5	85.3	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,496	1,494	1,500	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	12.5	10.4	9.4	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.1	6.2	5.8	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	70.9	70.9	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	399	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	84.3	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	187	202	40	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	1,135	1,119	800	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Gabrovo District

▶ Population (2020)	106,193
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,023.0
▶ Number of settlements	349
▶ Share of urban population (%)	79.9



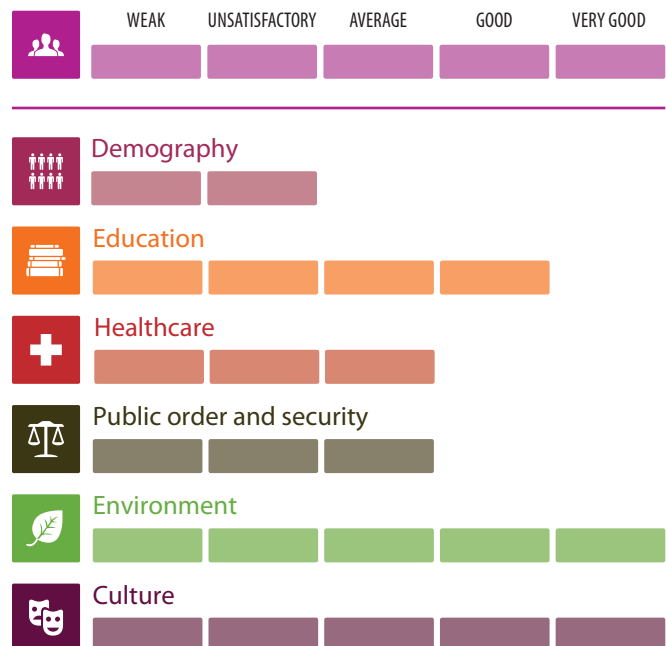
The average annual income per household member in Gabrovo is the second highest in the country after that in the capital. It is one of the districts with the highest share of people in the workforce with secondary education, which corresponds to its industrial profile. The ageing of the population remains a challenge for the labor market. Business and investment activity again remained high in 2019. Gabrovo ranks second in the country as regards the utilization of European funds. The infrastructural development is very good, and this is the district with the densest road network in the country. Although Gabrovo is among the districts with relatively highly developed economy, the level of local taxes again remained low in 2021. The transparency of the local municipalities records high values.

Gabrovo is one of the districts (along with Vidin) with the most unfavorable demographic conditions. Students' results are relatively high, although in 2021 they were below the average levels for the country. In the past few years, there has been an increasing shortage of teachers in the district. The number of patients treated in the local hospitals remains relatively high. Although the workloads of the criminal judges are relatively low, this has little effect on the speed of delivery of justice. In 2020, Gabrovo was the country's leader with 76% of detected crimes. The district's performance as regards the environment indicators is very good. Despite the nationwide restrictions imposed in 2020 due to the pandemic, Gabrovo's cultural life remained among the most intense ones in the country.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

Gabrovo's performance in this category is traditionally very good and ranks the district immediately after the capital. In 2019, GDP continued to grow, reaching 14,400 BGN per capita and was the sixth highest in the country. Salaries and incomes went up. The average annual income per household member was 7,400 BGN, compared to 6,000 BGN in the country, and was the second highest after the one in the capital.

These indicators are the prerequisite for the relatively low poverty levels in the district in 2019. The share of population living below the national poverty line was 17.8%, compared to 22.6% in the country, and that of population living with material deprivation – 14.1%, compared to 19.9% nationwide.

### Labor market

Economic activity in the district continued to grow in 2020 and remained above the national average, as it traditionally does. However, this growth was accompanied by both a decrease in employment and an increase in unemployment. The rate of economic activity reached 74.7%, compared to 73.7% in the country, and that of employment – 67.7%, compared to the national average of 68.5%.

Gabrovo is among the districts with the lowest share of population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education – 10.6%, compared to 16.9% in the country. The district is also among those with the highest share of employed people with secondary education – 66.3%, compared to 53.9% in the country – which corresponds to its industrial profile

A challenge still facing the labor market is the ageing of the population. The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 is 54.5%, versus 67.1% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years there will be 55 young people joining the work force.

### Investment and economy

Business and investment activity in the district again remained high in 2019. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population continued to rise and reached 57 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 61 per 1,000 persons. FTA acquisition expenditures also went up to 2,200 BGN/person, while the national average was 3,200 BGN/person. FDI reached 3,200 EUR/person and was the fifth highest in the country.

The higher amounts of domestic and foreign investment in the district have also led to an increase in production value per capita, which reached 24,900 BGN/person.

Gabrovo ranks second after the capital district in the utiliza-

tion of EU funds. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached 3,510 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 2,217 BGN/person. The top place in the district was held by the Gabrovo municipality, with 4,364 BGN/person.

### Infrastructure

The infrastructural development of Gabrovo district is very good. In 2020 Gabrovo was the district with the highest road network density in the country – 25.6 km/100 sq. km of territory, compared to 17.9 km/100 sq. km in the country, although the share of highways and first-class roads was lower – 16.4% compared to 18.5% in the country. The quality of the road surfaces was also lower – 36.7% of them were in good condition. Household access to the internet continues to increase, but in 2020 it was lower than the national average, albeit by a small margin.

Gabrovo ranks first in the country in terms of the share of households connected to a gas supply in 2020 – 9.6%, which is three times above the national average of 3.1%. The installed RES capacity is relatively limited.

### Local taxes

Although Gabrovo is among the districts with a relatively highly developed economy, in 2021 the level of local taxes remained low. The margin was especially big for the rate of the retail trade tax. Its average rate for all the municipalities in Gabrovo district was 8.87 BGN/sq. m, against 12.99 BGN/sq. m countrywide. The tax rate on non-gratuitous acquisition of property was also considerably lower in the district compared to that in the country.

Within the district, Gabrovo city municipality levies the highest local taxes, while the lowest rates are in the municipalities of Tryavna and Dryanovo.

### Administration

The 2021 AIP active transparency ratings of the local administration in Gabrovo district are very high – 78.9%, compared to the national average of 73.2%, thus ranking it third in the whole country. Within the district, the municipality with the best transparency rating is that of the town of Sevlievo.

However, the performance of the local authorities as regards the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services continues to be relatively poor.

In 2019, cadastral map coverage in Gabrovo again continued to increase but at a slower rate than in the country on average, leaving the district further behind in this indicator.



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

Gabrovo is one of the districts (along with Vidin) which in 2020 presented the most unfavorable demographic conditions. The natural population growth rate reached a new record at -18.1‰, compared to -9.5 ‰ in the country. However, 2020 turned out to be favorable in terms of attracting population to the district. The net migration rate was for the first time positive and among the highest in the country – 10.5‰.

The trend towards population ageing puts Gabrovo in second place in the country (again only after Vidin district) for the highest age dependency of the population. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 reached 250.9%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to that aged 15–64 it was 49.2% versus 34.1% nationally.

Most of the population of the district is urban – 79.9%, compared to 72.9% in the country, but its density is relatively low, with 1,218 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,506 persons/sq. km countywide.

### Education

The rate of enrolment of schoolchildren in 5th–8th grade has been rising and in 2020 it included practically the whole of the respective age group. The percentages of school year repeaters registered a sharp drop to a bare 0.20%, against 0.55% nationwide.

In 2021, student performance in Gabrovo district was relatively good, though it remained below the national average. The district's average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 33.4 points, compared to 37.9 points in the country. Results in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature were slightly below the national average – 4.19, versus 4.21 nationally, but the share of “fail” (below 3.00) grades was relatively low – 5%, against 7% nationwide.

In the past few years, there has been an increasing shortage of teachers in Gabrovo district, against the growth in their numbers across almost the entire country. In 2020, the number of teachers in primary and secondary education in the district decreased to 77 per 1,000 students, compared to 87 per 1,000 students nationally, and was the second lowest in the country, before only Yambol district.

Gabrovo remains among the districts with the highest and still rising number of university students, reaching 46 per 1,000 persons, against 32 per 1,000 persons in the country.

### Healthcare

In 2020, Gabrovo again remained among the districts with the highest share of people with health insurance – 96.3%, versus 88.7% as the national average. The number of doctors – GPs, as well as specialist physicians – is close to the national average. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has continued to rise in the past three years but is still relatively low – 5.1 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.5 beds per 1,000 persons nationally.

The number of patients treated in the local hospitals remains relatively high – 188 per 1,000 persons, compared to 138 per 1,000 persons countrywide. The infant mortality rate in the district has been increasing and is higher than the national average.

### Public order and security

Although criminal court workloads in Gabrovo district remained lower than the national average in 2020, this did not have a significant effect on the speedy delivery of justice. One local judge heard an average of 5.8 criminal cases per month, compared to 8.6 cases per month per judge in the country, while the share of cases completed within 3 months was 84%, versus 90% nationally.

In 2020, the number of registered crimes against the person and property decreased and remained below the national average, with 9.6 crimes per 1,000 persons, compared to 9.9 per 1,000 people in the country. At the same time, however, the crime detection rate has continued to increase. Gabrovo is the leader in the country with 76.3% of detected crimes, versus 52.1% on average for the whole country.

### Environment

The performance of Gabrovo district in the environment indicators is very good. In 2019, the amount of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere was relatively low – 30 t/sq. km. For its part, the relatively high share of urban population accounts for the high number of households living in settlements connected to a public sewerage network – 85.1%, compared to 76.4% in the country, and to sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants – 74.5%, versus 64.6% nationwide.

In 2018, the volume of generated household waste in the district decreased, but nevertheless remained relatively high – an annual of 433 kg/person, against 409 kg/person in the country. At the same time, however, almost all waste (91%) was handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to 71% in the country.

### Culture

In spite of the restrictions imposed in 2020 due to the pandemic, Gabrovo district's cultural life remains among the most intense in the country and is outranked only by the capital district. The main reason for this is the extremely high number of visits to museums. Although similar to the country's average, this number also shrank by over 50%. In 2020, the number of visits to local museums was 1,800 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationally.

The number of visits to libraries and cinemas in the district decreased at a rate higher than the country's average, while values stayed below average.

## Key indicators for the district of Gabrovo

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	13,510	14,444	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	6,937	7,406	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,796	12,895	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	14.6	17.8	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	67.2	70.1	67.7	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	4.5	(4.5)	(7.0)	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	14.5	12.6	10.6	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	27.9	29.0	23.1	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	22,999	24,907	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	2,133	2,244	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	3,120	3,210	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	70.6	74.9	77.5	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	39.0	36.7	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	24.9	24.9	25.6	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	80.0	74.8	78.9	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–13.2	–12.7	–18.1	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–3.7	–4.2	10.5	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.10	4.31	4.19	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	31.3	33.9	33.4	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	95.5	93.4	100.0	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	80	81	77	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	95.9	97.5	96.3	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,518	1,501	1,609	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.4	10.5	9.6	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.1	6.4	5.8	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	85.1	85.1	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	433	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	91.1	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	339	402	109	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	3,553	3,812	1,800	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.



# Haskovo District

▶ Population (2020)	224,471
▶ Territory (sq. km)	5,533.3
▶ Number of settlements	261
▶ Share of urban population (%)	71.9



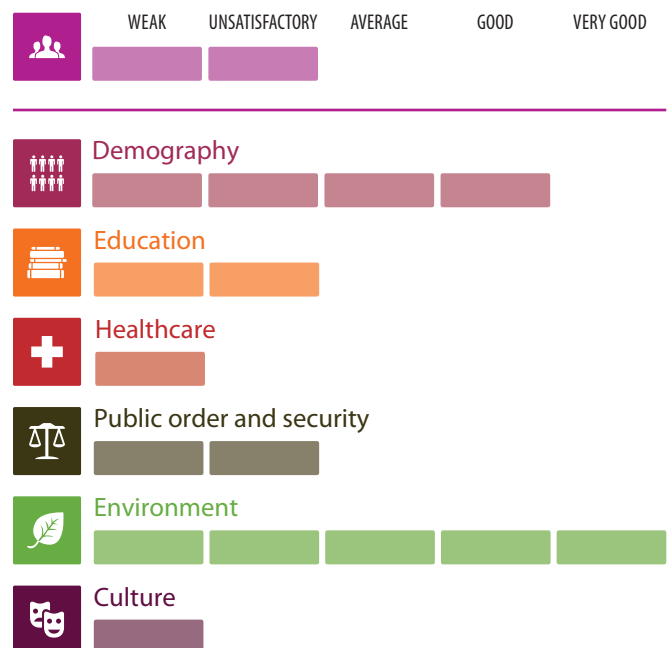
Household incomes in Haskovo district have been gradually rising, yet the issue of high poverty levels and material deprivation persists. Employment has fallen below the national average. The local labor market continues to face the challenges posed by the educational structure of the workforce and the ageing population. Investment activity remains low. The density of the road and railway networks in the district is relatively high. The share of highways and first-class roads is also higher than average. Local taxes are lower than average. The self-assessments of local administrations for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services are improving, but remain below the national average.

2020 marked a deterioration in the natural population growth and the net migration rates. The district performs poorly in education. The results of the students in the district are low. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. Morbidity and infant mortality are relatively high. The workloads of the local criminal judges continue to decrease, but the delivery of justice is slow. The crime detection rate is high. The high assessment of Haskovo district in the environment category is mainly due to the relatively low volumes of generated household waste and its management. The pandemic and the countrywide restriction on cultural events in 2020 affected cultural life in the district as well.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

Haskovo is the district with the lowest GDP per capita in southern Bulgaria after Sliven, with only 9,000 BGN per capita in 2019, compared to the national average of 17,200 BGN. The average annual gross salary of employed people has been increasing, but in 2019 it was the third lowest in the country – only 10,600 BGN, versus 15,200 BGN in the country. The average annual income per household member went up to 5,700 BGN in the district, compared to 6,000 BGN nationally.

These indicators are the main factor for the high poverty levels in the district. 23.8% of the population live with material deprivation, compared to 19.9% on average nationally, and 30.9% are below the national poverty line, versus 22.6% on average countrywide.

### Labor market

In 2020, economic activity in Haskovo district decreased significantly and its rate dropped to 67.7%, compared to 73.7% in the country. This decline was accompanied by a sharp shrinkage of employment, whose rate of 67.4% now fell below the national average of 68.5%. Unemployment, however, remained relatively low.

The local labor market continues to face the challenges posed by the educational structure of the workforce and the ageing population. In 2020, the share of university graduates among the 25–64 age group dropped to 17.8%, compared to 29.2% in the country. Also, the share of people with primary or lower education went up to reach 25.8%, compared to the national average of 16.9%. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 rose slightly but remained low at 60.5%, compared to 67.1% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 61 young people joining the workforce.

### Investment and economy

Investment activity in Haskovo district remained low in 2019. FTA acquisition expenditures even decreased to 1,130 BGN/person, compared to 3,155 BGN/person nationally. FDI underwent a mild increase to 815 EUR/person but remained considerably below the national average of 3,655 EUR/person. These indicator values also result in relatively low production, which slowed down and reached 12,900 BGN/person, compared to 28,000 BGN/person nationally.

Utilization of EU funds is also relatively poor. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operation-

al programs amounted to 1,435 BGN/person, while the national average was 2,217 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Svilengrad.

### Infrastructure

Haskovo district has a relatively well developed road and railway network. The share of first-class roads and highways is also higher than the national average – 21.5% in 2020, compared to 18.5% in the country. The quality of the roads has been improving, but remains relatively low. The share of road surfaces in good condition was 36.8% in 2019, compared to 41.4% countrywide.

Households' access to the internet improved in 2020 and nearly reached the national average, with 78.6% in the district, versus 78.9% in the country. The share of households with access to a gas supply is low – 0.8%, against 3.1% nationally.

Installed RES capacity is 0.9 kW/person, against 0.6 kW/person in the country.

### % Local taxes

The levels of the monitored local taxes in the municipalities on the district's territory again remained close to, though below the national average in 2021. The taxes on the immovable real estate of legal entities (2.04‰) and motor vehicles (1.54 BGN/kW) were equal to the respective national averages. Lower than the average ones were the tax rates on retail trade (12.76 BGN/sq. m, versus 12.99 BGN/sq. m in the country), on non-gratuitous acquisition of property (2.55%, against 2.73% nationally) and on taxi transportation (288 BGN, compared to 453 BGN countrywide).

### Administration

In recent years, in line with the nationwide trend, cadastral map coverage in Haskovo district went up considerably and in 2019 it included 93.2% of the territory, compared to 91.4% in the country.

In 2021, the self-assessments of the district's municipalities on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services also went up, though remaining below the respective national averages. An increase was also registered in the AIP Active transparency rating of the local administrations, whose average reached 73.7% and exceeded the national average of 73.2%. Within the district, the highest rating was achieved by the municipalities of Harmanli and Dimitrograd.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

In 2020, natural population growth in Haskovo district registered a decrease, while the net migration rate went up. The natural population growth rate dropped to -12.3‰, compared to -9.5‰ nationally. The net migration rate went up in almost the entire country and for the first time in a number of districts it reached a positive value. Haskovo district was no exception, though its migration rate remained relatively low -4.7‰.

Population ageing continues to be a problem for the district. In 2020, the population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 was 159.9%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15-64 it was 37.2%, against 34.1% in the country.

The share of urban population is comparable to the country's average - 71.9%, versus 72.9% nationally. At the same time, population density is relatively low - 1,043 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,506 persons/sq. km nationally.

### Education

The district performs poorly in education. The coverage of the education system has improved but remains relatively low. In 2020, the net enrolment in 5th-8th grade was 84.9%, against 86.5% nationally. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education have been on the decrease but remain relatively high. The number of teachers is relatively small and in 2020 it decreased even further. Their proportion was 82 per 1,000 students, compared to 87 teachers per 1,000 students in the country.

Students' results remained low in 2021. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 32.4 points, versus 37.9 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.00, compared to 4.21 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 12%, against 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. In 2020, there was one GPs per 1,871 people, compared to 1,727 people per doctor nationally. The number of beds in the district's general hospitals remained extremely low, with 3.57 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.52 beds per 1,000 people in the country.

Population morbidity and infant mortality in the district are relatively high. The number of hospitalizations was 159 people per 1,000 persons in 2020, compared to the national average of 138 per 1,000 persons. The infant mortality rate went up for

the third year in a row and reached 8.4‰, compared to the national average of 5.1‰.

The number of people with health insurance dropped to 89.2% in 2020, but remained above the national average of 88.7%.

### Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in the district continued to decrease in 2020, but delivery of justice remained slow. One criminal judge heard an average of 7.8 cases per month, compared to an average of 8.6 cases per judge in the country. At the same time, the relative share of criminal cases closed within 3 months shrank to 88%, against 90% nationally, and pending cases went up to 14%, against 11% countrywide.

The crime rate in Haskovo district is comparable to that in the country on average, but the detection rate is considerably higher. The crimes against the person and property registered in 2020 amounted to 10.0 per 1,000 persons, compared to 9.9 per 1,000 persons nationally. The proportion of cleared crimes improved and reached 63.0%, against 52.1% nationally.

### Environment

The positive assessment of Haskovo district in the environment category is mainly due to the relatively low volumes of generated household waste and its management. In 2018, the annual amount of generated waste was 316 kg/person, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person. 96% of all generated household waste was handed over for recycling and treatment, compared to 71% in the country.

The volumes of carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere remain low - 61.7 t/sq. km.

There has been little change in the share of households with access to a public sewerage network, which in 2019 reached 72.6%, against 76.4% in the country. The share of households whose sewerage system is connected to a wastewater treatment plant was 53.5%, compared to 64.6% countrywide.

### Culture

The pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on visits to cultural events in 2020 had a powerful negative impact on cultural life in the district as well. What is more, the reduction of visits in the district was even larger. Cinema visits dropped by 87% to a bare 13 per 1,000 persons, compared to a reduction by 71% and 190 per 1,000 persons nationally. Museum visits declined by 71% to 73 per 1,000 persons, compared to a drop by 58% to 322 per 1,000 persons in the country. The decrease in the numbers of library visits was by 42% to 196 per 1,000 persons, against a 30% reduction to 480 per 1,000 persons in the country.

## Key indicators for the district of Haskovo

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,545	9,036	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,119	5,678	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,623	10,566	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	28.5	30.9	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.0	70.9	67.4	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	3.1	(0.4)	(0.3)	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	21.0	24.0	25.8	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	20.1	20.2	17.8	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	12,598	12,867	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,197	1,130	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	801	815	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	72.3	68.1	78.6	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	33.7	36.8	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	20.7	20.7	20.7	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	63.0	67.3	73.7	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-8.5	-8.7	-12.3	<b>-9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	-5.2	-3.8	4.7	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.84	4.07	4.00	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.8	32.0	32.4	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	84.7	82.6	84.9	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	77	84	82	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	88.5	90.1	89.2	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,809	1,847	1,871	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.2	10.1	10.0	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	9.1	8.0	7.8	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	72.7	72.6	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	316	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	96.1	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	72	98	13	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	224	251	73	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Kardzhali District

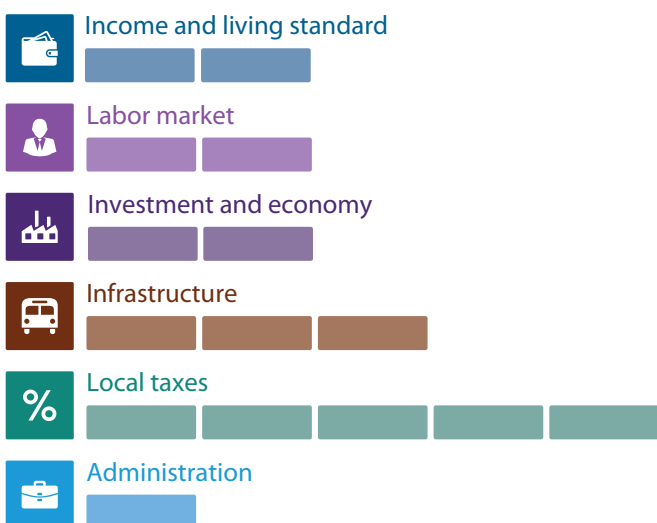
▶ Population (2020)	159,493
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,209.1
▶ Number of settlements	468
▶ Share of urban population (%)	40.2



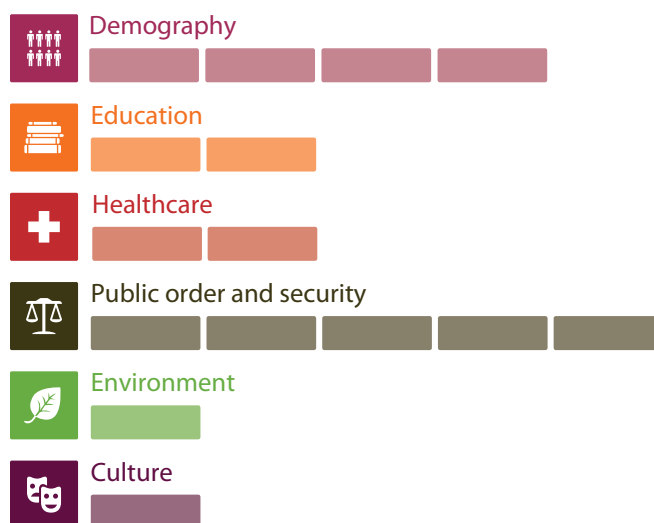
Over the past few years GDP per capita in Kardzhali district has registered a steady increase. Salaries and incomes have also been rising fast, though at a rate lower than the national average and their levels are still far from the average ones in the country. In 2020 the labor market in the district again faced great difficulties. Economic activity remains the lowest in the country, employment is shrinking, and the workforce is among the least educated. FTA acquisition expenditures have increased considerably and are now already among the highest in the country, but production value remains low. A relatively limited proportion of the road surfaces is in good condition. The level of local taxes is low. The performance of the administration is poor.

Kardzhali district continues to attract considerably more population than the country on average. The share of urban population remains the lowest in the country. The number of teachers remains high. The results of the students in the district are extremely poor. Healthcare suffers from a chronic shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The performance of Kardzhali in the field of security and justice is among the best, and it is in this district that the number of registered crimes is the lowest in the country. A relatively small proportion of municipal waste is handed over for treatment and recycling, and access to public sewerage networks is severely limited. Cultural life in the district is among the least active in the country.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■

### Income and living standard ■■■

Over the past few years, GDP per capita in Kardzhali district has registered steady growth and in 2019 it reached 9,600 BGN/person. Salaries and incomes have also been rising, though more slowly than nationally, and their levels are still far below average. In 2019 the average income per household member rose by 3%, against 8% nationally, and remained among the lowest in the country at 4,200 BGN/person, against the national average of 6,000 BGN/person.

These indicators are also the main factor for the relatively high poverty levels in the district. The proportion of people living with material deprivation was 35.2%, compared to 22.6% in the country, while those living below the poverty line made up 23.0%, versus the national average of 19.9%.

### Labor market ■■■

In 2020, the labor market in Kardzhali district continued to face extremely serious difficulties. Economic activity remained the lowest in the country – 63.3%, against 73.7% nationally, and even decreased compared to the year before. The drop in this indicator was also accompanied by a considerable shrinkage of both employment and unemployment. The employment rate came down to 61.9%, compared to the national average of 68.5%.

One major challenge facing the labor market is still the relatively low education of the workforce. In 2020, the share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education rose to reach 34.3%, compared to 16.9% in the country, and was one of the highest in the country. The share of employed people with a university degree decreased to 17.6%, versus 29.2% nationally.

The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 also remains low – 48%, compared to 67% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are half as many young people who will join the workforce.

### Investment and economy ■■■

In 2019, investment and business activity in Kardzhali district remained relatively low. Kardzhali was also the district with the lowest number of nonfinancial enterprises – 32 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 61 per 1,000 persons. FTA expenditures rose considerably – by almost 200%, and at 3,861 BGN/person were among the highest in the country. The main reason for this increase is the newly opened gold mine in Krumovgrad.

FDI has continued to increase but is still below the national average per capita. Production value in Kardzhali district is among the lowest in the country (with only Vidin and Silistra registering worse figures) – it amounts to 10,200 BGN/person, against 28,000 BGN/person as the national average.

Utilization of EU funding has increased but still remains among the lowest in the country. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,516 BGN/person, against the national average of 2,217 BGN/person. Within the district, the municipalities with the highest rate of utilization were those of Kardzhali and Momchilgrad.

### Infrastructure ■■■■

The density of the railroad network in Kardzhali district is 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 – 11.2%, against 18.5% in the country. Road surfaces in good condition are relatively limited – 33.3%, compared to 41.4% across the country.

The share of households with internet access in the district has been rising but is still below the national average. The share of households connected to a gas supply remains among the lowest in the country. The installed RES capacity is relatively large.

### Local taxes ■■■■■■

The municipalities in Kardzhali district kept local tax rates low in 2020. The average rate of each of the five monitored local taxes was lower than the national average. The difference is especially large as regards the retail trade tax rate. Within the district, the local tax rates as a whole were lowest in the municipality of Kardzhali city, and highest in the municipalities of Ardino and Momchilgrad.

### Administration ■■

The performance of the local administrations in Kardzhali is relatively poor. In 2021, the local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services went up but remained relatively low. The Active transparency rating of the local administration was the lowest in the country – 59.4%, compared to the national average of 73.2%. Within the district, the lowest ratings were given to the municipalities in Kardzhali, Momchilgrad and Kirkovo, each below 60%.



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

The natural population growth rate in Kardzhali district dropped sharply in 2020 to  $-7.1\text{‰}$  but was higher than the national average of  $-9.5\text{‰}$ . The district continued to attract considerably more new residents than in the country on average and the net migration rate of  $23.2\text{‰}$  was the third highest in the country, after that in Sofia (district) and Pernik.

Age dependency ratios continued to rise but came close to the national average. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 151.5%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 32.9%, against 34.1% in the country.

Kardzhali remains the district with the smallest proportion of urban population – 40.2%, versus the national average of 72.9%. Nevertheless, the average density of the population living in the urban settlements is relatively high – 1,978 persons/sq. km, against 1,506 persons/sq. km on average nationwide.

### Education

Enrolment in 5th–8th grade in Kardzhali district has continued to decrease and in 2020 was among the lowest in the country – 77.2%, against the national average of 86.5%. At the same time, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education were still comparatively small. The number of primary and secondary school teachers continued to be high – 100 per 1,000 students, versus the national average of 87 per 1,000 students.

However, in 2021 the educational results of the students from the district were once again extremely low. The average score in the 2021 external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 31.7 points, compared to 37.9 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was 3.98, compared to 4.21 nationally. The share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) decreased but again remained the highest one in the country – 18%, compared to the national average of 7%.

Higher education is poorly represented in the district, with 7 university students per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

### Healthcare

In 2020, the health insurance system in Kardzhali district again covered practically the entire population. At the same time, it suffers from a chronic shortage of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – and of hospital beds. Kardzhali is the district with the smallest number of GPs relative to the population. There is 1 GP per 3,067 persons, whereas nationally it is 1 GP per 1,727 persons.

The number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals remains extremely low and in the past few years has even been

falling, reaching 3.49 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 5.52 beds per 1,000 persons.

Hospitalization figures in Kardzhali district are close to the national average, which suggests that there is no clearly discernible “health tourism.”

### Public order and security

In 2020, Kardzhali’s performance in the field of justice and security was once again among the best in the country. The workloads of the local criminal judges have increased in the past few years but they remain relatively low nevertheless, which affects the speed of delivery of justice. In 2020, there were on average 7.5 cases a month per one judge, compared to 8.6 cases per judge nationally. 96% of criminal cases were closed within 3 months, against the national average of 90%.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property in Kardzhali district is the lowest in the whole country – 5 per 1,000 persons, versus 10 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate was higher – 64.0%, versus the national figure of 52.1%.

### Environment

The volumes of carbon dioxide emissions in the district of Kardzhali again remained relatively low in 2019. The amount of household waste in the district is also among the lowest in the country – 253 kg/person, compared to 409 kg/person nationally. At the same time, however, a relatively small portion of this waste is handed over for treatment and recycling – 13%, against 71% in the country.

The share of households connected to a public sewerage system is small – 45.3%, against 76.4% in the country, and connectivity with wastewater treatment plants is similarly low – 44.8%, compared to the national average of 76.4%. These figures find their explanation in the extremely low share of population living in urban settlements.

### Culture

Cultural life in Kardzhali district retained its low intensity in 2020. The pandemic and the restrictions on visits to cultural events added their own negative impact. Visits to the local cinemas fell by 80% and were down to a bare 18 visits per 1,000 persons, against the average of 190 visits per 1,000 persons in the country. Visits to museums dropped by 61% to 39 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 322 per 1,000 persons. Libraries lost 53% of their visitors, shrinking to 138 per 1,000 persons, against an average of 480 per 1,000 persons in the country.

## Key indicators for the district of Kardzhali

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,472	9,606	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,057	4,173	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,419	11,356	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	37.7	35.2	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	58.6	63.7	61.9	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	3.4	(2.0)	(1.4)	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	35.7	33.7	34.3	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	16.8	18.6	17.6	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	9,028	10,206	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,313	3,861	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,908	2,013	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	84.4	67.5	77.3	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	30.5	33.3	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	20.2	20.2	20.2	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	54.0	54.1	59.4	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–3.7	–3.6	–7.1	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	15.3	37.2	23.2	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.78	3.92	3.98	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	34.8	31.9	31.7	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	83.5	80.3	77.2	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	94	100	100	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	2,576	2,985	3,067	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	5.2	5.1	5.0	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	5.1	7.5	7.5	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	45.3	44.8	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	253	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	12.8	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	100	90	18	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	104	100	39	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.



# Kyustendil District

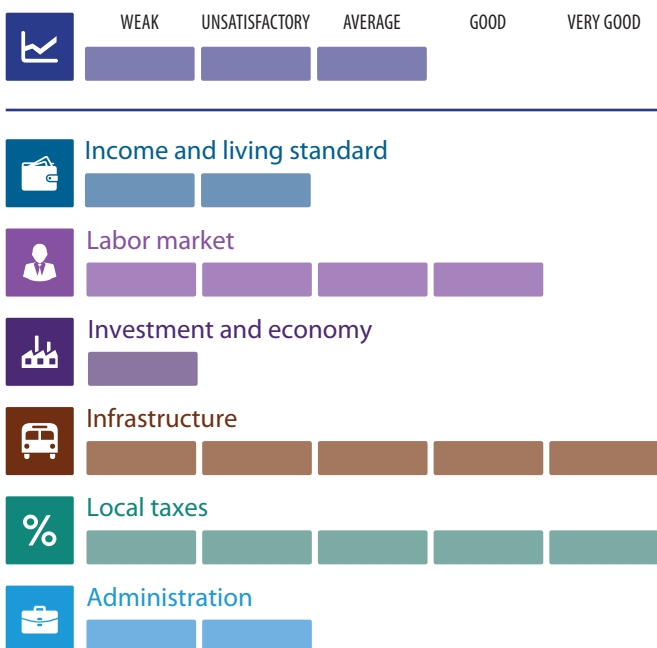
▶ Population (2020)	116,767
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,051.5
▶ Number of settlements	182
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.4



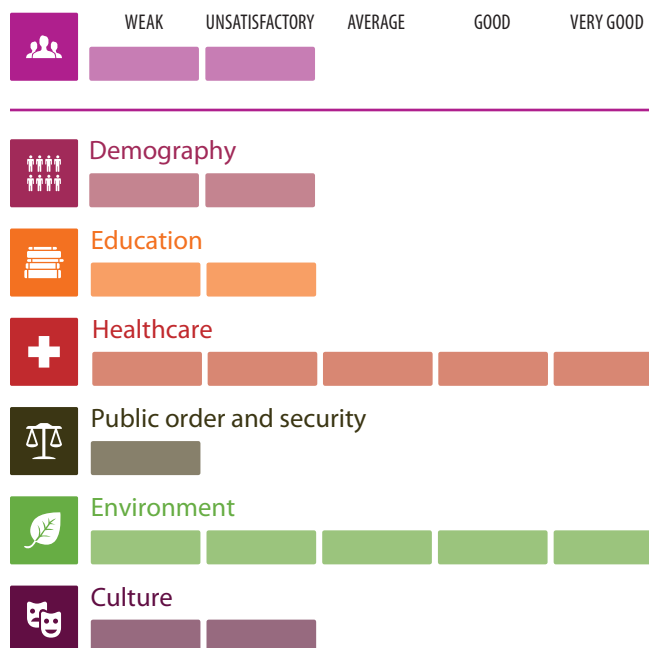
GDP per capita, salaries and incomes in Kyustendil district have all been growing but their levels remain below the national averages. Employment remains low and in 2020 it even went into decline. The trend toward population ageing is still a challenge before the labor market. Investment activity is among the weakest in the country. Utilization of European funds also retains its low levels. The density of the road and railway networks in the district remains higher than the national average. The share of highways and first-class roads is also higher. The average rate of local taxes in the municipalities is among the lowest in the country. However, the Active transparency rating of the local self-government also remains among the lowest in the country.

Due to the extremely negative values of the natural population growth, Kyustendil is among the districts with the oldest population. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school are relatively low. Students' results remain unsatisfactory. Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest number of GPs, but there is a relative shortage of specialist physicians. Its performance in the field of justice is among the poorest in the country. The number of crimes and the share of detected crimes are close to the respective national averages. Kyustendil district is a leader as regards the environmental indicators, which is mainly due to the amounts of generated household waste and of those handed over for treatment and recycling. Cultural life is characterized by its low intensity.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

GDP per capita in Kyustendil district has continued to grow but its rate of increase in 2019 was among the lowest in the country and continues to lag behind those in the other districts. Salaries and incomes have also gone up but remain below the national averages. The annual gross salary reached 10,600 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 15,200 BGN, and annual income per household member reached 5,000 BGN, compared to 6,000 BGN nationally.

The share of population living below the national poverty line remains high – 32.9%, compared to 22.6% in the country. However, the share of population living with material deprivation in the district has remained lower than the national average – 16.9%, against 19.9% countrywide.

### Labor market

In 2020, economic activity rose slightly but remained relatively low – 70.6%, compared to 73.7% in the country. The employment rate in the district remained low, at 66.0%, versus an average of 68.5% nationwide. At the same time, the unemployment rate also remained low.

Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest share of the workforce with secondary education – 69%, compared to 54% in the country, which is in line with the district's industrial profile. The proportion of people with a university degree is 24%, versus 29% nationally, while the share of those with primary or lower education is the second lowest in the country, after that in the capital – 7%, against 17% nationally.

The labor market in the district continues to be affected by the factor of population ageing. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 is 53%, compared to 67% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be only 53 young people joining the workforce.

### Investment and economy

Investment activity in Kyustendil district again remained among the lowest in the country for 2019. FTA acquisition expenditures over the past few years have recorded constant fluctuations but remain extremely low. In 2019, they amounted to 1,070 BGN/person, versus the national figure of 3,155 BGN/person. For its part, FDI was ten times lower than the national average – 372 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 3,655 EUR/person. These figures account for the relatively low production value in Kyustendil district – only 12,800 BGN/person against 28,000 BGN/person as the national average.

Utilization of European funds is also lagging behind. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,272 BGN/person, while the national average was 2,217 BGN/person. Within the district, there was not a single municipality with utilized EU funding per capita above the national average.

### Infrastructure

The density of the road and railway networks in the district again remained higher than the national averages in 2020. The share of highways and first-class roads was also higher – 20.8%, compared to 18.5% in the country, and so was the share of road surfaces in good condition – 54.6% of, compared to the average of 41.4% nationwide.

Households' internet access in the district rose sharply and in 2020 it almost equalled the national average – 62.5%, compared to 75.1% in the country. Higher than average was the share of households connected to a gas supply – 5.4%, against 3.1% in the country. The installed RES capacity was 0.383 kW/person, compared to the national average of 0.603 kW/person.

