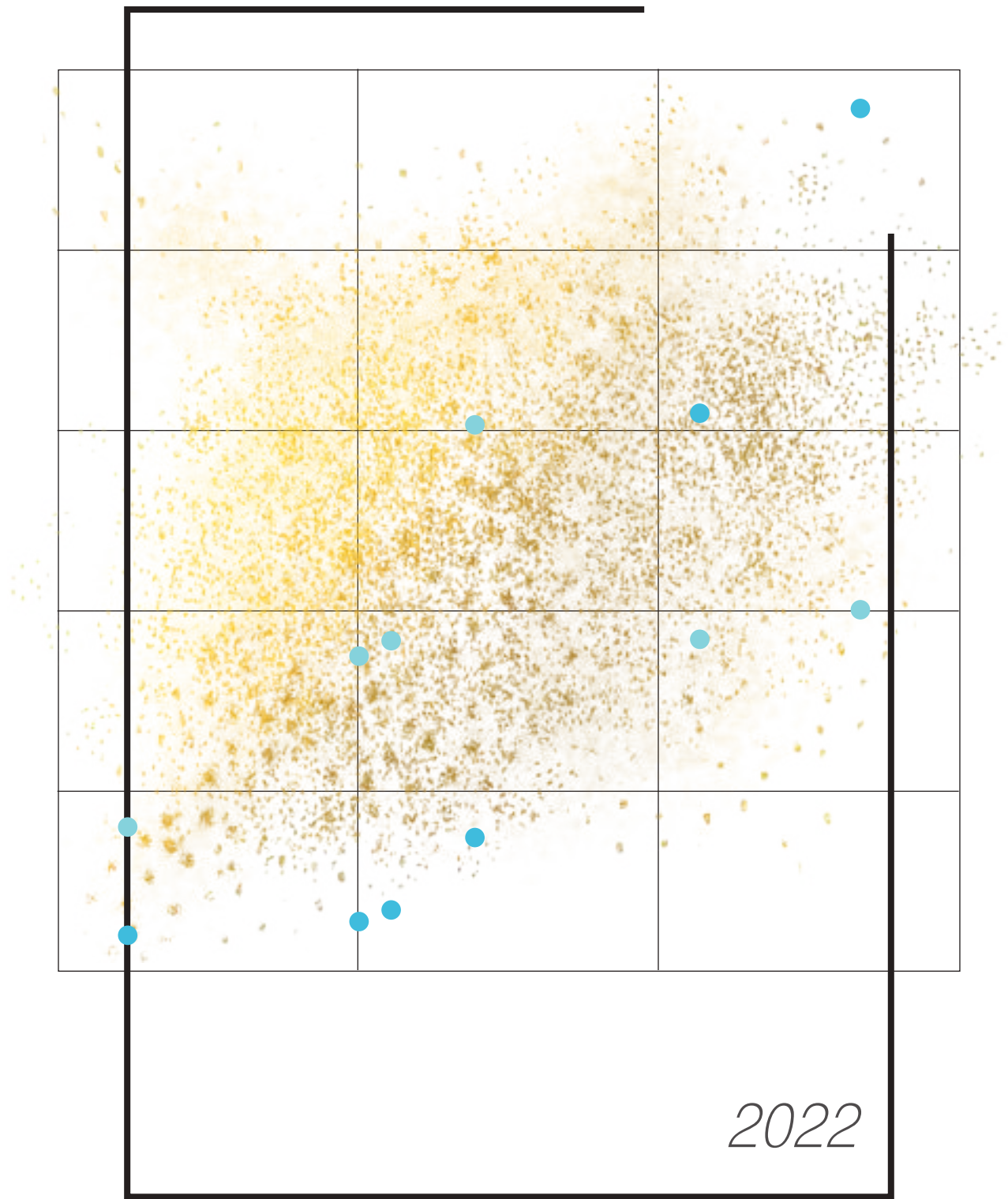


REGIONAL PROFILES



INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT

IME

REGIONAL PROFILES

INDICATORS OF DEVELOPMENT

2022

IME

Institute for Market Economics

Sofia • 2022



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

The study is based on 68 indicators evaluating the economic and social environment in the country's 28 districts. All data presented in it is also available at www.regionalprofiles.bg, the Institute's specialized web page. Being organized around specific indicators allows data to be observed in its dynamics, as well as to make comparisons between individual districts. Access to the most complete recent mass of statistical data at the regional level is thus facilitated.

Thanks to the work of the institutions collecting and providing statistics, with each successive year, we have been able to include more relevant and wide-ranging statistics for each district's socio-economic environment. In the present edition most figures are for 2021. 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, and infrastructure. Where possible, in fields such as administration or local taxes and fees, for example, as well as matriculation exam results, the analysis also rests on figures for 2022.

This study can benefit national and local government, businesses, 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 in the performance of their own district in comparison with other districts in various spheres of economic and social life.

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

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

The IME team

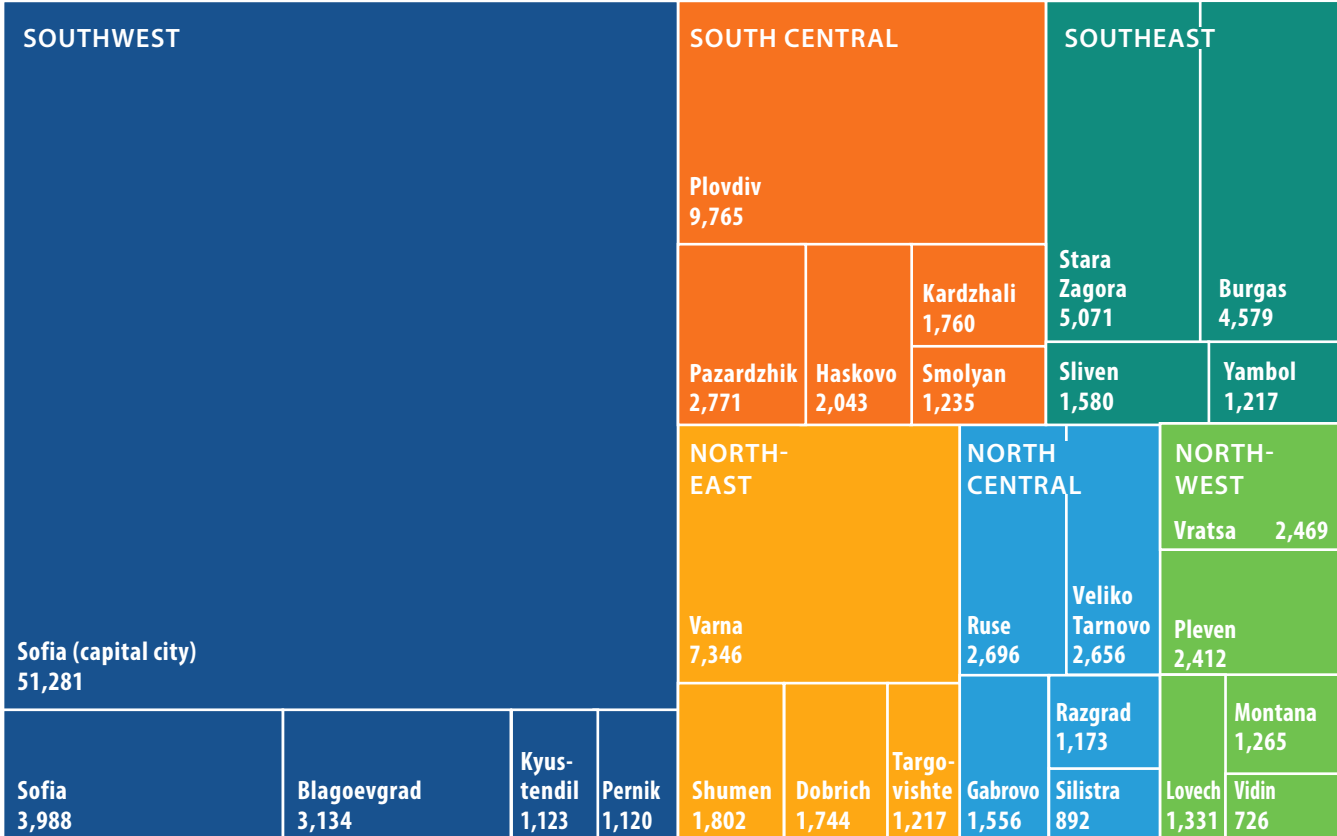
Regional Profiles 2022: Persisting Differences and Potential for Development

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: POTENTIAL AT THE THRESHOLD OF NEW CHALLENGES

The pandemic left its mark on the regional map of economic development in Bulgaria, with at least 10 districts showing a shrinking of their economy in nominal terms. The gross domestic product (GDP) of Sofia (capital city) remained practically unchanged – slightly over 51 billion BGN, which was nearly 43% of the country’s economy. In southern Bulgaria, the district that stands out is that of Plovdiv (9.8 billion BGN), which traditionally makes for over half of the GDP of the Southern Central Region. In the southeast, Stara Zagora (5.1 billion BGN) for a time outperformed Burgas (4.6 billion BGN) – the district hardest hit by the pandemic.

In the north, the undisputed leader is Varna district (7.3 billion BGN), which also showed a decline in the service sector but retained the robust industries at the maritime capital’s periphery. Veliko Tarnovo sailed through the pandemic relatively smoothly and almost equaled Ruse at levels of around 2.7 billion BGN. For decades, the two districts have been “racing” each other as regards the scale of their economies, but in the past few years Ruse has been winning by a neck. The smaller scale of the economic centers in northern Bulgaria, with the exception of Varna, as well as the weaker connection among them, is the main factor determining the difference between Bulgaria’s north and south.

Fig. 1. Gross domestic product of the districts in Bulgaria in 2020 (in million BGN)



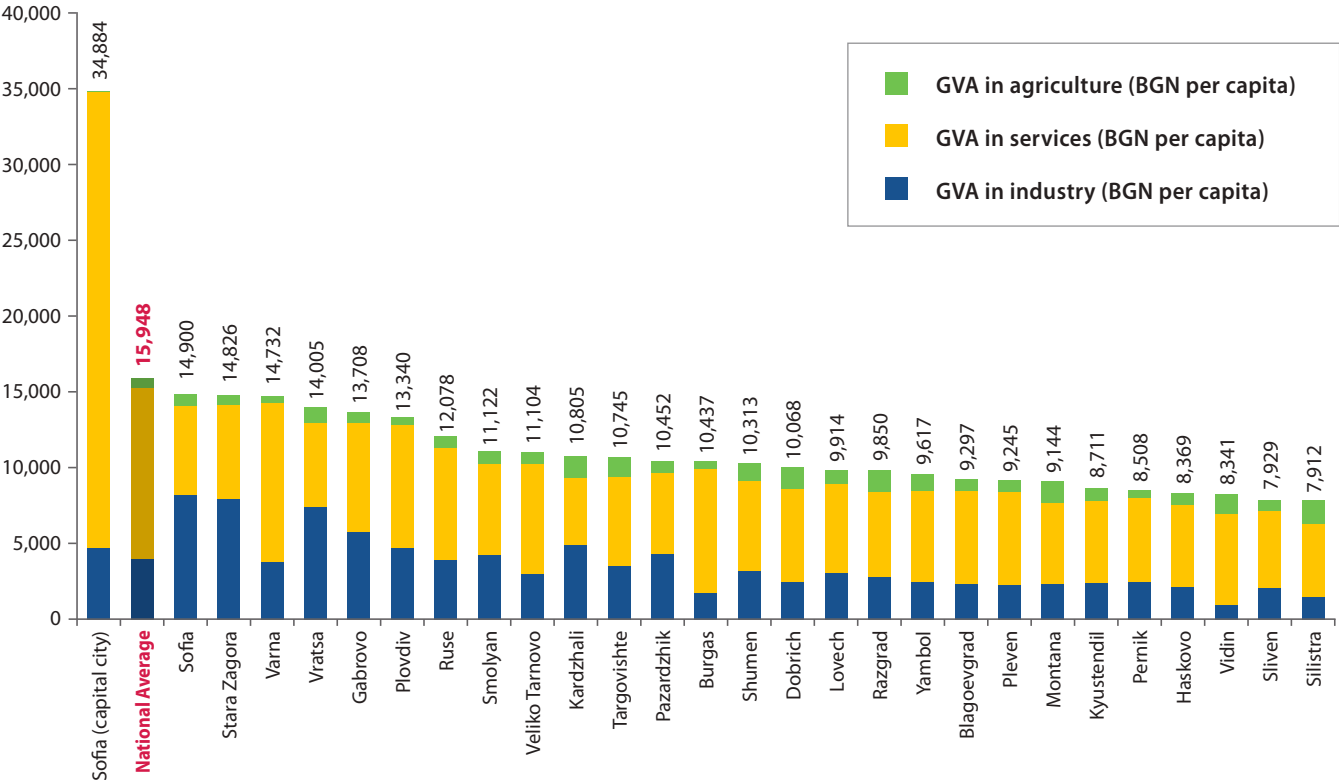
Source: NSI.

Gross value added (GVA) per capita¹ by district varies from over 35,000 BGN in Sofia (capital) to less than 8,000 BGN in Silistra. Sofia’s economy differs considerably from the rest and is strongly dominated by the service sector, which brings nearly 86% of value added. The second place in the country is again occupied by Sofia district (15,000 BGN per capita), which includes the industry in the immediate periphery of the big capital city, but also a large part of the mining and metallurgy in the Srednogorie region. Along with the district of Sofia, industry also plays a more significant role in the districts of Stara Zagora and Vratsa, where GDP per capita is also high – some 14,000–15,000 BGN – thanks to the high value added by the energy companies. A relatively high share of industry is also characteristic of Gabrovo district, due to the long traditions in process manufacturing, as well as in Kardzhali and Pazardzhik, where successfully functioning alongside process manufacturing are also mining industrial enterprises – in Krumovgrad and Panagyurishte respectively – which reported good results in 2020.

Traditionally, a high share of the service sector is a feature of the coastal districts of Varna and Burgas – around 70–80% of value added to the local economy. In Plovdiv, the indicators are more balanced, amounting to slightly over 60% of the value added. Nevertheless, in absolute figures, the value added in the services in Plovdiv outstrips that in Varna and Burgas, which reflects the larger scale of Plovdiv’s economy. Agriculture brings over 10% of the value added in the districts of Silistra, Vidin, Montana, Razgrad, Dobrich, Targovishte, Shumen, Yambol, and Kardzhali. Clearly, these are the relatively poorer districts located mainly in the northern part of the country.

In spite of the economic recovery of 2021, employment rates failed to return to pre-pandemic levels. The employment rate of the population aged 15–64 remained slightly over 68% in the country on average, vary-

Fig. 2. Gross value added per capita by district in 2020



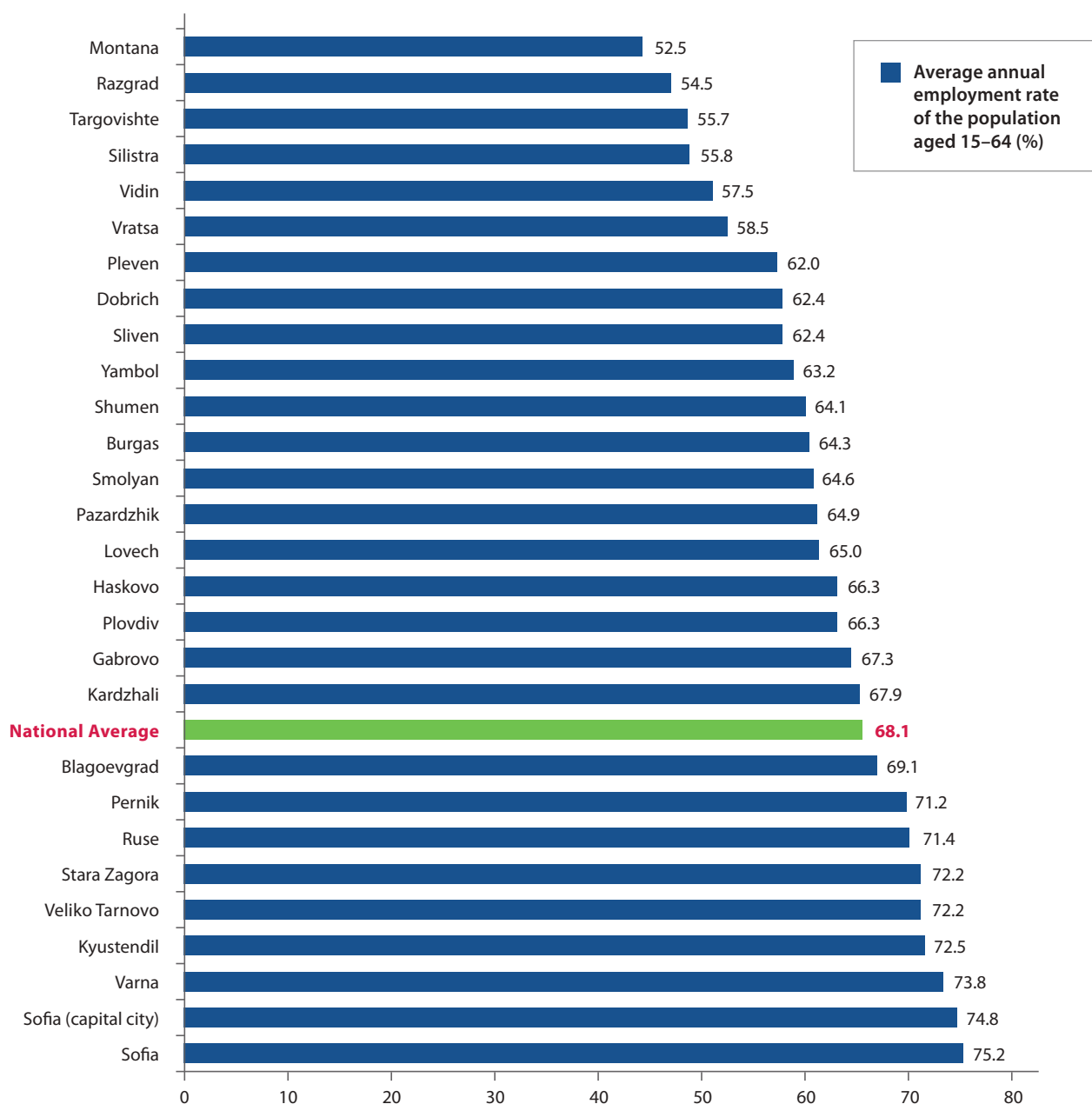
Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

¹ The IME team has estimated GDP per capita based on the results of the last census. The official results show that the country’s population in 2021 was slightly over 6.5 million.

ing from 52.5% in Montana to around 75% in Sofia (capital) and Sofia district. Notable here is the extremely strong performance of Sofia district which again outstripped Sofia (capital). Third comes Varna district with an employment rate of 73.8%, which marks a historical record for the local economy. Despite the pandemic, however, wide differences in the labor market continue to exist. In 2021, eight districts recorded an employment rate of over 70%, which is 15 to 20 p.p. greater than that of the districts at the bottom of the ranking. All six districts with an employment rate of the working population below 60% are located north of the Balkan mountain – Montana, Razgrad, Targovishte, Silistra, Vidin, and Vratsa.

A continuing trend over the past few years is the growth of salaries on a national scale. Toward the middle of 2022, the average gross monthly salary in the capital exceeded 2,300 BGN. Next comes Sofia district with an average salary of over 1,600 BGN, followed by the districts of Varna, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Vratsa, and Gabrovo – between 1,400 and 1,500 BGN. The lowest average salaries in 2022 were those in Blagoevgrad and Kyustendil – around 1,100 BGN a month, as well as in Vidin, Haskovo, and Smolyan. At a municipal level, the highest pay-

Fig. 3. Employment rate of the population in 2021 by district (%)

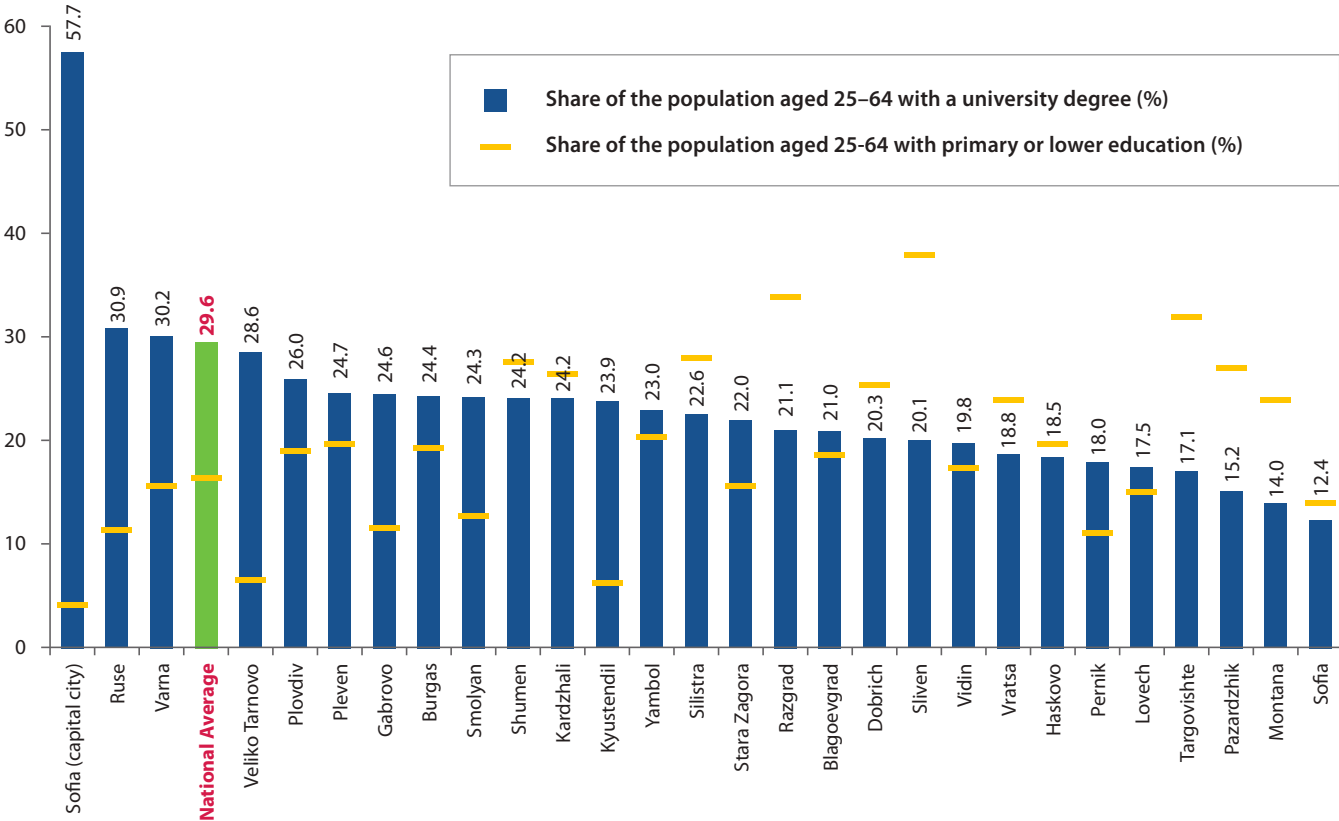


Source: NSI.

ments went to employees in and around the three leading centres – Sofia, Varna, and Plovdiv, as well as in the Srednogie area and several municipalities that are home to large energy companies.

Human capital and the profile of the workforce are key to the process of transformation of the Bulgarian economy. In 2021, nearly 30% of the workforce (aged 24–64 years) had a university degree, a share that has been rising in recent years. The unquestioned leader is Sofia (capital city), where 57.7% of the workforce have higher education. Next come the districts of Ruse (30.9%), Varna (30.2%), and Veliko Tarnovo (28.6%), which have traditionally performed strongly in this indicator. It is notable that several districts in north Bulgaria are among those with top positions in this ranking. In at least 12 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 Sliven, Razgrad, and Targovishte remains excessively high.

Fig. 4. Educational structure of the workforce by district in 2021



Source: NSI, calculations by IME.

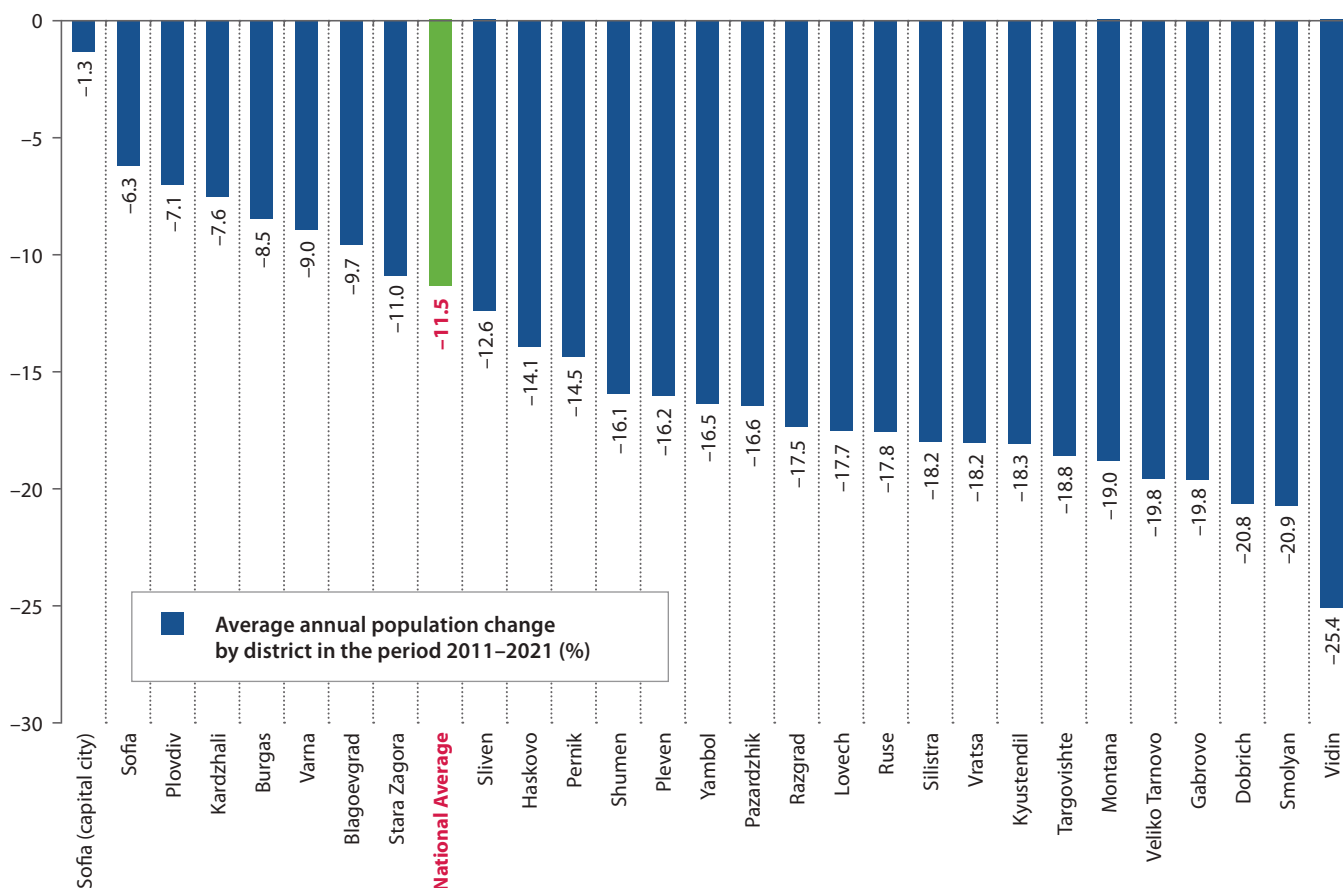
The regional profiles offer a clear indication that although the impact of the pandemic and the subsequent economic recovery is visible on the regional map, the large differences dating back to before that period still persist. As 2022 draws to an end and against the background of the continuing political instability and the challenges facing the economy, developing and unleashing the regions’ potential will be of crucial importance. The local governments need to be exceptionally active and put all their efforts into transforming their respective economies through increased productivity and competitiveness, not least by attracting investment and developing industrial areas, cooperating with educational institutions and supporting investment in human capital, staying open to regional partnerships and thinking beyond the usual administrative boundaries. In these efforts, municipalities need support and, above all, real steps towards financial decentralization and more own resources.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT: PERSISTENT DIFFERENCES IN QUALITY OF LIFE

In 2021, Bulgaria's population was slightly over 6.5 million, and throughout the past decade it has been on the decline in each of the 28 districts. The downward trend has been in evidence even in Sofia (capital city), where it was also partly provoked by the pandemic. This is shown by the data from the 2021 census which presents a much more reliable demographic picture. The loss of population is a consequence both of the deteriorating demographic structure – respectively a strongly negative rate of natural increase in all districts – and of the mechanical population outflow from most of them. Some districts, mostly in the north, have lost between 20% and 25% of their population over the last ten years. Areas that have lost less than 10% of their population are considered good examples.

The districts with the lowest population decline are those that over the years have managed to attract people, i.e. they have recorded positive net migration. These processes are most stable in Sofia (capital city) and Sofia district, as well as in Plovdiv, Burgas, and Varna. In each of these examples, the fringes of the big city – whether industrial or tourist – have attracted people. It is interesting that in recent years there has been a steady trend of population inflow in Kardzhali, and moreover, in almost all its district municipalities. At the same time, one of the major challenges facing the secondary centres – for example Stara Zagora, Ruse, and Veliko Tarnovo – is the inability to attract/retain their populations sustainably, especially young and economically active people.

Fig. 5. Population change by district in the period 2011–2021*



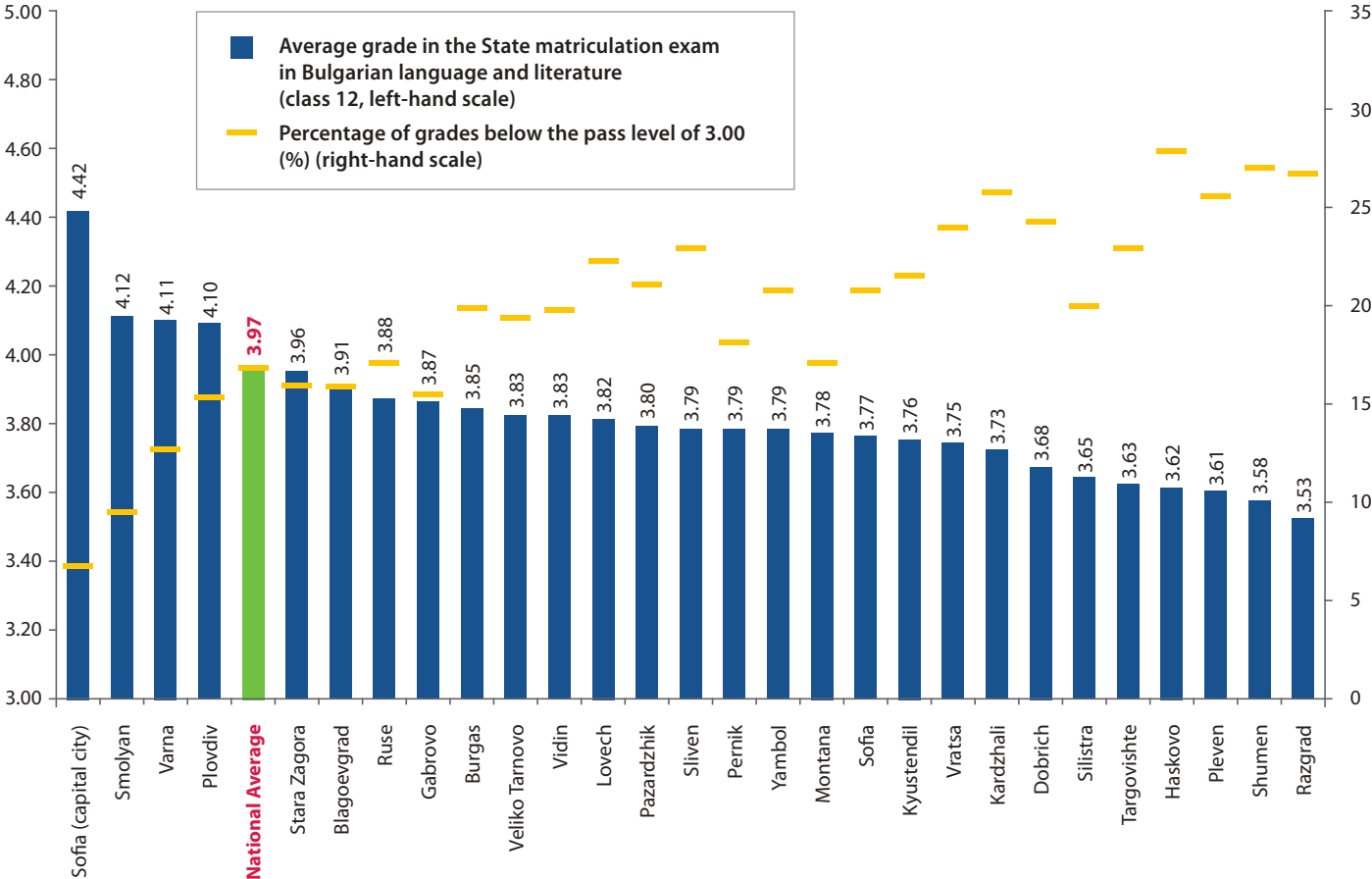
* Data based on the 2011 and 2021 censuses.

Source: NSI.

Education has also been severely affected over the past two years, with students going into online learning for long periods of time. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons for the lower results in the State matriculation exams in 2022. The country's leaders in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature are not a surprise – they are Sofia (capital), Smolyan, Varna, and Plovdiv. The four districts are the only ones to record an average grade higher than 4.00. Sofia (capital city) and Smolyan are also the only districts with a lower share (below 10%) of poor grades. The districts at the bottom of the ranking show very worrying results, with an average result in the exam in Bulgarian language and literature of slightly above the level of 3.50, and the share of poor grades reaching over 25%, i.e. one in four children received a poor grade.

Despite the pandemic and the challenges to the educational process, the intake of children in the education system has remained relatively good, although there are still districts where this is a problem. In about ten districts, the net enrollment rate in 5th–7th grade is above or around 90%, while in another seven districts the enrollment rate is below the 80% mark. The relative share of those who dropped out of primary and secondary education has fallen to 2.5%, and the share of repeaters is consistently below 1%. All this goes to show that even if some success has been achieved in terms of keeping children in school, there is still work to be done in the poorer areas of the country. It is also clear that the biggest challenge in the system remains that of quality, as measured by educational outcomes and skills acquired.

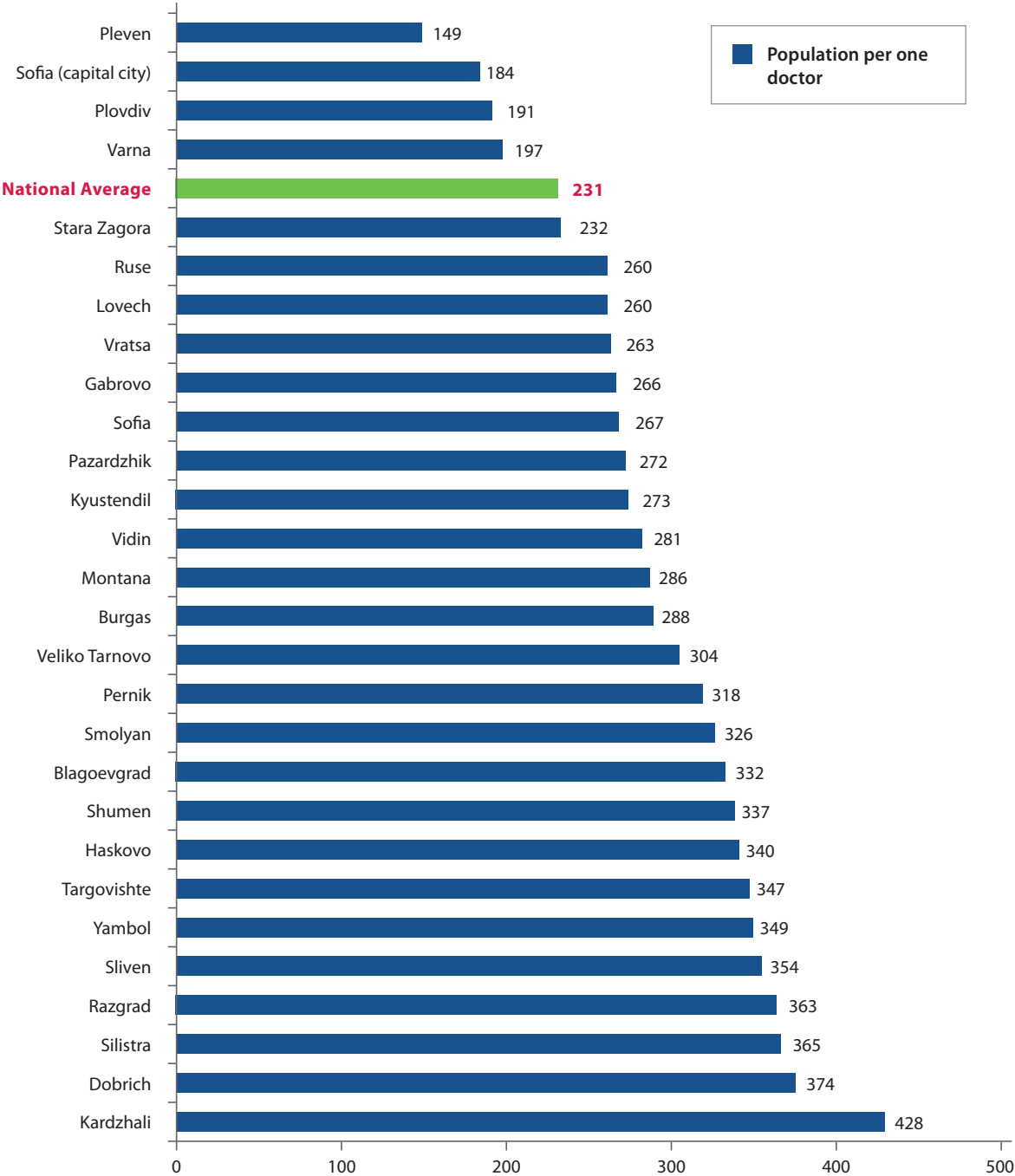
Fig. 6. Average grade in the 2022 State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature



Source: MES, calculations by IME.

The pandemic gave special prominence to the area of healthcare and the ability of the healthcare system to respond to an emergency. At one point, data such as the number of hospital beds and access to doctors became the most crucial indicators for the quality of life in the different regions. Regional differences in the area of healthcare are especially visible when considered from the perspective of access to GPs. While in some districts – Pleven, Sofia (capital city), Plovdiv, and Varna – less than 200 persons on average were served by one GP, in half of the others one doctor cared for over 300 persons. Regional centers with good medical universities performed significantly better on indicators of access to health care, especially in terms of access to specialist physicians. The numbers of hospital beds also vary from nearly 11 beds per 1,000 persons in Plevan district to under 3 beds per 1,000 people in Pernik, Dobrich, and Shumen.

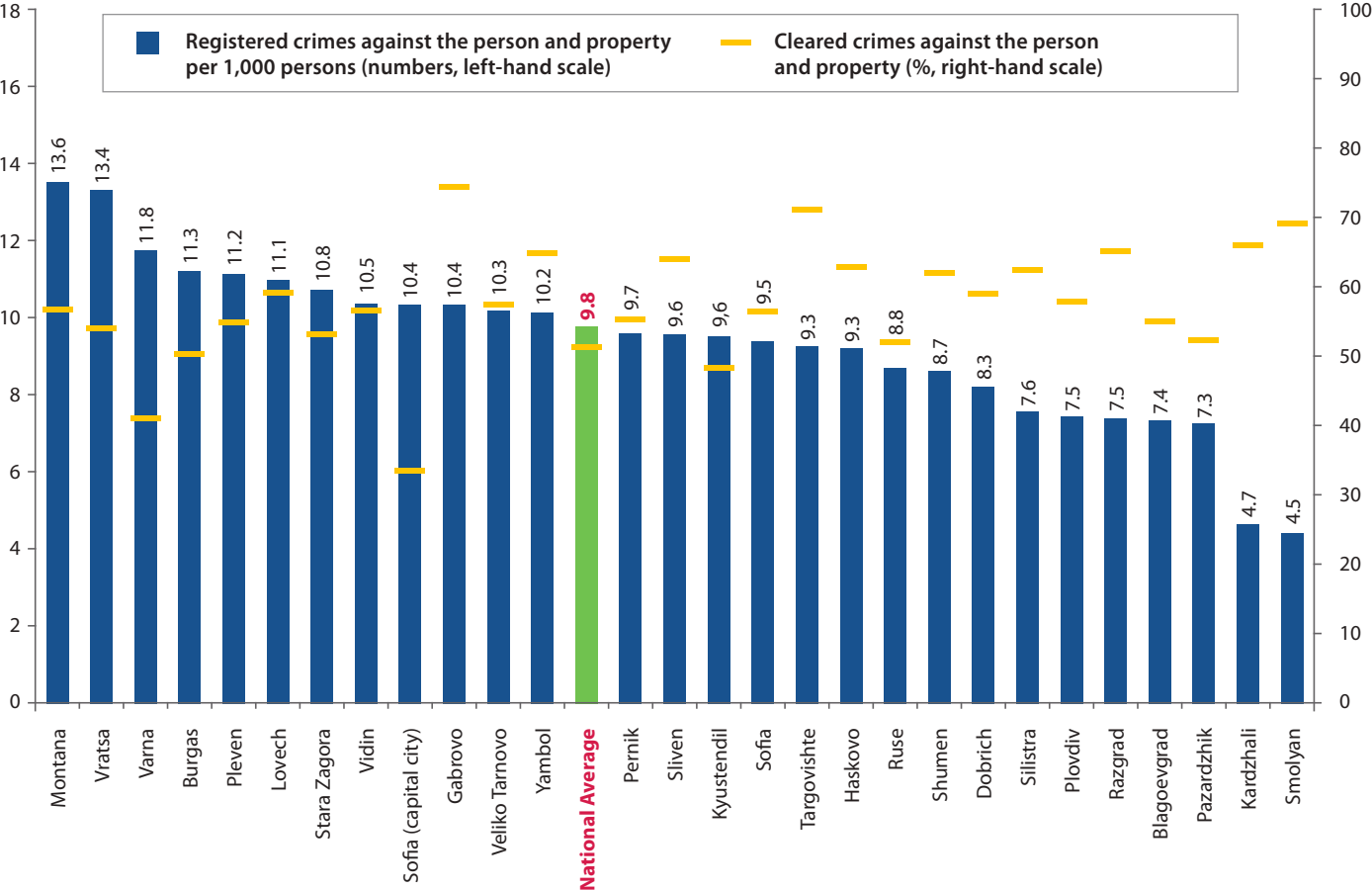
Fig. 7. Access of the population to GPs in 2021 by district



Source: NSI.

Over the past few years, the country has witnessed a steady decline in the number of registered crimes against the person and property. In 2021, an average of 9.8 crimes against the person and property were registered per 1,000 population, while ten years ago this indicator was at least 1.5 times higher. Kardzhali and Smolyan were yet again the safest districts, with under 5 crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons. The districts in the Bulgarian north-west – Montana, Vratsa, and Vidin, as well as Varna and Burgas – were notable for the high number of registered crimes, though in the coastal districts the trend in the past few years has been towards a serious decline. The average detection rate was highest in Gabrovo district, where nearly 75% of the crimes against the person and property registered throughout the year were cleared. Again, In Sofia (capital) and Varna, the tendency is for detection rates to remain low, with under 50% of the registered crimes against the person and property having been cleared within the year.

Fig. 8. Registered crimes against the person and property and detection rates in 2021



Source: SJC, calculations by IME.

The current edition of *Regional Profiles: Development Indicators* reveals for yet another year the economic potential as well as the deep social differences between Bulgaria’s regions. The publication covers a period in which the economy has started its recovery from the heavy blow of the pandemic, but has at the same time encountered new challenges under the conditions of a severe political crisis. The census highlighted more clearly than ever the extreme demographic problems facing the country and limiting the potential for growth in places. However, successful patterns of development in certain districts show that there are no insurmountable factors and that an upturn, economic transformation, and revitalization in demographic and social terms are entirely possible in some places. If at the moment three regions have shown sustainable positive dynamics and stand out from all the others, then the goal of the regional policy in the medium term should be to unlock the potential of the secondary centers. This depends on a number of policies at the national level, but also on the powers, capacity, and financial independence of the local authorities.

