Pernik district

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

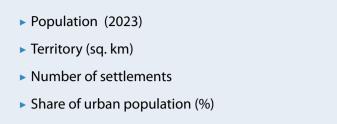*S*alaries and pensions in Pernik district continue to rise and the poverty level remains low. The workforce is characterized by a relatively high proportion of people with secondary education. Investment activity in the district is slack. Pernik is among the districts with the highest density of road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

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

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

	WEAK	UNSATISFACTORY	AVERAGE	GOOD	VERY GOOD

Income and living conditions

Labor market

Investment and business

Infrastructure

Local taxes

Administration

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

	WEAK	UNSATISFACTORY	AVERAGE	GOOD	VERY GOOD

Demography

Education

Healthcare

Security and justice

Environment

Culture and tourism

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ▬▬▬

Income and living conditions ▬▬▬▬

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

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

Labor market ▬▬▬▬

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

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

Investment and business ▬

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

Utilization of European funds has seen the biggest annual rate of increase in the country, but the relative volumes of the payments still remain relatively low. By 30 June 2024, payments made to beneficiaries under EU operational programs amounted to 2,191 BGN/person, compared to 3,175 BGN/person nationally.

Infrastructure ▬▬▬▬▬▬

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

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

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

Local taxes ▬▬▬

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

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

Administration ▬▬

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

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

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

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ▬ ▬

▦ Demography ▬ ▬

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

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

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

▤ Education ▬ ▬ ▬ ▬

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

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

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

✚ Healthcare ▬

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

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

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

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

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

⚖ Security and justice ▬ ▬ ▬ ▬ ▬

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

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

🍃 Environment ▬ ▬ ▬

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

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

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

🎭 Culture and tourism ▬

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

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

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

Key indicators for the district of Pernik

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

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

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

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

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