### Local taxes

In 2021, the average level of the local taxes in the municipalities of Kyustendil district again remained among the lowest in the country. The biggest margin was in the annual rates for motor vehicles and non-gratuitous acquisition of property.

The average tax rate on retail trade in the municipalities of the district was 10.06 BGN/sq. m, versus 12.99 BGN/sq. m in the country. The tax rate for taxi transportation was also considerably lower than the national average.

### Administration

Cadastral map coverage in Kyustendil district is relatively high. The self-assessments of the local administrations for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services were considerably lower than the national average.

In 2021, the AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration went up but remained among the lowest in the country – 61.9%, compared to the national average of 73.2%. The highest ratings were recorded in the municipalities of Kocherino, Kyustendil and Bobov dol – over 65%, though they, too, failed to even reduce their margin with the national average. The municipality of Boboshevo received the lowest ratings within the district.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

The natural population growth rate dropped sharply in 2020 and apart from remaining below the national average, it was among the lowest in the country at  $-17.2\%$ , compared to  $-9.5\%$  nationwide. Like most other districts during 2020, Kyustendil managed to attract new residents and for the first time in at least twenty years the net migration rate was a positive value  $-14.7\%$ .

Nevertheless, due to the highly negative natural population growth rate, Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest rate of population ageing, preceded only by Vidin and Gabrovo in this indicator. The age dependency rate in the district, calculated as the ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14, reached 230.5%, compared to 150% in the country on average, and that of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 was 46%, versus the national average of 34.1%.

The share of urban population is 69.4%, which is close to, but below the national average of 72.9%, but population density is relatively low  $-1,108$  persons/sq. km, against 1,506 persons/sq. km in the country on average.

### Education

In 2020, the rate of enrolment in 5th–8th grade dropped slightly but again remained higher than the national average  $-88.6\%$ , versus 86.5% nationally. Kyustendil is also among the districts with relatively low shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education. The proportion of primary and secondary school teachers remains close to, but below the national average.

The performance of the students in Kyustendil district remains unsatisfactory. Their average score in the 2021 external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 34.1 points, compared to 37.9 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.04, compared to the average of 4.21 nationally. The number of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was 9%, versus 7% as the national average.

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

### Healthcare

Делът на здравноосигурените в областта традиционно е The share of people with health insurance in the district is traditionally very high  $-95.6\%$ , compared to 88.7% in the country. The number of beds in the local general hospitals in 2020 also remained higher, albeit slightly, than the national average  $-5.55$  beds per 1,000 people, against 5.52 per 1,000 people in the country. Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest relative number of GPs, with one GP per 1,478 people, versus one GP per 1,727 in the country, but there is a relative shortage of specialist physicians.

The infant mortality rate is declining and is lower than the national average. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals also remains below average  $-122$  per 1,000 people, compared to 138 per 1,000 people in the country.

### Public order and security

The performance of Kyustendil district in justice remained among the lowest in the country in 2019. The workloads of criminal judges were among the heaviest, which left its impact on the speed of delivery of justice. There were 11.8 cases a month per one judge on average, compared to 8.6 cases nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 82%, against the national average of 90%.

The crime rate, as well as the detection rate in the district, came close to the national average. In 2020, the registered crimes against the person and property were 9.6 per 1,000 persons, versus 9.9 per 1,000 persons on average nationwide. The detection rate in the district reached 51.3%, versus the national figure of 52.1%.

### Environment

Kyustendil district is the country's leader in terms of the environment indicators. This is mostly due to the amount of household waste and the share handed over for treatment and recycling. In 2018, there was a significant drop in the amount of waste generated by households  $-287$  kg/person per annum, compared to the average of 409 kg/person in the country. At the same time, the share handed over for treatment and recycling reached 98%, versus the national average of 71%.

Close to, though slightly below the respective national averages, were the proportion of the population with access to a public sewerage network  $-72.7\%$ , versus the national average of 76.4%, and of that with a sewerage system connected to a wastewater treatment plant  $-62.3\%$ , versus 64.6% countrywide.

Carbon dioxide emissions in the district remained higher than the average ones in Bulgaria.

### Culture

Cultural life in Kyustendil district retained its low intensity in 2019. The pandemic and the restrictions on cultural events in the country had an even worse effect in the district. The relative number of cinema visits dropped by 84%, compared to 71% nationally, to reach 45 per 1,000 persons, against 190 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Museum visits declined by 71%, compared to 58% countrywide. Their relative number was 312 per 1,000 persons and for the first time fell below the national average, which was 322 per 1,000 persons. Visits to libraries fell by 53% to 209 per 1,000 persons, while in the country they decreased by 30% to 480 per 1,000 persons.

## Key indicators for the district of Kyustendil

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,285	9,468	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,773	4,977	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,476	10,576	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	15.8	32.9	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	67.5	67.6	66.0	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	3.6	(2.6)	(4.6)	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	9.6	5.6	7.1	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	22.3	21.5	24.0	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	11,850	12,831	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,118	1,070	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	361	372	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	59.8	62.5	78.6	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	51.8	54.6	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	20.6	20.6	20.4	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	57.0	56.9	61.9	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–13.4	–13.2	–17.2	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–3.8	–4.8	14.7	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.96	4.08	4.04	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.6	30.0	31.4	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	92.2	89.8	88.6	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	83	88	85	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	94.9	97.0	95.6	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,429	1,426	1,478	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.3	11.7	9.6	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	12.8	11.0	11.8	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	72.6	72.7	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	287	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	97.6	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	286	273	43	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	979	1,094	312	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Lovech District

▶ Population (2020)	122,518
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,128.8
▶ Number of settlements	110
▶ Share of urban population (%)	61.8



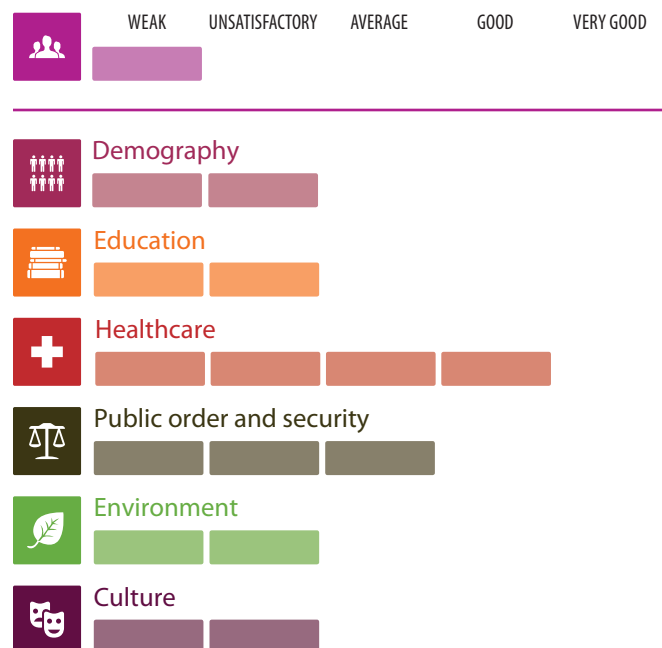
**G**DP per capita in Lovech district grew in 2019, but both its growth rate and its overall value continued to lag behind the national average. Salaries and incomes also registered an increase. The shrinkage of economic activity was accompanied by a decline in both employment and unemployment. Investment activity is not particularly intense. The number of enterprises remains relatively low. The volume of production in the district also remains limited. The share of households with internet access has registered significant growth. The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Lovech district is relatively low. The transparency assessment of the local self-government bodies is declining, but remains higher than the national average.

Due to the strongly negative natural population growth rate, Lovech is among the districts with a high level of population ageing. The performance of the district in the field of education is unsatisfactory. The students' results are relatively low. The number of GPs has been declining in recent years, but remains higher than the national average. The number of beds in the local general hospitals remains relatively low. The average workload of the judges in Lovech district is equal to the national average, but the delivery of justice is significantly faster. The amount of generated household waste is relatively low, but the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains extremely small. Cultural life in Lovech district is not very active.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

In 2019, GDP per capita in Lovech district continued to grow, but at a rate lower than the national average and its value remained below the average one in the country. Salaries and incomes also registered an increase. The average gross salary of employed people reached 11,400 BGN per annum, compared to 15,200 BGN on average nationwide. The average income per household member amounted to 4,500 BGN per year, against 6,000 BGN countrywide.

In 2019, poverty rates in the district again remained higher than the national average. The share of population living below the poverty line was 25.3%, versus 22.6% in the country, and those living in material deprivation constituted 22.4% of the population, compared to 19.9% nationwide.

### Labor market

Over the past few years, economic activity in Lovech district has been rising at a fast and steady rate and has almost caught up with the national average. In 2020, however, economic activity decreased sharply – by 4.6 p.p., which is the largest decline in the country, and came down to 68.9%, compared to 73.7% in the country. This shrinkage in activity was driven by a decline in both employment and unemployment in the district. The employment rate decreased to 64.1%, versus 68.5% nationally.

A relatively high share of the population aged 25–64 in the district has secondary education – 64.6%, compared to 53.9% in the country, and the shares of both university graduates and those with primary or lower education are smaller than the respective national averages – 20.5%, against 29.2% in the country, and 14.9%, against 16.9% in the country respectively.

The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 has decreased to 63.6%, compared to 67.1% nationally. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 64 young people who will join the workforce.

### Investment and economy

Investment activity in Lovech district was again not particularly strong in 2019. The relative number of enterprises in the district remained relatively low – 46 per 1,000 persons, versus the national average of 61 per 1,000 persons. FTA expenditures rose considerably – by 19%, but nevertheless remained low at 1,384 BGN/person, against 3,155 BGN/person. FDI in the district also went up to reach 1,201 EUR/person, against 3,655 EUR/person on a national level. Production value remained low – 14,800 BGN/person, while the national average was 28,000 BGN/person.

Utilization of EU funds is relatively high. Payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached 2,328 BGN/person, versus 2,217 BGN/person on a national level. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipalities of Troyan, Yablanitsa and Lukovit.

### Infrastructure

The railroad network density in Lovech district remained low in 2020. Although the road network density was slightly higher than the national average, the share of highways and first-class roads remained relatively small – 16.2%, versus 18.5% in the country. The share of road surfaces in good condition in 2019 was close to the national average – 41%, versus 41.4% in the country.

While it had previously been lagging behind as regards the relative share of households with internet access, in 2020 the figures were considerably higher and reached 77.2%, compared to the national average of 78.9%. The share of households connected to a gas supply was relatively high – 3.4%.

### Local taxes

The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Lovech district remained relatively low in 2021. An exception was the tax rate on non-residential immovable property of legal entities. In Lovech district it was 2.25‰ on average, compared to 2.04‰ in the country.

Considerably lower than the national averages were the tax rates on motor vehicles – 1.28 BGN/kW, versus 1.52 BGN/kW in the country, and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property – 2.34%, compared to 2.73 nationally.

### Administration

Cadastral map coverage in Lovech district has traditionally been higher than in the country on average and in 2019 it reached 93.8%, against 91.4% nationally.

The local administrations' self-assessment ratings again show that the district is lagging considerably behind as regards the development of e-government, but is performing well in the provision of one-stop shop services.

The transparency ratings of the local administration dropped in 2021, but remained above the national average. Within the district, the highest transparency ratings (over 80%) were given to the municipalities of Troyan, Ugurchin and Teteven, and the lowest one (64%) – to that of Letnitsa.



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

### Demography ■■■

The natural population growth rate came down to -14.5‰ in 2020 and remained considerably lower than the national average of -9.5‰. Like most other districts during 2020, Lovech managed to attract new residents and for the first time in at least twenty years the net migration rate was a positive value - 14‰.

Nevertheless, due to the extremely negative natural population growth rate, Lovech is among the districts with a high level of population ageing. The age dependency rate in the district, calculated as the ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14, has reached 201.6%, compared to 150.6 in the country on average, and that of people aged 65+ to those aged 15-64 it is 45.6%, versus the national average of 34.1%.

A relatively low share of the district's population lives in urban settlements - 61.8%, compared to 72.9% in the country, and the population density of urbanized areas is considerably lower - 836 persons/sq. km, while nationally it is 1,506 persons/sq. km.

### Education ■■■

The district's performance in education is unsatisfactory. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school have declined considerably, but they still remain higher than the respective national averages. Though the enrolment ratio in 5th-8th grade has declined to 86.7%, it still remains higher, albeit by a small margin, than the national average of 86.5%.

Students' results in the district are relatively low. The average score in the 2021 external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade was 29.5 points, versus 37.9 points in the country on average. At the same time, the average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.13, compared to 4.21 in the country, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) rose to 8%, against the national average of 7%.

In 2020, the education system in Lovech district continued to suffer from a relative shortage of teachers. The relative number of teachers in primary and secondary education went up, but it still remained lower than the national average - 85/1,000 students, versus 87/1,000 students in the country.

The number of university students again remained relatively low in 2020, with 2 students per 1,000 persons, against 32 students per 1,000 persons nationally.

### Healthcare ■■■■■

The number of GPs in Lovech district has decreased over the past few years but in 2020 it again remained higher than the national average. The share of people with health insurance also declined to 90.4% but remained above the national average of 88.7%.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals remains relatively low - 4.17 beds per 1,000 people in the district, versus 5.52 beds per 1,000 people in the country.

The number of hospitalizations in the district - 137 per 1,000 persons - is practically equal to the national average of 138 per 1,000 persons. Infant mortality in the district is also equal to the national average.

### Public order and security ■■■■

The workloads of criminal judges in 2020 were equal to the national average but the speed of delivery of justice in Lovech district remained considerably higher. One local judge heard an average of 8.6 cases a month. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 94%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide. Pending cases, for their part, amounted to below 8%, against over 11% nationally.

The relative number of registered crimes against the person and property in Lovech district dropped to 10.5 per 1,000 persons, but remained above the national average of 9.9 per 1,000 persons. However, the detection rate was higher than the national average - 55.2%, against 52.1% in the country.

### Environment ■■■

Carbon dioxide emissions in Lovech district reached 669 t/sq. m in 2019. The amount of household waste generated in the district remained relatively low - 332 kg/person per annum, against 409 kg/person per annum as the national average. However, in 2018 the share of that waste handed over for treatment and recycling was still extremely limited - 11%, compared to the national average of 71%.

The share of population with access to public sewerage networks has been growing but at a very slow rate and in 2019 it was still lagging behind the national average, reaching 69.3%, compared to 76.4% countrywide. A rather low share (57%) of the population was connected to waste water treatment plants, against 64.6% in the country.

### Culture ■■■

Cultural life in Lovech district has shown little intensity. Like essentially all other districts, in 2020 the district fell under the negative impact of the pandemic and the restrictions on cultural events. Cinema visits dropped by 77% to 43 per 1,000 persons, while nationwide they fell by 71% to 190 per 1,000 persons. The decrease was smaller as regards museum visits, which shrank by 45%, against 58% nationwide, and their number remained higher than average - 571 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Library visits decreased by 41%, against 30% in the country, and were down to 134 per 1,000 persons, compared to 480 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

## Key indicators for the district of Lovech

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,653	10,284	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,303	4,454	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,317	11,365	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	38.3	25.3	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	60.9	67.0	64.1	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	9.8	6.5	(4.8)	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	15.6	13.5	14.9	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	20.9	19.1	20.5	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	14,666	14,809	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,165	1,384	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	969	1,201	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	67.8	66.8	77.2	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	37.8	41.0	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	18.0	18.3	18.3	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	74.0	77.9	76.9	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–11.5	–13.1	–14.5	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–5.0	–5.8	14.0	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.00	4.19	4.13	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.7	29.8	29.5	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	90.6	88.6	86.7	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	79	86	85	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	90.5	92.0	90.4	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,464	1,476	1,531	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	12.7	11.2	10.5	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	12.0	9.9	8.6	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	69.1	69.3	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	332	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	11.3	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	112	183	43	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	906	1,031	571	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.



# Montana District

▶ Population (2020)	126,198
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,635.6
▶ Number of settlements	130
▶ Share of urban population (%)	63.7



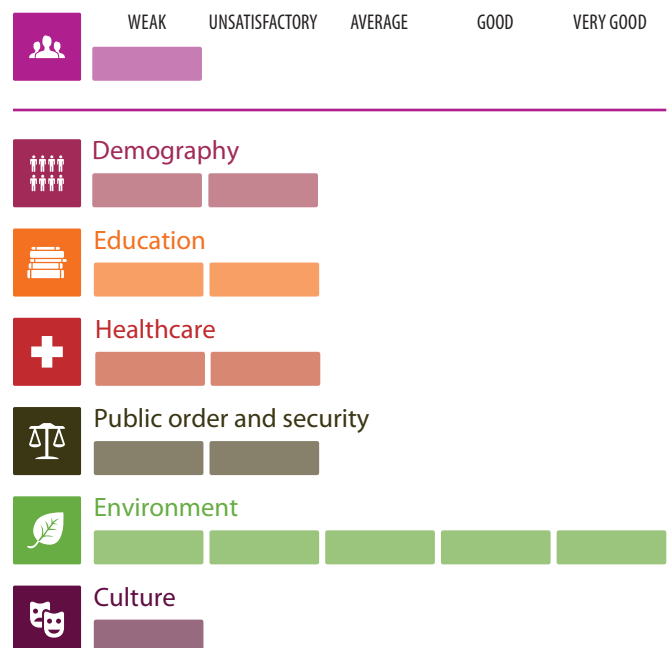
Montana is one of the districts with the lowest incomes and quality of life in Bulgaria, which is the main prerequisite for the high poverty levels among its population. Economic activity has registered the highest growth rate in the country but, at the same time, this has been accompanied by the highest rates of increase in both employment and unemployment, even though they remain considerably less favourable than average. Investment activity is relatively low but utilization of European funds is relatively high. This is the district with the lowest share of highways and first-class roads in the country. The average rate of local taxes is the second lowest in the country. The self-assessment ratings of the local administrations for the development of electronic government continue to lag behind.

The continuing tendency towards population ageing in the whole of Bulgaria remains particularly conspicuous in Montana district. Students' results were once again extremely low in 2021. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education have declined. Access to doctors in the district is relatively good. The workloads of the local criminal judges are considerably lower than the country's average, which has an impact on the speed of delivery of justice. In 2020 Montana recorded the highest number of registered crimes. The district stands well in terms of its environmental indicators, which is mainly due to the low volumes of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere, as well as to the smaller amounts of household waste and its management. Cultural life is characterized by its low intensity.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

### Income and living standard ■■

Montana is among Bulgaria's districts with the lowest incomes and quality of life. GDP per capita in the district went up in 2019 but at a rate half the national average and its value remained relatively low – 9,500 BGN, compared to 17,200 BGN in the country. Salaries and incomes also increased but remained relatively low. The average gross annual salary of employed people reached 11,200 BGN, against 15,200 BGN, and the income per household member was 4,600 BGN, compared to 6,200 BGN nationally.

These indicators are the main prerequisite for the high poverty levels in the district. Compared with the country as a whole, Montana has the highest share of population living below the poverty line – 47.4%, compared to 22.6% nationally. The share of population living with material deprivation was 22.7% in 2019, versus 19.9% in the country.

### Labor market ■■■

The unfavourable trends in the local labor market in 2020 put Montana in the second lowest place in the country in this category, followed only by Targovishte district. Economic activity registered the highest growth rate in the country (7.6 p.p., against a decrease of 0.6 p.p. in the country in 2020) and for the first time it was higher than the national average, reaching 76.2%, compared to 73.7% nationwide. At the same time, this growth was accompanied by the highest rates of increase in both employment and unemployment. Employment went up considerably – by 3.9 p.p., versus a decrease of 1.6 p.p. countrywide, but the low base again placed Montana district last in the country with an employment figure of 52.1%, versus 68.5% nationwide. Unemployment rose by 3.7 p.p., compared to 1.0 p.p. nationwide and its figure remains the highest in the country at 24.1%, against the national average of 5.2%.

A major challenge facing the labor market is posed by the low educational status of the workforce. The share of people aged 25–64 with a university degree is the lowest in the country – 11.3%, versus 29.2% nationally, while the share of the workforce with primary or lower education is among the highest, constituting 28.2%, whereas on a national scale this share is 16.9%.

The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 has continued to decrease and has fallen to 65.5%, compared to 67.1% nationally. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 65 young people who will join the workforce.

### Investment and economy ■■■

Investment activity in Montana district again remained comparatively low in 2019. The relative number of enterprises was among the lowest in the country – 36 per 1,000 persons,

compared to the national average of 61 per 1,000 persons. FTA acquisition expenditures registered a slight increase but also remained among the country's lowest – 1,200 BGN/person, versus 3,200/person nationally. Also, the district was among those with the lowest FDI stocks per capita, with 280 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 3,700 EUR/person.

In spite of that, production value in the district rose considerably to 15,000 BGN/person; however, it remained far below the national average of 28,000 BGN/person.

Utilization of EU funding in Montana district is relatively high. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs reached 2,439 BGN/person, versus an average of 2,217 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the top place in the utilization of EU funds is occupied by the municipality of Montana.

### Infrastructure ■■■

The density of the road and railroad network in Montana district is close to, though below, the national average. However, the share of highways and first-class roads is the smallest in the country – 9.1% in 2019, against 18.5% nationally. Only 28.9% of the road surfaces are in good condition, compared to the national average of 41.4%.

The relative share of households with internet access has registered a considerable decline and in 2020 it was among the lowest in the country – 58.2%, against 78.9% nationwide.

### Local taxes ■■■■■

The average level of municipal taxes in Montana for 2021 was the second lowest in the country, after that of Vidin district. The average tax rate on motor vehicles was the lowest in the country, the retail trade tax – the second lowest, and the tax on non-residential real estate of legal entities – the third lowest. The rates on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and on taxi transportation are also considerably lower than the average rates nationwide.

### Administration ■■■■

In 2021, the local authorities' self-assessment on the provision of one-stop shop services came close to the respective national averages, but those on the development of e-government continued to lag behind.

The 2021 transparency ratings of the local administration went up, but the increase was too small and for the first time they fell below the national average. Within the district, the highest ratings for this indicator were achieved by the municipalities of Boichinovtsi and Valchedrum.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

### Demography ■■■

The continuing trend towards population ageing is particularly conspicuous in Montana district. The natural population growth rate again registered a sharp decline in 2020 and at  $-18.2\%$  (versus  $-9.5\%$  nationally) was the second worst in the country after that of Vidin district. The trend toward in-migration, which was observable in almost all other districts, was in evidence in Montana as well, raising the net migration figure to  $5.4\%$  and for the first time to a positive value. This marked a slight improvement in the age dependency ratios, though their levels remained strongly unfavorable. In 2020 the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 194.5%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 – 44.1%, against 34.1% nationally.

A relatively low share of the population of Montana district lives in urban areas – 63.7%, versus the national average of 72.9%. Population density in the urban settlements is relatively low – 889 persons/sq.km, against 1,506 persons/sq.km on a national scale.

### Education ■■■

In the past few years, the rate of enrolment in 5th–8th grade has been lagging behind the country's average. In 2020 it was 83%, against 87% in the country. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education have been on the decrease but remain higher than the national averages. At the same time, the number of primary and secondary school teachers relative to the total student population has been declining but still remains slightly higher than average, with 88 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 87 per 1,000 students nationally.

The average results of the students from Montana district were again extremely low in 2021. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade went up to reach 30.1 p., but it was once again far behind the national average of 37.9 p. The average result in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature ranked Montana last in the country, alongside Yambol and Silistra – it was 3.94, compared to 4.21 nationally. Nevertheless, Montana can again boast a relatively low share of “fail” (below 3.00) grades, which were below 6%, against 7% nationwide.

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

### Healthcare ■■■

Access to doctors in Montana district remained relatively easy in 2020. The proportion of population cared by GPs is 1,502 persons to 1 GP, compared to 1,737 persons to 1 GP as the country's average. The relative number of specialist physicians is close to, though below the national average.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals has been rising and remains considerably higher than in the country on average, with 6.93 beds per 1,000 persons, versus the national average of 5.52 per 1,000 persons.

Infant mortality in the district recorded a sharp rise and in 2020 it was twice the national average. Much higher were also the hospitalization figures – 204 per 1,000 persons, compared to 138 per 1,000 persons nationally.

### Public order and security ■■■

In 2020 the local criminal judges in Montana district had considerably smaller workloads than in the country on average, which affected the speed of delivery of justice. One local judge heard an average of 5.6 cases, compared to 8.6 cases per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 92%, against the national average of 90%. At the same time, the share of pending cases remained relatively high – 13%, against 11% nationwide.

In 2020, Montana was among the districts with the highest numbers of registered crimes against the person and property. They numbered 13.8/1,000 persons, versus 9.9/1,000 persons nationwide. Nevertheless, the rate of detection again exceeded the national average – 54.1%, against 52.1% in the country.

### Environment ■■■■■

The performance of Montana district as regards the state of the environment remains very good. This is mainly due to the low volumes of carbon dioxide emissions, as well as to the smaller amounts of household waste and its management. In 2018, the average amount of household waste generated annually was 268 kg/person, against the average of 409 kg/person nationwide. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling was 95%, compared to 71% as the national average.

The relatively low share of urban population accounts for the relatively low share of households living in settlements with public sewerage networks – in 2019 it constituted 61.3%, compared to 76.4% in the country. Access to public sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants was available to 35.6%, compared to 64.6% in the country.

### Culture ■

In 2020, cultural life in Montana was once again characterized by its low intensity. The negative impact of the pandemic and the restrictions on cultural events had practically no effect on cinema visits in the district. They dropped by 1% but their number relative to the population remained comparatively low – 96 per 1,000 persons, while nationwide they numbered 190 per 1,000 persons. The decrease in museum visits was comparable to that of the country's average, but they too remained among the lowest in the country, with 67 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Since 2015, there has been no library in the district large enough to be included in the official NSI statistics.

## Key indicators for the district of Montana

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,033	9,522	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,507	4,644	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,129	11,165	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	45.7	47.4	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	52.2	48.2	52.1	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	15.3	20.4	24.1	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	25.6	30.3	28.2	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	12.6	10.0	11.3	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	13,048	14,982	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,157	1,201	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	274	280	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	67.8	78.0	58.2	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	30.5	28.9	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	17.1	17.2	16.9	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	73.0	71.0	72.0	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–14.0	–14.5	–18.2	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–5.7	–6.1	5.4	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.95	4.15	3.94	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	25.2	27.8	30.1	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	82.9	81.1	83.0	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	84	90	88	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	87.2	88.8	87.7	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,505	1,443	1,502	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	12.2	13.1	13.8	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.3	7.7	5.6	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	59.9	61.3	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	268	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	95.3	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	0	97	96	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	138	155	67	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Pazardzhik District

▶ Population (2020)	252,038
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,456.9
▶ Number of settlements	118
▶ Share of urban population (%)	62.6



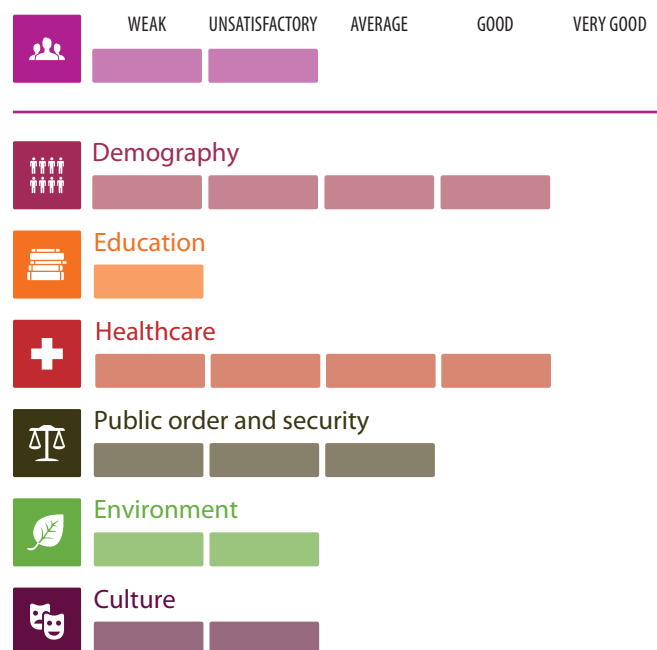
**G**DP in Pazardzhik district continued to grow in 2019, but at a rate below the national average and its amount continued to lag behind the average one in the country. The average annual income per household member declined and poverty levels remained high. The local labor market is still facing the challenge presented by the educational profile of the workforce. Investment activity in the district is not very strong. In 2019 there was an outflow of FDI. Pazardzhik is the district with the highest rating for infrastructural development and the leader in installed RES capacity. The average rate of local taxes levied by municipalities is relatively low. Their self-assessments for the development of e-government and the provision of one-

stop shop services remain below the national average. Age dependency ratios in the district continue to worsen, but remain more favorable than the national average. Pazardzhik is among the districts with the lowest performance in the education indicators. Students' results continue to lag behind the national averages. Access to GPs in the district is better than the country's average. The number of patients admitted to the local general hospitals is extremely low. The workloads of the local criminal judges are close to the national average, but the delivery of justice is faster. The crime rate in the district is relatively low. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains extremely limited. Cultural life in Pazardzhik district is not very active.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT





## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

In 2019, GDP per capita in Pazardzhik district continued to grow but at a rate lower than the country's average and its figure remained below the national average. A similar trend was observable as regards the gross annual salary of employed persons. It reached 11,700 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN in the country on average. However, the average annual income per household member in the district registered a decrease to 4,200 BGN, and compared to the average of 6,000 BGN nationally, it was among the lowest in the country.

These indicator values are the main prerequisite for the high poverty levels of the local population. In 2019, the share of people living with material deprivation was 37.0%, compared to 22.6% in the country, and those living below the national poverty line made up 26.5% of the residents, versus the national average of 19.9%.

### Labor market

Economic activity in Pazardzhik district is traditionally close to, but below the national average. In 2020, similar to the trends in most other districts, it shrank to 72.5%, versus 73.7% in the country. Employment decreased to 67.4%, compared to 68.5% nationally. Unemployment remained at 5.1%, versus the national average of 5.2%.

The educational profile of the workforce remains a persistent challenge facing the local labor market. In 2020, the share of people with a university degree decreased for the third consecutive year and came down to 15.6%, against an average of 29.2% in the country, while those with primary or lower education increased to 24.2%, versus 16.9% nationally.

The demographic replacement ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 reached 66.3% and for the first time was below the national average. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the workforce in the next few years, there are 66 young people who will join the labor market.

### Investment and economy

Investment activity in Pazardzhik district was not particularly strong in 2019. The number of enterprises remained low – 45 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 61 per 1,000 persons. FTA acquisition expenditures in the same year marked a symbolic increase to 2,256 BGN/person, against the national figure of 3,155 BGN/person. There was a drop in FDI stock in 2019 (by 6%) and its relative amount fell back to under 2,000 EUR/person.

In spite of these processes, production value in Pazardzhik district rose faster than the national average, though remaining relatively low – 16,500 BGN/person, against 28,000 BGN/person in the country.

As regards utilization of EU funding, Pazardzhik district is also lagging behind, in spite of the relatively high rate of increase compared to the previous year. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,429 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 2,217 BGN/person. Within the district, the municipality with the highest rate of utilization was that of Panagyurishte.

### Infrastructure

Pazardzhik is the district with the highest rating in terms of infrastructural development. In 2020, the density of its railroad network again remained higher than the national average. The road network density and the share of motorways and first-class roads were lower than the respective national average figures but road surface quality remained relatively high.

The population's access to the internet has improved rapidly and in 2019 it reached 81.7%, exceeding the average of 78.9% nationwide.

Pazardzhik district is the leader in installed RES capacity – 4.2 kW/person, compared to 0.6 kW/person in the country.

### Local taxes

The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Pazardzhik district again remained relatively low in 2021. Out of the five monitored taxes, the only exception was the tax rate on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, which was higher, albeit slightly, than the national average. Considerably lower than the average ones in the country were the local rates on non-residential property of legal entities, motor vehicles, taxi transportation and retail trade.

### Administration

Cadastral map coverage has been rising fast and in 2019 it exceeded the national average, with 93.3% of the district's territory already included, compared to 91.4% in the country. The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services rose considerably in 2021, though still remaining lower than in the country on average. The performance of the district's e-government was rated at 3.12 p. out of 4 p., versus the national average of 3.40 p., and the provision of one-stop shop services – at 3.01 p. out of 4 p, compared to 3.34 p. nationally. The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration went up to 70.4% in 2021, but for the second year in a row it remained below the national average (73.2%). Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipalities of Septemvri and Panagyurishte, each with over 75%.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

In 2020, the natural population growth rate dropped sharply to  $-10.7\%$  and thus fell below the national figure of  $-9.5\%$ . At the same time, however, and similar to most other districts, Pazardzhik managed to attract new residents and for the first time in at least two decades the net migration figure increased to the positive value of  $4.8\%$ .

Age dependency ratios continue to worsen but remain more favorable than in the country on average. In 2020, the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 139.3%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 it was 33.0%, against 34.1% nationally.

The proportion of urban population in Pazardzhik district remains relatively low – 62.6%, versus the national average of 72.9%. Nevertheless, the average density of the population living in urban settlements is relatively high – 2,074 persons/sq. km, against 1,506 persons/sq. km on average nationwide.

### Education

Pazardzhik is among the districts with the worst performance in education, where only Sliven has shown poorer results. In 2020, the rate of enrolment in 5th–8th grade dropped sharply to 79.8%, against the national average of 86.5%, and was among the lowest in the country. Excessively high were also the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education. The relative number of teachers has continued to increase and in 2020 it reached 96 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to the national average of 87 teachers per 1,000 students.

The figures for the average results of the district's students registered a slight decline in 2021 and again remained below the respective national averages. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 30.9 points, versus 37.9 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.03 in the district, compared to 4.21 nationally. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) dropped by 1 p.p. to 12%, but remained considerably above the average of 7% nationwide.

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

### Healthcare

The share of people with health insurance in Pazardzhik district again remained low in 2020 – 85.1%, against 88.7% in the country. Access to GPs in the district is higher than the national average but there is a pronounced shortage of specialist physicians. The provision of beds in the local general hospitals is traditionally higher than average and in 2020 there were 6.34 beds per 1,000 persons, versus the national average of 5.52 beds per 1,000 persons.

Hospitalization figures are extremely low – 87/1,000 persons, versus 138/1,000 persons nationally. This leads to the assumption

that a significant share of the population seeks medical services outside the district, for instance in Plovdiv or in the capital.

Infant mortality in the district recorded a considerable decrease but in 2020 it remained above the national average.

### Public order and security

The workloads of the local criminal judges are close to the national average, but delivery of justice is relatively faster. In 2020, one local judge heard an average of 8.4 cases a month, compared to 8.6 cases nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months rose to 93%, against the national average of 90%, and pending cases went up to reach 10%, versus 11% in the country.

The number of crimes in the district is relatively low, and detection rates are close to the national average. In 2020, the registered crimes against the person and property dropped to around 7.3 per 1,000 persons, versus 9.9 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate dropped by almost 10 p.p. to 52.4%, compared to the national figure of 52.1%.

### Environment

In 2019, carbon dioxide emissions in the district of Pazardzhik remained lower than the average ones in the country. Although in districts with a relatively high share of rural population connectivity to public sewerage systems is usually limited, in Pazardzhik district such access is close to the country's average – 72.7% compared to 76.4% nationally. However, connectivity to wastewater treatment plants lags significantly behind, with 44.1% versus 64.6% nationally.

The household waste generated in the district remains relatively small – in 2018 it was 339 kg/person, compared to 409 kg/person in the country. At the same time, however, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling also remained extremely limited – 13%, versus 71% nationally.

### Culture

Cultural life in Pazardzhik district is not particularly active. In 2020, the pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on visits to public places left their impact on Pazardzhik district as well. The number of cinema visits dropped by 77% to 43 per 1,000 persons, which is far below the national average of 190 per 1,000 persons. Library visits fell by 40%, versus 30% in the country, and their rate of 193 per 1,000 persons was considerably below the national average of 480 per 1,000 persons. Only museum visits managed to remain at levels above the country's average, although they also fell – by nearly 60% (or the general rate of decrease in 2020) to 361 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide.