Blagoevgrad district

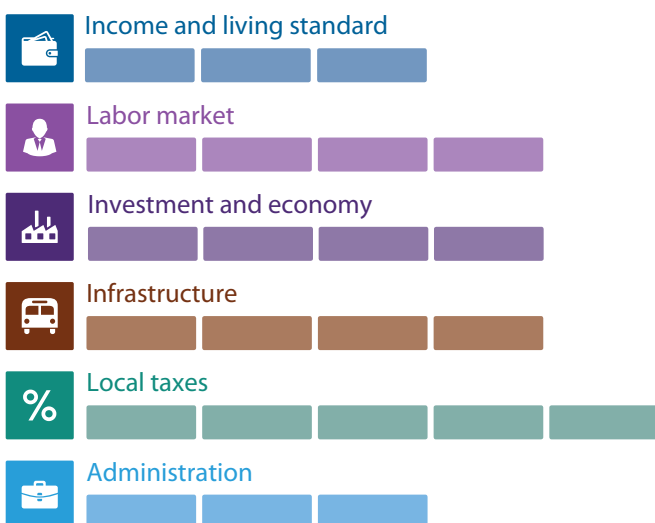
▶ Population (2021)	298,251
▶ Territory (sq. km)	6,449
▶ Number of settlements	274
▶ Share of urban population (%)	60.5



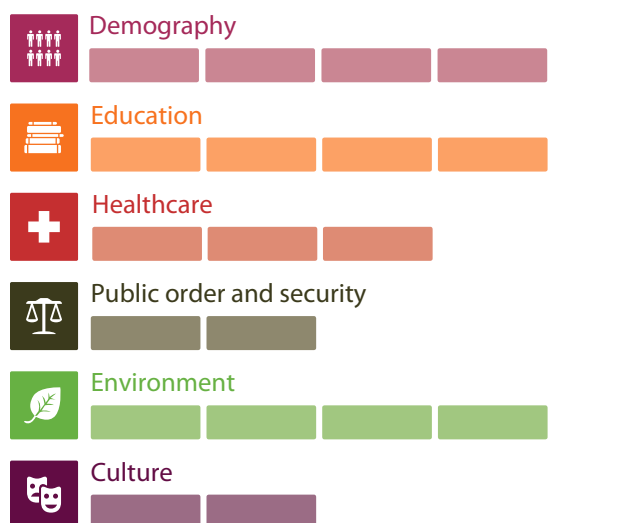
In 2020, GDP per capita in Blagoevgrad district retained its levels from the year before, which was in line with the general trend in the rest of the country. Salaries and income levels continued to rise. In 2020, employment rates fell and unemployment rates went up. Blagoevgrad is among the districts with the best road surface quality. Contrary to general nationwide trends, the district is relatively well developed economically, and in 2022 the level of local taxes again remained quite low. In 2021, practically the whole of the district's territory was covered by the cadastral map.

Blagoevgrad has performed relatively well in terms of demographic indicators and is one of the districts with the highest rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade. Students' results in 2022 again remained close to the national averages. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The crime rate remains relatively low and detection rates relatively high but delivery of justice is sluggish. The share of forested areas is high. The intensity of the cultural life is traditionally not very high, compared to that of other districts.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

GDP per capita in Blagoevgrad district reached 10,400 BGN/person in 2020, against the national average of 17,300 BGN/person, and retained its level from the year before, which was in line with the general trend in the rest of the country. Both salaries and incomes have also continued to rise. The average gross salary per person has reached 10,900 BGN, versus 16,700 BGN in the country. As regards poverty indicators, there has been a decline. In 2021, the relative share of people living in material deprivation was 19.5%, compared to the national average of 19.4%, while the number of those living under the national poverty line fell by 6 p.p. to 19.1%, and for the first time in at least three years was lower than the national average of 22.1%.

Labor market

In 2020 and 2021, economic activity in the district slackened, though again remaining above the national average. In 2021, its rate reached 75.3%, against 72.0% in the country. Moreover, alongside this decline Blagoevgrad district experienced a sharp drop in employment accompanied by a rise in unemployment. The employment rate fell by nearly 2.4 p.p. to 69.1%, though remaining relatively high against the national average of 68.1%. The unemployment rate rose to 8.1%, compared to the national average of 5.3%.

The educational structure of the labor force has remained relatively unfavorable and in 2021 it further deteriorated. The share of the population aged 25–64 with a university degree decreased slightly to 21.0% (versus 29.6% in the country), and those with primary and lower education increased to 18.8% (against 16.6% in the country).

The population replacement rate as a ratio of the people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 has reversed the tendency towards a steady decrease and in 2021 it rose, albeit remaining below average at 64.8%, versus 69.4% countrywide. 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

The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population in the district decreased for the first time in 2020, though remaining much higher than in the country on average – 70 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 60 per 1,000 persons. Investment and production value also declined. FDI decreased by 2% to 1,700 EUR/person (compared to 3,900 EUR/person in the country), and FTA acquisition expenditures fell by 15% to 1,500 BGN/person, against 3,300 BGN/person in the country. Production value in the district in 2020 was

17,300 BGN/person, compared to 27,200 BGN/person in the country.

Utilization of EU funds has continued to increase, now exceeding the national average. By 30 June 2022, payments made in Blagoevgrad district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached 3,800 BGN/person, placing it third in the country after Sofia (capital city) and Gabrovo. The largest recipients in the district were in 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, its share of highways and first-class roads in the country's road network is small. Nevertheless, Blagoevgrad remains among the districts with the best road quality, second only to Sliven district as regards the share of road surfaces in good condition – 66% in 2021, compared to 42% for the country.

The relative share of households with broadband internet access in Blagoevgrad district again remained below the national average in 2021. The share of households connected to a gas supply also remained lower than the national average – 4.4%, versus 5.3% respectively.

Local taxes

Contrary to general nationwide trends, the district is relatively well developed economically, while in 2022 the level of local taxes has 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 been rising by leaps and bounds over the past few years and in 2021, it included practically the whole of its territory, against the national average of 97.4%,

In 2022, both the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services in Blagoevgrad's municipalities place the district below the national average.

The AIP transparency ratings of the local administration in Blagoevgrad's municipalities worsened in 2022 and placed the district below the national average – 61.3% in the district, versus 70.2% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In regard to 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 2021, the natural population growth in the district fell sharply for the second year in a row, though at -10.6‰ it again remained higher than the national average of -13.2‰. The district continued to attract new residents and its net migration rate reached 1.1‰, though it too recorded a decline compared to the year before.

Population ageing in the district remains an ongoing trend but in 2020 its rate again remained below the national average. The ratio of the age dependency of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 137.2%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 31.0%, versus 34.0% nationwide.

A relatively small share of the population lives in urban settlements – 60.5%, against the national average of 73.1%. At the same time, the population density in the district's urban settlements remains high at 2,242 persons/sq. km, versus 1,489 persons/sq. km on average for the country.

Education

Blagoevgrad is among the districts with the highest rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade – 92.9% in 2021, compared to 85.9% countrywide. The percentages of school year repeaters and of dropouts from primary and secondary education remain considerably lower than the respective national averages. The number of teachers relative to primary and secondary school students remains close to the national average.

In 2022, students' performance in Blagoevgrad district also remained close to the national averages. The district's average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade reached 35.0 points, compared to 35.3 points in the country. For its part, the average result in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.91, versus 3.97 nationally. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades was 16%, against 17% 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 percentage of people with health insurance in Blagoevgrad district rose slightly in 2021 and again remained above the national average. At the same time, the healthcare system in the region keeps suffering from shortages of medical staff – both GPs and specialist physicians – and of hospital beds. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has even fallen to 3.79 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 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 – 1.5‰, versus 5.6‰ nationwide for 2021.

Public order and security

Court workloads in Blagoevgrad district remained lower than the national average in 2021 – 7.2 cases a month per one criminal judge, compared to 9.0 nationally. Nevertheless, justice delivery was not speedy enough. The share of pending cases was 15%, compared to 12% as the national average. Blagoevgrad is also among the districts (alongside Sofia and Yambol) with the lowest number of cases cleared within 3 months – 82%, versus 89% in the country.

The crime rate in the district remained low in 2021, and detection rates were relatively high. Registered crimes against the person and property in Blagoevgrad district amounted to 7.4 per 1,000 persons, with 9.8 per 1,000 persons as the national figure. 55.4% of those crimes were cleared, against 51.7% on average for the whole country.

Environment

The amount of household waste generated in the district is relatively low – an annual of 327 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 – 7.3%, against 69.3% as the national average.

A relatively large part of the district's population lives in settlements with a public sewerage network – 83.3% versus 76.3% countrywide. However, in 2020 connectivity to wastewater treatment plants was low – 32.7%, against the national average of 66.7%.

The share of forest areas is high – 51.5%, compared to 33.1% nationally, and that of degraded land is low, at 0.11%, versus 0.42% nationally.

Culture

The intensity of Blagoevgrad district's cultural life is traditionally not very high when compared to other districts, and in 2020 and 2021, due to the pandemic and the reduced number of visits to social places, it shrank even further. Still, in 2021 it rose a bit, compared to 2020.

Cinema visits almost doubled to reach 258 per 1,000 persons, with 351 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The number of theatre visits also doubled to 63 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 129, and museum visits rose to 320 per 1,000 persons, compared to 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide. However, numbers for library visits did not follow the nationwide trend and in 2021 went up, for the first time surpassing the national average figures relative to the population in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Blagoevgrad

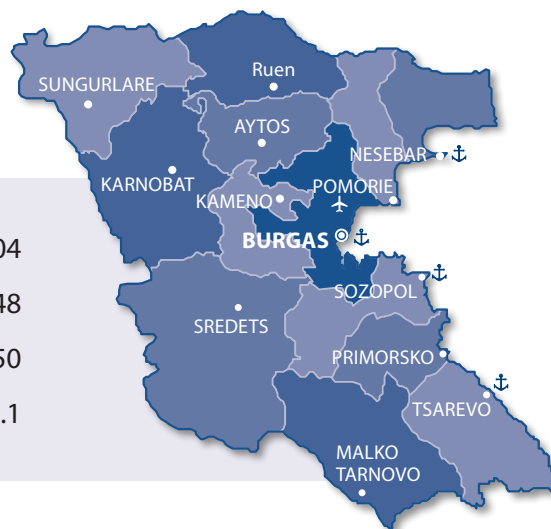
Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,383	10,381	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	9,810	10,881	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	23.9	25.1	19.1	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	78.5	77.1	75.3	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	75.2	71.5	69.1	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	4.1	7.3	8.1	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	19.9	17.9	18.8	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	21.8	21.1	21.0	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	18,679	17,251	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,765	1,509	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,745	1,715	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	71.1	75.8	80.6	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	69.6	64.1	65.6	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	11.1	11.1	11.1	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	68.3	69.0	61.3	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-4.1	-7.6	-10.6	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-3.9	2.5	1.1	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.24	4.19	3.91	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	34.4	37.1	35.0	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	92.4	92.4	92.9	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	92	97	98	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	90.6	89.6	90.2	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,701	1,755	1,775	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	8.4	7.3	7.4	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	8.3	7.7	7.2	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	82.9	83.3	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	327	327	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	7.3	7.3	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	443	114	258	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	457	203	320	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Burgas District

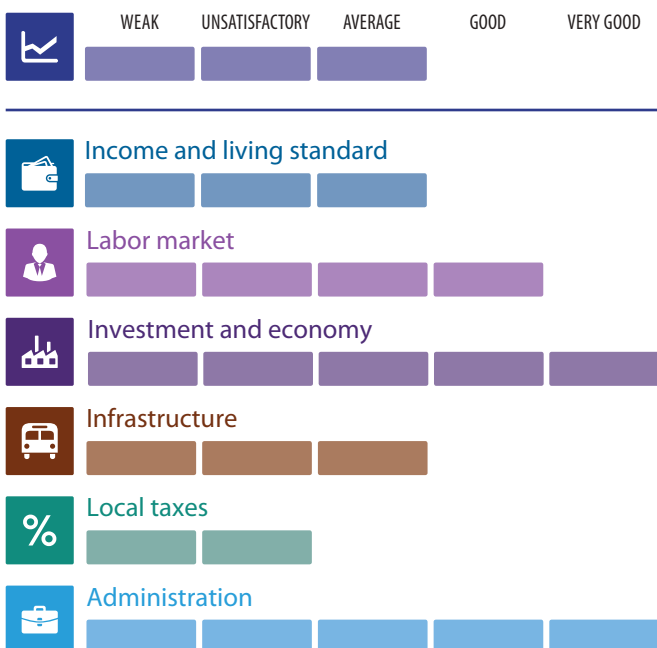


▶ Population (2021)	408,704
▶ Territory (sq. km)	7,748
▶ Number of settlements	250
▶ Share of urban population (%)	76.1

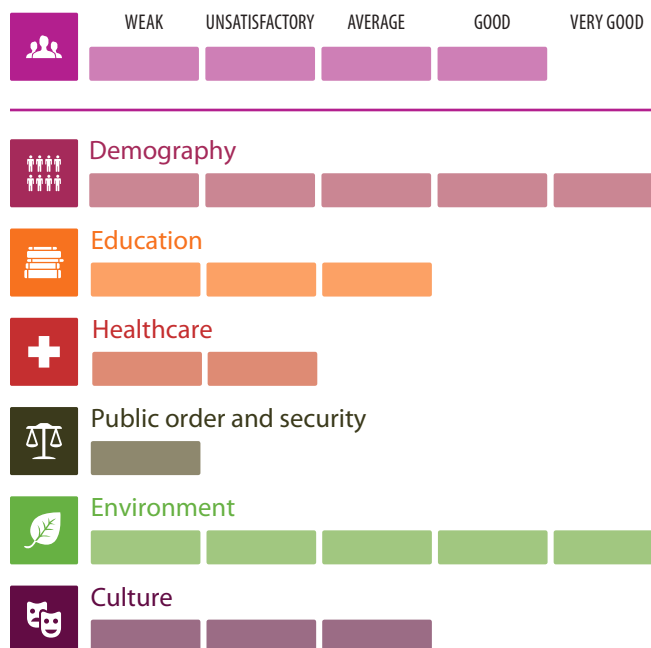
GDP per capita in the district of Burgas has registered a sharp drop. Nevertheless, salaries and income levels have continued to rise, though remaining below the average ones in the country. Like elsewhere in the country, there has been a slight drop in employment accompanied by a rise in unemployment, though the values of both indicators are less favorable in the district than in the country. In 2020, investment and business activity in Burgas district again remained among the highest in the country. The share of highways and first-class roads is high, but the quality of the road surface remains low. In 2022, Burgas remained one of the dis-

tricts with the highest local tax rates in the country. The demographic indicators place Burgas district among the top three in the country. In 2022, the results of the students in the district in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade were relatively high. However, the average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature showed a decline. Healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. Crime rates are falling but remain above the national average. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is relatively high. Visits to various cultural events have shown an increase.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

After a steady rise over the previous five years at least, in 2020 GDP per capita in Burgas district decreased sharply by 17%, which is the biggest drop in the whole country. In 2020, GDP in the district was 11,200 BGN per capita, compared to 17,300 BGN countrywide. Salaries and incomes in the district have continued to grow, though without reaching the average nationwide levels. The average annual gross salary of employed people in the district was 13,500 BGN in 2020, compared to 16,700 BGN as the national average, while the average annual income per household member in 2021 rose to 7,400 BGN/person, against the national average of 7,700 BGN/person. These indicators determine the decreasing yet relatively high level of poverty in the district. The share of the population living with material deprivation in 2021 was 21.9% (compared to 19.4% in the country), and of those living below the national poverty line – 24.6% (compared to 22.1% countrywide).

Labor market

In 2021, economic activity in Burgas district registered a negligible rise and remained relatively low – 68.2%, compared to the national average of 72.0%. At the same time and alongside the nationwide trend, Burgas district experienced a slight drop in employment and a rise in unemployment, with both indicators having more unfavorable values than in the country on average. The employment rate was 64.3%, compared to the national average of 68.1%, and the unemployment rate – 5.8%, versus 5.3% nationwide.

The educational status of the workforce in the district is relatively low but 2021 again marked some positive tendencies. The share of people aged 25–64 with higher education reached 24.4%, against 29.6% on a national level, while the share of people with primary or lower education was 19.5%, compared to the national average of 16.6%.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 had been rising for five years in a row and in 2021 registered a considerable increase, reaching 74.1%, versus 69.4% countrywide. Thus, for every 100 people who will leave the workforce in the next few years, there are 74 people who will enter the labor market.

Investment and economy

In 2020, investment and business activity in Burgas district remained relatively high, unlike in the rest of the country, where the economic indicators worsened. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population was the second highest in the country, after only the capital district, even though it registered the largest decline (by 5 enterprises) to 71 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 60 per 1,000 persons. Burgas was also the district with the greatest shrinkage regarding production value – by 32%, compared to

3% nationwide, and for the first time it fell to a level below the national average – 24,400 BGN/person in the district, versus 27,200 BGN/person nationally.

In 2020, FTA acquisition expenditures continued to fall but remained relatively high at 2,400 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 – 5,900 EUR/person, against 3,900 EUR/person on a national level.

Payments made to beneficiaries of EU projects have grown as well, albeit by 30 June 2022 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 again remained relatively low in 2021. 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 31%, against the national average of 42%.

The share of households with internet connectivity has risen to 82.9%, versus the national average of 83.5%. The share of households connected to a gas supply is lower than average – 0.6%, against 5.3% nationally. The installed RES capacities are also more limited – 0.3 KW/person, which is twice as low as the national average.

Local taxes

In 2022, Burgas remains one of the districts with the highest level of local taxation. The margin is particularly large in the taxation on motor vehicles, retail trade, and non-gratuitous acquisition of property. Sozopol is the municipality levying the highest local taxes not only in the district but also in the whole of the country. Municipalities with relatively higher tax rates also include the tourist towns of Pomorie, Primorsko, and the city of Burgas. Karnobat and Aitos impose the lowest rates.

Administration

The cadastral map of the district of Burgas now covers practically the whole of its territory. The local authorities' self-assessment ratings on the development of e-government went up in 2022 to relatively high levels. At the same time, the self-assessment ratings on their provision of one-stop-shop administrative services have gone down to below the national average.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration fell slightly in 2022 but remain relatively high at 72.4%, versus the national average of 70.2%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The demographic indicators place Burgas district among the top three in the country, after only Sofia (capital city) and Varna. The rate of natural population growth is still negative and continues to decline but at -9.9% in 2021 it was still among the highest in the country, while the national average was -13.2% . Burgas district continues to attract new residents as well, with the net migration rate reaching 7.4% , which is the second highest in the country. This also reflects in the age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 133.4%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it is 31.8%, versus 34.0% nationwide. For the first time in at least ten years, the share of the urban population in Burgas district is declining, although it remains above the national average – 76%, compared to 73% in the country. The population density in urban areas is also relatively high – 2,240 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,506 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

The enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade continued to decline in 2021 and again remained below the national average. At the same time, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education rose to 0.77%, though remaining relatively low against the national average of 0.94%. The number of teachers relative to the population has risen slightly but again remains relatively low – 92 per 1,000 students, compared to 97 teachers per 1,000 students nationwide.

In 2022, the results in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade were relatively high – 36.9 points, compared to the national average of 35.3 points. However, the average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature remained relatively low. The average grade in 2022 was “Good” 3.85, compared to 3.97 in the country, and the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was 20%, against 17% on average in the country.

The number of university students in the district relative to the population increased in 2021, but remained lower than the national average.

Healthcare

In 2021, the share of people with health insurance in Burgas district again remained among the lowest in the country – 83.9%, compared to 88.7% nationwide. Healthcare in the district also suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. There are 2,129 people per one GP, compared to 1,734 people per one GP in the country. The number of hospital beds is 4.3 per 1,000 persons, against 5.6 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 fell in 2021 to 6.8% , which was still above the national average of 5.6% .

Public order and security

Court workloads in Burgas district were close to but above the national average in 2021. There were on average 9.7 cases a month per one criminal judge, compared to 9.0 nationally. The speed of justice delivery was also close to the national average. The share of cases closed within 3 months was 88%, compared to 89% as the national average, and the share of pending cases was 12.2%, against 11.8% in the country.

The crime rate in the district has been falling but remains above the national average. In 2021, the registered crimes against the person and property in Burgas district amounted to 11.3 per 1,000 persons, with 9.8 per 1,000 persons as the national figure. Detection rates went up to reach 50.8%, which is still below the national average of 51.7%.

Environment

In 2020, Burgas was once again among the districts with the greatest amounts of waste generated by the households – an annual of 440 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 – 88.7%, against 69.3% as the national average.

With its high urban population, a relatively large part of them live in settlements with public sewerage networks – 79.2%, versus 76.3% countrywide, and in settlements with a sewerage system connected to a wastewater treatment plant – 71.0%, against the national average of 66.7%.

The share of forest areas is high at 41%, compared to the national average of 33%, and the share of degraded land is low – 0.25%, versus 0.42% nationally.

Culture

The pandemic and the restrictions on visits to public places in 2020 and 2021 had a strongly negative impact on cultural life in the country, Burgas district making no exception. Still, in 2021 the number of visits to various cultural events marked an increase. The number of cinema visits doubled to 402 per 1,000 persons, which once again was above the national average. Museum and theatre visits also went up compared to 2020 but they still remained below the national averages. There was a huge rise in the number of library visits – over 4 times – to 420 per 1,000 persons, which may be due to the opening of the new building of Burgas Regional Library “Peyo Yavorov”.

Key indicators for the district of Burgas

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	13,507	11,181	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,301	13,473	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	20.0	26.5	24.6	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	72.0	67.9	68.2	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	69.4	64.6	64.3	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	3.6	4.9	5.8	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	20.4	19.6	19.5	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	22.5	24.2	24.4	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	35,826	24,365	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,543	2,381	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	5,219	5,888	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	77.7	79.8	82.9	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	32.5	26.4	31.0	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	15.2	15.3	15.3	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	66.9	73.8	72.4	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-4.7	-6.6	-9.9	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	2.1	7.8	7.4	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.18	4.12	3.85	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	38.1	39.3	36.9	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	85.9	85.5	84.8	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	83	86	92	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	84.8	84.3	83.9	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	2,006	2,058	2,129	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	14.2	11.5	11.3	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	8.9	9.7	9.7	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	79.1	79.2	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	437	440	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	88.8	88.7	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	843	193	402	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	598	198	321	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Dobrich district

▶ Population (2021)	167,314
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,720
▶ Number of settlements	216
▶ Share of urban population (%)	68.6



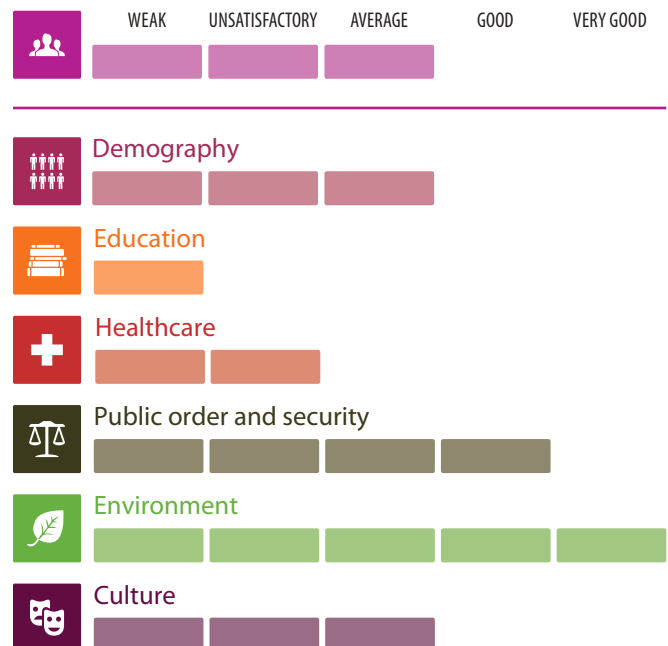
GDP per capita in Dobrich district has continued to grow but its rate remains relatively low. The low educational status of the workforce continues to be a major challenge before the labor market. Investment in the district has been increasing but remains comparatively low, and production value is relatively limited. Dobrich is among the districts with the highest share of households with access to a gas supply. The level of local taxes in the local municipalities is relatively low. The indicators for the work of local government rank Dobrich among the top performers in the whole country.

The urban population and its density remain low. Its performance as regards the education indicators is poor. Student scores are 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 number of registered crimes in the district continues to fall and remains lower than the national average, while detection rates are rising. The share of public sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants remains high. Museum visits in the district have risen considerably.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

GDP per capita in Dobrich district has continued to grow and in 2020 its rate of increase was higher than the national average, though its volume remained relatively low – 10,200 BGN, compared to 17,300 BGN as the country's average. Salaries and incomes have grown but they remain below the respective national averages. The gross annual salary in the district has reached 12,500 BGN, versus the national average of 16,700 BGN.

Still, in spite of the lag in incomes and salaries, in 2021 poverty levels in Dobrich district were close to, though slightly above the national average. The proportion of people living in material deprivation was 19.7%, versus 19.4% on average nationwide, while the share of those living below the poverty line was 26.0%, compared to the national average of 22.1%.

Labor market

After a decade of fluctuations, in the past few years economic activity in Dobrich district has settled below the national average. In 2021, the rate of economic activity dropped to 68.5%, against 72.0% in the country. This decrease was accompanied by a decline in employment and an increase in unemployment rates in the district. Employment rates reached 62.4%, compared to 68.1% in the country on average, and unemployment rates reached 8.9%, whereas the national average was 5.32%.

In 2021, 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 20.3%, against the national average of 29.6%. The proportion of people in the workforce with primary or lower education was 25.6%, versus 16.6% 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 70.6%, compared to 69.4% 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 71 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and economy

Investment in the district has been increasing, but it remains comparatively low, and production value is relatively limited. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population has decreased to 54 per 1,000 persons, against 60 per 1,000 persons as the national average. FTA acquisition expenditures and accumulated FDI flows relative to the population have increased by 1/4, reaching 2,200 BGN/person, versus 3,300 BGN/person in the country, and 2,200 EUR/person, versus the national figure of 3,900 EUR/person.

There was, however, a decrease in production value for the second year in a row and in 2020 it shrank to 12,800 BGN/person, versus the national average of 27,200 BGN/person.

Utilization of European funds in the district has continued to grow but both its rate and its volume remain below the national average per capita. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,874 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded in the Dobrich city municipality while the lowest ones were in the greater Dobrich municipality.

Infrastructure

The density of the infrastructure in Dobrich district, and especially that of its railroad network, remains quite low. In 2021, the share of highways and first-class roads remained nearly twice as low as the national average – 10.1%, against 18.5% respectively. At the same time, road quality is relatively good, with 40% of road surfaces in good condition.

The relative share of households with internet access in Dobrich district remains relatively low – 68.1%, against the average of 83.5% nationwide.

Dobrich is among the districts with the highest share of households connected to a gas supply – 9.6%, versus the national average of 5.3%. The installed RES capacities – 3.2 kW/person – place the district second in the country on this indicator, preceded only by Pazardzhik.

Local taxes

In 2022, local tax rates in Dobrich district again remained relatively low. The margin with the national average rates was especially significant as regards the average local rates on immovable non-residential property for legal entities and on taxi transportation. However, the tax on non-gratuitous transfer of property remains higher than the national average.

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

Administration

The indicators for the functioning of the local government rank Dobrich among the top performers in the whole country. The major reason for this is the high AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration – 81.2% in 2022, against 73.2% nationwide, thus ranking Dobrich at the top place in the whole country for the second year in a row. Cadastral coverage in Dobrich district remains high. The district municipalities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services is close to the national average for 2022.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth rate decreased to -16.6% in 2021, compared to -13.2% as the national average. The net migration rate also fell and after reaching a positive value in 2020, it was again negative at -1.1% . The trend towards population ageing is visible in the age dependency rates. In 2021, the ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 years increased to 163.9%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to that aged 15–64 rose to 36.0%, with 34.0% nationally.

The urban population remains relatively low – 68.6%, versus 73.1% in the country, and Dobrich continues to be the district with the lowest population density in its urban settlements – 651 persons/sq. km, versus 1,489 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

The performance of Dobrich district as regards the education indicators is poor. In 2021, the enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade decreased to 70.6% and remained the lowest one in the country. At the same time, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education remained high. The number of primary and secondary school teachers went up to 112 per 1,000 students and remained higher than the national average of 97 teachers per 1,000 students.

In 2022, students' results for the district remained relatively low. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 29.2 p., compared to 35.3 p. in the country on average. The average score in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.68, compared to the national average of 3.97. In addition, the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) reached 24.4%, versus 17.0% 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 still remains among the districts with the lowest share of people with health insurance – 86.0% in 2021, 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 comparatively high. With the exception of Pernik district, Dobrich has the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals – 2.84 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 5.652 per 1,000 persons.

The shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds, as well as the district's proximity to Varna, can probably explain the relatively low number of hospitalizations in Dobrich – 100.7 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 per 1,000 persons across the country.

The infant mortality rate in the district was 7‰ in 2021 and remained higher than the national average of 5.6‰.

Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in Dobrich district again remained relatively low in 2021, which affected the speed of delivery of justice. There were on average 7.2 cases a month per judge, compared to 9.0 cases per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months decreased but was still higher than the national average – 94%, against 89% respectively.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property continues to fall and remains lower than the national average – 8.3 per 1,000 persons, versus 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationwide, while detection rates are rising and are higher than the national average – 59.4%, versus the national figure of 51.7%.

Environment

In 2020, the share of the population with access to a public sewerage system was still slightly below the national average – 70.7%, versus 76.3% countrywide, though the share of sewerage systems in the district connected to wastewater treatment plants remained higher than in the country on average – 70.7%, versus 66.7% countrywide.

The average annual amount of waste generated by households in 2020 was 404 kg/person, which was close to the national average of 409 kg/person. At the same time, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling was among the highest in the country – 97.2%, versus 69.3% nationwide.

The share of forest areas remained relatively low in 2021 at 12.1%, compared to the national average of 33.1%, while the share of degraded land was also relatively low – 0.15%, versus 0.42 nationally.

Culture

Similar to the nationwide trend, cultural life in Dobrich district began to recover in 2021, after the severe pandemic-related restrictions of the year before. Museum visits went up to 1,045 per 1,000 persons, which was considerably higher than the national average of 426 per 1,000 persons.

Visits to theatres and libraries also marked an increase and their numbers came close to the national averages – 118 per 1,000 persons (against 129 per 1,000 persons in the country), and 385 per 1,000 persons (against 449 per 1,000 persons in the country) respectively. Visits to the cinema remained relatively low in the district, even though their number also increased to 70 per 1,000 persons, compared to 351 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Key indicators for the district of Dobrich

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,061	10,195	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,440	12,548	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	22.8	25.0	26.0	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	72.0	69.9	68.5	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	66.9	63.2	62.4	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	7.0	9.6	8.9	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	24.8	25.6	25.6	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	21.1	22.3	20.3	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	14,549	12,795	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,811	2,235	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,707	2,159	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	70.0	70.4	68.1	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	46.7	45.4	40.3	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	17.4	17.4	17.4	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	76.2	83.6	81.2	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-9.0	-11.9	-16.6	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-2.7	3.1	-1.1	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.20	4.08	3.68	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.8	30.5	29.2	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	74.7	73.4	70.6	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	98	105	112	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	86.5	85.3	86.0	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,494	1,500	1,507	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	10.4	9.4	8.3	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	6.2	5.8	7.2	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	70.9	70.7	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	405	404	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	97.2	97.2	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	202	40	70	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	1,119	800	1,045	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Gabrovo district

- ▶ Population (2021)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

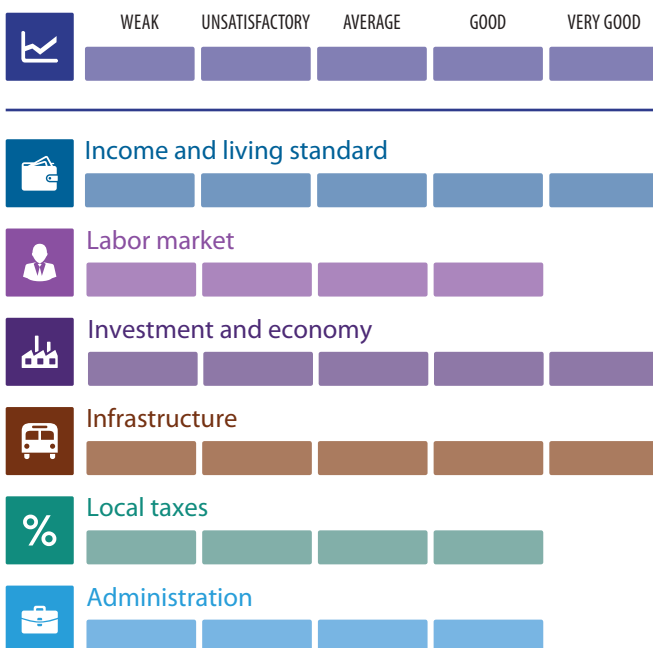
103,404
2,023
349
79.9



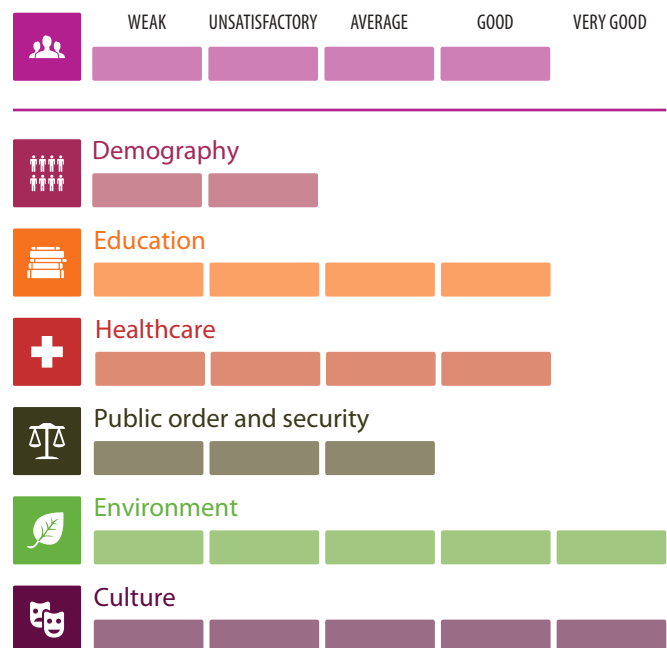
GDP, salaries, and incomes in Gabrovo district have continued to grow. Their indicator values determine the relatively low level of poverty in the district. Employment and unemployment rates remain less favorable than the national average. Business and investment activity in the area is high. Infrastructural development is very good. Although Gabrovo is among the highly developed economic areas, the level of local taxes is relatively low. The transparency of the local government in Gabrovo district is decreasing, but remains relatively high. Gabrovo is one of the districts with the most unfa-

vorable demographic conditions. The results in the field of education are good. The indicators evaluating healthcare place the district among the top performers in the country. Gabrovo is among the districts with the highest share of health-insured persons. The district continues to be the leader as regards the share of cleared crimes. The relatively high share of the urban population explains the large share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage systems. Cultural life in Gabrovo district remains among the most intensive 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 2020, GDP continued to grow, reaching 14,700 BGN per capita, and was again the sixth highest in the country. Salaries and incomes also went up. The average annual gross salary of employed people reached 13,900 BGN.

These indicators are the prerequisite for the relatively low poverty levels in the district. The share of the population living with material deprivation decreased to 12.7%, compared to 19.4% in the country, and that of the people living below the national poverty line fell sharply to 12.3%, compared to 22.1% nationwide.

Labor market

Economic activity in the district fell slightly in 2021 but remained above the national average, with a rate of 72.5%, compared to 72.0% in the country. However, this growth was accompanied by both a decrease in employment and an increase in unemployment. Even though the changes are slight, these indicators remain less favourable than the country's averages. The employment rate reached 67.3%, compared to the national average of 68.1%, and the unemployment rate was 7.2%, versus 5.3% nationwide.

Gabrovo is among the districts with the lowest share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education – 11.7%, compared to 16.6% in the country. The district is also among those with the highest share of employed people with secondary education – 63.7%, compared to 53.8% in the country – which corresponds to its industrial profile.

A challenge still facing the labor market is the ageing of the population. In 2021, the demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 was 56.1%, versus 69.4% 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 56 young people joining the work force.

Investment and economy

Business and investment activity in the district again remained high in 2020. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population continued to fall, in line with the general trend in the country, and reached 56 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 60 per 1,000 persons. FTA acquisition expenditures also suffered the negative impact of the pandemic and the crisis. They shrank to 1,900 BGN/person, while the national average was 3,300 BGN/person. FDI, however, continued to increase and reached 3,300 EUR/person, thus placing the district fourth in the country, after the capital, Sofia district, and Burgas.

Gabrovo ranks second after the capital district in the utilization of EU funds. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached 3,800 BGN/person. The top place in the district was held by Gabrovo city municipality with 4,700 BGN/person.

Infrastructure

The infrastructural development of Gabrovo district is very good. In 2021, Gabrovo was the district with the highest road network density in the country – 25.6 km/100 sq. km of territory, compared to 18.0 km/100 sq. km in the country, although the share of highways and first-class roads was lower than the national average – 16.6%, compared to 18.5% in the country.

The quality of the road surfaces was also lower and has been deteriorating in the past few years – 26% of them are in good condition, versus 42% in the country. Household access to the internet continues to increase and in 2021 it exceeded the national average – 83.7% in the district, versus 83.5% nationally.

Gabrovo ranks first in the country in terms of the share of households connected to a gas supply for 2021 – 11.8%, which is double the national average of 5.3%. The installed RES capacities are relatively limited.

Local taxes

Although Gabrovo is among the districts with a relatively highly developed economy, in 2022 the level of local taxes again remained relatively low. The margin is especially big in the retail trade tax. Its average rate across all the municipalities in Gabrovo district is 8.67 BGN/sq. m, against 12.99 BGN/sq. m countrywide. The tax rate on non-gratuitous acquisition of property is 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 municipality of Tryavna.

Administration

In 2021, the cadastral map covered practically the whole of Gabrovo district's territory. However, the self-assessment of the local authorities on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services went up in 2022 but while the self-assessment on e-government continues to be relatively high, that on the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services still lags behind the average ones in the country.

The AIP active transparency ratings of the local administration in Gabrovo district fell in 2022 but remained relatively high at 72.9%, compared to the national average of 70.2%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Gabrovo is one of the districts whose demographic picture in 2021 was once again among the most unfavorable in the country. The natural population growth rate reached a new negative record at -22.1% , compared to the national average of -13.2% , and was the third worst in the country, after that in the districts of Vidin and Montana. In 2021, the net migration rate was also negative, with a rate of -0.8% .

The trend towards population ageing is clearly visible in the age dependency ratios. In 2021, Gabrovo overtook Vidin and settled at the top place nationally for the highest age dependency of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14, which was 249.6%, compared to 149.3% in the country. The age dependency of the population aged 65+ to that aged 15–64 was 49.2%, versus 34.0% nationally.

Most of the population of the district is urban – 79.9%, compared to a national average of 73.1%, but its density is relatively low, with 1,191 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,489 persons/sq. km countywide.

Education

The performance of Gabrovo district in the education category is good. In 2021, it was once again one of the districts with a very high rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade. The percentage of school year repeaters has gone up but remains relatively low. In 2021, the number of teachers in primary and secondary education in the district went up and for the first time in eight years exceeded the national average, reaching 99 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 97 per 1,000 students countrywide.

In 2022, the district's average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 30.9 points, compared to 35.3 points in the country. Results in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature were below the national average – “Good” 3.87, versus 3.97 nationally, but the share of “fail” (below 3.00) grades continues to be relatively low – 15.6%, against 17% nationwide.

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

The indicators evaluating healthcare place the district among the top performers in the country, where it is preceded only by the districts of Pleven and Kyustendil.

In 2021, Gabrovo again remained among the districts with the highest share of health-insured persons– 96.9%, versus 88.7% as the national average. The relative number of GPs is considerably higher than the national average, but specialist physicians are scarce. The number of beds in the local general hospitals has continued to rise but it still stands below the national average – 5.24 beds per 1,000 persons in the district, compared to 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons nationally.

The number of patients treated in the local hospitals remains relatively low – 202.8 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 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 court workloads in Gabrovo district remained lower than the national average in 2021, this did not have a significant effect on the speedy delivery of justice. One local judge heard an average of 6.9 criminal cases per month, compared to 9.0 cases per judge in the country, while the share of cases completed within 3 months was 86%, versus 89% nationally.

In 2021, the number of registered crimes against the person and property increased and exceeded the national average, with 10.4 crimes per 1,000 persons in the district, compared to 9.8 per 1,000 people in the country. At the same time, however, Gabrovo continues to be the country's leader in the crime detection rate, with 74.9% of detected crimes, versus 51.7% on average for the whole country.

Environment

The performance of Gabrovo district in the environment indicators is very good and places it second in the whole country. The relatively high urban population accounts for the high number of households living in settlements with access to a public sewerage network – 84.1%, compared to 76.3% in the country, and to sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants – 73.6%, versus 66.7% nationwide.

In 2020, the volume of generated household waste in the district decreased slightly, but nevertheless remained relatively high – an annual of 416 kg/person, against 409 kg/person in the country. At the same time, however, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling remained high at 76.6%, compared to 69.3% in the country.

The share of forest areas is close to the national average, but that of degraded land is considerably smaller.

Culture

In spite of the nationwide restrictions imposed in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic, Gabrovo district's cultural life remains among the most intensive 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, similarly to the country's average, in 2020 this number had also shrunk by over 50%. It rose to 2,357 per 1,000 persons in 2021, yet this number cannot yet make up for the earlier shrinkage. Nevertheless, it remains far above the national average of 426 per 1,000 people.

The number of theatre visits also went up in 2021 to reach 160 per 1,000 persons, compared to 129 per 1,000 persons nationally. Libraries and cinemas in the district have been attracting more and more people but the number of visits relative to the population remains comparatively low.

Key indicators for the district of Gabrovo

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	14,519	14,651	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,895	13,902	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	17.8	22.3	12.3	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	73.4	72.8	72.5	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	70.1	67.7	67.3	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	(4.5)	(7.0)	(7.2)	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	12.6	10.6	11.7	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	29.0	23.1	24.6	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	24,907	24,891	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,244	1,892	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	3,210	3,273	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	74.9	77.5	83.7	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	36.7	26.5	26.5	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	24.9	25.6	25.6	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	74.8	78.9	72.9	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-12.7	-18.1	-22.1	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-4.2	10.5	-0.8	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.31	4.19	3.87	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	33.9	33.4	30.9	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	93.4	100.0	90.5	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	80	79	99	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	97.5	96.3	96.9	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,501	1,609	1,567	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	10.5	9.6	10.4	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	6.4	5.8	6.9	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	85.1	84.1	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	418	416	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	76.5	76.6	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	402	109	209	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	3,812	1,800	2,357	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Haskovo district

- ▶ Population (2021)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

220,269
5,533
261
71.7



Household incomes in Haskovo district have been gradually rising, yet the problems of high poverty levels and material deprivation persist. Unemployment remains at low levels, but employment is decreasing. Investment activity remains slack. The density of the road and railway networks in the district is above the national average. Local tax rates in the district's municipalities are close to but below the country's average. The self-assessments of local administrations for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop

administrative services have improved considerably. The district's population continues to age. Students' results are low. Healthcare in Haskovo district suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The crime rate is commensurable with the country's average while the detection rate is considerably higher. The high assessment of Haskovo district in the environment category is mainly due to the relatively low volumes of generated household waste and the limited share of degraded land. Cultural life in the district is of relatively low intensity.

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

Haskovo is the district with the lowest GDP per capita in southern Bulgaria after Sliven, with only 9,100 BGN per capita in 2020, compared to the national average of 17,300 BGN, and has been growing at a rate lower than the average one in the country. Salaries and incomes are also rising, but remain relatively low. The average annual gross salary of employed people was 11,600 BGN in 2020, versus 16,700 BGN in the country. These indicators are the main factor for the relatively high poverty levels in the district. 27.4% of the population is living with material deprivation, compared to 19.4% on average nationally, and the share of the population living below the national poverty line is 32.9%, versus 22.1% on average countrywide.

Labor market

In 2021, economic activity in Haskovo district maintained its level from the previous year and its rate remained relatively low – 67.5%, compared to 72.0% in the country. Unemployment remained low, but employment decreased as well. The employment rate reached 66.3%, compared to the national average of 68.1%.