## Key indicators for the district of Pazardzhik

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,213	9,965	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,592	4,180	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,513	11,675	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	41.4	37.0	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	63.8	69.1	67.4	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	4.7	5.1	5.1	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	23.2	22.8	24.2	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	17.8	17.5	15.6	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	14,754	16,513	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	2,237	2,256	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	2,020	1,890	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	67.8	68.3	81.7	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	41.1	44.4	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	16.2	16.2	16.9	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	68.0	65.4	70.4	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–5.6	–6.7	–10.7	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–4.1	–3.9	4.8	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.95	4.07	4.03	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.4	31.3	30.9	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	82.5	82.4	79.8	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	92	92	96	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	84.7	85.8	85.1	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,667	1,631	1,669	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	9.1	8.8	7.3	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	10.8	10.4	8.4	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	72.3	72.7	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	339	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	13.4	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	0	190	43	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	821	864	361	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Pernik District

▶ Population (2020)	119,808
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,394.2
▶ Number of settlements	171
▶ Share of urban population (%)	77.9



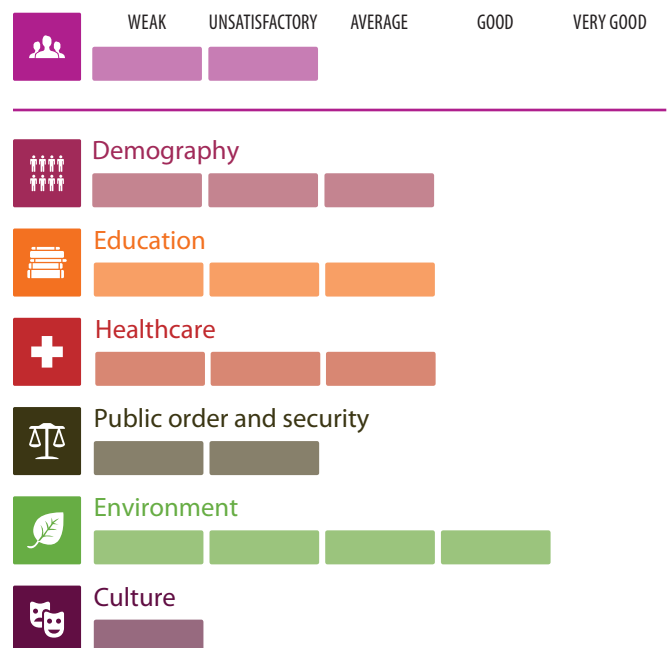
The relatively high incomes in Pernik district are the main prerequisite for the relatively low poverty levels of its population. The workforce has a high proportion of people with secondary education. Population ageing remains a major challenge for the local labor market. Investment activity in the district is relatively weak. Utilization of European funds is growing, but the district still ranks among the last in the country in this category. The share of highways and first-class roads remains low, but road quality is good. The average rates of the local taxes levied by the local municipalities remained relatively low in 2021. Cadastral map coverage in the district has been growing rapidly. The self-assessment rating on the transparency of the dis-

trict's municipalities is among the lowest in the country. Age dependency continues to worsen and is among the highest in the country. The results in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature, which in the district are traditionally lower than the national average, went even further down in 2021. Pernik has the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals. Hospitalization numbers are also among the lowest. The workloads of criminal judges in Pernik district are relatively low, but this does not affect the speed of delivery of justice. The relatively high share of urban population entails a large share of population living in settlements with public sewerage. Pernik is the district with the least active cultural life in the country, which is probably related to its proximity to the capital.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

In 2019, GDP per capita in Pernik district registered very minor growth to 9,400 BGN, against the country's average of 17,200 BGN. At the same time, salaries and incomes have been rising faster. The average gross annual salary of employed people was 11,400 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN on average nationwide, while the income per household member remained among the highest in the country, reaching slightly above 7,000 BGN, against 6,000 BGN countrywide. The explanation for this difference is that salary data are based on place of employment, and those on household income – on place of residence. In other words, when people are resident in Pernik but are working in Sofia, this has a positive effect on the data for household income but not on salary data.

The relatively high incomes also result in relatively low poverty levels in the district. In 2019, the share of population living with material deprivation amounted to 18.8% in Pernik district, compared to 19.9% in the country, while the share of those living below the poverty line was 14.2%, versus 22.6% nationally.

### Labor market

In 2020, economic activity registered a slight decrease to 78.1%, against the national average of 73.7%. This decrease was accompanied by a parallel shrinkage in employment and a rise in unemployment. The employment rate was 69.8%, compared to the average of 68.5% in the country. The unemployment rate reached 8.3%, versus the national average of 5.2%.

Characteristic of the workforce in Pernik district is the relatively large share of people with secondary education. While on a national scale a little over half the working-age population have secondary education, in Pernik district they constitute almost 2/3, while the shares of both university graduates and people with primary or lower education are lower.

A major challenge facing the local labor market continues to be the problem of population ageing. The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 49.5%, against 67.1% nationwide. Thus, for every 100 adults who are about to leave the workforce in the next few years, there are fewer than 50 young people who will join the labor market.

### Investment and economy

Investment activity in Pernik district is relatively weak. The proximity to the capital has an impact on both the number of enterprises and the investment attracted into the district. In 2019, there were 46 enterprises per 1,000 people, compared to 61 per 1,000 people in the country. FTA acquisition expenditures went up but because of their low base, they remained among the lowest in the country. In 2019 they amounted to 1,222 BGN/person, against 3,155 BGN countrywide. FDI stock registered a 5% drop and went down to 1,561 EUR/person, compared to

3,655 EUR/person nationally. The same decrease marked production value in Pernik district, which was 16,700 BGN/person, compared to an average of 28,000 BGN/person nationwide.

Utilization of European funds has been on the increase but its figures still rank Pernik among the worst performing districts in the country. By 15 June 2021, payments made to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,194 BGN/person on average, compared to 2,217 BGN/person on a national level.

### Infrastructure

In 2020, the density of the road and railroad networks in Pernik district again remained considerably higher than the national average. The share of highways and first-class roads was lower – 15.7%, against 18.5% in the country; however, the quality of the roads was relatively good. The share of road surfaces in good condition was 46.9%, against the national average of 41.4%.

The relative share of households with internet access registered a considerable increase and at 83.4% it exceeded the average of 78.9% nationally. The share of households connected to a gas supply in 2020 was low – 0.7%, against the national average of 3.1%. The installed RES capacity is a bare 0.07 kW/person, compared to 0.60 kW/person countrywide.

### Local taxes

The average level of the local taxes in the municipalities of Pernik district again remained relatively low in 2021, and the average rates of all five monitored taxes were lower in the district than in the country. The margin was particularly wide as regards the tax rate on motor vehicles and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property.

Within the district, the lowest taxes were levied by the municipalities of Breznik and Tran.

### Administration

Cadastral map coverage in Pernik district again continued to increase rapidly in 2019 and for the second year in a row it exceeded the national average.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services improved in 2021, though with ratings below the country's average.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration in Pernik's municipalities decreased further and in 2021 it was the second lowest in the country, followed only by the municipalities in Kardzhali district – 59.6%, compared to the national average of 73.2%. Within the district, the highest rating was achieved by the municipality of Breznik, and the lowest one was given to Zemen municipality.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■■■

### Demography ■■■■

The natural population growth rate in Pernik district has continued to decline. 2020 was a year of considerable decrease (to -16.3‰), which distanced it even further from the national average of -9.5‰. At the same time, however, the district attracted a large number of new residents. While this was a trend typical of almost the whole country in 2020, it was especially pronounced in the districts around the capital (Sofia district and Pernik). Thus, for the first time in the last decade, the net migration rate in the district reached a positive value (26.6‰).

Age dependency in the district has continued to worsen and in 2020 it was once again among the highest in the country. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 was 204.0%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to that aged 15–64 it was 40.7%, against 34.1% nationally.

The share of urban population is relatively high – 77.9%, versus 72.9% countrywide, but its density is low – 922 people/sq. km, compared to 1,506 people/sq. km in the country.

### Education ■■■■

The rate of enrolment in 5th–8th grade fell to 89.6% in 2020 but continued to be higher than the national average of 86.5%. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school also shrank and remained lower than the national averages. In 2019, repeaters made up 0.42% of the students, against 0.55% in the country. The share of dropouts was 1.5%, compared to 2.5% nationally.

The relative number of teachers remains relatively high – 92 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 87 teachers per 1,000 students nationally.

The average score in the national external examination in mathematics after 7th grade rose considerably – by over 3 p. – though it still remained relatively low at 32.0 p., compared to 37.9 p. nationally. The average grade in the matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature came down to below the national average (4.06 versus 4.21 respectively) – a situation traditional for the district. At the same time, however, the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) decreased and for the third consecutive year it fell below the national average – 6.6% in the district, against 7.0 in the country.

The small number of university students in the district can be explained with Pernik’s proximity to the capital.

### Healthcare ■■■■

The share of people with health insurance in Pernik district has decreased but in 2020 it remained above the national average – 89.6%, against 88.7% in the country. The district is relatively well provided with GPs, but in 2020 there were relatively few specialist physicians.

Pernik is the district with the lowest number of beds in local general hospitals – 2.45 beds per 1,000 persons, which is half the average number in the country (5.52 beds per 1,000 per-

sons). The relative number of hospitalizations is also among the lowest in the country – 80 per 1,000 persons, compared to 138 per 1,000 persons nationwide. These figures suggest that Pernik’s population seeks medical care outside the district, most probably in the capital with its larger hospitals.

The infant mortality rate in the district has fallen considerably and is lower than the national average.

### Public order and security ■■■

The workloads of the local criminal judges in Pernik district were relatively small in 2020 but this had little effect on the speedy delivery of justice. One local judge heard an average of 5.8 criminal cases per month, compared to 8.6 cases per month per judge in the country. The share of cases completed within 3 months dropped to 90%, or equal to the national figure, while pending cases doubled in number to 13.3%, against 11.1% in the country.

The relative number of registered crimes in Pernik district is close to, but slightly higher than the national average, while the detection rate is practically equal to it. Registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 10.9 per 1,000 persons, versus an average of 9.9 crimes per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate was 52.7%, against 52.1% for the country on average.

### Environment ■■■■

The relatively high share of urban population entails a large share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network – 79.6%, compared to 76.4% in the country in 2019. Connectivity to wastewater treatment plants is also high – 74.5%, against 64.6% countrywide. In 2018 Pernik was once again among the districts with the highest volume of generated household waste – 472 kg/person per annum, compared to 409 kg/person in the country. At the same time, however, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling was also high – 86%, against 71% nationally.

In 2019, carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere in Pernik district were 108 t/sq. km.

### Culture ■■

Pernik is among the districts with the least active cultural life, which is probably due to its proximity to the capital. Cinema visits amount to 19 per 1,000 persons, while in the country they are ten times that figure – 190 per 1,000 persons. In 2020, the pandemic and the restrictions on visits to cultural events in the whole country left their impact on Pernik district as well. The number of museum visits dropped by 51% to 156 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationally. Library visits shrank by 42%, versus 30% in the country, and numbered 135 per 1,000 persons against the national average of 480 per 1,000 persons.

## Key indicators for the district of Pernik

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,153	9,356	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	6,269	7,049	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,321	11,434	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	11.9	14.2	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.7	70.9	69.8	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	7.5	8.2	8.3	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	12.4	13.4	11.3	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	23.8	21.4	25.1	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	17,525	16,730	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,109	1,222	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,647	1,561	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	67.7	68.8	83.4	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	46.7	46.9	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	24.0	23.8	23.9	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	63.0	61.8	59.6	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–11.9	–13.1	–16.3	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–0.7	–0.9	26.6	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.04	4.13	4.06	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.6	28.7	32.0	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	90.7	91.6	89.6	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	90	93	92	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	89.7	91.0	89.6	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,502	1,490	1,536	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	13.7	11.8	10.9	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	4.9	6.3	5.8	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	79.4	79.6	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	472	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	86.3	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	0	0	19	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	317	318	156	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Pleven District

▶ Population (2020)	234,872
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,653.3
▶ Number of settlements	123
▶ Share of urban population (%)	65.9



Although in 2019 GDP per capita in Pleven district again recorded considerable growth, it still remained relatively low. The rise in economic activity in the district was accompanied by a decline in employment and a rise in unemployment. Investment and business activity rallied and grew significantly in 2019, but the indicator values still lagged considerably behind the national average. The share of highways and first-class roads is low and so is road quality. Local taxes remained close to the national average in 2021. The ratings for the transparency of the local governments lag behind the national ones. The population of the district has been ageing rapidly. The performance of students remained poor in 2021. Pleven is a

district with strong traditions in the field of healthcare and in 2020 it was the country's leader in terms of the indicators in this category. The relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals was high, which is probably due to the easy access to doctors and the availability of hospital beds. The workloads of the local criminal judges are relatively low, which has a positive effect on the speed of delivery of justice. The volumes of carbon dioxide emissions remain several times lower than the national average. The drop in attendance to cultural events caused by the pandemic and the restrictions imposed in 2020 have had an even greater impact on the district.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT





## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

### Income and living standard ■■■■

Although in 2019 GDP per capita in Pleven district again recorded a considerable nominal growth rate – 12%, compared to the national average of 10%, it still remained relatively low – 9,800 BGN/person, against 17,200 BGN/person in the country. Salaries also rose relatively fast and their average amount reached 11,600 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN nationwide. Incomes per household member remained generally stable, with a rate of increase for 2019 of a bare 2%, compared to 8% in the country. The average annual income per household member reached 5,900 BGN and for the first time in ten years fell below the national average of 6,000 BGN.

The share of population living with material deprivation remained above the national average in 2019. At the same time, the share of those living below the poverty line shrank to a level below the national average – 20.4% in the district, versus 22.6% nationally.

### Labor market ■■■■

Economic activity in Pleven district continued to intensify in 2020, but at 72.9%, it remained below the national average of 73.7%. This growth was accompanied by a parallel decline in employment and a rise in unemployment. The employment rate shrank at the same rate as the average one in the country and was down to 61.6%, against 68.5% nationwide. The unemployment rate, for its part, rose faster and was double the national one – 11.3%, versus the national average of 5.2%.

In 2020 the educational structure of the workforce in Pleven district marked an improvement. The share of the population aged 25–64 with a university degree rose to 25.4%, against 29.2% in the country, while the share of those with primary or lower education decreased to 19.1%, compared to 16.9% nationally.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 has been rising but it still remains relatively low – 63.2% in Pleven district, against 67.1% countrywide. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 63 young people joining the workforce.

### Investment and economy ■■■■

Investment and business activity in Pleven district rallied and grew significantly in 2019, but the indicator values still lagged considerably behind the national average. The relative number of non-financial enterprises reached 42 per 1,000 persons, versus 61 per 1,000 persons nationally. FTA acquisition expenditures grew by 19%, compared to 15% in the country, and for the first time exceeded 2,000 BGN/person. After the outflow of FDI the previous year, in 2019 its amounts grew considerably – by 123%, compared to the average national rate of 3%, reaching 1,171 EUR/person, versus the national average of

3,655 EUR/person. Production value in the district rose by 11%, against 8% in the country, and in 2019 it reached 14,500 BGN/person, compared to 28,000 BGN/person nationwide.

Utilization of European funds in Pleven district remains close to the national average. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,120 BGN/person, compared to 2,217 BGN/person on a national level. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded by Belene municipality.

### Infrastructure ■■■■

Pleven district is characterized by a higher than average density of its railroad network. The density of its road network is close to, though slightly below the national average. In 2019, the share of highways and first-class roads was low – 12.2%, versus 18.5 in the country, and the share of road surfaces in good condition remained small – 36.5%, compared to the national average of 41.4%.

The share of households with internet access remains low – 68.9%, against the average of 78.9% nationally.

The share of households connected to a gas supply in 2020 was 2.3%, against 3.1% in the country. The installed RES capacity is 0.3 kW/person, compared to the national average of 0.6 kW/person.

### Local taxes ■■■■

Against the background of its relatively weak economic development, in 2021 Pleven district again kept local taxes at levels comparable to the national average rates, though the local rates were significantly higher than the average ones in North-western Bulgaria.

Two of the monitored rates in the district were considerably higher than the respective national averages – the tax on non-residential real estate for legal entities and the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property.

### Administration ■■■■

Cadastral map coverage in Pleven district has registered a considerable increase and in 2019 it exceeded the national average. The local administrations' self-assessments on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services also rose and in 2021 they were above those in the country on average.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration have been lagging behind and in 2021 for the first time they fell below the national average – 71.1% in Pleven district, versus 73.2% nationally. Within the district, the highest ratings of over 82% were achieved by the municipalities of Dolna Mitropoliya, Knezha and Cherven bryag.



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

While in the previous ten years the natural population growth rate had fluctuated between  $-9.0\%$  and  $-11.0\%$ , in 2020 it fell sharply to  $-13.5\%$ , against the national average of  $-9.5\%$ . As in most other districts, the net migration rate reached a positive value, but at  $1.3\%$ , it remained relatively low.

These processes are the main prerequisite for the high degree of population ageing in the district. In 2020, the age dependency rate as a ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 years reached  $187.7\%$ , compared to  $150.6\%$  in the country on average, and to those aged 15–64 years –  $44.2\%$ , versus  $34.1\%$  nationwide.

The share of urban population remains relatively small –  $65.9\%$ , compared to  $72.9\%$  in the country, and population density in the urban settlements is relatively low –  $1,070$  persons/sq. km, while nationally it is  $1,506$  persons/sq. km.

### Education

The district does not perform well in terms of the indicators assessing education. The enrolment ratio in 5th–8th grades rose in 2020 to  $87.3\%$  and remained slightly above the national average of  $86.5\%$ . The percentage of repeaters continued to shrink and came close to the average for the country. At the same time, for the third consecutive year the share of dropouts from primary and secondary school remained high, reaching a figure well above average –  $3.5\%$  in the district, against  $2.5\%$  in the country. The relative number of teachers in primary and secondary schools dropped sharply in 2020 but retained a level above the national average –  $90$  teachers per  $1,000$  students, against  $87$  teachers per  $1,000$  students nationally.

Students' results again remained low in 2021. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was  $31.8$  p., compared to  $37.9$  p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was among the lowest in the country –  $3.97$ , versus  $4.21$  in the country, and "fail" grades (below  $3.00$ ) made up  $12\%$ , against the national average of  $7\%$ .

Pleven is one of the few districts in Bulgaria registering a steady increase in the number of university students over the past few years. In 2020 it reached  $16/1,000$  persons, yet it still remained half the national average.

### Healthcare

Pleven district has strong traditions in the sphere of healthcare and in 2020 it held the top place in the country in this category. The share of people with health insurance in the region remained at levels above the national average –  $91.0\%$  in the district, compared to  $88.7\%$  in the country. Pleven is also the district with the highest proportion both of GPs and specialist physicians. One local GP cares for  $1,243$  persons on average, compared to  $1,727$  persons per doctor in the country.

Pleven is also the district best provided with hospital beds. In 2020 their number even went up to reach  $9.94$  beds per  $1,000$  persons, compared to  $5.52$  beds per  $1,000$  persons in the country.

The relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals remained high in 2020 –  $206$  per  $1,000$  persons, compared to  $138$  per  $1,000$  persons nationwide, which is probably related to the easy access to doctors and the availability of hospital beds in the district. It can also be assumed that residents of other districts come to Pleven to seek medical care.

### Public order and security

The workloads of the criminal judges in Pleven district are relatively small, which has a favorable impact on the speed of delivery of justice. In 2020, one local judge heard an average of  $6.4$  cases a month, compared to  $8.6$  cases nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was  $92\%$ , compared to the average of  $90\%$  nationwide, while pending cases made up  $10\%$ , versus  $11\%$  in the country.

The total number of crimes registered in Pleven district in the past ten years is on the whole higher than the national average but within the past three years it has followed a steady downward curve. In 2020, registered crimes against the person and property in the district constituted  $10.9$  per  $1,000$  persons, versus the average of  $9.9$  per  $1,000$  persons nationwide. The detection rate was  $53.4\%$ , against  $52.1\%$  for the country on average.

### Environment

In 2019, the relative volumes of carbon dioxide emissions in Pleven district again remained many times smaller than the country's average. The share of population living in settlements with access to a public sewerage network amounted to  $57.0\%$ , compared to  $76.4\%$  countrywide.  $53.3\%$  of the population were connected to a wastewater treatment plant, against  $64.6\%$  in the country. Both indicators place Pleven district considerably behind the respective national averages, which is also a consequence of the relatively low share of urban population.

In 2018, the amounts of household waste generated in the district increased for the third year in a row, but they remained below the national average. At the same time, the amounts of waste handed over for treatment and recycling also went up and reached  $90\%$ , compared to the national average of  $71\%$ .

### Culture

In 2020, Pleven district's cultural life again remained characterized by relatively low intensity. The drop in attendance to cultural events caused by the pandemic and the restrictions imposed in 2020 had an even greater impact on the district. Only the number of museum visits reached a level above the national average –  $345$  visits per  $1,000$  persons, against  $332$  per  $1,000$  persons nationally.

## Key indicators for the district of Pleven

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,795	9,813	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,774	5,893	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,461	11,567	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	30.3	20.4	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	64.4	63.2	61.6	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	8.2	7.9	11.3	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	18.8	20.8	19.1	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	24.1	23.1	25.4	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	13,009	14,472	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,722	2,049	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	524	1,171	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	63.6	71.7	68.9	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	33.6	36.5	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	17.1	17.1	17.1	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	75.0	71.8	71.7	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–10.8	–11.0	–13.5	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–5.0	–6.1	1.3	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.94	4.00	3.97	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	26.8	28.8	31.8	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	88.6	87.0	87.3	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	93	97	90	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	90.3	91.9	91.0	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,205	1,212	1,243	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	13.0	11.7	10.9	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	9.4	7.7	6.4	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	56.8	57.0	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	391	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	89.7	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	434	452	93	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	796	854	345	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Plovdiv District

▶ Population (2020)	666,600
▶ Territory (sq. km)	5,972.9
▶ Number of settlements	212
▶ Share of urban population (%)	74.8



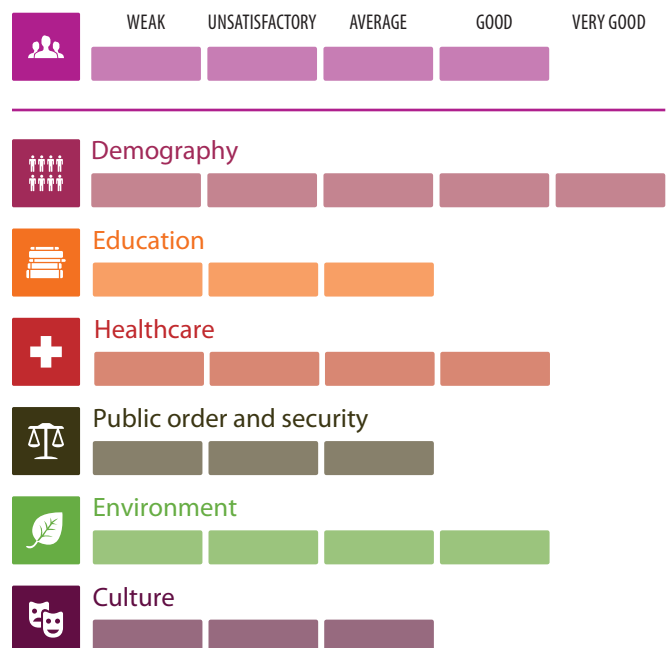
**G**DP per capita in Plovdiv district has continued to grow at a rate similar to the national average, and in 2019 it was the fifth highest in the country. The decline in the labor market activity compared to the previous year was accompanied by a decline in employment and a rise in unemployment, but both remained relatively favorable. However, there has been a decline in FDI stock. The infrastructural development in the district can be assessed as good. The density of the railroad network remains high. The level of local taxation in Plovdiv district is relatively high. The 2021 self-assessments of the local administrations for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services exceeded the national average.

Despite the general trend towards population ageing in the country, Plovdiv performs relatively well. Higher education has well established traditions in the district. Students' results in 2021 were high. Plovdiv is also among the districts with the largest numbers of doctors and hospital beds. These indicators may be the reason for the extremely high number of patients treated in the local hospitals. The number of crimes remains low and their detection rate is relatively high. The generated household waste in the district has decreased for the second consecutive year, but its volume remains relatively high. The pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on cultural events affected Plovdiv to a lesser extent than other districts.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

GDP per capita in Plovdiv district has continued to grow at a rate similar to the national average. In 2019, it reached 14,500 BGN and was the fifth highest in the country whose average was 17,200 BGN. Gross salaries of employed people in the district have also been growing steadily, reaching 13,000 BGN per year, compared to 15,200 BGN in the country. Faster growth was observed in household incomes and in 2019, for the first time in ten years, they exceeded the national average – an annual amount of 6,200 BGN per household member, compared to 6,000 BGN in the country.

Poverty levels in 2019 exceeded the national average. The share of population living with material deprivation amounted to 24.9%, versus 19.9% nationally, and that of people living below the national poverty line – 22.7%, versus 22.6% countrywide.

### Labor market

In the last few years, economic activity in Plovdiv district has been making hesitant progress and in 2020 its growth rate of 71.7% again fell below the average level of 73.7% in the country. The decline in economic activity compared to the previous year was accompanied by a drop in employment and a rise in unemployment rates; however, they both remained more favorable than the respective national averages. The employment rate was 68.7%, against 68.5% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 3.0%, against 5.2% nationwide.

A major challenge facing the local labor market continues to be the educational structure of the workforce. It improved somewhat in 2020 but still remained slightly less favorable than the country's average figures. The share of working age population with a university degree reached 26.4%, against 29.2% in the country on average, while the share of those with primary or lower education reached 19.7%, compared to 16.9% nationally. The population replacement ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 was 68.2% – slightly more favorable than the national average of 67.1%.

### Investment and economy

The relative number of enterprises in Plovdiv district continued to grow in 2019, but with 60 non-financial enterprises per 1,000 persons, it fell slightly below the national average of 61 per 1,000 persons.

Almost equal to the average level for the country were FTA acquisition expenditures – 3,100 BGN/person, versus 3,200 BGN/person nationally. The same was valid for production value, which was equal to the national average of about 28,000 BGN/person.

FDI stock registered a drop of 7% and its volume began to lag behind the national average. By the end of 2019 its value reached 2,668 EUR/person, versus the national average of 3,655 EUR/person.

Plovdiv district has also been lagging behind in the utilization of European funds. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,674 BGN/person, compared to 2,217 BGN/person nationally. 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 is evaluated as good. 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 in 2020 was 17.5%, compared to the national average of 18.5%. The quality of the roads is relatively good – in 2019 roads with surfaces in good condition constituted 48.7%, against the average of 41.4% countrywide.

The relative share of households with internet access has been declining but remains above the average one nationwide – 79.9%, versus 78.9% respectively. The installed RES capacity is close to but above the national average. The share of households connected to a gas supply remains relatively low at 1.4%, against 3.1% in the country.

### Local taxes

As in most districts with better developed economy, in 2021 the level of local taxation in Plovdiv district was again relatively high. The biggest difference remained in the rate on taxi transportation. Its average level in the municipalities of the district was 521 BGN per year, compared to 453 BGN in the country. A higher tax was also levied on non-residential real estate for legal entities – 2.21‰ in Plovdiv, compared to 2.04‰ nationwide.

### Administration

After several years of stagnation, in 2019 the coverage of the cadastral map in Plovdiv district increased sharply from 33.6% to 95.3% and even surpassed the average value of 91.4% for the country.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services for 2021 also went up and even exceeded the national average, albeit by a small margin.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration marked a slight improvement but at 71.1% remained below the national average of 73.2%. Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipalities of Parvomai and Hissarya (nearly 90%), and the lowest by the municipalities of Stamboliyski and Kaloyanovo (slightly above 40%).

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

Despite the nationwide process of population ageing in Bulgaria, Plovdiv district has been performing relatively well. While in the past few years the natural growth rate of the population had continued to decline a little, in 2020 it registered a considerable decrease by 3‰, though at -8.3‰ it still exceeded the national average of -9.5‰. Plovdiv continued to attract new residents in 2020 and its net migration rate rose to 7.7‰. These are processes that have had a relatively beneficial impact on the age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 years reached 140.8%, compared to 150.6% in the country on average, and to those aged 15–64 years – 32.5%, versus 34.1% nationwide.

A relatively large share of the district's population lives in urban areas, and in 2020 it reached 74.8%, compared to 72.9% in the country. Plovdiv ranks third after the capital and Sliven as regards population density in its settlements – 2,503 persons/sq. km, while nationally it is 1,506 persons/sq. km.

### Education

The enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade in Plovdiv district fell slightly in 2020 but remained above the national average. Worse figures, however, were recorded for the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school.

The number of teachers remained relatively small – 82 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 87 teachers per 1,000 students countrywide.

In 2021, students' results remained good. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 38.7 points, against the national average of 37.9 points. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.30, versus the average of 4.21 in the country. "Fail" grades (below 3.00) made up 6.0%, against the national average of 7.0%.

Plovdiv is a district with long and stable traditions in higher education. The number of university students is the third largest in the country, outranked only by that of the capital and Veliko Tarnovo.

### Healthcare

Plovdiv is among the districts with the largest number of doctors and hospital beds. In 2020, one local GP cared for 1,618 persons on average, compared to 1,727 persons per doctor in the country. The index for access to specialist physicians is also more favourable than the national average. The local general hospitals provide 8.11 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.52 per 1,000 persons in the country, which ranks Plovdiv second in the country after Pleven district. These figures probably account for the extremely high relative number of patients

treated in the local general hospitals – 197 per 1,000 persons, compared to 138 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

### Public order and security

The workloads of the criminal judges in Plovdiv district are among the heaviest in the country and in 2020 they continued to increase, reaching an average of 11.5 cases a month per judge, compared to 8.6 cases a month per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 93%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide, and pending cases made up 8%, against 11% in the country.

The number of crimes registered in Plovdiv district remains low, and crime detection relatively high. In 2020 the registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 8.1 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 9.9 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate reached 60.6%, against 52.1% for the country on average.

### Environment

Carbon dioxide emissions in Plovdiv district remain below the country average. The concentration of the district's population in the cities is a prerequisite for a relatively high share of households with access to a sewerage network connected to a wastewater treatment plant – 67%, versus 64.6% nationally, and equally, for a high share of people living in areas with access to public sewerage networks – 82.7%, against the national average of 76.4% in 2019.

The amounts of household waste generated in the district declined for the second year in a row, though they still remained relatively large. In 2018 they reached 446 kg/person per annum, against an average of 409 kg/person nationally. At the same time, the amounts handed over for treatment and recycling also showed an increase and reached 67%, though that was still below the national average of 71%.

### Culture

The pandemic-induced restrictions on cultural activities in 2020 affected Plovdiv to a lesser extent than the other districts. Cinema visits dropped by 37%, compared to 71% in the country, and numbered 234 per 1,000 persons, against 190 per 1,000 persons nationally. Museum visits shrank by 48%, versus 58% countrywide, and were down to 299 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to the local libraries decreased by 24%, compared to 30% in the country, and numbered 223 per 1,000 persons, against 480 per 1,000 persons nationally.



## Key indicators for the district of Plovdiv

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	13,141	14,460	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,093	6,163	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,780	12,996	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	19.9	22.7	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	69.9	70.3	68.7	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	3.6	2.4	3.0	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	20.3	20.2	19.7	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	27.0	26.0	26.4	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	25,792	27,998	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	2,790	3,103	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	2,861	2,668	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	74.4	80.7	79.9	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	50.3	48.7	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	17.1	17.1	17.1	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	75.0	70.1	71.1	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-5.2	-5.3	-8.3	<b>-9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	3.1	3.1	7.7	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.25	4.33	4.30	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	34.7	36.7	38.7	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	88.6	87.8	87.4	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	78	84	82	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	87.1	87.6	87.4	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,571	1,588	1,618	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	8.6	8.3	8.1	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	11.0	11.4	11.5	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	81.6	82.7	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	446	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	66.8	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	874	373	234	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	448	575	299	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Razgrad District

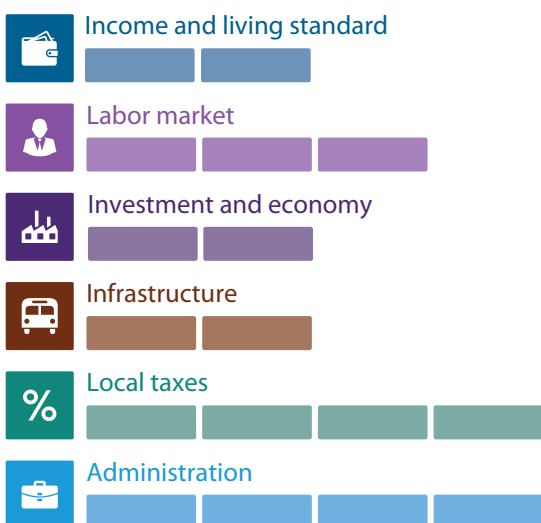
▶ Population (2020)	110,300
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,639.7
▶ Number of settlements	103
▶ Share of urban population (%)	46.6



The lagging behind of both the economic development and the incomes in Razgrad has left its impact on the poverty levels in the district. Employment has been declining and unemployment has risen, with both remaining significantly more unfavorable than the national average. The local labor market continues to face the challenge posed by the educational structure of the workforce. Investment activity in the district remains low. The density of the road network is relatively high, but the shares of highways and first-class roads, as well as that of road surfaces in good condition, are extremely low. The average level of local taxes levied by the local municipalities is lower than the national average. The self-assessments of the local administrations on the development of e-government and the provision

of one-stop shop administrative services are improving. The natural population growth rate has fallen considerably, but the net migration rate has increased. Razgrad is among the districts with the smallest share of urban population. The district's performance in the field of education is unsatisfactory. Students' results again remained relatively low in 2021. Razgrad is among the districts with the most acute shortage of doctors. The number of crimes in the district is relatively low and their detection rate is high. Razgrad ranks last among the districts in terms of the environmental indicators. The share of the population in settlements with a public sewerage network remains low. The pandemic and the country-wide restrictions on cultural events in 2020 have had a strong impact on cultural life in Razgrad district as well.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT





## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

### Income and living standard ■■■

Despite the low starting point, GDP per capita in Razgrad district has been growing at a slower pace than in the country on average and in 2019 it reached 10,400 BGN, against 17,200 BGN nationally. Gross salaries in the district rose at the country's average rate, but remained relatively low – 12,800 BGN per year, compared to 15,200 BGN per year in the country. In 2019, household incomes rose significantly (by 23%, versus 8% in the country) and reached 5,400 BGN/household member, though still remaining below the national average of 6,000 BGN.

The slow growth rate of the local economy, as well as of incomes, has also left its impact on the poverty levels in Razgrad district. The share of the population living with material deprivation in 2019 was 35.8%, compared to 19.9% in the country, and the population living below the national poverty line made up 28.0%, versus 22.6% nationwide

### Labor market ■■■■

After a steep rise in 2019, in 2020 economic activity in the district retained its level of 71.4%, compared to 73.7% in the country. At the same time, however, employment rates declined and unemployment rates went up, both remaining considerably less favorable than the respective national averages. The employment rate reached 60.8%, compared to 68.5% in the country, while the unemployment rate also rose to reach 10.6%, against the average of 5.2% nationwide.

A major challenge still facing the local labor market is the educational structure of the workforce. In 2020 the share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education was 30.7%, compared to 16.9% nationally, and of those with a university degree – 19.5%, against 29.2% in the country on average. It should be noted, however, that in recent years the educational level of the district's workforce has been improving.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 65.3%, compared to the national average of 67.1%. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 65 young people joining the workforce.

### Investment and economy ■■■

Investment activity in Razgrad district remained low in 2019. Razgrad is among the districts with the lowest relative number of enterprises – 39 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 61 per 1,000 persons. Production value reached 16,700 BGN/person, compared to 28,000 BGN/person in the country. FDI registered a drop and remained among the lowest in the country – 182 EUR/person, versus 3,655 EUR/person nationally. At the same time, there was a considerable rise in FTA acquisition expenditures which reached 2,415 BGN/person, compared to the average of 3,155 BGN/person in the country.

Utilization of European funds has been lagging behind. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,739 BGN/person, compared to 2,217 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded by the municipalities of Ispernih and Kubrat.

### Infrastructure ■■■

The density of the district's railroad network is close to, though slightly below the country's average. The road network density is higher, but the share of highways and first-class roads is extremely low – 11.1%, compared to 18.5% countrywide, and so is the share of road surfaces in good condition – 17.6%, versus 41.1% nationally.

The relative share of households with internet access went further up in 2020 to reach 73.4%, though it still remained lower than the average of 78.9% nationwide. The installed RES capacity is negligible – 0.005 kW/person. The share of households connected to a gas supply is relatively high – 4.9%, compared to the national average of 3.1%.

### Local taxes ■■■■■

In 2021, the average level of local taxes in Razgrad district's municipalities remained lower than the national average. Among the five monitored local taxes, only the tax on non-residential real estate of legal entities was higher in Razgrad district than the average one in the country.

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

### Administration ■■■■■

After several years of stagnation, in 2019 cadastral map coverage in Razgrad district rose sharply from 35.6% to 96.2% of its territory, and even exceeded the country's average of 91.4%.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services went up in 2021 but remained considerably below the national average.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration reached 73.8% in 2021 and exceeded the national average of 73.2%. Within the district, the municipalities of Razgrad city and Tzar Kaloyan performed best as regards the transparency indicator.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

### Demography ■■■■

While for five years in a row the natural population growth rate in Razgrad district had fluctuated between  $-8\%$  and  $-9\%$ , in 2020 it fell considerably to  $-14.2\%$ . The net migration rate went up and for the first time in at least twenty years it recorded a positive value, thus joining the trend in almost all of the country's districts.

The above processes are reflected in the age dependency ratios as well. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 164.2%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 34.7%, versus the national average of 34.1%.

Razgrad is one of the three districts, along with those of Kardzhali and Silistra, where less than 50% of the population lives in cities. In 2020, 46.6% of the population was urban, compared to 72.9% in the country. Its density was also relatively low – 834 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,506 people/sq. km countrywide.

### Education ■■

The district's performance as regards the education indicators is unsatisfactory. The rate of enrolment of schoolchildren in 5th–8th grade in 2020 was 85.5%, against 86.5% nationally. The percentages of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school have been decreasing, but while the number of repeaters is comparatively small, that of dropouts has reached the national average.

Students' results for 2021 again remained relatively low. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 31.2 points, versus 37.9 points nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 3.96, compared to 4.21 in the country, and "fail" grades (below 3.00) made up 10%, against the national average of 7%.

The relative number of teachers in primary and secondary education remains close to the national average.

The single provider of higher education in Razgrad is a branch of Ruse University. This accounts for the small number of university students in the district – the 2020 data show just 2 students per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 students per 1,000 persons nationally.

### Healthcare ■■■■

The share of people with health insurance in Razgrad district remains extremely high – 95.4%, compared to 88.7% nationally.

At the same time, Razgrad is among the districts with the most acute shortage of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians. In 2020 one local GP cared for 2,298 persons on average, compared to 1,727 persons per doctor in the country.

The relative number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals is also relatively small – 5.01 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.52 per 1,000 persons in the country. At the

same time, the relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is high, with 162 hospitalizations per 1,000 persons, compared to 138 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

The infant mortality rate has decreased to equal the national average.

### Public order and security ■■■■

The workloads of the criminal judges and the speed of delivery of justice in Razgrad district are close to the average ones in the country. In 2020 one local judge heard an average of 8.9 criminal cases a month, compared to 8.6 cases per judge nationally, while the proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 91%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide. Pending cases constituted 8%, against 11% in the country.

The number of crimes registered in Razgrad district is relatively low, and crime detection is high. In 2020 the registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 8 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 10 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate dropped to 65.7%, which was again considerably above the national average of 52.1%.

### Environment ■

Among all of Bulgaria's districts, Razgrad ranks last as regards the environmental indicators. Due to the low concentration of people in urban areas, it is one of the districts with the worst results for the share of population with access to sewerage systems connected to wastewater treatment plants – in 2019 it was 41.9%, versus 64.6% nationally, as well as in terms of the share of population living in settlements with a public sewerage network – again 41.9%, compared to the national figure of 76.4%.

Razgrad district generates greater amounts of household waste than any other district in Bulgaria. Its average volume reached 529 kg/person annually, compared to 409 kg/person in the country on average. At the same time, the amounts handed over for treatment and recycling were a mere 9%, versus the national average of 71%.

Razgrad is among the districts with relatively small volumes of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere.

### Culture ■■■

The pandemic and the restrictions on cultural events in 2020 affected Razgrad district's cultural life no less than the rest of the country. The number of visits to the local museums and libraries decreased by more than the national average – the former by 69% to 173 per 1,000 persons, versus 58% and 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide, and the latter by 44% to 233 per 1,000 persons, compared to 30% and 480 per 1,000 persons in the country.

Visits to the cinema shrank by 66%, compared to 71% in the country, and numbered 36 per 1,000 persons, compared to 190 per 1,000 persons nationally.

## Key indicators for the district of Razgrad

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,709	10,416	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,408	5,420	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,569	12,814	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	24.2	28.0	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	56.2	61.8	60.8	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	11.1	9.6	10.6	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	36.6	31.6	30.7	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	20.0	18.8	19.5	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	15,560	16,650	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,780	2,415	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,564	(182)	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	63.3	69.5	73.4	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	21.2	17.6	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	19.2	19.2	19.2	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	76.0	73.2	73.8	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-8.7	-9.0	-14.2	<b>-9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	-4.5	-3.9	5.3	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.80	4.02	3.96	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.1	31.1	31.2	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	88.2	85.4	85.5	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	88	92	88	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	94.3	96.5	95.4	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	2,306	2,172	2,298	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.6	9.9	8.0	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	9.4	9.2	8.9	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	41.9	41.9	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	529	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	8.5	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	98	106	36	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	521	563	173	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Ruse District

- ▶ Population (2020)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

214,103  
2,803.4  
83  
76.6



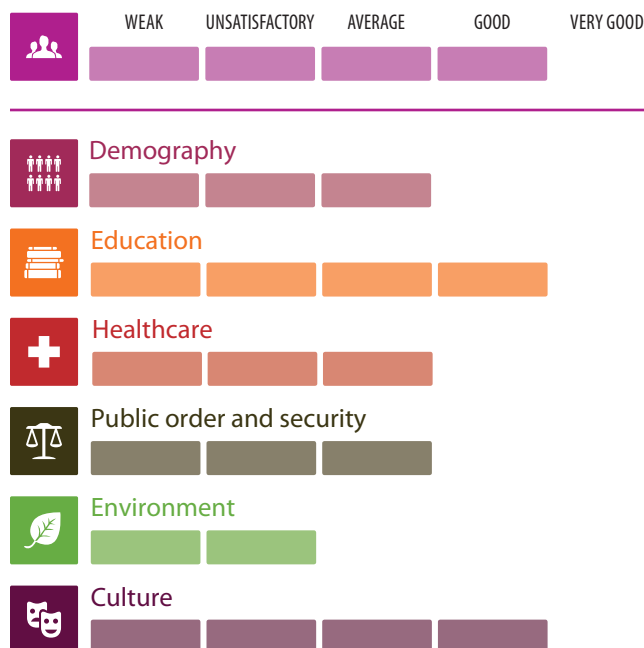
GDP per capita in Ruse district has been growing, but at a significantly lower rate within the past few years, and so the district has been increasingly lagging behind the national averages. Poverty levels are similar to the average ones in the country. In 2020 there was a rally in the labor market. Employment rates went up and unemployment rates fell. Ruse is also among the districts with the most highly educated workforce. Investment activity is moving closer to the national average. Ruse is the district with the highest railway network density in the country. A bare 11.5% of the road surface is in good condition. The average level of the tax burden is close the national average. Cadastral map coverage in the district has been rising. The rate of natural population growth continues to decline.

Ruse is among the districts with the highest levels of urbanization. The performance of the students from the district is close to the average one in the country. The healthcare system continues to suffer from a shortage of doctors. In the past few years the number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals has increased but their general availability remains relatively limited. The workloads of the local criminal judges are among the heaviest in the country but this does not have a negative effect on the speed of delivery of justice. The share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains extremely low. The pandemic of 2020 and the countrywide restrictions on cultural events have had a strongly negative effect on the district's cultural life.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

### Income and living standard ■■■

GDP per capita in Ruse district has been rising, but its growth rate in the past few years has been relatively low, and the district is increasingly lagging behind the national average. While two decades ago GDP in the district was lower than the country's average by about 12–13%, in 2019 it reached 12,800 BGN, compared to 17,200 BGN in the country – a difference of 25%. Regarding salaries, the situation is almost identical – in 2019 the average gross salary in the district reached 12,300 BGN per year, compared to 15,200 BGN countrywide.

For the third year in a row, in 2019 household incomes in the district stayed below the national average and their growth rate was lower as well.

Poverty levels in the district in 2019 were similar to the national average. The share of the population living below the national poverty line was 22.2%, compared to 22.6% in the country, and of those living with material deprivation – 25.2%, versus 19.9% nationally.

### Labor market ■■■■■

In 2020, there was a rally in the labor market. Economic activity continued to grow and for the first time in almost ten years it rose above the national average. This increase was accompanied by growing employment and declining unemployment. The employment rate was among the highest in the country – 71.4%, against 68.5% nationally.

Ruse is also among the districts with the most highly educated workforce. The share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 has reached 31.2%, compared to 29.2% nationwide, and of people with primary or lower education – 11.7%, versus 16.9% in the country.

The local labor market continues to face the challenge of population ageing. In 2020, the replacement ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 was 61.5%, compared to 67.1% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 62 young people joining the workforce.

### Investment and economy ■■■

In 2019, investment activity in Ruse district came close to the national average. The number of enterprises reached 54 per 1,000 persons, compared to 61 per 1,000 persons in the country. For two consecutive years, FTA acquisition expenditures increased to reach 2,053 BGN/person, against 3,155 BGN/person nationally. There was also a steep rise in accumulated FDI flows, which by the end of 2019 reached 1,992 EUR/person, versus the national average of 3,655 EUR/person.

Production value went up to 25,000 BGN/person, compared to 28,000 BGN/person nationally.

Utilization of European funds in Ruse has registered a significant increase though it is still lagging behind the average level in the country. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,917 BGN/person, compared to 2,217 BGN/person on a national level. Within the district, the leader in utilization of EU funding is Byala municipality.

### Infrastructure ■■■

Ruse is the district with the most dense railway network in the country. The density of the road network and the share of highways and first-class roads are higher than average but road quality remains extremely low. A bare 11.5% of road surfaces are in good condition, against 41.4% nationwide, which is the lowest figure for 2019 in the whole country.

The percentage of households in the district with internet access is on the decline but remains relatively high at 80.0%, compared to 78.9% in the country.

The installed RES capacities are small – 0.03 kW/person. The share of households connected to a gas supply is relatively high – 3.9%, compared to the national average of 3.1%.

### Local taxes ■■■

In 2021, the average level of the tax burden in Ruse district was close to the country's average. Among all monitored taxes, the only one where there was a significant difference with the national average was the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, which in Ruse district was lower.

The local taxes on motor vehicles and retail trade were higher but they did not differ much from the average ones.

### Administration ■■■■

After two years without any major progress, cadastral map coverage in Ruse district rose sharply from 43% to 96% and even exceeded the national average of 91%.

In 2021, the local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government went down and the district's average ratings fell below the national average. However, the self-assessments on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services achieved high scores.

There was a big increase in the transparency ratings of local government bodies and they were again higher than the country's average. Within the district, the municipalities with the highest ratings were those of Dve Mogili and Ruse city, and those with the lowest ratings were the ones in Byala and Veto-vo (slightly above 50%).



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

Natural population growth in Ruse district has continued to decline and in 2020 it fell to -13.5‰, against the national average of -9.5‰. Net migration increased in almost the whole country and in a great number of districts its rate was a positive value. Ruse district was no exception but its net migration rate was the unremarkable 0.7‰.

These are processes that have had an extremely negative impact on the age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 years has reached 186.6%, compared to 150.6% in the country on average, and to those aged 15–64 years – 37.8%, versus 34.1% nationwide.

Ruse is among the districts with a high level of urbanization – in 2020 76.6% of the population were living in urban settlements, compared to 72.9% nationally, while the population density was 1,646 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,506 persons/sq. km in the country.

### Education

The number of teachers in primary and secondary schools in Ruse has been falling but remains above the national average. The share of repeaters remains lower than nationally and is decreasing even further, although the share of dropouts from primary and secondary school still remains high.

The enrolment ratio in 5th to 8th grade still fails to catch up with the national average, with 84.5%, versus the national average of 86.5% in 2020.

Students' results for 2021 again remained close to the average ones in the country. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade rose to 39.1 points, compared to 37.9 points nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was down to 4.19, whereas the national average was 4.21. The shrinking in the numbers of university students from previous years has slowed down and in the past three years they were 29 per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 per 1,000 persons nationally.

### Healthcare

In 2020, the healthcare system in Ruse district continued to suffer from a shortage of doctors. One local doctor was caring for an average of 2,254 persons from the population, compared to 1,727 people per doctor in the country. The number of specialist physicians was also relatively low.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of beds in the local general hospitals, but bed availability still remains relatively limited. Thus, in 2020 there were 5.04 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.52 per 1,000 persons in the country. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals was higher than the national average – 146 per 1,000 persons, compared to 138 per 1,000 persons in the country.

The infant mortality rate in the district has fallen considerably and at 2‰ in 2020, it was the lowest in the whole country where the average for that year was over 5‰.

The share of people with health insurance has dropped to 87.7% and is lower than the national average of 88.7%.

### Public order and security

Although the workloads of the criminal judges in Ruse district were again relatively heavy in 2020, this did not have a negative impact on the speed of delivery of justice. One local judge heard an average of 11.4 cases a month, compared to 8.6 cases per one judge countrywide. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 95%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide, and that of pending cases – 7%, versus 11% nationally.

The crime rate in Ruse district is relatively low, and the detection rate relatively high. In 2020, the registered crimes against the person and property in the district constituted 8.9 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 9.9 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate, for its part, rose to 56.9%, against 52.1% for the country on average.

### Environment

Carbon dioxide emissions in Ruse district are relatively low. In 2018, the amounts of household waste generated in the district were close to the national average. At the same time, the share handed over for treatment and recycling remained extremely low at 17%, compared to the national average of 71%.

The share of the population with access to public sewerage systems remains relatively low – 68.9%, versus 76.4% in the country on average. Nevertheless, in 2019 the whole sewerage network was already connected to wastewater treatment plants, compared to the national average of 64.6%.

### Culture

The pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on cultural events in 2020 left their negative impact on Ruse district's cultural life no less than in the rest of the country. The number of visits to the local museums decreased by half – 51%, compared to 58% nationally, and dropped to 277 per 1,000 persons, versus 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Library visits were also reduced by half (whereas in the country they shrank to 1/3) and numbered 303 per 1,000 persons, compared to 480 per 1,000 persons in the country.

Visits to the cinema shrank by 70% to 224 per 1,000 persons, though their levels remained above the national average of 190 per 1,000 persons.



## Key indicators for the district of Ruse

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,769	12,771	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,416	5,702	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,185	12,329	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	14.1	22.2	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	67.7	69.6	71.4	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	5.2	3.1	(2.6)	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	12.9	11.4	11.7	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	29.1	30.9	31.2	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	23,237	25,111	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,948	2,053	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	1,964	1,992	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	71.9	84.4	80.0	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	21.8	11.5	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	18.3	18.2	18.2	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	65.0	71.4	74.9	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-9.7	-10.2	-13.5	<b>-9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	-2.9	-4.1	0.7	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.13	4.25	4.19	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	35.0	35.2	39.1	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	84.9	84.4	84.5	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	92	96	91	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	87.0	88.3	87.7	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	2,115	2,155	2,254	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.0	9.7	8.9	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	10.0	9.6	11.4	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	68.7	68.9	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	404	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	16.7	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	717	746	224	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	391	565	277	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Shumen District

▶ Population (2020)	172,022
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,389.7
▶ Number of settlements	151
▶ Share of urban population (%)	59.9



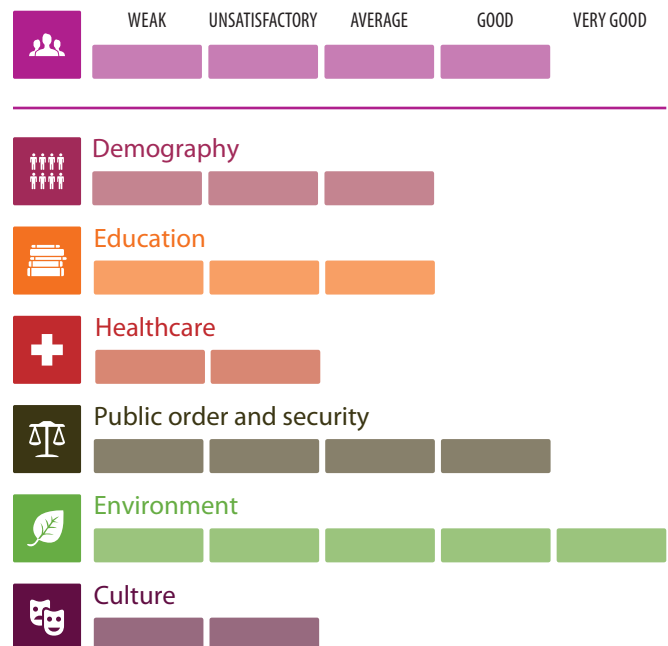
The growth of GDP, incomes and salaries in Shumen district has continued, though it is not sufficient for convergence with the respective national averages. Poverty levels are relatively high. Unemployment is still the main problem facing the local labor market. Investment activity remains relatively low. FTA acquisition expenditures and FDI stocks have recorded a decrease. Shumen is the district with the highest share of first-class roads and highways in the country. The municipalities in the district have kept local taxes relatively low. In 2021 there was an improvement in the self-assessments of the local administrations for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services but they remained relatively low.

Population ageing in Shumen district is accelerating relatively fast. Students' performance is still poor. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The number of hospitalizations is much below the country's average. The workloads of the local criminal judges remain low and this has a favorable effect on the speed of delivery of justice. The crime rate in the district continues to fall, and the detection rate to rise. The high assessment of Shumen district in the environment category is due mostly to the low volumes of household waste and its management. The pandemic and the restrictions on cultural events in 2020 have had a negative impact on the district's cultural life.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■

### Income and living standard ■■■■

The growth of GDP per capita in Shumen district has continued, reaching 10,200 BGN/person in 2019 and placing the district in the middle lower half of the ranking scale for this indicator. Incomes and salaries have also continued to rise, but they too remain below the respective national averages. The average gross annual salary of employed people was 12,100 BGN, versus 15,200 BGN in the country, and the average income per household member was 5,300 BGN, compared to 6,000 BGN per household member nationally.

Shumen continues to face significant problems with poverty levels. The share of the population below the national poverty line is 29.1%, compared to 22.6% in the country, and that of people living with material deprivation – 18.5%, compared to 19.9% nationally.

### Labor market ■■■■

Economic activity in the district has continued to increase and in 2020 it was among the highest in Bulgaria, reaching 77.8%, compared to 73.7% in the country. Employment maintained its level – 66.5%, compared to 68.5% in the country, but the unemployment rate increased to 11.3%, against 5.2% in the country.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 has decreased to 66.3%, compared to 67.1% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market, there are 66 young people who will join the workforce.

A challenge facing the labor market in Shumen district is the educational structure of the workforce. The share of people aged 25–64 with primary or lower education has decreased slightly to 27.1%, but is still above the national average of 16.9%. The share of people with a university degree has also increased, reaching 24.6%, compared to 29.2% in the country.

### Investment and economy ■■

Investment activity in Shumen district remained relatively low in 2019. The number of enterprises in Shumen was small – 41 per 1,000 persons, against 61 per 1,000 persons nationally. FTA acquisition expenditures, as well as FDI recorded a decrease and they remained considerably lower than in the country. FTA acquisition expenditures amounted to 1,804 BGN/person, compared to 3,155 BGN/person in the country, and FDI was 665 EUR/person, compared to 3,655 EUR/person in the country.

The above figures have resulted in relatively low production volumes – 16,700 BGN/person, compared to 28,000 BGN/person nationally.

The district has also underperformed as regards the utilization of European funds. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the dis-

trict to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,690 BGN/person, while the national average was 2,217 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Novi Pazar.

### Infrastructure ■■■■■■

The density of the road and railway networks in Shumen district is higher than the national average. Shumen is also the district with the largest share of first-class roads and highways in the country for 2020 – 36.4%, compared to 18.5% in the country. Road quality also continues to be higher than the national average, with road surfaces in good condition making up 45.9%, versus 41.4% in the country in 2019.

Household access to the internet increased to 82.5% in 2020 and was among the highest in the country. The share of households connected to a gas supply is identical to the national average – 3.1%. The installed RES capacity is significantly below the national average.

### Local taxes ■■■■■■

The municipalities in Shumen district again kept the levels of local taxes relatively low in 2021. The rates higher than the respective national averages were those on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and on motor vehicles. At the same time, the taxes on taxi transportation, immovable real estate for legal entities and retail trade were significantly lower.

### Administration ■■■■

In line with the progress made throughout the country, the coverage of the cadastral map in Shumen has increased significantly in recent years and in 2019 it already included 90.2% of the district's territory, against 90.4% nationally.

The self-assessments of the local administrations for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services improved in 2021 but remained relatively low.

Similarly, the transparency ratings of the municipalities in the district went up, though remaining relatively low. In 2021, the average AIP active transparency rating in the district was 66.4%, compared to 73.2% nationally. Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipalities of Hitрино, Smyadovo and Nikola Kozlevo.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

In 2020, population ageing in Shumen district went on accelerating relatively quickly. The natural population growth rate dropped to -11‰, compared to -9.5‰ nationally. At the same time, the district continued to attract new residents in 2020 and the net migration rate remained positive for the third consecutive year, reaching 8.2‰.

The age dependency rate as a ratio between the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 160.3%, compared to the national average of 150.6%, and to the 15–19 age group it was 34.4%, versus 34.1% in the country.

The share of urban population has continued to decline and in 2020 it dropped to 59.9%, versus the national average of 72.9%. Its density also remains low – 885 persons/sq. km in 2019, compared to 1,506 people/sq. km on average countrywide.

### Education

The coverage of the education system has been declining and moving further away from the national average. In 2020, the net enrolment in 5th–8th grade was 82.4%, against 86.5% nationally. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education have sustained levels close to the respective national averages. The number of teachers has been on the decrease but remains relatively high. In 2020 their proportion was 93 per 1,000 students, compared to 87 teachers per 1,000 students in the country.

Students' results remained low in 2021. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 30.4 points, versus 37.9 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 3.98, compared to 4.21 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 9.5%, against 7% nationally.

Interest in Shumen University has been gradually declining since 2006, with the number of students dropping from 45 to 38 per 1,000 persons within a decade, though remaining higher than the national average of 32 students per 1,000 persons.

### Healthcare

The healthcare system in Shumen district suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The number of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – is below the national average. In 2020 there was one GP per 1,911 people, compared to 1,727 people per doctor nationally. The number of beds in the district's general hospitals remained extremely low, with 2.91 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.52 beds per 1,000 people in the country. The number of hospitalizations was much lower than in the country – 108 people per 1,000 persons in 2020, compared to the national average of 138 per 1,000 persons. This suggests that the residents may be seeking medical care outside the district.

Infant mortality was relatively high in 2020, with its rate rising considerably to reach 8.2‰, compared to the national average of 5.1‰.

The number of people with health insurance dropped in 2020 and for the first time in ten years fell below the national average.

### Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in the district remained low in 2020, which had a favorable effect on the speed of delivery of justice. One criminal judge heard an average of 6.3 cases per month, compared to an average of 8.6 cases per judge in the country. The relative share of criminal cases closed within 3 months reached 93%, against 90% nationally, and the number of pending cases was among the lowest in the country – 5%, against 11% countrywide.

The crime rate in Shumen district has continued to decline and the detection rate to rise. Crimes against the person and property registered in 2020 amounted to 7.9 per 1,000 persons, compared to 9.9 per 1,000 persons nationally. The proportion of cleared crimes was 62.6%, against 52.1% nationally.

### Environment

The positive assessment of Shumen district in the environment category is due mostly to the low volumes of household waste and its management. The amounts of household waste generated in the district were 305 kg/person in 2018, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person, however, 95% of the total generated quantities were handed over for treatment and recycling.

The volumes of carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere remained low – 36.3 t/sq. km.

There has been little change in the share of households with access to a public sewerage network, which remains low. In 2019 it reached 58.0%, against 76.4% in the country. The share of households whose sewerage system is connected to a wastewater treatment plant was 54.4%, compared to 64.6% countrywide.

### Culture

The 2020 pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on visits to cultural events had a powerful negative impact on cultural life in the district as well. Cinema visits dropped by 80% to 22 per 1,000 persons, compared to a reduction by 71% and 190 per 1,000 persons nationally. The decline in museum and library visits was more limited – the former by 46%, compared to 58% in the country, and the latter by 27%, against a 30% reduction nationally. Museum visits in 2020 amounted to 623 per 1,000 persons, versus 322 per 1,000 persons in the country, and library visits – 957 per 1,000 persons, compared to 480 per 1,000 persons nationally.

## Key indicators for the district of Shumen

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,397	10,177	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,855	5,347	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,028	12,124	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	38.3	29.1	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	64.6	66.6	66.5	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	12.0	10.1	11.3	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	28.9	29.5	27.1	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	24.0	23.7	24.6	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	15,681	16,722	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	2,106	1,804	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	681	665	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	70.5	77.3	82.5	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	41.7	45.9	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	18.3	18.2	18.2	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	66.0	65.4	66.4	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-7.6	-7.4	-11.0	<b>-9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	4.1	6.9	8.2	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.85	3.96	3.98	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	24.5	29.6	30.4	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	83.6	83.1	82.4	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	96	95	93	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	88.6	88.9	87.9	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,744	1,833	1,911	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	9.6	9.3	7.9	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.9	6.2	6.3	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	58.2	58.0	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	305	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	94.7	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	126	111	22	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	1,072	1,162	623	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Silistra District

▶ Population (2020)	107,435
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,846.3
▶ Number of settlements	118
▶ Share of urban population (%)	43.8



Silistra is the district with the lowest GDP per capita in Bulgaria and despite this, it has been growing relatively slowly. At the same time, the share of population living with material deprivation remains relatively low. The development of the local labor market remains unsatisfactory. The employment rate is the second lowest in the country. Silistra is among the districts with the weakest investment activity. FDI per capita remains the lowest in the country. Household access to the Internet is increasing and is relatively high. Typically for the economically less developed districts, the average level of local taxes in Silistra district is low. The average rating for the transparency of the local government also remains lower.

The natural population growth in Silistra district continues to deteriorate. In 2021, the average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature in the district was the lowest in the country. Healthcare in Silistra district suffers from a shortage of both doctors and hospital beds. The workloads of criminal judges have increased in recent years and are higher than the national average, but delivery of justice is relatively fast. Silistra is among the districts with the worst performance as regards the environment indicators. One of the main reasons for this is the extremely low share of waste submitted for treatment and recycling. The pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on cultural events in 2020 affected cultural life in the district.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT





## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

### Income and living standard ■■■■

Silistra is the district with the lowest GDP per capita and despite this, it has been growing at a relatively slower pace to reach 7,700 BGN/person in 2019, compared to the national average of 17,200 BGN/person. Salaries in the district have remained relatively low as well. The average gross annual salary in 2019 amounted to 10,600 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN in the country. Household incomes have recorded a more significant increase: they reached 5,700 BGN/household member, compared to 6,000 BGN in the country.

The relative share of the population living with material deprivation in Silistra district remained relatively small in 2019 – 15.5%, compared to 19.9% in the country, while the share of those living below the national poverty line was slightly above average at 24.0%, versus 22.6% nationwide.

### Labor market ■■■

In 2020, the development of the local labor market again remained unsatisfactory. Economic activity went down and this was accompanied by a parallel drop in employment and a rise in unemployment. The rate of economic activity reached 69.7%, compared to 73.7% in the country. The rate of employment shrank by over 4 p.p. to 54.1% and was the second lowest in the country (after Montana district), far below the national average of 68.5%. The unemployment rate went up by over 2 p.p. and reached 15.6% – another figure far more unfavorable than the national average of 5.2%.

The labor market in Silistra district also suffers from the extremely poor educational structure of the workforce. The share of the working age population with university degrees constitutes 20.8% of the workforce, compared to 29.2% countrywide, and of those with primary or lower education – 30.7%, versus 16.9% nationwide.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 has been on the rise, but it still remains below the national average – 64.9% in Silistra, against 67.1 in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 65 young people who will join the workforce.

### Investment and economy ■■

Silistra is among the districts with the lowest investment activity in the country (alongside Sliven district). Accumulated FDI per capita remains the lowest in the whole country and by the end of 2019 it even shrank to 99 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 3,655 EUR/person. FTA expenditures have also registered a decrease to 1,523 BGN/person, compared to 3,155 BGN/person nationally.

Poor economic activity in Silistra district is also manifested in the relatively small number of enterprises in the region. In 2019 they were 37 per 1,000 persons, compared to 61 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

The above tendencies are also reflected in the weak growth of production value in the district, which remained the second lowest in the country (after Vidin) in 2019. It was three times lower than the country's average – 9,800 BGN/person, against 28,000 BGN/person respectively.

The municipalities in Silistra district are also lagging behind as regards the utilization of European funds. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,688 BGN/person, compared to 2,217 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 highways and first-class roads is considerably below average – 11.3% in 2019, against 18.5% countrywide. Nevertheless, the quality of the road surface is relatively high – 60.2% of the roads are in good condition, versus 41.4% 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 internet by the households in the district has been rising to reach a relatively high percentage – 80.7%, compared to the average of 78.9% nationwide. The share of households connected to a gas supply is relatively low – 0.2%, versus 3.1% in the country.

### Local taxes ■■■■■

As is typical of the less economically developed districts, the average level of local taxes in Silistra is relatively low. In 2021, all monitored local taxes were lower than the respective national averages. The biggest margin occurred in the rates for retail trade and taxi transportation. The retail trade patent tax levied by the municipalities in Silistra district was 8.75 BGN/sq. m on average, compared to 12.99 BGN/sq. m nationally. The annual patent tax on taxi transportation was 313 BGN, versus 453 BGN in the country.

### Administration ■■■

Along with most other districts in the country, Silistra made quick progress with cadastral map coverage which in 2019 already included 97.3% of the district's territory, compared to 91.4% nationally.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services decreased in 2021 and fell below the national average. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration in Silistra district also retained its lower values.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

### Demography ■■■

The natural population growth rate in Silistra district has continued to deteriorate and in 2020 it registered the considerable decrease to -14.0‰, compared to -9.5‰ in the country. Net migration increased in almost the whole country and for the first time in years its rate reached a positive value in a great number of districts. Silistra district was no exception but its net migration rate was relatively low - 3.2‰.

These are processes that affect the age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 is 179.9%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15-64 - 40.0%, versus the national average of 34.1%.

Silistra is among the districts with the smallest share of urban population, after Kardzhali district. In 2020, 43.8% of the population were living in urban settlements, against 72.9% countrywide. Population density is twice as low as the national average - 782 persons/sq. km, against 1,506 persons/sq. km countrywide.

### Education ■■■

The district's performance as regards the indicators for education is unsatisfactory. The rate of enrolment in 5th to 8th grade was considerably below the national average in 2019 - 80.2% in Silistra district, compared to 86.5% nationally. The share of repeaters was still comparatively small, but that of dropouts from primary and secondary school remained relatively high - 4.5% in 2019, versus 2.5% countrywide.

The number of teachers continued to rise in 2020 and reached proportions considerably higher than the national average. There are now 97 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 87 teachers per 1,000 students nationwide.

The average score received by the students in Silistra district in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade went up in 2021 but remained relatively low - 30.3 points, versus 37.9 points nationally. At the same time, the average grade in the 2021 State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was the lowest in the country, alongside Yambol and Montana - 3.94 in Silistra district, compared to the national average of 4.21. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) went down but it still remained above the national average - 11% in the district, compared to 7% in the country.

The only provider of higher education in the district is a branch of Ruse University, with a very small number of university students - just 2 students/1,000 persons, compared to 32 students/1,000 persons nationally.

### Healthcare ■■

In 2020, the healthcare system in Silistra district continued to suffer from a shortage of both doctors and beds in the local general hospitals. One local GP was caring for 2,193 persons on average, compared to 1,727 persons per doctor in the country. The shortage of specialist physicians is also acute.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals has continued to increase in the past few years, but their relative proportion remains relatively low - 4.5 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.5 beds per 1,000 persons in the country.

The relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is 180 per 1,000 persons compared to 138 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The infant mortality rate has doubled and exceeds the national average.

### Public order and security ■■■■

The workloads of the local criminal judges in Silistra district have increased in recent years and are higher than the national average, but delivery of justice is relatively fast. In 2020, one judge heard an average of 9.9 criminal cases a month, compared to 8.6 cases per judge nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 94%, versus the average of 90% nationwide, and the share of pending cases was 9%, while in the country it was 11% on average.

The crime rate has been going up but remains relatively low. In 2020, crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 8.1 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 9.9 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate stood at 60.6%, compared to the national average of 52.1%.

### Environment ■■

In 2019, Silistra was also among the worst performing districts as regards the environmental indicators (alongside Razgrad). One major reason for the low figures was the extremely small volumes of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling - a bare 4%, versus the national average of 71%. At the same time, the amounts of generated household waste were similar to the average ones countrywide - 400 kg/person annually.

Due to the low level of urbanization, a relatively small share of the population lives in settlements with a public sewerage network - 51.5%, compared to 76.4% in the country. Similarly low is the share of the population whose sewerage is connected to wastewater treatment plants - 44.4% versus 64.6% nationally.

Considerably lower than elsewhere in the country are the carbon dioxide emissions in the district.

### Culture ■■■■■■

The pandemic in 2020 and the restrictions on cultural events affected cultural life in Silistra district no less than in the country as a whole. The number of cinema visits dropped by nearly 80% to 25 per 1,000 persons, compared to 190 per 1,000 persons nationally. Museum visits decreased by half to 162 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Only visits to the local libraries were higher than the national average.

## Key indicators for the district of Silistra

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,029	7,687	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,201	5,729	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,434	10,572	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	19.8	24.0	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	60.2	58.2	54.1	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	11.1	13.3	15.6	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	32.7	30.4	30.7	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	16.9	19.5	20.8	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	8,927	9,832	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,589	1,523	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	257	(99)	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	69.4	76.6	80.7	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	62.1	60.2	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	17.8	17.8	17.8	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	63.0	63.0	66.4	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–10.5	–9.5	–14.0	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–1.2	–2.1	3.2	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.77	3.86	3.94	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	26.2	26.7	30.3	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	80.3	79.8	80.2	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	85	95	97	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	87.2	88.7	87.6	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,998	2,077	2,193	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	7.1	7.8	8.1	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.9	8.1	9.9	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	51.5	51.5	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	400	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	4.0	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	0	119	25	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	239	309	162	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Sliven District

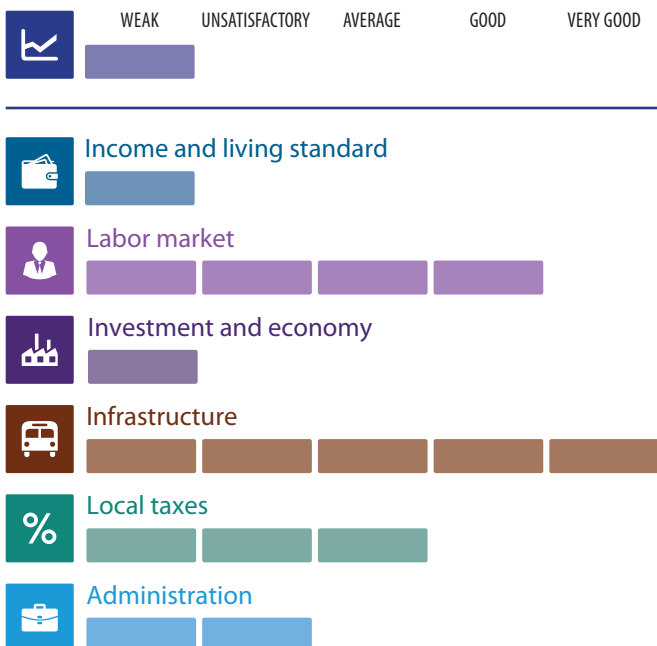
▶ Population (2020)	183,335
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,544.1
▶ Number of settlements	110
▶ Share of urban population (%)	65.2



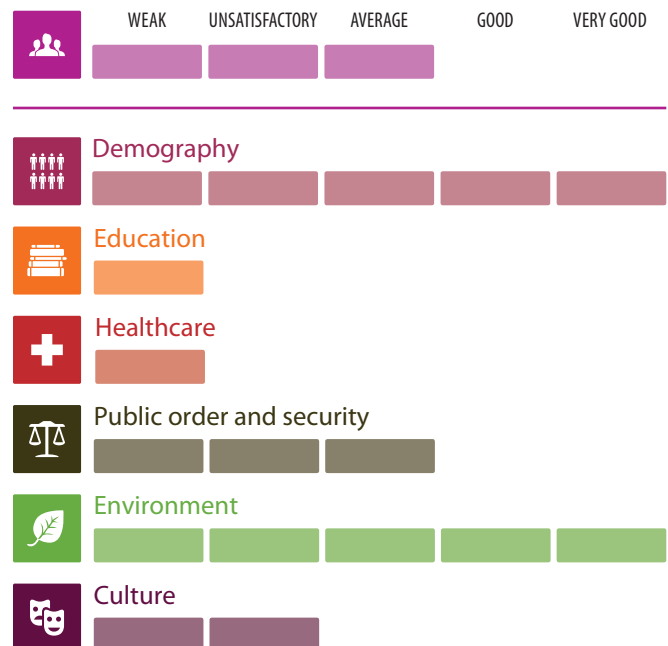
Sliven is among the districts with the lowest GDP per capita and in spite of this, it has been growing relatively slowly. Household incomes remain relatively low. These indicators are also the main factor for the high poverty levels in the district. The educational structure of the workforce is still a challenge before the local labor market. Investment activity is extremely low and the district ranks last in the country in this category. The basic infrastructure retains its high level. The self-assessments of the local administrations on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services are significantly lower than the respective national averages.

The demographic condition of the district ranks it among the country's leaders on this indicator. Sliven is the district with the lowest score on the indicators for education. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school are the highest in Bulgaria. Sliven's poor rating in the healthcare category is mainly due to the extremely high infant mortality rate. The workloads of the local criminal judges are relatively heavy, but this does not have a negative effect on the speed of delivery of justice. The share of municipal waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains high. In 2020 the pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on cultural events affected the district's cultural life as well.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■

### Income and living standard ■■

Sliven is among the districts with the lowest GDP per capita (alongside Silistra) and has been growing relatively slowly to reach 8,100 BGN in 2019, compared to the national average of 17,200 BGN.

The average annual gross salary increased by 11% to reach 11,100 BGN, against 15,200 BGN in the country. In 2019, despite their higher growth rate throughout the year, household incomes again remained relatively low – 4,400 BGN/person, compared to 6,000 BGN/person nationally.

These indicators are also the main factor for the high poverty level in the district. In 2019, the share of the population living with material deprivation was 34.0%, versus 19.9% in the country. Identical to it is the share of the population living below the national poverty line – 33.9%, against 22.6% countrywide.

### Labor market ■■■■

Economic activity in Sliven district has continued to grow, though at 71.9% it failed to catch up with the national average of 73.7 in 2020. This increase has been in line with the increase in both employment and unemployment. The employment rate reached 65% in 2020, versus the national average of 68.5%, and unemployment was 6.9%, compared to 5.2% nationally.

The labor market still faces the challenge posed by the educational structure of the workforce. In 2020, the share of the population aged 25–64 years with primary or lower education reached 36.2%, against 16.9% nationally, and was among the highest in the country. The share of people with higher education remained relatively limited – 21.4%, versus the national average of 29.2%.

At the same time, the district has rather favorable demographic conditions – the population replacement rate as a ratio of the people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is the highest in the country at nearly 89.5%, while the national average is 67.1%. This means that for every 100 adults who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are about 90 young people who will join the workforce.