The local labor market continues to face the challenges posed by the educational structure of the workforce and the ageing population, although the indicators improved considerably in 2021. The share of university graduates among the 25–64 age group went up to 18.5%, compared to 29.6% in the country. Also, the share of people with primary or lower education decreased to 19.9%, compared to the national average of 16.6%. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 reached 64.0%, compared to 69.4% 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 64 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and economy

Investment activity in Haskovo district again remained slack in 2020. The number of non-financial enterprises in the district is 53 per 1,000 persons, compared to 60 per 1,000 persons in the country. FTA acquisition expenditures went up but remained low nevertheless – 1,200 BGN/person, compared to 3,300 BGN/person nationally. FDI decreased to 794 EUR/person and also remained considerably below the national average of 3,900 EUR/person. These indicator values are also a factor for the relatively low production value, which went down to 11,800 BGN/person, compared to 27,200 BGN/person nationally.

Utilization of EU funds is also relatively poor. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,649 BGN/person, which is half

the national average. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of Svilengrad.

Infrastructure

The density of the road and railway network in Haskovo district is above the national average. The share of first-class roads and highways is also higher than the national average – 21.5% in 2021, compared to 18.5% in the country. The quality of the roads has been improving, yet remains relatively low. The share of road surfaces in good condition was 39% in 2021, compared to 42% countrywide.

Households' access to the internet improved in 2021, reaching 81.1% in the district, versus 83.5% in the country. The share of households with access to a gas supply is low – 1.1%, against 5.3% nationally.

Installed RES capacities are 0.9 kW/person, against 0.6 kW/person in the country.

Local taxes

In 2022, the levels of the monitored local taxes in the municipalities on the district's territory again remained close to, though below the national average. The taxes on the immovable non-residential property for legal entities and motor vehicles were practically equal to the respective national averages. Lower than average were the tax rates on retail trade (12.75 BGN/sq. m, versus 12.99 BGN/sq. m in the country), on non-gratuitous acquisition of property (2.61%, against 2.75% nationally) and on taxi transportation (305 BGN, compared to 478 BGN countrywide). Within the district, the lowest local taxes are levied by the municipalities of Simeonovgrad and Ivaylovgrad, and the highest – by those of Madzharovo and Haskovo city.

Administration

In recent years, in line with the nationwide trend, cadastral map coverage in Haskovo district went up considerably and in 2021 it included 97.2% of the territory, compared to 97.4% in the country.

In 2022, 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 considerably and exceeded the respective national averages. A decline was registered in the AIP Active transparency rating of the local administrations, which nevertheless remained above the national average – 72.2% in the district, versus 70.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2021, both the natural population growth and the net migration rate in Haskovo district registered a decrease. The natural population growth rate dropped to -15.5‰, compared to -13.2‰ nationally. The net migration rate went down but remained positive at 0.4‰.

The trend towards population ageing in the district is continuing. In 2021, the population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 160.6%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 37.5%, against 34.0% in the country.

The share of people living in cities is comparable to the country's average – 71.7%, versus 73.1% nationally. At the same time, population density is relatively low – 1,027 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,489 persons/sq. km nationally.

Education

The district performs poorly as regards the education indicators. The coverage of the education system has improved and has come closer to the national average. In 2021, the net enrolment in 5th–7th grade was 85.6%, against 85.9% nationally. The number of teachers is increasing and has almost reached the country's average. However, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education remain high. Students' results again remained low in 2022. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 29.4 points, versus 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.62, compared to 3.97 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was the highest in the country – 28.0%, against 17.0% 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 GP per 1,932 people, compared to 1,734 people per doctor nationally. The number of beds in the district's general hospitals remains extremely low, with 3.64 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 beds per 1,000 people in the country.

Population morbidity and infant mortality in the district are relatively high. The number of hospitalizations is 156.7 people per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 222.6 per 1,000 persons, which suggests that the population may be seeking health care outside the district given the limited number of doctors and hospital beds. The infant mortality rate has gone down, reaching 4.8‰, compared to the national average of 5.6‰.

The number of people with health insurance increased slightly in 2021 and remains above the national average – 89.6% in the district, against 88.7% in the country.

Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in the district increased slightly in 2021, reaching an average of 8.8 a month per one local judge, but they remained below the national average of 9.0 cases per judge. At the same time, the relative share of criminal cases closed within 3 months remained 88%, against 89% nationally, and pending cases decreased to 9.0%, against 11.8% 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 2021 amounted to 9.3 per 1,000 persons, compared to 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationally. The proportion of cleared crimes improved and reached 63.4%, against 51.7% nationally.

Environment

The high assessment of Haskovo district in the environment category is mainly due to the relatively low volumes of generated household waste. In 2020, the annual amount of generated waste was 313 kg/person, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person. 71.2% of all generated household waste was handed over for recycling and treatment, compared to 69.3% in the country.

There has been little change in the share of households with access to a public sewerage network, which in 2020 reached 72.3%, against 76.3% in the country. The share of households whose sewerage system is connected to a wastewater treatment plant was 53.2%, compared to 66.7% countrywide.

The amount of forest areas is close to the national average – 32.4% in the district, compared to 33.1% in the country, but degraded land is significantly more limited – 0.15% in the district, compared to 0.42% in the country in 2021.

Culture

Cultural life in Haskovo district has shown little intensity. After the sharp decline in 2020, in 2021 it intensified, although none of the values of the monitored indicators managed to return to their pre-pandemic level. Cinema visits reached 91 per 1,000 persons, against 351 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to the local theatres and museums numbered 55 per 1,000 persons, against 129 per 1,000 persons in the country, and 109 per 1,000 persons, against 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide respectively. The local libraries attracted 215 visits per 1,000 persons, against 449 per 1,000 persons in the country on average.

Key indicators for the district of Haskovo

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,083	9,100	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,566	11,642	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	30.9	38.9	32.9	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	71.1	67.6	67.5	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	70.9	67.4	66.3	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	(0.4)	(0.3)	(1.6)	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	24.0	25.8	19.9	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	20.2	17.8	18.5	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	12,867	11,793	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,130	1,230	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	815	794	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	68.1	78.6	81.1	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	36.8	36.0	38.9	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	20.7	20.7	20.9	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	67.3	73.7	72.2	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-8.7	-12.3	-15.5	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-3.8	4.7	0.4	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.07	4.00	3.62	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	32.0	32.4	29.4	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	82.6	84.9	85.6	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	85	90	96	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	90.1	89.2	89.6	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,847	1,871	1,932	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	10.1	10.0	9.3	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	8.0	7.8	8.8	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	72.6	72.3	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	314	313	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	71.1	71.2	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	98	13	91	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	251	73	109	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Kardzhali district

- ▶ Population (2021)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

161,024
3,209
468
40.2



Salaries and incomes in Kardzhali district have been rising fast, though their levels are still below the respective national averages. Economic activity and employment rates have registered record growth, though their rates are still less favourable than the average ones in the country. Investment and business activity again remained relatively low in 2020. The density of the rail network is also relatively limited. The level of local taxes in the municipalities of Kardzhali region remains relatively low. The local authorities' self-assessment of the development of e-government and of the

provision of one-stop-shop services has gone up. The rate of natural population growth is relatively high. In 2022, the performance of the students in the district remained poor. Healthcare suffers from a chronic shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The number of registered crimes against the person and property is among the lowest in the country, and their detection is among the highest. The amount of household waste generated in the district is low, but also, a relatively small proportion of municipal waste is handed over for treatment and recycling. Cultural life in the district is among the least active in the country.

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 ■■■■

Over the past few years, GDP per capita in Kardzhali district has registered a steady increase. In 2020 it again registered a record growth (14.3% against 0.2% in the country) and reached 11,000 BGN/person, against the national average of 17,300 BGN/person. Salaries and incomes have also grown considerably, though their levels are still below average. The average gross salary of employed people is 12,700 BGN/person, against the national average of 16,700 BGN/person.

These processes have been accompanied by decreasing, though still high poverty levels in the district. The proportion of people living in material deprivation is 20.5%, compared to 19.4% in the country, while those living below the poverty line make up 25.5%, versus the national average of 22.19%.

Labor market ■■■■

Economic activity and employment rates in Kardzhali district registered record growth in 2021 (of 6 p.p.), though their rates still remain lower than the average ones in the country. The rate of economic activity reached 69.0%, against 72.0% nationally, and that of employment – 67.9% (compared to 68.1% in the country). At the same time, the unemployment rate remained relatively low.

The educational structure of the workforce has also improved considerably, but it continues to be less favorable than the national average. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education has decreased to 26.6%, compared to 16.6% in the country, and that of employed people with a university degree has gone up to reach 24.26%, versus 29.6% nationally.

The aging of the population affects the labor market as well. Kardzhali is one of the two districts (along with Smolyan) in which the demographic replacement rate is lower than 50%. In 2021, the ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 was 49.0%, compared to 69.4% 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 2020, investment and business activity in Kardzhali again remained relatively slack and placed the district at the bottom of the scale, with only Sliven district showing worse results. Kardzhali was also the district with the lowest number of nonfinancial enterprises – 32 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 60 per 1,000 persons. In addition, in 2020 the district registered an outflow of foreign and domestic investment. FTA expenditures fell drastically to 1,400 BGN/person, compared to 3,300 BGN/person in the country. FDA also suffered a sharp decrease to 1,600 BGN/person, against 3,900 BGN/person nationally.

At the same time, production value in Kardzhali district again recorded high growth, though it remained considerably below the country's average relative to the population – 11,200 BGN/person, against 27,200 BGN/person as the national average.

Utilization of EU funding has increased but still remains among the lowest, lagging behind the country's average. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,727 BGN/person. Within the district, the municipalities with the highest rate of utilization were Kardzhali and Momchilgrad.

Infrastructure ■■■■

In 2021, the density of the railroad network in Kardzhali district again remained among the lowest in the country. The road network density was higher than the national average but the share of highways and first-class roads was relatively low – 11.2%, against 18.5% in the country. There was, however, an increase in the share of road surfaces in good condition, and it came close to the national average – 41% in the district, compared to 42% across the country.

The share of households with internet access in the district continued to rise in 2021 and even exceeded the national average. The share of households connected to a gas supply remains among the lowest in the country. The installed RES capacities are relatively large.

Local taxes ■■■■

The municipalities in Kardzhali district again kept local tax rates low in 2022. The difference is especially large as regards the retail trade tax and the tax rate on immovable non-residential property for legal entities. The tax rates on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and transport vehicles are higher than average. Within the district, the local tax rates are lowest in the municipality of Chernoochene, and highest in the municipality of Ardino.

Administration ■■■

The cadastral tax coverage in Kardzhali district is similar to the national average, reaching 98%.

In 2022, 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 trend as regards the Active transparency rating of the local administration is similar – it reached 66.0%, compared to the national average of 70.2%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2021, the natural population growth rate in Kardzhali district continued to decrease considerably, though at -11.1% it was again higher than the national average of -13.2% . The district continued to attract new residents and the net migration rate of 12.6% was the highest in the country.

Age dependency ratios have continued to rise but come close to the national average. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 155.7% , compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it is 34.1% , against 34.0% in the country.

Kardzhali remains the district with the smallest urban populations – 40.2% , versus the national average of 73.1% . Nevertheless, the average density of the population living in the urban settlements is relatively high – $1,981$ persons/sq. km, against $1,489$ persons/sq. km on average nationwide.

Education

Enrolment in 5th–7th grade in Kardzhali district has continued to decrease and in 2021 it was again among the lowest in the country – 76.0% , against the national average of 85.9% . At the same time, the proportions of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education are still comparatively small. The number of primary and secondary school teachers continues to be high – 109 per $1,000$ students, versus the national average of 97 per $1,000$ students.

However, in 2022 the educational results of the students from the district were once again low. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 30.5 points, compared to 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was “Good” 3.73 , compared to 3.97 nationally. The share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) again remained among the highest ones in the country – 25.9% , compared to the national average of 17% .

Higher education is poorly represented in the district, with 4 university students per $1,000$ persons, compared to 32 per $1,000$ persons countrywide.

Healthcare

In 2021, the health insurance system in Kardzhali district again covered practically the whole of its population. At the same time, it suffers from a chronic shortage of doctors and hospital beds. Kardzhali is the district with the smallest number of both GPs and specialist physicians relative to the population. There is one GP per $3,097$ persons, whereas nationally it is one GP per $1,734$ persons on average.

The number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals remains extremely low and in the past few years has even been falling, reaching 3.45 beds per $1,000$ persons, compared to the national average of 5.62 beds per $1,000$ persons.

Hospitalization figures in Kardzhali district are relatively low – 120.9 per $1,000$ persons, compared to the national average of 222.6 , which suggests that residents seek medical health outside the district.

Public order and security

In 2021, Kardzhali’s performance in the field of justice and security was characterized by a reduction in the workloads of the local criminal judges and a lower speed of delivery of justice. There were on average 6.4 cases a month per one judge, compared to 9.8 cases per judge nationally. 86% of criminal cases were closed within 3 months, against the national average of 89% .

The number of registered crimes against the person and property in Kardzhali district is among the lowest in the whole country and half the national average – 4.7 crimes per $1,000$ persons, versus 9.8 per $1,000$ persons nationwide. The detection rate is higher, reaching – 66.5% , versus the national figure of 51.7% .

Environment

In 2020, the amount of household waste in the district was among the lowest in the country – 250 kg/person, compared to 409 kg/person nationally. At the same time, however, a relatively small portion of this waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 7.3% , against 69.3% in the country.

The extremely small share of the population living in urban settlements in the districts accounts for the low share of households connected to a public sewerage system – 44.3% , against 76.3% in the country. Connectivity with wastewater treatment plants is similarly low – 36.7% , compared to the national average of 66.7% .

Kardzhali is among the districts with the largest forest areas in the country – 54.9% in 2021, compared to 33.1% in the country. The degraded land is relatively limited – 0.14% , compared to 0.42% in the country.

Culture

Cultural life in Kardzhali district retained its low intensity in 2021. The pandemic and the restrictions on visits to cultural events added their own negative impact. Visits to the various cultural events increased somewhat in 2021, but the rise in numbers was too small to compensate for the drastic fall of the year before. Visits to local cinemas fell to 27 per $1,000$ persons, against the average of 351 per $1,000$ persons in the country. Visits to museums reached 49 per $1,000$ persons, against the national average of 426 per $1,000$ persons, and visits to theatres – 37 per $1,000$ persons, against 129 per $1,000$ persons nationally. Visits to libraries relative to the population were half those in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Kardzhali

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,656	11,034	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,356	12,705	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	35.2	30.8	25.5	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	65.1	62.8	69.0	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	63.7	61.9	67.9	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	(2.0)	(1.4)	(1.7)	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	33.7	34.3	26.6	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	18.6	17.6	24.2	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	10,206	11,191	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	3,861	1,352	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	2,013	1,608	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	67.5	77.3	85.6	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	33.3	35.3	40.9	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	20.2	20.2	20.2	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	54.1	59.4	66.0	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-3.6	-7.1	-11.1	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	37.2	23.2	12.6	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.92	3.98	3.73	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	31.9	31.7	30.5	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	80.3	77.2	76.0	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	104	104	109	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	104.7	100.0	100.0	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	2,985	3,067	3,097	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	5.1	5.0	4.7	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	7.5	7.5	6.4	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	44.8	44.3	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	248	250	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	7.3	7.3	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	90	18	27	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	100	39	49	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Kyustendil district

- ▶ Population (2021)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

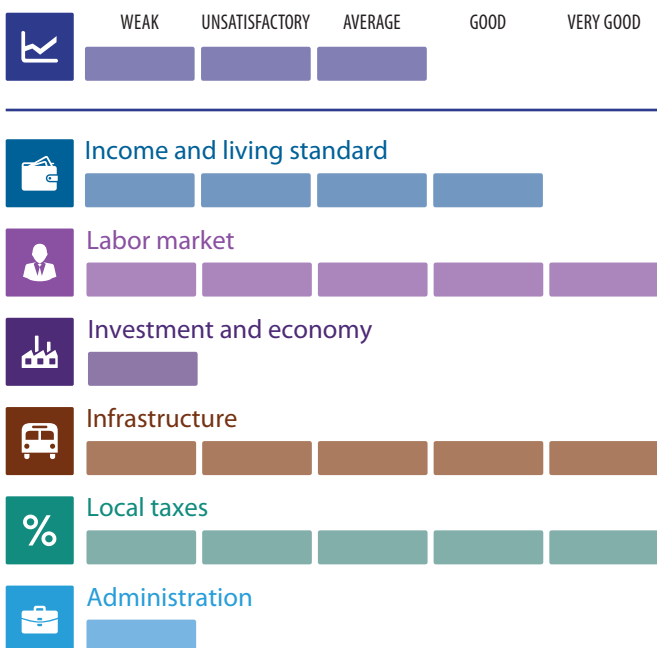
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69.7



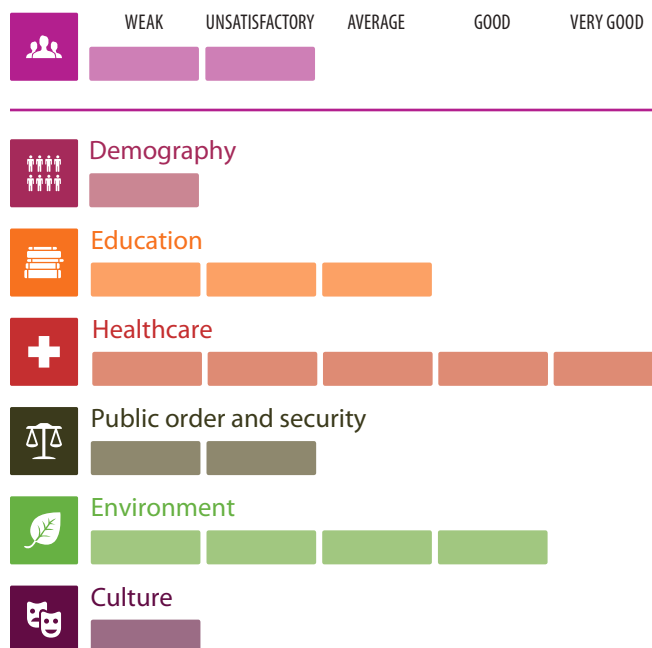
GDP per capita, salaries, and incomes in Kyustendil district have been growing but their levels remain relatively low. Economic activity and employment rates have exceeded the average ones in the country for the first time in the past few years. Investment in Kyustendil district is among the lowest in the country. The density of the road and railway networks in the district remains higher than the national average. The average rate of local taxes in the district's municipalities is relatively low. Kyustendil is the district with the worst performance in the indicators assessing the work of the local administration.

Kyustendil is among the districts with the fastest ageing populations. Students' results in 2022 again remained unsatisfactory. Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest number of GPs, and the lowest infant mortality rate. Its performance in the field of justice is among the poorest in the country. The workload of the local criminal judges is the highest in the country, but the speed of delivery of justice is relatively high. The amounts of generated household waste are low. At the same time, however, a relatively small portion of this waste is handed over for treatment and recycling. Cultural life remains 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 2020 again remained lower than in the country – 9,600 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 17,300 BGN. Salaries and incomes have also gone up, but they remain below the national averages. The annual gross salary of employed people reached 11,500 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 16,700 BGN. The rise in incomes, on the other hand, has an immediate effect on the level of poverty in the district. The share of the population living with material deprivation has decreased to 9.3% (versus 19.4% in the country), and that of the population living below the national poverty line – to 17.9% (versus 22.1% in the country).

Labor market

The labor market in the district showed a number of positive trends in 2021. Economic activity and employment rates grew significantly and for the first time in the past few years exceeded the national averages. The rate of economic activity increased to 74.5%, against 72.0% in the country, and that of employment reached 72.5%, versus 68.1% in the country. The unemployment rate, on the other hand, remained low.

Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest share of the workforce with secondary education – 69.7%, compared to 53.8% in the country, which is in line with the district's industrial profile. The proportion of people aged 25–64 with a university degree is 23.9%, versus 29.6% nationally, while the share of those with primary or lower education is the second lowest in the country, after that in the capital – 6.4%, against 16.6% nationally.

The labor market in the district continues to face the challenge of population ageing. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 is 53.9%, compared to 69.4% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labour market in the next few years, there will be only 54 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and economy

Investment activity in Kyustendil district again remained among the lowest in the country for 2020. The number of nonfinancial enterprises was 52 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 60 per 1,000 persons. In addition, in 2020 the district registered an outflow of foreign and domestic investment and a shrinkage of production volumes. FTA acquisition expenditures per person dropped to 807 BGN/person, versus the national figure of 3,300 BGN/person. For its part, FDI fell to 350 EUR/person, compared to the national average

of 3,900 EUR/person. Production value in Kyustendil district shrank to only 12,500 BGN/person, against 27,200 BGN/person as the national average.

Utilization of European funds is also lagging behind, though its annual rate of increase is among the highest in the country. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,492 BGN/person. Within the district, the municipality with the highest amount of utilized EU funding was Rila.

Infrastructure

The density of the road and railway networks in the district again remained higher than the national averages for 2021. 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 – 55% of, compared to the average of 42% nationwide.

Households' internet access in the district rose sharply and in 2021 it was 77.3%, compared to the national average of 83.5%. Higher than average was the share of households connected to a gas supply – 7.5%, against 5.3% in the country. The installed RES capacities were 0.396 KW/person, compared to the national average of 0.615 KW/person.

Local taxes

In 2022, the average level of the local taxes in the municipalities of Kyustendil district has again remained among the lowest in the country. The biggest margin is 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 is 9.83 BGN/sq. m, versus 12.99 BGN/sq. m in the country. The tax rate for taxi transportation is also considerably lower than the national average.

Within the district, the municipality with the lowest rates is that of Nevestino, and those with the highest are the municipalities of Rila and Boboshevo.

Administration

Kyustendil is the district with the worst performance in the indicators assessing the work of the local administration. The self-assessments of the local administrations for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services are among the lowest in the country and in 2022 they even dropped slightly.

In 2022, the AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has also dropped and now is the lowest one in the country – 50%, compared to the national average of 70.2%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Demographic development in Kyustendil district is among the weakest in the country. The rate of natural population growth has continued its rapid decrease and in 2021 it reached -22.0% (against -13.2% in the country). Like almost all districts, in 2020 Kyustendil managed to attract settlers and the mechanical growth rate was positive for the first time in at least two decades. However, this trend did not prove to be permanent and in 2021 it was again negative, with a value of -5.7% .

Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest rate of population ageing, preceded only by Vidin, Gabrovo, and Smolyan 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 229.1%, compared to 149.3% in the country on average, and that of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 was 46.2%, versus the national average of 34.0%.

The urban population is 69.7%, which is close to, but below the national average of 73.1%, but population density is relatively low – 1,078 persons/sq. km, against 1,489 persons/sq. km in the country on average.

Education

In 2021, the rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade went up and at 92.9%, it again remained higher than the national average of 85.9%. The number of primary and secondary school teachers relative to student numbers has gone up and remains close to but still below the national average.

The performance of the students in Kyustendil district in 2022 again remained unsatisfactory. Their average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 28.2 points, compared to 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was “Good” 3.76, compared to the average of 3.97 nationally. The number of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was 21.7%, versus 17.0% as the national average.

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

Healthcare

The performance of Kyustendil district in the field of healthcare is among the best in the country. The share of people with health insurance in the district is traditionally relatively high – in 2021 it was 96.8%, compared to 88.7% in the country. The number of beds in the local general hospitals also remained higher, albeit slightly, than the national average – 5.71 beds per 1,000 people, against 5.62 per 1,000 people in the country. Kyustendil is among the districts with the highest relative number of GPs, with one GP per 1,493 people, versus one GP per 1,734 in the country, but there is a relative shortage of specialist physicians.

The infant mortality rate has been declining and in 2021 it was the lowest in the country – 1.3‰, against 5.6‰ as the national average. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals also remains below average – 183.9 per 1,000 people, compared to 222.6 per 1,000 people in the country.

Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in Kyustendil district are among the heaviest in the country, with 12.3 cases a month per judge on average, compared to 9.0 cases nationally in 2021. Nevertheless, the speed of delivery of justice is relatively high. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 94%, against the national average of 89%, and the share of pending cases is 8.2%, versus 11.8% countrywide.

Both the crime rate and the detection rate in the district are close to the national average. In 2021, the registered crimes against the person and property were 9.6 per 1,000 persons, versus 9.8 per 1,000 persons on average nationwide. The detection rate in the district reached 48.8%, versus the national figure of 51.7%.

Environment

The amount of household waste in Kyustendil district is among the lowest in the country – 245 kg/person per annum, compared to the average of 409 kg/person in the country for 2020. At the same time, the share handed over for treatment and recycling is low – 31.1%, versus the national average of 69.3%.

Close to, though slightly below the national average, is the proportion of the population with access to a public sewerage network – 72.3%, versus the national average of 76.3%, and of that with a sewerage system connected to a wastewater treatment plant – 62.1%, versus 66.7% countrywide.

The share of forest areas is relatively high – 42.0% against 33.1% in the country, but the share of degraded land is also above the national average – 0.67%, against 0.42% for the country in 2021.

Culture

In 2021, cultural life in Kyustendil district again retained its low intensity. The pandemic and the restrictions on cultural events in the country in 2020 had an even worse effect in the district, while the recovery in 2021 could not compensate for the sharp drop of the previous year. The relative number of cinema visits reached 48 per 1,000 persons, against 129 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Museums attracted more interest and visits to them remained above the national average; however, their number remained half that of pre-pandemic times. In 2021, their relative number was 521 per 1,000 persons, versus the national average of 426 per 1,000 persons. Visits to libraries also increased, though remaining only half the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Kyustendil

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,517	9,616	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,576	11,519	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	32.9	21.8	17.9	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	69.4	69.2	74.5	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	67.6	66.0	72.5	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	(2.6)	(4.6)	(2.8)	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	5.6	7.1	6.4	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	21.5	24.0	23.9	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	12,831	12,473	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,070	807	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	372	350	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	62.5	78.6	77.3	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	54.6	54.0	55.3	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	20.6	20.4	20.1	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	56.9	61.9	50.0	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-13.2	-17.2	-22.0	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-4.8	14.7	-5.7	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.08	4.04	3.76	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	30.0	31.4	28.2	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	89.8	88.6	92.9	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	88	91	96	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	97.0	95.6	96.8	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,426	1,478	1,493	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	11.7	9.6	9.6	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	11.0	11.8	12.3	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	72.7	72.3	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	228	245	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	33.7	31.1	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	273	43	48	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	1,094	312	521	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Lovech district

- ▶ Population (2021)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

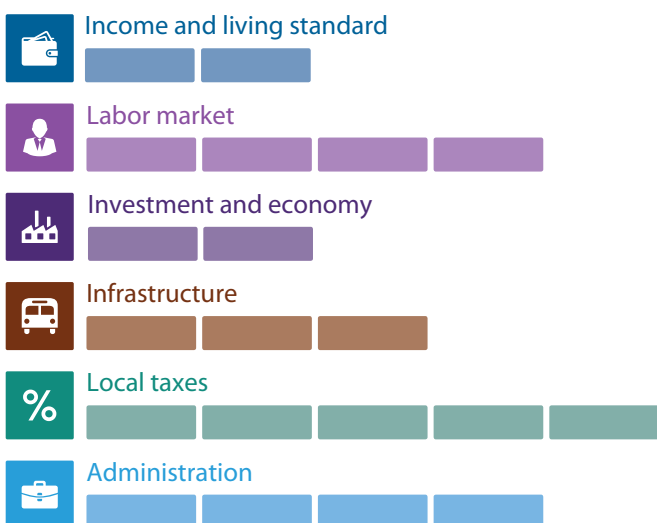
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61.8



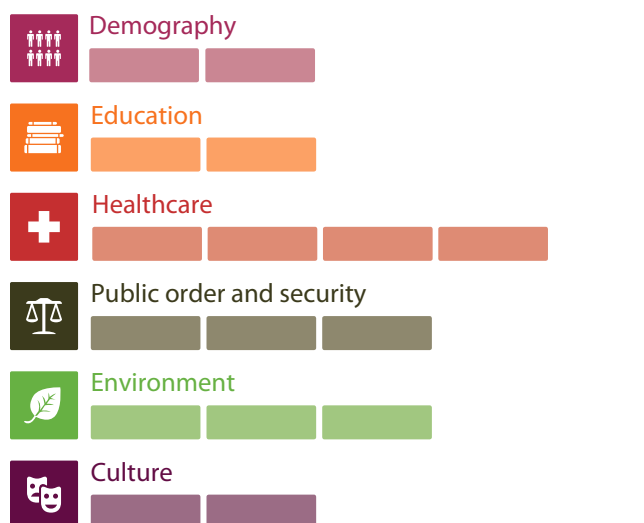
GDP per capita, incomes, and salaries in Lovech district have been rising but still remain relatively low. Poverty, however, has decreased. Unemployment is close to the national average but economic activity and employment rates are low. The volume of production in the district has shrunk. Road surface quality in Lovech district is comparable to the country's average. The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of the district is relatively low. The local administrations' self-assessment ratings again show that the district is lagging considerably behind as regards the development of e-government.

Due to the strongly negative natural population growth rate, Lovech is among the districts with quickly ageing populations. Students' results are relatively low. The number of GPs has been declining in recent years, but remains higher than the national average. The availability of beds in the local general hospitals again remains relatively low. 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 2020, GDP per capita in Lovech district registered considerable growth, yet remained relatively low – 10,900 BGN, against the average of 17,300 BGN in the country. Salaries and incomes also registered an increase but they still remain relatively limited. The average gross salary of employed people reached 12,600 BGN per annum, compared to 16,700 BGN on average nationwide.

In line with these trends, poverty rates in the district are on the decrease. The share of the population living below the poverty line, however, remains high – 28.1%, versus 22.1% in the country for 2021.

Labor market

Economic activity and employment rates in Lovech district have been rising but in 2021 they again remained relatively low. The rate of economic activity reached 69.0%, compared to 72.0% in the country, and employment rates stood at 65.0%, versus 68.1% nationally. At the same time, unemployment rates continued to be close to the national average.

A relatively high share of the population aged 25–64 in the district has secondary education – 67.3%, compared to 53.8% in the country, while the shares of both university graduates and those with primary or lower education are smaller than the respective national averages – 17.5%, against 29.6% in the country, and 15.2%, against 16.6% in the country respectively.

The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 was 64.3% in 2021, compared to 69.4% 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

The relative number of enterprises in the district is 45 per 1,000 persons, versus the national average of 60 per 1,000 persons. A decrease in foreign and domestic flows was also registered in 2020, as well as a shrink in production value. FTA expenditures dropped to 1,200 BGN/person, against 3,300 BGN/person, and FDI in the district similarly decreased to 1,100 EUR/person, against 3,900 EUR/person on a national level. Production value shrank to 14,300 BGN/person, while the national average was 27,200 BGN/person.

Utilization of EU funds is relatively high. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs reached 2,577 BGN/person. Within the district, the

highest amounts were utilized by the municipalities of Troyan and Yablanitsa – over 3,000 BGN/person.

Infrastructure

The railroad network density in Lovech district in 2021 again remained close to the country's average. Although the road network density is slightly higher than the national average, the share of highways and first-class roads remains relatively small – 16.2%, versus 18.5% in the country. The share of road surfaces in good condition is comparable to the national average – 40%, versus 42% in the country.

The share of households with internet access continued to rise in 2021, but remained relatively low – 78.1%, compared to the national average of 83.5%. The share of households connected to a gas supply is 3.9%, still below the national average (5.3% in 2020). The installed RES capacities relative to the population are twice as low as the national average.

Local taxes

The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of Lovech district again remained relatively low in 2022. An exception was the tax rate on non-residential immovable property of legal entities. In Lovech district it was 2.22‰ on average, compared to 2.06‰ in the country. Considerably lower than the national averages were the tax rates on motor vehicles – 1.09 BGN/kW, versus 1.54 BGN/kW in the country, and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property – 2.34%, compared to 2.75% nationally.

Within the district, the lowest local taxes are levied by the municipalities of Ugarchin and Letnitsa, and the highest – by those of Yablanitsa and Apriltsi.

Administration

Cadastral map coverage in Lovech district has traditionally been higher than in the country on average and in 2021 it reached 98.8%, against 97.4% nationally.

The local administrations' self-assessment ratings for 2022 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 further in 2022, but remained above the national average – 74.3% in the district, against 70.2% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth rate again came down in 2021 to reach -19.2‰ and remained considerably lower than the national average of -13.2‰. Lovech has also failed to attract new residents and the net migration rate is negative at -3.2‰.

These developments further deepen the trend toward population ageing in the district. This is clearly visible in the age dependency rates for 2021. The ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 199.68%, compared to 149.36 in the country on average, and to those aged 15–64 – 45.5%, versus the national average of 34.0%.

The share of the district's population living in urban settlements is relatively low – 61.8%, compared to 73.1% in the country, and the population density of urbanized areas is considerably lower – 818 persons/sq. km, while nationally it is 1,486 persons/sq. km.

Education

The district's performance in the education category is unsatisfactory. The enrolment ratio in 5th–7th grade registered a slight increase to 87.1% in 2021 and remained higher than the national average (85.9%). The percentage of repeaters has risen and continues to be considerably higher than the national average. The relative number of teachers in primary and secondary education has gone up considerably and has reached 113 per 1,000 students, versus 97 per 1,000 students in the country.

Students' results in the district are low. The average score in the 2022 external assessment in mathematics after 7th grade was 26.1 points, versus 35.3 points in the country on average. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.82, compared to 3.97 in the country, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) rose to 22.4%, against the national average of 17%.

The number of university students in Lovech district again remained extremely low in 2020, with only the Technical College, which is a branch of Gabrovo Technical University, on its territory.

Healthcare

Healthcare in Lovech district is at a relatively high level. The number of GPs has decreased over the past few years but in 2021 it again remained higher than the national average. Specialist physicians are also well represented. The share of people with health insurance remains above the national average – 90.6%, against 88.7% in the country.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals has gone up but remains relatively low – 4.27 beds per 1,000 persons in the district, versus 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons in the country.

The number of hospitalizations in the district – 137.8 per 1,000 persons – is below the national average of 222.6 per 1,000

persons, and it is highly possible that some of the residents choose to seek medical care in the hospitals in Pleven district.

Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in 2021 were above the national average but the speed of delivery of justice in Lovech district again remained considerably higher. One local judge heard an average of 9.9 cases a month, versus 9.0 cases per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 95%, compared to the average of 89% nationwide.

The relative number of registered crimes against the person and property in Lovech district went up to 11.1 per 1,000 persons and remained above the national average of 9.8 per 1,000 persons. However, the detection rate was higher than the national average – 59.5%, against 51.7% in the country.

Environment

The share of waste generated by the households in Lovech district is relatively low – 325 kg/person per annum, compared to 409 kg/person, but the share of this waste handed over for treatment and recycling remains extremely limited – 13%, compared to the national average of 69.3% for 2020.

The share of the population with access to public sewerage networks has continued to lag behind the national average and in 2020 it reached 68.8%, compared to 76.3% country-wide. The share of sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants is 56.4%, against 66.7% in the country.

The share of forest areas is close to the national average – 35.8%, compared to 33.1% countrywide, and that of degraded land is relatively limited at 0.16%, versus 0.42% nationally in 2021.

Culture

Cultural life in Lovech district has shown little intensity. Similar to the whole country, in 2020 the district suffered the negative impact of the pandemic and the restrictions on cultural events. In 2021 it revived somewhat, compared to 2020; however, this was insufficient to make up for the shrinking of the year before. Cinema visits went up to 145 per 1,000 persons, with 351 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Library visits rose slightly, reaching 143 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 449 per 1,000 persons.

The number of museum visits registered a greater increase and remains above the country average – 738 per 1,000 persons, compared to 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide. From among the monitored indicators, only the number of theatre visits has registered a decrease and in 2021 it was a bare 30 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 129 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Lovech

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,337	10,865	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,365	12,594	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	25.3	28.9	28.1	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	71.8	67.3	69.0	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	67.0	64.1	65.0	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	6.5	(4.8)	(5.7)	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	13.5	14.9	15.2	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	19.1	20.5	17.5	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	14,809	14,312	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,384	1,151	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,201	1,136	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	66.8	77.2	78.1	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	41.0	40.9	40.1	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	18.3	18.3	18.3	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	77.9	76.9	74.3	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-13.1	-14.5	-19.2	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-5.8	14.0	-3.2	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.19	4.13	3.82	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.8	29.5	26.1	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	88.6	86.7	87.1	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	89	97	113	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	92.0	90.4	90.6	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,476	1,531	1,556	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	11.2	10.5	11.1	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	9.9	8.6	9.9	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	69.3	68.8	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	328	325	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	13.0	13.0	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	183	43	145	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	1,031	571	738	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Montana District

▶ Population (2021)	122,179
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,636
▶ Number of settlements	130
▶ Share of urban population (%)	64.0



Montana is one of the districts with relatively low incomes and quality of life. Trends in the labor market are unfavorable. The low education of the workforce remains a challenge. Investment activity in the district is relatively low. The density of the road and rail networks remains lower than the national average. The average level of local taxes in the municipalities of the district is the second lowest in the country. The local administrations' self-assessments on the development of e-government and the provision of administrative one-stop-shop services are significantly below the national average.

The continuing tendency towards population ageing in the whole of Bulgaria remains particularly conspicuous in Montana district. Students' results are relatively low. The number of beds in local general hospitals has been increasing and remains significantly higher than the national average. The district has recorded the highest number of registered crimes against the person and property in the country over the last two years. The amount of household waste in the district is low, and its management is good. Cultural life in the Montana region is among the least intense in the country.

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 ■■■

Montana is among Bulgaria's districts with relatively low incomes and quality of life. GDP per capita in the district has been increasing but its value remains relatively low – 10,000 BGN, compared to 17,300 BGN in the country in 2020. Salaries and incomes have also increased but remain relatively low. The average gross annual salary of employed people has reached 12,500 BGN, against 16,700 BGN nationally.

These indicators are the main prerequisite for the high poverty levels in the district. Montana is one of the districts (alongside Vidin) with the highest share of the population living below the poverty line – 42.0%, compared to 22.1% nationally, although this is the lowest level of this indicator for the last 4 years. The share of the population living with material deprivation has been decreasing and in 2020 it was 13.5%, versus 19.4% in the country.

Labor market ■■

The unfavourable trends in the local labor market again rank Montana second lowest in the country in this category for 2021, followed only by Targovishte district. Economic activity in the district again fell drastically – by over 5 p.p., after its sharp rise in the year before, and reached 63.4%, compared to 72.0% nationwide. At the same time, employment rates went up and unemployment rates fell, but both remain significantly less favorable than the national averages. The employment rate in the district is 52.5%, (compared to 68.1% in the country). The unemployment rate decreased significantly – by 7.0 p.p., which is the largest drop in the country, but remains relatively high – 17.1% compared to 5.3% in the country.

A major challenge that still faces the labor market in the district is the low educational status of the workforce. The share of people aged 25–64 with a university degree is among the lowest in the country – 14.0%, against 29.6% nationally. The share of the workforce with primary or lower education has shrunk but again remains high –24.1%, whereas on a national scale the figure is 16.6%.

The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 has increased slightly to 66.3%, compared to 69.4% nationally. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 66 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and economy ■■■

Investment activity in Montana district again remained comparatively slack in 2020. The relative number of enterprises was among the lowest in the country – 36 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 60 per 1,000 persons. FTA acquisition expenditures registered a slight increase but also remained among the country's lowest – 1,300 BGN/person, versus 3,300 BGN/person nationally. Also, the district

was among those with the lowest rates of FDI per capita, with 288 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 3,900 EUR/person.

Production value in the district rose considerably to 15,700 BGN/person in 2020, against the national average of 27,200 BGN/person.

Utilization of EU funding in Montana district is relatively high. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs reached 2,692 BGN/person. Within the district, the top place in the utilization of EU funds is occupied by the municipality of Montana city – 4,231 BGN/person.

Infrastructure ■■■

Montana district's performance in this category is among the worst in the country. The density of the road and railroad networks remains below the national average. The share of highways and first-class roads is half that in the country – 9.1% in 2019, against 18.5% nationally. This can also explain the relatively poor condition of the roads – in 2021, only 27% of the road surface was in good condition, compared to 42% in the country.

Internet access in the district is increasing but remains relatively low – it is available to 70.2% of households, compared to 83.5% in the country. The share of households with access to a gas supply has increased to 4.5%, compared to 5.3% in the country. Installed RES capacities remain relatively limited.

Local taxes ■■■■■■

The average level of municipal taxes in Montana for 2022 was again the second lowest in the country, after that in Vidin district. The average tax rates on motor vehicles and retail trade were the second lowest in the country, and the tax on non-residential real estate of legal entities – the third lowest. Within the district, Medkovets is the municipality levying the lowest local taxes, and the municipalities of Chiprovtsi and Valchedram – the highest.

Administration ■■■

In 2022, the local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services fell considerably below the respective national averages. The AIP transparency rating of the local administration was also lower, albeit slightly, than the country's average – 69.5%, against 70.2% in the country.

The cadastral map coverage of the district's territory is close to the national average – 97.1% in the district, compared to 97.4% in the country in 2021.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■■

The continuing tendency towards population ageing is particularly conspicuous in Montana district. The natural population growth rate again registered a decline in 2021 and at -23.2‰ (versus -13.2‰ nationally) was the second worst in the country after that in Vidin district. The district fails to attract people and the net migration figure is also negative at -2.9‰.

The trend towards population ageing is also visible in the district's age dependency ratios although in 2021 they registered a decrease. The ratio of the population aged over 65 to that aged 0-14 was 190.9%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to that aged 15-64 it was 43.7%, compared to 34.0% in the country.

A relatively low share of the population of Montana district lives in urban settlements - 64.0%, versus the national average of 73.1%. Population density in urban settlements is relatively low.

Education ■■■

In the past few years, the rate of enrolment in 5th-7th grade has been lagging behind the country's average. In 2021 it was 81.8%, against 85.9% in the country. The percentages of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education are higher than the national averages. The number of primary and secondary school teachers relative to the total student population has gone up to 102 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 98 per 1,000 students nationally.

The average results of the students from Montana district were again relatively low in 2022. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 27.8 p., which ranked it far behind the national average of 35.3 p. The average result in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language was "Good" 3.78, compared to 3.97 nationally. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades was close to the national average - 17.2% in the district, versus 17.0% nationally.

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

Healthcare ■■■■

Access to doctors in Montana district remained relatively good in 2021. The proportion of the population cared for by GPs is 1,547 persons to one GP, compared to 1,734 persons to one 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 7.15 beds per 1,000 persons, versus the national average of 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons.

Infant mortality in the district continues to be relatively high. The hospitalization figures are also much higher than the national average - 241.8 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Public order and security ■■

Montana again remains among the regions with the weakest performance in the sphere of security and justice for 2021. The main reason for this is that the district has recorded the highest number of registered crimes against the person and property in the last two years. The number of crimes in 2021 was 13.6 per 1,000 persons, compared to 9.8 per 1,000 persons in the country. Despite this, the share of detected crimes is higher than the national average - 57.2%, compared to 51.7% in the country.

The indicators for the justice system also assign the district a low ranking. Although the workloads of criminal judges are among the lowest in the country, the delivery of justice is relatively slow. One local judge hears an average of 6.2 criminal cases per month, compared to 9.0 cases per judge per month in the country, and the share of cases completed within 3 months is 86%, versus 89% nationally. The share of pending cases has reached 15.6%, against 11.8% in the country.

Environment ■■■■■

The performance of Montana district as regards the state of the environment is good. This is mainly due to the smaller amount of household waste and its management. In 2020, the average amount of household waste generated annually was 286 kg/person, against the average of 409 kg/person nationwide. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling was 87.36%, compared to 69.3% as the national average.

The relatively low urban population accounts for the relatively low share of households living in settlements with public sewerage networks - in 2020 it constituted 61.0%, compared to 76.3% in the country. Access to public sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants was also low - available to 35.2% of the households, compared to 66.7% in the country.

The share of forest areas is relatively low - 23.2%, against 33.1% in the country, but the share of the land that is deranged is also relatively low - 0.12%, against 0.42% for the country in 2021.