### Investment and economy ■■

Investment activity in Sliven is extremely low, which ranks the district last in the whole country in this category. The number of non-financial enterprises in the district was 39 per 1,000 persons in 2019 and remained relatively low compared to the national average of 61 per 1,000 persons. Domestic and foreign investment also remained low. FTA acquisition expenditure was 1,236 BGN/person, versus the average of 3,155 BGN/person nationally. Cumulative FDI in the district amounted to 866 EUR/person, which is nearly four times lower than the national average of 3,655 EUR/person. Production in the district

was worth only 12,500 BGN/person – more than half the average figure for the national economy, which was 28,000 BGN/person.

Sliven is also the district with the lowest utilization rate of European funds. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,168 BGN/person, against 2,217 BGN/person on a national level. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of the city of Sliven, though even these payments were far below the national average.

### Infrastructure ■■■■■■

The basic physical infrastructure in Sliven district retains its high quality. The density of the road and railroad networks is comparable to the national average. In 2020, the share of highways and first-class roads remained comparatively high.

Sliven is the district with the largest share of road surfaces in good condition – 79.4%, against 41.4% in the country in 2019. Digital connectivity is also relatively good and in 2020 the share of households with internet access went up to 83.4%, versus 78.9% nationally. The share of households connected to a gas supply remains low – 1.0%, compared to 3.1% nationally.

### Local taxes ■■■■

In 2021, the average rate of the tax on non-residential immovable property for legal entities was the highest in the country. At the same time, the rates of the taxes on retail trade, non-gratuitous acquisition of property and taxi transportation were lower than the respective national averages. The tax on motor vehicles was comparable to the average one in the country.

### Administration ■■

Against the background of the rapid progress of cadastral map coverage in the rest of the country over the past two years – reaching nearly 91.4% of Bulgaria's territory – in 2019 Sliven had managed to include only 63.6%, which places the district last in the whole of Bulgaria in this category.

The local authorities' self-assessments on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop services have marked a significant improvement, but in 2021 the ratings were again considerably lower than the respective national averages. The transparency ratings of the municipalities in the district have been steadily rising and in 2021 they reached an average of 79.8%, versus 73.2% countrywide. The highest rating of over 88.5% was achieved by the city municipality of Sliven; however, there are wide margins between the ratings given to the municipalities across the district.



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

In 2020, Sliven's demographic conditions placed the district in a leading position in the country. The natural population growth rate went down, but it still remained among the highest in the country at  $-6.4\%$ , compared to the national average of  $-9.5\%$ . At the same time, the population has been shrinking fast due to intensive out-migration. In 2020, the net migration rate rose considerably but its value remained negative ( $-2.2\%$ ).

The age dependency ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 has marked a minimal rise, but at 109.6% it still ranks Sliven district at the top place in the country, where that ratio is 150.6%. The ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 is also lower – 33.2%, compared to 34.1% nationwide. The share of population living in urban areas is relatively low – 65.2%, compared to 72.9% in the country, but the population density measured as the average number of people per unit area remains the second highest in the country after that in the capital.

### Education

Sliven is the district with the lowest results as regards the indicators for education. The shares of repeaters and drop-outs from primary and secondary education are the highest in the whole country. The rate of enrolment in 5th–8th grade went up in 2020 and almost equaled the country average for that year.

The number of teachers has been declining and remains below the national average – 81 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 87 teachers per 1,000 students in the country.

Students' performance in 2021 again remained weak. Sliven was the district with the lowest score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade – 27.5 points, compared to the average of 37.9 points nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was also relatively low – 4.08, versus the national average of 4.21, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 8%, compared to the national average of 7%.

### Healthcare

The poor results of Sliven district in the area of healthcare are mostly due to the exceptionally high infant mortality rate. In 2020 it went down but again remained the highest in the whole country –  $11.7\%$ , against  $5.1\%$  nationally.

The numbers of doctors and hospital beds are below the respective national averages. One local GP cares for 1,930 persons on average, compared to 1,727 persons per doctor countrywide. The index for access to specialist physicians is also more unfavorable than the national average. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has been steadily increasing in recent years, but it still remains relatively low.

The number of people treated in the local general hospitals in 2020 was 118 per 1,000 persons, compared to 138 per 1,000 persons countrywide. The share of people with health insurance remains relatively low – 86.4%, versus 88.7% in the country.

### Public order and security

Criminal judges in Sliven district have relatively heavy workloads, yet in 2020 this again did not have an adverse effect on the speed of delivery of justice. One judge heard an average of 9.7 cases a month, compared to 8.6 cases nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months reached 93%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide. Pending cases made up 8%, against 11% in the country.

The number of crimes in the district has decreased in the past few years (similar to the average crime rate in the country), while the detection rate remains higher than the national average. In 2020, the registered crimes against the person and property in Sliven district amounted to 9.4 per 1,000 persons, against 9.9 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate went up to 67.2% and remained considerably above the average figure of 52.1% reported that year for the whole country.

### Environment

The relatively high rating of Sliven district in the environment category is primarily due to the low relative volume of generated household waste and the high share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling. In 2018, the volume of household waste shrank to 307 kg/person, against 409 kg/person on a national scale, while 92% of it was handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to the national average of 71%. The relative volume of carbon dioxide emissions in the district was half the country's average.

A challenge facing the district is the limited share of population with access to public sewerage networks – only 65.2%, compared to 76.4% countrywide, and the share of sewerage systems connected to wastewater treatment plants – 57.3% in Sliven district, against the national average of 64.6%.

### Culture

The pandemic in 2020 and the restrictions on cultural events affected cultural life in Sliven district no less than in the country as a whole. The number of cinema visits dropped by 84% to 14 per 1,000 persons. Museum visits suffered a smaller decline – by 48%, compared to 58% in the country – but with 280 per 1,000 persons, they nevertheless remained below the national average of 322 per 1,000 persons. At the same time, visits to the local libraries remained relatively higher in number than the national average – 604 per 1,000 persons, versus 480 per 1,000 persons in the country.



## Key indicators for the district of Sliven

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,600	8,130	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,790	4,446	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,005	11,085	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	35.6	33.9	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	61.2	64.5	65.0	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	9.9	6.5	6.9	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	33.4	37.6	36.2	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	21.1	20.9	21.4	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	11,803	12,467	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,160	1,236	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	866	866	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	75.2	77.2	83.4	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	80.0	79.4	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	16.5	16.4	16.4	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	71.0	77.8	79.8	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–3.6	–2.9	–6.4	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–6.8	–10.0	–2.2	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.04	4.16	4.08	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	25.8	29.3	27.5	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	85.7	84.9	86.4	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	73	83	81	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	86.6	87.5	86.4	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,856	1,841	1,930	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.3	10.2	9.4	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	9.8	9.8	9.7	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	65.3	65.2	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	307	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	91.7	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	66	90	14	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	497	485	280	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Smolyan District

▶ Population (2020)	102,710
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,192.8
▶ Number of settlements	240
▶ Share of urban population (%)	56.7



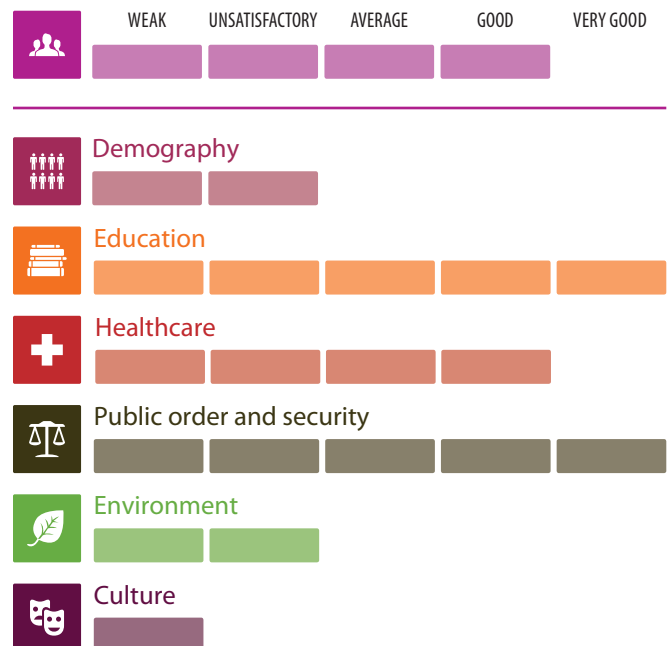
Over the last two decades, GDP in Smolyan district has been growing, though at a slower rate than the average one for the country's economy, and so the margin between them has widened. Incomes, however, continue to exceed the national averages, which explains the relatively low poverty levels in the district. Population ageing remains among the major challenges for the continuing development of the local labor market. FTA expenditures per capita have been rising considerably. FDI has remained at persistently low levels. The specific geographic location of the district as a border region and its mountainous terrain account for its relatively underdeveloped infrastructure. Smolyan ranks among the districts with relatively low local tax rates.

The population of the district is among the fastest ageing in the country. Smolyan continues to rank among the leaders in the education category. Its students are very high achievers, the number of teachers is high, and the share of dropouts is low. The share of people with health insurance is among the highest in the country. Access to GPs is also very good. Smolyan district ranks first in the whole of Bulgaria in the public order and security category. Delivery of justice is speedy, the crime rate is low, and the detection rate is high. Against the district's relatively low level of urbanization, the share of its population living in settlements with public sewerage networks is relatively high. The intensity of its cultural life is low.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

Over the last two decades, GDP in Smolyan district has been growing, though at a slower rate than that of Bulgaria's economy in general. In consequence, the district is increasingly lagging behind the average level in the country by a margin which has gone up from 20% in 2002 to 32% in 2019. In 2019, GDP per capita in the district rose by 10%, (the average national rate) and reached 11,700 BGN. The average gross annual salary of employed people in the district also increased at a rate similar to that in the country but remained below its level – 11,100 BGN in Smolyan, compared to 15,200 BGN nationally. Household incomes have remained higher than the national average, reaching 6,400 BGN per household member in 2019, compared to 6,000 BGN in the country.

Poverty levels in the district also remained lower in 2019 than the national average. The share of the population living with material deprivation was extremely low – 12.8%, which ranked the district second in the country after the capital. The share of the population living below the national poverty line was 21.2%, versus 22.6% on average countrywide.

### Labor market

In spite of the decrease experienced by almost all of the country's districts in 2020, economic activity in Smolyan continued to grow and remained high – 77.1%, compared to 73.7% in the country. This growth, however, was accompanied by a decline in employment and a rise in unemployment. The employment rate dropped by 1.3 p.p. to 65.2%, against 68.5% on a national scale, while the unemployment rate rose by 3.1 p.p. to 11.9%, compared to the national average of 5.2%.

The educational structure of the workforce in the district has undergone a slight improvement. In 2020 the share of people aged 25–64 with a university degree was 23.5%, against 29.2% nationally, while the number of those with primary or lower education declined to 14.0%, versus the national average of 16.9%.

A huge challenge for the further development of the local labor market continues to be population ageing. Smolyan is the district with the lowest population replacement rate as a ratio of the people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64, which in 2020 dropped to 40.9%, compared to 67.1% nationwide.

### Investment and economy

In 2019, the number of registered enterprises went up to reach 52 per 1,000 persons, which, however, was still below 61 per 1,000 persons as the average one for the national economy that year. FTA acquisition expenditures rose by nearly 50%, but in spite of this considerable increase, they still remained below the national average – 2,600 BGN/person in the district, versus 3,200 BGN/person in the country. FDI remained persistently

low – 889 EUR/person in the district, against 3,700 EUR/person countrywide.

In 2019 production value in the district also grew but again at a slower rate than in the country, which set the district even further behind the average figure for Bulgaria's economy as a whole.

Utilization of EU funds in Smolyan district has been growing fast and for the first time has exceeded the national average. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,500 BGN/person, versus 2,200 BGN/person in the country. The leaders in the region are the municipalities of Smolyan city, Rudozem and Zlatograd.

### 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 quality is relatively good and in 2019 it improved even more, so that the share of roads with surfaces in good condition reached 53.8%, against the country's average of 41.4%.

Households' access to the internet has registered a decrease and in 2020 it went down to 73.6%, versus the national average of 78.9%. The share of households connected to a gas supply is practically nil – 0.02%, compared to 3.1% in the country on average. Installed RES capacity has reached 2.5 kW/person, versus 0.6 kW/person nationally.

### Local taxes

In 2021, Smolyan ranked among the districts with relatively low local taxes. The biggest differences with the respective national averages were observed in the tax on retail trade and motor vehicles. In 2021, the average retail trade tax in the municipalities in Smolyan district was 7.74 BGN/sq. m, versus 12.99 BGN/sq. m in the country. The tax on motor vehicles and passenger cars was 1.37 BGN/kW, compared to 1.54 BGN/kW nationally.

### Administration

The self-assessments of the local administration on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services has continued to improve in the past few years, and in 2021 they already exceeded the respective national averages. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration also went up in 2021, but remained below the national average.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

The population of Smolyan district is one of the fastest ageing in the country. 2020 was a year of both a declining birth rate and increasing out-migration. After three years of natural population growth rate between  $-10\text{‰}$  and  $-9\text{‰}$ , in 2020 it experienced a sharp drop to  $-14.4\text{‰}$ , compared to the national average of  $-9.5\text{‰}$ . In 2020 the net migration rate increased considerably but its value remained negative at  $-1.6\text{‰}$ .

The district's age dependency ratios have been deteriorating fast and are considerably more unfavorable than in the country on average. In 2020 the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 220.2%, compared to 150.6% nationally, and to the 15–64 age group it was 40.1%, versus 34.1% countrywide.

The share of urban population in the district is relatively low – 56.7%, against the national average of 72.9%. At the same time, the density of the population remains relatively high.

### Education

Smolyan continues to rank among the districts with the best performance in education, where it is second only to Sofia (capital city). The net enrolment rate of schoolchildren in 5th–8th grade is one of the highest in the country – 90.8%, compared to the average of 86.5% nationally. The proportion of teachers to students in primary and secondary education is the highest in the country – 120 teachers per 1,000 students in 2020, compared to the national average of 87 teachers per 1,000 students. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education is the lowest one in Bulgaria. The number of repeaters is also relatively low.

The performance of the district's students in 2021 again exceeded the national average. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 42.6 points, against 37.9 points nationwide, and was the third highest in the whole country, preceded only by that in the capital and Varna district. The average result in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature reached 4.44 in the district, versus 4.21 nationally, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) dropped to 2.4%, against 7.0% nationwide, which ranked Smolyan district second only to the capital.

Smolyan is home to two university branches – one of Varna Free University and the other of Plovdiv University "Paisii Hilendarski". The reported relative number of university students in the district is 14 per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 students per 1,000 persons in the country on average.

### Healthcare

Smolyan district performs quite well in the healthcare category. The percentage of people with health insurance is among the highest in Bulgaria and in 2020 it reached 95.6%, compared to 88.7% nationwide. Access to GPs is relatively good,

though the number of specialist physicians is still considerably lower than the average one for the country.

Hospital bed capacity dropped to 5.41 per 1,000 persons in 2020. The relative number of patients treated in the local hospitals was high, with 168 per 1,000 persons, versus 138 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

### Public order and security

In 2020, Smolyan was again the top-ranking Bulgarian district in the public order and security category. The workloads of the local criminal judges were the lowest in the country, with a monthly average of 3.6 cases per judge, compared to 8.6 cases nationally. This has had a beneficial effect on the speed of delivery of justice. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was the highest in the country – 96%, against 90% nationally.

Smolyan is also one of the districts with the lowest crime rates in the country. Registered crimes against the person and property number 5.2 per 1,000 persons, with 9.9 per 1,000 persons as the national average. At the same time, the detection rate in the district is extremely high – 68.6%, compared to 52.1% countrywide.

### Environment

Smolyan is among the districts with the lowest volumes of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere. In 2019, 73.1% of the population lived in settlements with a public sewerage network (compared to 76.4% in the country), which is a comparatively high figure in view of the low level of urbanization in the district. However, Smolyan district is still lagging behind in terms of the connectivity of sewerage networks to waste water treatment plants, with a coverage of only 43.1% of the local population, compared to the national average of 64.6%.

The amounts of household waste generated in the district are relatively small – 301 kg/person per year, against 409 kg/person on a national scale. The figures for the share of this waste handed over for treatment and recycling have fluctuated significantly over the past few years.

### Culture

Cultural life in Smolyan district is characterized by its low intensity. In 2020, it also suffered the effects of the pandemic and the nationwide restrictions on cultural events. Cinema visits dropped by 74% to 38 per 1,000 persons, while nationwide they fell by 71% to 190 per 1,000 persons, and library visits decreased by 34% to 131 per 1,000 persons, compared to the drop of 30% to 480 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The reduction in museum visits was smaller – by 38%, against 58% in the country, but the numbers remained very low – 96 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons in the country.

## Key indicators for the district of Smolyan

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,597	11,681	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	6,127	6,354	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,145	11,106	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	20.9	21.2	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	67.7	66.5	65.2	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	10.5	8.8	11.9	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	15.3	14.3	14.0	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	22.5	23.5	23.5	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	14,914	15,866	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,738	2,591	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	860	889	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	73.0	82.4	73.6	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	49.1	53.8	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	16.9	16.9	16.9	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	67.0	67.5	72.2	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–9.4	–9.7	–14.4	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–8.1	–8.4	–1.6	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.19	4.53	4.44	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	37.7	38.1	42.6	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	91.6	90.9	90.8	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	119	122	120	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	94.8	97.0	95.6	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,587	1,569	1,605	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	5.1	6.0	5.2	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	5.0	5.2	3.6	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	72.9	73.1	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	301	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	7.5	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	134	149	38	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	129	154	96	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Sofia (capital city)



▶ Population (2020)	1,318,601
▶ Territory (sq. km)	1,348.9
▶ Number of settlements	38
▶ Share of urban population (%)	95.5

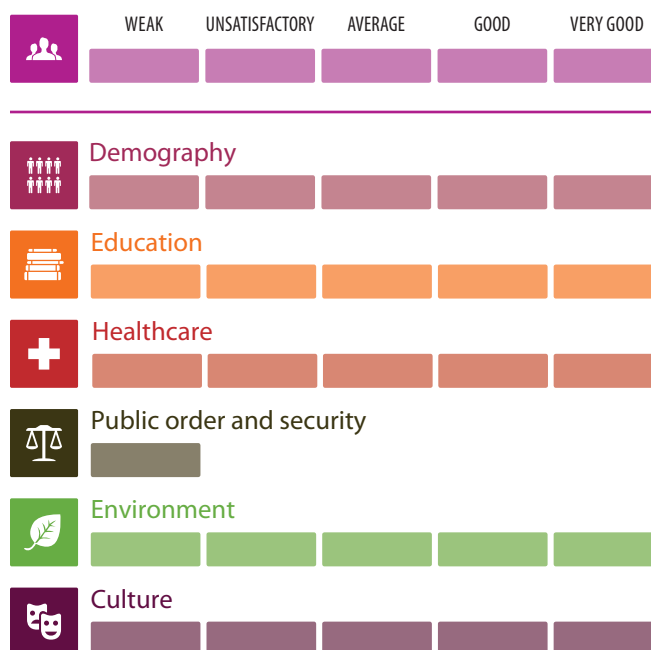
Sofia (capital) has the highest GDP per capita in Bulgaria, with a value double the national average and twice that of the district ranking second in this indicator – Sofia district. Its good performance in the indicators for economic development is also manifested in the favorable dynamics of the local labor market. The capital remains the district with the best educational structure of its workforce. It is also the undisputed leader in investment activity. The share of households with access to broadband internet continues to increase. In 2021, the capital was once again the district with the highest local taxes. It has the highest scores in the municipal administration's self-assessments on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services.

The pandemic, the shutting down of entire sectors and the opportunities for working from home have affected Sofia's population size. The capital is once again the leader in the field of education, with a high enrolment rate, a low share of repeaters and dropouts, good student performance and a high number of university students. The number of specialist physicians is the highest in the country. The capital's poor result and its last place in the country in the public order and security category is a consequence of the heavy workloads of the local judges and the low detection rate. The district's high level of urbanization accounts for the large share of population with access to public sewerage networks. Sofia remains the district with the most intensive cultural life.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT





## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

The capital is the district with the highest GDP per capita, with a value twice the national average and double that of Sofia district which ranks second in this category. In 2019, GDP per capita in Sofia rose at a faster rate than the national average and reached 38,600 BGN, against 17,200 BGN in the country.

Salaries and incomes are growing at a rate similar to the national average, but their amounts are significantly higher. The average annual gross salary reached 21,000 BGN in 2019, against 15,200 BGN in the country, while the average annual income per household member reached 8,200 BGN in 2019, compared to 6,000 in the country.

The capital remained the district with the lowest poverty level in 2019. The share of the population living with material deprivation amounted to 10.8%, versus 19.9% nationally, while that of people living below the national poverty line was 10.0%, compared to 22.6% in the country.

### Labor market

The capital's good performance in the indicators for economic development is also manifested in the favorable dynamics of the local labor market. Economic activity decreased slightly in 2020 in unison with the general shrinkage across the whole country, but remained relatively high – 77.2%, compared to 73.7% nationally. Parallel to this decline was an increase in unemployment and a decrease in employment, with the rates for both indicators slightly higher than the respective national averages. The employment rate went down to 74.4%, against 68.5% nationally, and the unemployment rate went up to 2.86%, versus 5.2% nationally.

The capital remains the district with the best educational structure of its workforce, which in 2020 continued to improve. The share of the population aged 25–64 with a university degree reached 56.8%, against 29.2% in the country, while employed people with primary or lower education made up 3.9%, compared to 16.9% nationally.

Sofia has overtaken Varna district and now has the second highest (after Sliven) population replacement ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 – 78.7%, compared to 67.1% nationwide. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 79 young people joining the workforce.

### Investment and economy

In 2019, Sofia remained the undisputed leader in investment activity. The district has the largest number of enterprises relative to its population – 93 per 1,000 persons, compared to an average of 61 per 1,000 persons in the country. The growth rate of FTA acquisition expenditures is double the national av-

erage and the capital has now moved even further ahead of the country's average and of the district ranked second in this category. Production value in the district has also grown at a higher rate to reach 56,700 BGN/person, compared to 28,000 BGN/person in the country. Significantly higher than the average national figures is cumulative FDI – 9,626 EUR/person.

By 15 June 2021, the capital again occupied the top place as regards utilization of EU funds. Payments made in Sofia (capital) district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 3,676 BGN/person, compared to 2,217 BGN/person nationally.

### Infrastructure

There are no roads from the national road network within Sofia (capital) district, but its territory is bordered directly by several highways. Sofia Central Railway Station is one of the main railway hubs in the country and the density of the railway network of 12.8 km/100 sq. km in the capital district significantly exceeds the national average of 3.6 km/100 sq. km. The share of households with access to high-speed internet has continued to increase and in 2020 it reached 90.8%, compared to 78.9% in the country. The share of households connected to a gas supply is also relatively high – 4.4%, against 3.1% in the country.

### Local taxes

The level of local taxation in Sofia (capital) district again remained the highest in the whole country in 2021. The biggest differences in comparison to the national figures were recorded in the retail trade tax, the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and on taxi transportation

From the other monitored taxes, the only one that remained below the average nationwide rates was the tax on immovable non-residential real estate for legal entities.

### Administration

In 2021, the work of Sofia's municipal administration lost its top place for transparency ratings, where it was outranked by the districts of Dobrich, Gabrovo, Varna and Sliven, although its AIP Active transparency rating was considerably higher than the national average – 78.3%, against the national average of 73.2%. Sofia is also the district with the highest results in its local administration self-assessments for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services, with the maximum of 4 points.

Almost the whole of the capital's territory was already included in the cadastral map in 2019 – 99.2%, against 91.4% nationally.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

In 2020, Sofia (capital) remained the district with the most favourable demographic conditions in the country. Although here, as elsewhere in Bulgaria, the natural population growth rate was negative, it still held the top place with  $-3.5\%$ , compared to the national average of  $-9.5\%$ . The pandemic, the shutting down of entire sectors and the opportunities for working from home have affected Sofia's population size. Thus Sofia (capital) has become the district with the greatest loss of population and net migration of  $-12.0\%$ .

The age dependency ratios in the district remained considerably more favourable than in the country on average. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 years reached 117.4%, compared to 150.61% nationally, and to those aged 15–64 years – 26.2%, versus 34.1% nationwide.

The district's specificity is a prerequisite for the extremely high level of urbanization – 95.5% of its territory, and the population density is three times the country's average – 4,860 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,506 persons/sq. km nationally.

### Education

The capital remains the country's leader in education, with a high rate of enrolment, low shares of repeaters and dropouts, good student performance and a high number of university students.

The only less favorable figures pertain to the teacher-student ratios, which can be explained with the opportunities for large-size schools and classes.

The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education are considerably smaller than the country's averages. In 2021, the students in the capital achieved an average score of 50.1 points in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade, which is far above the national average of 37.9 points. Also, the average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.58, compared to the average of 4.21 countrywide, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was only 1.8%, against the national average of 7.0%.

In 2020, the number of university students in Sofia again remained considerably above the national average.

### Healthcare

In 2020, the capital remained among the districts with the best healthcare in the country (outranked only by Pleven district), characterized by easy access to specialist physicians and low infant mortality.

The indicator for access to GPs is similar to the national average – one doctor cares for an average of 1,728 persons, compared to 1,727 persons on average for the country. The hospital bed capacity is also similar to the national average – 5.72 beds in general hospitals per 1,000 persons, compared

to 5.52 beds nationally. The number of hospitalizations is 122 per 1,000 persons, against 138 per 1,000 persons countrywide. The infant mortality rate continues to decline and is half the national average.

### Public order and security

The capital's poor results and its last place in the whole country in the indicator of security and justice is a consequence of the heavy workloads of the local judges and the low detection rate.

In 2020, one criminal judge in Sofia (capital) heard an average of 10.6 cases a month, compared to 8.6 cases per judge nationally. These heavy workloads had a negative impact on the speed of delivery of justice. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 84%, compared to the average of 90% nationwide, and pending cases constituted 17%, versus less than 11% countrywide. The number of crimes against the person and property registered in the capital district dropped in 2020 to 11.4 per 1,000 persons but still remained high compared to the national average of 9.9 per 1,000 persons. These are all factors contributing to the exceptionally low share of cleared crimes – a bare 32.1%, versus 52.1% for the country.

### Environment

The capital remained the district with the highest annual volume of generated household waste in 2018, with 499 kg/person, compared to 409 kg for the country. However, almost all waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 97%, compared to 71% on average for the country.

The high degree of urbanization in the district entails high figures for accessibility to public sewerage systems – 96.3% of the population, versus 76.4% nationally, while the whole sewerage network is connected to waste water treatment plants, compared to 64.6% on average countrywide.

Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere remain at the second highest level in the country (after the district of Stara Zagora).

### Culture

The pandemic-induced restrictions on cultural activities in 2020 affected cultural life in Sofia (capital) as well. Still, the drop in the number of visits was similar to the national average and the capital remained the district with the most intense cultural life. Cinema visits dropped by 73%, compared to 71% nationally, and amounted to 473 per 1,000 persons, against 190 per 1,000 persons in the country. Visits to the local libraries decreased by 23% to 855 per 1,000 persons, against 480 per 1,000 persons nationally. Only museum visits still remained below the national average, with 207 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

## Key indicators for the district of Sofia (capital city)

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	33,437	38,603	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	7,603	8,224	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	19,026	21,040	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	8.8	10.0	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	75.6	76.4	74.4	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	2.1	1.6	2.8	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	4.2	4.9	3.9	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	51.4	52.8	56.8	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	50,416	56,667	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	5,568	7,147	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	9,361	9,626	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	81.9	83.0	90.8	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	0.0	0.0	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	0.0	0.0	0.0	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	77.0	78.8	78.3	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-1.9	-2.0	-3.5	<b>-9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	3.9	2.4	-12.0	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.53	4.63	4.58	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	44.6	48.1	50.1	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	89.4	89.4	88.8	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	82	87	83	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	86.6	87.1	87.1	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,665	1,712	1,728	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	15.1	13.3	11.4	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	14.2	12.0	10.6	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	96.3	96.3	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	499	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	96.8	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	1,884	1,756	473	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	748	652	207	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Sofia District



▶ Population (2020)	232,574
▶ Territory (sq. km)	7,062.3
▶ Number of settlements	284
▶ Share of urban population (%)	59.0

The high GDP per capita and salaries are a precondition for the relatively low poverty levels in Sofia district. The development of the local labor market in 2020 was very good, which again manifests the deep interrelation between the economies of the capital and the district of Sofia. The good economic development is also accompanied by high investment activity. The density of the road network is higher than the national average, and the share of highways and first-class roads is the second largest in the country. The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Sofia district is generally close to the national average. The performance of the local administrations in the district is poor. While during the pandemic year 2020 the capital was losing

population, Sofia district was the leader in attracting new residents. At the same time, however, the rate of natural population growth in Sofia district continued to fall, which was manifested in the deteriorating age dependency ratios. The performance of the students in the district is relatively poor. The district recorded the highest number of hospitalizations. Its performance in the category of public order and security remained poor in 2020, mainly due to the relatively slow delivery of justice, even though the workloads of the local judges have been going down and have fallen below the country's average. The share of generated waste handed over for treatment and recycling is extremely small. The cultural life in the district preserves its low intensity.



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

In 2019, Sofia district overtook Stara Zagora in GDP per capita and climbed to the second place in the country, after the capital. Salaries in the district have been rising at a rate close to the national average, though incomes remain at relatively low levels. The average annual gross salary of employed people has reached 14,600 BGN, against 15,200 BGN as the country's average. The average gross annual income per household member in 2019 was 4,800 BGN, compared to 6,000 BGN in the country.

The relatively high values of GDP and salaries in the district have kept poverty levels relatively low. In 2019, the share of the population living with material deprivation was 14.5%, compared to 19.9% in the country, and those living below the national poverty line made up 17.6%, versus 22.6% nationwide.

### Labor market

The development of the local labor market in 2020 continued to be very good, which once again shows the deep interrelation between the economies of the capital and of Sofia district. Economic activity in the district increased significantly and for the third consecutive year exceeded the national average, with a figure of 79.7%, compared to 73.7% for the country. This growth was accompanied by an increase in employment to 78.8%, compared to 68.5% in the country, thus placing Sofia district at the top in employment. Unemployment also remained extremely low.

The profile of the workforce in Sofia district is characterized by a large number of people with secondary education – 75%, compared to 54% in the country, while the shares of people with a university degree and of those with primary or lower education are 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 processing industry to develop in its geographical periphery.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 has dropped to 61.3% and is lagging increasingly behind the national average.

### Investment and economy

The positive economic development of the district is associated with high investment activity. In 2019, the district reported the second highest figures in the country for FDI, preceded only by the capital. They amounted to 6,569 EUR/person, versus 3,655 EUR/person countrywide. Production value also ranked the district second in the country, with 47,300 BGN/person, compared to 28,000 BGN/person nationally.

FTA acquisition expenditures shrank to 2,803 BGN/person, compared to 3,155 BGN/person nationally. The number of enterprises in the district remains relatively low, while the share of large enterprises among them is relatively high.

Utilization of EU funds has gone up but is still lagging behind the country's average. By 15 June 2021, payments made in Sofia district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,159 BGN/person, compared to 2,217 BGN/person nationally. Within the district, the leader in the utilization of EU funds was the municipality of Kostinbrod.

### Infrastructure

Sofia district has a very well developed infrastructure. The density of the road network is higher than the national average, and the share of highways and first-class roads is the second largest in the country after that in Shumen district, with 30.2%, compared to the national average of 18.5%. At the same time, however, the quality of the roads remains relatively low, with only 31.7% of the road surfaces in good condition, versus 41.4% in the country in 2019.

The railroad network density is also relatively high.

In spite of its considerable increase, in 2020 access to the Internet in the district was still relatively limited, with 73.0% of the households connected to it, compared to 78.9% on average in the country.

Sofia district ranks second (after Gabrovo) in terms of the share of households connected to a gas supply – 8.7%, against 3.1% in the country.

### Local taxes

In 2021, the average level of local taxation in Sofia district remained generally close to, yet lower than the average one for all Bulgarian municipalities. Higher than average continued to be the taxes on non-residential immovable property of legal entities and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property. By contrast, significantly lower than the average rates were the taxes on motor vehicles, taxi transportation and retail trade.

### Administration

The performance of the municipal administrations in Sofia district is poor. While almost the entire territory of the country is already covered by the cadastral map (91.4%), in 2019 the coverage in the district was only 75.3%. The self-assessment of the municipal authorities for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services in 2021 also remained lower than the national average.

In 2021, Sofia continued to be among the districts with the lowest transparency assessment of its local administrations, and in spite of the considerable improvement, the rating reached 65.3%, compared to 73.2% on average for the country. Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipalities of Chelopech, Svoge and Chavdar.



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

### Demography ■■■■■

While during the pandemic year 2020 the capital was losing population, Sofia district was the leader in attracting new residents. The net migration rate reached levels that set a record for at least a twenty-year period not only for the district, but in the country as a whole – 63‰. At the same time, however, the rate of natural population growth in Sofia district continued to fall and remained below the national average at –12.3‰, against –6.7‰ nationwide. This process is reflected in the deteriorating age dependency ratios in the district. In 2020, the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 173.3%, compared to 150.6% nationally, and to those aged 15–64 it was 37%, versus 34.1% nationwide.

Sofia is among Bulgaria's districts with a low level of urbanization – 59.0% of its population is urban, against 72.9% countrywide, and with a low population density of 756 persons/sq. km, compared to the national average of 1,506 persons/sq. km.

### Education ■■

The net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade in Sofia district remains relatively high, although in 2020 it dropped to 89.8%, compared to 86.5% on average for the country. In 2020, the number of teachers in primary and secondary education in the district was 90 per 1,000 students, versus 87 per 1,000 students nationally. The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education decreased to figures already below the country's averages, though the percentage of repeaters remained higher.

Students' performance was also relatively poor. In the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade in 2021, they achieved an average score of 31.8 points, versus 37.9 points nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 3.99, compared to the average of 4.21 countrywide, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) reached 11%, against the national average of 7%. The number of university students in Sofia district is relatively small – 7 students per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 32 students per 1,000 persons in 2020.

### Healthcare ■■■

Access to doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – in the district is slightly below the national average. In 2020, one GP cared for an average of 1,846 people, compared to 1,727 people per GP in the country. The share of people with health insurance rose to 87.3%, but failed to reach the national average of 88.7%.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals relative to the population in the district remained, as always, higher than the national average, reaching 5.75 beds per 1,000 people, compared to 5.52 beds per 1,000 people nationally. Sofia is also the district with the highest number of hospitalizations – 207 per 1,000 persons in 2020, compared to 138 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Infant mortality rates went up in 2020 and now exceed the national average.

### Public order and security ■

The results for Sofia district regarding the provision of public order and security in 2020 remained poor. That was mostly a consequence of the slow delivery of justice, although the workloads of the local criminal judges had been going down and fell below the national average. One criminal judge in Sofia district heard an average of 5.6 cases a month, compared to 8.6 cases per judge in the country. At the same time, there was a decrease to 77% of the criminal cases closed within 3 months, compared to the average of 90% nationwide, and pending cases rose to 22%, versus 11% countrywide.

The indicator values for security and justice in Sofia district are close to the national average. The number of registered crimes against the person and property is 9.7 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 9.9 per 1,000 persons. The detection rate is 53.3%, versus 52.1% for the country

### Environment ■

The annual volume of generated household waste rose to 487 kg/person in 2018 and was among the highest in the country. However, an exceptionally small share of the waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 19%, compared to 71% for the country.

In spite of the low level of urbanization, the share of households in the district with access to public sewerage networks is high – 78.2%, compared to the national average of 76.4%. At the same time, access to sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants is lower – in 2019 it was 40.5%, against the average share of 64.6% in the country.

Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere amount to 30 t/sq. km and remain considerably lower than the national average.

### Culture ■

In 2020, cultural life in Sofia district still sustained its low intensity, which can probably be attributed to the region's proximity to the capital, which allows a large part of the population relatively fast and easy access for to the biggest city in the country. No visits to libraries and theaters have been reported for the district, while cinema and museum visits dropped due to the pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on visits to cultural events. Cinema visits shrank by 59% to 32 per 1,000 persons, compared to 190 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Visits to museums were reduced by half but remained higher than the national average – 732 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons countrywide.



## Key indicators for the district of Sofia

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	15,654	16,276	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,853	4,844	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	13,425	14,586	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	20.4	17.6	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	73.3	77.7	78.8	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	0.7	(0.4)	(0.9)	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	12.3	10.9	13.6	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	13.6	12.0	11.3	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	48,092	47,296	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	3,140	2,803	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	6,064	6,569	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	51.3	67.3	73.0	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	30.8	31.7	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	21.4	21.4	21.4	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	58.0	57.3	65.3	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–9.8	–9.3	–12.3	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–1.1	–1.2	63.0	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.92	4.00	3.99	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.4	31.0	31.8	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	91.3	91.6	89.8	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	84	87	90	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	86.3	87.3	87.3	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,758	1,771	1,846	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	13.5	11.2	9.7	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	9.6	9.5	5.6	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	77.2	78.2	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	487	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	18.9	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	67	78	32	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	1,178	1,430	732	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Stara Zagora District

▶ Population (2020)	312,398
▶ Territory (sq. km)	5,151.1
▶ Number of settlements	206
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.6



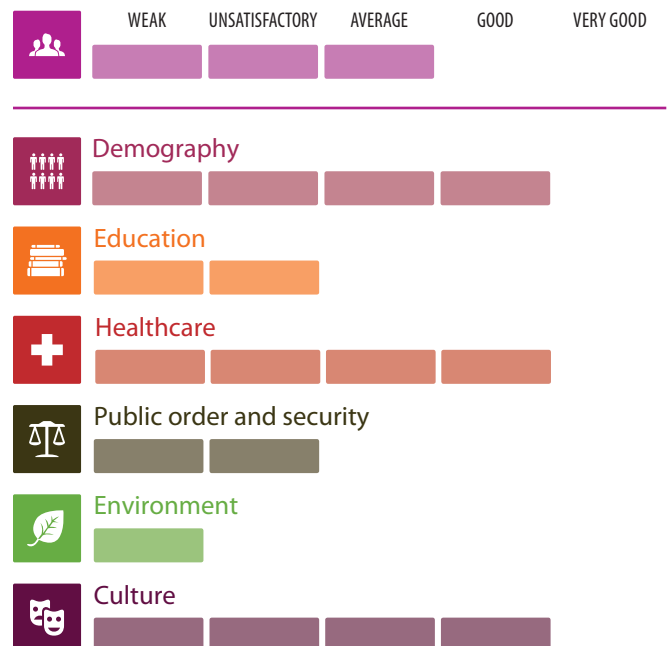
**G**DP per capita in Stara Zagora decreased in 2019 and the district lost its second place in this indicator. However, salaries and incomes in the district continue to rise. Economic activity is declining, but remains relatively high and over the past few years has been consistently above the national average. Employment and unemployment rates are more favorable than the respective country averages. There are a relatively small number of enterprises in the district, but production value is relatively high. The share of road surfaces in good condition lags behind the average figures. Stara Zagora maintains relatively low local taxes. The self-assessments of local administrations for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services are poor.

In line with the trend on the national level, the natural population growth in Stara Zagora has been deteriorating in recent years. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education remain almost twice as high as the national average. Access to doctors is relatively good. However, the number of beds in the local general hospitals is declining and lagging further behind the national average. The workloads of criminal judges in the district are relatively heavy, but this does not have a strong negative impact on the speed of delivery of justice. The poor assessment of Stara Zagora in the environment category is primarily due to the extremely high level of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere. The pandemic is having a negative impact on the district's cultural life.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

GDP per capita in Stara Zagora decreased in 2019 and the district lost its second place (after the capital), now outranked by Sofia district and Varna. Nevertheless, salaries and incomes in the district continued to rise, though at a slower rate than in the country, and remained relatively high. The average annual gross salary of employed people reached 13,900 BGN, and the average income per household member went up to 5,600 BGN.

In terms of the poverty indicators, the figures for Stara Zagora district were almost identical to the national average – 23.1% of the households in the district were below the national poverty line, versus 22.6% in the country, and 19.8% were living with material deprivation, compared to 19.9% nationally.

### Labor market

Economic activity in Stara Zagora district is declining, but remains relatively high and over the past few years has remained consistently above the national average. The economic activity rate for 2020 is 75.5%, versus 73.7% countrywide. However, its decrease has been accompanied by a decline in employment and rising unemployment, though both rates are more favorable than the respective national averages. The employment rate is 73.3% (compared to 68.5% nationally) and is among the highest in the country.

The educational structure of the workforce in the district has been improving. In 2020, the population aged 25–64 with higher education reached 21.6%, though remaining below the national average of 29.2%. However, the share of the population with primary and lower education was relatively small – 16.4%, compared to 16.9% in the country. The relatively high share of the workforce with secondary education is therefore in line with the district's industrial profile.

The population replacement rate of those leaving the labor market by those joining it – that is, the ratio of the population aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64, is 69.1% (versus 76.1% in the country), which indicates an impending contraction of the labor force.

### Investment and economy

There are a relatively small number of enterprises in Stara Zagora district – 49 per 1,000 people, compared to 61 per 1,000 people in the country in 2019. However, production value in the district is relatively high and with 26,900 BGN/person that year, Stara Zagora was preceded only by Sofia (capital), Sofia district, Burgas and Plovdiv. By the end of 2019, FDI stock had grown twice as fast as in the country on average and reached 3,111 EUR/person, compared to 3,655 EUR/person in the country. FTI acquisition expenditures had been gradually increas-

ing and in 2019 they reached 2,849 BGN/person, again ranking Stara Zagora among the top five districts.

The district's performance as regards the utilization of European funds is not so good. By 15 June 2021, payments made to beneficiaries of EU projects amounted to 1,783 BGN/person, compared to 2,217 BGN/person for the country on average. Within the district, the leader in the utilization of EU funds was the municipality of Gurkovo, and the bottom place was held by Bratya Daskalovi.

### Infrastructure

The density of the railway 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 28.7%, compared to 18.5% for the country in 2020. Nevertheless, the share of roads with good quality surface has been lagging behind the average figures – 37.6% in 2019, versus 41.4% nationally.

Households' access to the internet has decreased slightly and in 2020 it was already below the national average. Slightly higher is the share of households with access to a gas supply, as well as installed RES capacity relative to the district's population.

### Local taxes

Unlike most districts with a high degree of economic development, in 2021 Stara Zagora kept its municipal tax rates relatively low. The biggest differences compared to the respective national averages were observed in the tax on the immovable property of legal entities and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property. Taxes on taxi transportation were also considerably lower. Conversely, the tax on retail trade was higher than average, while that on motor vehicles was close to the national average.

### Administration

In 2019, cadastral map coverage in the district exceeded 95% of its territory. The self-assessments of the local administration on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services improved in 2021, though remaining considerably below the national averages. The average AIP Active transparency rating of the local municipalities also went up but remained relatively low – 69.3% in the district, compared to 73.2% nationally. Within the district, the highest ratings were achieved by the municipalities of Gurkovo and Nikolaevo, and the lowest ones were those of Galabovo municipality.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

In line with the trend in the whole country, the natural population growth rate in Stara Zagora district has been deteriorating in recent years and in 2020 it decreased to  $-10.1\%$ , versus the national average of  $-9.5\%$ . At the same time, the net migration rate went up in almost the whole country and for the first time in a number of districts it reached a positive value. Stara Zagora district was no exception, though its migration rate remained relatively low –  $3.7\%$ .

In 2020, the district's rate of population ageing was similar to the national average. The age dependency rate as a ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 150.7%, compared to 150.6% nationally, and to the 15–64 age group it was 36.4%, versus 34.1% countrywide.

The share of urban population in the district shrank by nearly 3 p.p. to 69.6%, against the national average of 72.9%. At the same time, the density of the urban population remained close to the country's average – 1,477 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,506 persons/sq. km nationally.

### Education

The net enrolment rate of schoolchildren in 5th–8th grade remains at a relatively high level – 91.4%, compared to the average of 86.5% nationally. However, the shares of repeaters and drop-outs from primary and secondary education remain almost twice as high as the respective country averages. The number of teachers continues to rise and in 2020 for the first time it exceeded the national average – 88 teachers per 1,000 students in the district, compared to 87 teachers per 1,000 students nationally.

In 2021, the results of the students in Stara Zagora district were below the national average. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 33.9 points, against 37.9 points nationwide. The average result in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.12 in the district, versus 4.21 nationally, and the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) reached 8%, against 7% nationwide.

The number of university students in the district has been on the increase, but remains almost twice as low as the country's average – 17 students per 1,000 people, versus 32 students per 1,000 people nationally.

### Healthcare

In 2020, the number of people with health insurance went down, though remaining above the country's average. Access to doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – in Stara Zagora district is relatively favorable – 1,502 people on average per one GP, compared to the national average of 1,727 people per doctor. However, the number of beds in the local general hospitals has been on the decrease and is falling further behind the national average. In 2020, the available hospital beds amounted to 4.74 per 1,000 people, versus 5.52 beds per 1,000 people nationwide. Hospitalization numbers are close to but

below the national average – 123 per 1,000 people, against 138 per 1,000 people countrywide.

The infant mortality rate shrank by half in 2020 and came close to the national average.

### Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in Stara Zagora district remain relatively heavy, but in 2020 this did not have a strong negative impact on the speed of delivery of justice. One local judge heard an average of 10.2 cases per month, compared to 8.6 cases monthly per judge in the country. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months reached 93%, against 90% nationally, and that of pending cases – 10%, compared to 11% in the country.

The number of crimes and the detection rate in the district remained close to the respective national averages in 2020. The registered crimes against the person and property constituted 10.3 per 1,000 persons in the district, compared to 9.9 per 1,000 persons in the country, while the detection rate was 54.2% in Stara Zagora, versus 54.2% in the country.

### Environment

The poor rating given to Stara Zagora in the environment category is based predominantly on the excessively high carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere. In 2019, those emissions amounted to 3,655 t/sq. km of carbon dioxide, or almost four times higher than in Sofia (capital), which is the district that comes second after Stara Zagora. The high figure is due to the presence of the large coal-fired power plants operating on the district's territory.

The amounts of household waste generated by the district's residents have also been on the rise and in 2018 they reached 412 kg/person per year, for the first time exceeding, albeit slightly, the national average. At the same time, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling increased to 86%, versus 71% in the country.

The district is lagging behind as regards the share of population living in settlements with public sewerage – 71.5% in 2019, compared to 76.4% nationally. Of the households with access to public sewerage networks, 62.1% are connected to a wastewater treatment plant, against 64.6% in the country.

### Culture

The pandemic and the nationwide restrictions on cultural events in 2020 had their negative impact on the district's cultural life as well. Cinema visits dropped by 74% to 168 per 1,000 persons, while nationwide they fell to 190 per 1,000 persons, and library visits decreased by 20% to 456 per 1,000 persons, compared to 480 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Museum visits were reduced by 62%, though they remained above the national average, with 405 visits per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons in the country.

## Key indicators for the district of Stara Zagora

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	17,273	16,276	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,478	5,610	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	13,190	13,914	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	17.8	23.1	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	71.0	74.7	73.3	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	2.3	(1.4)	(2.2)	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	18.0	18.7	16.4	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	19.0	20.7	21.6	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	25,207	26,929	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	2,621	2,849	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	2,937	3,111	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	71.4	77.9	76.0	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	40.7	37.6	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	17.5	17.5	17.6	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	71.0	65.1	69.3	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-7.3	-7.6	-10.1	<b>-9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	-1.2	-1.8	3.7	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.06	4.18	4.12	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.9	31.8	33.9	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	92.9	91.4	91.4	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	81	87	88	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	89.3	90.0	89.3	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,471	1,485	1,502	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	11.0	11.4	10.3	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	10.0	11.2	10.2	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	72.0	71.5	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	412	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	86.3	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	596	635	168	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	865	1,060	405	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Targovishte District

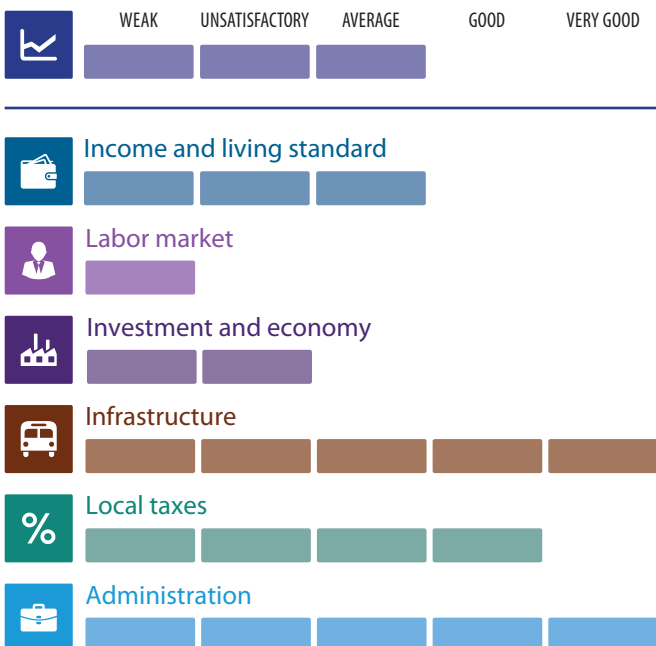
▶ Population (2020)	110,471
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,558.5
▶ Number of settlements	194
▶ Share of urban population (%)	54.2



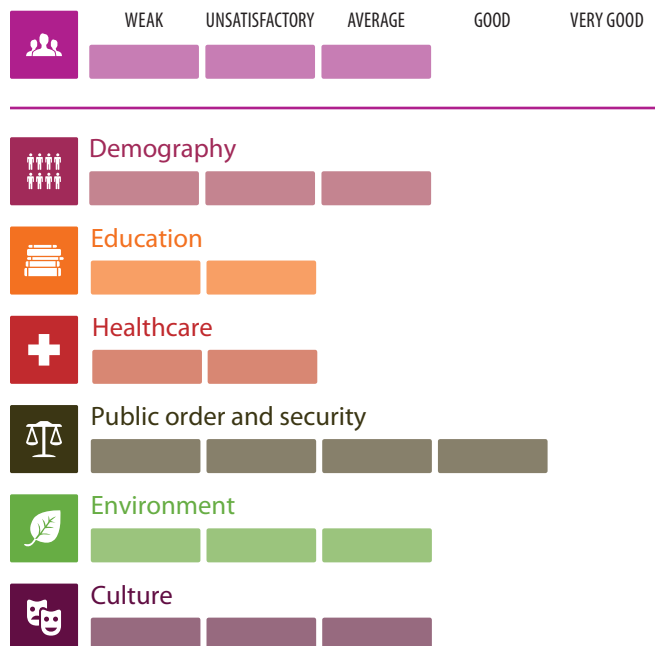
In 2019, the growth of GDP in Targovishte district slowed down, leaving the district to lag even further behind the national average. Targovishte is the district with the weakest performance for 2020 as regards the labor market indicators. A huge challenge for the labor market in the district is the deteriorating educational structure of the workforce. The FTA acquisition expenditures and FDI are relatively stable, although they stand significantly below the national average. The quality of the road surfaces is good. Local taxes in the district are low. The self-assessments of the local administrations on e-government development and the provision of one-stop-shop services are improving.

The degree of urbanization in the district has not changed significantly in recent years, remaining among the lowest in the country. Targovishte is among the districts with the lowest coverage of the education system. Student performance continues to be unsatisfactory. Access to GPs in the district is very limited. Morbidity, measured by the number of people treated in the local general hospitals, is relatively high. Criminal judgements in the district are among the least busy in the country, but this does not greatly benefit the speed of delivery of justice. The crime rate is relatively low and detection is high. Cinemas and museums in the area have been particularly hard hit by the pandemic-induced restrictions on cultural events.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT





## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

In 2019, the growth of GDP in Targovishte district slowed down, leaving the district to lag even further behind the national average. GDP per capita reached 10,500 BGN, compared to 17,200 BGN in the country. However, incomes and salaries grew relatively fast, although they also remained relatively low. In 2019, the annual gross salary of employed people was 12,000 BGN, against 15,200 BGN in the country, and the income per household member was 4,600 BGN, versus 6,000 BGN nationally.

Although a relatively small share of the population lives with material deprivation – 17.7%, compared to 19.9% in the country, the share of those living below the poverty line remains high – 30.2%, versus 22.6% nationally in 2019.

### Labor market

Targovishte is the district with the worst performance as regards the labor market indicators for 2020. Economic activity shrank dramatically to 67.4%, compared to 73.7% in the country. This decline was accompanied by falling employment and rising unemployment. The employment rate went down to 56.5%, compared to 68.5% in the country, and the unemployment rate went up to 10.9%, versus 5.2% countrywide.

A huge challenge for the labor market in the district is the deteriorating educational structure of the workforce. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education has been increasing in recent years and in 2020 it was the highest in the country – 38.3%, compared to the national average of 16.9%. The share of university graduates decreased to 15.8%, against 29.2% nationally.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to the 60–64 age group has gone up to 69.8%, compared to 67.1% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 70 young people joining the work force.

### Investment and economy

Due to the markedly industrial profile of the local economy and the significant role played by big business, Targovishte has a relatively small number of enterprises – 37 per 1,000 people in 2019, with an upward trend. Despite the steady growth, production value in the district remains low – 16,500 BGN per capita, compared to the national average of 28,000 BGN. At the same time, however, FTA acquisition expenditures in the district have reached 2,236 BGN/person, compared to 3,155 BGN/person in the country. FDI amounts to 2,760 EUR/person, against 3,655 EUR/person nationally.

Utilization of European funds in the district remains low. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,321 BGN/person, compared to 2,217 BGN/person nationally, and there is not a single municipality in the district that has managed to reach the national average.

### Infrastructure

The density of the railway network remained relatively low in 2020. The average density of the road network was generally above the country's average, but the share of highways and first-class roads was relatively low – 14.7%, compared to the national average of 18.5%. Nevertheless, the quality of road surfaces was among the best in the country. In 2019, 60.8% of the roads in the district were in good condition, compared to only 41.4% in the country.

There has been a significant improvement in the population's access to the internet, which within the past two years has exceeded the national average, reaching 82.4% in 2020, compared to 78.9% in the country. For its part, the share of households connected to a gas supply is twice as high as the national average – 6.2%, versus 3.1% in the country.

### Local taxes

Local taxes in the municipalities of Targovishte district again remained at relatively low levels in 2020. None of the monitored taxes was higher than the respective national average. Relatively the lowest tax rates were those on the immovable non-residential property of legal entities and on taxi transportation.

### Administration

The cadastral map of the district already covers 95.3% of the territory. The municipalities' average self-assessments on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop services went up in 2021 to reach figures above the respective national averages. However, the AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations went down, though still remaining above the country's average. In 2021, the highest rating was achieved by the city municipality of Targovishte, and the lowest rating was given to Opaka municipality.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

In 2020, there was visible deterioration in the natural population growth and the net migration rates. The natural population growth dropped to  $-12.5\%$ , compared to  $-9.5\%$  nationally. The net migration rate went up in almost the entire country and for the first time in a number of districts it reached a positive value. Targovishte district was no exception, though its migration rate remained relatively low  $-4.5\%$ .

The population ageing rate has been on the increase but remains close to the national average. In 2020, the population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 151.6%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 34.8%, against 34.1% in the country.

The degree of urbanization in the district has not changed significantly in recent years and remains among the lowest in the country  $-54.2\%$  in Targovishte, compared to 72.9% in the country. Population density in the urban settlements is also relatively low  $-1,069$  persons/sq. km, compared to 1,506 people for the country on average.

### Education

Targovishte is among the districts with the lowest coverage of the education system. In 2020, the net enrolment in 5th–8th grade was the second lowest in the country, after that in Dobrich district, and it even deteriorated compared to the previous year, with 75.7%, against 86.5% nationally. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education have been on the decrease but remain higher than in the country as a whole. The proportion of teachers is 101 per 1,000 students, compared to 87 teachers per 1,000 students on average. Students' results, however, remained unsatisfactory in 2021. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 34.5 points, versus 37.9 points on in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was 3.96, compared to 4.21 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 8%, against 7% nationally.

### Healthcare

After Kardzhali district, Targovishte is the district with the most difficult access to GPs, with an average of 2,402 people per doctor in 2020, compared to 1,727 people per doctor nationally. The index of access to specialist physicians also has an unfavorable value. For seven years in a row, the number of beds in the district's general hospitals has been gradually increasing and in 2020 it drew nearer to the national average, with 5.39 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.52 beds per 1,000 people in the country.

The health system coverage in the district has decreased and 86.9% of people have health insurance, compared to the national average of 88.7%. Population morbidity, measured by

the number of hospitalizations, is relatively high  $-164$  people per 1,000 persons on average have been treated in the local general hospitals, compared to the national average of 138 per 1,000 persons. Infant mortality, however, went down in 2020 and at 3.8‰ fell below the national average of 5.1‰.

### Public order and security

Criminal judges in the district are among the least busy in the country, preceded in this category only by those in Smolyan, but this has little effect on the speed of delivery of justice. One criminal judge heard an average of 4.3 cases per month, compared to an average of 8.6 cases per judge in the country. The relative share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 92%, against 90% nationally, and pending cases made up 9%, against 11% countrywide.

The crime rate in Targovishte is relatively low and the detection rate is high. The crimes against the person and property registered in 2020 amounted to 8.9 per 1,000 persons, compared to 9.9 per 1,000 persons nationally. The detection rate was among the highest in the country, after that in Gabrovo  $-70.6\%$ , against 52.1% nationally.

### Environment

Carbon emissions in Targovishte district have remained relatively low in recent years. In 2019, the amounts of carbon dioxide emissions reached 87t/100 sq. km.

Households have been generating relatively small volumes of waste  $-302$  kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling increased from 8.6% in 2017 to 68.3% in 2018, when the national average was 70.9%. Little change and even a worsening trend have been registered in the share of households connected to a public sewerage network  $-$  a bare 54.1% in 2019, compared to 76.4% in the country. Only 44.3% of the sewerage networks are connected to a wastewater treatment plant, which is considerably below the national average of 64.6%.

### Culture

The pandemic and the countrywide limitations on visits to public places in 2020 have had a powerful negative impact on cultural life in the district. Cinemas and museums were particularly hard hit. Cinema visits dropped by 94% to 12 per 1,000 persons, compared to a reduction by 71% and 190 per 1,000 persons nationally. Museum visits decreased by 72% to 49 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons in the country. The fall in the numbers of library visits is less drastic, as they remained nearly twice the national average  $-863$  per 1,000 persons, against 480 per 1,000 persons in the country.

## Key indicators for the district of Targovishte

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,981	10,470	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,879	4,576	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,833	12,035	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	28.1	30.2	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	63.0	60.1	56.5	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	11.2	10.5	10.9	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	33.7	36.0	38.3	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	16.8	16.8	15.8	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	15,518	16,536	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	2,071	2,236	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	2,514	2,760	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	65.7	77.1	82.4	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	51.3	60.8	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	20.4	20.4	20.4	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	77.0	78.4	76.0	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-7.8	-8.9	-12.5	<b>-9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	0.0	2.7	4.5	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.88	3.85	3.96	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	31.9	35.2	34.5	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	76.4	76.8	75.7	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	92	104	101	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	87.9	88.3	86.9	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	2,334	2,311	2,402	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.8	9.5	8.9	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	3.5	3.5	4.3	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	56.2	54.1	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	302	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	68.3	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	214	185	12	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	161	175	49	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Varna District

▶ Population (2020)	470,005
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,819.5
▶ Number of settlements	159
▶ Share of urban population (%)	83.2



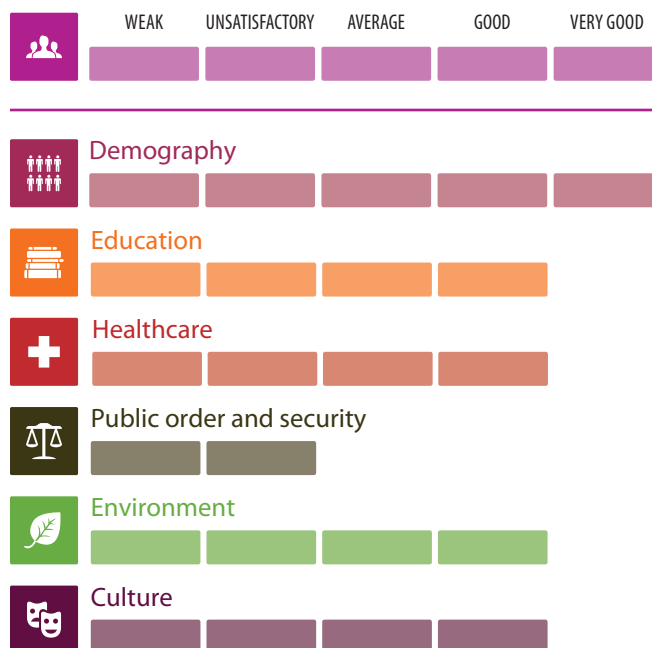
**G**DP per capita in Varna district has continued to grow, and in 2019 it overtook that of Stara Zagora and returned Varna to the third place in the country. The same has happened with wages. Trends in the labor market in 2020 placed the district in a relatively favorable position. In 2019 investment and business activity again remained relatively high, although some negative trends were also in evidence. The infrastructure remained well developed in 2020. The average levels of the monitored local taxes remained relatively high in 2021. The 2021 self-assessment rates of the local administrations on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services showed a considerable increase.

In 2020 Varna retained its place among the districts with very good demographic development. With a significant share of the population living in urban areas, a large proportion of the households have access to public sewerage networks. Varna is among the districts with the best results in the field of education. The performance of students in 2021 was very good. Compared to the national average values, Varna district has more doctors but fewer hospital beds. Crime rates remain quite high, and detection rates among the lowest in the country. The reduction in the number of visits to cultural events in 2020 was more noticeable than in the country on average.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■

### Income and living standard ■■■■

GDP in Varna district has continued to grow and with 16,300 BGN per capita in 2019, it overtook Stara Zagora and returned Varna to the third place in the country, preceded only by Sofia (capital city) and Sofia district. The same has happened with the average annual gross salary of people in employment. In 2019, it reached 14,300 BGN. The average income per household member has also continued to grow and in 2019 it exceeded the national average, though Varna ranked eighth among the country's districts. This explains the relatively high share of the population living with material deprivation – 26.7%, compared to 19.9% in the country. At the same time, however, the share of the population living below the national poverty line remains below the national average.

### Labor market ■■■■■

Trends in the labor market in 2020 placed Varna district in a relatively favorable position. The economic activity rate decreased slightly and remained below the national average. At the same time, however, employment rates went up and unemployment rates fell. The employment rate reached 70.2%, already exceeding the national average of 68.5%, while the unemployment rate fell to 2.2%, remaining one of the lowest in the country with its average of 5.2%.

The share of the workforce with secondary education in the district is relatively high. The share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 has continued to decrease and for the second consecutive year is below the national average – 24.8%, compared to 29.2% in the country. The share of the population with primary education or less has also decreased, reaching 14.4%, versus 16.9% nationwide.

The relatively good demographic trends in Varna district also indicate a favorable development in the labor market. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 is 77.5% (compared to the national average of 67.1%), and is the third highest in the country after Sliven and the capital. Moreover, it has been growing rapidly and steadily since 2013, when Varna district ranked ninth in the country.

### Investment and economy ■■■■■

Investment and business activity in the district again remained relatively high in 2019, although some slightly negative trends were also noticeable. The number of non-financial enterprises reached 71 per 1,000 persons, compared to 61 per 1,000 persons in the country. At the same time, and contrary to the general trends in the country, domestic and foreign investments lagged slightly behind. The amount of FTA acquisition expenditures decreased by 1% (against a growth of 15% in the country) to 2,700 BGN/person, versus 3,200 BGN in the coun-

try. FDI decreased by 6% to just over 3,700 EUR/person, against 3% growth in the country and just under 3,700 EUR/person. The growth of production value in the district has also slowed down – 5%, compared to 8% in the country, and amounts to 23,300 BGN/person (compared to 28,000 BGN/person in the country).

Utilization of European funds has been growing but nevertheless remains relatively low. By 15 June 2021, payments made in the district under EU operational programs amounted to 1,500 BGN/person, compared to 2,200 BGN/person in the country. Within the district, the largest payments were made to the Byala municipality, while the lowest rates of utilization were registered in the Vetrino and Dalgopol municipalities.

### Infrastructure ■■■■

The infrastructure of Varna district remained relatively well developed in 2020. The density of the road and railway networks was high. The share of highways and first-class roads was also high – 27.4%, compared to 18.5% in the country. The quality of the road surface was close to, but above the national average level. 43.5% of the roads in the district were in good condition, versus 41.4% countrywide.

The relative share of households with internet access increased to 77.5%, but remained slightly below the national average. The share of households connected to a gas supply and installed RES capacity was relatively low

### Local taxes ■■

Within Varna district, the average level of the monitored local taxes levied by the municipalities remained relatively high in 2021. An exception is the annual patent tax for taxi transportation for 2021, which was reduced from 690 BGN to 300 BGN in the municipality of Varna city in response to the crisis and the pandemic that had started the previous year. This led to a reduction in the total amount of tax in the district, which shifted it below the national average.

The taxes on retail trade and on immovable non-residential property of legal entities remained among the highest in the country.

### Administration ■■■■■

In 2021, the self-assessment ratings of Varna district municipalities on the performance of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services rose considerably and exceeded the national averages. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration also rose, with the highest ones recorded by the municipalities of Beloslav and Devnya.



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

In 2020, Varna remained among the districts with very good demographic development, ranking second after the capital city. The natural population growth rate fell to  $-5.7\%$ , but remained among the highest in the country and far above the national average of  $-9.5\%$ . Varna district continues to attract population and at  $-6.3\%$ , the net migration rate has reached its highest value in a decade.

This also reflects on the age dependency ratios, which in Varna district remained relatively favorable. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 127.6%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 29.7%, versus 34.1% in the country.

Varna is among the districts with the highest share of urban population – 83.2%, compared to 72.9% in the country, although its density is close to the average values – 1,800 persons/sq. km, against the national average of 1,500 persons/sq. km.

### Education

Varna is among the districts with the best performance in the field of education, coming third in the country after only Sofia (capital city) and Smolyan. In 2020, the enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade remained relatively low – 83.6%, compared to 86.5% countrywide; however, the percentage of school year repeaters and that of dropouts from primary and secondary education were also low.

In 2021, the performance of students in Varna district was very good. The district's average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade reached 44.4 points, compared to 37.9 points in the country. For its part, the average result in the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.39, versus 4.21 nationally. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades also remained low – 5%, against 7% nationwide.

In line with the nationwide trend over the past few years, the number of university students as a share of the total population has been on the decline. Nevertheless, it remains considerably above the national average – in 2020 it was 50 per 1,000 persons, against 32 per 1,000 persons in the country.

### Healthcare

In 2020, the share of people with health insurance in Varna district remained among the lowest in the country – 83.9%, compared to 88.7% nationwide. Compared to the national averages, the district has more doctors but it suffers from a shortage of hospital beds. The number of hospital beds was 4.37 per 1,000 persons, against 5.52 per 1,000 persons countrywide. Nevertheless, the number of patients treated in the local general hospitals in 2020 came close to the national average – 133 per 1,000 persons, versus 138 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

The infant mortality rate has been falling and remains relatively low.

### Public order and security

Court workloads in Varna district remain relatively low. In 2020 there were 6.9 cases a month per one local judge, compared to 8.6 per one judge nationally. The smaller workloads affect the speedy delivery of justice. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 93%, compared to 90% as the national average, and that of pending cases – 7%, compared to 11% nationally.

The crime rate in the district has been falling but remains one of the highest in the country. Detection rates have been going up but in 2020 they again remained among the lowest in the country. Registered crimes against the person and property in Varna district amounted to 12.5 per 1,000 persons, with 9.9 per 1,000 persons as the national figure. The detection rate of 40.1% ranked below the national average of 52.1% and was the second lowest in the country after the capital (32.1%).

### Environment

With Varna district's large share of urban population, a large part of it lives in settlements with public sewerage networks – 86.5%, versus 76.4% countrywide, and in areas with sewerage systems connected to waste water treatment plants – 86.5%, against the national average of 64.6% for 2019.

In 2018 Varna remained among the districts with the greatest amounts of waste generated by the households – an annual of 498 kg/person, against 409 kg/person on a national scale. At the same time, however, a relatively large share of this waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 78%, against 71% as the national average.

### Culture

The pandemic and the measures put in place in 2020 in order to contain the spread of the disease strongly affected the cultural life in the country and significantly restricted attendance to various cultural events. The district of Varna was no exception; what is more, the negative impact there was even more tangible than elsewhere in the country. The number of cinema visits throughout 2020 dropped by 73%, compared to 71% nationwide, though it remained considerably above average – 306 per 1,000 persons. Museum visits remained relatively low in number, with 180 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide, but their drop was also larger – by 72%, against 58% in the country. A similar trend was in evidence as regards visits to the local libraries, which shrank by 39%, versus 30% in the country, and brought the numbers down to 223 per 1,000 persons, compared to 480 per 1,000 persons nationwide.



## Key indicators for the district of Varna

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	15,479	16,340	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,407	5,883	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	13,008	14,282	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	18.5	18.4	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.3	69.6	70.2	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	4.4	3.0	2.2	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.1	18.8	14.4	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	29.5	25.3	24.8	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	22,164	23,275	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	2,761	2,732	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	3,968	3,721	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	76.6	73.5	77.5	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	42.7	43.5	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	18.8	18.8	18.8	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	73.0	75.3	78.7	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-4.0	-3.6	-5.7	<b>-9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	2.2	0.7	6.3	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.26	4.34	4.39	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	38.6	43.3	44.4	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	84.2	84.7	83.6	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	83	87	83	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	83.5	84.0	83.9	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,655	1,655	1,685	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	14.3	14.1	12.5	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.3	6.7	6.9	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	86.4	86.5	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	498	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	78.1	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	1,043	1,132	306	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	609	647	180	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Veliko Tarnovo District

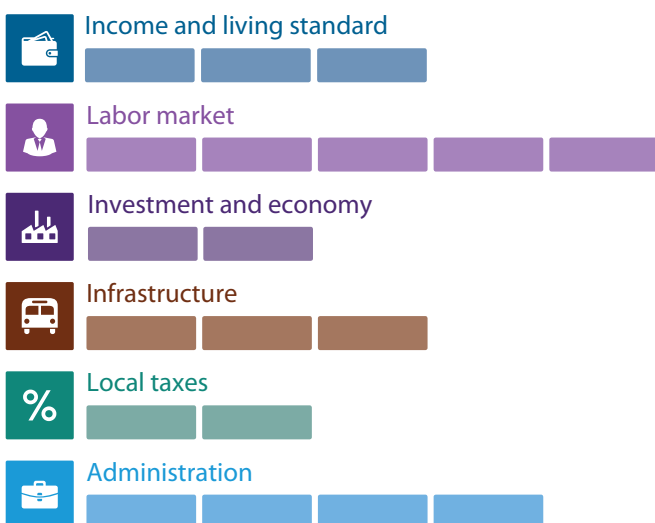
▶ Population (2020)	231,143
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,661.6
▶ Number of settlements	336
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.7



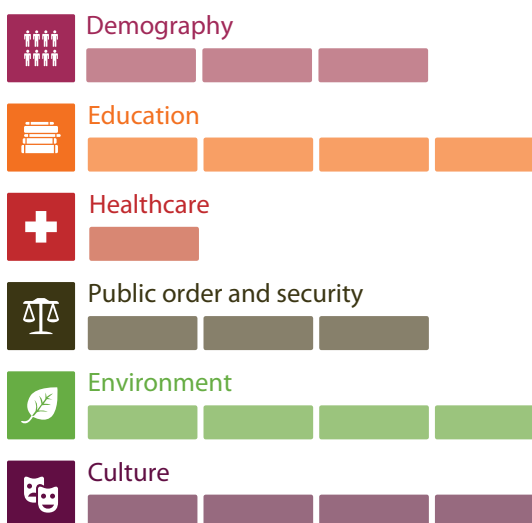
GDP per capita in Veliko Tarnovo district has been growing, but at a rate below the national average and over the past ten years the gap has been on the increase. A similar trend has been in evidence as regards the salaries of employed persons. Investment and business activity is unsatisfactory. However, in 2020 the indicators for the labor market and the trends in it give the district a top place in the country, where it comes second only after Sofia (capital). The density of the road and railway networks is high, but the share of highways and first-class roads remains low. Local taxes are relatively high. The Active transparency ratings of the local administration remain above the national average.

The general trend towards population ageing 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 is among the highest in the country. The number of specialist physicians, as well as of hospital beds, is considerably below the national average. Registered crimes against the person and property have been on the rise. The share of household waste handed over for recycling and treatment is close to 100%. The relatively low share of population living in urban areas reflects on the figures for connectivity to public sewer networks. Veliko Tarnovo district's cultural life is quite intense.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

GDP in Veliko Tarnovo district has been growing, though at a rate below the national average and in the past ten years the gap between the values of GDP per capita in the district and the national ones has increased. In 2019 GDP per capita reached 11,000 BGN, against the national average of 17,000 BGN. A similar trend has been in evidence as regards the salaries of employed persons. In 2019 the average annual gross salary of employed people was 11,600 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN in the country. The average annual income per household member shrank to 5,700 BGN, compared to 6,000 BGN nationally.

These figures and processes have their impact on the poverty levels, which remain relatively high. In 2019, the relative share of people living under the national poverty line was 25.8%, versus 22.6% on a national scale, while those living in material deprivation made up 24.9%, compared to the national average of 19.9%.

### Labor market

The labor market trends give Veliko Tarnovo district a top ranking position in the country for 2020, where it is second only to Sofia (capital city). Economic activity fell, though it still remained among the highest in the country – 78.4%, against 73.7% in the country on average, and was outperformed only by Blagoevgrad and Sofia. Employment declined and unemployment went up, yet they both remained far more favorable than the country's average. In 2020 the employment rate was 75.9%, compared to the national average of 68.5%, and the unemployment rate was 2.5%, against 5.2% 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 was 10.19%, compared to the national average of 16.9%. Those with a university degree made up 29.7%, against the national average of 29.2%.

One major challenge still facing the labor market in Veliko Tarnovo district is population ageing. The population replacement rate of the people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 63%, versus 67% countrywide. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 63 young people joining the workforce.

### Investment and economy

Investment and business activity in Veliko Tarnovo district remained unsatisfactory in 2019. The number of non-financial enterprises grew but remained below the national average – 46 per 1,000 persons, compared to 61 per 1,000 persons in the country on average. FDI acquisition expenditures increased by 16%, compared to 15% countrywide, but remained significantly below the national average – 2,100 BGN/person in

the district, compared to 3,200 BGN/person in the country. A similar trend was noticeable as regards production volumes – they increased relatively fast, by 10%, compared to a rise of 8% in the country. Nevertheless its value remained low – 15,900 BGN/person, against 28,000 BGN/person nationwide. FDI even registered an outflow and it went down to 551 EUR/person, compared to 3,700 EUR/person in the country.

By 15 June 2021, payments made in Veliko Tarnovo district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,800 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 2,200 BGN/person. The top place in the district was held by Svishtov municipality (2,100 BGN/person), though it too failed to reach the national average.