Culture ■■

In 2021, cultural life in Montana was once again among the least intense in the country. It revived somewhat but not sufficiently to make up for the huge shrinking of the year before, caused by the onset of the pandemic and the ensuing restrictions on public events. Cinema visits went up to 123 per 1,000 persons, with 351 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The local theatres and museums managed to attract 49 persons per 1,000 population and 79 persons per 1,000 population respectively, compared to the national averages of 129 persons per 1,000 population for theatre visits, and 426 per 1,000 people for museum visits in 2021. 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

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,572	10,027	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,165	12,487	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	47.4	46.3	42.0	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	60.5	68.7	63.4	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	48.2	52.1	52.5	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	20.4	24.1	17.1	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	30.3	28.2	24.1	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	10.0	11.3	14.0	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	14,982	15,717	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,201	1,267	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	280	288	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	78.0	58.2	70.2	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	28.9	35.2	27.0	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	17.2	16.9	16.9	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	71.0	72.0	69.5	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-14.5	-18.2	-23.1	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-6.1	5.4	-2.9	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.15	3.94	3.78	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	27.8	30.1	27.8	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	81.1	83.0	81.8	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	94	98	102	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.8	87.7	88.5	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,443	1,502	1,547	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	13.1	13.8	13.6	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	7.7	5.6	6.2	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	61.3	61.0	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	287	286	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	87.6	87.6	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	97	96	123	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	155	67	79	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Pazardzhik district

▶ Population (2021)	247,360
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,457
▶ Number of settlements	118
▶ Share of urban population (%)	62.7



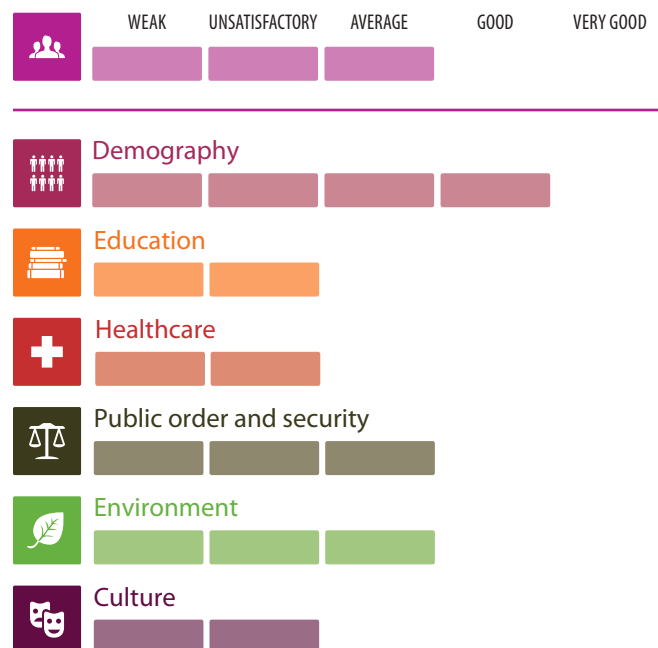
GDP, salaries, and incomes in Pazardzhik district have continued to grow, but remain relatively low. The employment rate is falling and the unemployment rate is rising. Investment and business activity in the area are not particularly brisk. However, production value continues to rise. Pazardzhik is the district with the highest rating for infrastructural development. The average amount of local taxes is relatively low. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administration has been decreasing and remains relatively low.

Age dependency ratios in the district continue to worsen but remain more favorable than the national average. Students' results again remain relatively low. Access to GPs in the district is better than the country average but there is an obvious shortage of specialist physicians. The number of crimes remains relatively small, and their detection rate is close to the country average. Connectivity to wastewater treatment plants lags significantly behind. Cultural life in the Pazardzhik region is among the least intense in the country.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

In 2020, GDP, salaries, and incomes in Pazardzhik district continued to grow and their rate of increase was higher than the national average, though remaining relatively low. GDP per capita reached 11,000 BGN, compared to 17,300 BGN in the country on average. The gross annual salary of employed persons was 13,100 BGN, compared to 16,700 BGN in the country. These developments account for the falling poverty levels of the local population. The share of people living with material deprivation has dropped to 23.3%, compared to 19.4% in the country, and those living below the national poverty line make up 30.6% of the residents, versus the national average of 22.1%.

Labor market

Economic activity in Pazardzhik district is traditionally close to, but below the national average. In 2021, its rate decreased somewhat and reached 70.3%, versus 72.0% in the country. This drop was accompanied by a fall in employment and a rise in unemployment. The employment rate decreased to 64.9%, compared to 68.1% nationally, and that of unemployment went up to 7.7%, versus the national average of 5.3%.

The educational profile of the workforce remains a persistent challenge facing the local labor market. In 2021, the share of people with a university degree continued to decrease and came down to 15.2%, against an average of 29.6% in the country, while those with primary or lower education increased to 27.2%, versus 16.6% nationally.

The demographic replacement ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 67.4%, compared to the national average of 69.4%. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the workforce in the next few years, there are 67 young people who will join the labor market.

Investment and economy

Investment and business activity in Pazardzhik district were again not particularly brisk in 2020. The number of enterprises remained low – 44 per 1,000 persons, against the national average of 60 per 1,000 persons. There was an outflow of foreign and domestic direct investment. FTA acquisition expenditures in the same year marked a considerable decrease (by 15%) to 1,900 BGN/person, against the national figure of 3,300 BGN/person, and FDI fell by 10% to 1,700 EUR/person, compared to 3,900 EUR/person countrywide. In spite of that, production value in Pazardzhik district continued to rise and reached 17,000 BGN/person, against 27,200 BGN/person in the country. As regards utilization of EU funding, Pazardzhik district has recorded some increase yet the amounts remain relatively low.

By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,600 BGN/person. Within the district, the municipality with the highest rate of utilization was Panagyurishte.

Infrastructure

Pazardzhik is the district with the highest rating as regards infrastructural development. In 2021, 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 share of the road surface in good condition increased to 55%, compared to 42% in the country.

In 2019, the district population's access to the internet continued its rapid rise and remained above the national average – 85.1% in the district, versus 83.5% nationwide.

Pazardzhik district is the country's leader in installed RES capacities – 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 2022. 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 tax rates on non-residential real estate of legal entities, motor vehicles, taxi transportation, and retail trade.

Within the district, the municipalities of Sarnitsa and Bratsigovo levy the highest local taxes, while the lowest rates are in the municipalities of Pazardzhik, Velingrad, and Lesichovo.

Administration

Cadastral map coverage now includes practically the whole of the district's territory. In 2022, the local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop-shop services retained in general its level and remained considerably below the national average. The performance of the district's e-government was rated at an average of 3.12 p. out of 4 p., versus the national average of 3.47 p., and the provision of one-stop-shop services – at 3.08 p. out of 4 p., compared to 3.37 p. nationally. The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration went down in 2022 to 65.3%, against the national average of 70.2%, and remained relatively low.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2021, the natural population growth rate dropped considerably for the second year in a row, reaching -14.0% and thus settling below the national figure of -13.2% . At the same time, Pazardzhik fails to attract new residents, and the net migration rate is also negative at -1.8% .

Age dependency ratios continue to deteriorate but remain more favorable than in the country on average. In 2021, the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 139.7%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 it was 33.2%, against 34.0% nationally.

The urban population in Pazardzhik district remains relatively low – 62.7%, versus the national average of 73.1%, while the average density of the population living in urban settlements is relatively high – 2,041 persons/sq. km, against 1,489 persons/sq. km on average nationwide.

Education

Pazardzhik is among the districts with the worst performance in the indicators for the education category. In 2021, the rate of enrolment in 5th-7th grade dropped for the third year in a row, reaching 78.4%, against the national average of 85.9%. The percentages of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education were also excessively high. The relative number of teachers has shrunk slightly but continues to exceed the national average.

The figures for the average results of the district's students in 2022 again remain relatively low. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 30.1 points, versus 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.80 in the district, compared to 3.97 nationally. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) dropped by 1 p.p. to 21.2%, versus the average of 17% 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 2021 – 85.8%, against 88.7% in the country. Access to GPs in the district is better than the national average but there is a definite shortage of specialist physicians. The provision of beds in the local general hospitals is traditionally higher than average and in 2021 there were 6.68 beds per 1,000 persons, versus the national average of 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons.

Hospitalization figures are extremely high – 277 per 1,000 persons, versus 222.6 per 1,000 persons nationally. Infant mortality in the district continues to decrease and for the first time in at least ten years is below the national average.

Public order and security

The workloads of the local criminal judges are lower than the national average and this affects the speed of delivery of justice. In 2021, one local judge heard an average of 7.9 cases a month, compared to 9.0 cases nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 92%, against the national average of 89%, and pending cases amounted to 7%, compared to the national average of 12%.

The number of crimes remains relatively small, while their detection rate is close to the country's average. In 2021, the registered crimes against the person and property amounted to 7.3 per 1,000 persons, versus 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate was 52.7%, compared to the national figure of 51.7%.

Environment

Although in districts with a relatively high share of rural population connectivity to public sewerage systems is usually limited, in Pazardzhik district such access in 2020 was close to the country's average – 72.6%, compared to 76.3% nationally. However, connectivity to wastewater treatment plants lags significantly behind, with 43.7%, versus 66.7% nationally.

The amount of household waste generated in the district remains relatively small – in 2020 it was 367 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 – 15.4%, versus 69.3% nationally.

Pazardzhik is the district with the second highest share of forest areas, with only Smolyan outranking it – 54.9% in the district, versus 33.1% countrywide. The degraded land, for its part, is close to the national average – 0.42%.

Culture

In 2021, cultural life in Pazardzhik district again remained among the least active in the country. Attendance to various cultural events went up somewhat but this was insufficient to make up for the huge shrinking in the year before, caused by the onset of the pandemic and the ensuing restrictions on all public events. Cinema visits reached 121 per 1,000 persons, with 351 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Visits to local theatres and museums were close to the respective national averages – 152 per 1,000 persons, compared to 129 per 1,000 persons, and 409 per 1,000 persons versus 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Visits to libraries remain relatively low – 204 per 1,000 people in the district, compared to 449 per 1,000 people in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Pazardzhik

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,017	10,995	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,675	13,090	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	37.0	32.9	30.6	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	72.9	71.1	70.3	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	69.1	67.4	64.9	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	5.1	5.1	7.7	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	22.8	24.2	27.2	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	17.5	15.6	15.2	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	16,513	17,006	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,256	1,911	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,890	1,710	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	68.3	81.7	85.1	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	44.4	49.6	54.7	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	16.2	16.9	16.9	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	65.4	70.4	65.3	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-6.7	-10.7	-14.0	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-3.9	4.8	-1.8	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.07	4.03	3.80	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	31.3	30.9	30.1	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	82.4	79.8	78.4	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	99	107	105	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	85.8	85.1	85.8	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,631	1,669	1,671	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	8.8	7.3	7.3	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	10.4	8.4	7.9	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	72.7	72.6	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	368	367	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	15.4	15.4	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	190	43	121	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	864	361	409	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Pernik district

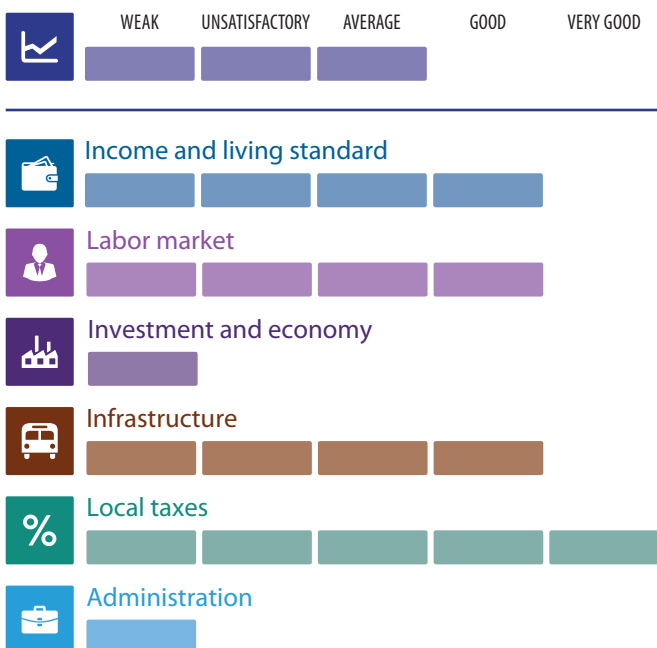
▶ Population (2021)	118,023
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,394
▶ Number of settlements	171
▶ Share of urban population (%)	78.1



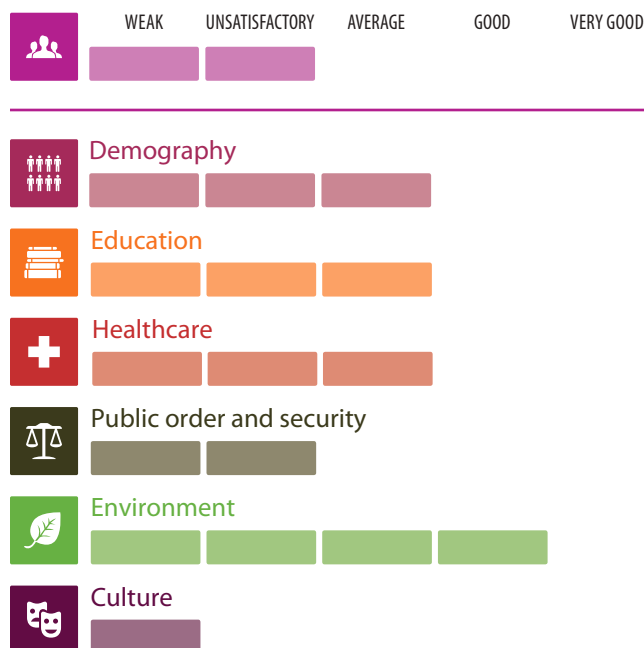
In terms of economic development, Pernik takes a place in the middle of the ranking. The relatively high incomes in Pernik district are the main prerequisite for the relatively low poverty levels of its population. The workforce is characterized by a high proportion of people with secondary education. Population ageing remains a major challenge for the local labor market. Investment activity in the district is relatively slack. The share of highways and first-class roads remains low, but road quality is good. Local tax rates are low. The AIP active transparency rating of the district's mu-

nicipalities is among the lowest in the country. Age dependency continues to deteriorate and is among the highest in the country. Students' results in the district are traditionally lower than the national average. Pernik has the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals. The relative number of registered crimes in Pernik district is close to the national average, while the detection rate is slightly higher. The volume of generated household waste is the highest in the country. 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 2020, GDP per capita in Pernik district registered a slight decrease to 9,400 BGN/person, against the country's average of 17,300 BGN. At the same time, salaries and incomes have been rising, though at a rate lower than the national average. The average gross annual salary of employed people is 12,400 BGN, compared to 16,700 BGN on average nationwide, while the income per household member remains among the highest in the country, reaching 8,300 BGN, against 7,700 BGN countrywide. The explanation for this difference is that salary data are based on place of employment, while data on household income consider the place of residence. In other words, when people are resident in Pernik but are working in Sofia (capital city), 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 2020, the share of the population living with material deprivation amounted to 16.7% in Pernik district, compared to 19.4% in the country, while the share of those living below the poverty line in 2021 was 19.1%, versus 22.1% nationally.

Labor market

In 2021, unemployment went down and economic activity and employment went up. The rates of economic activity and employment continue to be relatively high, reaching respectively 76.9% (against 72.0% in the country) and 71.2% (versus 68.1% in the country). At the same time, the unemployment rate remains relatively unfavorable, although it has decreased to 7.5%, compared to 5.3% in the country.

A 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 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 population ageing. The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 50.3%, against 69.4% nationwide. Thus, for every 100 adults who are about to leave the workforce in the next few years, there are half as many young people who will join the labor market.

Investment and economy

Investment activity in Pernik district is relatively slack. Its proximity to the capital affects both the number of enterprises and the investment flows attracted into the district. In 2020, there were 45 enterprises per 1,000 persons, compared to 60 per 1,000 persons in the country. Both foreign and domestic investment flows rose considerably, but the figures remain relatively low. FTA acquisition expenditures were 1,400 BGN/

person, against 3,300 BGN/person countrywide, while FDI amounted to 1,900 EUR/person, compared to 3,900 EUR/person nationally. Nevertheless, production value in Pernik district shrank for the second year in a row and in 2020 it was 15,200 BGN/person, compared to an average of 27,200 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 30 June 2022, payments made to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,400 BGN/person on average.

Infrastructure

In 2021, 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 – 15.9%, against 18.5% in the country; however, the quality of the roads was relatively good. The share of road surfaces in good condition was 41%, against the national average of 42%.

The relative share of households with internet access registered a considerable increase and in 2021 it came close to the national average – 82.8% in Pernik district, versus 83.5% nationally. The share of households connected to a gas supply is low – 1.8% in 2020, against the national average of 5.3%. The installed RES capacities are a bare 0.07 kW/person, compared to 0.62 kW/person countrywide.

Local taxes

The average level of the local taxes in the municipalities of Pernik district again remained relatively low in 2022, 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 Zemen, and the highest ones were in the municipality of Kovachevtsi.

Administration

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

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration in Pernik's municipalities decreased further and in 2022 it was again the second lowest in the country, followed only by the municipalities in Kyustendil district – 52.64%, compared to the national average of 70.2%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth rate in Pernik district has continued to decline. 2020 was yet another year of considerable decrease, reaching –22.1‰, compared to the national average of –13.2‰. The net migration rate has dropped but remains positive (1.1‰).

The rapid rate of population ageing in the district is also evident in the age dependency ratios. In 2021, the ratio of the population aged 65+ to that aged 0–14 was 200.8%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to that aged 15–64, it was 40.5%, against 34.0% nationally.

The urban population is relatively high – 78.1%, versus 73.1% countrywide, but its density is low – 904 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,489 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

The rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade was 91.06% in 2021 and continued to exceed the national average of 85.9%. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school are also lower than the respective national averages. The relative number of teachers remains relatively high – 102 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 97 teachers per 1,000 students nationally.

The average score in the national external examination in mathematics after 7th grade is relatively low – 28.4 p., compared to 35.3 p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature is traditionally below the national average – “Good” 3.79, versus 3.97 respectively. The share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) is 18.2% in the district, against 17.0 in the country.

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

Healthcare

The share of people with health insurance in Pernik district has decreased but remains above the national average – 89.3%, against 88.7% in the country. The district is relatively well provided with GPs, but in 2021 there were relatively few specialist physicians.

Pernik is the district with the lowest number of beds in the local general hospitals – 2.49 beds per 1,000 persons, which is half the average number in the country (5.62 beds per 1,000 persons). The relative number of hospitalizations is also among the lowest in the country – 58.5 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 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 rose sharply in 2021 and for the first time in at least a decade exceeded the national average. This has had a negative effect on the speed of delivery of justice. One local judge hears an average of 9.7 criminal cases per month, compared to 9.0 cases per month per judge in the country. The share of cases completed within 3 months has dropped to 86%, against 89% in the country.

The crime rate in Pernik district is close to the national average, while the detection rate is slightly higher. Registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 9.7 per 1,000 persons in 2021, versus an average of 9.8 crimes per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate was 55.7%, against 51.7% for the country on average.

Environment

The relatively high urban population entails a large share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network – 78.9%, compared to 76.3% in the country in 2020. Connectivity to wastewater treatment plants is also high – 73.8%, against 66.7% countrywide. In 2020, Pernik was once again the district with the highest volume of generated household waste – 543 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 – 75.8%, against 69.3% nationally.

The share of forest areas in Pernik district is relatively high – 40.2% in the district, versus 33.1% countrywide. However, the share of degraded land is twice the national average – 0.96%, compared to 0.42% in the country.

Culture

Pernik is among the districts with the least active cultural life, with only Kardzhali district performing worse. This is probably due to Pernik’s proximity to the capital.

In 2021, cinema visits amounted to 99 per 1,000 persons, compared to 351 per 1,000 persons nationally. Museum visits numbered 263 per 1,000 persons, compared to 426 per 1,000 persons in the country. Library visits were 174 per 1,000 persons against the national average of 449 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Pernik

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,405	9,352	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,434	12,359	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	14.2	16.8	19.1	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	77.5	76.1	76.9	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	70.9	69.8	71.2	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	8.2	8.3	7.5	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	13.4	11.3	11.3	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	21.4	25.1	18.0	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	16,730	15,202	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,222	1,432	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,561	1,872	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	68.8	83.4	82.8	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	46.9	49.7	41.3	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	23.8	23.9	24.0	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	61.8	59.6	52.4	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-13.1	-16.3	-21.2	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-0.9	26.6	1.1	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.13	4.06	3.79	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.7	32.0	28.4	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	91.6	89.6	91.0	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	98	99	102	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	91.0	89.6	89.3	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,490	1,536	1,595	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	11.8	10.9	9.7	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	6.3	5.8	9.7	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	79.6	78.9	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	550	543	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	75.7	75.8	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	0	19	99	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	318	156	263	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Pleven district

- ▶ Population (2021)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

228,300
4,653
123
66.2



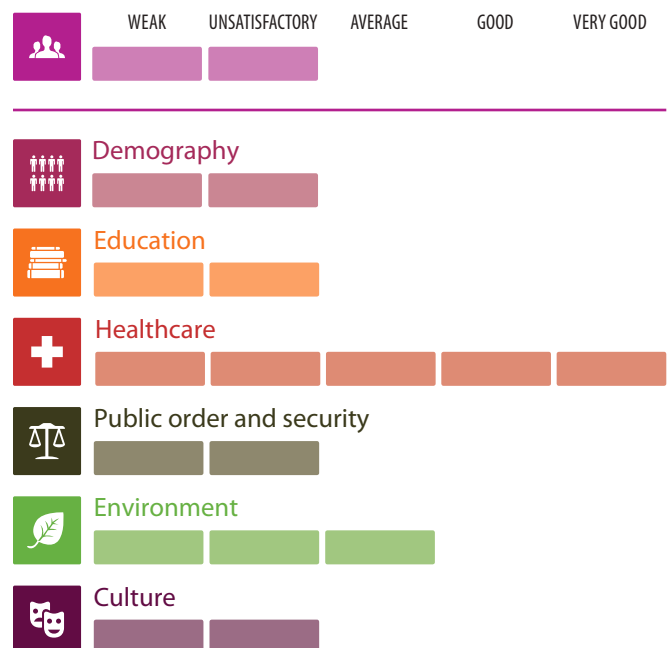
Salaries and incomes in Pleven district have been growing relatively fast. The economic activity rate has decreased slightly and this is accompanied by a slight increase in employment and a more noticeable decrease in unemployment. Investment and business activity in the area remain relatively unfavorable. Road quality is improving. The rates of local taxes in the municipalities of Pleven district are close to the national averages. Pleven ranks among the districts with the highest ratings for the indicators measuring the work of the administration.

The process of population ageing is deepening. The district does not perform well in the indicators assessing education. Pleven is a district with strong traditions in the field of healthcare and is once again the leader in the indicators for this category. The number of registered crimes is traditionally higher than the national average. Pleven is the district with the lowest share of forest areas. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling continues to be extremely high. Cultural life is characterized by relatively low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

Although in 2020 GDP per capita in Pleven district again recorded a considerable growth rate (by 4.1%, compared to the national average of 0.2%), it still remained relatively low – 10,300 BGN/person, against 17,300 BGN/person in the country. Salaries and incomes are also rising relatively fast. The average annual salary of employed people has reached 12,700 BGN, compared to 16,700 BGN nationwide.

These trends account for the falling poverty level of the local population, although it remains close to and just below the national average. The share of the population living with material deprivation was 24.7% in 2021, compared to the national average of 19.4%. For its part, in 2021 the share of those living below the poverty line shrank more considerably and fell below the national average – 21.6% in the district, versus 22.1% nationally.

Labor market

The rate of economic activity in Pleven district dropped slightly in 2021, reaching 69.0%, compared to the national average of 72.0%. This decrease was accompanied by a slight increase in employment and a more tangible drop in unemployment. However, both rates remained unfavorable. The employment rate went up to 62.0%, against 68.1% nationwide. The unemployment rate, for its part, was 10.0%, versus the national average of 5.3%.

In 2021, the share of the population aged 25–64 with a university degree dropped slightly to 24.7%, against 29.6% in the country, while the share of those with primary or lower education rose to 19.9%, compared to 16.6% 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 – 65.3% in Pleven district, against 69.4% countrywide. 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 Pleven district again remained relatively unfavorable in 2020. The relative number of non-financial enterprises was 42 per 1,000 persons, versus 60 per 1,000 persons nationally. FTA acquisition expenditures dropped to 1,800 BGN/person, compared to 3,300 BGN/person. FDI has been rising but continues to be relatively low – 1,300 EUR/person in the district, compared to the national average of 3,900 EUR/person.

Production value in the district has risen considerably (by 7.1%), reaching 15,500 BGN/person, compared to 27,200 BGN/person nationwide.

Utilization of European funds in Pleven district remains close to the national average. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,363 BGN/person. 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 the road and railroad network. However, highways and first-class roads as a share of all roads remain relatively limited – 12.2% in 2021, versus 18.5 in the country. Nevertheless, road quality has been improving and is already commensurable with the national average – 41% of the roads are in good condition, compared to the national average of 42%.

The share of households with internet access is rising but remains relatively low – 76.3%, against the average of 83.5% nationally. The share of households connected to a gas supply has gone up to 2.8%, which is nevertheless nearly half the national average of 5.3%. The installed RES capacities relative to the population are also twice as low as in the country on average.

Local taxes

In 2022, 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 northwestern 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. Within the district, Pleven city municipality levies the highest local taxes, while the lowest rates are in the municipalities of Dolni Dubnik and Pordim.

Administration

Pleven is among the districts with the highest ratings for the work of the local administration. The local administrations' self-assessments on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop-shop services have been rising and in 2022 they exceeded the respective national averages.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration have been lagging behind and they are again lower than the national average – 69.8% on average in Pleven district, versus 70.2% nationally.

Cadastral map coverage in Pleven district has continued to increase and has reached 97.7%, against the national average of 97.4%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

For the second year in a row, in 2021 the natural population growth rate dropped considerably to reach -18.9% , against the national average of -13.2% . Pleven district also fails to attract new residents and the net migration rate is negative (-3.4%).

These processes are the main prerequisite for the high level of population ageing in the district. In 2021, the age dependency rate as a ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 years reached 186.1%, compared to 149.3% in the country on average, and to those aged 15–64 years – 44.1%, versus 34.0% nationwide.

The urban population remains relatively small – 66.2%, compared to 73.1% in the country, and population density in the urban settlements is also relatively low – 1,489 persons/sq. km.

Education

The district does not perform well as regards the indicators assessing education. The enrolment ratio in 5th–7th grades dropped in 2021 to 85.6% and is now below the national average of 85.9%. The percentage of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary school remains relatively high. The relative number of teachers has settled at a level above the national average – 100 teachers per 1,000 students, against 97 teachers per 1,000 students nationally.

Students' performance in Pleven district again remained low in 2022. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 28.0 p., compared to 35.3 p. nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was among the lowest in the country – “Good” 3.61, versus 3.97 in the country, and “fail” grades (below 3.00) made up 25.7%, against the national average of 17.0%.

Pleven is one of the few districts in Bulgaria registering a steady increase in the number of university students over the past few years, though relative to the population it remains half the national average

Healthcare

Pleven district has strong traditions in the sphere of healthcare and in 2021 it again held the top place in the country in this category. The share of people with health insurance in the region remains at levels above the national average – 92% in the district, compared to 89% in the country. Pleven is also the district with the highest proportion of both GPs and specialist physicians. One local GP cares for 1,214 persons on average, compared to 1,734 persons per doctor in the country.

Pleven is also the district best provided with hospital beds. In 2021, their number even went up to reach the unprecedented 11.10 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons in the country.

The relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals remains considerably higher than in the country –

386.4 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Public order and security

The workloads of the criminal judges in Pleven district are relatively small, which, however, has little effect on the speed of justice delivery. In 2021, one local judge heard an average of 6.8 cases a month, compared to 9.0 cases nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 89%, which equals the national average.

The total number of crimes against the person and property registered in Pleven district is traditionally higher than the national average and in 2021 it reached 11.2 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationwide. At the same time, the detection rate continues to exceed the national average and has increased to 55.3%, against 51.7% in the country.

Environment

The share of the population living in settlements with access to a public sewerage network amounts to 60.2% in Pleven district, compared to 76.3% countrywide. Connectivity to wastewater treatment plants is available to 55.6% of the households, against 66.7% in the country. Both indicators place Pleven district behind the respective national averages, which is also an effect of the relatively low urban population.

For the second year in a row, in 2020 the amounts of household waste generated in the district exceeded the national average – 461 kg/person, compared to 409 kg/person in the country. At the same time, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling also remained extremely high – 90.5%, versus 69.3% nationally.

Pleven is the district with the lowest share of forest areas – 7.3%, compared to 33.1% nationally. However, the share of the land, which is degraded, is also low – 0.18%, versus 0.42% nationally.

Culture

In 2021, Pleven district's cultural life again remained characterized by relatively low intensity, even though visits to the monitored events went up relative to 2020, when their number had fallen drastically due to the pandemic and the resulting restrictions. The greatest rise was in the number of cinema visits in the district, though they remained relatively low – 247 per 1,000 persons, versus 351 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Also considerably below the national average were theatre visits – 57 per 1,000 persons in the district, compared to 129 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to libraries numbered 236 per 1,000 persons in the district, compared to 449 per 1,000 persons in the country.

Visits to local museums have been on the increase and remain relatively high in number – 443 per 1,000 persons, versus 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Key indicators for the district of Pleven

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	9,864	10,268	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,567	12,660	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	20.4	28.3	21.6	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	68.8	69.4	69.0	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	63.2	61.6	62.0	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	7.9	11.3	10.0	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	20.8	19.1	19.9	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	23.1	25.4	24.7	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	14,472	15,499	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,049	1,799	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,171	1,285	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	71.7	68.9	76.3	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	36.5	37.2	41.3	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	17.1	17.1	18.3	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	71.8	71.7	69.8	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-11.0	-13.5	-18.9	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-6.1	1.3	-3.4	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.00	3.97	3.61	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.8	31.8	28.0	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	87.0	87.3	85.6	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	94	99	100	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	91.9	91.0	92.0	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,212	1,243	1,214	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	11.7	10.9	11.2	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	7.7	6.4	6.8	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	57.0	60.2	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	463	461	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	90.6	90.5	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	452	93	247	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	854	345	443	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Plovdiv district

▶ Population (2021)	662,907
▶ Territory (sq. km)	5,973
▶ Number of settlements	212
▶ Share of urban population (%)	75.1



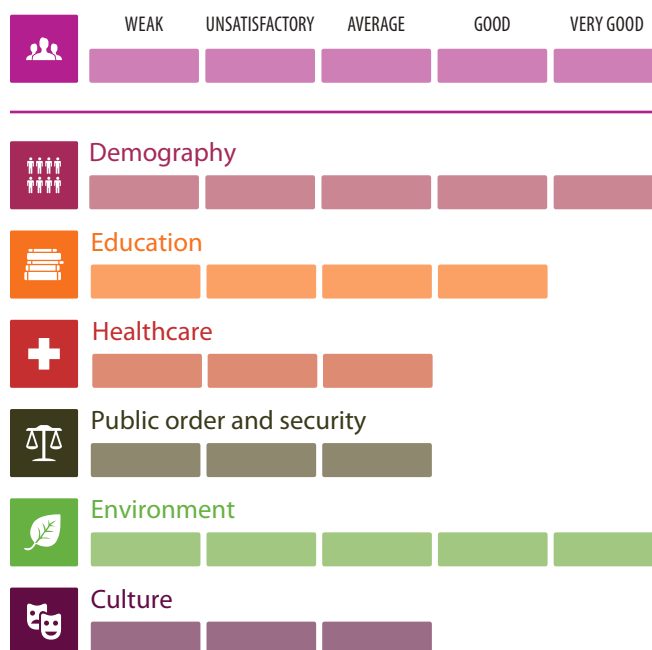
GDP per capita in Plovdiv district has continued to grow at a rate similar to the national average. Salaries and incomes in the district are also increasing. The decline in labor market activity is accompanied by a decline in employment and a rise in unemployment. FTA acquisition expenditures are largely lagging behind the national average. The infrastructural development in the district can be assessed as very good. The level of local taxation in Plovdiv district is relatively high. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administration is above the country's average.

Despite the general trend towards population ageing in the country, Plovdiv performs relatively well. The age dependency ratios are favorable. Students' results are high. Plovdiv is also among the districts with the largest relative numbers of doctors and hospital beds. The relative number of patients treated in the local hospitals is the highest in the country. The workloads of the criminal judges in Plovdiv district are among the heaviest in the country but the speed of delivery of justice is relatively high. The share of forest areas is close to the country's average, but that of degraded land is considerably lower. Cultural life in the district is intensifying.

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 2020, it reached 14,600 BGN, but has dropped two places in the ranking (after those of Gabrovo and Vratsa) and is now the seventh highest in the country. Salaries and incomes in the district are also increasing. In 2020, the average annual gross salary of employed people reached 14,200 BGN per year, compared to 16,700 BGN in the country.

Poverty levels exceed the national average. The share of the population living with material deprivation amounts to 24.3%, versus 19.4% nationally, and that of people living below the national poverty line – 26.8%, versus 22.1% countrywide.

Labor market ■■■■

In 2021, economic activity in Plovdiv district went down and at a rate of 68.5% remained below the average level of 72.0% in the country. The decline in economic activity was accompanied by a drop in employment and a rise in unemployment. The employment rate decreased significantly for the second year in a row and in 2021 it fell for the first time below the national average, with a value of 66.3%, against 68.1% in the country. However, the increase in unemployment continues to be relatively low and the rate remains below the country's average – 3.3% in the district, compared to 5.3% in the country.

A major challenge facing the local labor market continues to be the educational structure of the workforce. It improved somewhat in 2021 but again remained slightly less favorable than the country's average figures. The share of the population with a university degree was 26.0%, against 29.6% in the country on average, while the share of those with primary or lower education was 19.2%, compared to 16.6% nationally. The population replacement ratio of those aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 69.8%, compared to 69.4% 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 workforce.

Investment and economy ■■■■

In 2020, the relative number of enterprises in Plovdiv district continued to lag slightly behind the national average, with 59 non-financial enterprises per 1,000 persons, against 60 per 1,000 persons in the country.

FTA acquisition expenditures shrank considerably in 2020 (by 17%) and fell considerably below the national average – 2,600 BGN/person in the district, versus 3,300 BGN/person nationally. There was also a drop in production value, but it was identical to the national average and in this indicator Plovdiv equals the country's average –27,200 BGN/person in the district and in the country. At the same time, FDI registered an

increase and reached 3,000 EUR/person, versus the national average of 3,900 EUR/person.

Plovdiv district has also been lagging behind in the utilization of European funds. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,874 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were registered in the municipalities of Hissarya and Krichim.

Infrastructure ■■■■

The development of the district's infrastructure can be assessed as 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 is 17.5%, compared to the national average of 18.5%. The quality of the roads in the district is relatively good – in 2021 roads with surfaces in good condition constituted 47%, against the average of 42% countrywide.

The relative share of households with internet access went up in 2021 and remained above the average one nationwide – 88.9%, versus 83.5% respectively. The installed RES capacities are close to but above the national average. The share of households connected to a gas supply remains relatively low at 1.7%, against 5.3% in the country.

Local taxes ■■

As in most districts with a better developed economy, in 2022 the level of local taxation in Plovdiv district again remained relatively high. The biggest margin was in the rate on taxi transportation. Its average level in the municipalities of the district was 535 BGN per year, compared to 478 BGN in the country. A higher tax was also levied on non-residential real estate for legal entities – 2.11‰ in Plovdiv, compared to 2.06‰ nationwide.

Within the district, the municipalities of Kaloyanovo and Maritsa levy the lowest local taxes, while the highest rates are in Plovdiv city and Karlovo.

Administration ■■■■

Cadastral map coverage in Plovdiv district has slowed down in the past few years, reaching 95.3% compared to 97.4% for the country.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop-shop services for 2022 is below the national average.

The AIP Active transparency ratings of the local administration have marked a slight increase and now exceed the national average, with 72.4% in the district, versus 70.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Contrary to the nationwide trend towards population ageing, Plovdiv district has been performing relatively well. In the past two years the natural growth rate of the population declined considerably (by 3‰), however, it still exceeds the national average with -11.3‰ in the district, versus -13.2‰ in the country. Plovdiv continued to attract new residents in 2021 and achieved a net migration rate of 6.0‰.

These processes once again left their relatively beneficial impact on the age dependency ratios in the district for 2021. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 years was 137.9%, compared to 149.3% in the country on average, and to those aged 15–64 years – 32.2%, versus 34.0% nationwide.

A relatively large share of the district's population lives in urban areas, and in 2021 it reached 75.1%, compared to 73.1% in the country. Plovdiv ranks third after the capital and Sliven as regards population density in its settlements – 2,490 persons/sq. km, while nationally it is 1,489 persons/sq. km.

Education

The net enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade in Plovdiv district rose slightly in 2021 and 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 remains relatively small – 92 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 97 teachers per 1,000 students countrywide.

In 2022, students' results again remained good. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 35.0 points, against the national average of 35.3 points. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.10, versus the average of 3.97 in the country. "Fail" grades (below 3.00) made up 15.5%, against the national average of 17.0%.

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 in the capital and Veliko Tarnovo.

Healthcare

Plovdiv is among the districts with the largest number of doctors and hospital beds. In 2021, one local GP cared for 1,637 persons on average, compared to 1,734 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 8.12 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 per 1,000 persons in the country, which ranks Plovdiv second in the country after Pleven district. Plovdiv is also the district with the highest relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals – 399.1 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 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 2021 they continued to increase, reaching an average of 11.8 cases a month per judge, compared to 9.0 cases a month per judge nationally. Nevertheless, this high intensity does not impede the speedy delivery of justice. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 93%, compared to the average of 89% nationwide, and pending cases make up 7.6%, against 11.8% in the country.

The number of crimes registered in Plovdiv district remains low, and crime detection is relatively high. In 2021, the registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 7.5 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate was 58.2%, against 51.7% for the country on average.

Environment

The concentration of the district's population in towns and cities is a prerequisite for a relatively high share of households with access to a sewerage network connected to a wastewater treatment plant – 74.0%, versus 66.7% nationally, and similarly, for a high share of people living in areas with accessibility to public sewerage networks – 82.4%, against the national average of 76.3% in 2020.

The amounts of household waste generated in the district remain high – 469 kg/person per annum, against an average of 409 kg/person nationally. At the same time, the amounts handed over for treatment and recycling have dropped slightly to 62.0%, remaining below the national average of 69.3%.

Forest areas in Plovdiv district are close to the national average – 32.7%, versus 33.1% countrywide. The share of degraded land, however, is considerably lower – 0.17%, against 0.42% in the country for 2021.

Culture

After the severe pandemic-induced restrictions on cultural activities in 2020, cultural life in Plovdiv district intensified in 2021. Cinema visits reached 438 per 1,000 persons, against 351 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to the local theatres and museums increased to 118 per 1,000 persons, against 129 per 1,000 persons in the country, and 351 per 1,000 persons, against 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide respectively. Visits to the local libraries recorded a slight drop compared to the year before and numbered 220 per 1,000 persons, against 449 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

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	14,535	14,648	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,996	14,171	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	22.7	25.8	26.8	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	72.0	70.8	68.5	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	70.3	68.7	66.3	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	2.4	3.0	3.3	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	20.2	19.7	19.2	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	26.0	26.4	26.0	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	27,998	27,188	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	3,103	2,560	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	2,668	2,986	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	80.7	79.9	88.9	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	48.7	40.9	46.5	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	17.1	17.1	17.1	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	70.1	71.1	72.4	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-5.3	-8.3	-11.3	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	3.1	7.7	6.0	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.33	4.30	4.10	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	36.7	38.7	35.0	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	87.8	87.4	87.6	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	84	92	92	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87.6	87.4	87.1	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,588	1,618	1,637	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	8.3	8.1	7.5	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	11.4	11.5	11.8	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	82.7	82.4	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	469	469	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	62.1	62.0	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	373	234	438	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	575	299	351	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Razgrad district

- ▶ Population (2021)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

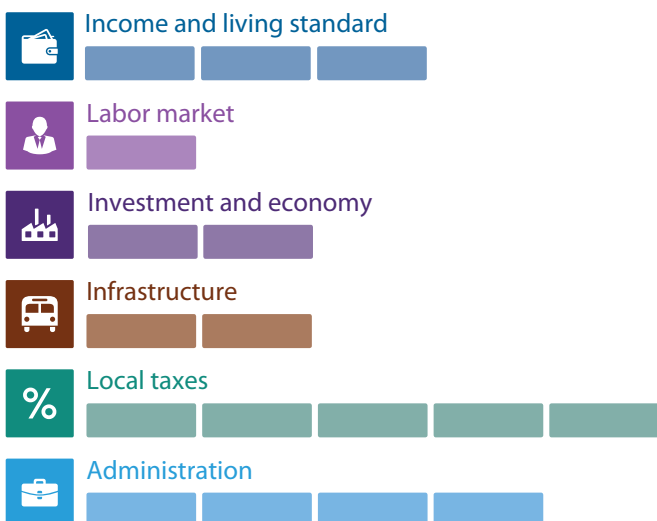
107,764
2,488
103
46.5



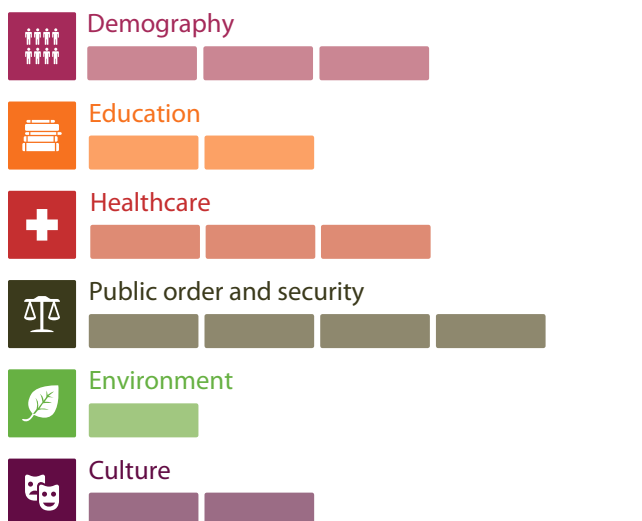
GDP in Razgrad district continues to grow at an increasing rate, but its value remains relatively low. The performance of the labor market in the district is traditionally relatively weak. Investment activity remains low. The density of the road network is relatively high, but the share of highways and first-class roads, as well as that of road surfaces in good condition, is extremely low. The average level of local taxes levied by the local municipalities is lower than the national average. The AIP transparency rating of the local administration is falling.

Razgrad is among the districts with under 50% of the population living in urbanized areas. Students' results are extremely low. Razgrad is one of the districts with the most acute shortage of doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians. The number of crimes in the district is relatively low and their detection rate is high. Razgrad ranks last among all the districts in terms of environmental indicators. The share of the population living in settlements with a public sewerage network is the lowest in the whole country. Cultural life in Razgrad district is intensifying.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

GDP per capita in Razgrad district has continued to grow at a rising rate, but its value remains relatively low – 10,600 BGN/person, against 17,300 BGN nationally. Salaries and incomes in the district are also rising. The average annual gross salary of employed people has reached 13,900 BGN, compared to 16,700 BGN in the country.

The effect of these processes is that poverty levels in Razgrad district have fallen. The share of the population living with material deprivation has decreased to 30.9%, but remains high when compared to the average of 19.4% in the country, while that of the population living below the national poverty line dropped to 16.7% in 2021 and is already significantly below the national average (22.1%).

Labor market

The performance of the labor market in Razgrad district is traditionally relatively weak, and in 2021 the indicators further deteriorated. Economic activity and employment each suffered a decline that set a record on a national scale. The rate of economic activity collapsed by more than 6 p.p. to 61.9%, against 72.0% in the country. The decrease in the employment rate also exceeded 6 p.p. – it went down to 54.5%, compared to 68.1% in the country, making Razgrad the district (after Montana) with the second lowest employment rate in the country. Unemployment also increased and its rate in 2021 was 12.0%, versus 5.3% in the country.

A major challenge still facing the local labor market is the seriously worsening educational structure of the workforce. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education has increased to 34.1%, compared to 16.69% nationally, and is the second highest in the country, after that in Sliven district. The share of those with a university degree has also gone up, but remains relatively low – 21.1% in Razgrad, against 29.6% in the country on average.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 64.6%, compared to the national average of 69.4%. 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 again remained low in 2020. Razgrad is among the districts with the lowest relative number of enterprises – 39 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 60 per 1,000 persons. FTA acquisition expenditures have shrunk to 2,300 BGN/person, compared to the average of 3,300 BGN/person in the country. FDI registered an increase, yet remains relatively low – 1,900 EUR/person, versus 3,900 EUR/person nationally. Production value has shrunk to

15,600 BGN/person, compared to 27,200 BGN/person in the country.

Utilization of European funds has been lagging behind. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,912 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest figures for utilization of EU funding were recorded by the municipalities in Isperih 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%, versus 42% nationally in 2021.

The relative share of households with internet access went further up in 2021 to reach 76.6%, though it again remained lower than the average of 83.5% nationwide. The installed RES capacities are negligible – 0.006 kW/person. The share of households connected to a gas supply is relatively high – 6.1%, compared to the national average of 5.3%.

Local taxes

In 2022, the average level of local taxes in Razgrad district's municipalities again remained lower than the national average. Among the five monitored local taxes, only the tax rate 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 non-gratuitous acquisition of property, taxi transportation, and retail trade.

Within the district, the lowest taxes are levied by the municipalities in Samuil and Tsar Kaloyan, and the highest – by those in Isperih and Loznitsa.

Administration

Cadastral map coverage in Razgrad district has continued to rise and in 2021 it reached 98.1%, compared to the country's average of 97.4%.

The local authorities' self-assessments on the development of e-government and on the provision of one-stop-shop services went up in 2022 but while that on e-government remains below the national average, the assessment on the provision of one-stop-shop services is now considerably higher.

The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has dropped to 68.1% and is now below the national average of 70.2%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The natural population growth rate in Razgrad district has been dropping rapidly and in 2021 it was down to -17.3% , versus the national average of -13.32% . At the same time, the district fails to attract new residents and the net migration rate is also negative (-1.5%).

Population ageing in the district is reflected in the age dependency ratios as well. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 has reached 163.0%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it is 35.0%, versus the national average of 34.0% in 2021.

Razgrad is one of the three districts, along with those of Kardzhali and Silistra, where less than 50% of the population lives in urban settlements. In 2021, 46.5% of the population was urban, compared to 73.1% in the country. Its density is also among the lowest in the country – 818 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,489 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

The district's performance as regards the education indicators is unsatisfactory. The rate of enrolment of schoolchildren in 5th–7th grade in 2021 was 85.5%, against 85.9% nationally.

Students' results for 2022 were extremely low in Razgrad district. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 29.1 points, versus 35.3 points nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was the lowest in the country – “Good” 3.53, compared to 3.97 in the country, while the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was one of the highest, after the districts of Shumen and Haskovo – 26.9%, against the national average of 17.0%.

The relative number of teachers in primary and secondary education has gone up and exceeds the national average.

The single provider of higher education in Razgrad district is a branch of Ruse University. This accounts for the small number of university students in the district – the 2021 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 – 96.3%, 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 2021, one local GP cared for 2,293 persons on average, compared to 1,734 persons per doctor in the country.

The relative number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals is also relatively small – 5.13 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 per 1,000 persons in the country. At the same time, the relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is low – 129.8 hospitalizations per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

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 2021, one local judge heard an average of 8.2 criminal cases a month, compared to 9.0 cases per judge nationally, while the proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 91%, compared to the average of 89% nationwide. Pending cases constituted 7.2%, against 11.8% in the country.

The number of crimes registered in Razgrad district is relatively low, and crime detection is high. In 2021, the registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 7.5 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate dropped slightly to 65.5%, which was again considerably above the national average of 51.7%.

Environment

Among all of Bulgaria's districts, Razgrad ranks last as regards environmental indicators. Due to the low concentration of people in urbanized areas, it is one of the districts with the worst results for the share of the population with access to sewerage systems connected to wastewater treatment plants – in 2020 it was 41.6%, versus 66.7% nationally, as well as in terms of the share of population living in settlements with a public sewerage network – again 41.96%, compared to the national figure of 76.34%.

Razgrad is also among the districts generating very high amounts of household waste. Its average volume reached 471 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 9.5%, versus the national average of 69.3%.

Forest areas are relatively small – 22.4%, against 33.1% in the country, but the share of the land that is degraded is also small – 0.16%, against 0.42% countrywide in 2021.

Culture

After the sharp decline in 2020, the intensity of cultural life in Razgrad district grew in 2021. Visits to cinemas reached 85 per 1,000 persons, compared to 351 per 1,000 persons in the country. Visits to local theaters are traditionally more than the average ones in the country, and in 2021, Razgrad's theaters recorded 164 visits per 1,000 persons, compared to 129 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to museums remained lower – 351 per 1,000 persons in the district, versus 426 per 1,000 persons countrywide. The relative number of visits to libraries remained almost unchanged compared to the previous year, and in 2021 their number was twice as low as the national average – 232 per 1,000 persons, against 449 per 1,000 persons in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Razgrad

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,470	10,634	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,814	13,902	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	28.0	23.1	16.7	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	68.5	68.0	61.9	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	61.8	60.8	54.5	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	9.6	10.6	12.0	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	31.6	30.7	34.1	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	18.8	19.5	21.1	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	16,650	15,552	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,415	2,294	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	(182)	1,901	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	69.5	73.4	76.6	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	17.6	15.6	16.9	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	19.2	19.2	19.2	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	73.2	73.8	68.1	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-9.0	-14.2	-17.3	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-3.9	5.3	-1.5	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.02	3.96	3.53	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	31.1	31.2	29.1	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	85.4	85.5	85.5	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	94	99	107	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	96.5	95.4	96.3	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	2,172	2,298	2,293	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	9.9	8.0	7.5	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	9.2	8.9	8.2	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	41.9	41.6	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	472	471	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	9.5	9.5	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	106	36	85	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	563	173	351	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Ruse district

- ▶ Population (2021)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

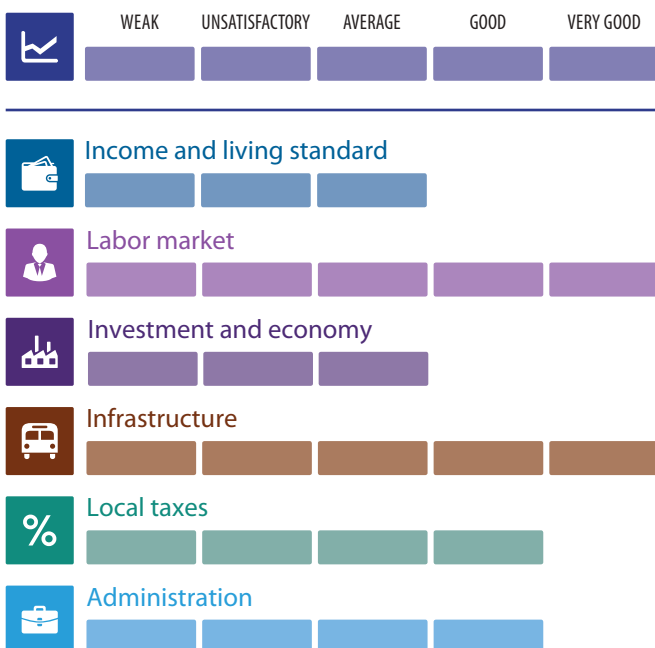
209,084
2,803
83
76.9



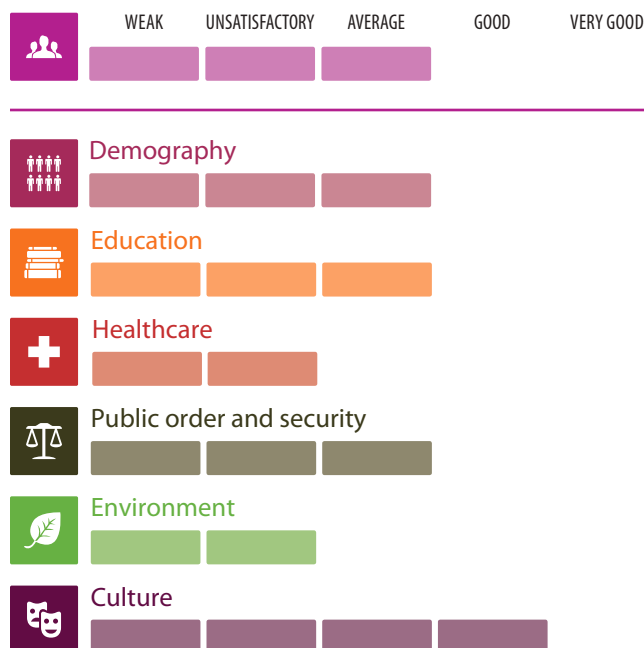
GDP per capita in Ruse district has been falling, and so the district is increasingly lagging behind the national average. Both employment and unemployment figures remain more favorable than the average ones in the country. Production value per capita in the district has shrunk slightly, but it remains relatively high. Ruse is the district with the highest railway network density in the country. The average level of the tax rates levied by the municipalities in Ruse district is close to the national average. The local authorities' self-assessment on the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services achieved high scores.

The age dependency ratios in the district have improved slightly but remain above the country's average. Student performance in the district is close to the average one in the country. The healthcare system continues to suffer from a shortage of doctors. 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. Ruse is among the districts whose cultural life shows high intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

GDP per capita in Ruse district has been falling, 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 2020 it reached 12,600 BGN, compared to 17,300 BGN in the country – a difference of 27%. For the fifth year in a row, household incomes in the district have been falling below the national average.

The income per household member was 7,500 BGN in 2021, compared to 7,700 BGN in the country. The average annual gross salary of employed people reached 13,600 BGN in 2020, versus 16,700 BGN nationally.

At the same time, poverty levels in the district exceed the national average. The share of the population living with material deprivation was 23.2% in 2021, versus 19.4% nationally, and the share of those living below the national poverty line was 24.0%, compared to 22.1% in the country.

Labor market

Economic activity in the district is growing and continues to be higher than the national average, reaching 74.9% in 2021, compared to 72.0% in the country. Both employment and unemployment figures remain more favorable than average. The employment rate is 71.4%, against 68.1% in the country, and the unemployment rate is 4.6%, compared to 5.3% nationwide.

Ruse is also among the districts with the most highly educated workforce. The share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 is the second highest in the country (after the capital), even though in 2021 it shrank slightly to 30.9%. The share of people with primary or lower education is only 11.6%, versus 16.6% in the country.

The local labor market continues to face the challenge of population ageing. In 2021, the replacement ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 was 63.9%, compared to 69.4% 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 64 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and economy

In 2020, investment activity in Ruse district came close to the national average. The number of enterprises reached 54 per 1,000 persons, compared to 60 per 1,000 persons in the country. For the third consecutive year, FTA acquisition expenditures went up and reached 2,100 BGN/person, against 3,300 BGN/person nationally. Accumulated FDI flows increased to 2,100 EUR/person, versus the national average of 3,900 EUR/person. Production value in the district shrank slightly but remained relatively high – 24,600 BGN/person.

Utilization of European funds in Ruse has registered a significant increase though it is still lagging behind the average level in the country. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,281 BGN/person. Within the district, the leader in utilization of EU funding is Byala municipality.

Infrastructure

Ruse is the district with the highest railway network density in the country. The density of the road network and the share of highways and first-class roads are also higher than average. Road quality has improved drastically and 41% of road surfaces were in good condition in 2021, against 42% nationwide.

The percentage of households in the district with internet access has also increased considerably. It is traditionally higher than the national average – 87.9% compared to 83.5% in the country.

The installed RES capacities are small – 0.04 kW/person. The share of households connected to a gas supply is also below the national average – 4.6%, compared to 5.3% countrywide.

Local taxes

In 2022, the average level of the tax rates in Ruse district was close to the country's average. Among all monitored taxes, the only one where there was a significant margin with the national average was the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, which in Ruse district's municipalities was lower.

For their part, the local taxes on motor vehicles and retail trade were higher, but they did not differ much from the average levels.

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

Administration

After three years without any major progress, cadastral map coverage in Ruse district rose sharply from 43% to 97.1% in 2021 and came very close to the national average of 97.4%.

In 2022, the local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government went slightly up but did not yet reach the national average. However, the self-assessment on the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services again achieved high scores.

The AIP active transparency ratings of local government bodies fell slightly but again exceeded the country's average.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Natural population growth in Ruse district has continued to decline and in 2021 it fell to -17.6% , against the national average of -13.2% . However, Ruse is one of the few districts that manage to attract new residents, although its net migration rate is low -0.3% .

The age dependency ratios in the district have improved slightly, but remain higher than the national average. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 years has reached 184.5%, compared to 149.3% in the country on average, and to those aged 15–64 years -37.5% , versus 34.0% nationwide.

Ruse is among the districts with a high level of urbanization – in 2021 76.9% of the population was living in urban settlements, compared to 73.1% nationally, while the population density was 1,618 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,489 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

The enrolment ratio in 5th to 7th grade again remains below the national average, and has even decreased to 83.8%, versus the national average of 85.9% for 2021. At the same time, the share of repeaters has risen slightly, though it still remains lower than nationally -0.41% in the district, versus 0.94% nationally. The number of teachers in primary and secondary schools in Ruse is equal to the national average -97 per 1,000 students.

Students' results for 2022 again remained close to the average ones in the country. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade dropped to 35.9 points, compared to 35.3 points nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.88, whereas the national average was 3.97. "Fail" grades (below 3.00) made up 17.2%, against the national average of 17.0%.

The number of university students has shrunk to 27 per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Healthcare

In 2021, the healthcare system in Ruse district continued to suffer from a shortage of doctors. One local GP was caring for an average of 2,248 persons from the population, compared to 1,734 people per doctor in the country. The number of specialist physicians was close to the national average.

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of beds in the local general hospitals, and in 2021, for the first time in at least ten years, bed availability exceeded the country's average -5.70 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 per 1,000 persons in the country. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals was higher than the national average -245.9 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 per 1,000 persons in the country.

The infant mortality rate in the district is close to the national average. The share of people with health insurance is 88.2%, which is slightly 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 2021, this did not have a negative impact on the speed of delivery of justice. One local judge heard an average of 10.5 cases a month, compared to 9.0 cases per one judge countrywide. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 92%, compared to the average of 89% nationwide, and that of pending cases -8.3% , versus 11.8% nationally.

The crime rate in Ruse district is relatively low, and the detection rate is close to the average one in the country. In 2021, the registered crimes against the person and property in the district constituted 8.8 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate, for its part, dropped to 52.5%, against 51.7% for the country on average.

Environment

The amounts of household waste generated in the district are close to, though above the national average -423 kg/person in the district per year, versus 409 kg/person in the country. At the same time, the share handed over for treatment and recycling remained extremely low at 33.9%, compared to the national average of 6.3% for 2020.

The share of the population with access to public sewerage systems remains relatively low -68.0% , versus 76.3% in the country on average. Nevertheless, in 2020 the whole sewerage network was already connected to wastewater treatment plants, compared to the national average of 66.7%.

Forest areas in Ruse district are relatively limited -14.6% , versus 33.1% countrywide. Degraded land, however, is high -0.54% , against 0.42% in the country for 2021.

Culture

In 2021, Ruse was once again among the districts with the most active cultural life. After the sharp decline of 2020, its intensity in the district grew in 2021, although none of the values of the monitored indicators managed to return to their pre-pandemic level. Cinema visits reached 395 per 1,000 persons, against 351 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to the local theatres and museums numbered 178 per 1,000 persons, against 129 per 1,000 persons in the country, and 348 per 1,000 persons, against 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide respectively. Local libraries attracted 220 visits per 1,000 persons, against 449 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Key indicators for the district of Ruse

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	12,838	12,592	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,329	13,591	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	22.2	22.8	24.0	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	71.9	73.3	74.9	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	69.6	71.4	71.4	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	3.1	(2.6)	4.6	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	11.4	11.7	11.6	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	30.9	31.2	30.9	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	25,111	24,562	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,053	2,101	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,992	2,079	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	84.4	80.0	87.9	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	11.5	20.0	40.5	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	18.2	18.2	18.2	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	71.4	74.9	72.2	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-10.2	-13.5	-17.6	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-4.1	0.7	0.3	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.25	4.19	3.88	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	35.2	39.1	35.9	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	84.4	84.5	83.8	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	94	97	97	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.3	87.7	88.2	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	2,155	2,254	2,248	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	9.7	8.9	8.8	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	9.6	11.4	10.5	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	68.9	68.0	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	423	423	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	33.9	33.9	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	746	224	395	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	565	277	384	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Shumen district

▶ Population (2021)	169,423
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,390
▶ Number of settlements	151
▶ Share of urban population (%)	60.0



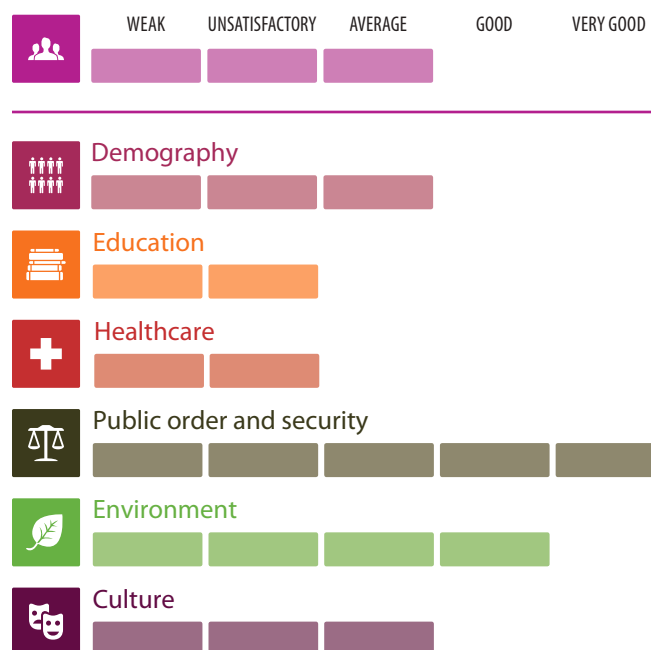
The growth of incomes and salaries in Shumen district has continued, thus leading to a decrease in poverty levels. Employment is falling and unemployment is rising, with both indicators remaining less favorable than average. Investment activity in the district remains relatively slack. Shumen is the 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. The AIP active transparency rating of the local government bodies has gone up considerably.

Both the natural population growth and the net migration rate are decreasing. Students' performance is still poor. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of doctors and hospital beds. The workloads of the local criminal judges remain low and this has a favorable effect on the speed of delivery of justice. The high assessment of Shumen district in the environment category is due mostly to the low volumes of household waste and its management. The number of visits to local cinemas and museums is increasing.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

The growth of GDP per capita in Shumen district has continued, reaching 10,500 BGN/person and placing the district around the middle but still in the lower half of the ranking scale for this indicator in 2020. Incomes and salaries have also continued to rise. The average gross annual salary of employed people is 13,300 BGN, versus 16,700 BGN in the country.

The share of the population below the national poverty line has gone down and is now considerably below the national average – 15.4%, compared to 22.1% in the country. The share of people living with material deprivation is identical to the country's average – 19.4%.

Labor market

Economic activity in the district remained relatively high in 2021 – 74.8%, compared to 72.0% in the country, which is practically at the same level as in the previous year. At the same time, employment is falling and unemployment is rising, with both indicators continuing to be less favorable than in the country on average. The employment rate decreased to 64.1%, against 68.1% in the country, and the unemployment rate increased to 14.2%, versus 5.3% nationally.

A challenge still facing the labor market in Shumen district is the educational structure of the workforce. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education has increased slightly to 27.8%, against the national average of 16.6%. The share of those with a university degree has also increased slightly, reaching 24.2%, compared to 29.6% in the country.

In 2021, the population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that aged 60–64 was 66.8%, compared to 69.4% in the country. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market, there are 67 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and economy

Investment activity in Shumen district again remained relatively slack in 2020. The number of enterprises in Shumen district was small – 41 per 1,000 persons, against 60 per 1,000 persons nationally. FTA acquisition expenditures, as well as FDI, were at a standstill and remained considerably lower than in the country. FTA acquisition expenditures amounted to 1,800 BGN/person, compared to 3,300 BGN/person in the country, and FDI was 686 EUR/person, compared to 3,900 EUR/person in the country.

The above figures have resulted in relatively low production value – 16,600 BGN/person, compared to 27,200 BGN/person nationally.

Shumen is also among the districts with relatively low utilization of European funds. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,898 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 amount of first-class roads and highways in the country for 2021 – 36.4%, compared to 18.5% in the country. Road quality has also improved but remains below the national average, with road surfaces in good condition making up 38%, versus 42% in the country.

Household access to the internet has increased to 84.6% and remains higher than in the country (83.5%). The share of households connected to a gas supply is close to the national average – 4.9% in the district, against 5.3% nationally. The installed RES capacities are significantly below the national average.

Local taxes

The municipalities in Shumen district again kept the levels of local taxes relatively low in 2022. The average rates higher than the respective national averages were those on immovable non-residential property for legal entities and on motor vehicles. At the same time, the taxes on taxi transportation, non-gratuitous acquisition of property, and retail trade were significantly lower.

Within the district, the highest local taxes are levied by the municipalities of Novi Pazar and Kaolinovo, and the lowest – by those of Hitрино and Nikola Kozlevo.

Administration

In line with the progress made throughout the country, the coverage of the cadastral map in Shumen has increased significantly in recent years. In 2021 it already included 97.8% of the district's territory, against 97.4% nationally.

The self-assessments of the local administrations for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services again remained relatively low in 2022. At the same time, the AIP active transparency rating of the municipalities in the district went up considerably and exceeded the country's average – 76.1% in the district, compared to 70.2% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2021, both the natural population growth and the net migration rate decreased. The natural population growth rate dropped to -15.1‰, compared to -13.2‰ nationally. The net migration rate went down, but over the past few years it has remained positive - 1.3‰ in 2021.

The age dependency rate as a ratio between the population aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 reached 161.9%, compared to the national average of 149.3%, and to the 15-19 age group it was 34.7%, versus 34.0% in the country.

The urban population, as well as population density again remained low in 2021. The share of population living in urban settlements was 60.0%, versus the national average of 73.1%; population density was 873 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,489 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 2021, the net enrolment in 5th-7th grade was 79.6%, against 85.9% nationally. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education have maintained levels close to the respective national averages. The number of teachers has been on the increase and remains relatively high. In 2021, the teachers in primary and secondary schools numbered 105 per 1,000 students, compared to 97 teachers per 1,000 students in the country.

In 2021, students' results again remained among the lowest in the country. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 27.0 points, versus 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.58, compared to 3.97 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 27.2%, against 17% nationally.

The number of university students has gone up to 41 per 1,000 persons, 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 2021, there was one GP per 1,862 persons, compared to 1,734 persons per doctor nationally. The number of beds in the district's general hospitals remained extremely low, with 2.92 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons in the country. The number of hospitalizations was much lower than in the country - 102.2 persons per 1,000 persons in 2020, compared to the national average of 222.6 per 1,000 persons. This suggests that the residents may be seeking medical care outside the district.

Infant mortality remained relatively high in 2021 - 8.2‰, compared to the national average of 5.6‰.

The share of the population with health insurance went up in 2020, but it still remains below the national average.

Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in the district remained low in 2021, which had a favorable effect on the speed of delivery of justice. One criminal judge heard an average of 7.6 cases per month, compared to an average of 9.0 cases per judge in the country. The relative share of criminal cases closed within 3 months reached 95%, against 89% nationally, and that of pending cases was the lowest in the country - 2.7%, against 11.8% countrywide.

The crime rate in Shumen district is low, and the detection rate is high. The crimes against the person and property registered in 2021 amounted to 8.7 per 1,000 persons, compared to 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationally. The proportion of cleared crimes was 62.4%, against 51.7% nationally.

Environment

The high assessment of Shumen district in the environment category is mostly due to the relatively low volumes of household waste and its management. In 2020, the amount of household waste generated in the district was 363 kg/person, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person, and 94.1% of the total generated quantities were handed over for treatment and recycling, versus 69.3% nationally.

There has been little change in the share of households with access to a public sewerage network, which remains low. In 2020, it reached 57.3%, against 76.3% in the country. The share of households whose sewerage system is connected to a wastewater treatment plant was 53.6%, compared to 66.7% countrywide.

The amount of forest areas is close to the national average, but that of degraded land is rather more limited.

Culture

The pandemic and the restrictions on cultural events have affected cultural life in the district as well, and this is clearly manifested in the data for 2021. Visits to cinemas rose to 68 per 1,000 persons, versus 351 per 1,000 persons in the country. Visits to museums in the district also increased to a level above the national average relative to population, although numbers may not yet have managed to reach pre-pandemic levels. A decrease is visible in the visits to theaters and libraries. Visits to theaters reached 43 per 1,000 persons, compared to 129 per 1,000 persons in the country, and visits to libraries - 915 per 1,000 persons, which is significantly higher than the average number in the country - 449 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Shumen

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,230	10,475	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,124	13,345	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	29.1	21.5	15.4	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	74.2	75.0	74.8	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	66.6	66.5	64.1	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	10.1	11.3	14.2	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	29.5	27.1	27.8	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	23.7	24.6	24.2	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	16,722	16,613	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,804	1,777	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	665	686	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	77.3	82.5	84.6	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	45.9	34.6	37.6	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	18.2	18.2	18.2	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	65.4	66.4	76.1	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-7.4	-11.0	-15.1	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	6.9	8.2	1.3	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.96	3.98	3.58	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.6	30.4	27.0	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	83.1	82.4	79.6	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	100	101	105	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.9	87.9	88.1	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,833	1,911	1,862	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	9.3	7.9	8.7	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	6.2	6.3	7.6	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	58.0	57.3	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	363	363	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	94.1	94.1	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	111	22	68	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	1,162	623	793	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Silistra district

- ▶ Population (2021)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

104,869
2,846
118
43.7



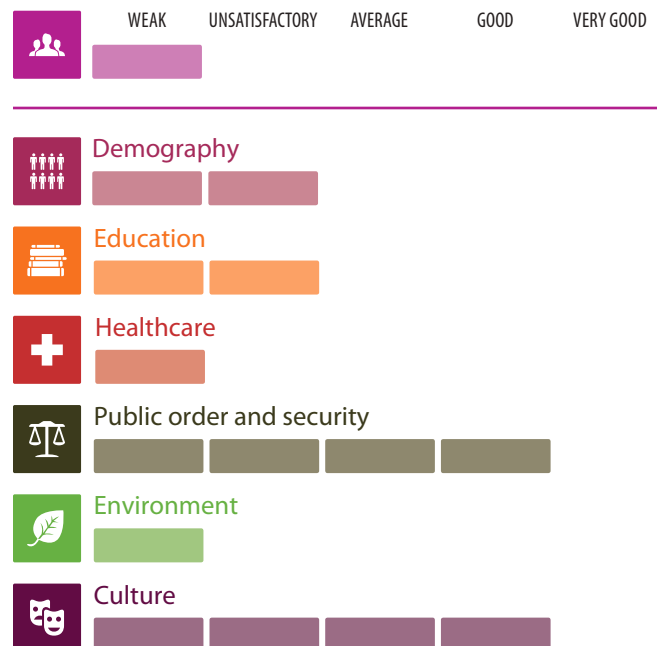
Silistra is once again the district with the lowest GDP per capita, despite its relatively high rate of increase. The development of the local labor market remains unsatisfactory. Some improvement can be seen in the educational structure of the workforce. Silistra is among the regions with the weakest investment activity in the country. The quality of the road surface is relatively high. All monitored local taxes are lower than the national average. The average rating for the transparency of the local self-government has fallen and lags considerably behind.

The natural population growth in Silistra district continues to deteriorate. Students' results are relatively low. Healthcare in Silistra district suffers from a shortage of both doctors and hospital beds. The crime rate is rising, though remaining relatively low, while the detection rate is high. Silistra is among the districts with the worst performance as regards environment indicators. One of the main reasons for this is the extremely low share of waste submitted for treatment and recycling. Cultural life in the district is intensifying.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

Although GDP per capita grew relatively fast in 2020, Silistra is again the district with the lowest GDP figures – 8,300 BGN/person in 2019, compared to the national average of 17,300 BGN/person. Salaries and incomes in the district continue to increase, yet are still relatively low. The average gross annual salary of employed people amounts to 11,700 BGN, compared to 16,700 BGN in the country. Nevertheless, these developments have led to a drop in the poverty levels in the district. In 2021, the relative share of the population living with material deprivation in Silistra district was 11.5%, compared to 19.4% in the country, while the share of those living below the national poverty line was 23.4%, versus 22.1% nationwide.

Labor market

In 2021, the development of the local labor market again remained unsatisfactory. Economic activity went up, but remained relatively low – 65.4%, compared to 72.0% in the country. This increase was accompanied by a parallel rise in employment and a drop in unemployment, though both indicators remained considerably less favorable than the respective national averages. The employment rate reached 55.8%, against the national average of 68.1%. The unemployment rate went down to 14.7%, versus the national average of 5.2%.

The educational structure of the workforce also shows some improvement. The share of the population with primary or lower education has decreased to 28.2% of the workforce, compared to 16.6% nationwide, while the share of those with a university degree has increased to 22.6%, versus 29.6% countrywide.

A major challenge facing the local labor market continues to be population ageing. 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 – 65.2% in Silistra, against 69.4% 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 the districts of Sliven and Kardzhali). The number of nonfinancial enterprises was 37 per 1,000 persons in 2020, compared to 60 per 1,000 persons countrywide. Foreign and domestic investment also remains relatively low. FTA expenditures have reached 1,400 BGN/person (versus 3,300 BGN/person nationally), and FDI – 385 EUR/person, compared to the national average of 3,900 EUR/person. Silistra is also one of the districts with the lowest production value – 10,000 BGN/person, against 27,200 BGN/person respectively.

The municipalities in Silistra district are also lagging behind as regards the utilization of European funds. By 30 June 2022,

payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,952 BGN/person. 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 2021, against 18.5% countrywide. Nevertheless, the quality of the road surface is high – 60% of the roads are in good condition, versus 42% in the country.

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

Access to the internet is available to 79.0% of the households in the district, compared to the average of 83.5% nationwide in 2021. The share of households connected to a gas supply has been rising, but it remains relatively low – 1.6%, versus 5.3% 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 2022, all monitored local taxes were lower than the respective national averages. The biggest margin occurred in the rates for retail trade, motor vehicles, and taxi transportation. Within the district, the municipalities of Kainardzha, Alfatar, and Sitovo levy the lowest local taxes, while the highest rates are in Dulo-vo municipality.

Administration

Along with most other districts in the country, Silistra has made quick progress with cadastral map coverage, which in 2021 already included 97.3% of the district's territory, compared to 97.4% nationally.

The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government has registered a considerable decrease and is among the lowest in the country for 2021 – an average of 2.93 p. (out of a maximum of 4 p. and against 3.47 p. nationally). The local authorities' self-assessment on the provision of one-stop-shop services, however, has risen and now equals the national average.

The average AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has decreased and is lagging considerably behind the national average – 58.6% in Silistra district, versus 70.2% in the country for 2022.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■■

The natural population growth rate in Silistra district has continued to deteriorate and in 2021 it registered a considerable decrease to -18.2‰ , compared to -13.2‰ in the country. The net migration rate was also negative, although at -0.5‰ it was not too low.

These developments affect the age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 178.2%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 – 40.1%, versus the national average of 34.0%.

Silistra is one of the districts with the urban populations, coming only after Kardzhali district. In 2021, 43.7% of the population was living in urban settlements, against 73.1% countrywide. Population density is twice as low as the national average – 767 persons/sq. km, against 1,489 persons/sq. km countrywide.

Education ■■

The district's performance as regards the indicators for education is unsatisfactory. The rate of enrolment in 5th to 7th grade in 2021 was considerably below the national average – 77.8% in Silistra district, compared to 85.9% nationally. The share of repeaters remains comparatively small, but that of dropouts from primary and secondary school is relatively high. The number of teachers continues to rise and is again considerably higher than the national average. There are now 111 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 97 teachers per 1,000 students nationwide.

Students' results in Silistra district were again relatively poor in 2022. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade remained relatively low – 26.9 points, versus 35.3 points nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.65, compared to the national average of 3.97. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 20.1% in the district, compared to 17.0% 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 3 students per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 students per 1,000 persons nationally.

Healthcare ■■

In 2021, 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 2,097 persons on average, compared to 1,734 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 proportion to the population remains relatively low – 4.54 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons in the country.

The relative number of patients treated in the local general hospitals is 181.8 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The infant mortality rate has been rising considerably in the past few years and in 2021 was among the highest in the country.

Public order and security ■■■■

The workloads of the local criminal judges in Silistra district decreased in 2021 and are now relatively low. One local judge hears an average of 7.1 criminal cases a month, compared to 9.0 cases per judge nationally. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is equal to the national average of 89%, but the share of pending cases is considerably lower – 5.4% in the district, versus 11.8% in the country.

The crime rate has been going up but remains relatively low, while the detection rate is high. In 2021, registered crimes against the person and property in the district amounted to 7.6 per 1,000 persons, versus the average of 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate stood at 63.0%, compared to the national average of 51.7%.

Environment ■

Silistra is also among the worst performing districts as regards environmental indicators. One major factor for the low figures is the extremely small amount of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling – a bare 3.2%, versus the national average of 69.3%. At the same time, the amount of generated household waste is similar to the national average – an annual of 381 kg/person in the district, versus 409 kg/person in the country.

Due to the low level of urbanization, a relatively small share of the population lives in settlements with a public sewerage network – 51.2%, compared to 76.3% in the country. Similarly low is the share of the population whose sewerage is connected to wastewater treatment plants – 44.1%, versus 66.7% nationally. Forest areas in Silistra district are limited – 14.6%, versus 33.1% countrywide. Degraded land, however, is close to the national average – 0.40%, against 0.42% in the country.

Culture ■■■■

After the sharp decline in 2020, cultural life in Silistra district grew in intensity in 2021, although none of the values of the monitored indicators managed to return to their pre-pandemic levels. Cinema visits reached 80 per 1,000 persons, against 351 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to the local theatres and museums numbered 65 per 1,000 persons, against 129 per 1,000 persons in the country, and 194 per 1,000 persons, against 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide respectively. Only visits to the local libraries exceeded the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Silistra

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	7,727	8,307	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,572	11,727	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	24.0	32.4	23.4	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	67.3	64.1	65.4	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	58.2	54.1	55.8	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	13.3	15.6	14.7	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	30.4	30.7	28.2	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	19.5	20.8	22.6	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	9,832	9,979	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,523	1,388	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	(99)	385	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	76.6	80.7	79.0	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	60.2	67.4	59.6	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	17.8	17.8	17.8	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	63.0	66.4	58.6	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-9.5	-14.0	-18.2	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-2.1	3.2	-0.5	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.86	3.94	3.65	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	26.7	30.3	26.9	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	79.8	80.2	77.8	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	101	106	111	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.7	87.6	88.3	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	2,077	2,193	2,097	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	7.8	8.1	7.6	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	8.1	9.9	7.1	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	51.5	51.2	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	382	381	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	3.2	3.2	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	119	25	80	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	309	162	194	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Sliven district



▶ Population (2021)	180,058
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,544
▶ Number of settlements	110
▶ Share of urban population (%)	65.2

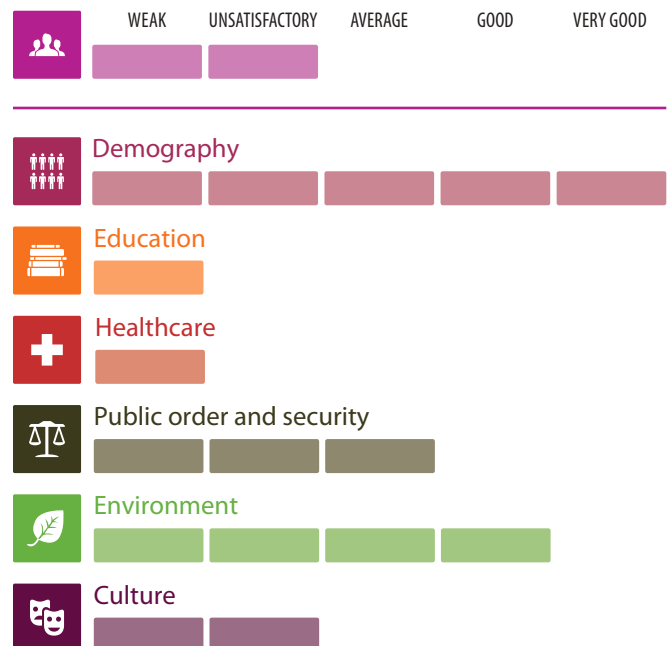
Although GDP per capita in the district of Sliven is growing, it is among the lowest in the country. The shrinking of economic activity is accompanied by a decrease in employment and an increase in unemployment. Investment activity is extremely slack and the district ranks last in this category. The basic physical infrastructure retains its high level. The tax rates on retail trade and taxi transportation are significantly lower than the respective national averages. The transparency of the municipalities in the district remains high.

The demographic picture of the district ranks it among the country's leaders on this indicator. At the same time, Sliven is among the districts with the lowest performance as regards the indicators for education. Sliven's poor rating in the healthcare category is mainly due to the extremely high infant mortality rate. The relative number of crimes in the district is close to the average in the country, while the detection rate remains considerably higher. The low proportion of the population in housing with access to public sewerage remains a challenge. The intensity of cultural life is increasing.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Income and living standard ■■

Although GDP per capita in the Sliven region is growing, in 2020 it was among the lowest in the country, (alongside Silistra) – 8,600 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 17,300 BGN/person. Salaries and incomes in the district are also increasing, but they remain considerably below the average levels. The average annual gross salary of employed people reached 12,400 BGN, against 16,700 BGN in the country.

Sliven is the district with the highest share of the population living with material deprivation – 34.1%, compared to 19.4% in the country. The share of the population living below the national poverty line is also significantly higher than the average value – 32.0% in the district, compared to 22.1% in the country in 2021.

Labor market ■■■■

Economic activity in Sliven district decreased in 2021 and its rate fell to 68.8%, compared to the national average of 72.0%. This shrinking of the activity has been accompanied by a decrease in employment and an increase in unemployment. The employment rate reached 62.4%, versus the national average of 68.1%, and unemployment was 9.4%, compared to 5.3% nationally.

The labor market still faces the challenge posed by the educational structure of the workforce. In 2021, the share of the population aged 25–64 years with primary or lower education went up and reached 38.2%, against 16.6% nationally, and was the highest in the country for that year. The share of people with higher education remained relatively limited and even fell to 20.1%, versus the national average of 29.6%.

At the same time, the district presents a rather favorable picture of its demography – 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 90.5%, while the national average is 69.4%. This means that for every 100 adults who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are about 91 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and economy ■■

Investment activity in Sliven is extremely slack, which ranks the district last in the whole country in this category. The number of non-financial enterprises in the district was 38 per 1,000 persons in 2020 and remained relatively low compared to the national average of 60 per 1,000 persons. Domestic and foreign investment also remained low. FTA acquisition expenditure decreased to 1,100 BGN/person, versus the average of 3,300 BGN/person nationally. FDI in the district amounted to 867 EUR/person, which is the same as in the year before and over four times lower than the national average of 3,900 EUR/

person. Production in the district was worth only 12,000 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 27,200 BGN/person, and decreased compared to 2019.

Sliven is also the district with the lowest utilization rate of European funds. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,339 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipality of the city of Sliven, though even those payments were far below the national average.

Infrastructure ■■■■■■

The basic physical infrastructure in Sliven district retains its high level. The density of the road and railroad networks is comparable to the national average. In 2021, the share of highways and first-class roads remained comparatively high – 22.2%, compared to 18.5% in the country.

Sliven continues to be the district with the largest share of road surfaces in good condition – 68%, against 42% in the country in 2021. Digital connectivity is also relatively good – the share of households with internet access was 83.3% in 2021, versus 83.59% nationally. The share of households connected to a gas supply remains low – 1.0%, compared to 5.3% in the country.

Local taxes ■■■■

In 2022, the average rates of the tax on non-residential immovable property for legal entities and non-gratuitous acquisition of property were higher than in the country. At the same time, the tax rates on retail trade and taxi transportation were considerably lower than the respective national averages. The tax on motor vehicles was comparable to the average one in the country.

Administration ■■■■■■

Cadastral map coverage has increased and is now above the country's average, although by a small margin, and includes almost the whole of the district's territory. The local authorities' self-assessment on the development of e-government marked a significant improvement in 2022, while that on the provision of one-stop-shop services retained its level from the year before and was lower than the national average.

The transparency of the municipal bodies in the district has continued to improve and in 2022 the average rating reached 80.1%, versus 70.2% countrywide, which again places Sliven district second in the country, after Dobrich district.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2021, Sliven's demographic picture again 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 -9.0% (versus -13.2% nationally), while the decrease was among the lowest in the country. At the same time, the district has failed to attract new residents and the net migration rate remained negative (-4.8%).

The age dependency ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 has decreased further, but at 108.8% it still ranks Sliven district at the top place in the country, where that ratio is 149.3%. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 is also lower – 33.2%, compared to 34.0% nationwide. The share of the population living in urban areas is relatively low – 65.2%, compared to 73.1% in the country, but the population density measured as the average number of people per unit settlement 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 dropouts from primary and secondary education are the highest in the whole country. The number of teachers has been rising but it still remains the lowest in the country – 86 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 97 teachers per 1,000 students in the country.

Students' performance in 2022 again remained weak. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 25.8 points, compared to the average of 35.3 points nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was also relatively low – "Good" 3.79, versus the national average of 3.97, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 23.1%, compared to the national average of 17.0%.

In the past few years, the rate of enrolment in 5th–7th grade has remained steady and it parallels the country's average – 85.3% in the district, versus 85.9% nationally.

Healthcare

The poor results of Sliven district in the area of healthcare are mostly due to the exceptionally high infant mortality rate. In 2021 it remained the highest in the whole country and even went up to 14.8‰, against 5.6‰ nationally.

The numbers of doctors and hospital beds in Sliven district are below the respective national averages. One local GP cares for 1,916 persons on average, compared to 1,734 persons per doctor countrywide. The index for access to specialist physicians is also more unfavorable than in the country on average. The number of beds in the local general hospitals continues to be

relatively low – 4.73 per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 per 1,000 persons in the country in 2021.

The number of people treated in the local general hospitals is 171.0 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 per 1,000 persons countrywide. The share of people with health insurance remains relatively low – 86.7%, versus 88.7% in the country.

Public order and security

One judge in Sliven district hears an average of 7.76 cases a month, compared to 9.60 cases nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 92%, compared to the average of 89% nationwide. Pending cases make up 9.5%, against 11.8% in the country.

The number of crimes in the district is close to the average crime rate in the country, but the detection rate is considerably higher. In 2021, registered crimes against the person and property in Sliven district amounted to 9.6 per 1,000 persons, against 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The detection rate was 64.4% versus the average of 51.7% in the country.

Environment

The relative volume of generated household waste is close to, but below the national average – 368 kg/person per year in the district, compared to 409 kg/person in the country in 2020. The share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is almost equal to the national average – slightly over 69%.

A challenge still facing the district is the limited share of the population with access to public sewerage networks – only 64.8%, compared to 76.3% countrywide, while the share of sewerage systems connected to wastewater treatment plants is 56.9% in Sliven district, against the national average of 66.7%.

The forest areas are relatively high – 42.4% (compared to 33.1% in the country), while degraded land is around the national average in 2021.