### Infrastructure

Veliko Tarnovo's central position in northern Bulgaria accounts for the great density of its road and railroad networks. Nevertheless, the share of highways and first-class roads in the total network is low – 16.3% in 2020, against 18.5% as the country's average. The share of road surfaces in good condition remains small – 38.2% in 2019, compared to 41.4% countrywide. In 2020 the relative share of households with internet access remained relatively limited – 67.3%, against the national average of 78.9%.

The share of households connected to a gas supply is relatively high.

### Local taxes

The average tax rates in the Veliko Tarnovo municipalities remained high in 2021. The greatest margin was in the non-residential immovable property tax for legal entities, which was 2.45‰, compared to 2.01‰ in the country. Relatively high were also the rates of the taxes on motor vehicles and retail trade. The taxi transportation tax rate has been on the decrease and is relatively low.

### Administration

In 2019, almost the entire territory of Veliko Tarnovo district was already covered by the cadastral map. The 2021 the local authorities' self-assessments on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop shop administrative services were lower than the national averages. Higher than the national average was the AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations – 75.1%, compared to 73.2% as the national average. The highest transparency ratings in the district of Veliko Tarnovo were achieved by the Svishtov municipality.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

The trend towards fast population ageing remained particularly conspicuous in Veliko Tarnovo in 2020. The natural population growth rate continued to be markedly negative at  $-7.6\text{‰}$ , compared to the national average of  $-9.5\text{‰}$ , and has been going down by the year. There has been an increase in the net migration rate, but even that value ( $-0.1\text{‰}$ ) continues to be negative.

These are trends that affect the district's age dependency ratios. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 189.2%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 38.3%, versus 34.1% nationwide.

A relatively small share of the population lives in urban areas – 69.7%, against the national average of 72.9%. At the same time, the population density of the district's urban parts remains low at 1,042 persons/sq. km, versus 1,506 persons/sq. km on average for the country.

### Education

The education indicators of Veliko Tarnovo district rank it relatively high in the country. The net enrollment ratio of schoolchildren in 5th–8th grade is 85.1%, compared to 86.5% in the country, which is close to the national average, though slightly less favorable. The same is true of the share of repeaters (0.59% compared to 0.55%) and of dropouts from primary and secondary education (2.9% against 2.5% nationwide). The number of teachers in primary and secondary education remains high – 98 per 1,000 students, compared to 87 per 1,000 students in the country.

In 2021, the performance of students in the district remained below the national average. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 35.4 points, compared to 37.9 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was 4.19, versus 4.21 nationally.

The number of university students in the district has been declining in line with its overall decline in the country in recent years, but remains among the highest in the country and second only to that in the capital – 68 per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

### Healthcare

Veliko Tarnovo is among the worst performing districts in the country as regards healthcare, with only Silistra and Sliven registering poorer results. In 2020, the share of people with health insurance was among the lowest in the country – 84.7%, compared to the national average of 88.7%. The number of GPs is close to the average one in the country, but that of specialist physicians is significantly lower.

The number of beds in the general hospitals remains extremely low – 3.33 per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.52 per 1,000 persons in the country, and its growth over the past few years has been very slow. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is close to the national average – 133 per

1,000 persons, compared to 138 per 1,000 persons country-wide. The infant mortality rate increased considerably for the second consecutive year to reach 9.0‰ in 2020, compared to 5.1‰ in the country.

### Public order and security

In 2020, criminal court workloads in Veliko Tarnovo district were again relatively lower than the national average – 6.8 cases a month per one judge on average, compared to 8.6 cases nationally. This affected the speed of delivery of justice. Thus, the share of cases closed within 3 months reached 92%, compared to 90% as the national average.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property in Veliko Tarnovo district rose in 2020 and amounted to 10.1 per 1,000 persons, for the first time exceeding the national average. At the same time, the share of cleared crimes continued to fall and was down to 60.6%, though remaining above the national average of 52.1%

### Environment

The amount of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere in the district has been rising but in 2019 it still remained considerably below the national average. The amount of household waste generated in the district was relatively low in 2018 – an annual of 425 kg/person, against 409 kg/person on a national scale. However, the amount of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling reached almost 100%, against 71% as the national average.

The relatively low share of population living in urban areas affects the data on households' access to public sewerage networks. In 2019, 69.4% of the population lived in settlements with public sewerage, compared to 76.4% nationwide, and 62.3% of the networks were connected to wastewater treatment plants, versus 64.6% in the country.

### Culture

Cultural life in the district of Veliko Tarnovo shows a markedly good performance, even though it too was particularly hard hit by the pandemic and the restrictions imposed in 2020 on cultural events in the country. Visits to museums in the district decreased by 64%, compared to 58% in the country, but remained significantly higher than the national average – 851 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons in the country. The number of visits to libraries shrank twice as much – 62%, compared to 30% in the country, though it still remained relatively high, with 996 per 1,000 persons, versus 480 per 1,000 persons nationwide. At the same time, the drop in the number of cinema visits in the district was much smaller – 39%, compared to 71% in the country, and for the first time their number exceeded the national average – 195 per 1,000 persons, compared to 190 per 1,000 persons in the country.

## Key indicators for the district of Veliko Tarnovo

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,434	11,071	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	6,024	5,707	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,529	11,619	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	28.8	25.8	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	66.6	78.7	75.9	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	5.4	(2.0)	(2.5)	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	13.0	8.9	10.1	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	26.8	29.6	29.7	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	14,517	15,918	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,816	2,100	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	597	551	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	66.6	63.0	67.3	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	29.7	38.2	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	20.1	20.1	20.1	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	73.0	70.8	75.1	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-9.4	-10.1	-12.3	<b>-9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	-5.0	-3.4	-0.1	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.05	4.28	4.12	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.1	33.4	35.4	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	84.0	85.7	85.1	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	93	98	98	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	83.9	85.3	84.7	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,746	1,736	1,738	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.1	9.2	10.1	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	7.2	6.6	6.8	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	68.4	69.4	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	425	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	99.9	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	408	319	195	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	2,139	2,346	851	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Vidin District

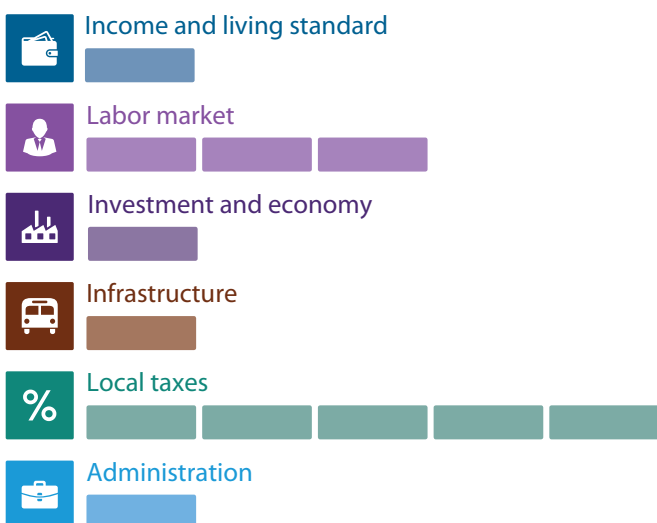
▶ Population (2020)	82,024
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,032.9
▶ Number of settlements	140
▶ Share of urban population (%)	64.6



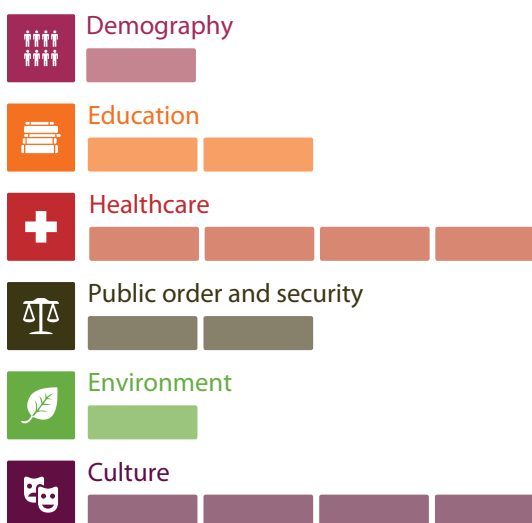
Vidin is the district with the worst indicators for incomes and quality of life in the country. The decline in employment and the increase in unemployment in 2020 were not as high as in the rest of the country, but overall labor market indicators remained significantly less favorable. Investment and business activity is relatively weak. The infrastructure indicators are the lowest in the country. Vidin is the district with the lowest average rates of the monitored local taxes for 2021, and Gramada is the municipality with the lowest taxes not only in Vidin district, but also in the whole country. The 2021 self-assessments of the administration on the development of their e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services are among the lowest in the country. The transparency

ratings of local administrations also remain extremely low. In 2020, Vidin remained the district with the most unfavorable demographic trends in the country. The number of teachers in primary and secondary education increased in 2020 and for the first time in three years was higher than the national average. The number of GPs remains relatively high, but healthcare suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. Despite the low and still decreasing workload of criminal judges, the speed of delivery of justice is low. The relatively low share of the population living in cities is a factor for the relatively limited share of households with a connection to a public sewerage network. The performance of Vidin district in the field of culture is good.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT





## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■

### Income and living standard ■

Vidin is the district with the worst indicators for incomes and quality of life. GDP per capita in the district of Vidin went on rising in 2019, reaching 8,700 BGN, but in the last two decades its difference with the national average has kept increasing. Employed people's salaries have been increasing faster than the national average rate, but remain among the lowest in the country, after only those in Blagoevgrad district. The average annual income per household member in 2019 was 3,400 BGN, compared to 6,000 BGN nationwide, and was the lowest in the country.

These trends affect the poverty levels in the district, which remain quite high. In 2019, the share of population living below the national poverty line was 35.0%, against 22.6% in the country, and of the population living with material deprivation – 31.0%, versus 19.9% countrywide.

### Labor market ■■■■

Economic activity in the district decreased slightly in 2020 to 75.0%, compared to 73.7% in the country, but for the third consecutive year remained at a relatively high level. The decline in employment and the increase in unemployment in 2020 were not as high as in the rest of the country, but those indicators remain significantly less favorable. The employment rate was 55.7%, compared to 68.5% in the country, and the unemployment rate was 19.3%, against 5.2% in the country.

The educational structure of the workforce has continued to deteriorate in recent years. The share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education fell to 18% in 2020, compared to 29% in the country, and the share of people with primary or lower education increased to 19%, versus 17% nationwide.

One of the major challenges facing the local labor market is population ageing. The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 rose significantly after 2013, but in 2020 it remained lower than the national average – 65%, compared to 67% nationwide. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 65 young people joining the workforce.

### Investment and economy ■■

Investment and business activity in Vidin district remained relatively low in 2019. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population grew, but again remained among the lowest in the country. Vidin recorded the lowest values (almost four times lower than the average ones) for the volumes of FTA acquisition expenditures – 839 BGN/person, compared to 3,155 BGN/person in the country, and production value –

7,600 BGN/person, against 28,000 BGN/person nationwide. FDI in the district was in a similar situation. After a three-year steady increase, by the end of 2019 it had reached 1,052 EUR/person, but still remained considerably lower than the national average of 3,655 EUR/person.

By 15 June 2021, payments made to beneficiaries of EU operational programs were close to the national average, with the municipalities of Belogradchik and Vidin taking the top places within the district.

### Infrastructure ■■

Vidin is the district with the worst infrastructure indicators in the country. The density of the road and railway networks is close to the national average. However, the share of first-class roads and highways (11.6%, compared to 18.5% in the country in 2020), and that of the road surfaces in good condition (28.4%, compared to 41.4% in the country in 2019) are considerably lower than the national averages.

Household access to the Internet remains low and in 2020 it even dropped to 44.8%, compared to 78.9% nationwide. Vidin is one of the two districts (along with Smolyan) without any household gas supply infrastructure.

### Local taxes ■■■■■■

In 2021, Vidin was the district with the lowest rates for the monitored local taxes. In general, the averaged total rate of the taxes in the district was lower than the national average. The difference was especially big as regards the taxation on retail trade – 4.46 BGN/sq. m on average for the district, against 12.99 BGN/sq. m in the country. The level of taxation on motor vehicles was also extremely low.

Gramada is the municipality with the lowest taxes not only in Vidin district, but also in the whole country.

### Administration ■■

Vidin is also the district with the worst performance of the local administrations. In 2021 the district municipalities' self-assessments on the development of their e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services were among the lowest in the country. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations also remains extremely low and has even decreased in the past two years, moving down to 60% versus 73% in the country. Within the district, the highest result was recorded by Belogradchik municipality (93%), and the lowest – by the municipalities of Boynitsa and Gramada (44%).

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

### Demography ■■

Vidin remains the district with the most unfavorable demographic picture in the country for 2020. The natural population growth rate fell rapidly and reached its lowest value of -21.9‰, compared to -9.5‰ in the country. At the same time, however, 2020 was the first year in at least two decades in which the district managed to attract population. The net migration rate was 2.1‰.

The long period of rapid population ageing is also reflected in the extremely unfavorable age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of the population 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 251.2%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 51.5%, versus 34.1% in the country.

The share of urban population remained relatively low in 2020, while population density was almost twice as low as the national average.

### Education ■■■

The performance of Vidin district in the field of education is unsatisfactory. In 2020, the district was once again among those with the lowest net enrollment rate in 5th–8th grade – 80.8%, compared to 86.5% in the country. The share of repeaters remained double the national average.

The performance of students in the 2021 national external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was again extremely poor. With an average score of 28.4 points (against 37.9 points in the country) the district occupied the second lowest place in the country, followed only by Sliven district. 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 4.12, compared to 4.21 nationally, while the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was lower – 6%, against 7% nationwide.

The number of teachers in primary and secondary education relative to student numbers went up in 2020 and for the first time in three years was higher than the national average.

Positive trends can be observed in higher education. In the academic year 2020/2021, the branch of the University of Ruse, which opened in Vidin in 2017, already had an enrolment of nearly 450 students.

### Healthcare ■■■■■■

The share of people with health insurance dropped in 2020 to 91.2% but still exceeded the national average of 88.7%. The proportion of GPs 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 been rising in the past few years but it still remains relatively low – 4.08 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.52 beds per 1,000 persons in the country. This probably explains

the relatively low hospitalization figures in 2020 – 105 per 1,000 persons, versus 138 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

The infant mortality rate in Vidin district dropped sharply in 2020, after a significant rise over the previous two years, and came down to 4.2‰, compared to 5.1‰ in the country. In 2019, infant mortality figures rose considerably for the second consecutive year, reaching 9.1‰, compared to 5.6‰ as the national average.

### Public order and security ■■■■

Despite the low and still decreasing workload of the criminal judges in Vidin district, the speed of delivery of justice remained low in 2020, with the number of cases closed within 3 months at 88%, compared to 90% in the country.

Vidin is also among the districts with the highest crime rate. In 2020, the registered crimes against the person and property were 12.5 per 1,000 persons, against 9.9 per 1,000 persons in the country. At the same time, however, the detection rate was slightly higher than the national average – 54.5%, versus 52.1% countrywide.

### Environment ■■

Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere in the district remained extremely low in 2019. The amount of generated household waste in 2018 was also low – 339 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person. At the same time, however, the share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling remained very small – less than 10%, with over 70% countrywide.

The relatively low share of population living in urban areas is a factor for the relatively limited share of households connected to a public sewerage system in 2019 (57.9% of the population, compared to 76.4% in the country) and to wastewater treatment plants (49.5%, against 64.6% in the country). It should be noted, however, that great progress was recorded in the district after the opening of the new wastewater treatment plant in Vidin in October 2019 – previously the share of the treated sewage amounted to only 0.5%.

### Culture ■■■■■■

In 2020 Vidin again performed well in the category of culture. The pandemic and restrictions on cultural events throughout the country affected the district as well. The drop in museum visits was less dramatic and their number remained significantly higher than the national average – 1,139 per 1,000 persons, compared to 322 per 1,000 persons in the country.

Nevertheless, the decrease in visits to cinemas and libraries in the district was higher than the respective national averages, and their number remained considerably lower.

## Key indicators for the district of Vidin

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,926	8,734	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	3,470	3,437	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,103	10,302	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	39.0	35.0	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	58.8	56.5	55.7	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	19.9	19.1	19.3	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	11.8	15.4	18.5	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	20.1	19.2	18.0	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	6,954	7,649	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	851	839	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	953	1,052	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	61.7	63.0	44.8	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	38.3	28.4	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	20.2	20.2	20.2	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	63.0	61.9	60.2	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–16.4	–16.4	–21.9	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–7.6	–7.9	2.1	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.18	4.21	4.12	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	24.6	28.7	28.4	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	82.9	78.9	80.8	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	80	88	90	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	90.8	92.7	91.2	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,432	1,428	1,465	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	14.1	13.2	12.5	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	7.3	6.6	4.3	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	57.6	57.9	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	339	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	10.0	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	319	397	102	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	2,141	2,546	1,139	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Vratsa District

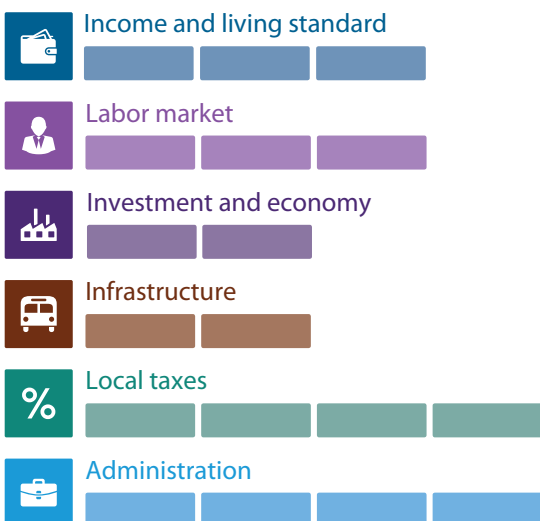
▶ Population (2020)	158,554
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,619.8
▶ Number of settlements	123
▶ Share of urban population (%)	58.8



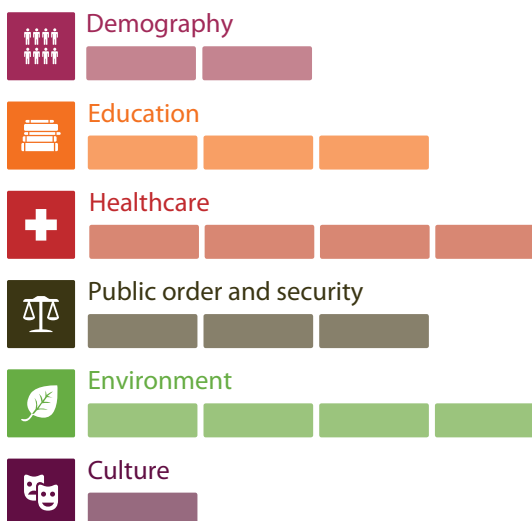
Vratsa is one of the two districts in which GDP per capita shrank in 2019. At the same time, however, salaries and incomes continued to grow at a higher than average rate. The labor market indicators place Vratsa district in an unfavorable position. The challenges facing the local labor market continue to be the relatively low-educated workforce and the ageing population. Economic and investment activity is relatively low, but production value continues to grow. The whole district performs poorly in terms of the indicators for infrastructural development. The average level of local taxes in the local municipalities was again relatively low in 2021. The age dependency ratios remain significantly less

favorable than the national averages. The share of urban population remains low. The indicators in the field of primary and secondary education remain relatively good, but the students' results are relatively poor. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of doctors (both GPs and specialist physicians) and hospital beds. The workloads of criminal judges in the district are decreasing and remain relatively low, which affects the speed of delivery of justice. The relatively small share of the population living in cities and its low density may explain the limited share of households in settlements with a public sewerage network. The cultural life in the district is of low intensity.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

After a high and stable growth of GDP in the previous few years, in 2019 it decreased by 12% to 13,300 BGN/person, thus falling further behind the national average of 17,200 BGN/person. Vratsa is one of the two districts (along with Stara Zagora) in which GDP per capita has shrunk, against a 10% growth in the country on average. At the same time, however, salaries and incomes in the district continue to grow at a rate faster than the national average, although they remain below the average levels. The gross annual salary of employees has reached 13,900 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN in the country.

Poverty in the district remains relatively high.

### Labor market

The labor market indicators for 2020 place Vratsa district in an unfavorable position. Economic activity remained relatively low – 67.4%, compared to 73.7% in the country, and it even shrank slightly compared to the previous year. The employment rate declined, while the unemployment rate rose to almost twice the national average. The employment rate was down to 57.1%, compared to 68.5% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 10.3%, compared to 5.2% in the country.

Among the challenges that keep facing the local labor market are the relatively low level of education of the workforce and population ageing. The number of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 has risen to 22.9%, but their share remains below the national average of 29.2%. At the same time, the number of people with primary or lower education has increased to 22.4%, compared to 16.9% in the country.

The labor market is affected by population ageing as well. The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 in the district is 65.4%, compared to 67.1% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who will have to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 65 young people who will join the workforce.

### Investment and economy

Economic and investment activity in Vratsa district remained relatively low in 2019. The relative number of non-financial enterprises was 38 per 1,000 persons, against 61 per 1,000 persons as the national average. Typical of FTA expenditure acquisition rates in the district are significant drops and increases. In 2019 they fell by 10% to 1,513 BGN/person, which is half the national figure of 3,155 BGN/person. A shrinkage by 23% was noticeable in the stock of FDI, which were now 7 times lower than the national average – 505 EUR/person in the district, against 3,655 EUR/person in the country.

Despite these decreases, production value in Vratsa district continued to rise at a rate that was even higher than in the

country on average. It amounted to 17,600 BGN/person, against 28,000 BGN/person as the national average.

Vratsa is among the top ranking districts in terms of utilization of EU funding.

### Infrastructure

Vratsa district performs badly as regards the indicators for infrastructural development, and together with Vidin and Montana occupies the bottom three places in the country.

The density of the road and railroad networks nearly equals the national averages but road quality remains extremely low. The share of highways and first-class roads is 10%, against 18.5% in the country. In 2019 the share of roads with surfaces in good condition was 28.4%, compared to the national average of 41.4%. It should be noted, however, that compared to the previous two years, road surface quality has improved.

In 2020, the relative share of households with internet access in Vratsa district again remained almost unchanged – 71.5%, against the average of 78.9% nationwide. The share of households connected to gas supply was 1.9%, against 3.1% in the country. Installed RES capacity reached 0.382 kW/person, compared to the national average of 0.603 kW/person.

### Local taxes

In 2021, the average rate of the local taxes in the district's municipalities again remained relatively low. The retail trade tax rate in the district was almost half the national average – 6.69 BGN/sq. m, against 12.99 BGN/sq. m nationally. Also lower were the rates for the motor vehicle tax, the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and on taxi transportation.

Of the monitored tax rates, only the average one on non-residential immovable property of legal entities was higher than its average counterpart in the country.

Within the district, relatively lower local taxes are levied by the municipalities of Krivodol, Hairedin and Vratsa, while the higher ones are in Oryahovo, Byala Slatina and Kozloduy.

### Administration

Vratsa district registers relatively good results regarding the functioning of its local administration. Cadastral map coverage has been rising fast but is still below the national average. The level of e-government again remained relatively low in 2021, while that of the provision of one-stop shop services remained relatively high. The transparency ratings of the local administration were close to but slightly higher than the national average



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

While within the previous ten years the natural population growth rate in the district had remained at relatively stable, though relatively low levels, in 2020 it fell sharply from around -11‰ to -13.9‰, against -9.5‰ in the country on average. At the same time, the net migration rate rose and for the first time its value was positive, reaching 2.3 ‰, which, however, was not enough to compensate for the rapid ageing of the population. The age dependency ratios remained significantly less favorable than the national average. In 2020, the ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 177.5%, compared to 150.6% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 40.0%, against 34.1% in the country.

The share of urban population remains low – 58.8%, compared to 72.9% in the country, and its density is twice as low as the national average – 756 people/sq. km compared to 1,506 people/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. In 2020 Vratsa again remained among the districts with the highest net enrolment rate in 5th–8th grade – 91.8%, compared to 86.5% in the country. The number of teachers was also higher than the national average – 93 per 1,000 students, versus an average of 87 per 1,000 students nationally. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education were lower than the average ones – 0.41%, against 0.55% in the country, and 2.3%, versus 2.5% in the country, respectively.

The students' results in 2021 were relatively poor. The average score in the national external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 30.3 points, compared to 37.9 points nationally. The average score in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was lower than in the previous year, falling to 3.99 versus 4.21 nationally. The number of "fail" (below 3.00) grades increased to 10%, compared to 7% in the country.

Vratsa is not among the leaders in the field of higher education, although it is home to two branches of higher education institutions. The number of students in the district is 7 per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

### Healthcare

The share of health-insured persons in Vratsa district is traditionally higher than the national average, but its healthcare suffers from a shortage of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – and of hospital beds. In 2020 the number of beds in the local general hospitals remained almost unchanged, with 4.46 beds per 1,000 persons, while the national average was 5.52 per 1,000 persons.

After a three-year steady decrease, in 2020 the infant mortality rate was down to 3.7‰, against 5.1‰ nationwide. However, the number of people treated in the local general hospitals was high – 154 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 138 per 1,000 persons.

### Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in Vratsa district continued to decrease and in 2020 again remained relatively low, which affected the speedy delivery of justice. In 2020, one local judge heard an average of 6.4 cases a month, compared to 8.6 cases per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months decreased but remained high nevertheless – 93%, against the national average of 90%. Vratsa also remains the district with the smallest share of pending cases – 5%, or half that in the country on average.

The registered crimes against the person and property in Vratsa district decreased for the third year in a row but their number again remains among the highest in the country, second only to Montana district – 13 per 1,000 persons, versus 10 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Still, the detection rate in 2020 was higher than the national average, albeit by a small margin – 54.5%, versus the national figure of 52.1%.

### Environment

In 2019, carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere in the district of Vratsa still remained nearly twice as low as the average ones in Bulgaria. The amounts of waste generated by households also remained relatively smaller – 278 kg/person per annum, versus 409 kg/person in the country. However, the share handed over for treatment and recycling was again lower than the national figures – 67%, versus 71% respectively.

The relatively low share of population living in urban areas and the small population density in Vratsa district can account for the limited access of the households to a public sewerage system – 57.8%, compared to the national average of 76.2%. Public sewerage networks with access to wastewater treatment plants are available to 51.4% of the population, compared to the average of 64.6% countrywide.

### Culture

The low intensity of its cultural life remained a characteristic of Vratsa district in 2020. Due to the pandemic and the restrictions on visits to cultural venues, the numbers of museum and cinema visits fell. The decrease was comparable to that in the country on average, but in absolute values the number of visits in Vratsa district was considerably lower. Visits to the local museums numbered 45 per 1,000 persons, against the average of 322 per 1,000 persons nationwide, and visits to cinemas were 111 per 1,000 persons, compared to 190 per 1,000 persons nationwide.



## Key indicators for the district of Vratsa

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	15,018	13,278	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	4,582	5,209	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,489	13,874	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	29.0	38.9	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	54.5	59.8	57.1	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	10.1	7.7	10.3	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	20.8	20.7	22.4	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	21.5	21.0	22.9	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	15,540	17,592	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,682	1,513	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	654	505	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	65.5	71.1	71.5	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	26.5	28.4	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	17.9	17.9	17.9	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	74.0	69.9	73.9	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–11.4	–11.4	–13.9	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–7.5	–7.8	2.3	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.98	4.08	3.99	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	26.2	28.9	30.3	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	93.0	89.9	91.8	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	86	94	93	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	91.4	93.5	92.6	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,709	1,679	1,762	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	15.4	14.1	13.0	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	7.3	6.6	6.4	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	57.6	57.8	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	278	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	67.5	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	191	367	111	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	140	131	45	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Yambol District



▶ Population (2020)	116,911
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,355.5
▶ Number of settlements	109
▶ Share of urban population (%)	68.8

**G**DP in Yambol district has continued to grow, but remains far from the average level in the country. Incomes and salaries in the district also remain lower, which is the main factor for the high level of poverty in the district. Employment retains its value from the previous year and remains relatively low. FDI stocks have decreased and remain among the lowest in the country. 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 in 2021 were close to the national averages. The self-assessments of the local administrations in Yambol district for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services are low. In 2020, there was a deterioration in the natural population

growth and the rate of attracting new residents to the district. The performance of the students in the district is very poor. The share of repeaters is on the increase and is significantly above the national average. Although the number of GPs relative to the population in the district is close to the national average, the number of specialist physicians is among the lowest in the country. The workloads of the local criminal judges are lower than in the country, and the delivery of justice is speedier. The relatively good assessments of Yambol district in the environment category are mainly due to the small volumes of generated household waste and its management. The pandemic and the restriction on cultural events in 2020 have had a negative impact on cultural life in the district as well.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



### Income and living standard



### Labor market



### Investment and economy



### Infrastructure



### Local taxes



### Administration



## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



### Demography



### Education



### Healthcare



### Public order and security



### Environment



### Culture



## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■

### Income and living standard ■■

GDP in Yambol district continued to grow in 2019 and reached 10,100 BGN per capita, but remained far from the country's average of 17,200 BGN. Salaries and incomes in the district also registered a growth. The average gross annual salary of employed people increased significantly, by over 11%, to 12,000 BGN, compared to 15,200 BGN nationally. The average income reached 5,600 BGN per household member, against 6,000 BGN in the country.

Despite these favorable trends, poverty levels remain high. Yambol is the district with the highest share of the population living with material deprivation – 39.6% in 2019, compared to 19.9% in the country. The share of the population living below the poverty line is also significantly higher than the national average – 33.2%, versus 22.6% nationally.

### Labor market ■■■■

The economic activity on the labor market declined in 2020 and for the third consecutive year was below the national average, with a rate of 70.7%, compared to 73.7% in the country. The employment rate retained its value from the previous year and remained at a relatively low level – 63.2%, versus 68.5% nationally. Unemployment remained above the national average.

Trends in the educational structure of the workforce are favorable, although the indicator values are still relatively low. The share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 has increased to 23.5%, compared to 29.2% in the country, and that of people with primary or lower education has dropped to 21.3%, against the national average of 16.9%.

Although the deterioration of the population replacement rate in recent years is visible, its value remains relatively favorable. In 2020, the ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that of the 60–64 age group was 64.9%, compared to 67.1% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 65 young people who will join the workforce.

### Investment and economy ■■■

Due to the dominance of the processing industry, Yambol is among the districts with a relatively small number of enterprises – only 47 per 1,000 persons in 2019, compared to 61 per 1,000 persons nationally, but the tendency is towards an increase in their number. The annual FTA acquisition expenditures have increased, but remain relatively low – 1,777 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 3,155 BGN/person. There has even been a decrease in FDI stock and it remains among the lowest in the country at 352 EUR/person, versus

3,655 EUR/person nationally. Production value has risen to reach 16,200 BGN/person, compared to 28,000 BGN/person in the country.

There has been an increase in the utilization of European funds, though it still remains below the national average. By 15 June 2021, the payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 2,068 BGN/person, while the national average was 2,217 BGN/person. Within the district, there is not a single municipality where the amount of utilized EU funding per capita is above the national average.

### Infrastructure ■■■■

Yambol district is characterized by a high density of the road network. However, the railway network is among the least developed in the country, after that of Dobrich district. In 2020, the share of first-class roads and highways was above the national average – 20.6%, compared to 18.5% nationally. In recent years, there have been fluctuations in the figures indicating the quality of the road surface, with about 43.9% of the roads in good condition in 2019, against 41.4% in the country.

The share of households connected to high-speed internet went up in 2020 but remained among the lowest in the country – only 63.1%, compared to 78.9% nationally.

The share of households connected to a gas supply is relatively large. Installed RES capacity is relatively high.

### Local taxes ■■■■

The average rates of local taxes in Yambol district in 2021 again remained close to the average ones in the country. Among the monitored taxes, relatively high were those on the real estate of legal entities and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property. At the same time, the rates on retail trade and taxi transportation remained below average. In 2021, the tax rate for retail trade in Yambol district was on average 8.16 BGN/sq. m, compared to 12.99 BGN/sq. m in the country.

### Administration ■■■

The average self-assessments of the local administrations in Yambol district regarding the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop shop administrative services again remained below the respective national averages in 2021. The AIP active transparency rating achieved by the local administration in 2021 was 72.7%, compared to 73.2% in the country. Within the district, the highest rating was achieved by the municipalities of Bolyarovo and Tundzha.

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

In 2020, there was a deterioration in the natural population growth and a rise in the net migration rate. The natural population growth rate in Yambol district dropped to -11.5 ‰, below the national average of -9.5 ‰. There was a trend towards an increase in the net migration rate in almost the whole country and for the first time in a number of districts it reached a positive value. Yambol district was no exception, though its migration rate remained relatively low - 4.3‰.

In recent years, the process of population ageing in Yambol district has continued to accelerate. In 2020, the age dependency rate as a ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 reached 160.8%, compared to 150.6% nationally, and to the 15-64 age group it was 40.5%, versus 34.1% countrywide.

The share of urban population in Yambol district is lower than in the country - 68.8%, against 72.9% nationally, and so is population density - 1,069 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,506 persons/sq. km countrywide.

### Education

The coverage of the education system has been on the increase and in 2020 it remained above the national average, with 89.8% in the district, versus 86.5% in the country. The share of repeaters has gone up and is considerably above the national average. However, the share of dropouts from primary and secondary education is relatively low. Yambol is the district with the lowest number of teachers in the country - 76 per 1,000 students, compared to 87 teachers per 1,000 students nationally.

Students' results again remained extremely low in 2021. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 35.0 points, versus 37.9 points in the country. The district also registered the lowest average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature, alongside Silistra and Montana - 3.94, compared to 4.21 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) increased to 13%, against 7% nationally.

The number of university students is 7 per 1,000 people, against 32 per 1,000 people nationwide.

### Healthcare

Although the number of GPs relative to the population in Yambol district is close to the national average, the number of specialist physicians is among the lowest in the country, followed only by that in Dobrich district. The number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals is also extremely low - 3.54 beds per 1,000 people, compared to the national average of 5.52 beds per 1,000 people.

These figures probably account for the low number of hospitalizations in 2020 - 100 per 1,000 people, versus 138 per 1,000 people countrywide. It can be assumed, therefore, that the residents seek medical care outside the district.

The coverage of the health system declined in 2020 and at 88.4%, it fell for the first time below the national average of 88.7%.

The infant mortality rate remains high.

### Public order and security

In 2020, the workloads of the local criminal judges were lower than in the country, and the delivery of justice - speedier. One local criminal judge heard an average of 7.2 cases per month, compared to 8.6 per judge in the country. The share of pending cases dropped to 8%, versus the national average of 11%. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months went up to reach 90%, which equaled the national average.

In 2020, the crime rate in the district continued to fall, and the detection rate to rise. Crimes against the person and property dropped to 9.0 per 1,000 persons, versus 9.9 per 1,000 persons nationally. The detection rate was among the highest in the whole country - 66.9%, compared to 52.1% nationwide.

### Environment

The relatively positive assessment of Yambol district in the environment category is mainly due to the small volumes of generated household waste and its management. In 2018, the amounts of household waste generated in the district were 317 kg/person, against the national average of 409 kg/person. 90% of the generated waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to 71% on average countrywide.

The carbon dioxide emissions in the district remain low - 9 t/sq. km.

There has been little change in the share of households with access to a public sewerage network, which in 2019 remained close to, though below the national average - 71.9%, against 76.4% in the country. The share of households whose sewerage system is connected to a wastewater treatment plant was the lowest in the country - a bare 4.8%, compared to 64.6% countrywide.

### Culture

The pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on visits to cultural events in 2020 had a powerful negative impact on cultural life in the district as well. There was a considerable shrinkage (by 93%, versus 71% nationally) in cinema visits, which dropped to a bare 8 per 1,000 persons, compared to 190 per 1,000 persons nationally. The reduction of museum and library visits was more limited and close to the national average - the former fell by 57%, compared to 58% in the country, and the latter by 39%, against 30% nationally. Both indicators remained below the country's average. Museum visits in 2020 amounted to 143 per 1,000 persons, versus 322 per 1,000 persons in the country, and library visits - 274 per 1,000 persons, compared to 480 per 1,000 persons nationally.

## Key indicators for the district of Yambol

Indicators of economic development	2018	2019	2020	National average
GDP per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,694	10,142	n.a.	<b>17,170</b>
Average annual income per household member (BGN)	5,357	5,638	n.a.	<b>6,013</b>
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,815	12,048	n.a.	<b>15,209</b>
Share of the population living below the national poverty line (%)	24.3	33.2	n.a.	<b>22.6</b>
Employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	62.3	63.1	63.2	<b>68.5</b>
Unemployment rate of the population over 15 years of age (%)	8.3	9.0	(7.5)	<b>5.2</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)	23.4	23.3	21.3	<b>16.9</b>
Share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	21.0	19.8	23.5	<b>29.2</b>
Production value (BGN/person)	15,014	16,153	n.a.	<b>28,027</b>
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (BGN/person)	1,683	1,777	n.a.	<b>3,155</b>
Cumulative foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (EUR/person)	445	352	n.a.	<b>3,655</b>
Share of households with Internet (%)	62.1	53.4	63.1	<b>78.9</b>
Share of roads in good condition (%)	39.8	43.9	n.a.	<b>41.4</b>
Road network density (km/100 sq. km territory)	19.0	19.0	19.0	<b>17.9</b>
AIP active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)*	67.0	70.4	72.7	<b>73.2</b>

Indicators of social development	2018	2019	2020	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	–8.9	–8.7	–11.5	<b>–9.5</b>
Net migration rate (‰)	–4.3	–4.6	4.3	<b>4.4</b>
Average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.80	4.04	3.94	<b>4.21</b>
Average grade in the National external exam in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.4	31.2	35.0	<b>37.9</b>
Net enrolment of the population in 5th–8th grade (%)	90.6	87.0	89.8	<b>86.5</b>
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	71	77	76	<b>87</b>
Share of population with health insurance (%)	89.3	89.8	88.4	<b>88.7</b>
Population per one GP (number of people)	1,575	1,701	1,771	<b>1,727</b>
Registered crimes against the person and property per 1,000 people	10.5	9.6	9.0	<b>9.9</b>
Workloads of criminal judges in office (cases/month)	6.0	5.4	7.2	<b>8.6</b>
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)	71.8	71.9	n.a.	<b>76.4</b>
Generated household waste per capita (kg/person/year)	317	n.a.	n.a.	<b>409</b>
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	89.8	n.a.	n.a.	<b>70.9</b>
Visits to cinemas per 1,000 persons	97	114	8	<b>190</b>
Visits to museums per 1,000 persons	292	329	143	<b>322</b>

\* The data for 2021 are included in the 2021 study. The same also applies for the previous years.