Culture

After the sharp decline in 2020, cultural life in Silistra district grew in intensity in 2021, although none of the values of the monitored indicators managed to return to their pre-pandemic levels. Cinema visits reached 53 per 1,000 persons, against 351 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to the local theatres and museums numbered 81 per 1,000 persons, against 129 per 1,000 persons in the country, and 360 per 1,000 persons, against 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide respectively. Only visits to the local libraries exceeded the national average – 621 per 1,000 persons in the district, against 449 per 1,000 persons in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Sliven

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, BGN, current prices	8,172	8,616	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,085	12,370	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	33.9	34.4	32.0	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	69.0	69.9	68.8	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	64.5	65.0	62.4	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	6.5	6.9	9.4	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	37.6	36.2	38.2	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	20.9	21.4	20.1	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	12,467	11,974	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,236	1,075	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	866	867	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	77.2	83.4	83.3	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	79.4	72.9	68.0	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	16.4	16.4	16.4	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	77.8	79.8	80.1	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-2.9	-6.4	-9.0	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-10.0	-2.2	-4.8	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.16	4.08	3.79	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	29.3	27.5	25.8	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	84.9	86.4	85.3	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	83	82	86	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87.5	86.4	86.7	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,841	1,930	1,916	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	10.2	9.4	9.6	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	9.8	9.7	7.6	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	65.2	64.8	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	369	368	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	69.2	69.1	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	90	14	53	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	485	280	360	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Smolyan district

- ▶ Population (2021)
- ▶ Territory (sq. km)
- ▶ Number of settlements
- ▶ Share of urban population (%)

99,318
3,193
240
56.9



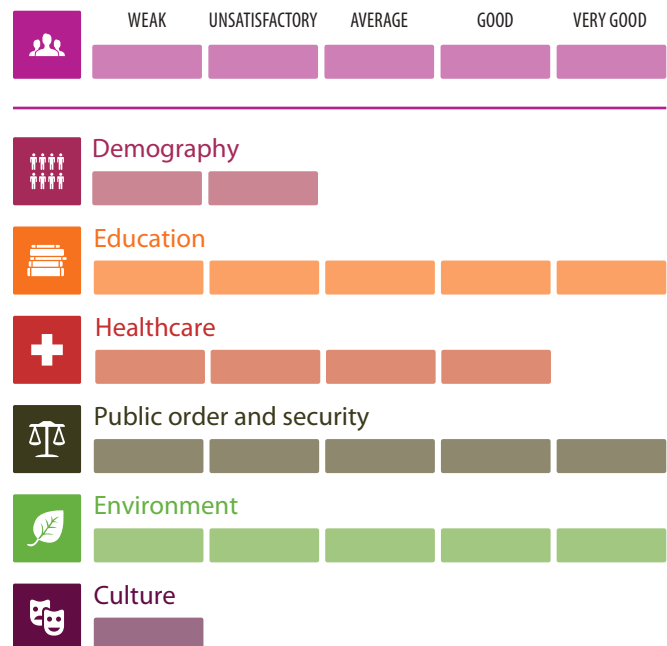
GDP, salaries, and incomes in Smolyan district continue to rise. The poverty level is about average. Employment and unemployment are falling, with both indicators remaining relatively unfavorable. The number of enterprises, the volume of production, domestic, and foreign investment are all shrinking. There are no railways, highways, and first-class roads in the district. Smolyan is among the districts with relatively low local taxes. The transparency rating of local self-government bodies is decreasing and remains below average. The population of the district is among the fastest

ageing in the country. Smolyan continues to rank among the leaders in the education category. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education are low. The share of people with health insurance is high. Smolyan is the district with the lowest workload of the local judges and with the smallest number of registered crimes. The district also ranks first with the highest share of forest areas and the lowest share of degraded land. The intensity of its cultural life is gradually increasing, but it nevertheless remains weak.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

GDP per capita in Smolyan district has continued to grow and in 2020 it reached 12,000 BGN, compared to 17,300 BGN nationally. Salaries and incomes are also rising. In 2020, the average annual gross salary of employed people was 12,000 BGN, compared to 16,700 BGN in the country. In 2021, household incomes again remained higher than the national average.

Poverty levels in the district are close to the national average. The share of the population living with material deprivation is 18.5%, versus 19.4% in the country, and that of the population living below the national poverty line is 23.0%, against 22.1% countrywide.

Labor market

In 2020, economic activity in Smolyan shrank to 70.8%, and its rate fell below the national average of 72.0%. This shrinking was accompanied by a decline in both employment and unemployment, with the two indicators remaining less favorable than the respective national averages. The employment rate reached 64.6%, compared to 68.1% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 8.8%, against 5.3% nationwide.

The educational structure of the workforce in the district has shown a slight improvement and is again relatively high. In 2021, the share of people aged 25–64 with primary or lower education declined to 12.9%, versus the national average of 16.6%, while the number of those with a university degree went up to 24.3%, against 29.6% nationally,

A huge challenge for the continuing 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 was 42.3% in 2021, compared to 69.4% nationwide. This means that for every 100 adults who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 42 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and economy

In 2020, business and investment activity in the Smolyan region deteriorated, as the number of enterprises, production volume, and domestic and foreign investment shrank. The number of non-financial enterprises in the district reached 51 per 1,000 persons, compared to 60 per 1,000 persons in the country. FTA acquisition expenditure per capita decreased by 15% to 2,200 BGN, versus 3,300 BGN in the country, and FDI – by 36% to 565 EUR per capita, compared to 3,900 EUR per capita countrywide. Production value shrank to 15,600 BGN, but the decline was not so great (1.4%).

Utilization of European funds in Smolyan district is relatively good. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to

beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,800 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by the municipalities of Nedelino and Smolyan city.

Infrastructure

The specific geographic location of the district as a border region and its mountainous terrain account for its relatively poorly developed infrastructure. Smolyan lacks railroads, highways, and first-class roads. The density of its road network remains below the national average. Road quality remained relatively good in 2021, with the share of roads with surfaces in good condition reaching 50%, against the country's average of 42%.

Households' access to the internet has registered an increase, but in 2021 it was again lower than the national average – 73.6% in the district, versus 83.5% in the country. The share of households connected to a gas supply is practically nil, against 5.3% in the country on average. Installed RES capacities have reached 2.8 kW/person, versus 0.6 kW/person nationally.

Local taxes

In 2022, Smolyan again ranked among the districts with relatively low local taxes. The biggest differences with the respective national averages were observed in the taxes on retail trade and motor vehicles. In 2022, the average retail trade tax in the municipalities in Smolyan district was 7.73 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. Among the monitored taxes, the rates in the district were higher for the tax on immovable non-residential property for legal entities.

Within the district, the municipalities levying the lowest taxes are those in Smolyan city, Nedelino, and Borino, and the highest – the municipality of Dospat.

Administration

The self-assessment of the local administration on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services dropped in 2022 and fell below the respective national averages. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration also decreased and remained below the national average – 66.9% in the district, compared to 70.2% in the country.

Cadastral map coverage in Smolyan district has been rising steadily and in 2021 it already covered practically the whole of its territory.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The population of Smolyan district is one of the fastest ageing in the country. In 2021, the district recorded one of the lowest declines in the natural population growth rate, but also one of the largest decreases in the net migration rate, with both figures remaining negative. The natural population growth rate was -16.8% , versus -13.2% nationwide, and the net migration rate collapsed from -1.6% to -8.9% .

The district's age dependency ratios have been deteriorating fast and are considerably less favorable than in the country on average. In 2021, the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 reached 229.6%, compared to 149.3% nationally, and to the 15–64 age group it was 41.6%, versus 34.0% countrywide.

The urban population in the district is relatively low – 56.9%, against the national average of 73.1%. At the same time, the density of the population remains relatively high – 1,717 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,489 persons/sq. km in the country.

Education

Smolyan continues to rank among the districts with the best performance in the education category, where it is second only to Sofia (capital city). The net enrolment rate of schoolchildren in 5th–7th grade is one of the highest in the country – 91.8%, compared to the average of 85.9% nationally. The proportion of teachers to students in primary and secondary education is the highest in the country – 130 teachers per 1,000 students in 2021, compared to the national average of 97 teachers per 1,000 students. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education are the lowest in Bulgaria.

The performance of the district's students in 2022 again exceeded the national average. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 39.4 points, against 35.3 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 "Good" 4.12 in the district, versus 3.97 nationally, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 9.6%, against 17.0% nationwide, which ranked Smolyan district second only to the capital.

Healthcare

Smolyan district performs quite well in the healthcare category. The percentage of people with health insurance is among the highest in Bulgaria – 97.5% in 2021, compared to 88.7% nationwide, which can also be explained by the high rate of population aging and the large share of pensioners in the district. Access to GPs is relatively easy, though the number of specialist physicians is still considerably lower than the average one for the country.

Bed capacity in the local general hospitals is close to the country's average – 5.60 per 1,000 persons, versus 5.62 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The relative number of patients treated in

the local hospitals is 179.1 per 1,000 persons, versus 222.6 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

Public order and security

In 2021, 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 3.3 cases per judge, compared to 9.8 cases per judge 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 – 95%, against 89% nationally.

Smolyan is also the district with the lowest crime rates in the country. Registered crimes against the person and property number 4.5 per 1,000 persons, with 9.8 per 1,000 persons as the national average. At the same time, the detection rate in the district is extremely high – 69.7% in the district, compared to 51.7% countrywide.

Environment

Smolyan is among the districts with very good performance when it comes to the environment indicators. It is also the district with the largest forest areas – 69.5%, against 33.1% in the country, and with the lowest amount of degraded land – 0.08%, versus 0.42% nationwide.

In 2020, 73.4% of the population lived in settlements with a public sewerage network (compared to 76.3% 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 wastewater treatment plants, with a coverage of only 42.7% of the local population, compared to the national average of 66.7%.

The amounts of household waste generated in the district are relatively small – 333 kg/person per year, against 409 kg/person on a national scale. The share of this waste that has been handed over for treatment and recycling is also low – 48.0%, compared to 69.3% in the country.

Culture

After the sharp decline of 2020, the intensity of cultural life in the district grew in 2021, although none of the values of the monitored indicators managed to return to their pre-pandemic level, so Smolyan district's overall performance in this category remains poor. Cinema visits numbered 95 per 1,000 persons, against 351 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to the local theatres and museums numbered 42 per 1,000 persons, against 129 per 1,000 persons in the country, and 176 per 1,000 persons, against 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide respectively and visits to local libraries amounted to 152 per 1,000 persons, against 449 per 1,000 persons nationally.

Key indicators for the district of Smolyan

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,742	12,028	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,106	12,037	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	21.2	24.4	23.0	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	73.0	74.0	70.8	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	66.5	65.2	64.6	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	8.8	11.9	8.8	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	14.3	14.0	12.9	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	23.5	23.5	24.3	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	15,866	15,649	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,591	2,197	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	889	565	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	82.4	73.6	76.3	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	53.8	55.1	50.1	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	16.9	16.9	16.9	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	67.5	72.2	66.9	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-9.7	-14.4	-16.8	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-8.4	-1.6	-8.9	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.53	4.44	4.12	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	38.1	42.6	39.4	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	90.9	90.8	91.8	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	125	130	130	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	97.0	95.6	97.5	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,569	1,605	1,552	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	6.0	5.2	4.5	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	5.2	3.6	3.3	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	73.1	73.4	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	333	333	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	48.0	48.0	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	149	38	95	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	154	96	176	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Sofia (capital) district



▶ Population (2021)	1,307,439
▶ Territory (sq. km)	1,341
▶ Number of settlements	54
▶ Share of urban population (%)	95.5

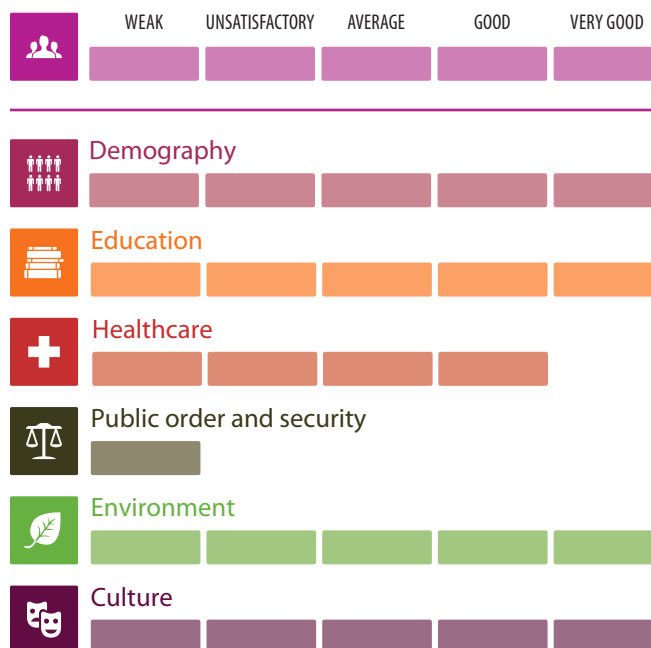
Sofia (capital) has the highest GDP per capita, with a value of more than double the national average and that of the district ranking second in this indicator – Sofia district. Its labor market is well developed. Sofia is also the undisputed leader in terms of investment activity. The share of households with access to broadband internet continues to increase. The capital is the district with the highest local taxes in the country. It has the highest scores in the municipal administration’s self-assessment on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services.

Sofia is the district with the most favorable demographic picture. 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 among the highest in the country. Delivery of justice is relatively slow, and the crime detection rate is the lowest in the country. The district’s high level of urbanization accounts for the large share of the 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 volume more than twice larger than both the national average and that of Sofia district which ranks second in this category. In 2020, GDP per capita in Sofia reached 38,900 BGN, against 17,300 BGN in the country.

Salaries and incomes are growing and their amounts are significantly higher. The average annual gross salary reached 23,000 BGN in 2020, against 16,700 BGN in the country.

The capital is also the district with the lowest poverty level. The share of the population living with material deprivation amounts to 9.6%, versus 19.4% nationally in 2020, while that of people living below the national poverty line is 11.3%, compared to 22.1% nationally in 2021.

Labor market

The capital's good performance in the indicators for economic development is again manifested in the favorable dynamics of the local labor market in 2021. Economic activity decreased, but remained relatively high – 75.8%, compared to 72.0% nationally. Parallel to this decline was an increase in employment and a decrease in unemployment. The employment rate reached 74.8%, against 68.1% nationally, and the unemployment rate – 2.7%, versus 5.3% nationally.

The capital remains the district with the best educational structure of its workforce, which in 2021 continued to improve. The share of the population aged 25–64 with a university degree reached 57.7%, against 29.6% in the country, while employed people with primary or lower education made up 4.2%, compared to 16.6% nationally.

Sofia has the second highest (after Sliven) population replacement ratio as a ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 – 83.2%, compared to 69.4% nationwide. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 83 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and economy

In 2020, 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 60 per 1,000 persons in the country. The growth rate of FTA acquisition expenditures is five times the national average and the capital has now moved even further ahead of the country's average and the district ranked second in this category. Production value in the district has also grown at a higher rate to reach 57,800 BGN/person, compared to 27,200 BGN/person in the country. Significantly higher than the average

national figures is also cumulative FDI – 10,600 EUR/person, against 3,900 EUR/person in the country.

By 30 June 2022, the capital again occupied the top place as regards utilization of EU funds, even though its rate of increase was relatively low compared to the previous year. Payments made in Sofia (capital) district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 3,972 BGN/person.

Infrastructure

There are no roads from the national road network within Sofia (capital) district, but its territory is bordered directly by several highways. In addition, Sofia Central Railway Station is one of the main railway hubs in the country and the density of the railway network of 12.7 km/100 sq. km territory 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 is again very high – 90.3%, compared to 83.5% in the country. The share of households connected to a gas supply is rising and exceeds the national average.

Local taxes

The level of local taxation in Sofia (capital) district again remained the highest in the whole country in 2022. The biggest differences in comparison to the national figures were recorded in the retail trade tax (20.00 BGN/sq. m, compared to 12.99 BGN/sq. m in the country), the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property (3.00% versus 2.75% in the country), and on taxi transportation (850 BGN annually against 478 BGN in the country).

From the other monitored taxes, the only one that remained below the average nationwide rate was the tax on immovable non-residential property for legal entities (1.88‰, against 2.06‰ in the country).

Administration

Sofia is the district with the highest results in the assessment of the work of its local administration. The whole territory of the capital is now included in the cadastral map, against 97.4% nationally. The development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services again received the maximum points in 2022. The AIP active transparency rating of the district's local administration bodies has decreased, but remains higher than the national average – 74.8%, against the national average of 70.2%.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2021, Sofia (capital) remained the district presenting the most favorable demographic picture in the country. Although the natural population growth rate is negative and is decreasing like elsewhere in the country, it still occupies the top place nationwide with a value of -6.8% , compared to the national average of -13.2% . Sofia (capital) continues to attract new residents and the net migration rate is 6.0% .

The age dependency ratios in Sofia remain significantly more favorable than the average ones for the country. The ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 114.2% , compared to 149.3% nationally, with the capital being surpassed only by Sliven district. At the same time, Sofia is the leader in attracting people of working age, and the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 15–64 is 25.7% , compared to 34.0% in the country.

The district's specificity accounts for the extremely high level of urbanization – 95.5% of its territory – and the population density is three times the country average – $4,761$ persons/sq. km, compared to $1,486$ persons/sq. km nationally.

Education

The capital remains the country's leader in the education category, 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 figure pertains to the teacher-student ratios, which can be explained by the 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 2022, the students in the capital achieved an average score of 47.3 points in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade, which is far above the national average of 35.3 points. Also, the average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.42 , compared to the average of "Good" 3.97 countrywide, while the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was only 6.8% , against the national average of 17.0% .

The number of university students in Sofia remains considerably above the national average – 72 per $1,000$ persons, versus 32 per $1,000$ persons nationwide.

Healthcare

In 2021, the capital remained among the country's districts with good healthcare, 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 $1,755$ persons, compared to $1,734$ persons on average in the country. The hospital bed capacity is also similar to the national average – 5.69 beds in general hospitals per $1,000$ persons, compared to 5.62 beds

nationally. The number of hospitalizations is 300.6 per $1,000$ persons, against 222.6 per $1,000$ persons countrywide. The infant mortality rate is almost 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 are a consequence of the heavy workloads of the local judges and the low detection rates.

In 2021, one criminal judge in Sofia (capital) heard an average of 11.3 cases a month, compared to 9.0 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 89% nationwide, and pending cases constituted 20.7% , versus 11.8% countrywide.

The number of crimes against the person and property registered in the capital district dropped in 2021 to 10.4 per $1,000$ persons but it still remained high compared to the national average of 9.8 per $1,000$ persons. These are all factors contributing to the exceptionally low share of cleared crimes – a bare 33.7% , versus 51.7% for the country.

Environment

The capital remained among the districts with the highest annual volume of generated household waste in 2020, with 480 kg/person, compared to 409 kg for the country. However, almost all waste was handed over for treatment and recycling – 98.4% , compared to 69.3% on average in the country.

The high degree of urbanization in the district is the determining factor for the high share of the population with access to public sewerage systems – 96.3% of the population, versus 76.3% nationally, while the whole sewerage network is connected to wastewater treatment plants, compared to 66.7% on average countrywide.

The amount of degraded land is high – 1.43% , versus 0.42% nationally in 2021.

Culture

In 2021, the capital was once again the district with the most active cultural life. After the sharp decline in 2020, the intensity of cultural life in the district increased in 2021, although the value of none of the considered indicators could return to its pre-pandemic level. Visits to cinemas reached 814 per $1,000$ persons (compared to 351 per $1,000$ persons in the country). Visits to local theaters and museums were respectively 274 per $1,000$ persons (versus 129 per $1,000$ persons in the country) and 290 per $1,000$ persons (against 426 per $1,000$ persons in the country). Libraries in the district attracted 748 visits per $1,000$ persons (compared to 449 per $1,000$ persons in the country).

Key indicators for the district of Sofia (capital city)

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	38,803	38,891	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	21,040	22,950	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	10.0	9.2	11.3	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	78.0	79.4	75.8	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	76.4	74.4	74.8	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	1.6	2.8	2.7	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	4.9	3.9	4.2	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	52.8	56.8	57.7	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	56,667	57,800	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	7,147	9,214	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	9,626	10,604	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	83.0	90.8	90.3	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	78.8	78.3	74.8	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-2.0	-3.5	-6.8	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	2.4	-12.0	6.0	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.63	4.58	4.42	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	48.1	50.1	47.3	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	89.4	88.8	89.1	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	85	93	87	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87.1	87.1	89.0	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,712	1,728	1,755	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	13.3	11.4	10.4	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	12.0	10.6	11.3	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	96.3	96.3	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	476	480	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	98.4	98.4	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	1,756	473	814	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	652	207	290	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Sofia district

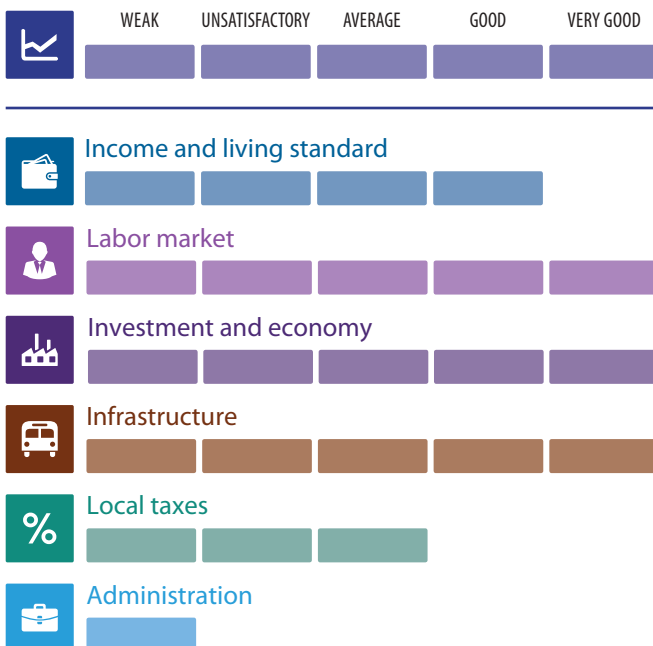
▶ Population (2021)	233,607
▶ Territory (sq. km)	7,062
▶ Number of settlements	284
▶ Share of urban population (%)	59.3



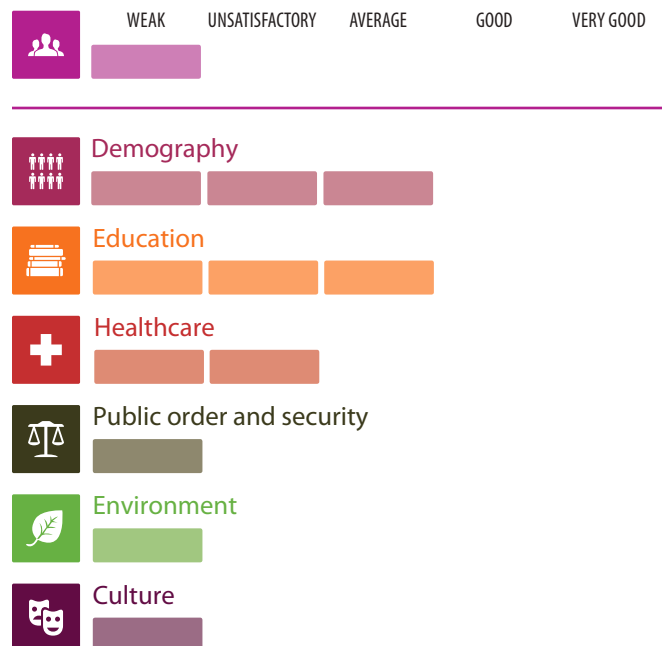
The relatively high figures for both GDP per capita and salaries are a precondition for the relatively low poverty levels in Sofia district. The development of the local labor market continues to be very good, which again manifests the deep interrelation between the economies of the capital and the district of Sofia. Good economic development is also accompanied by high investment activity. The density of the road network is high. 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. The rate of natural population growth in Sofia district continues to fall and remains below the national average. The level of urbanization in Sofia district is relatively low. The performance of the students in the district is poor. Access to doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians in the district – is slightly below the national average. Delivery of justice is slow. The share of generated waste handed over for treatment and recycling is small. The share of forest areas is relatively high. Cultural life in Sofia district retains its low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■■■

Sofia district retains second place in the country (after the capital district) as regards GDP per capita, which has continued to rise and reached 17,100 BGN in 2020. Salaries and incomes have also been rising. The average annual gross salary of employed people reached 15,900 BGN and is also the second highest in the country (again after the capital).

The relatively high values of GDP and salaries in the district have kept poverty levels relatively low. In 2021, the share of the population living with material deprivation was 12.7%, compared to 19.4% in the country, and those living below the national poverty line made up 21.8%, versus 22.1% nationwide.

Labor market ■■■■■■

The development of the local labor market in 2021 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 slightly and settled above the national average – at 76.9%, compared to 72.0% for the country. This growth was accompanied by a decrease both in employment and unemployment. The employment rate was 75.2% and was once again the highest in the country. Unemployment also remained extremely low.

The profile of the workforce in Sofia district is characterized by a large number of people with secondary education – 73.4%, compared to 53.8% 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 university graduates and naturally leaving the processing industry to develop in its geographical periphery.

Population ageing continues to be a challenge facing the local labor market. The population replacement rate as a ratio of people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 was 62.5%, versus the national average of 69.4%.

Investment and economy ■■■■■■

The positive economic development of the district is associated with high investment activity. In 2020, the district again reported the second highest figures in the country (after those in the capital) for foreign and domestic investment. FTA acquisition expenditures reached 3,400 BGN/person, compared to 3,300 BGN/person nationally, and FDI amounted to 6,700 EUR/person, versus 3,900 EUR/person countrywide. Production value also ranked the district second in the country, with 49,900 BGN/person, compared to 27,200 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 considerably. By 30 June 2022, payments made in Sofia district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,556 BGN/person. 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 35% of the road surfaces in good condition, versus 42% in the country in 2021.

The railroad network density is also relatively high.

Access to the Internet in the district remains relatively limited, with 74.1% of the households connected to it, compared to 83.5% on average in the country.

Sofia district takes the top place in the country regarding the share of households connected to a gas supply – 12.3%, against 5.3% in the country.

Local taxes ■■■■■■

In 2022, the average level of local taxation in Sofia district remained generally close to the average one for all Bulgarian municipalities. Higher than average continued to be the taxes on immovable non-residential property for 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.

Within the district, the highest average tax rates are those in the municipalities of Samokov and Botevgrad, and the lowest ones are in the municipalities of Mirkovo and Chelopech.

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 (97.4%), in 2021 cadastral coverage in the district was 92.6%. The self-assessment of the municipal authorities for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services in 2022 also remained lower than the national average.

In 2022, Sofia district continued to be among those with the lowest transparency assessment of its local administrations, with a rating of 57.9%, compared to 70.2% on average for the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■■■

The rate of natural population growth in Sofia district continues to fall and remains below the national average at -15.5‰, against -13.2‰ nationwide in 2021. The net migration rate is also negative at -5.1‰.

These processes are reflected in the deteriorating age dependency ratios in the district. In 2021, the ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 170.1%, compared to 149.3% nationally, and to those aged 15–64 it was 37.0%, versus 34.0% nationwide.

Sofia is among Bulgaria's districts with a relatively low level of urbanization – 59.3% of its population is urban, against 73.1% countrywide, and with a low population density of 755 persons/sq. km, compared to the national average of 1,489 persons/sq. km.

Education ■■■■

The net enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade in Sofia district remains relatively high – 90.0%, compared to 85.9% on average for the country in 2021. The number of teachers in primary and secondary education in the district continues to grow, reaching 101 per 1,000 students, versus 97 per 1,000 students nationally.

The performance of the students in the district is relatively poor. At the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade in 2022, they achieved an average score of 29.6 points, versus 35.3 points nationally. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.77, compared to the average of 3.97 countrywide, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) reached 20.9%, against the national average of 17.0%.

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 2021.

Healthcare ■■■

Access to doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians in the district – is slightly below the national average. In 2021, one GP cared for an average of 1,839 people, compared to 1,734 people per GP in the country. The share of people with health insurance has decreased significantly and is now below the national average.

The number of beds in the local general hospitals relative to the population in the district has been falling in the past few years, while that in the country has been rising, but it is, as always, higher than the national average. In 2021, there were 5.73 beds per 1,000 people, compared to 5.62 beds per 1,000 people nationally. The number of hospitalizations in 2021 was 211.9 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 per 1,000 persons nationally.

The infant mortality rate has fallen and in 2021 was below the national average.

Public order and security ■

The results for Sofia district regarding the provision of public order and security in 2021 remained poor. That was mostly a consequence of the slow delivery of justice, although the workloads of the local criminal judges were below the national average. One criminal judge in Sofia district heard an average of 8.2 cases a month, compared to 9.0 cases per judge in the country. At the same time, the number of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 82%, compared to the average of 89% nationwide, and pending cases amounted to 21.6%, versus 11.8% countrywide, which is the highest figure for this indicator 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 9.5 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 9.8 per 1,000 persons. The detection rate is 56.8%, versus 51.7% for the country.

Environment ■

The annual volume of household waste generated in Sofia district is among the highest in the country – 470 kg/person, versus 409 kg/person nationwide, while the share of the waste handed over for treatment and recycling is among the lowest – 12.1%, compared to 69.3% in the country in 2020.

In spite of the relatively low level of urbanization, the share of households in the district with access to public sewerage networks is high – 76.2%, compared to the national average of 76.3%. At the same time, access to sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants is lower – 39.9%, against the average share of 66.7% in the country.

The forest areas are relatively large (46.0%, compared to 33.1% in the country), and the amount of degraded land is close to the average (0.41%, against 0.42% in the country) in 2021.

Culture ■

In 2021, cultural life in Sofia district still sustained its low intensity, probably due to the region's proximity to the capital, which allows a large part of the population relatively fast and easy access to the biggest city in the country. No visits to libraries and theaters have been reported for the district, while cinema visits dropped significantly due to the pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on visits to cultural events. Visits to museums went up and their relative number is relatively high, although they cannot yet recover their pre-pandemic level.

Key indicators for the district of Sofia

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	17,087	17,146	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	14,586	15,857	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	17.6	22.8	21.8	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	77.7	76.6	76.9	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	77.7	78.8	75.2	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	(0.4)	(0.9)	(0.7)	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	10.9	13.6	14.2	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	12.0	11.3	12.4	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	47,296	49,856	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,803	3,430	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	6,569	6,704	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	67.3	73.0	74.1	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	31.7	30.2	35.4	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	21.4	21.4	21.4	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	57.3	65.3	57.9	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-9.3	-12.3	-15.5	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-1.2	63.0	-5.1	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.00	3.99	3.77	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	31.0	31.8	29.6	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	91.6	89.8	90.0	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	90	97	101	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	87.3	87.3	82.9	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,771	1,846	1,839	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	11.2	9.7	9.5	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	9.5	5.6	8.2	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	78.2	76.2	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	479	470	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	12.0	12.1	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	78	32	30	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	1,430	732	955	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Stara Zagora district

▶ Population (2021)	307,140
▶ Territory (sq. km)	5,151
▶ Number of settlements	206
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.9



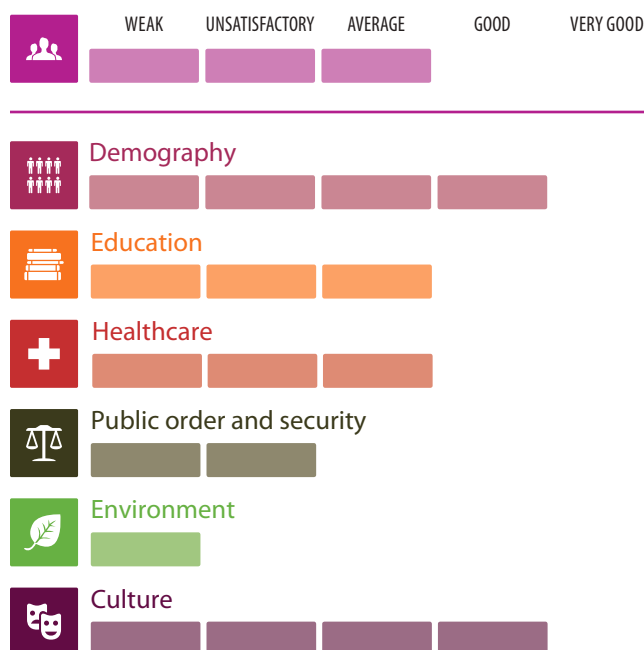
Salaries and incomes in the district continue to grow, but the poverty rate is rising. Employment is decreasing and unemployment is increasing, though both rates are more favorable than the respective national averages. There are a relatively small number of enterprises in the district, but production 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 a national level, the natural population growth in Stara Zagora has been deteriorating in recent years. The relative number of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education remain considerably higher than the national average. Access to doctors is relatively good. However, the number of beds in local general hospitals is declining. Delivery of justice is relatively speedy. Carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere and the amount of degraded land are extremely high. Stara Zagora is among the districts with the most active cultural life.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

Although GDP per capita in Stara Zagora has continued to decrease, however slightly, in 2020 the district outstripped Varna and recovered its third place in the ranking (after the capital and Sofia district). Salaries and incomes in the district also continue to rise. The average annual gross salary of employed people has reached 15,000 BGN, compared to 16,700 BGN nationally.

Poverty levels in Stara Zagora district are rising and now exceed the national average. The share of the population living with material deprivation is 22.0%, compared to 19.9% nationally, and of those living below the national poverty line it is 28.1, versus 22.1% in the country.

Labor market

Economic activity in Stara Zagora district is declining, yet remains relatively high and over the past few years has remained consistently above the national average. The economic activity rate for 2021 is 74.5%, versus 72.0% 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 72.2%, compared to 68.1% nationally, while the unemployment rate is 3.1%, versus 5.3% in the country.

The educational structure of the workforce in the district has been improving. In 2021, the population aged 25–64 with higher education reached 22.0%, though remaining below the national average of 29.6%. However, the share of the population with primary and lower education was relatively small – 15.8%, compared to 16.6% 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 71.7% (versus 69.4% in the country), which indicates an impending contraction of the labor force.

Investment and economy

Stara Zagora district has a relatively small number of enterprises – 49 per 1,000 people, compared to 60 per 1,000 people in the country in 2020. However, although on the decrease, production value in the district is relatively high, and with 25,400 BGN/person reported for that year, Stara Zagora was preceded only by Sofia (capital), Sofia district, Ruse, and Plovdiv. By the end of 2020, accumulated FDI retained its level – 3,100 EUR/person, compared to 3,900 EUR/person in the country. However, FTA acquisition expenditures decreased to 2,500 BGN/person, versus 3,300 BGN/person nationally; nevertheless, Stara Zagora again ranked among the top four districts.

The district's performance as regards the utilization of European funds is not so good. By 30 June 2022, payments made to beneficiaries of EU projects amounted to 2,032 BGN/person. 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 municipality.

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 2021. Nevertheless, the share of roads with good quality surface has been lagging behind the average figures – 39%, versus the national average of 42% in 2021.

Households' access to the internet has been rising, but it remains below the national average – 78.8%, against 83.5% in the country. Slightly higher is the share of installed RES capacities relative to the district's population, while the share of households with access to a gas supply is lagging behind – 4.2% in the district, against 5.3% in the country.

Local taxes

Unlike most districts with a high degree of economic development, in 2022 Stara Zagora again kept its municipal tax rates relatively low. The biggest differences compared to the respective national averages were observed in the tax on non-residential immovable property for 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 equal to the national average.

Within the district, the lowest average tax rates are those in the municipalities of Bratya Daskalovi and Chirpan, and the highest ones – in the municipality of Stara Zagora city.

Administration

Cadastral map coverage in the district has stopped increasing in the past few years and is lagging behind the country's average – 95.8% in the district, against 97.4% nationally in 2021.

The self-assessments of the local administration on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services improved in 2022, though remaining considerably below the national averages. The average AIP Active transparency rating of the local municipalities also remained relatively low in 2022 – 63.8% in the district, compared to 70.2% nationally.

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 2021 it decreased to -14.1% , versus the national average of -13.2% . At the same time, Stara Zagora is among the few districts which in 2021 again managed to attract population and its net migration rate was positive -0.3% .

In 2021, 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 149.2%, compared to 149.3% nationally, and to the 15–64 age group it was 36.4%, versus 34.0% countrywide.

The urban population and the density of the population in the district are also close to the country's average – 69.9% of the population live in urban areas, against the national average of 73.1%. Population density is 1,457 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,489 persons/sq. km nationally in 2021.

Education

The net enrolment rate of schoolchildren in 5th–7th grade is declining but remains at a relatively high level – 89.6%, compared to the average of 86.9% nationally in 2021. However, the shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education remain considerably higher than the respective national averages. The number of teachers has continued to rise and has reached 95 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to 97 teachers per 1,000 students nationally.

In 2022, the average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was relatively low – 31.9 points, against 35.3 points nationwide. The students in the district performed relatively well in the State matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature. Their average result was “Good” 3.96, compared to 3.97 nationally, and the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) amounted to 16.1%, against 17.0% nationwide.

The number of university students in the district has been on the increase but remains considerably lower than the country's average – 18 students per 1,000 people, versus 32 students per 1,000 people nationally.

Healthcare

In 2021, the number of people with health insurance remained above the country's average – 89.4%, against 88.7% nationwide. Access to doctors – both GPs and specialist physicians – in Stara Zagora district is relatively good – 1,463 people on average per one GP, compared to the national average of 1,734 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 2021, the available hospital beds in the district amounted to 4.65 per 1,000 people, versus 5.62 beds per 1,000 people nationwide. Hospitalization numbers are close to but below the national average – 192.1 per 1,000 people, against 222.6 per 1,000 people countrywide.

The infant mortality rate in the district has gone up and is now considerably above the national average.

Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in Stara Zagora district remain relatively heavy, but in 2021 once again this did not have a negative impact on the speed of delivery of justice. One local judge heard an average of 10.8 cases per month, compared to 9.0 cases monthly per judge in the country. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 92%, against 89% nationally, and that of pending cases – 9.1%, compared to 11.8% in the country.

The number of crimes in the district is relatively high, but the detection rate also remained relatively high in 2021. The registered crimes against the person and property constituted 10.8 per 1,000 persons in the district, compared to 9.8 per 1,000 persons in the country, while the detection rate was 53.6% in Stara Zagora, versus 51.7% 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 and the large amount of degraded land. In 2021, 3.35% of the land was degraded, against 0.42% in the country, while the high figure for carbon dioxide emissions is due to the presence of the country's largest coal-fired power plants operating on the district's territory. At the same time, the amount of forest areas is close to the average figure – 31.7% in the district, against 33.1% in the country.

The amounts of household waste generated by the district's residents in 2020 were 380 kg/person per year, with 83.2% handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to 69.3% in the country.

The district is lagging behind as regards the share of the population living in settlements with public sewerage – 70.6% in 2020, compared to 76.3% nationally. Of the households with access to public sewerage networks, 65.7% are connected to a wastewater treatment plant, against 66.7% in the country.

Culture

In 2021, Stara Zagora was once again among the districts with the most active cultural life. After the sharp decline in 2020, cultural life in the district intensified in 2021, although none of the values of the monitored indicators managed to return to their pre-pandemic level. Cinema visits reached 307 per 1,000 persons, against 351 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to the local theatres and museums numbered 161 per 1,000 persons, compared to 129 per 1,000 persons in the country, and 570 per 1,000 persons, against 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide respectively. The local libraries attracted 507 visits per 1,000 persons, versus 449 per 1,000 persons in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Stara Zagora

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	16,361	16,233	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	13,914	15,010	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	23.1	25.9	28.1	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	75.7	74.9	74.5	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	74.7	73.3	72.2	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	(1.4)	(2.2)	3.1	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	18.7	16.4	15.8	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	20.7	21.6	22.0	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	26,929	25,415	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,849	2,500	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	3,111	3,111	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	77.9	76.0	78.8	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	37.6	37.3	38.9	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	17.5	17.6	17.6	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	65.1	69.3	63.8	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-7.6	-10.1	-14.1	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-1.8	3.7	0.3	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.18	4.12	3.96	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	31.8	33.9	31.9	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	91.4	91.4	89.6	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	90	91	95	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	90.0	89.3	89.4	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,485	1,502	1,463	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	11.4	10.3	10.8	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	11.2	10.2	10.8	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	71.5	70.6	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	381	380	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	83.3	83.2	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	635	168	307	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	1,060	405	570	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Targovishte district

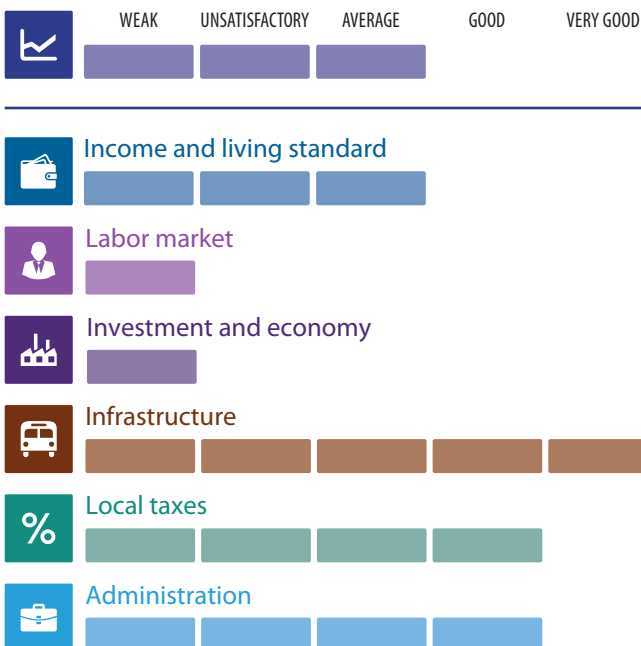
▶ Population (2021)	108,117
▶ Territory (sq. km)	2,710
▶ Number of settlements	194
▶ Share of urban population (%)	54.3



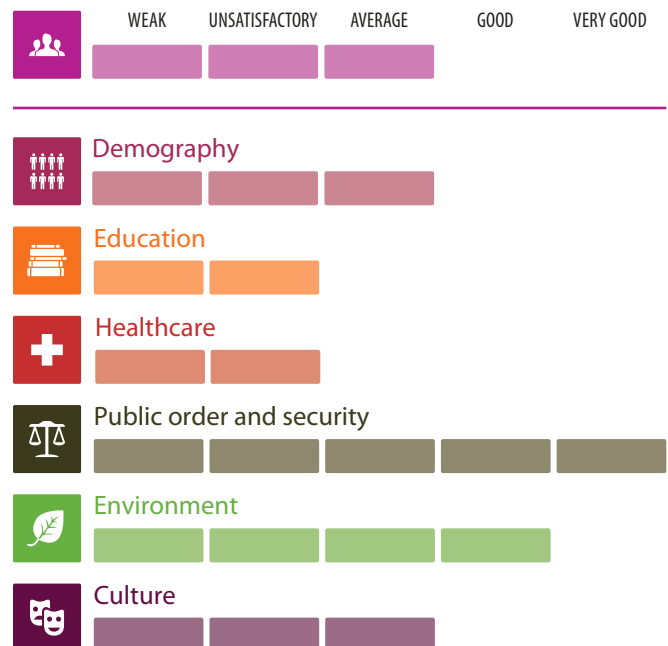
The growth of GDP in the district is relatively high, but its volume remains relatively low. The poverty level is decreasing. Targovishte is the district with the poorest performance as regards the labor market indicators. There has been a contraction in investment and production. The quality of the road surfaces is among the best in the country. The levels of local taxes in the district remain relatively low. The self-assessment of the local administrations on e-government development has gone up and remains higher than the national average.

Natural population growth in the district is deteriorating and the number of people settling in the district is declining. The coverage of the education system is low and student results are poor. Access to GPs is difficult. Health insurance coverage is increasing but remains below average. Criminal judges in the district are among the least busy in the country and this affects the speed of delivery of justice. The share of the sewerage networks connected to a wastewater treatment plant is low. The intensity of cultural life in the district is increasing.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

In 2020, the growth of GDP in Targovishte district was relatively high, but its amount remained relatively low – 11,000 BGN per person, compared to 17,300 BGN per person in the country. However, incomes and salaries also went up, although they too failed to reach the average levels. The annual gross salary of employed people was 13,400 BGN, against 16,700 BGN in the country.

The poverty level in the district is decreasing and remains below the country's average. The share of the population living with material deprivation is 14.5%, compared to 19.4% in the country, while the share of those living below the poverty line is 21.4%, versus 22.1% nationally in 2021.

Labor market

In 2021, Targovishte was once again the district with the worst performance as regards the labor market indicators. Economic activity continued to shrink, reaching 62.4%, versus 72.0% in the country. This decline was accompanied by falling employment and a minimal drop in unemployment. The employment rate was 55.7%, compared to 68.1% in the country, and the unemployment rate was 10.8%, versus 5.3% countrywide.

A huge challenge for the labor market in the district is the deteriorating educational structure of the workforce, even though 2021 saw a significant improvement. The share of the population aged 25–64 with primary or lower education dropped by over 6 p.p. and is no longer the highest in the country (a place now occupied by Sliven district), having reached 32.2%, compared to 16.6% in the country. The share of university graduates increased to 17.1%, against 29.6% nationally.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of those aged 15–19 to the 60–64 age group has continued to increase to reach 70.0%, against 69.4% in the country in 2021. 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 workforce.

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 2020, with an upward trend. At the same time, investment and production in the district are shrinking. FTA acquisition expenditures per person decreased by 1/3 to 1,500 BGN/person, against 3,300 BGN/person in the country. FDI reached 2,500 EUR/person, compared to 3,900 EUR/person in the country, and production value – 16,500 BGN/person, against 27,200 BGN/person in the country.

Utilization of European funds in the district remains low. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 1,459 BGN/person. Within the district, the highest amounts were utilized by Popovo municipality.

Infrastructure

The density of the railway network again remained relatively low in 2021. The average density of the road network is generally above the country's average, but the share of highways and first-class roads is relatively low – 14.7%, compared to the national average of 18.5%. Nevertheless, the quality of road surfaces is among the best in the country. In 2021, 60% of the roads in the district were in good condition, compared to 42% in the country.

There has been an improvement in the population's access to the internet, which within the past three years has exceeded the national average, reaching 88% in 2021, compared to 83.5% in the country. The share of households connected to a gas supply is also relatively high – 8.3%, versus 5.3% in the country.

Local taxes

Local taxes in the municipalities of Targovishte district again remained at relatively low levels in 2022. 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 for legal entities and on taxi transportation – respectively 1.92‰ (versus 2.06‰ in the country), and 288 BGN (against 478 BGN in the country).

Within the district, the average local taxes are the lowest in the municipality of Antonovo and the highest in the municipality of Omurtag.

Administration

The cadastral map of the district already covers 95.5% of the territory. The municipalities' average self-assessments on the development of e-government have gone up and remained above the national average. However, the self-assessment on the provision of one-stop-shop services has declined and has fallen below the national average. There has also been a decline in the AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations, which in 2022 almost equaled the national average – 70.1% in the district, compared to 70.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2021, natural population growth visibly deteriorated and resident numbers declined. The natural population growth rate dropped to -16.7% , compared to -13.2% nationally. At the same time, net migration went down and its rate was again negative, though not too low at -0.8% .

The population ageing rate remains close to the national average. In 2021, the population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 151.3%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 34.8%, against 34.0% 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 – 54.3% in Targovishte, compared to 73.1% in the country. Population density in the urban settlements is also relatively low – 1,050 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,489 people in the country on average.

Education

Targovishte is among the districts with the lowest coverage of the education system. In 2021, the net enrolment in 5th–7th grade was the second lowest in the country, after that in Dobrich district, and it even deteriorated compared to the previous year, with 74.4%, against 85.9% nationally. The shares of students that have repeated a class or have dropped out from primary and secondary education remain higher than in the country. The relative number of teachers is 111 per 1,000 students, compared to 97 teachers per 1,000 students in the country.

Students' results, however, again remained unsatisfactory in 2022. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 30.2 points, versus the average of 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.63, compared to 3.97 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 23.1%, against 17.0% nationally.

Healthcare

After Kardzhali district, Targovishte is the district with the most difficult access to GPs, with an average of 2,300 persons per doctor in 2021, compared to 1,734 persons per doctor nationally. The index of access to specialist physicians also has an unfavorable value. Over the past few years, the number of beds in the district's general hospitals has been gradually increasing and in 2021 it reached 5.50 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons in the country.

The health system coverage in the district has been rising but remains below the national average – 87.5% of the population have health insurance, compared to the national average of 88.7%. Population morbidity, measured by the number of hospitalizations, is relatively high – 153.0 per 1,000 persons on average were treated in the local general hospitals, compared to the

national average of 222.6 patients per 1,000 persons. However, this may mean that residents seek health care outside the district, given the relatively low access to doctors and beds. Infant mortality has been rising and is above the national average.

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, and in 2021 once again this affected the speed of justice delivery. One criminal judge heard an average of 5.3 cases per month, compared to an average of 9.0 cases per judge in the country. The relative share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 95%, against 89% nationally, and pending cases made up 6.4%, against 11.8% countrywide.

The crime rate in Targovishte remains relatively low and the detection rate is high. The crimes against the person and property registered in 2021 amounted to 9.3 per 1,000 persons, compared to 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationally. The detection rate was among the highest in the country, after that in Gabrovo – 71.7%, against 51.7% nationally.

Environment

The volumes of waste generated by the households in Targovishte district are considerably smaller than in the country on average – 290 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person. At the same time, the share of waste handed over for treatment and recycling is high – 80.2% in 2020, versus the national average of 69.3%. The share of households connected to a public sewerage network remains practically unchanged – 54.2%, compared to 76.3% in the country. A bare 44.3% of the sewerage networks are connected to a wastewater treatment plant, which is considerably below the national average of 66.7%.

The amount of forest areas is lower than the country's average (26.3% in the district, against 33.1% in the country), but degraded land is also limited (0.12% against 0.42% in the country) in 2021.

Culture

After the sharp decline in 2020, cultural life in the district intensified in 2021, although none of the values of the monitored indicators managed to return to their pre-pandemic levels. Cinema visits reached 19 per 1,000 persons, against 351 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to the local theatres and museums numbered 165 per 1,000 persons, against 129 per 1,000 persons in the country, and 82 per 1,000 persons, against 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide respectively. The local libraries are among the most visited in the country – they attracted 976 visits per 1,000 persons, against 449 per 1,000 persons in the country on average.

Key indicators for the district of Targovishte

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,524	11,013	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,035	13,368	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	30.2	22.7	21.4	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	67.3	63.4	62.4	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	60.1	56.5	55.7	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	10.5	10.9	10.8	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	36.0	38.3	32.2	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	16.8	15.8	17.1	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	16,536	16,471	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,236	1,525	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	2,760	2,477	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	77.1	82.4	88.0	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	60.8	65.4	60.0	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	20.4	20.4	19.3	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	78.4	76.0	70.1	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-8.9	-12.5	-16.7	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	2.7	4.5	-0.8	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	3.85	3.96	3.63	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	35.2	34.5	30.2	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	76.8	75.7	74.4	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	109	110	111	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	88.3	86.9	87.5	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	2,311	2,402	2,300	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	9.5	8.9	9.3	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	3.5	4.3	5.3	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	54.1	54.2	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	289	290	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	80.2	80.2	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	185	12	19	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	175	49	82	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Varna district

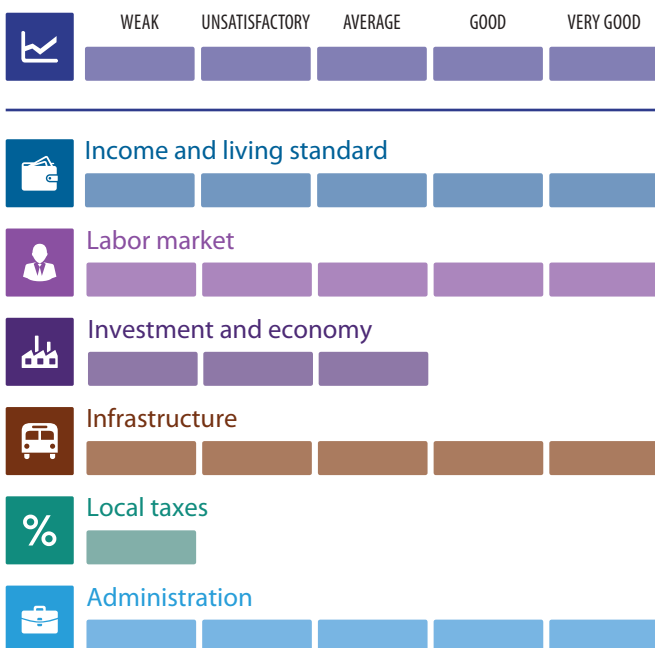
▶ Population (2021)	468,614
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,819
▶ Number of settlements	159
▶ Share of urban population (%)	83.3



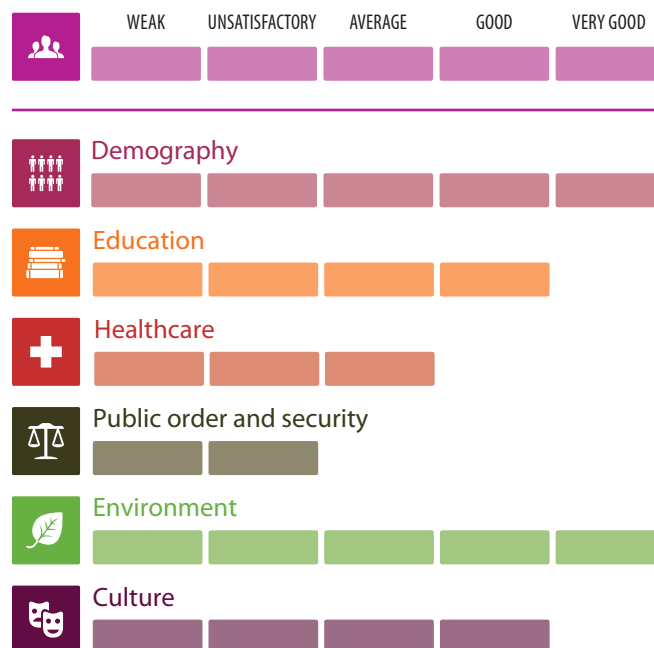
In 2020, Varna remained among the top-ranking districts as regards GDP per capita. Salary and income rates have continued to grow. Trends in the labor market in 2021 placed the district second in the country. Investment and business activity again remain relatively high, although some negative trends are also in evidence. The infrastructure remains well developed. The average levels of the monitored local taxes remained relatively high in 2022. Both e-government development and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services are at a high level.

Varna retains its place among the districts with a very good demographic development. Varna is among the districts with the best results in the field of education. The performance of students in 2022 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 relatively low. With its high share of urban population, a relatively large part of them lives in settlements with public sewerage. Cultural life in the district is relatively intensive.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■■■

Although GDP per capita in Varna declined in 2020, the district remained among the top-ranking districts in this category, preceded only by Sofia (capital city) and Gabrovo. Salary and income rates have continued to grow. The average annual gross salary of people in employment has reached 15,300 BGN, versus 16,700 BGN nationally, and the average income per household member was 8,100 BGN compared to the national average of 7,700 BGN.

Poverty levels have recorded a considerable decline. The share of the population living with material deprivation reached 20.8% in 2021, compared to 19.4% in the country, and the share of the population living below the national poverty line was 17.3%, versus the national average of 22.1%.

Labor market ■■■■■■

Trends in the labor market in 2021 placed the district second in the country, after Sofia (capital city). Economic activity has continued to grow, reaching a rate of 75.1% in 2021 and for the first time in over a decade exceeding the national average of 72.0 for that year. The increase in economic activity was accompanied by both an increase in employment and a decrease in unemployment, with their values remaining significantly more favourable than the average ones for the country. The employment rate in Varna district reached 73.8%, against the national average of 68.1%, while the unemployment rate was 1.6%, compared to the country's average of 5.3%.

The educational status of the work force in the district also remained good in 2021. The share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 increased by 5.4 p.p. to 30.2% and exceeded the national average of 29.6%. The share of the population with primary education or less increased, reaching 15.8%, but remained lower than the national average of 16.6%.

The relatively good demographic trends in Varna district are also an important factor for a more 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%: it has risen sharply (in line with the attraction of university graduates) to reach 81.9%, compared to the national average of 69.3%, 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 2020, although there were also some negative trends which went deeper than the effects of the pandemic nationwide and the state of emergency. The number of non-financial enterprises continues to be relatively high,

though it has been shrinking to reach 69 per 1,000 persons, compared to 60 per 1,000 persons in the country. At the same time, there is evidence of a reduction in investment flows and a decrease in production. The amount of FTA acquisition expenditures decreased by 18% to 2,200 BGN/person, against 3,300 BGN in the country. FDI fell by 15% to 3,200 EUR/person, compared to 3,900 EUR/person countrywide. Production value in the district shrank to 21,400 BGN/person, compared to 27,200 BGN/person in the country.

Utilization of European funding has been growing but nevertheless remains relatively low. By 30 June 2022, payments made in the district under EU operational programs amounted to 1,800 BGN/person. Within the district, the largest beneficiary was Byala municipality, while the lowest rates of utilization were registered in Dalgopol.

Infrastructure ■■■■■■

The infrastructure of Varna remained relatively well developed in 2021, placing the district second in the whole country. The density of the road and railway networks is high. The share of highways and first-class roads is also high – 27.4%, compared to 18.5% in the country. The quality of the road surface has improved considerably. 57% of the roads in the district are in good condition, versus 42% countrywide.

The relative share of households with internet access has made a huge increase to reach 91.1%, against the national average of 83.5%. The share of households connected to a gas supply and installed RES capacities is relatively low.

Local taxes ■■■■■■

Within Varna district, the average level of the monitored local taxes levied by the municipalities remained relatively high in 2022, ranking the district second after the capital. The margin is particularly large in the taxation on non-gratuitous acquisition of property and retail trade. Within the district, Varna city is the municipality levying the highest local taxes, while the municipalities of Dolni Chiflik and Vetrino have the lowest.

Administration ■■■■■■

In 2022, the self-assessment ratings of Varna district municipalities on the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services remained high, thus placing the district among those with top performance results countrywide. The AIP Active transparency rating of the local administration has fallen but still remains among the best in the country.

In 2021, 97.2% of the district's territory was covered by the cadastral map, which is close to the national average (97.4%).

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

In 2021, Varna remained among the districts with a very good demographic development, where it ranks second after the capital city on this indicator. The rate of natural increase fell to 9.2‰, but remained among the highest in the country and far above the national average of -13.2‰. Varna district continues to attract population and at 6.0‰, the net migration rate retains its positive value.

This also reflects on the age dependency ratios, which in Varna district remain relatively favorable. The ratio of people aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 is 127.6%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it is 29.5%, versus 34.0% in the country.

Varna is among the districts with the highest share of urban population – 83.3%, compared to 73.1% in the country, and a relatively high density in the urban areas – 1,800 persons/sq. km, against the national average of 1,500 persons/sq. km.

Education

Varna is also among the districts with the best performance in the field of education, again coming third in the country after only Sofia (capital city) and Smolyan. In 2021, the enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade remained relatively low – 83.0%, compared to 85.9% countrywide; however, the percentage of school year repeaters and that of dropouts from primary and secondary education were also low.

In 2022, 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 43.3 points, compared to 35.3 points in the country. For its part, the average result in the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 4.11, versus 3.97 nationally, and was the third highest nationwide. The share of "fail" (below 3.00) grades also remained low – 12.8%, against 17.0% nationwide.

The number of university students remains relatively high.

Healthcare

In 2021, the share of people with health insurance in Varna district again remained among the lowest in the country – 83.8%, 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 in the general hospitals was 4.18 per 1,000 persons, against 5.62 per 1,000 persons countrywide. The number of patients treated in the local general hospitals was also low – 158.9 per 1,000 persons, versus 222.6 per 1,000 persons countrywide. The infant mortality rate has been rising but remains relatively low.

Public order and security

Court workloads in Varna district remain relatively low. In 2021, there were 6.7 cases a month per local judge, compared to 9.0 per judge nationally. The smaller workloads affect the speed of delivery of justice. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months is 92%, compared to under 89% as the national average, and that of pending cases – 8%, compared to 12% 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 2021 they again remained among the lowest in the country. Registered crimes against the person and property in Varna district amounted to 11.8 per 1,000 persons, with 9.8 per 1,000 persons as the national figure. The detection rate of 41.4% ranked below the national average of 51.7% and was the second lowest in the country.

Environment

With Varna district's large urban population, a large part of its residents live in settlements with public sewerage networks – 86.1%, versus 76.3% countrywide, and in areas with sewerage systems connected to wastewater treatment plants – 86.15%, against the national average of 66.7% for 2020.

In 2020, Varna remained among the districts with the highest amounts of waste generated by the households – an annual of 456 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 – 85.6%, against 69.3% as the national average.

In 2021, the share of forest areas was lower than the national average – 29.1%, compared to 33.1% in the country, and the share of degraded land – higher at 0.51%, versus 0.42% nationally.

Culture

The pandemic and the measures put in place in 2020 and 2021 greatly 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, even though a positive trend emerged in 2021. Generally, cultural life in Varna district is relatively intensive. The number of cinema visits throughout 2021 remained considerably above average – 568 per 1,000 persons, compared to 351 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Museum visits remained relatively low in number, with 288 per 1,000 persons, compared to 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Theatre visits in the district increased and in 2021 their number came close to the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Varna

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	16,425	15,629	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	14,282	15,299	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	18.4	22.9	17.3	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	71.7	71.8	75.1	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	69.6	70.2	73.8	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	3.0	2.2	1.6	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	18.8	14.4	15.8	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	25.3	24.8	30.2	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	23,275	21,397	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,732	2,247	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	3,721	3,166	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	73.5	77.5	91.1	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	43.5	46.2	56.5	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	18.8	18.8	18.8	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	75.3	78.7	76.5	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-3.6	-5.7	-9.2	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	0.7	6.3	6.0	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.34	4.39	4.11	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	43.3	44.4	43.3	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	84.7	83.6	83.0	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	86	90	88	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	84.0	83.9	83.8	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,655	1,685	1,710	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	14.1	12.5	11.8	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	6.7	6.9	6.7	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	86.5	86.1	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	457	456	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	85.7	85.6	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	1,132	306	568	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	647	180	288	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Veliko Tarnovo district

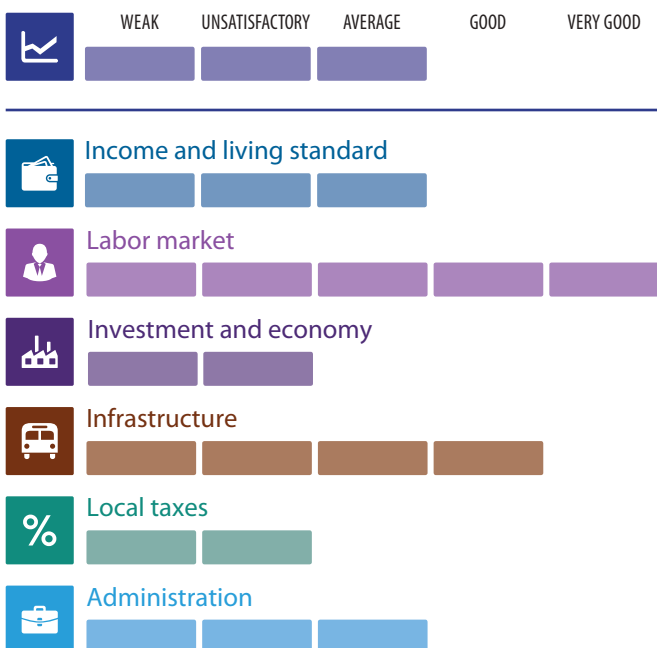
▶ Population (2021)	225,674
▶ Territory (sq. km)	4,662
▶ Number of settlements	336
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.9



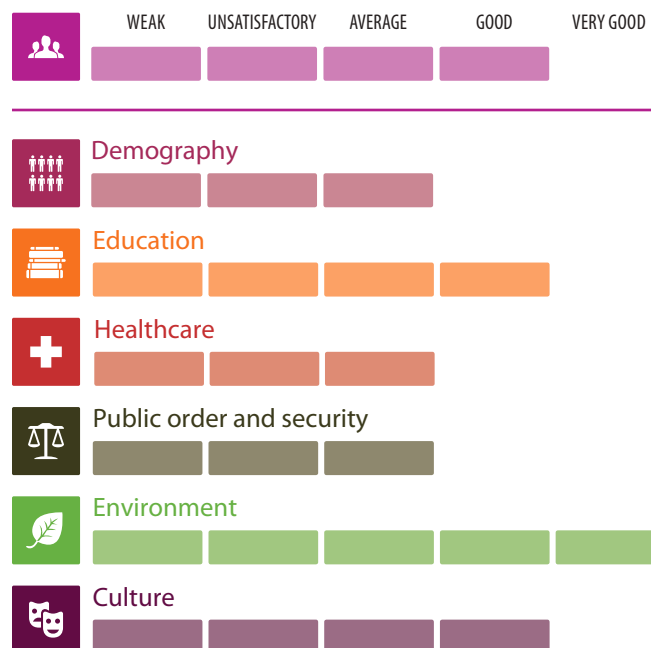
GDP per capita in Veliko Tarnovo district has been growing at a rate higher than the national average relative to the population but its value remains low. The indicators for the labor market and the trends in it give the district a top place in the country. Investment and business activity in Veliko Tarnovo district are unsatisfactory. The share of highways and first-class roads road remains low. The rates of the monitored local taxes in the district remain relatively high. The active transparency ratings of the local administration lag behind the national average. The general trend towards population ageing is par-

ticularly 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 hospital beds is still extremely low. The registered crimes against the person and property have been on the rise, and detection rates continue to fall. The share of household waste handed over for recycling and treatment is close to 100%. The district has performed quite well in the indicators for the environment. Veliko Tarnovo district's cultural life is quite intensive.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

GDP in Veliko Tarnovo district has been growing at a rate faster than the national average relative to the population but it still remains low at 15,000 BGN per capita, against the national average of 17,300 BGN. A similar trend has been in evidence as regards salaries and incomes – a relatively large increase but relatively low levels. In 2020, the average annual gross salary of employed people rose by 12%, compared to 10% nationwide, and reached 13,000 BGN, compared to 16,700 BGN in the country.

The relative share of people living in material deprivation rose slightly and remained considerably above the national average – 25.5% in the district, versus 19.4% on a national scale. The share of the population living under the national poverty line decreased sharply in 2021 – by 8 p.p., but at 22.5%, it still remained above the national average of 22.1%.

Labor market

The indicator values and the labor market trends give Veliko Tarnovo district a top ranking in the country for 2021, where it takes third place after Sofia (capital city) and Varna district. Economic activity has continued to fall, though it still retains its relatively high level – 75.0% against 72.0% in the country on average. Employment has also continued to decline and unemployment has gone up, yet they both remain far more favorable than in the country on average. In 2021, the employment rate was 72.2%, compared to the national average of 68.1%, and the unemployment rate was 3.7%, against 5.3% nationally.

The workforce in Veliko Tarnovo district is among the most highly educated in the country. The share of people aged 25–64 with primary education or less has continued to decrease, falling to 6.7%, compared to the national average of 16.6%. Those with a university degree make up 28.6%, against the national average of 29.6%.

One major challenge still facing the labor market in Veliko Tarnovo district is population ageing. The population replacement rate as a ratio of the people aged 15–19 to those aged 60–64 is 64.6%, versus 69.4% countrywide. 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 Veliko Tarnovo district remained unsatisfactory in 2020. The district is among the few with no reduction in the number of enterprises relative to the population, but this number still remains low – 46 per 1,000 persons, compared to 60 per 1,000 persons in the country on average. At the same time, the district has witnessed a drop in investment flows. FTA acquisition expenditures have decreased slightly to 2,000 BGN/person, against 3,300 BGN/person in the country. FDI has even suffered a reduction by

over 1/4 to 401 EUR/person compared to 3,900 EUR/person in the country. Production value has increased slightly (by 1.4%), reaching 16,100 BGN/person against 27,200 BGN/person nationwide.

By 30 June 2022, payments made in Veliko Tarnovo district to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 1,900 BGN/person. The top place in the district was held by the Svishtov municipality (2,400 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 2021, against 18.5% as the country's average. Road quality continues to rise and the share of road surfaces in good condition has outstripped the national average – 44% in the district, compared to 42% countrywide. In 2021, the relative share of households with internet access registered a slight increase but remained relatively limited – 81.7%, against the national average of 83.5%.

The share of households connected to a gas supply is 4.9%, compared to 5.3% in the country, and in 2020 the installed RES capacity remained half the national average level.

Local taxes

The average tax rates in the Veliko Tarnovo municipalities remained high in 2022. The greatest margin is in the non-residential immovable property tax for legal entities – 2.45‰, compared to 2.06‰ in the country, and the tax on non-gratuitous transfer of property – 2.90‰, compared to 2.75‰ in the country. The rates of the taxes on motor vehicles and retail trade are also relatively high. The taxi transportation rate has been on the decrease and is relatively low.

Within the district, Veliko Tarnovo city is the municipality levying the highest local taxes, while the municipalities of Suhindol and Elena have the lowest.

Administration

In 2021, almost the entire territory of Veliko Tarnovo district was already covered by the cadastral map. In 2022, the district municipalities' self-assessments on the development of their e-services were lower than the national averages, while those on the provision of one-stop-shop administrative services have risen to levels above the average. At the same time, the AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations is lagging behind and is 68.3% in the district, compared to 70.2% nationally.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

The trend towards fast population ageing again remained particularly conspicuous in Veliko Tarnovo in 2021. The natural population growth rate continued to be markedly negative at -17.6‰, compared to the national average of -13.2‰, and has been going down by the year. The district still fails to attract people and the net migration rate remains negative (-0.6‰).

These are trends that affect the district's age dependency ratios. The ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 reached 186.5%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15-64 it was 38.2%, versus 34.0% nationwide.

A relatively small share of the population lives in urban territories - 69.9%, against the national average of 73.1%. At the same time, the population density of the district's urban settlements remains low at 1,024 persons/sq. km, versus 1,489 persons/sq. km on average for the country.

Education

Veliko Tarnovo is among the districts with a relatively good performance in the field of education, though in 2021 the net enrolment rate in 5th-7th grade fell to 83.9%, compared to 85.9% countrywide. The percentage of school year repeaters went up to 0.85%, versus the national average of 0.94%. The number of teachers in primary and secondary schools still remains relatively high - 112 per 1,000 students, versus the national average of 97 per 1,000 students.

In 2022, the performance of students in the district again remained below the national average. The average score in the external examination in mathematics at the end of 7th grade was 32.7 points, compared to 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the matriculation exams in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.83, versus 3.97 nationally. The share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) was 19.5%, against 17.0% nationally.

The number of university students in the district remains among the highest in the country and second only to that in the capital - 70 per 1,000 persons, compared to 32 per 1,000 persons nationwide.

Healthcare

In 2021, the percentage of people with health insurance went up but remained among the lowest in the country - 85.3%, compared to the national average of 88.7%. The number of GPs is close to, though lower than the country's average, while that of specialist physicians is significantly lower.

The number of beds in general hospitals remains extremely low - 3.41 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 considerably below the national average - 124 per 1,000 persons, compared to 222.6 per 1,000 persons

countrywide. This may mean that the residents are seeking medical care outside the district (mostly in Pleven district).

The infant mortality rate has fallen and in 2021 it was 4.1‰, compared to 5.6‰ in the country.

Public order and security

In 2021, court workloads in Veliko Tarnovo district again remained relatively low - 7.8 cases a month per one judge on average, compared to 9 cases per judge nationally. This affects the speed of justice delivery. Thus, the share of cases closed within 3 months reached 92%, compared to 89% as the national average.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property in Veliko Tarnovo district rose in 2021, reaching 10.3 per 1,000 persons and exceeding the national figure. At the same time, the share of cleared crimes continued to fall and went down to 57.9%, though remaining above the national average of 51.7%.

Environment

The performance of Veliko Tarnovo district in the environment indicators is very good. In 2020, the amount of household waste generated in the district was relatively low - an annual of 355 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 69.3% as the national average.

The relatively low share of the population living in urban areas reflects on the households' access to public sewerage networks. In 2020, 69.5% of the population lived in settlements with public sewerage networks, compared to 76.3% nationwide, and 61.8% of the networks were connected to wastewater treatment plants, versus 64.6% in the country.

In 2021, the share of forest areas was lower than the national average - 23.4%, compared to 33.1% in the country, but the share of degraded land was also relatively low at 0.23%, versus 0.42% nationally.

Culture

The cultural life in the district of Veliko Tarnovo is intensive, although it was particularly hard hit by the pandemic and the restrictions imposed in 2020 and 2021 on cultural events in the country. In 2021, from among the indicators under observation, visits to museums were the only ones to go up, compared to the year before, and though failing to reach their 2019 levels, they remained considerably above the national average - 1,176 per 1,000 persons, compared to 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The number of visits to libraries also exceeded the national average, though they fell when compared to the previous year - 758 per 1,000 persons, versus 449 per 1,000 persons nationwide. The average yearly number of cinema and theatre visits relative to the population in the district continued its decrease in 2021, falling to half the national average.

Key indicators for the district of Veliko Tarnovo

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	11,129	11,492	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	11,619	13,008	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	25.8	30.8	22.5	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	80.4	77.9	75.0	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	78.7	75.9	72.2	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	(2.0)	(2.5)	3.7	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	8.9	10.1	6.7	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	29.6	29.7	28.6	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	15,918	16,145	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	2,100	2,022	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	551	401	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	63.0	67.3	81.7	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	38.2	40.0	44.1	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	20.1	20.1	20.1	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	70.8	75.1	68.3	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-10.1	-12.3	-17.2	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-3.4	-0.1	-0.6	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.28	4.12	3.83	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	33.4	35.4	32.7	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	85.7	85.1	83.9	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	102	112	112	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	85.3	84.7	85.3	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,736	1,738	1,710	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	9.2	10.1	10.3	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	6.6	6.8	7.8	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	69.4	69.5	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	355	355	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	100.0	100.0	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	319	195	182	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	2,346	851	1,176	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Vidin district

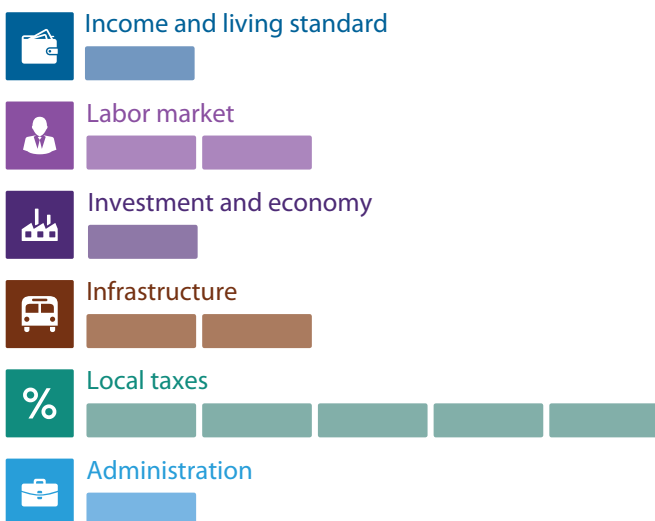
▶ Population (2021)	78,814
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,033
▶ Number of settlements	140
▶ Share of urban population (%)	64.9



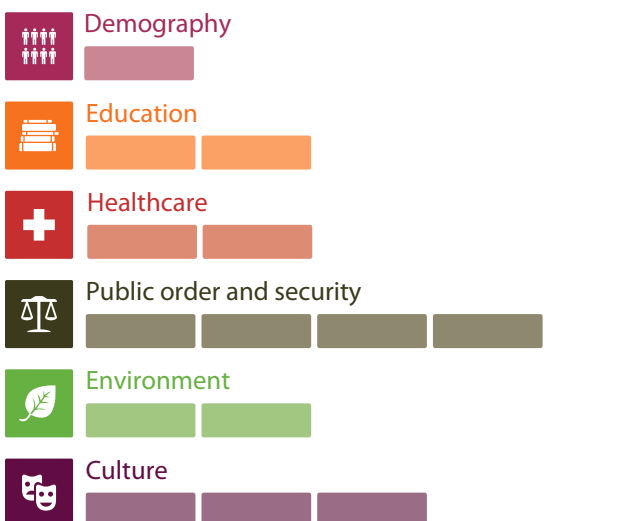
Vidin is the district with the worst indicators for income and quality of life. Positive trends are noticeable in the labor market, but the rates remain unfavorable. Investment and business activity are relatively weak, and the infrastructure is not sufficiently developed. In 2022, Vidin retained its place as the district with the lowest average rates of the monitored local taxes. The results of the self-assessments of the local administration rank Vidin at the bottom of the scale. In 2021, Vidin remained the district with the most un-

favorable demographic picture in the country. Its performance in the field of education is unsatisfactory. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. In 2021, the workloads of criminal judges in the district increased, but the speed of delivery of justice also rose sharply. The relatively low share of the population living in cities accounts for the relatively limited share of households connected to a public sewerage network. The performance of Vidin district in the field of culture improved in 2021.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■

Income and living standard ■

Vidin is the district with the worst indicators for income and quality of life. GDP per capita in the district of Vidin rose in 2020, though at a slow speed, reaching 8,800 BGN, but in the last two decades its lag behind the national average has kept increasing. Employed people's salaries have been increasing, but they still remain among the lowest in the country, after only those in Blagoevgrad district. The average annual income per household member in 2021 was 4,700 BGN, compared to 7,700 BGN nationwide.

These trends affect the poverty levels in the district, which remain quite high. In 2021, the share of the population living below the national poverty line was 43.3%, against 22.1% in the country, and of the population living with material deprivation – 27.0%, versus 19.4% countrywide.

Labor market ■■■

Economic activity in the district decreased in 2021 for the third year in a row, falling to 69.0%, compared to 72.0% in the country, and remained at a relatively low level. At the same time, there has been a rise in employment and a decrease in unemployment, though both rates remain significantly less favorable than the country's averages. The employment rate is 57.5%, compared to 68.1% in the country, and the unemployment rate is 16.7%, against 5.3% in the country.

2021 marked an improvement in the educational structure of the workforce, but it cannot compensate for the deterioration of the previous years. The share of the population aged 25–64 with higher education reached 19.8%, compared to 29.6% in the country, and the share of people with primary or lower education was 17.6%, versus 16.6% 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 again remained lower than the national average – 66.1%, compared to 69.4% nationwide. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there will be 66 young people joining the workforce.

Investment and economy ■

Investment and business activity in Vidin district again remained relatively slack in 2020. The number of non-financial enterprises relative to the population was among the lowest in the country – 37 per 1,000 persons, compared to 60 per 1,000 persons in the country.

FTA acquisition expenditures per person in Vidin district rose considerably – by 27%, compared to 6% in the country, but

they still remain among the lowest nationwide – 1,100 BGN/person, compared to 3,300 BGN/person in the country. At the same time, the district has witnessed a drop in investment flows, which have fallen to 968 EUR/person, versus the national average of 3,900 EUR/person. Production value has also declined to 7,200 BGN/person, which is the lowest figure in the country and nearly four times below the average.

The amounts paid to beneficiaries under EU operational programs relative to the population in the district are comparable to the national average and have grown significantly. By June 30th, 2022, such payments reached 2,600 BGN/person, 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, alongside Vratsa and Montana. The density of the road and railway networks is close to the national average. However, in 2021 the share of first-class roads and highways (11.3%, compared to 18.5% in the country), and that of road surfaces in good condition (28%, compared to 42% in the country) remained considerably lower than the national averages. Household access to the Internet remains low, even though it has risen to 74.8%, compared to 83.5% nationwide. Vidin is one of the two districts (along with Smolyan) without a gas supply network.

Local taxes ■■■■■■

In 2022, Vidin was once again the district with the lowest rates for the monitored local taxes. The difference was especially big as regards the taxation on retail trade – 4.58 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.

Vidin city municipality levies the lowest taxes in the district, and Bregovo and Ruzhintzi have the highest.

Administration ■

Vidin is also the district with the worst performance of the local administrations (alongside Kyustendil). In 2022, the district municipalities' self-assessments on the development of their e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services were the lowest in the country. The AIP active transparency rating of the local administrations also remains relatively low and has even decreased in the past two years, moving down to 57.4% versus 70.2% in the country. Cadastral map coverage is 97.4%, which equals the national average.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ■

Demography ■■

Vidin remains the district with the most unfavorable demographic picture in the country for 2021. The natural population growth rate fell rapidly and reached its lowest value of -25.7% , which is almost half the national average of -13.25% . At the same time, the district fails to attract population and the net migration rate has again a negative value (-4.4%), with 2020 as the only year when it had a positive one.

The long period of rapid population ageing also finds its reflection in the extremely unfavorable age dependency ratios in the district. The ratio of the population 65+ to those aged 0–14 has reached 248.0%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and for those aged 15–64 it is 50.9%, versus 34.0% in the country.

The urban population remained relatively low in 2021, 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 2021, the district was again among those with the lowest net enrollment rate in 5th–7th grade – 78.8%, compared to 85.9% in the country. The share of repeaters remained double the national average.

The performance of students in the 2022 national external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was again extremely poor. With an average score of 21.6 points (against 35.3 points in the country), the district occupied the lowest place nationwide. The performance of high school graduates was better but also below the national average. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was “Good” 3.83, compared to 3.97 nationally, while the share of “fail” grades (below 3.00) was relatively high – 19.9%, against 17% nationwide.

The number of teachers in primary and secondary education relative to student numbers went up in 2021 and for the second year in a row was higher than the national average, with 110 teachers per 1,000 students, compared to the national average of 97 teachers per 1,000 students.

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 over 450 students.

Healthcare ■■

The proportion of people with health insurance reached 92.4% in 2021 and again 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 – 4.25 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons in the country. This probably explains why in 2021 hospitalization figures were again relatively low – 134.9 per 1,000 persons, versus 222.6 per 1,000 persons countrywide.

The infant mortality rate in Vidin district rose sharply in 2021, reaching 13.3‰, compared to 5.6‰ in the country.

Public order and security ■■■■

Despite the rising workloads of the criminal judges in Vidin district, in 2021 they remained below the national average, while the speed of delivery of justice recorded a sharp increase. There were 7.6 cases a month per judge on average, compared to 9 cases per judge nationally, and the number of cases closed within 3 months reached 94%, compared to 89% in the country.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property has been falling but it still remains above the national average – 10.5 per 1,000 persons, against 9.8 per 1,000 persons in the country. At the same time, however, the detection rate has gone up to reach 57.0%, versus 51.7% countrywide.

Environment ■■

The amount of generated household waste in 2020 was relatively low – 368 kg/person per year, compared to the national average of 409 kg/person. At the same time, however, the share handed over for treatment and recycling remained very small: 18.9%, with over 69.3% countrywide.

The relatively low share of the population living in urban settlements can account for the relatively limited share of households connected to a public sewerage system in 2020 (57.7% of the population, compared to 76.3% in the country) and to wastewater treatment plants (49.3%, against 66.7% in the country). The shares of both forest areas and degraded land are low.

Culture ■■■■

The pandemic and restrictions on cultural events throughout the country affected the district as well. Still, in 2021 cultural life in Vidin district revived somewhat, even though it remained far below the levels of 2019. The number of cinema visits more than doubled to 232 per 1,000 persons, compared to 351 per 1,000 persons as the national average. Theatre visits reached 154 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 129 per 1,000 persons, and library visits numbered 386 per 1,000 persons, versus 449 per 1,000 persons nationally. Only museum visits have decreased, though their number remains relatively high – 545 per 1,000 persons, compared to 426 per 1,000 persons in the country.

Key indicators for the district of Vidin

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	8,780	8,847	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	10,302	11,253	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	35.0	43.3	43.3	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	70.1	69.1	69.0	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	56.5	55.7	57.5	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	19.1	19.3	16.7	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	15.4	18.5	17.6	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	19.2	18.0	19.8	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	7,649	7,209	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	839	1,065	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	1,052	968	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	63.0	44.8	74.8	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	28.4	24.6	28.3	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	20.2	20.2	20.1	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	61.9	60.2	57.4	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-16.4	-21.9	-25.7	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-7.9	2.1	-4.4	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.21	4.12	3.83	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.7	28.4	21.6	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	78.9	80.8	78.8	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	94	104	110	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	92.7	91.2	92.4	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,428	1,465	1,433	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	13.2	12.5	10.5	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	6.6	4.3	7.6	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	57.9	57.7	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	369	368	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	18.9	18.9	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	397	102	232	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	2,546	1,139	545	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Vratsa district

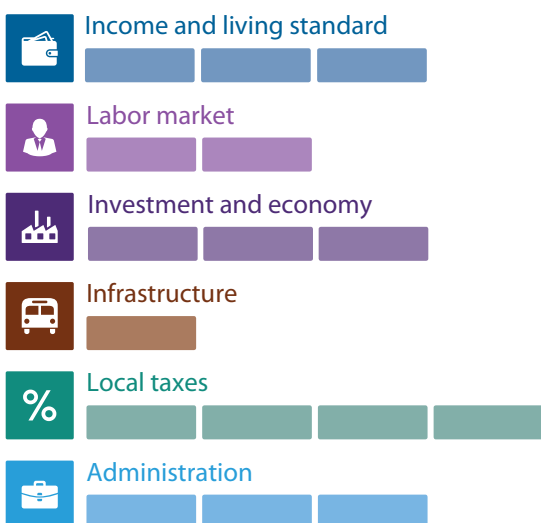
▶ Population (2021)	153,700
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,620
▶ Number of settlements	123
▶ Share of urban population (%)	59.0



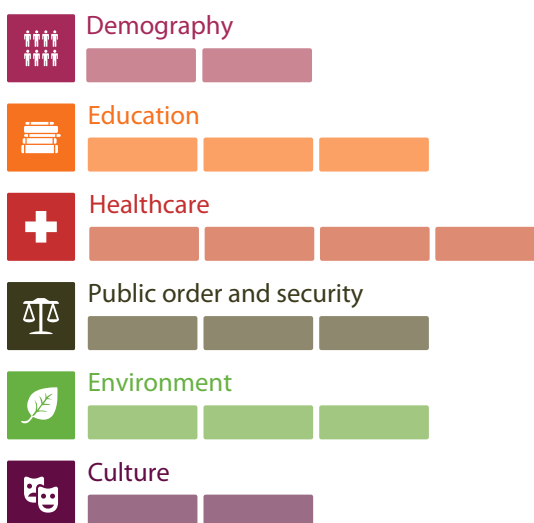
Vratsa is the district with the greatest increase in GDP per capita in 2020. Salaries and incomes also continued to grow. Employment is increasing and unemployment is decreasing but the rates still remain less favourable than in the country on average. Economic and investment activity is relatively slack. The whole district performs poorly in terms of the indicators for infrastructural development. The average level of local taxes in the local municipalities is relatively low. The local administrations' transparency ratings lag behind those in the country.

Age dependency ratios are still significantly less favorable than the national averages. The indicators in the field of primary and secondary education remain relatively good, but students' results are relatively low. Healthcare suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. The number of registered crimes against the person and property in Vratsa district is among the highest in the country. Access to public sewerage networks is limited. The cultural life in the district is not particularly intensive.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ■■■

Income and living standard ■■■■

In 2020, Vratsa was the district with the greatest increase in GDP per capita. It rose by nearly 17%, against 0.2% nationwide, and reached 15,600 BGN/person, thus outstripping districts such as Gabrovo, Burgas, and Plovdiv. Salaries and incomes in the district have continued to grow. The gross annual salary of employees has gone up to 15,500 BGN, compared to 16,700 BGN in the country.

However, these processes do not yet affect the general level of poverty in the district. In 2021, the share of the population living with material deprivation was 25.7%, against 19.4% in the country, and the population living below the national poverty line was 33.5%, versus 22.1% countrywide.

Labor market ■■■

Economic activity in Vratsa district has gone up but it still remains relatively slack. Its rate in 2021 was 65.2%, compared to 72.0% in the country. Alongside this process, employment has been increasing and unemployment decreasing, but both continue to be less favourable than the country averages. The employment rate is 58.5%, compared to 68.1% in the country, and the unemployment rate – 10.1%, compared to 5.3% in the country.

Vratsa is among the districts with a pronounced industrial profile and the share of the workforce with secondary education is relatively high. In 2021, the share of the population aged between 25 and 64 with a university degree dropped to 18.8% (compared to 29.6% in the country), while that of people with primary or lower education increased to 24.1%, compared to 16.6% in the country.

Population ageing has a major effect on the local labor market. The demographic replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that of 60–64 in the district is 65.8%, compared to 69.4% 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 66 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and economy ■■■■

Economic and investment activity in Vratsa district remained relatively limited in 2020. The relative number of non-financial enterprises was 37 per 1,000 persons, against 60 per 1,000 persons as the national average. FTA expenditure acquisition rates in the district typically fluctuate by a lot. In 2020, they rose considerably (by 22%) to reach 1,839 BGN/person, compared to the national figure of 3,348 BGN/person. A huge rise was recorded in FDI, but its amount relative to the population remained small – 769 EUR/person in the district, against 3,877 EUR/person in the country.

Contrary to the trend characteristic of most other districts, in 2020 production value in Vratsa district continued to rise,

though at a slow rate, amounting to 17,600 BGN/person, against 27,200 BGN/person as the national average.

Vratsa is among the top-ranking districts as regards utilization of EU funding. By 30 June 2022, such payments made to beneficiaries of EU operational programmes reached 3,169 BGN/person. Within the district, the municipalities of Vratsa city and Mezdra take the top places for utilization of EU funding.

Infrastructure ■■

The whole of Vratsa district performs badly as regards the indicators for infrastructural development, and together with the districts of Vidin and Montana it occupies one of 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 9.9%, against 18.5% in the country. In 2021, the share of roads with surfaces in good condition was 27%, compared to the national average of 42%.