\*\* The data refer to the 2020–2021 academic year while the matriculation exam was held in 2021. The same also applies for the previous years.

# Categories of Indicators

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita	The indicator measures the standard of living in a district and the level of development of the local economy. The higher GDP per capita the district has, the more indicative this is of a strong local economy and a higher standard of living for local residents.	2000–2019	BGN per capita	NSI
Average annual income per household member	The indicator shows the general welfare and living standard of the local population. For the purposes of this study, we have used the total income, including cash income (salary and wages, pensions, social benefits, transfers from other households, proceeds from sales, etc.) and valued in-kind income.	2001–2019	total income BGN/ household member	NSI
Average annual gross wage	Income earned from salaries and wages is one of the key factors determining the level of household income.	2008–2019	BGN	NSI
Relative share of the population living with material deprivation	This is a subjective indicator based on surveys of households on specific indicators of material deprivation using a Eurostat methodology. The questionnaire includes difficulties with paying rent and utility bills, ownership of a car or a washing machine, meat consumption, inadequate heating, etc. A person is defined as living in material deprivation if unable to afford costs on three of the nine indicators.	2007–2019	%	NSI
Relative share of the population 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 equivalent disposable income.	2007–2019	%	NSI



## Labor market

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Annual average economic activity rate of the population	The economic activity rate shows what share of the population is employed or actively seeking employment. The economically active population forms the labor force in each district.	2008–2020	%	NSI
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15 to 64	Low unemployment rates in a district are indicative of a vibrant and job-creating local economic environment.	2000–2020	%	NSI
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64	The employment rate is a leading indicator of the labor market showing what proportion of the working-age population is actually employed.	2003–2020	%	NSI
Demographic replacement rate (ratio of the number of people aged 15 to 19 to those aged 60 to 64)	The demographic replacement rate shows the ratio of the number of people aged 15 to 19 (who are about to enter the labor market) to those aged 60 to 64 (who are about to leave it). The demographic replacement rate is used as an indicator of the reproductive capacity of the labor force in the country's districts.	2010–2020	%	NSI
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education	A large share of population with higher education in a district creates preconditions for increased competitiveness, labor productivity, and economic growth.	2009–2020	%	NSI
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 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.	2009–2020	%	NSI



## Investment and economy

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Number of non-financial enterprises	The indicator shows entrepreneurial density and investment activity in the local economy.	2008–2019	number of non-financial enterprises/1,000 persons	NSI
Expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets	The level of expenditure on the acquisition of fixed tangible assets (FTA) per capita in a district is the leading indicator of investment in the local economy.	2008–2019	BGN/person	NSI
Foreign direct investment in non-financial enterprises (stocks)	The indicator of foreign direct investment (FDI) in non-financial enterprises shows the cumulative investment flows to the region and its attractiveness to foreign investors.	2000–2019	EUR/person	NSI
Utilization by municipalities of EU funds as beneficiaries under operational programs	A high level of utilization of EU funds under operational programs creates preconditions for improving a district's competitiveness. It is an indicator of the successful functioning of the local administration and its willingness and ability to create better working and living conditions in the district with the help of EU funds.	By 15 June 2021	BGN/person	EUMIS, EUMIS 2021
Production value	Production value per capita shows the relative productivity of the enterprises in the district.	2005–2019	BGN/person	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.	2000–2020	length of the road network km/100 sq. km. territory	NSI
Railway network density	The indicator represents all railway lines between stations or places indicated as independent points of departure and arrival of trains carrying passengers and freight. It excludes the urban railway lines. The greater the density of the railway network in a district, the easier the transportation of passengers and freight.	2000–2020	length of railways 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 motorways and first-class roads points to a better developed local infrastructure.	2009–2020	%	NSI
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.	2006–2020	%	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).	2010–2019	%	RIA
Share of households connected to a gas supply	Indicates the level of household consumption of natural gas	2020	%	NCRD
Installed RES capacity	Provides information on the installed capacity of solar power systems, wind turbines, hydroelectric and other renewable energy sources.	2020	kW/person	NCRD

## % Local taxes

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Tax rate on immovable non-residential property for legal entities	Property taxes are the biggest source of own revenue for municipalities. Taxation on immovable property is indeed the major factor influencing the business environment and the burden on businesses.	2012–2021	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. Since 2019, the indicator also takes into account the newly introduced environmental component in the total tax rate.	2012–2021	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 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.	2012–2021	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 foreign investors entering the local market and to local investors expanding their activities.	2012–2021	p.p. (‰)	Request for access to information under APIA
Tax rate on taxi transportation of passengers	The tax rate on taxi transportation of passengers is set by each municipality and affects the final price of the service.	2017–2021	BGN	Request for access to information under APIA

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Share of territory included in the cadastral map	Low cadastral map coverage in a given district is an obstacle to investment, especially when the latter includes developing new construction sites.	2003–2019	%	GCCA
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.	2014–2021	%	Access to Information Programme 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-services, while a high rating shows a capacity for carrying out two-way transactions between the local administration and citizens/businesses.	2013–2021	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 their readiness to operate a one-stop shop.	2013–2021	Rating from 1 to 4	Request for access to information under APIA

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Age dependency ratio of population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14	The indicator shows the ageing rate in a given district – the higher the indicator value, the more clearly expressed the population ageing process.	2011–2020	%	NSI
Age dependency ratio of population aged 65+ to those aged 15–64	The age dependency ratio shows the ratio of those aged 65 years and above, who are mostly economically inactive, and those of working age. A higher age dependency ratio indicates a deterioration of the population age structure, which affects the labor market, economic growth, etc.	2011–2020	%	NSI
Share of urban population	The share of urban population provides information on the degree of urbanization of each district.	2001–2020	%	NSI
Population density relative to the area of the settlements and other urban areas	The population density indicator gives information on the number of people per unit area. Population density is influenced by the rate of natural increase and net migration flows, as well as by the urbanization processes.	2001–2020	number of persons/sq.km	NSI
Rate of natural increase	The natural population growth 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 region per 1,000 persons; a positive value is considered a favorable demographic indicator.	2001–2020	per mille (‰)	NSI
Net migration rate	The net migration rate shows an increase or decrease of the population per an annual average of 1,000 persons 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.	2001–2020	per mille (‰)	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 region.	2000–2020	number of university students/ 1,000 persons	NSI
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1000 students	The ratio between the number of teachers and the number of students in a given district is a standard indicator measuring the quality of education.	2011–2020	number of teachers/ 1,000 students	NSI
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 8th 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 8th grade is based on the fact that this is the lowest educational stage where a relatively low coverage of the education system is registered.	2008–2020	%	NSI
Share of dropouts from primary and secondary education	The share of dropouts from primary and secondary education shows the number of students who prematurely left school that year. A low percentage of dropouts from primary and secondary education signals a well-developed educational system capable of keeping at-risk students at school.	2008–2019	%	NSI
Relative share of class repeaters	The 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.	2011–2020	%	NSI
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature	A high average grade in the annual 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.	2008–2021	Grade from 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.	2008–2021	%	MES
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade	A high result in the National external examination 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.	2018–2021	Average number of points out of a possible 100	MES

## Healthcare

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Population per one GP	GPs are usually the first point of contact in the healthcare system. The indicator on the number of people cared for by one GP shows both the availability of medical staff in a district and medical doctors' workloads.	2011–2020	persons/ 1 GP	NSI
Access to specialist physicians index	The index measures access to specialist physicians relative to the 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.	2018–2020	Compiled index	IME, based on NSI
Number of hospitalizations in general hospitals	The indicator provides information on the morbidity of the population and the workloads of general hospitals. Here, it is used to measure the level of morbidity in each district – the higher its value, the higher morbidity on its territory.	2008–2020	number of persons treated in the local general hospitals/ 1,000 persons	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.	2010–2020	%	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 people. The availability of hospital beds serves as a relative indicator of the physical resources of the district's healthcare system.	2011–2020	number of hospital beds/ 1,000 persons	NSI
Infant mortality rate	The infant mortality rate shows the number of deaths of infants under 1 year for every 1,000 live births during the respective year. A high rate indicates both inadequate public health care and low health culture of the local population.	2008–2020	per mille (‰)	NSI



## Public order and security

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).	2009–2020	%	SJC
Share of pending criminal cases	The share of pending criminal cases in a district's courts indicates the efficiency of the local judiciary.	2009–2020	%	SJC
Workloads of the criminal judges in office	The indicator shows the actual workloads of criminal judges at the district courts throughout the respective year. The higher the workload, the more difficult the access to justice.	2010–2020	cases/ criminal judge/ month	SJC
Crimes against the person and property	Crimes against the person and property can serve as an indicator of the criminality in a given area. Officially registered crimes do not always faithfully represent the criminality in the district but provide a good basis for evaluation and comparisons between districts.	2000–2020	Number of crimes/ 1,000 persons	NSI, MI
Share of cleared crimes against the person and property from 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.	2000–2020	%	NSI, MI

Indicator	Description	Period	Unit	Source
Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere	The emissions of harmful substances into the atmosphere per sq. km are indicative of the degree of pollution caused by human activity in a given district. For the purposes of this analysis only carbon dioxide emissions have been selected as largest in volume and at the same time most indicative of the harmful emissions. Districts with high air pollution are less attractive in terms of living conditions.	2010–2019	tons of emissions/ 1 sq. km territory	NSI
Generated household waste	The amount of generated household waste per person of the serviced population is a standard indicator for 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.	2008–2018	kg/ person/ per 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.	2013–2018	%	NSI
Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks connected to a waste water treatment plant	The availability of municipal waste water treatment plants is a precondition for lower environmental pollution from sewage and higher utilization of water resources in a given district. The larger the share of public sewerage networks connected to waste water treatment plants, the more reduced the effect of sewage on the environment.	2001–2019	%	NSI
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage networks	The indicator shows the percentage of residents in a district living in areas with a public sewerage system. The coverage of public sewerage has an impact on both the social and the environmental characteristics of the districts.	2010–2019	%	NSI

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.	2009–2019	number of visits/ 1,000 persons	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.	2009–2020	number of visits/ 1,000 persons	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.	2009–2020	number of visits/ 1,000 persons	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.	2009–2020	number of visits/ 1,000 persons	NSI

# Appendix

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

### Income and living standard

Indicator	GDP per capita (BGN)	Average annual income per household member (BGN)	Average annual gross salary of people in employment and civil service relationship (BGN)	Share of the people living in material deprivation (%)	Share of the people living below the national poverty line (%)
District	2019	2019	2019	2019	2019
Blagoevgrad	10,329	6,079	9,810	19.6	23.9
Burgas	13,437	5,169	12,301	22.7	20.0
Varna	16,340	5,883	14,282	26.7	18.4
Veliko Tarnovo	11,071	5,707	11,619	24.9	25.8
Vidin	8,734	3,437	10,302	31.0	35.0
Vratsa	13,278	5,209	13,874	24.2	38.9
Gabrovo	14,444	7,406	12,895	14.1	17.8
Dobrich	10,009	5,500	11,440	19.5	22.8
Kardzhali	9,606	4,173	11,356	23.0	35.2
Kyustendil	9,468	4,977	10,576	16.9	32.9
Lovech	10,284	4,454	11,365	22.4	25.3
Montana	9,522	4,644	11,165	22.7	47.4
Pazardzhik	9,965	4,180	11,675	26.5	37.0
Pernik	9,356	7,049	11,434	18.8	14.2
Pleven	9,813	5,893	11,567	25.4	20.4
Plovdiv	14,460	6,163	12,996	24.9	22.7
Razgrad	10,416	5,420	12,814	35.8	28.0
Ruse	12,771	5,702	12,329	25.2	22.2
Silistra	7,687	5,729	10,572	15.5	24.0
Sliven	8,130	4,446	11,085	34.0	33.9
Smolyan	11,681	6,354	11,106	12.8	21.2
Sofia (capital city)	38,603	8,224	21,040	10.8	10.0
Sofia	16,998	4,844	14,586	14.5	17.6
Stara Zagora	16,276	5,610	13,914	19.8	23.1
Targovishte	10,470	4,576	12,035	17.7	30.2
Haskovo	9,036	5,678	10,566	23.8	30.9
Shumen	10,177	5,347	12,124	18.5	29.1
Yambol	10,142	5,638	12,048	39.6	33.2
<b>National Average</b>	<b>17,170</b>	<b>6,013</b>	<b>15,209</b>	<b>19.9</b>	<b>22.6</b>



## Labor market

Indicator	Annual average economic activity of the population (%)	Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15–64 (%)	Demographic replacement rate (ratio of the number of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64) (%)	Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education (%)	Relative share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education (%)
District	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020
Blagoevgrad	78.8	7.3	71.5	20.0	21.1	17.9
Burgas	69.5	4.9	64.6	70.4	24.2	19.6
Varna	72.4	2.2	70.2	77.5	24.8	14.4
Veliko Tarnovo	78.4	(2.5)	75.9	62.8	29.7	10.1
Vidin	75.0	19.3	55.7	65.2	18.0	18.5
Vratsa	67.4	10.3	57.1	65.4	22.9	22.4
Gabrovo	74.7	(7.0)	67.7	54.5	23.1	10.6
Dobrich	72.8	9.6	63.2	68.9	22.3	25.6
Kardzhali	63.3	(1.4)	61.9	48.0	17.6	34.3
Kyustendil	70.6	(4.6)	66.0	53.0	24.0	7.1
Lovech	68.9	(4.8)	64.1	63.6	20.5	14.9
Montana	76.2	24.1	52.1	65.5	11.3	28.2
Pazardzhik	72.5	5.1	67.4	66.3	15.6	24.2
Pernik	78.1	8.3	69.8	49.5	25.1	11.3
Pleven	72.9	11.3	61.6	63.2	25.4	19.1
Plovdiv	71.7	3.0	68.7	68.2	26.4	19.7
Razgrad	71.4	10.6	60.8	65.3	19.5	30.7
Ruse	74.0	(2.6)	71.4	61.5	31.2	11.7
Silistra	69.7	15.6	54.1	64.9	20.8	30.7
Sliven	71.9	6.9	65.0	89.5	21.4	36.2
Smolyan	77.1	11.9	65.2	40.9	23.5	14.0
Sofia (capital city)	77.2	2.8	74.4	78.7	56.8	3.9
Sofia	79.7	(0.9)	78.8	61.3	11.3	13.6
Stara Zagora	75.5	(2.2)	73.3	69.1	21.6	16.4
Targovishte	67.4	10.9	56.5	69.8	15.8	38.3
Haskovo	67.7	(0.3)	67.4	60.5	17.8	25.8
Shumen	77.8	11.3	66.5	66.3	24.6	27.1
Yambol	70.7	(7.5)	63.2	64.9	23.5	21.3
<b>National Average</b>	<b>73.7</b>	<b>5.2</b>	<b>68.5</b>	<b>67.1</b>	<b>29.2</b>	<b>16.9</b>



## Investment and economy

Indicator	Number of non-financial enterprises per 1,000 persons	Expenditure on the acquisition of FTA per capita (BGN)	FDI in non-financial enterprises (stocks) per capita (EUR)	Utilization by municipalities of EU funds as beneficiaries under operational programs per capita (BGN)	Production value per capita (BGN)
District	2019	2019	2019	15 June 2021	2019
Blagoevgrad	72	1,765	1,745	3,422	17,592
Burgas	76	2,543	5,219	2,090	24,907
Varna	71	2,732	3,721	1,521	14,549
Veliko Tarnovo	46	2,100	551	1,760	10,206
Vidin	37	839	1,052	2,228	12,831
Vratsa	38	1,513	505	2,825	14,809
Gabrovo	57	2,244	3,210	3,510	14,982
Dobrich	55	1,811	1,707	1,722	16,513
Kardzhali	32	3,861	2,013	1,516	16,730
Kyustendil	53	1,070	372	1,272	14,472
Lovech	46	1,384	1,201	2,328	27,998
Montana	36	1,201	280	2,439	16,650
Pazardzhik	45	2,256	1,890	1,429	25,111
Pernik	46	1,222	1,561	1,194	9,832
Pleven	42	2,049	1,171	2,120	12,467
Plovdiv	60	3,103	2,668	1,674	15,866
Razgrad	39	2,415	(182)	1,739	56,667
Ruse	54	2,053	1,992	1,917	47,296
Silistra	37	1,523	(99)	1,688	26,929
Sliven	39	1,236	866	1,168	16,536
Smolyan	52	2,591	889	2,517	12,867
Sofia (capital city)	93	7,147	9,626	3,676	16,722
Sofia	43	2,803	6,569	2,159	16,153
Stara Zagora	49	2,849	3,111	1,783	28 027
Targovishte	37	2,236	2,760	1,321	17,592
Haskovo	54	1,130	815	1,435	24,907
Shumen	41	1,804	665	1,690	14,549
Yambol	47	1,777	352	2,068	10,206
<b>National Average</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>3,155</b>	<b>3,655</b>	<b>2217</b>	<b>12,831</b>



## Infrastructure

Indicator	Road network density (km/100 sq. km. territory)	Railway network density (km/100 sq. km. territory)	Share of highways and first-class roads (%)	Share of households with broadband internet access (%)	Share of road surfaces in good condition (%)	Share of households with access to a gas supply (%)	Installed RES capacity per capita (kW)
District	2020	2020	2020	2020	2019	2020	2020
Blagoevgrad	11.1	2.5	17.3	75.8	69.6	2.7	0.664
Burgas	15.3	2.3	26.0	79.8	32.5	0.4	0.253
Varna	18.8	5.2	27.4	77.5	43.5	1.5	0.155
Veliko Tarnovo	20.1	5.1	16.3	67.3	38.2	3.5	0.299
Vidin	20.2	3.6	11.6	44.8	28.4	0.0	0.584
Vratsa	17.9	3.1	10.0	71.5	28.4	1.9	0.382
Gabrovo	25.6	3.7	16.4	77.5	36.7	9.6	0.076
Dobrich	17.4	1.3	10.1	70.4	46.7	8.0	3.131
Kardzhali	20.2	2.1	11.2	77.3	33.3	0.2	1.345
Kyustendil	20.4	4.0	20.8	78.6	54.6	5.4	0.383
Lovech	18.3	2.6	16.2	77.2	41.0	3.4	0.372
Montana	16.9	3.1	9.1	58.2	28.9	3.8	0.365
Pazardzhik	16.9	4.2	14.6	81.7	44.4	2.5	4.192
Pernik	23.9	4.8	15.7	83.4	46.9	0.7	0.070
Pleven	17.1	4.4	12.2	68.9	36.5	2.3	0.311
Plovdiv	17.1	5.4	17.5	79.9	48.7	1.4	0.667
Razgrad	19.2	3.5	11.1	73.4	17.6	4.9	0.005
Ruse	18.2	5.5	21.6	80.0	11.5	3.9	0.027
Silistra	17.8	2.5	11.3	80.7	60.2	0.2	0.291
Sliven	16.4	3.8	22.2	83.4	79.4	1.0	0.669
Smolyan	16.9	0.0	0.0	73.6	53.8	0.0	2.547
Sofia (capital city)	0.0	12.8	0.0	90.8	0.0	4.4	0.052
Sofia	21.4	4.2	30.2	73.0	31.7	8.7	0.298
Stara Zagora	17.6	5.1	28.7	76.0	37.6	3.3	0.700
Targovishte	20.4	2.8	14.7	82.4	60.8	6.2	0.043
Haskovo	20.7	3.7	21.5	78.6	36.8	0.8	0.903
Shumen	18.2	4.6	36.4	82.5	45.9	3.1	0.144
Yambol	19.0	1.5	20.6	63.1	43.9	4.7	1.043
<b>National Average</b>	<b>17,9</b>	<b>3,6</b>	<b>18,5</b>	<b>78,9</b>	<b>41,4</b>	<b>3,1</b>	<b>0,603</b>

## % 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 (%)	Tax rate on taxi transportation of passengers (BGN)
District	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021
Blagoevgrad	1.75	1.38	11.75	2.19	355
Burgas	2.03	1.80	15.22	2.87	514
Varna	2.25	1.65	16.53	2.94	302
Veliko Tarnovo	2.45	1.63	12.13	2.71	383
Vidin	1.75	1.25	4.46	2.58	275
Vratsa	2.22	1.39	6.69	2.67	313
Gabrovo	2.13	1.55	8.87	2.47	406
Dobrich	1.55	1.56	8.70	2.92	300
Kardzhali	1.77	1.39	8.04	2.49	322
Kyustendil	2.00	1.29	10.06	2.26	286
Lovech	2.25	1.28	10.39	2.33	326
Montana	1.73	1.22	5.10	2.45	332
Pazardzhik	1.92	1.45	8.95	2.74	294
Pernik	1.92	1.38	9.88	2.45	300
Pleven	2.51	1.24	9.14	2.83	361
Plovdiv	2.21	1.55	13.32	2.77	521
Razgrad	2.27	1.37	9.19	2.52	286
Ruse	1.99	1.59	13.53	2.32	456
Silistra	2.03	1.45	8.75	2.33	313
Sliven	2.63	1.55	9.82	2.67	364
Smolyan	2.12	1.37	7.74	2.57	318
Sofia (capital city)	1.88	1.69	20.00	3.00	850
Sofia	2.37	1.33	10.69	2.63	282
Stara Zagora	1.64	1.54	13.96	2.28	301
Targovishte	1.83	1.52	9.07	2.49	231
Haskovo	2.04	1.54	12.76	2.52	288
Shumen	1.84	1.56	8.88	2.66	265
Yambol	2.17	1.53	8.16	2.50	347
<b>National Average</b>	<b>2.04</b>	<b>1.54</b>	<b>12.99</b>	<b>2.69</b>	<b>453</b>

## Administration

Indicator	Cadastral coverage (%)	Active transparency rating of local government bodies (%)	Development of e-government (rating from 1 to 4)	Development of one-stop shop services (rating from 1 to 4)
District	2019	2021	2021	2021
Blagoevgrad	98.5	69.0	3.14	3.53
Burgas	84.7	73.8	3.53	3.12
Varna	96.7	78.7	3.77	3.76
Veliko Tarnovo	96.7	75.1	3.17	3.15
Vidin	89.3	60.2	2.75	2.26
Vratsa	88.8	73.9	3.18	3.67
Gabrovo	82.9	78.9	3.11	2.15
Dobrich	97.6	83.6	3.48	2.97
Kardzhali	95.9	59.4	2.80	2.75
Kyustendil	95.3	61.9	2.95	2.56
Lovech	93.8	76.9	2.89	3.73
Montana	97.0	72.0	3.02	3.35
Pazardzhik	93.3	70.4	3.12	3.01
Pernik	96.1	59.6	3.01	2.99
Pleven	94.4	71.7	3.50	3.45
Plovdiv	95.3	71.1	3.41	3.35
Razgrad	96.2	73.8	3.29	3.00
Ruse	95.5	74.9	3.10	3.74
Silistra	97.3	66.4	3.18	2.29
Sliven	63.6	79.8	3.17	2.81
Smolyan	89.9	72.2	3.44	3.56
Sofia (capital city)	99.2	78.3	4.00	4.00
Sofia	75.3	65.3	3.27	2.76
Stara Zagora	95.3	69.3	2.96	2.93
Targovishte	95.3	76.0	3.62	3.43
Haskovo	93.2	73.7	3.16	3.04
Shumen	90.2	66.4	3.25	3.09
Yambol	82.5	72.7	2.90	2.81
<b>National Average</b>	<b>91.4</b>	<b>73.2</b>	<b>3.40</b>	<b>3.34</b>

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

### Demography

Indicator	Age dependency ratio of population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 (%)	Age dependency ratio of population aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 (%)	Share of urban population (%)	Population density in urban areas (number of persons/sq.km)	Natural population growth (‰)	Net migration rate (‰)
District	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020
Blagoevgrad	136.1	30.8	60.3	2,264	-7.6	2.5
Burgas	130.4	31.5	76.0	2,240	-6.6	7.8
Varna	127.6	29.7	83.2	1,814	-5.7	6.3
Veliko Tarnovo	189.2	38.3	69.7	1,042	-12.3	-0.1
Vidin	251.2	51.5	64.6	837	-21.9	2.1
Vratsa	177.5	40.0	58.8	756	-13.9	2.3
Gabrovo	250.9	49.2	79.9	1,218	-18.1	10.5
Dobrich	161.6	35.7	68.7	663	-11.9	3.1
Kardzhali	151.5	32.9	40.2	1,978	-7.1	23.2
Kyustendil	230.5	46.0	69.4	1,108	-17.2	14.7
Lovech	201.6	45.6	61.8	836	-14.5	14.0
Montana	194.5	44.1	63.7	889	-18.2	5.4
Pazardzhik	139.3	33.0	62.6	2,074	-10.7	4.8
Pernik	204.0	40.7	77.9	922	-16.3	26.6
Pleven	187.7	44.2	65.9	1,070	-13.5	1.3
Plovdiv	140.8	32.5	74.8	2,503	-8.3	7.7
Razgrad	164.2	34.7	46.6	834	-14.2	5.3
Ruse	186.6	37.8	76.6	1,646	-13.5	0.7
Silistra	179.9	40.0	43.8	782	-14.0	3.2
Sliven	109.6	33.2	65.2	2,617	-6.4	-2.2
Smolyan	220.2	40.1	56.7	1,761	-14.4	-1.6
Sofia (capital city)	117.4	26.2	95.5	4,860	-3.5	-12.0
Sofia	173.3	37.0	59.0	756	-12.3	63.0
Stara Zagora	150.7	36.4	69.6	1,477	-10.1	3.7
Targovishte	151.6	34.8	54.2	1,069	-12.5	4.5
Haskovo	159.9	37.2	71.9	1,043	-12.3	4.7
Shumen	160.3	34.4	59.9	885	-11.0	8.2
Yambol	160.8	40.5	68.8	1,069	-11.5	4.3
<b>National Average</b>	<b>150.6</b>	<b>34.1</b>	<b>72.9</b>	<b>1,506</b>	<b>-9.5</b>	<b>4.4</b>



## Education

Indicator	Number of students at colleges and universities per 1,000 persons	Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 persons	Net school enrolment rate of the population (5th to 8th grade) (%)	Relative share of dropouts from primary and secondary education (%)	Relative share of class repeaters (%)	Average grade in the State matriculation exam in BLL	Share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) in the SME in BLL (%)	Average grade in the NEE in mathematics after 7th grade (number of points out of a possible 100)
District	2020	2020	2020	2019	2020	2020/ 2021	2021	2021
Blagoevgrad	29	88	92.4	1.70	0.27	4.19	6.2	37.1
Burgas	15	81	85.5	2.60	0.22	4.12	9.0	39.3
Varna	50	83	83.6	2.20	0.21	4.39	4.9	44.4
Veliko Tarnovo	68	98	85.1	2.90	0.59	4.12	6.4	35.4
Vidin	6	90	80.8	2.30	1.06	4.12	6.4	28.4
Vratsa	7	93	91.8	2.30	0.41	3.99	9.7	30.3
Gabrovo	46	77	100.0	3.30	0.20	4.19	4.8	33.4
Dobrich	4	93	73.4	4.30	0.91	4.08	8.7	30.5
Kardzhali	4	100	77.2	1.50	0.24	3.98	17.9	31.7
Kyustendil	0	85	88.6	1.80	0.07	4.04	9.0	31.4
Lovech	2	85	86.7	2.80	0.91	4.13	8.4	29.5
Montana	0	88	83.0	2.70	0.99	3.94	5.8	30.1
Pazardzhik	0	96	79.8	3.90	1.35	4.03	11.7	30.9
Pernik	0	92	89.6	1.50	0.42	4.06	6.6	32.0
Pleven	16	90	87.3	3.50	0.59	3.97	11.5	31.8
Plovdiv	53	82	87.4	3.70	0.77	4.30	6.0	38.7
Razgrad	2	88	85.5	2.50	0.16	3.96	9.9	31.2
Ruse	29	91	84.5	2.90	0.22	4.19	4.7	39.1
Silistra	2	97	80.2	4.50	0.50	3.94	10.9	30.3
Sliven	9	81	86.4	5.40	1.50	4.08	8.0	27.5
Smolyan	14	120	90.8	0.30	0.32	4.44	2.4	42.6
Sofia (capital city)	71	83	88.8	0.60	0.28	4.58	1.8	50.1
Sofia	7	90	89.8	2.00	0.72	3.99	10.9	31.8
Stara Zagora	17	88	91.4	4.00	1.03	4.12	8.3	33.9
Targovishte	0	101	75.7	2.80	0.61	3.96	8.0	34.5
Haskovo	4	82	84.9	3.40	0.63	4.00	12.2	32.4
Shumen	38	93	82.4	2.50	0.51	3.98	9.5	30.4
Yambol	7	76	89.8	2.00	1.15	3.94	13.3	35.0
<b>National Average</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>86.5</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>0.55</b>	<b>4.21</b>	<b>7.0</b>	<b>37.9</b>

## Healthcare

Indicator	Population per one GP (persons)	Access to specialist physicians index (lower values are better)	Number of hospitalizations in general hospitals per 1,000 persons (number of persons)	Number of beds in general hospitals per 1,000 persons	Share of people with health insurance (%)	Infant mortality rate (‰)
District	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020
Blagoevgrad	1,610	12.07	113.0	4.13	89.6	3.0
Burgas	1,856	10.69	79.0	3.60	84.3	7.2
Varna	1,534	6.35	133.0	4.37	83.9	3.6
Veliko Tarnovo	1,649	11.89	133.0	3.33	84.7	9.0
Vidin	1,172	12.07	105.0	4.08	91.2	4.2
Vratsa	1,520	10.23	154.0	4.46	92.6	3.7
Gabrovo	1,504	9.95	188.0	5.10	96.3	6.4
Dobrich	1,333	14.74	98.0	2.82	85.3	5.7
Kardzhali	2,475	14.25	113.0	3.49	100.0	6.0
Kyustendil	1,359	11.19	122.0	5.55	95.6	3.8
Lovech	1,348	9.56	137.0	4.17	90.4	5.1
Montana	1,224	10.59	204.0	6.93	87.7	10.8
Pazardzhik	1,572	11.34	87.0	6.34	85.1	5.7
Pernik	1,415	12.26	80.0	2.45	89.6	5.0
Pleven	1,129	4.19	206.0	9.94	91.0	5.7
Plovdiv	1,452	6.72	197.0	8.11	87.4	5.6
Razgrad	2,121	11.70	162.0	5.01	95.4	5.0
Ruse	1,917	9.78	146.0	5.04	87.7	2.0
Silistra	1,712	12.67	180.0	4.50	87.6	8.8
Sliven	1,818	12.88	118.0	5.01	86.4	11.7
Smolyan	1,526	12.34	168.0	5.41	95.6	4.8
Sofia (capital city)	1,633	5.08	122.0	5.72	87.1	2.4
Sofia	1,751	9.20	207.0	5.75	87.3	5.3
Stara Zagora	1,368	9.37	123.0	4.74	89.3	5.0
Targovishte	2,056	11.45	164.0	5.39	86.9	3.8
Haskovo	1,774	12.10	159.0	3.57	89.2	8.4
Shumen	1,436	12.42	108.0	2.91	87.9	8.2
Yambol	1,364	14.42	100.0	3.54	88.4	8.2
<b>National Average</b>	<b>1,562</b>	<b>8.56</b>	<b>138.0</b>	<b>5.52</b>	<b>88.7</b>	<b>5.1</b>



## Public order and security

Indicator	Share of criminal cases closed within 3 months (%)	Share of pending criminal cases (%)	Workloads of the criminal judges in office (cases/criminal judge/month)	Crimes against the person and property (number of crimes/1,000 persons)	Share of cleared crimes against the person and property (%)
District	2020	2020	2020	2020	2020
Blagoevgrad	87.0	15.2	6.9	7.3	58.2
Burgas	88.0	10.4	9.7	11.5	50.3
Varna	93.0	7.4	6.9	12.5	40.1
Veliko Tarnovo	92.0	9.4	6.8	10.1	60.6
Vidin	88.0	15.2	4.3	12.5	54.5
Vratsa	93.0	4.5	6.4	13.0	54.5
Gabrovo	84.0	9.1	5.8	9.6	76.3
Dobrich	92.0	8.1	5.8	9.4	55.4
Kardzhali	96.0	4.5	7.5	5.0	64.0
Kyustendil	82.0	11.0	11.8	9.6	51.3
Lovech	94.0	7.8	8.6	10.5	55.2
Montana	92.0	13.3	5.6	13.8	54.1
Pazardzhik	93.0	10.4	8.4	7.3	52.4
Pernik	90.0	13.3	5.8	10.9	52.7
Pleven	92.0	9.9	6.4	10.9	53.4
Plovdiv	93.0	7.7	11.5	8.1	60.6
Razgrad	91.0	7.8	8.9	8.0	65.7
Ruse	95.0	7.2	11.4	8.9	56.9
Silistra	94.0	9.3	9.9	8.1	60.6
Sliven	93.0	7.7	9.7	9.4	67.2
Smolyan	96.0	8.7	3.6	5.2	68.8
Sofia (capital city)	84.0	17.2	10.6	11.4	32.1
Sofia	77.0	22.3	5.6	9.7	53.3
Stara Zagora	93.0	8.6	10.2	10.3	54.2
Targovishte	92.0	8.7	4.3	8.9	70.6
Haskovo	88.0	13.5	7.8	10.0	63.0
Shumen	93.0	4.7	6.3	7.9	62.6
Yambol	90.0	7.7	7.2	9.0	66.9
<b>National Average</b>	<b>89.6</b>	<b>11.1</b>	<b>8.6</b>	<b>9.9</b>	<b>52.1</b>


**Environment**

Indicator	Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere (t/sq. km)	Generated household waste (kg/person/per year)	Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	Share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage networks connected to waste water treatment plants (%)	Share of population in settlements with public sewerage networks (%)
District	2019	2018	2018	2019	2019
Blagoevgrad	9.6	304	15.2	32.8	82.9
Burgas	91.8	433	83.2	66.1	79.1
Varna	582.7	498	78.1	86.5	86.5
Veliko Tarnovo	51.4	425	99.9	62.3	69.4
Vidin	2.5	339	10.0	49.5	57.9
Vratsa	n.a.	278	67.5	51.4	57.8
Gabrovo	30.3	433	91.1	74.5	85.1
Dobrich	7.2	399	84.3	70.9	70.9
Kardzhali	n.a.	253	12.8	37.5	44.8
Kyustendil	n.a.	287	97.6	62.3	72.7
Lovech	n.a.	332	11.3	57.0	69.3
Montana	2.6	268	95.3	35.6	61.3
Pazardzhik	32.2	339	13.4	44.1	72.7
Pernik	107.8	472	86.3	74.5	79.6
Pleven	56.9	391	89.7	53.3	57.0
Plovdiv	131.6	446	66.8	67.0	82.7
Razgrad	54.3	529	8.5	41.9	41.9
Ruse	169.7	404	16.7	68.9	68.9
Silistra	10.1	400	4.0	44.4	51.5
Sliven	n.a.	307	91.7	57.3	65.2
Smolyan	3.4	301	7.5	43.1	73.1
Sofia (capital city)	n.a.	499	96.8	96.3	96.3
Sofia	30.2	487	18.9	40.5	78.2
Stara Zagora	3,654.5	412	86.3	62.1	71.5
Targovishte	87.5	302	68.3	44.3	54.1
Haskovo	61.7	316	96.1	53.5	72.6
Shumen	36.3	305	94.7	54.4	58.0
Yambol	9	317	89.8	4.8	71.9
<b>National Average</b>	<b>227.6</b>	<b>409</b>	<b>70.9</b>	<b>64.6</b>	<b>76.4</b>


**Culture**

Indicator	Visits to theaters (number of visits/ 1,000 persons)	Visits to cinemas (number/ 1,000 persons)	Visits to museums (number/ 1,000 persons)	Visits to libraries (number/ 1,000 persons)
District	2019	2020	2020	2020
Blagoevgrad	123	114	203	446
Burgas	378	193	198	101
Varna	462	306	180	223
Veliko Tarnovo	146	195	851	996
Vidin	423	102	1,139	370
Vratsa	166	111	45	0
Gabrovo	440	109	1,800	297
Dobrich	211	40	800	352
Kardzhali	154	18	39	138
Kyustendil	123	43	312	209
Lovech	161	43	571	134
Montana	88	96	67	0
Pazardzhik	261	43	361	193
Pernik	65	19	156	135
Pleven	258	93	345	189
Plovdiv	232	234	299	223
Razgrad	434	36	173	233
Ruse	540	224	277	303
Silistra	235	25	162	n.a.
Sliven	313	14	280	604
Smolyan	99	38	96	131
Sofia (capital city)	708	473	207	855
Sofia	0	32	732	0
Stara Zagora	459	168	405	456
Targovishte	625	12	49	863
Haskovo	298	13	73	196
Shumen	191	22	623	957
Yambol	494	8	143	274
<b>National Average</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>190</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>480</b>