Households' internet access in Vratsa district also lags behind the country's averages. The share of households connected to a gas supply is 2.7%, against 5.3% in the country. Installed RES capacities have reached 0.389 KW/person, compared to the national average of 0.615 KW/person.

% Local taxes ■■■■

In 2022, 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 – 6.84 BGN/sq. m, against 12.99 BGN/sq. m nationally. The rates for the motor vehicle tax, the tax on non-gratuitous acquisition of property, and taxi transportation were also lower.

Of the monitored tax rates, only the average one on non-residential immovable property of legal entities was higher in 2022 than its average counterpart in the country.

Within the district, the highest local taxes are levied by Kozloduy municipality, and the lowest ones – by Mizia municipality.

Administration ■■■■

Although cadastral map coverage has been rising, in 2021 Vratsa was the district with the smallest share of territory covered by the cadastre – 89.9%, compared to 97.4% in the country.

In 2022, the level of e-government in Vratsa district again remained relatively low but that of the provision of one-stop-shop services was still relatively high. The transparency ratings of the local administration have fallen and they lag behind the national average.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

While in the previous ten years the natural population growth rate in the district had remained at the relatively stable yet low level of around -11% , in the past two years it fell sharply and in 2021 it was -20.0% , against -13.2% in the country on average. At the same time, the net migration rate has also fallen to -5.3% . The age dependency ratios remain significantly less favorable than the national average. In 2021, the ratio of the population aged 65+ to those aged 0–14 was 174.2%, compared to 149.3% in the country, and to those aged 15–64 it was 39.8%, against 34.0% in the country.

The urban share of the population remains low – 59%, compared to 73.1% in the country, and its density is twice as low as the national average – 737 people/sq. km compared to 1,489 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 2021, Vratsa again remained among the districts with the highest net enrolment rate in 5th–7th grade – 92.3%, compared to 85.9% in the country. The number of teachers was also higher than the national average – 112 per 1,000 students, versus an average of 97 per 1,000 students nationally. The shares of repeaters and dropouts from primary and secondary education were close to the average ones.

Students' results in 2022 were again relatively poor. The average score in the national external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 26.4 points, compared to 35.3 points nationally. The average score in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.75 versus 3.97 nationally. The number of "fail" (below 3.00) grades was 24.1%, compared to 17.0% 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 8 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 – 93.8%, versus 88.7% in the country in 2021. The relative number of GPs is close to the national average but healthcare in the district suffers from a shortage of specialist physicians and hospital beds. In 2021, the number of beds in the local general hospitals was 4.61 per 1,000 persons, while the national average was 5.62 per 1,000 persons.

Over the past three years, the infant mortality rate has remained steady and below the national average. In 2021 it was down to 4.0‰, against 5.6‰ nationwide. However, the number of people treated in the local general hospitals is relatively

low – 183 per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 222.6 per 1,000 persons.

Public order and security

The workloads of criminal judges in Vratsa district have been rising and moving close to the national average. This, however, has not had a negative effect on the speed of justice delivery. In 2021, one local judge heard an average of 8.5 cases a month, compared to 9.0 cases per judge nationally. The proportion of criminal cases closed within 3 months continues to be the highest in the country – 97%, against the national average of 89%. Vratsa also remains the district with the smallest share of pending cases – 3.6%, compared to 11.8% in the country on average.

The number of registered crimes against the person and property in Vratsa district again remains among the highest in the country and second only to Montana district – 13.4 per 1,000 persons, versus 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationwide. Still, the detection rate in 2021 was higher than the national average – 54.3%, versus the national figure of 51.7%.

Environment

In 2020, the amounts of waste generated by households remained relatively small – 251 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 – 55.3%, versus 69.3% respectively.

The relatively low share of the 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 – 57.7%, compared to the national average of 76.3%. Access to public sewerage networks connected to wastewater treatment plants is also relatively low – available to 51.4% of the population, compared to the average of 66.7% countrywide.

The share of forest areas is low – 14.8% in 2021, versus 33.1% in the country, and degraded land makes up 0.22% of the district's territory, compared to 0.42% in the country.

Culture

Cultural life in the district remained at a standstill in 2020 due to the pandemic and the countrywide restrictions on visits to cultural venues. In 2021 it liven somewhat, though the district continued to lag behind the average values of the nationwide indicators. The number of cinema visits went up to 228 per 1,000 persons, compared to 351 per 1,000 persons as the national average. Theatre and museum visits reached 61 and 93 per 1,000 persons respectively, compared to the national averages of 129 and 426 per 1,000 persons. Visits to the local libraries numbered 446 per 1,000 persons and thus came close to the national average of 449 per 1,000 persons.

Key indicators for the district of Vratsa

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	13,347	15,572	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	13,874	15,537	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	38.9	33.2	33.5	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	64.9	63.6	65.2	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	59.8	57.1	58.5	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	7.7	10.3	10.1	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	20.7	22.4	24.1	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	21.0	22.9	18.8	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	17,592	17,615	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,513	1,839	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	505	769	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	71.1	71.5	67.9	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	28.4	34.5	27.2	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	17.9	17.9	18.2	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	69.9	73.9	64.7	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-11.4	-13.9	-20.0	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-7.8	2.3	-5.3	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.08	3.99	3.75	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	28.9	30.3	26.4	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	89.9	91.8	92.3	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	97	109	112	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	93.5	92.6	93.8	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,679	1,762	1,727	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	14.1	13.0	13.4	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	6.6	6.4	8.5	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	57.8	57.7	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	252	251	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	55.1	55.3	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	367	111	228	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	131	45	93	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of the previous years.

Yambol district

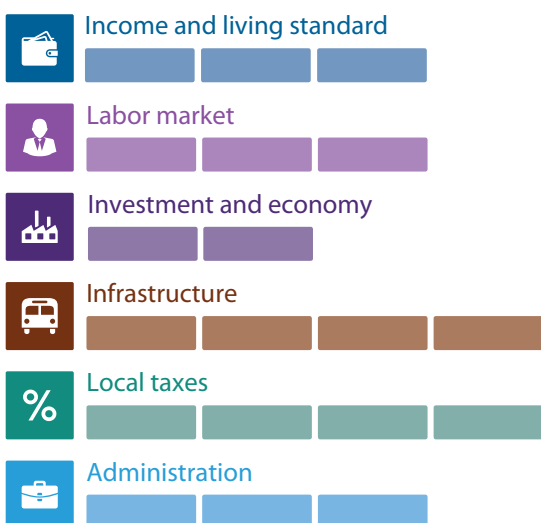


▶ Population (2021)	114,361
▶ Territory (sq. km)	3,355
▶ Number of settlements	109
▶ Share of urban population (%)	69.1

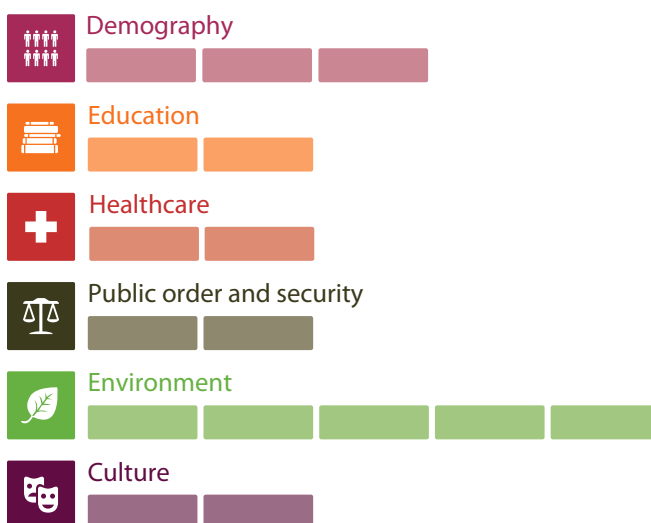
Incomes and salaries in Yambol district have continued to grow. The poverty level in the district has decreased dramatically. Employment remains low and unemployment is above the average countrywide. Investment activity is shrinking. Yambol is characterized by a highly dense road network, but the railway network is among the least developed in the country. The average levels of local taxes are close to the national averages. The self-assessments of the local administrations in Yambol district for the development of e-government and the provision of one-stop-shop services

have gone up but remain below the national average. Both natural population growth and the net migration rate are falling. The performance of the students in the district is poor. Although the number of GPs in the district relative to the population is close to the national average, the numbers of specialist physicians and of beds in the local general hospitals are low. The infant mortality rate is decreasing. Delivery of justice is relatively slow. Crime detection is relatively high. Degraded land is limited. Cultural life in Yambol district is of relatively low intensity.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Income and living standard

GDP in Yambol district has continued to grow and has reached 10,400 BGN per capita, placing the district in the lower half of the country's ranking on this indicator for 2020. Salaries and incomes in the district have also continued to rise. The average gross annual salary of employed people reached 13,100 BGN, compared to 16,700 BGN nationally.

The poverty level has fallen dramatically but remains above the national average. The share of the population living with material deprivation was 28.0% in 2021, compared to 19.4% in the country. The share of population living below the poverty line was 24.0%, versus 22.1% nationally.

Labor market

The economic activity in the labor market declined slightly in 2021 and settled below the national average, with a rate of 67.7%, compared to 72.0% in the country. The employment rate retained its value from the previous several years, remaining relatively low – 63.2%, versus 68.1% nationally. Unemployment continues to exceed the national average.

A challenge still facing the labor market in Yambol district is the educational structure of the workforce, although the past few years are marked by more favorable trends. In 2021, the share of university graduates among the population aged 25–64 was 23.0%, compared to 29.6% in the country, and that of people with primary or lower education – 20.6%, against the national average of 16.6%.

The population replacement rate as a ratio of the population aged 15–19 to that of the 60–64 age group has been improving but remains below the country's average – 67.0% in the district, compared to 69.4% in the country in 2021. This means that for every 100 people who are about to leave the labor market in the next few years, there are 67 young people who will join the workforce.

Investment and economy

In 2020, investment activity in the Yambol region went down. Due to the relative dominance of the processing industry, Yambol is among the districts with a relatively small number of enterprises – only 46 per 1,000 persons, compared to 60 per 1,000 persons nationally. FTA acquisition expenditures have decreased and remain relatively low – 1,600 BGN/person, compared to the national average of 3,300 BGN/person. There has also been an outflow of FDI and it remains among the lowest in the country at 339 EUR/person, versus 3,900 EUR/person nationally. These indicators also account for the decrease in production value, which in 2020 was 15,200 BGN/person, compared to 27,200 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 30 June 2022, the payments made in the district to beneficiaries of EU operational programs amounted to 2,400 BGN/person. Within the district, the largest amounts were utilized EU by Yambol city municipality.

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 2021, the share of first-class roads and highways exceeded the national average – 20.6%, compared to 18.5% nationally. The quality of the road surface in the district is traditionally close to or above the country's average, but in 2021 the share of roads in good condition dropped to 36% and was well behind the national average of 42%.

The share of households connected to high-speed internet has been rising and in 2020 it was equal to the national average – 83.5%.

The share of households connected to a gas supply is relatively large. The figures for installed RES capacities are also relatively high.

Local taxes

The average rates of local taxes in Yambol district in 2022 again remained close to the average ones in the country. Among the monitored taxes, relatively high were those on the immovable non-residential property for legal entities and on non-gratuitous acquisition of property. At the same time, the rates for retail trade and taxi transportation remained well below average. The tax rate for retail trade in Yambol district was 8.13 BGN/sq. m on average, compared to 12.99 BGN/sq. m in the country. Within the district, the highest local taxes are levied by the municipality of Yambol city, and the lowest – by that of Elhovo.

Administration

The 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 went up in 2022, though remaining below the average ones in the country. The AIP active transparency rating achieved by the local administration fell slightly, but since the decrease in the national average was higher, Yambol district exceeded it with a rating of 72.5%, compared to 70.2% in the country.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Demography

Both the natural population growth and the net migration rate in Yambol district have decreased. The natural population growth rate has dropped to -14.6‰, compared to -13.2‰ nationally. The net migration rate is also negative at -3.9‰.

The age dependency rates retain their levels, yet remain relatively low. The ratio of the people aged 65+ to those aged 0-14 is 160.8%, compared to 149.3% nationally, and to the 15-64 age group - 41.0%, versus 34.0% countrywide.

The urban population in Yambol district is lower than in the country - 69.1%, against 73.1% nationally, and so is population density - 1,069 persons/sq. km, compared to 1,489 persons/sq. km countrywide.

Education

In 2021, the net enrolment in 5th-7th grade went down but remained above the national average, with 89.1% in the district, versus 85.9% in the country. The share of repeaters is considerably above the national average. However, the relative amount of dropouts from primary and secondary education is relatively low. Yambol is among the districts with the lowest number of teachers in the country - 89 per 1,000 students, compared to 97 teachers per 1,000 students nationally.

Students' results again remained low in 2022. The average score in the external examination in mathematics after 7th grade was 30.7 points, versus 35.3 points in the country. The average grade in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature was "Good" 3.79, compared to 3.97 in the country, and the share of "fail" grades (below 3.00) - 21.1%, against 17.0% nationally.

The number of university students is 6 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 the districts of Dobrich and Kardzhali. The number of hospital beds in the local general hospitals is also extremely low - 3.62 beds per 1,000 persons, compared to the national average of 5.62 beds per 1,000 persons.

These figures probably account for the low number of hospitalizations in 2021 - 121.7 per 1,000 persons, versus 222.6 per 1,000 persons countrywide. It can be assumed, therefore, that the residents seek medical care outside the district.

The share of people with health insurance remains close to the national average. The infant mortality rate has fallen but remains high.

Public order and security

The workloads of the local criminal judges are considerably lower than in the country, but the delivery of justice is relatively slow. In 2021, one local criminal judge heard an average of 5.6 cases per month, compared to 9.0 per judge in the country. The share of pending cases was 12.6%, versus the national average of 11.8%. The share of criminal cases closed within 3 months was 82%, versus the national average of 89%.

The crime rate in the district is close to, though above the country's average, and the detection rate is relatively high. In 2021, crimes against the person and property amounted to 10.2 per 1,000 persons, versus 9.8 per 1,000 persons nationally. The detection rate was 65.2%, compared to 51.7% nationwide.

Environment

The relatively good assessment of Yambol district in the environment category is mainly due to the small volumes of generated household waste and its management. In 2020, the amounts of household waste generated in the district were 359 kg/person, against the national average of 409 kg/person. 79.7% of the generated waste was handed over for treatment and recycling, compared to 69.3% on average countrywide.

The carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere remain low.

There has been little change in the share of households with access to a public sewerage network, which in 2020 remained close to, though below the national average - 71.3%, against 76.3% in the country. The share of households whose sewerage system is connected to a wastewater treatment plant rose considerably, reaching 69.2%, compared to 64.6% countrywide.

Forest areas are limited - 15.2%, versus 33.1% in the country, and so is degraded land - 0.17% against 0.42% countrywide in 2021.

Culture

Cultural life in Yambol district is characterized by relatively low activity. After the sharp decline in 2020, in 2021 its intensity went up. Cinema visits are one of the indicators that exceeded their pre-pandemic value - they reached 130 per 1,000 persons, against 351 per 1,000 persons nationally. Visits to the local theatres and museums numbered 128 per 1,000 persons, against 129 per 1,000 persons in the country, and 145 per 1,000 persons, against 426 per 1,000 persons nationwide respectively. The local libraries attracted 333 visits per 1,000 persons, against 449 per 1,000 persons in the country on average.

Key indicators for the district of Yambol

Economic Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (BGN, current prices)	10,195	10,410	n.a.	17,299
Average annual gross salary per employed person (BGN)	12,048	13,055	n.a.	16,687
Relative share of people living below the national poverty line (%)	33.2	31.4	24.0	22.1
Annual average economic activity rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	69.6	68.3	67.7	72.0
Annual average employment rate of the population aged 15 to 64 (%)	63.1	63.2	63.2	68.1
Annual average unemployment rate of the population aged 15+ (%)	9.0	(7.5)	(6.7)	5.3
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with primary or lower education (%)	23.3	21.3	20.6	16.6
Relative share of the population aged 25 to 64 with higher education (%)	19.8	23.5	23.0	29.6
Production value (BGN/person)	16,153	15,177	n.a.	27,213
Expenditures for acquisition of fixed tangible assets per capita (BGN/person)	1,777	1,639	n.a.	3,348
Foreign direct investment to non-financial enterprises, per capita (cumulative) (EUR/person)	352	339	n.a.	3,877
Relative share of households with internet access (%)	53.4	63.1	83.5	83.5
Share of roads in good condition (%)	43.9	41.0	36.3	42.0
Road network density (km/100 sq. m territory)	19.0	19.0	19.1	18.0
Active Transparency Rating of local government bodies (%)*	70.4	72.7	72.5	70.2

Social Development Indicators	2019	2020	2021	National average
Rate of natural increase (‰)	-8.7	-11.5	-14.6	-13.2
Net migration rate (‰)	-4.6	4.3	-3.9	1.9
Average grades in the State matriculation exam in Bulgarian language and literature**	4.04	3.94	3.79	3.97
Average grade in the National external examination in mathematics after 7th grade (points)**	31.2	35.0	30.7	35.3
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade) (%)	87.0	89.8	89.1	85.9
Number of teachers in primary and secondary schools per 1,000 students	78	90	89	97
Health insured persons as share of the population (%)	89.8	88.4	88.6	88.7
Number of people per general practitioner	1,701	1,771	1,733	1,734
Crimes against the person and property per 1,000 persons	9.6	9.0	10.2	9.8
Actual workload of penal judges in the district court (cases/month)	5.4	7.2	5.6	9.0
Share of population living in settlements with public sewerage systems (%)	71.9	71.3	n.a.	76.3
Household waste generated per capita of serviced population (kg/person/year)	362	359	n.a.	409
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling (%)	79.5	79.7	n.a.	69.3
Number of visits to cinemas per 1,000 people of the average annual population	114	8	130	351
Number of visits to museums per 1,000 people of the average annual population	329	143	145	426

* The 2021 data are included in the 2022 study.

** The data refer to the 2021-22 academic year, while the State matriculation exams took place in 2022. The same is valid of 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.	2000–2020	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.	2001–2020	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.	2008–2020	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.	2007–2021	%	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.	2007–2021	%	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.	2003–2021	%	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.	2000–2021	%	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.	2003–2021	%	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.	2010–2021	%	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.	2009–2021	%	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.	2009–2021	%	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.	2008–2020	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.	2008–2020	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.	2000–2020	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 30 June 2022	BGN/person	EUMIS, EUMIS 2021
Production value	Production value per capita shows the relative productivity of the enterprises in the district.	2005–2020	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.	2000–2021	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.	2000–2021	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.	2009–2021	%	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.	2006–2021	%	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).	2010–2021	%	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.	2012–2022	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.	2012–2022	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.	2012–2022	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.	2012–2022	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.	2017–2022	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.	2003–2021	%	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.	2014–2022	%	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.	2013–2022	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.	2013–2022	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.	2011–2021	%	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.	2011–2021	%	NSI
Share of urban population	The share of urban population provides information on the degree of urbanization of each district.	2001–2021	%	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.	2001–2021	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.	2001–2021	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.	2001–2021	per mille (‰)	NSI

Education

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.	2000–2021	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.	2011–2021	number of teachers/ 1,000 students	NSI
Net enrolment rate of the population (5th to 7th grade)	The net enrolment rate of the population is the ratio between the total number of enrolled students in the official school age range for a given level of education and the total population of the same age group. The rate is calculated as a percentage by 31 December of the respective year. The number of students in primary and secondary education is established by 1 October of the respective year. The selection of 5th to 7th grade is based on the fact that this is the lowest educational stage where a relatively low coverage of the education system is registered.	2008–2021	%	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.	2011–2021	%	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.	2008–2022	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.	2008–2022	%	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.	2018–2022	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.	2011–2021	persons/ one 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.	2018–2021	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.	2008–2021	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.	2010–2021	%	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.	2011–2021	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.	2008–2021	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).	2009–2021	%	SJC
Share of pending criminal cases	The share of pending criminal cases in a district's courts indicates the efficiency of the local judiciary.	2009–2021	%	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.	2010–2021	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.	2000–2021	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.	2000–2021	%	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.	2008–2020	kg/ person/ year	NSI
Share of household waste handed over for treatment and recycling	The share of recycled and treated household waste is important in that the rest of the waste is sent to landfills which carry serious environmental and health risks. A higher share of recycled and treated waste means a cleaner environment.	2013–2020	%	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.	2001–2020	%	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.	2010–2020	%	NSI
Share of forest areas relative to the total area of the district	The indicator measures the proportion of real estate – timber forests and nontimber forest. areas.	2021	%	NSI
Share of degraded land relative to the district's territory	The indicator measures the proportion of real estate used for extractive activities and real estate used as landfills for industrial and household waste, degraded land.	2021	%	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.	2009–2021	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.	2009–2021	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.	2009–2021	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.	2009–2021	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	2020	2021	2020	2021	2021
Blagoevgrad	10,381	(7,336)	10,881	19.5	19.1
Burgas	11,181	7,431	13,473	21.9	24.6
Varna	15,629	8,069	15,299	20.8	17.3
Veliko Tarnovo	11,492	(6,937)	13,008	25.5	22.5
Vidin	8,847	4,685	11,253	27.0	43.3
Vratsa	15,572	5,651	15,537	25.7	33.5
Gabrovo	14,651	8,923	13,902	12.7	12.3
Dobrich	10,195	(7,258)	12,548	19.7	26.0
Kardzhali	11,034	(6,364)	12,705	20.5	25.5
Kyustendil	9,616	(7,648)	11,519	9.3	17.9
Lovech	10,865	4,651	12,594	17.5	28.1
Montana	10,027	5,758	12,487	13.5	42.0
Pazardzhik	10,995	(4,961)	13,090	23.3	30.6
Pernik	9,352	8,295	12,359	16.7	19.1
Pleven	10,268	(8,680)	12,660	24.7	21.6
Plovdiv	14,648	(7,304)	14,171	24.3	26.8
Razgrad	10,634	7,101	13,902	30.9	16.7
Ruse	12,592	7,493	13,591	23.2	24.0
Silistra	8,307	7,303	11,727	11.5	23.4
Sliven	8,616	(5,982)	12,370	34.1	32.0
Smolyan	12,028	7,940	12,037	18.5	23.0
Sofia (capital city)	17,146	6,268	15,857	12.7	21.8
Sofia	38,891	9,544	22,950	9.6	11.3
Stara Zagora	16,233	(7,111)	15,010	22.0	28.1
Targovishte	11,013	5,700	13,368	14.5	21.4
Haskovo	9,100	(6,885)	11,642	27.4	32.9
Shumen	10,475	(7,330)	13,345	19.4	15.4
Yambol	10,410	6,719	13,055	28.0	24.0
National Average	17,299	7,705	16,687	19.4	22.1

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	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021
Blagoevgrad	75.3	8.1	69.1	64.78	21.0	18.8
Burgas	68.2	5.8	64.3	74.07	24.4	19.5
Varna	75.1	1.6	73.8	81.86	30.2	15.8
Veliko Tarnovo	75.0	3.7	72.2	64.57	28.6	6.7
Vidin	69.0	16.7	57.5	66.06	19.8	17.6
Vratsa	65.2	10.1	58.5	65.82	18.8	24.1
Gabrovo	72.5	(7.2)	67.3	56.10	24.6	11.7
Dobrich	68.5	8.9	62.4	70.55	20.3	25.6
Kardzhali	69.0	(1.7)	67.9	49.05	24.2	26.6
Kyustendil	74.5	(2.8)	72.5	53.94	23.9	6.4
Lovech	69.0	(5.7)	65.0	64.34	17.5	15.2
Montana	63.4	17.1	52.5	66.30	14.0	24.1
Pazardzhik	70.3	7.7	64.9	67.39	15.2	27.2
Pernik	76.9	7.5	71.2	50.33	18.0	11.3
Pleven	69.0	10.0	62.0	65.29	24.7	19.9
Plovdiv	68.5	3.3	66.3	69.83	26.0	19.2
Razgrad	61.9	12.0	54.5	64.57	21.1	34.1
Ruse	74.9	4.6	71.4	63.95	30.9	11.6
Silistra	65.4	14.7	55.8	65.16	22.6	28.2
Sliven	68.8	9.4	62.4	90.48	20.1	38.2
Smolyan	70.8	8.8	64.6	42.29	24.3	12.9
Sofia (capital city)	76.9	(0.7)	75.2	62.52	12.4	14.2
Sofia	75.8	2.7	74.8	83.20	57.7	4.2
Stara Zagora	74.5	3.1	72.2	71.73	22.0	15.8
Targovishte	62.4	10.8	55.7	70.01	17.1	32.2
Haskovo	67.5	(1.6)	66.3	64.03	18.5	19.9
Shumen	74.8	14.2	64.1	66.78	24.2	27.8
Yambol	67.7	(6.7)	63.2	67.02	23.0	20.6
National Average	72.0	5.3	68.1	69.38	29.6	16.6

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	2020	2020	2020	30 June 2022	2020
Blagoevgrad	70	1,509	1,715	3,814	17,251
Burgas	71	2,381	5,888	2,309	24,365
Varna	69	2,247	3,166	1,758	21,397
Veliko Tarnovo	46	2,022	401	1,942	16,145
Vidin	37	1,065	968	2,583	7,209
Vratsa	37	1,839	769	3,169	17,615
Gabrovo	56	1,892	3,273	3,836	24,891
Dobrich	54	2,235	2,159	1,874	12,795
Kardzhali	32	1,352	1,608	1,727	11,191
Kyustendil	52	807	350	1,492	12,473
Lovech	45	1,151	1,136	2,577	14,312
Montana	36	1,267	288	2,692	15,717
Pazardzhik	44	1,911	1,710	1,620	17,006
Pernik	45	1,432	1,872	1,363	15,202
Pleven	42	1,799	1,285	2,363	15,499
Plovdiv	59	2,560	2,986	1,876	27,188
Razgrad	39	2,294	1,901	1,912	15,552
Ruse	54	2,101	2,079	2,281	24,562
Silistra	37	1,388	385	1,952	9,979
Sliven	38	1,075	867	1,339	11,974
Smolyan	51	2,197	565	2,823	15,649
Sofia (capital city)	42	3,430	6,704	2,556	49,856
Sofia	93	9,214	10,604	3,972	57,800
Stara Zagora	49	2,500	3,111	2,032	25,415
Targovishte	37	1,525	2,477	1,459	16,471
Haskovo	53	1,230	794	1,649	11,793
Shumen	41	1,777	686	1,898	16,613
Yambol	46	1,639	339	2,396	15,177
National Average	60	3,348	3,877	3,229	27,213


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	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2020	2020
Blagoevgrad	11.1	2.5	17.3	80.6	65.6	4.4	0.687
Burgas	15.3	2.3	26.0	82.9	31.0	0.6	0.256
Varna	18.8	5.2	27.4	91.1	56.5	1.7	0.148
Veliko Tarnovo	20.1	5.1	16.3	81.7	44.1	4.9	0.320
Vidin	20.1	3.6	11.3	74.8	28.3	0.0	0.590
Vratsa	18.2	3.1	9.9	67.9	27.2	2.7	0.389
Gabrovo	25.6	3.7	16.6	83.7	26.5	11.8	0.078
Dobrich	17.4	1.3	10.1	68.1	40.3	9.6	3.174
Kardzhali	20.2	2.1	11.2	85.6	40.9	0.4	1.334
Kyustendil	20.1	3.9	20.8	77.3	55.3	7.5	0.396
Lovech	18.3	2.6	16.2	78.1	40.1	3.9	0.378
Montana	16.9	3.1	9.1	70.2	27.0	4.5	0.375
Pazardzhik	16.9	4.1	14.6	85.1	54.7	3.1	4.207
Pernik	24.0	4.8	15.9	82.8	41.3	1.8	0.072
Pleven	18.3	4.7	12.2	76.3	41.3	2.8	0.321
Plovdiv	17.1	5.4	17.5	88.9	46.5	1.7	0.668
Razgrad	19.2	3.5	11.1	76.6	16.9	6.1	0.006
Ruse	18.2	5.5	21.6	87.9	40.5	4.6	0.040
Silistra	17.8	2.5	11.3	79.0	59.6	1.6	0.300
Sliven	16.4	3.8	22.2	83.3	68.0	1.0	0.692
Smolyan	16.9	0.0	0.0	76.3	50.1	0.0	2.842
Sofia (capital city)	21.4	4.2	30.2	74.1	35.4	12.3	0.296
Sofia	0.0	12.7	0.0	90.3	0.0	5.7	0.053
Stara Zagora	17.6	5.1	28.7	78.8	38.9	4.2	0.794
Targovishte	19.3	2.7	14.7	88.0	60.0	8.3	0.048
Haskovo	20.9	3.8	21.5	81.1	38.9	1.1	0.912
Shumen	18.2	4.6	36.4	84.6	37.6	4.9	0.145
Yambol	19.1	1.6	20.6	83.5	36.3	5.4	1.051
National Average	18.0	3.6	18.5	83.5	42.0	5.3	0.615

% 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	2022	2022	2022	2022	2022
Blagoevgrad	1.75	1.38	11.76	2.20	341
Burgas	2.08	1.81	15.24	2.87	541
Varna	2.22	1.65	16.49	2.94	581
Veliko Tarnovo	2.45	1.63	12.15	2.90	387
Vidin	1.77	1.25	4.58	2.58	277
Vratsa	2.22	1.41	6.84	2.67	353
Gabrovo	2.3	1.53	8.63	2.55	406
Dobrich	1.55	1.56	8.70	3.01	293
Kardzhali	1.8	1.59	8.16	2.86	322
Kyustendil	2.06	1.30	9.83	2.32	293
Lovech	2.22	1.09	10.39	2.34	393
Montana	1.73	1.22	5.10	2.56	332
Pazardzhik	1.92	1.45	8.95	2.77	294
Pernik	1.96	1.37	9.89	2.45	294
Pleven	2.99	1.24	9.15	2.83	380
Plovdiv	2.11	1.57	13.10	2.81	535
Razgrad	2.16	1.37	9.20	2.43	286
Ruse	1.99	1.59	13.52	2.32	449
Silistra	2.05	1.45	8.77	2.65	313
Sliven	2.63	1.55	9.83	2.79	364
Smolyan	2.12	1.37	7.73	2.62	318
Sofia (capital city)	2.44	1.31	10.67	2.87	281
Sofia	1.88	1.69	20.00	3.00	850
Stara Zagora	1.68	1.54	13.94	2.40	288
Targovishte	1.92	1.52	9.09	2.62	288
Haskovo	2.1	1.53	12.75	2.61	305
Shumen	2.13	1.56	9.05	2.69	275
Yambol	2.18	1.53	8.13	2.78	300
National Average	2.06	1.54	12.99	2.75	478

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	2021	2022	2022	2022
Blagoevgrad	100.0	61.3	3.17	3.28
Burgas	99.6	72.4	3.75	3.03
Varna	97.2	76.5	3.78	3.82
Veliko Tarnovo	96.6	68.3	3.19	3.43
Vidin	97.4	57.4	2.91	2.35
Vratsa	89.9	64.7	3.37	3.69
Gabrovo	100.0	72.9	3.47	2.49
Dobrich	97.9	81.2	3.47	3.35
Kardzhali	97.6	66.0	2.92	2.90
Kyustendil	97.2	50.0	2.93	2.54
Lovech	98.8	74.3	3.10	3.89
Montana	97.1	69.5	3.02	2.82
Pazardzhik	100.0	65.3	3.12	3.08
Pernik	97.2	52.4	3.03	2.95
Pleven	97.7	69.8	3.84	3.50
Plovdiv	95.9	72.4	3.42	3.14
Razgrad	98.1	68.1	3.30	3.42
Ruse	97.1	72.2	3.17	3.76
Silistra	97.3	58.6	2.93	3.39
Sliven	98.1	80.1	3.81	2.81
Smolyan	98.7	66.9	3.06	2.97
Sofia (capital city)	92.6	57.9	3.30	2.90
Sofia	100.0	74.8	4.00	4.00
Stara Zagora	95.8	63.8	2.99	2.99
Targovishte	95.5	70.1	3.81	3.25
Haskovo	97.2	72.2	3.55	3.47
Shumen	97.8	76.1	3.03	3.16
Yambol	97.1	72.5	3.00	3.29
National Average	97.4	70.2	3.47	3.37

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	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021
Blagoevgrad	137.2	31.0	60.5	2,242	-10.6	1.1
Burgas	133.4	31.8	76.1	2,234	-9.9	7.4
Varna	127.6	29.5	83.3	1,808	-9.2	6.0
Veliko Tarnovo	186.5	38.2	69.9	1,024	-17.2	-0.6
Vidin	248.0	50.9	64.9	812	-25.7	-4.4
Vratsa	174.2	39.8	59.0	737	-20.0	-5.3
Gabrovo	249.6	49.2	79.9	1,191	-22.1	-0.8
Dobrich	163.9	36.0	68.6	651	-16.6	-1.1
Kardzhali	155.7	34.1	40.1	1,981	-11.1	12.6
Kyustendil	229.1	46.2	69.7	1,078	-22.0	-5.7
Lovech	199.8	45.5	61.8	818	-19.2	-3.2
Montana	190.9	43.7	64.0	866	-23.1	-2.9
Pazardzhik	139.7	33.2	62.7	2,041	-14.0	-1.8
Pernik	200.8	40.5	78.1	904	-21.2	1.1
Pleven	186.1	44.1	66.2	1,046	-18.9	-3.4
Plovdiv	137.9	32.2	75.1	2,490	-11.3	6.0
Razgrad	163.0	35.0	46.5	818	-17.3	-1.5
Ruse	184.5	37.5	76.9	1,618	-17.6	0.3
Silistra	178.2	40.1	43.7	767	-18.2	-0.5
Sliven	108.8	33.2	65.2	2,581	-9.0	-4.8
Smolyan	229.6	41.6	56.9	1,717	-16.8	-8.9
Sofia (capital city)	170.1	37.0	59.3	755	-15.5	-5.1
Sofia	114.2	25.7	95.5	4,761	-6.8	6.0
Stara Zagora	149.2	36.4	69.9	1,457	-14.1	0.3
Targovishte	151.3	34.8	54.3	1,050	-16.7	-0.8
Haskovo	160.6	37.5	71.7	1,027	-15.5	0.4
Shumen	161.9	34.7	60.0	873	-15.1	1.3
Yambol	160.8	41.0	69.1	1,049	-14.6	-3.9
National Average	149.3	34.0	73.1	1,489	-13.2	1.9

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 7th grade) (%)	Relative share of dropouts from primary and secondary education (%)	Relative share of class repeaters (%)	Average grade in the State matriculation exam in BLL (2–6)	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	2021	2021	2021	2019	2020	2021/2022	2022	2022
Blagoevgrad	29	98	92.9	1.70	0.56	3.91	16.0	35.0
Burgas	17	92	84.8	2.60	0.77	3.85	20.0	36.9
Varna	50	88	83.0	2.20	0.64	4.11	12.8	43.3
Veliko Tarnovo	70	112	83.9	2.90	0.85	3.83	19.5	32.7
Vidin	6	110	78.8	2.30	2.13	3.83	19.9	21.6
Vratsa	8	112	92.3	2.30	1.30	3.75	24.1	26.4
Gabrovo	46	99	90.5	3.30	0.60	3.87	15.6	30.9
Dobrich	4	112	70.6	4.30	1.53	3.68	24.4	29.2
Kardzhali	4	109	76.0	1.50	0.42	3.73	25.9	30.5
Kyustendil	0	96	92.9	1.80	1.07	3.76	21.7	28.2
Lovech	1	113	87.1	2.80	1.41	3.82	22.4	26.1
Montana	0	102	81.8	2.70	1.83	3.78	17.2	27.8
Pazardzhik	0	105	78.4	3.90	1.55	3.80	21.2	30.1
Pernik	0	102	91.0	1.50	0.63	3.79	18.2	28.4
Pleven	16	100	85.6	3.50	1.12	3.61	25.7	28.0
Plovdiv	53	92	87.6	3.70	1.28	4.10	15.5	35.0
Razgrad	2	107	85.5	2.50	0.59	3.53	26.9	29.1
Ruse	27	97	83.8	2.90	0.41	3.88	17.2	35.9
Silistra	3	111	77.8	4.50	0.86	3.65	20.1	26.9
Sliven	8	86	85.3	5.40	2.71	3.79	23.1	25.8
Smolyan	14	130	91.8	0.30	0.19	4.12	9.6	39.4
Sofia (capital city)	7	101	90.0	2.00	1.36	3.77	20.9	29.6
Sofia	72	87	89.1	0.60	0.38	4.42	6.8	47.3
Stara Zagora	18	95	89.6	4.00	1.32	3.96	16.1	31.9
Targovishte	0	111	74.4	2.80	0.97	3.63	23.1	30.2
Haskovo	4	96	85.6	3.40	1.16	3.62	28.0	29.4
Shumen	41	105	79.6	2.50	0.81	3.58	27.2	27.0
Yambol	6	89	89.1	2.00	1.46	3.79	21.0	30.7
National Average	32	97	85.9	2.50	0.94	3.97	17.0	35.3

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	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021
Blagoevgrad	1,775	12.34	148.9	3.79	90.2	1.5
Burgas	2,129	10.89	164.5	4.28	83.9	6.8
Varna	1,710	6.85	158.9	4.18	83.8	4.3
Veliko Tarnovo	1,710	11.86	124.0	3.41	85.3	4.1
Vidin	1,433	11.99	134.9	4.25	92.4	13.3
Vratsa	1,727	10.61	183.0	4.61	93.8	4.0
Gabrovo	1,567	10.20	202.8	5.24	96.9	6.6
Dobrich	1,507	14.91	100.7	2.84	86.0	7.0
Kardzhali	3,097	15.00	120.9	3.45	100.0	6.8
Kyustendil	1,493	11.02	183.9	5.71	96.8	1.3
Lovech	1,556	9.24	137.8	4.27	90.6	6.2
Montana	1,547	10.95	241.8	7.15	88.5	9.4
Pazardzhik	1,671	11.55	277.0	6.68	85.8	4.9
Pernik	1,595	12.87	58.5	2.49	89.3	3.5
Pleven	1,214	3.13	386.4	11.10	92.0	6.7
Plovdiv	1,637	6.94	399.1	8.12	87.1	4.8
Razgrad	2,293	12.85	129.8	5.13	96.3	6.3
Ruse	2,248	9.81	245.9	5.70	88.2	5.8
Silistra	2,097	13.07	181.8	4.54	88.3	12.7
Sliven	1,916	13.42	171.0	4.73	86.7	14.8
Smolyan	1,552	12.94	179.1	5.60	97.5	6.8
Sofia (capital city)	1,839	9.44	211.9	5.73	82.9	4.7
Sofia	1,755	5.47	300.6	5.69	89.0	3.2
Stara Zagora	1,463	9.52	192.1	4.65	89.4	9.9
Targovishte	2,300	11.46	153.0	5.50	87.5	8.7
Haskovo	1,932	12.58	156.7	3.64	89.6	4.8
Shumen	1,862	12.79	102.2	2.92	88.1	8.2
Yambol	1,733	14.25	121.7	3.62	88.6	7.5
National Average	1,734	8.77	222.6	5.62	88.7	5.6



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	2021	2021	2021	2021	2021
Blagoevgrad	82.0	15.1	7.2	7.4	55.4
Burgas	88.0	12.2	9.7	11.3	50.8
Varna	92.0	8.4	6.7	11.8	41.4
Veliko Tarnovo	92.0	11.8	7.8	10.3	57.9
Vidin	94.0	4.3	7.6	10.5	57.0
Vratsa	97.0	3.6	8.5	13.4	54.3
Gabrovo	86.0	11.4	6.9	10.4	74.9
Dobrich	94.0	6.1	7.2	8.3	59.4
Kardzhali	86.0	13.3	6.4	4.7	66.5
Kyustendil	94.0	8.2	12.3	9.6	48.8
Lovech	95.0	8.7	9.9	11.1	59.5
Montana	86.0	15.6	6.2	13.6	57.2
Pazardzhik	92.0	7.0	7.9	7.3	52.7
Pernik	86.0	8.8	9.7	9.7	55.7
Pleven	89.0	10.0	6.8	11.2	55.3
Plovdiv	93.0	7.6	11.8	7.5	58.2
Razgrad	91.0	7.2	8.2	7.5	65.5
Ruse	92.0	8.3	10.5	8.8	52.5
Silistra	89.0	5.4	7.1	7.6	63.0
Sliven	92.0	9.5	7.6	9.6	64.4
Smolyan	95.0	14.0	3.3	4.5	69.7
Sofia (capital city)	82.0	21.6	8.2	9.5	56.8
Sofia	84.0	20.7	11.3	10.4	33.7
Stara Zagora	92.0	9.1	10.8	10.8	53.6
Targovishte	95.0	6.4	5.3	9.3	71.7
Haskovo	88.0	9.0	8.8	9.3	63.4
Shumen	95.0	2.7	7.6	8.7	62.4
Yambol	82.0	12.6	5.6	10.2	65.2
National Average	89.1	11.8	9.0	9.8	51.7


Околна среда

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 (%)	Share of forest areas relative to the district's territory (%)	Share of degraded land relative to the district's territory (%)
District	2019	2020	2020	2020	2020	2021	2021
Blagoevgrad	9.6	327	7.3	32.7	83.3	51.5	0.11
Burgas	91.8	440	88.7	71.0	79.2	40.9	0.25
Varna	582.7	456	85.6	86.1	86.1	29.1	0.51
Veliko Tarnovo	51.4	355	100.0	61.8	69.5	23.4	0.23
Vidin	2.5	368	18.9	49.3	57.7	26.3	0.25
Vratsa	n.a.	251	55.3	51.4	57.7	14.8	0.22
Gabrovo	30.3	416	76.6	73.6	84.1	32.6	0.11
Dobrich	7.2	404	97.2	70.7	70.7	12.1	0.15
Kardzhali	n.a.	250	7.3	36.7	44.3	54.2	0.14
Kyustendil	n.a.	245	31.1	62.1	72.3	42.0	0.67
Lovech	n.a.	325	13.0	56.4	68.8	35.8	0.16
Montana	2.6	286	87.6	35.2	61.0	23.2	0.12
Pazardzhik	32.2	367	15.4	43.7	72.6	54.9	0.42
Pernik	107.8	543	75.8	73.8	78.9	40.2	0.96
Pleven	56.9	461	90.5	55.6	60.2	7.3	0.18
Plovdiv	131.6	469	62.0	74.0	82.4	32.7	0.17
Razgrad	54.3	471	9.5	41.6	41.6	22.4	0.16
Ruse	169.7	423	33.9	68.0	68.0	14.6	0.54
Silistra	10.1	381	3.2	44.1	51.2	14.6	0.40
Sliven	161.0	368	69.1	56.9	64.8	42.4	0.38
Smolyan	3.4	333	48.0	42.7	73.4	69.5	0.08
Sofia (capital city)	30.2	470	12.1	39.9	76.2	46.0	0.41
Sofia	n.a.	480	98.4	96.3	96.3	32.9	1.43
Stara Zagora	3,654.5	380	83.2	65.7	70.6	31.7	3.35
Targovishte	87.5	290	80.2	44.3	54.2	26.3	0.12
Haskovo	61.7	313	71.2	53.2	72.3	32.4	0.15
Shumen	36.3	363	94.1	53.6	57.3	29.9	0.23
Yambol	9	359	79.7	69.2	71.3	15.2	0.17
National Average	n.a.	409	69.3	66.7	76.3	33.1	0.42


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	2021	2021	2021	2021
Blagoevgrad	63	258	320	494
Burgas	107	402	321	420
Varna	129	568	288	250
Veliko Tarnovo	63	182	1,176	758
Vidin	154	232	545	386
Vratsa	61	228	93	446
Gabrovo	160	209	2,357	297
Dobrich	118	70	1,045	385
Kardzhali	37	27	49	213
Kyustendil	50	48	521	244
Lovech	30	145	738	143
Montana	49	123	79	0
Pazardzhik	152	121	409	204
Pernik	0	99	263	174
Pleven	57	247	443	236
Plovdiv	118	438	351	220
Razgrad	164	85	351	232
Ruse	178	395	384	337
Silistra	65	80	194	2,041
Sliven	81	53	360	621
Smolyan	42	95	176	152
Sofia (capital city)	0	30	955	0
Sofia	274	814	290	748
Stara Zagora	161	307	570	507
Targovishte	165	19	82	976
Haskovo	55	91	109	215
Shumen	43	68	793	915
Yambol	128	130	145	333
National Average	129	351	426	449